

The Call That Finished Nixon

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The refusal of Governor George Wallace to ask an Alabama congressman to vote against impeachment clinched Richard Nixon's decision to resign the presidency, the former chief executive is quoted as saying in a book by television performer David Frost.

"Haig had been in the room as I was talking," Nixon is quoted as saying of a telephone conversation with Wallace that was overheard by his former chief of staff, Alexander Haig.

"And I said, and he recalls this very vividly, I said, 'Well, Al, there goes the presidency,'" Nixon is quoted as saying in Frost's book, "I Gave Them a Sword."

Frost wrote that Nixon said he decided then to resign, although he did not actually leave office for more than two weeks.

Wallace's office in Montgomery said the account was "substantially correct."

The Associated Press obtained a copy of the 320-page book yesterday four days before its scheduled release by William Morrow & Co.

It details the events leading to and including the 29 hours of interviews with Nixon that Frost distilled into five televised interviews.

Frost quotes Nixon as saying he telephoned Wallace on July 23, 1974, to intercede with Representative Walter Flowers, a Democrat and then a member of the House Judiciary Committee, after the governor's 1972 presidential campaign manager suggested that such a call might be welcome. But Wallace, Nixon said, "seemed not to understand why I was calling."

Nixon continued. "He said, 'Well this is the first I've ever heard about this.' He said, 'I don't believe that there is anything I can do to be helpful.' He was very kind, however. He said, 'I'm praying for you.' He says, 'I wish this didn't have to be visited upon you, but I think that if I were to call, it might be misinterpreted.'"

"The governor did tell the President he wouldn't make the call because it would be improper," a spokesman for Wallace said. And Flowers' office in Washington confirmed that no call on the subject was received from Wallace.

Payment for the interviews, Frost wrote, was \$600,000 plus 20 percent of the profits. With most of the series' commercials going for \$125,000 a minute and with sales in foreign countries, the enterprise may have cleared more \$3 million. Frost has declined to specify the amount.

Associated Press