

ALL THE WAY

by

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OSF PUBLICATION DRAFT

Revised

July 20, 2012

Commissioned by:
OREGON SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
Ashland, Oregon

"ALL THE WAY" was developed, in part, with assistance from the Orchard Project, a program of The Exchange (www.exchangenyc.org).

LADY BIRD JOHNSON

And you're a terrible liar. As always.

SENATOR RUSSELL

The politician's curse...

RUSSELL/BIRD/JENKINS leave. SPOT on LBJ.

LBJ

"Any jackass can kick a barn down, but it takes a carpenter to build one." Sam Rayburn, bless his memory, said that to me the first time he invited me up to his office for one of his, "Board of Education" meetings. Bourbon, poker, and politics. I coulda kissed his bald head. God knows, I'd been kissing his ass since the day I moved to Washington, tryin' to get him to take notice of me, a dirt-poor Freshman Representative from bumfuck Texas, and when the call finally came, I felt like the Lord's Anointed. Sam Rayburn. *Speaker of the House!* Coulda had anything in the world and you know what Mr. Sam wanted, his greatest regret? "A tow-headed boy to take fishing." I heard that, and I did my damndest to be that boy. "Suck up." Uh-huh. "Brown noser." Sure. "Kiss ass." Yeah. I've heard it all. *Fuck. You.* Everybody wants power; everybody! And if they say they don't, they're lyin'. But everybody thinks it ought to be given out free of charge, like Mardi Gras beads, 'specially to them, because, of course, they're gonna do Good with it. Nothin' comes free. *Nothin'*. Not even "Good." Especially not "Good." When the carpenter picks up his saw, if wood could talk, it would scream.

LIGHTS UP on OVAL OFFICE. LBJ and SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY.

TB reads: 294 days to the Election.

SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY

You cannot cut the Voting Rights section out of the Civil Rights Bill!

LBJ

You can't pass a Civil Rights bill with Voting Rights intact! Not this year. Not now.

SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY

It'll never even get out of the House like this.

LBJ

The House is not the problem; the Senate is.

SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY

The House is a problem, Mr. President. Hell, we can't even get it out of Judge Smith's Rules Committee.

LBJ

(amused)

You gotta give Judge Smith credit. I 'member how he stalled the '57 Bill by claiming he had to go home to Virginia to take a look at a barn of his that had burned down. Sam Rayburn said he knew Judge Smith would do most anything to block a Civil Rights bill but he never thought he'd resort to arson!

SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY

Have you made a deal with Smith? Is that why you cut Voting Rights?

LBJ

I haven't made any kind of deal with the Judge.

SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY

You told Dr. King that you wanted that Bill passed, "without one word changed."

LBJ

When you go to sell a horse, you don't start by talking about it bein' blind in one eye and got the heaves.

SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY

People are going to say that it's 1957 all over again and you're just gutting this Bill.

LBJ

Bullshit! It's still a damn good bill, Humphrey, and you know it. A great Bill! Real progress on Public Housing, Public Access, and School Desegregation. Don't you tell me that ain't nothin'.

SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY

The Liberal wing of the Party will think you betrayed them. Senator Douglas will go ballistic.

LBJ

Those are your people. It's your job to bring them around.

SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY

My job?!

LBJ

Don't be so modest, Hubert, you're the Great White Hope of Liberals everywhere.

SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY

If I am anything like what you say, it's because people know I stand by my principles. I can't sell what I don't believe in! I won't.

LBJ

This ain't about Principles, *it's about Votes*. That's the problem with you Liberals - *you don't know how to fight!* You wanta get something done in the *real* world, Hubert, you're gonna have to get your hands wet. You say you're the leader of the Liberal wing of the Democratic party? Then show me some goddamn leadership! These three good ole boys were talkin' about the "ugliest sound in the world." The first one said, "I once slipped in the lumber yard and fell onto the belt that fed the buzz saw. As it was dragging me closer I could hear that saw whining and I mean to tell you, that was the ugliest sound in the world." The second boy says, "Ah, hell, that ain't nothing. I once was so drunk I fell onto the railroad track and got my leg all twisted up under one of them ties just as a big ole freight train was bearing down. I lay there as that train came towards me - chugachug, chugachug, chugachug - and *that* is the ugliest sound in the world." The third boy says, "You fellas don't know what you're talkin' about. I was once fucking this purty gal when all of a sudden her husband come home? I jumped buck naked out the window but he grabbed my balls with one hand and pulled out his big ole jack knife with the other, and set to opening the blade with his mouth. And the click, click, click of his teeth on that blade, that was the ugliest sound in the world!"

You know what the ugliest sound in the world is, Hubert? The tick, tick, tick of a clock. All the men in my family die young - I almost died of that heart attack ten years ago - and I ain't got much time left. We only got until the convention in August, while people are still grieving Kennedy's death, to get this Bill passed. If we don't act now, this opportunity to do something about Civil Rights will disappear forever. Are you in, or are you out?

A moment.

SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY

Can you get the Bill out of the House Rules Committee?

LBJ

Leave Judge Smith to me.

SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY

Without anymore compromises?

LBJ

Yes.

SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY
And Voting Rights?

LBJ
Next year. You have my word.

SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY
This is going to be a very difficult sell, Mr. President.

LBJ
That's why I want you to be the Floor Manager of this Bill.

SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY
(surprised and flattered)
Floor Manager? I assumed Senator Mansfield...

LBJ
...Mike's a good man but I need someone more personable. People like you, Hubert. Hell, even Dick Russell likes you. You know I'm under a lot of pressure to announce my running mate for the election. Some people tell me I ought to pick Bobby Kennedy but I'm not so sure of his loyalty. There was a time, not so long ago, that him and the rest of his Harvard Blue Bloods looked down their noses at me like I was some kind of country bumpkin.

SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY
I'm sure that's not the...

LBJ
...They treated me like dog shit! All of 'em. Jackie called me a "cowboy oaf." Now, you show me that you have the guts to push this thing through, all the way, and you make yourself a very real candidate to be my Vice President. Of the United States. Of America. A step away from the White House. And as we've seen, anything can happen from there.

SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY
I'll do everything I can, Mr. President.

LBJ
Well, go on then, get started! What're you doin' standin' here!

LIGHTS DOWN on LBJ. HUMPHREY remains in a SPOT taking off his coat and tie as his wife, MURIEL, joins him.

SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY
The question is, did I hear him say what I thought I heard him say? Or did I hear him say what he knows I want to hear him say?