

## **“One of Those Blue Pills”**

**Date:** March 1963

**Participant:** John F. Kennedy

**Participant:** George Burkley

**Place:** Oval Office

President Kennedy suffered from extraordinarily poor health throughout his life and had received the last rites of the Catholic Church twice before the age of 30. Among Kennedy's many afflictions was Addison's disease, a potentially life-threatening condition. He also suffered from chronic back pain. The combination of illness and pain required significant doses of medication. In this telephone call, President Kennedy asked White House physician Admiral George Burkley to “send up a little extra medication.”

**George Burkley:** Dr. Burkley.

**President Kennedy:** Oh, Doctor, I wonder if you could—have you got—send up a little extra medication?

**Burkley:** I gave it to Mrs. [Evelyn M.] Lincoln. I—

**President Kennedy:** Did you get extra?

**Burkley:** Yes, she has it on her desk.

**President Kennedy:** I see.

**Burkley:** We can get it up to you. Up to your quarters?

**President Kennedy:** No, I'm in my office. Has she got it?

**Burkley:** Yes, she has it.

**President Kennedy:** All right. What about one of those blue pills?

**Burkley:** Oh, we can give her that, too.

**President Kennedy:** OK.

**Burkley:** She doesn't have that. [*President Kennedy acknowledges.*] I'll bring it right up.

*End of excerpt.*

“John F. Kennedy and George Burkley in March 1963,” Dictabelt 9B.7, John F. Kennedy Library, President’s Office Files, Presidential Recordings Collection, Draft Transcript, Presidential Recordings Program, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia.