

Tuned-Up Turnout

By Judith Martin

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NEW YORK — Former Rep. Hamilton Fish, 85 and feisty, delivered a shouted denunciation of the Senate Watergate Committee at the annual Freedom Awards dinner here Monday night where Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace was the hero of the evening.

More than 300 high-ranking military veterans and their wives—the men as heavily loaded with World War I and II medals as the women were with sequins—yelled and cheered as Fish charged that the Watergate committee had “not one

shred of evidence.”

Beside him on the podium, Sen. Edward J. Gurney (R-Fla.), one of those honored Monday and a member of the Watergate committee, joined in the applause for Fish's remarks.

Gurney, Wallace, Adm. Thomas Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Lt. Gen. William Knowlton, superintendent of the military academy at West Point, were all recipients of the Order of Lafayette's awards for patriotism.

The evening began quietly with the throng of guests crowding around Wallace in his wheelchair in the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. But it took on more of the atmosphere of a revival as Fish and Col. James Gerard, president general of the order, denounced the work of the Senate Watergate probers.

As members of the audience stood and shouted “Yeah!” and “Right, right!” Gerard brought the crowd to a pitch of excitement by attacking U.S. District Judge John Sirica as “having enacted the barbarities of the Spanish Inquisition”

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Tuned-Up Turnout in Full Trim

FREEDOM, From C1

against “first-time offenders” in his handling of the Watergate case.

Wallace, surrounded earlier by people voicing the hope that he would be back running for the presidency, took on the bearing of a war hero. Indeed, he characterized his paralysis as “a service disability—I got it in the political service.”

Wallace's speech in ac-

cepting his Freedom Award was calm in comparison with the speeches that had preceded his. He said that he had been talking law and order and national defense before anyone else, and called for a strong military budget. “Unless we are No. 1 there will never be a true detente,” he said.

Moorer called the United States “the world's keeper” and said fervently, “It just

burns me up when people suggest that we're not the best country in the world.”

Sen. Gurney ended his speech by saying, “I get down on my hands and knees when I come back from any other place in the world—and I mean any other place—and I thank God I live here.”

(In early November, Gurney criticized the work of the Senate Watergate Committee in a private letter

to Gov. Meldrim Thomson Jr. of New Hampshire, calling it a “travesty.”)

One of the officers of the order is Col. Howard E. Cox, whose son is married to President Nixon's daughter Tricia. Cox has been judge advocate of the group since 1960 and characterized it as “people who fought in France and formed this in the '40s when the other French groups were quibbling because some people were loyal to DeGaulle and others were accusing each other of having been collaborators.”

But 19-year-old Anthony Angerame, a student at The Citadel, said that anyone could join who wanted to and he had done so because of the orders: “true dedication to the future of America and patriotism.”

The entire evening was punctuated by bugle flourishes by a man named Don Cronan, who explained to everyone that he was “the old bugler from Fort Monroe.” He had brought his instrument and stood up every once in a while and gave the old military calls.

Many of the members of the order said that they belong to a number of military social societies and are able to get out their medals six or seven times a year for such organizations as The Military Order of the World Wars and Ends of the Earth. The latter is dedicated to The Spanish American War.



Associated Press

Alabama Gov. George Wallace, seated, and other guests during the playing of the National Anthem at the Order of Lafayette Freedom Awards Dinner.



United Press International

Alabama Gov. George Wallace, left, shakes hands with Adm. Thomas H. Moorer. Looking on are Mrs. Moorer, left, and Mrs. Wallace.