



Photographs by JAY L. CLENDENIN *Los Angeles Times*

**CENTER STAGE:** The Massachusetts senator, 76, has made few public appearances since surgery in June to remove a malignant brain tumor. "Nothing," he said, "was going to keep me away."

# Warm welcome for party stalwart

Sen. Edward Kennedy tells a fervent crowd, "This November, the torch will be passed."

By SARAH D. WIRE  
Special to *The Times*

DENVER — Caroline Kennedy choked up as she introduced her Uncle Teddy. Maria Shriver wiped away a tear. And the crowd went wild, waving signs embossed with the Kennedy name, as the elder statesman of Democratic politics shuffled onto the stage.

"My fellow Democrats, my fellow Americans, it is so wonderful to be here," said Massachusetts Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, who is battling a brain tumor.

"And nothing," he added, "was going to keep me away from this special gathering."

The 76-year-old senator's four-decade-plus political career was honored with a Ken Burns documentary on the opening night of the Democratic National Convention. But to the delight of many, Kennedy then addressed the gathering — his voice strong



**HOMETOWN CROWD:** Massachusetts delegates wave signs during Kennedy's introduction. He spoke after a Ken Burns documentary paid tribute to his 40-plus years in politics.

and full of conviction.

"This November, the torch will be passed to a new generation of Americans," Kennedy said, alluding to the political dynasty that began with President Kennedy, his brother.

Despite his battle with cancer, Kennedy promised to be on the Senate floor come January. And with Barack Obama as president, he said, the country too will rise to meet the challenges it faces.

"Yes we can, yes we will," Kennedy said, invoking a phrase often heard on the Obama campaign trail.

Kennedy arrived in Denver on Sunday night and was examined by doctors here. His

personal physicians were said to be concerned about exposing him to crowds because of his weakened immune system. Kennedy had brain surgery on June 2 and has remained mostly out of the public eye while undergoing chemotherapy.

In the last 48 years, the senator has attended all but two Democratic National Conventions and has spoken at the last eight.

In his 1980 speech, Kennedy conceded the nomination to Jimmy Carter after a nasty primary battle, but urged Democrats to move away from centrist policies and back toward the party's original values.

The speech — which is known by its last line, "The Dream Shall Never Die" — encouraged a new generation of career politicians.

"In a lot of ways, a whole country of young people were inspired that day," said Joe Trippi, who worked on Kennedy's 1980 bid. "Hundreds of politicians who were in their 20s then have those words memorized."

Susan Estrich, a law and political science professor at USC who was a special assistant to Kennedy, said Monday's tribute to the senator differed from his other speeches because of

the reality of his illness.

"It's the knowledge that it will take a miracle for this to not be his last convention," Estrich said. "When it comes to Ted Kennedy, I don't care if you are a die-hard Carter supporter, a die-hard Clinton supporter, every eye will have tears."

Friends and colleagues rejected the idea that Monday's seven-minute speech marked the sunset of Kennedy's career.

"I think he's focusing on getting back to the Senate and being a part of a great progressive moment in this country," said Bob Shrum, a longtime political consultant who helped write Kennedy's 1980 convention speech. "He does represent for many Democrats the core values of the party."

Gregory P. Craig — a one-time Kennedy aide who is a member of Obama's inner circle — said that Kennedy "has built a powerful network of followers and staff associates who are part of his legacy. There are now two or three generations of them. They're effective, smart and single-minded."

On Monday night, Kennedy again challenged Americans to live up to the country's ideals:

"The work begins anew," he said, "the hope rises again and the dream lives on."