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WASHINGTON AP - Sen. Edward M. Kennedy is dropping broad hints that he may bid for the presidency in 1972—the office one brother died in and another was slain seeking.

He disguised many of the hints in humor Wednesday night at a dinner to raise money to erase the 1968 campaign deficit of his assassinated brother, Robert F. Kennedy.

But he also said of his brother, who was shot in Los Angeles just after proclaiming victory in the state's presidential primary last June 5:

"The campaign of 1968 never really ended in California because it remains with all of us.

"He often said, 'We have promises to keep.' And these are the promises which will bring all of us together so many times in the future."

For Ted Kennedy, 36, who previously has carefully avoided talk of a 1972 presidential bid, the other references to that prospect were jocular.

"My mother," he said, "called to say she had read that our new President wasn't going to use the Oval Room in the White House. She said she thought someone ought to use it."

Then, addressing some 2,500 who had paid at least \$100 each to reduce the Robert Kennedy campaign deficit, he added:

"We're looking into that."

The applause was sustained, the laughter minimal.

Kennedy said he had read numerous stories that there would be a Muskie-Kennedy ticket—"or maybe a Kennedy-Muskie ticket"—running for the Democratic party in 1972.

"Let me just say," he bantered, "that Ed Muskie hasn't picked a vice president yet."

And after a long pause: "And neither have I."

Among his applauding listeners was former Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, who has on occasion expressed to Kennedy the confidence that he will lead the nation one day. He was applauding loudly, too.

Although Kennedy as studiously avoided the 1972 candidacy he collected a number of valuable IOUs in the Democrats' unsuccessful 1968 campaign—first by refusing to accept a draft for the presidential nomination, then by discreetly, during his period of mourning, campaigning via television film for Democratic congressional candidates.

Kennedy was aware at Wednesday night's fund-raiser, of course, that Humphrey was there, along with Robert Kennedy's 1968 stand-in, Sen. George McGovern, campaign strategist Lawrence F. O'Brien, and dozens upon dozens of influential party senators and representatives.

So although he joked about 1972, he added no softening remarks to erase the impressions he had made.

The dinner was the fourth such occasion planned to help erase the estimated \$7.5 million debt rolled up by Robert Kennedy in the 1968 presidential primaries. A last extravaganza has been tentatively set for Los Angeles in March.

Those who came up with \$500 Wednesday night got to ride a bus to Edward Kennedy's house for a nightcap.

Even if all dinners sell out, the deficit is expected to linger at \$1 million. But the Democratic National Committee has voted to chip in that much. It too, has an eye on 1972.

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