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S T E V E N   M A R K   K O H N

# THE SENATOR'S STUMP SPEECH

**LOW VOICE**

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### PROGRAM NOTES

The text is by Noah “Soggy” Sweat, a judge and member of the Mississippi legislature who uttered these great words in a speech in 1952. My compliments to him. I also wish to thank my good friend Bill Powers who brought this text to my attention and suggested I set it to music. I hope this short piece will find its way onto recitals of “serious” music as either an unexpected relief from the formal or just a rollicking good encore.

—Steven Mark Kohn, 2006

### AVAILABLE EDITIONS

Low Voice and Piano	8674
High Voice and Piano	8675

## TEXT

**Senator:** *(Quieting applause from previous piece)*

Thank you! Thank you very much!

It is my distinct pleasure to be here today with all of you fine people.

**Audience member #1 (or Pianist):** *(Cutting him off)*

Excuse me, Senator! What is your position on whiskey?

**Audience member #2:**

Yeah! Where do you stand on whiskey?

**Audience member #3 (or Pianist):**

Yeah, what about it Senator?

*(all three ad lib.)*

**Senator:** *(Quieting them)*

Now, now now, my good people!

I had not intended to discuss this controversial subject at this particular time.

However, I want you to know that I do not shun controversy.

On the contrary, I will discuss any subject at any time, regardless of how fraught with controversy it may be.

You have asked me how I feel about whiskey. All right, here is how I feel about whiskey...

If when you say whiskey you mean the Devil's brew, the poison scourge, the bloody monster that defiles innocence, dethrones reason, destroys the home, creates misery and poverty, yea, literally takes the bread from the mouths of little children; if when you say whiskey you mean that evil drink that topples Christian men and women from the pinnacle of gracious, righteous living into the bottomless pit of degradation, and despair, and shame, and helplessness, and hopelessness, then I am against it.

But,

If when you say whiskey you mean the oil of conversation, the philosophic wine, the ale that is consumed when good fellows get together, that puts a song on their lips and laughter in their hearts, and the warm glow of contentment in their eyes;

if you mean Christmassy cheer; if you mean the stimulating drink that puts the spring into some old gentleman's step on a frosty, crispy morning;

if you mean the drink which enables man to magnify his joy, his happiness, his pleasure, and his love of life, and to forget, if only for a little while, life's great tragedies;

if you mean the drink the sale of which pours into our treasuries untold millions of dollars, which are used to provide tender care for our little crippled children, our blind, our deaf, our pitiful aged and infirm; to build roads and hospitals and schools, then certainly I am for it.

This is my stand, I will not be swayed from it. I will not detract from it. I will not compromise.

Thank you very much.

Noah "Soggy" Sweat (1922–1996)

*Adapted by* Steven Mark Kohn

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for Bill Powers

# The Senator's Stump Speech

for Low Voice and Piano

Text Attributed to Noah "Soggy" Sweat (1922–1996)  
Adapted by Steven Mark Kohn

Steven Mark Kohn

**Senator:** (*Quieting applause from previous piece*) Thank you! Thank you very much!  
It is my distinct pleasure to be here today with all of you fine people.

**Audience member #1** (or Pianist): (*Cutting him off*) Excuse me, Senator! What is your position on whiskey?

**Audience member #2:** Yeah! Where do you stand on whiskey?

**Audience member #3** (or Pianist): Yeah, what about it Senator?

(*all three ad lib.*)

**Senator:** (*Quieting them*) Now, now now, my good people!

Freely *f* with bombastic bravado, quasi recitativo

Freely *f* *l.v. sempre*

Ped.

2

3

Ped. Ped. Ped.

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4 *p* getting more somber , *pp* *rit.* *pp*

fraught with controversy it may be. You have asked me how I feel about whiskey. All right, here is how I feel about

*p* *pp* *rit.*

*ped.* *ped.* *ped.* *ped.*

8 *A tempo* ♩ = ca. 96 *pp*

whis - key... If when you say whis - key you mean

*A tempo* ♩ = ca. 96 *pp*

12 *f* *p*

the Dev - il's brew, the poi - son scourge, the blood - y mon - ster that de - files

*f* *p*

16 *cresc. poco a poco*

in - no - cence, de - thrones rea - son, de - stroys the home, cre - ates

*cresc. poco a poco*

20 *ff* *f*

mis - er - y and pov - er - ty, yea, lit - er - al - ly

23 *pp*

takes the bread from the mouths of lit - tle chil - dren; If when you say whis - key you mean

27 *f* *noble*

that e - vil drink that top - ples Chris - tian men and wo - men from the pin - na - cle of gra - cious,

31 *growing in intensity* *sfz*

right - eous liv - ing in - to the bot - tom - less pit of deg - ra - da - tion, and de - spair, and