

The Mock Convention Swing

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Final Record of
1976 Washington & Lee Mock Democratic Convention, May 7, 8.

The 1976 Washington & Lee Mock Convention, the nation's most accurate collegiate mock convention, chose former Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter as its Presidential nominee; Minnesota Senator Walter Mondale was tapped the Vice-Presidential candidate.



If the choice of Carter is correct, it will be the 11th correct pick out of 16 tries. Since 1948, the convention has been incorrect only once. If Mondale is Carter's choice as Vice-President, it will be the first time the W&L Mock Convention has correctly chosen the Vice-Presidential nominee.

Following his selection, Carter, the 1972 Mock Convention Keynote speaker, spoke to the delegates via a telephone hookup from Grand Island, Neb. As the audience anxiously listened, Carter said he appreciated the confidence the delegates had shown in him and called the nomination a "very encouraging" sign for his campaign. Carter said he hoped to live up to the delegates' expectations by winning the nomination on the first ballot in New York later this summer.



The Convention was kicked off Friday morning by a parade through downtown Lexington. The parade lasted for over an hour. Spectators, lining every foot of the parade route, watched as floats from each of the 50 states, the territories and the District of Columbia, as well as eight high school bands, passed by. Participants in the parade seemed to indulge in the festive atmosphere as much as anyone.

Leading the parade down Main Street was a Jackass — the symbol of the Democratic Party. Next came Miss Virginia, Joan Grady, and former Virginia Lt. Gov. Henry Howell, the Parade Marshall. The state floats, led by Virginia, followed in the approximate order that they entered the Union.

Winning first prize in the float competition was Kansas' 'Land of Oz' (three kegs of beer); followed by Louisiana's 'Riverboat' (two kegs) and Iowa's 'Corncob' (one keg). Tennessee, Hawaii, Minnesota, Missouri, Rhode Island, Maine, Alabama and Colorado received Honorable Mentions (a case). The winning high school band came all the way from Gloucester, N. J. (a trophy).



Friday afternoon, delegates and spectators crowded into patriotically-dressed Doremus Gymnasium for the Opening Session. The delegates' enthusiasm and anticipation was most evident as Washington and Lee President Robert E. R. Huntley spoke to the convention. Greeted with a standing ovation and the "W&L Swing," Huntley reminded everyone that, in this Bicentennial Year, Washington and Lee is celebrating its 226th birthday.

Lexington Mayor and W&L Economics professor Charles F. Phillips, welcoming student and guests on behalf of the city of Lexington, told the audience he was glad that no one during the parade had fallen into one of the many holes in Lexington's streets. (Due to the reworking of sewage and utility lines and the repaving of the city's streets, numerous man-swallowing holes were evident along the parade route.)

Virginia Atty. Gen. Andrew Miller called the Ford Administration "a caretaker regime." Urging the delegates to return government to the people, Miller stated that "as Democrats, we must renew the goals of our forefathers and make our mutual dreams a reality."

Reconvening after a little dinner and apparently a lot of drink, the delegates settled in for a long evening of speeches, voice votes and roll calls.

The Keynote Speaker was Wisconsin Senator William Proxmire. Senator Proxmire apparently did not realize the conservative nature of the W&L students. The Platform Session is the only session in which students are encouraged to express their own political opinions — and the delegates had come ready to provide conservative comment to Proxmire's liberal address.

This conservative comment led Washington Star reporter Bill Delaney to write, the "W&L student body considers the Democratic party a joke, if not a positive evil."

As Proxmire pointed out the lack of women in high positions in business, the audience stood to give Proxmire his loudest appaluse of the evening. This reaction prompted Proxmire to turn on the podium and ask Co-Chairman Reed Morgan, "What convention am I at?"

However, the good-natured Senator, taking the adverse response with a smile, continued his speech. He spoke about America's achievements of the past 50 years and added, "The future holds even greater



Following the Welcoming Remarks, convention delegates were faced with a credentials challenge. The vote went in favor of the Carter-supported delegation by a 1581½ to 1427½ margin. The voting was very close and provided some of the most tense moments of the Convention Weekend.

In the voting, it looked as if the Carter supporters would lose. But Illinois and Texas, who had passed earlier, put the New Progressives over the top by voting 268-31 in their favor.

Following the Credentials fight, Donald Fowler gave the Convention's Opening Address. The South Carolina Democratic Party Chairman and Chairman of the National Association of Democratic State Chairmen told the conventioners that the party's diverse factions must compromise in order to insure

achievements." He said our nation's problems will not be solved "by turning our backs, standing still or turning the government into a gigantic babysitter." He said the nation must recognize its problems and seek solutions.

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Realizing they may have been too harsh to the Senator, the conventioners gave him a standing ovation as he left the podium.

Following Proxmire to the podium, Michigan Congressman Don Riegle, giving the Platform Address, spoke with less optimism. After removing his jacket, rolling up his sleeves and loosening his tie, he began by saying, "The country today is in more trouble than it cares to admit." Riegle said the nation's most urgent need is "good leadership in both political parties."

Urging the delegates to think seriously about how the trends of our current policies will affect the future, the Senate-candidate told conventioners, "we have a tremendous struggle ahead of us."

Like Proxmire, Riegle was also besieged with conservative response. The assault, as it was earlier, was led by the South Carolina and Hawaii delegations.

Riegle managed to also stir the Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana delegations to their feet by calling the present oil prices a "rip-off."

Riegle however drew his most unpopular reaction when he said the nation needs more non-lawyers in

government. This affront was most resented not by the students, many of which are attending or are planning to attend law school, but by the spectators. The weekend was also the Law School's Alumni Weekend and many of the alumni had chosen to attend the Friday evening session.

After Proxmire and Riegle had left the podium, the conservatives directed their forces at dismantling the proposed platform.

One after another, the liberal planks of the majority report almost invariably fell to the conservative-supported planks. But the process was long and the evening drug on. Boredom set in, drinking continued and slowly delegates began to file out of Convention Hall. It had been a long day and many of the participants had been up late the night before finishing the floats.

While the speeches and debate were taking place on the floor, the large industrial states were caucusing upstairs. The state chairmen wanted to know how each other would vote the next day. How many votes would Carter receive on the first ballot? How would the big states react to this total? Who would the stop-Carter movement support on the second and third ballots? The answers made it clear that if Carter received over 1200 votes on the first ballot, his bandwagon would be hard to stop.

Back on the floor, the voting continued. Before half the planks had been voted upon, the students decided to suspend debate and vote just on the planks. But even this was not enough; finally, sometime after 1:00 a.m., it became evident that a quorum was not present and, with all the foreign policy planks still untouched, the session ended.

Saturday morning, most of the conventioners, tired, weary and somewhat hung-over, were slow to arrive at Convention Hall. Arkansas Senator Dale Bumpers realized that his task of restoring the crowd's enthusiasm would be difficult. As Bumpers began to speak, the crowd was still stirring, but soon the conventioners grew more attentive.

The delegates were thinking like Democrats once again, and the Southerner received applause on numerous occasions. Bumpers denounced Republican administrations as being characterized "by a basic mistrust of the people, a basic mistrust of Congress and a basic disregard for human needs." He added, "I had rather be in our party as a lowly worker, championing the rights of all men, than enjoy status and position in a party that does not."

If there were any unaroused delegates left, the fiery nominating speeches and rowdy demonstrations certainly brought them around. The realization that W&L's record of accuracy was on the line, the excitement created by all the color and pagentry and, finally, the constant awareness that the national press (cameras, microphones, notepads and all) was watching was enough to interest even the most apathetic student.

As the long-awaited Presidential balloting finally began, three years of planning and research began to unfold. The seriousness with which the state chairmen had pursued their duties softened as each announced his votes. Georgia announced as "The home of southern belles, Coca-Cola and peanuts." Kansas boasted it is "the birthplace of Vivan Vance, John Cameron Swayze, and not much else." New



Mexico surprised everyone when its state chairman began chattering in Spanish. Pennsylvania paused to remind everyone that Sunday was Mother's Day. And Texas matter-of-factly proclaimed it was "the eighth greatest oil-producing nation in the world."



As most of the delegates leisurely sat in their chairs listening attentively and jotting down vote totals, the pace around the Candidate Survey tables was too fast for any one human to keep up with. As the tally continued it became increasingly evident that Carter would be over the magic number set by the industrial-states caucus. As the stop-Carter people scurried about trying to solidify their support, the Carter people coolly bargained for the votes to put them over the top.

Dorman Walker, the Carter Coordinator, was using the Vice-Presidency to lure in votes. He was talking to Ohio State Chairman Jim Falk and Illinois State Chairman Everett Martin; Falk wanted John Glenn and Martin wanted Adlai Stevenson. In the early going, Walker decided it would be Stevenson before Glenn.

But falling only 134 votes short on the first ballot, Walker was now being told that he would be receiving support from most of George Wallace's 215 votes. He wasn't yet ready to make a deal with Illinois.

Approached by television reporters, Walker proclaimed, "The stop-Carter movement is dead."

Meanwhile, in front of the podium, the industrial states were once again caucusing. After going over the situation with other state chairmen California State Chairman and Brown Coordinator Ken Mc-Creedy declared, "Carter has too many votes, we can't dicker around now."

Realizing that he now held enough votes to go over the top on the second ballot, Walker decided not to make any Vice-Presidency deal. Acting on advice from the Credentials Committee that Sen. Walter Mondale of Minnesota would be a good choice to unify the party and knowing that Mondale was well liked in Carter's Atlanta headquarters, Walker chose to support Walter Mondale in the Vice-Presidential balloting.

Once the second roll call began, it was clear that Carter had the nomination. Alabama gave all its Wallace votes to Carter. Then California gave Carter 218 of its 280 votes. From then on, everyone began to board the Carter bandwagon until New York put Carter over by giving him all of its 274 votes.

Having nominated Carter and having heard his acceptance speech, the delegates, as they moved on to their last task, the Vice-Presidential nomination, suddenly realized that the boomingest Mock Convention of them all was about to be over.

In the first round of the Vice-Presidential balloting, a record number of candidates received votes — some were serious, most were not. Before Walter Mondale finally won by acclamation on the second ballot, votes were cast for such campus favorites as Tripod, the three-legged dog, and Nurse Agnor, the infirmity nurse, or national personalities such as Richard Nixon and Muhammed Ali or others such as Captain Kirk and Jack Daniels.



After adjournment, the conventioners slowly filed out of Doremus, taking one last look at the decorations and picking up souvenirs as they went. It was all over but the waiting, two months of it, to see if Washington and Lee's record of accuracy would be preserved.