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Wallace's View of Miami Beach, '76

Montgomery, Ala.

EVERYONE WHO comes to talk to George Wallace sooner or later gets around to wondering whether he will run for president in 1976. Wallace himself isn't saying.

But there are variations on the theme of a presidential candidacy, and not long ago, Wallace addressed himself — almost — to one of the most familiar ones in the following interview:

Just for the hell of it, Governor, let's say it's the summer of '76 and Teddy's just been nominated and one of his people is on the phone and he's saying Senator Kennedy wants very much to have a word with you.

Now, wait just a minute. Where's all this nominatin' going on?

At the Democratic convention of '76, sir. The delegates have just picked Teddy and —

But where? I got to know where all this is a happenin'. Miami Beach? Los Angeles? Chicago?

Well, anywhere, Governor. Just anywhere. That's not important. It's

Now come on, you wouldn't say that if you was Mayor Daley, now, would you?

Well, probably not, Governor, but this is just a hypothesis — just an imaginary set of circumstances that you might like to talk about or comment on.

Hypothesis, huh?

Yes, sir.

Just pretendin', huh?

That's right, Governor.

Well, all right, let's hear it again, but let's say it's in Miami Beach, all right? I like that weather down there.

Fine, sir. Now it's 1976 in Miami Beach . . .

They not gonna let the Democrats back down there, you know.

Where? Miami Beach?

That's right. Read something about that here just the other day. Don't want them back, they said.

What about the Republicans?

Well, it didn't say, as I recall.

You still want to make this in Miami Beach, then?

What's that?

The hypothesis, Governor. The '76 convention.

Well, yessuh. Miami Beach is fine with me if it's okay with you.

Well, all right, now, Governor. Let's say it's the summer of 1976 and the Democrats . . .

Down in Miami Beach . . .

. . . have chosen Kennedy as their Presidential nominee and now he's on the phone to your hotel and he wants to talk to you about being his running mate.

He does, huh?

Yes, sir, he does.

The Senator from Massachusetts?

Yes, sir.

Wants to talk to the Guv'nur of Alabama?

Yes, sir, he does — about being his vice-presidential candidate. Now, what do you say to him?

Well, that's a mighty interestin' little hypothesis you got goin' there.

but if you don't mind me sayin' so, it could stand some adjustin'

That would be fine, Governor.

Well, let's say it's 1976 and the Democrats . . .

In Miami Beach?

Well, yessuh, the Democrats, down in Miami Beach, have just nominated me as their Presidential candidate and now the Guv'nur of Alabama — that's me — is callin' the Senator from Massachusetts' hotel suite — co'se it'd be much finer'n mine, you understand — and now the Guv'nur is askin' the Senator — to be his runnin'-mate.

Yes, sir.

Now what's the Senator goin' to say to that, huh?

I don't know, Governor. What would he say?

Well, I don't know, either, but maybe some enterprisin' member of the Fourth Estate ought to skip his ass right on up there to Wsh'nun and ask him.

—James Wooten, New York Times