



“We’re Just So Fond of You”

Date: 1968-12-25
Conversation: WH6812-02-13821
Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson
Participant: Harry S. Truman
Participant: Lady Bird Johnson
Participant: Bess Truman
Start Time: 17:41
Duration: 05:19
Place: Mansion

SCENE SETTER: President and Lady Bird Johnson exchanged Christmas greetings and well wishes with the former president and first lady, Harry S. and Elizabeth V. “Bess” Truman, thanking them for their support and friendship. The President also described a gift from his Cabinet that had origins in the Truman administration.

President Johnson: I wanted to wish you a Merry Christmas and tell you that you’re loved.

Harry S. Truman: Thank you very much, and I hope you—everything goes all right for you.

President Johnson: It’s going—

Harry Truman: And that you got all you want for Christmas.

President Johnson: It’s been going well for me ever since I met you, and [Lady] Bird [Johnson] and I were just thinking about what wonderful people you and Miss [Elizabeth V.] Bess [Truman] have been to us since we met you, and we wanted to thank you.

Harry Truman: Appreciate that very much, and I wanted to tell you that I enjoyed the book you sent me.

President Johnson: Oh, well, bless your heart. Well, you—

Harry Truman: That’s the best thing that any president’s ever done. [*Lady Bird Johnson chuckles.*]

President Johnson: Well, you’re always in our hearts [*Lady Bird attempts to interject*] as is Mrs. Truman, and I wish you could see this pretty portrait of hers—

Harry Truman: I do, too.

President Johnson: —hanging here in the White House. We take so much pride in pointing out to all of our guests this portrait, because we think she’s a very unusual lady.

Harry Truman: Well, I’d say that’s very true, and I’m in agreement with you. [*All laugh.*]

Lady Bird Johnson: And oh, Mr. President, I hope you just have a happy, happy time. Did you have your grandchildren with you?

Harry Truman: How’s that?

Lady Bird Johnson: This is Lady Bird. I hope you had a happy Christmas [*Truman acknowledges*], and did you have your grandchildren with you?

Harry Truman: No. No, they couldn’t come out this time.

Lady Bird Johnson: [*speaking over Truman*] Well, I know you had a good visit with them in the summer, though.

Harry Truman: Beg [*your*] pardon?

Lady Bird Johnson: I know you had a good visit with them sometime in the summer, ’cause I remember seeing some pictures, and you looked so happy. [*Chuckles.*]

Harry Truman: That’s right. That’s mighty nice.

Lady Bird Johnson: Well, you give Mrs. Truman my love, and we just wanted to wish you both a happy Christmas and tell you that—

Harry Truman: Thank you very much.

President Johnson: Is she there where we can say a word to her?

Harry Truman: Yes, here. [*speaking aside*] Bess? Bess?

Pause while Bess Truman comes to the phone.

Elizabeth V. “Bess” Truman: Hello?

President Johnson: We wanted to—Lady Bird and I wanted to tell you and the President how loved you are and how admired you are and how grateful we are for all that you have done for us.

Bess Truman: Oh, you’re just too nice, Mr. President. [*Lady Bird chuckles.*]

President Johnson: No, I’m not.

Bess Truman: Much too nice.

President Johnson: No, I’m not.

Bess Truman: I hope y’all have had a wonderful day with your family.

President Johnson: We have. We're just so blessed. We had the sweetest daughters [Luci Baines Johnson Nugent and Lynda Bird Johnson Robb] here, and we talked to the boys [Patrick J. "Pat" Nugent and Charles S. "Chuck" Robb] last night in Danang.

Bess Truman: Oh, that's wonderful.

President Johnson: One of them went up and met with the Mar—the air boy went up and met with the Marine, and we talked to them about nine o'clock. It was nine o'clock in the morning there.

Bess Truman: Oh.

President Johnson: And we were so thrilled, and we made both of them's little bab[y]—one of them's baby's two months old [Lucinda Desha Robb], one's a little less than two years [Patrick Lyndon Nugent], and we made them both squeal over the telephone so they could hear them. [*Bess Truman and Lady Bird Johnson chuckle.*]

Bess Truman: Oh, that's good.

President Johnson: We . . . think of you often, and every time I go by your picture I see my favorite first lady except one. [*Lady Bird Johnson chuckles.*]

Bess Truman: Oh, well, [*unclear*].

President Johnson: And the one that—the other one is on the phone and wants to say hello to you.

Bess Truman: Oh, good.

Lady Bird Johnson: [*Chuckles.*] Oh, Mrs. Truman, I'm just getting all packed and ready to go, and I'm just thinking in all my time here I've always just considered you such a strong, good help to Lyndon, and to . . . and you've both been a great reliance to us.

Bess Truman: Oh, you're so nice to say that.

Lady Bird Johnson: We appreciate your friendship, and we're just so fond of you.

Bess Truman: [*speaking under Lady Bird Johnson*] Thank you. That gives us a big lift. [*Lady Bird Johnson laughs.*]

President Johnson: Did I tell you the other day—I told you this, but I want to tell you again: The other day my Cabinet gave me a silver blotter with a silver pen set on it, and they had the major acts that we had passed, more than a hundred.

Bess Truman: Oh, is that true?

President Johnson: And the, you know, things like elementary education, and medical care and things of that kind, civil rights and conservation measures. And they listed each one of the major bills. And they said—they had a nice little statement about [*Bess Truman acknowledges*] how they were glad to serve in an administration [that] passed all of these.

Bess Truman: Well, that was a lovely gift.

President Johnson: I took it and reviewed it on a trip that I was making home, and do you know that almost half of the bills that I had passed, President Truman had started 20 years ago?

Bess Truman: Is that so? That's very interesting.

President Johnson: So I thought that you would be interested in knowing that most of the good things like education and Medicare and civil rights, conservation, it took 20 years to get his ideas through, but they were finally passed and—

Bess Truman: But you did it.

President Johnson: I've tried to say that to the country, but the papers don't pay much attention to it.

Bess Truman: Oh, no! [*Lady Bird Johnson laughs.*] The papers. You know what we all think of the papers.

Lady Bird Johnson: Well, you have a healthy regard for them. [*Lady Bird Johnson and Bess Truman laugh.*] Well, we'll let you go, and we hope we [*speaking over Bess Truman*] get to see you during the next year.

End of excerpt.

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