

Daily News man 10 feet from him

By Robert Gruenberg
Of Our Washington Bureau

LAUREL, Md. — I was 10 feet away from Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace when he was shot.

The pandemonium that followed in the few seconds after the attempted assassination — with the governor lying on the pavement as blood steadily oozed from his chest — is indelibly imprinted in my experience.

He had just wound up the typical George Wallace rally — half political and half revival.

The shopping-center crowd had been slow to warm up to Wallace at first, but he had completely captured it by the end of his speech.

There was tremendous cheering as he finished. Wallace descended the steps of the platform and began shaking hands.

He stopped and removed his topcoat. Then he removed his suit coat.

WELL-WISHERS WEARING STRAW HATS with Wallace stickers pinned to them and waving American flags pressed toward him.

I elbowed forward to ask the governor a question. Then I heard four or five sharp reports.

"Dammit," I thought. "Who is shooting off firecrackers now. It gets the Secret Service up tight and creates difficulty with the cops."

Suddenly I heard screams.

The crowd for a moment thinned in front of me. I looked down and saw Wallace lying on the pavement about 8 or 10 feet from me. His right arm was stretched out at about a 45-degree angle from his body.

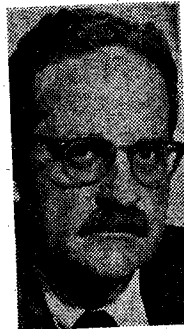
THE BLOOD FROM A WOUND in his chest was making an ever-widening stain as it flowed across his white shirt.

I ran toward the entrance of a small branch bank of the Equitable Trust Co. of Baltimore to grab a telephone and call The Daily News in Chicago.

Out of the corner of my eye, I caught a glimpse of the crowd in a wild maelstrom converging on somebody or something.

I later learned that it was the man who was seized as a suspect and pummelled and kicked before the Prince Georges County police rescued him from the crowd.

There were scattered shouts of anger, with at least one person shouting "Kill him."



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