ALL THE WAY
by
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OSF PRODUCTION 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 bumphuck 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 wanna 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.