

News Bureau
Washington and Lee University
Lexington, Virginia

immediate release

LEXINGTON, April _____ ---The picturesque Shenandoah Valley community of Lexington, Va., is normally just a small, quiet college town, but once every four years it becomes hotbed of political excitement that for two short days rivals the color and spectacle of the major party's national nominating conventions.

It happens every presidential election year around the first of May, and it's called the Washington and Lee University Mock Convention. This year's event is scheduled for April 30 and May 1, and for months the 1,025 students at Washington and Lee have been busy planning and building for the gala two days.

Since 1898, W & L students have sought to pre-guess the presidential nominee for the party out of power, and the 1956 Mock Convention is being held for the Democrats for the first time since student convention delegates correctly nominated Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932.

In ten previous Mock Conventions, W & L student politicians have been right six times, while erring four. But the interest which the event attracts hinges not on its record for accuracy, but on its tradition of authenticity in procedure and balloting.

Every member of the Washington and Lee student body belongs either to a state delegation or to some other important convention committee. Boys named to head state delegations are charged with the responsibility of contacting party leaders in their various states and determining as accurately as possible just how particular state delegations will vote at the Chicago mid-summer convention.

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In this manner, the first ballot at Washington and Lee often is nearly identical to the opening ballot at the national affair. Also, state delegations are in contact with state headquarters while the convention is in progress, getting instructions on the switching of backing and other information.

As has been the practice in the past, a prominent party spokesman acts as keynote speaker the W & L Mock Convention. This year no less a Democrat than Senator Alben W. Barkley, the former "Veep", will open the activities.

The keynoter's speech will follow the traditional "kick-off" parade, which this year will include Sharon Kay Ritchie, "Miss America for 1956," riding on the float of the New Jersey student delegation. All delegations enter one or more floats, and bands, color guards, and drill teams from all over Virginia and West Virginia take part. Over 90 marching units are planned for the 1956 "kick-off."

The float of the Louisiana delegations promises to be one of the best in the parade. With a wealth of theme material on which to base their ideas, the 17-member delegation is promising an entry which will be a strong contender for the first place award.

The Pelican State group is made up almost entirely of students from Louisiana, including six young men from Shreveport and northern Louisiana. They are Ralph Baucum, 812 Slattery Blvd.; Donald Holcombe, 4721 Thornhill Ave.; Whitfield Jack, Jr., 4112 Fairfield Ave.; Campbell Hutchinson, 4840 Camellia Lane; James McLeod, 720 Wilder Place; and Dick Fortson, of Homer, La.

They'll be in their seats Monday when Washington and Lee students go after another correct nomination, just like in 1952 when they, as did the nation, "liked Ike."

photo captions for Shreveport Times

Photo #1

1952 KEYNOTER---Senator Frank Carlson of Kansas got the 1952 Republican Mock Convention off to a rousing start at Washington and Lee with his keynote address. Carlson predicted Washington and Lee students would nominate the "next president of the United States" and the GOP National Convention and later the American voter proved Carlson and W & L correct in the choice of Dwight D. Eisenhower.

BOSTON TEA-PARTY, W & L VERSION---Representing the Massachusetts state delegation, a float depicting the raid of disguised Indians in the famed Boston Tea-Party proceeds up Lexington's Main Street.

HAIL COLUMBIA---The District of Columbia's entry in the 1952 kick-off parade was a float which bore representations of Washington's columned government buildings with Columbia, portrayed by a student from a nearby girls' college, riding atop.

ALASKA WENT FOR TAFT---Parka-clad delegates from the Territory of Alaska speak out for the late Robert Taft at the 1952 Convention. But, lacking the winter garb of the Alaskans, the rest of the delegations were cooler toward the candidacy of "Mr. Republican" and threw their support to Eisenhower.

PANDEMONIUM ON THE CONVENTION FLOOR---During the course of the 1952 Mock Convention, mere mention of a candidates name would set off exuberant demonstrations in his behalf.