

Kennedy Role In No. 2 Talk Is Recounted

By Thomas Collins
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Sen. Edward M. Kennedy spent a good part of Wednesday denying to the news media that he had any interest in the Democratic vice presidential nomination. But a check with the Boston Globe reporter who raised that possibility in a story Wednesday indicates that Kennedy's comments were calculated to stir just that kind of speculation.

The Globe's Washington bureau chief, Martin Nolan, dropped casually into Kennedy's Washington office on Monday. After a few minutes, Nolan recalled in a telephone interview, he asked Kennedy: "What are you going to do if George McGovern and the other leaders like (Chicago Mayor Richard J.) Daley come to you and say, 'God, we need you on the ticket. We'll never be able to win without you.'"

It was then, Nolan said, that Kennedy replied: "I don't want to exclude the possibilities." Then, Nolan said, "He continued to talk and I didn't interrupt him."

Kennedy, he said, discussed the possibility that "something may happen between now and the convention" and emphasized: "Now, I don't want to give the impression that Sen. McGovern has offered me anything. It would be presumptuous of me . . ."

Then he broke off the conversation and made arrangements for Nolan to fly to New York with him Tuesday to attend the party that Simon & Schuster gave to announce the publication of Kennedy's book, "In Critical Condition: The Crisis in America's Health Care."

Nolan, who had made only sketchy notes of the conversation, went back to his office and typed up the interview from memory.

The next day he rode with Kennedy on a scheduled flight to New York. He had his typewritten notes in front of him. One of the

first things he said to Kennedy was, "Look, you said you would not exclude all possibilities," and Kennedy replied, "that's right, I would not exclude all possibilities . . . I don't think those conditions are ready yet." He went on to say he thought he could do a more effective job as senator and in campaigning for the ticket.

It was when Nolan rephrased his question along the lines of, "If McGovern could prove to you that you were needed, would you accept?" That Kennedy carefully dictated this reply: "Write this down: 'In my own mind, if it would make a difference, it would really make a difference.'"

Then he asked rhetorically, "It's going to hit the fan now, isn't it?"

"I don't know, senator," Nolan told him, "Hey, we're just run a story and see what happens."

"He went over it word for word," Nolan said. At one point, he added, Kennedy wanted to change a few words in his notes and Nolan told him, "Hey, we're not working up a bill here."

He did change one word at Kennedy's request. Instead of saying he could do a more effective job as senator and campaigner, Kennedy asked that it be changed to an equally effective job. "That just strengthens the story," Nolan said.

Questioned by reporters Wednesday, Kennedy said, "I can't foresee any circumstances under which I might accept" the vice presidential nomination. But he did not deny the statements attributed to him by Nolan. "I am not a candidate for President nor am I a candidate for Vice President," he added. He said he would not accept a draft for either post.

Asked about Nolan's story, he said he had "answered in the affirmative, but I think that's a far reach from saying I'd accept the nomination."