

Kennedy Runs for Vice-President

Lead: In 1956 a little known Senator from Massachusetts suddenly emerged on the national scene by losing.

Intro.: "A Moment in Time" with Dan Roberts.

Content: In 1956 there was little doubt in party circles about who the Democrats would nominate for President. If he wanted it Adlai Stevenson of Illinois could again run against President Eisenhower. The question was who he would chose as a running mate. Jack Kennedy, Senator

from Massachusetts considered the race. Some of his advisors, most especially his father, Ambassador Joseph Kennedy, were skeptical. Assuming that Stevenson would lose, the defeat might be attributed to Jack's Catholicism. Also, despite his wealth, physical attractiveness, and stunning victory over Henry Cabot Lodge for the Senate, Kennedy's career had been rather lack-luster to that point and was considered by many to be a political light-weight.

All that changed when the freshly re-nominated Stevenson threw the convention into chaos by declining to name a running mate. The Kennedy competitive juices began to flow and his forces at the Chicago convention jumped into action. There were five

candidates but the real race was between Kennedy and Tennessee's Estes Kefauver. By the second ballot Kennedy was ahead but just barely. With the voting so close states previously committed to the other candidates were waving their standards to switch votes. Whoever switched first would probably put one or other over the top.

The convention chairman Sam Rayburn of Texas was no fan of Kennedy and therefore chose Missouri who switched its votes to Kefauver. Kennedy turned to his aides and said, "That's it -- let's go." He appeared at the hall and in a clever and gracious speech moved the unanimous nomination of his rival.

Kennedy's defeat at the convention was a political gift in disguise. Stevenson went ahead to lose and because Kennedy was not on the ticket, his religion could not be blamed for the loss. Four years later he left no stone unturned and won the nomination for President comfortably on the first ballot.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

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