

A Witness' Story of

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Laurel, Md.

I was sitting on the tailgate of the light blue Ford station wagon the Wallace staff was using to get around Maryland.

The Governor had come off the speaker's stand after addressing the crowd for about 40 minutes at the Laurel Shopping Center. He went to his right to shake hands with some of the crowd over there and I noticed that he had taken his coat off and that the short-sleeved blue shirt had the sleeves rolled up once or twice.

Then he came over after a minute or so to about four feet from where I was sitting. The crowd pressed forward to reach him and the restraining rope behind my back started pressing into it. I looked down at the rope and then I heard a sharp report like a firecracker.

Then two more and then perhaps another one. My first thought was that it was firecrackers. Then the crowd started screaming and scattering as though a sudden rush of air was blowing them away.

There was no way to make clear sense of the confusion. People screaming, shouting

at the top of their lungs, running in every direction.

George Wallace was lying on the ground. One of the Alabama State troopers, his own personal body guard, was lying at his feet. When I could see Wallace his eyes were fixed in a blank stare straight up. His wife, Cornelia, so carefully made up with her ink-black hair combed back from her forehead, so well-dressed in a beige suit with yellow, was kneeling beside him, crying, holding his head in her hands.

Wallace's shirt had been ripped open and I could see boxer shorts over the top of his trouser belt. In the

crowd, I could see the gray shirts of Prince Georges county police shoving.

I ran around the side of the crowd and found about ten policemen carrying a man with red, white and blue socks, a red, white and blue striped shirt, a "Wallace in '72" button on his suit. There was blood on his gums and one policeman had his arm so tightly around the suspect's neck that his face had turned a dark red.

A man in shirtsleeves, a Wallace supporter, ran up to the police and yelled at the man, "You nut. You must be crazy." Somebody else said something about "I knew this would happen," or "This

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the Shooting

had to happen here." It was more of a lament than a statement of fact.

I came back to where Wallace and his bodyguard were on the asphalt. His wife's suit now had a streak of blood on it and I could see blood on the Governor's right arm. Prince Georges police and the Secret Service agents picked Wallace up like an unwieldy package and tried to stuff him into the rear of the blue station wagon. Mrs. Wallace tugged and clawed at a tall, thin Secret Service agent so that she could get in with her husband.

Then a van from the Lau-

rel rescue squad pulled up and Wallace was pulled from the station wagon, put on a stretcher and placed into the van. George Mangum, the tall, husky coordinator, master of ceremonies who has been with Wallace throughout the campaign, was pleading with the crowd over the public address system. "If you're for him, please get back. Clear a path so he can get through."

The police also were laboring to clear a path for the ambulance. They took Wallace away, then they took away Captain E. C. Dothard, the plainclothes Alabama state trooper who

also was hit. Dothard was shouting. "Take care of the Governor. Take care of the Governor first."

Billy Grammer, the musician who has accompanied Wallace throughout the campaign to entertain the crowds, said, "I've said all along if they wanted to do something like this, they'd do it under these circumstances."

What he meant, he explained, was that it would be someone posing as a Wallace supporter. Then Billy Grammer, resplendent in his maroon suit, pink shirt and fancy cowboy boots, started to cry.