



When The Camera Stopped Rolling

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Television has become a window to our own culture. It shows us things that our ears will never be privy to. Nor should they be in some instances. For purposes of example I will take a look at, in amazingly accurate detail, the emergence of politics as a mainstay of television. Case in point, the 1960 Presidential Debates. These were the first of their kind to be broadcast visually to millions of American, who, up until then, received their debates sonically only. A lot has been made about what happened when the little red light turned on signifying the successful operation of the camera. Some say, these debates cemented Kennedy's victory. JFK was charismatic to say the least. He was the golden boy of politics. Young, good-looking, a war hero, the hot wife: Senator Kennedy had everything going for him going into the debates. His opponent, Richard Nixon, wasn't going to go down without a fight. He was cagey. He was gamy. He was serious. Kennedy knew this and decided to pull out his secret weapon when no one was watching ... literally. Ladies and gentlemen, thanks to advances in scientific technology, we have, for the first time, the official transcripts of what happened when those debates went to commercial.

NIXON

...And that is why America can never have a President who is weak on Communism. I will open the door to China.

DIRECTOR

Ok, we're at commercial. We're back in five.

NIXON

How are you, John?

JFK

You don't really think they'll actually let you go to China?

NIXON

Well, that's my plan. You've known that.

JFK

Oh yeah right. You're going to China. Hey, guess what? I'm going to the moon. What do you think of that?

NIXON

I was going to look into sending a ship to the moon.

JFK

No. You don't get it. *I'm* going to the moon.

NIXON

You?

JFK

Yeah, so you can suck me with this China stuff. Just wait till I tell everyone I'm gonna set up a casino on the moon. Frank and Dean are gonna be my openers...

NIXON

John, I'll never get you.

JFK

Yeah, if you say so Richie.

NIXON

Look, I don't call you Johnny; I'd appreciate the same respect, Senator.

JFK

What do you think the Chinese'll call you, huh?

NIXON

Senator, let's just keep this civil, why don't we?

JFK

You threatening me?

NIXON

No. I wouldn't -

JFK

You gonna beat me up if I don't follow your rules?

NIXON

John -

JFK

Someone get Giancana on the phone, will ya? I got a problem here.

NIXON

There's no problem.

JFK

You sure?

NIXON

Of course. The only thing I ask is a little professional courtesy. That's all. Call me -

JFK

I'll call you a bitch if I want to. No one tells JFK what to do...Richard.

NIXON

This is quite an attitude you've developed.

JFK

Developed? Developed? You think this is something new?

NIXON

It's a side I've never seen before now.

JFK

Get used to it. I've had it going on forty years now. Look, you want to be let in on a little secret, Richard?

NIXON

Sure. Though any secrets that are damaging might be –

JFK

Shut up. Here's a question...what's my middle name?

NIXON

What are you getting at?

JFK

Quick hint: it starts with the letter F.

NIXON

Ah, I know that one. Fitzgerald.

JFK

Wrong.

NIXON

No. I'm correct on that.

JFK

Common misconception.

NIXON

Well, what is it?

JFK

Fuckin.'

NIXON

Excuse me.

JFK

Fuckin.' I'm John Fuckin' Kennedy. What do you think about that?

NIXON

I don't believe you.

JFK

Doesn't matter what you believe. Check this out...Read it...

NIXON

Uhh...it says uh....State of Massasschusettes...birth record. Name: John, no this can't be...

JFK

Say it.

NIXON

I can't.

JFK
You answer as if I *asked* you nicely. Now read the goddamn name on the parchment.

NIXON
John...uh, fucking...

JFK
No G.

NIXON
What?

JFK
Do you see a “G” at the end of my name?

NIXON
Oh, I assumed....Uh, John fuckin’ Kennedy. Doesn’t matter.

JFK
Doesn’t matter huh? You like movies?

NIXON
Sure. Who doesn’t?

JFK
The movie about me is gonna be way better than the one about you.

NIXON
You don’t know that.

JFK
Yeah I do. Two reasons. First, the main character in mine is far superior to the one in yours, way more charismatic, better looking, went to a better law school.

NIXON
I object to –

JFK
You can’t object. This isn’t a trial. Guess I was right about the law school. Anyways, the second...and most important reason I’m better.... oops, I mean that my futuristic movie will be better than yours is that...Come on Richard, you know it...

NIXON
I. Don’t. Know.

JFK
My name is fuckin.’

NIXON
A movie about me would be pretty good, in my opinion.

JFK

Are you kidding?! I bet they won't even find an American to play you. Besides mine's gonna be about how great I am, and yours will be about what an asshole you are. Mark my words.

NIXON

This is beside the point.

JFK

You know what else I like?

NIXON

I have no idea.

JFK

I like movie stars.

NIXON

Me too.

JFK

I doubt were talking about the same thing. No offense, pal.

NIXON

I'm a big fan of John Wayne.

JFK

Westerns, huh? I guess I prefer movie stars that have, I don't know, what are those things called? You'd think being around them as much as I would, you would know what they called them, all the nicknames and all...

NIXON

John, I'm through with this –

JFK

Oh yeah, they're called vaginas. I like movie stars with those.

NIXON

This is highly inappropriate, John.

JFK

You want to know inappropriate. Next time you're talking about taxes, you think of me and brother tag-teaming Marilyn.

DIRECTOR

Ok guys, we're back in five...four ..three...two and...

JFK

I believe my distinguished opponent was finishing his point –

NIXON

Thank you John. I was saying –

JFK

Wasn't it about *taxes*?

NIXON

Why, uh.... yeah. I, uh, want to...

The rest of the transcript can be found at various locations across the World Wide Web, but I challenge you to find any piece of recorded transcript that gives this insight. To those listening to the debate over the radio, Nixon was the clear winner. But to those watching at home, well, they saw a different story. Nixon would look pale and was recovering from the flu and had some five o'clock shadow. However, what they didn't see was just as important given the newly discovered information you were just privy to and perhaps maybe, just maybe, the above record might be one of the most telling moments in the history of modern times. One of the most important moments in television history. A moment that changed American history forever. Would we be where we are now if John Kennedy's middle name was Ferdinand? It's certainly a point to consider, isn't it?