



“I’m Not Lying About That One”

Date: 1964-01-01

Conversation: WH6401-02-1128

Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson

Participant: Richard B. Russell Jr.

Participant: Lady Bird Johnson

Participant: A. W. Moursund III

Start Time: 20:32

Duration: 03:20

Place: LBJ Ranch

SCENE SETTER: After watching the Texas Longhorns win the Cotton Bowl on New Year’s Day 1964, President Johnson talked football, family, and drinking with his old friend Sen. Richard B. “Dick” Russell Jr. [D–Georgia]. Celebrating alongside the President at the LBJ Ranch, Lady Bird Johnson and A. W. “Judge” Moursund III joined the call and offered their own holiday greetings.

Richard B. “Dick” Russell Jr.: Happy New Year, Mr. President.

President Johnson: Well, I called you up to get New Year’s gift off of you, and damn if you didn’t beat me to it.

Russell: Yes, sir, I sure did.

President Johnson: I just sitting here with a bunch of your old roughneck friends, and we’re sitting in here in the den and . . . Wesley [W. West] and A. W. [“Judge” Moursund III]. And old A. W. said, “There’s old Dick Russell’s chair.” He said, “You remember that night he and Herman Brown came in here?”

Russell: God, I’d hoped that chair disappeared.

President Johnson: *[laughing]* No, they got it, and they call it—got a little brass plaque on it, said, “This is where Dick Russell sat the night that A. W. and Herman Brown brought him in [from the] football game.”

Russell: Yeah, well, I’ll tell you, that football team sure played ball today.

President Johnson: Huh?

Russell: That team sure played football today.

President Johnson: They did all right. You remember that night?

Russell: Not much about it. [*President Johnson laughs heartily.*] I don't remember much about it. [*Both laugh.*]

President Johnson: Well, we just wanted to call you up and tell you that you are a very much beloved man.

Russell: Well, you make me feel mighty good, Mr. President.

End of excerpt 1.

President Johnson: I hope you have a wonderful New Year. And wait a minute. A. W. wants to speak on behalf of me and Wesley and a few of them here, and say howdy, after this girl [Lady Bird Johnson] talks to you.

Russell: All right, sir.

Lady Bird Johnson: Senator?

Russell: Honey, how are you?

Lady Bird Johnson: Oh, I'm fine.

Russell: I've been seeing you with great approval in the newsreel and on the—in the paper.

Lady Bird Johnson: [*Chuckles.*] There's nobody's approval that I want more than yours.

Russell: Oh, Lord, what a politician. No wonder Lyndon Johnson's president.

Lady Bird Johnson: And, listen, I—

Russell: No wonder he's president.

End of excerpt 2.

Lady Bird Johnson: I just want to say that I hope there were a lot of Russells gathered around the Christmas dinner table [*Russell acknowledges*] and the New Year's dinner table.

Russell: We didn't have but 42 here at Christmas; a lot of them couldn't get in. But we had big time.

Lady Bird Johnson: Well, all my love to you—

Russell: Are those two lovely daughters of yours at home, or where are they this Christmas?

Lady Bird Johnson: Well, they were together with us at Christmas, and we had all of Lyndon's family at Christmas, and now we're having my family—about 15 Taylors. But my two children went with their dates to watch the big ball game.

Russell: That was a terrific ball game. That Texas could beat any college team in the world today. I never saw a team play like they do.

Lady Bird Johnson: [*Chuckles.*] And they'll be back tomorrow. And I want—that Lynda Bird [Johnson]'s going to come back up there. The main reason she's coming is because she wants to listen to smart people like you and get smarter.

Russell: She needs to be up there to help her daddy. She's a politician just like her mother. [*Lady Bird Johnson chuckles.*] [*Unclear.*]

Lady Bird Johnson: And here's Judge Moursund.

A. W. "Judge" Moursund III: Hi, Senator?

Russell: Judge, how are you?

Moursund: All right. Happy New Year to you.

Russell: Same to you, A. W., and many of them. I was getting along just fine here till Lyndon reminded me of that time I sort of disgraced myself over there, and you had to take care of me.

Moursund: Oh, heck, he shouldn't have mentioned that. [*Russell laughs.*] He's just kidding.

Russell: That's all right.

Moursund: How'd you like old Texas today?

Russell: I want to tell you: they could have whipped any college football team ever was assembled today.

Moursund: They're working today, weren't they?

Russell: Navy had a good team, but they just looked like [a] high school out there trying to play Texas.

End of excerpt 3.

Moursund: Well, have you had nice holidays?

Russell: Yeah, we've had a good time.

Moursund: Well, that's sure fine.

Russell: Y'all kill any deer out there?

Moursund: Yeah, we did. We miss you.

Russell: Well, I wished I could have been there. I hope the President didn't miss his turn as many times as he did that time he created that shortage of [*unclear*] . . .

Moursund: [*speaking over Russell*] No, he made an awful good shot yesterday. He shot a deer, I think, about 350 yards, right through the neck.

Russell: Well, that's wonderful.

Moursund: He really did. You know, I'm not lying about that one. [*Both laugh heartily.*]

End of excerpt 4.

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