

AUGUST CARNIVAL

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The Democratic Convention last month failed to live up to its advance press notices. Instead of fireworks, we got a James Thurber carnival. Those of us who had hoped for the excitement of another media-contrived "dream ticket" of Carter/Kennedy, swallowed our disappointment and had to be satisfied with the President's loving tribute to Hubert Horatio Hornblower. Another noteworthy moment came with a fine bit of investigative reporting by one of the roving TV girl persons who, discovering Bob Strauss trying to slip into the administrative command trailer, got him to reveal that the contents of a suspicious package under his arm were one roast beef and two turkey sandwiches. For unrelieved and sustained dullness, Mo Udall's keynote address was surpassed only by Jimmy Carter's acceptance speech.

The only genuine emotion of the whole convention was that generated in the breasts of the Kennedy faithful who dutifully packed the floor to hear their hero give one of his best performances. It all came together for a few moments. His speechwriters dusted off and produced a rousing, twenty-year-old, New Frontier speech; the teleprompter worked beautifully; the Senator didn't blow any lines. And no one enjoyed the performance more than Teddy himself.

The real highlight of the entire four days, however, was the superb moment at the convention's end when Teddy upstaged his party leader. A weakly smiling Carter fretting impatiently, the annoying wait for Teddy to appear, the imperial entrance, the confusion on the podium, and the tableau as Ted, carefully positioning himself on the raised portion to the rear, accepted the cheers and towered menacingly and magnificently over poor Jimmy, whose head barely managed to reach the level of Teddy's breast pocket. And then the final scene, after a couple of cool and abortive handshakes, of Kennedy moving down and away with Carter trailing, arms and hands outstretched in supplication. In the opinion of some observers, Carter goofed. Turning the other cheek and asking for love, unity and forgiveness doesn't really work after just beating somebody's ass. Jimmy came across at times with all the forcefulness of one of Thurber's henpecked husbands. More and more now, as his popularity has slipped, Jimmy wants to feel that he's another feisty Harry Truman; but he can't pull it off. Being a born-again Christian gets in the way. He looked good after the hour-long news conference on Brother Billy; he looked better after he won the rules fight on the convention's first day and convinced Teddy to withdraw. Then he blew it; it was downhill the rest of the way. Instead of standing firm, he compromised on platform issues to woo Kennedy support. Instead of ignoring Kennedy, he went begging; "Ted, your party needs . . . I need you." Instead of a short and forceful, no nonsense acceptance speech, he tried to tell it all and rambled on boringly and endlessly. His

attempts at "give 'em hell" oratory fell flat. Instead of leaving promptly at the end of the convention, he waited to be humiliated. Instead of Harry Truman, we got Walter Mitty.

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