

Mrs. Wallace's Wiretap Spurs Questions on Marriage

NYTimes SEP 11 1976

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Special to The New York Times

MONTGOMERY, Ala., Sept. 10—The disclosure this week that many of Gov. George C. Wallace's bedroom telephone conversations had been surreptitiously recorded, apparently by his wife, has raised questions about the stability of the Governor's marriage.

Friends of the Wallace family and some of those involved in investigating the eavesdropping say privately that the Governor's 37-year-old wife, Cornelia, decided to tap her husband's phone to determine whether he was discussing her with other women, perhaps in disparaging terms.

She is also said to have suspected that the Governor, 57 years old and crippled from the waist down since a 1972 assassination attempt, had ordered some of his aides to keep watch on her daily activities.

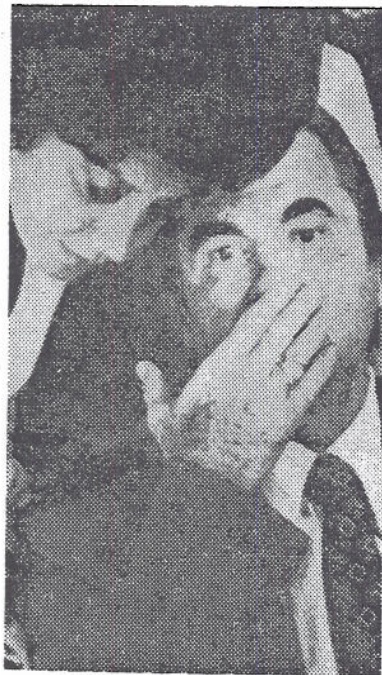
She Has Not Commented

Mrs. Wallace, an outgoing former country music performer who likes to speculate periodically about the possibility of succeeding her husband as Governor, has not commented on the eavesdropping. The Governor, in a hastily called news conference late Wednesday, said the matter was "purely domestic, involving me

Both the Governor and Mrs. Wallace are reported to have been in contact with attorneys since a security guard at the Governor's mansion discovered the bugging device several weeks ago. But whether divorce is being given serious consideration is not known.

"If you folks in the press would leave us alone in a domestic matter, we'll solve it a lot quicker," the Governor said at a news conference Wednesday.

There has been gossip about the stability of the Wallace marriage almost from the day Mr. Wallace was paralyzed four



Associated Press
Gov. George C. Wallace and his wife in Montgomery last Thursday.

years ago while campaigning for the Presidency in Maryland. However, until rumors of the eavesdropping began to spread several weeks ago, the gossip was given little credence.

Mr. Wallace has seemed unusually moody at times in past months. But it has never been clear whether he was reacting to marital difficulties, the collapse of his fourth try for the Presidency or some other circumstance.

Mrs. Wallace spent several nights away from the mansion immediately following

the discovery of the taping equipment. However, the couple appeared in public together yesterday during a mansion reception for Mrs. Jimmy Carter, the wife of the Democratic candidate for President.

After the taping device was discovered—its precise hiding place has not been disclosed—Governor Wallace's aides found some 200 tapes stored in a mansion safe.

"None of them are still in existence," the Governor said at his news conference when asked what was on the tapes and what had been done with them. He did not elaborate.

According to investigators, the taping device was purchased in Birmingham by one of Mrs. Wallace's relatives. The relative's name was not disclosed, nor did the investigators say who had installed the device in the mansion here.

"You can just say it was a nonprofessional installation," one investigator said privately.

Throughout the entire episode, Governor Wallace has avoided directly accusing his wife of eavesdropping. However, one close aide said today:

"She did it. It may not make much sense, but she did it."

Both the Governor and his aides have been questioned about the taping by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Under Federal law, it is illegal to tape conversations in which neither party knows taping is underway.

"Technically, what happened was against the law," said Ira DeMent, the United States District Attorney here. "You could get five years or be fined \$10,000 for it. But when the Governor showed us that it was nonprofessional and purely a domestic thing—all within the Wallace family—we just dropped the matter.

"It's all a bit sad."