

George C. Wallace

(August 25, 1919 – September 13, 1998)

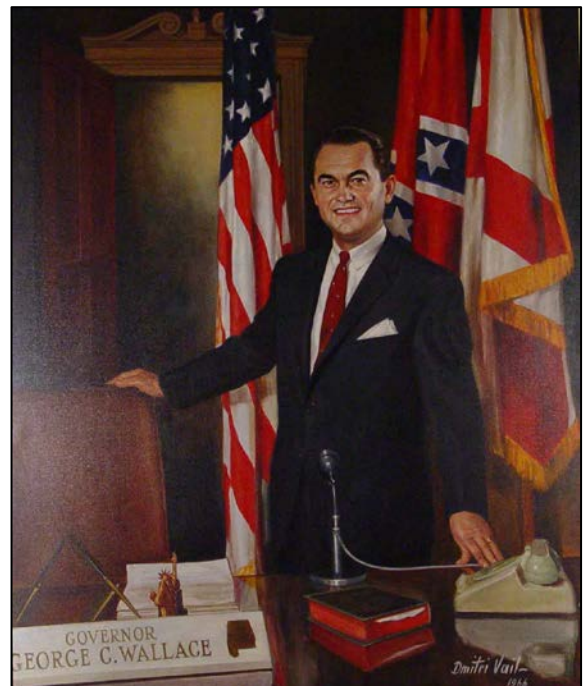
George Corley Wallace was born to George C. and Mozell (Smith) Wallace at Clio, Alabama, on August 25, 1919. A farmer's son, Wallace and his brothers Jack and Gerald and his sister Marianne attended local schools and helped out on the farm. In 1936, while attending Barbour County High School, Wallace won the state Golden Gloves bantamweight championship and held the title for the following year. He was also quite active with the high school football team until his graduation in 1937. Wallace enrolled in the University of Alabama Law School in 1937, the same year his father died, leaving the family with limited financial resources. Wallace worked his way through law school by boxing professionally, waiting on tables, serving as a kitchen helper and driving a taxi. Finding time to take part in school activities, he was president of his freshman class, captain of the university boxing team and the freshman baseball team and a member of the highly regarded law school honor court. He received his degree in 1942.

Following a brief period in the U.S. Army Air Forces (Wallace received a medical discharge), he returned to Alabama where he served as an assistant attorney general for the state. In

1947, running as a candidate from Barbour County, George Wallace was elected to the state legislature. His legislative tenure was quite productive. Among the highlights were several Wallace-sponsored bills which greatly enhanced Alabama's industrial environment by attracting more than one hundred industries into the state and the GI and Dependents Scholarships Act which provided college and trade school tuition to children and widows of war casualties. Wallace was elected judge in the Third Judicial Circuit in 1953, a position he held until 1959. During subsequent years he also served the Democratic party in many capacities.

In 1958, Wallace formally entered the governor's race and received more than a quarter million votes placing second in the primary to John Patterson. Patterson ran strong on the racial issue and accepted the support of the Ku Klux Klan; Wallace refused it. Wallace thereupon received the endorsement of the NAACP. In the run-off, Patterson defeated him by over 64,000 votes. This devastating loss forced Wallace to significantly adapt his socio-political ideologies to appeal to the state's voters.

Following his devastating defeat to Patterson, Wallace resumed his legal duties all the while forming a plan to achieve his goal - the governor's office. Wallace's views on race relations and segregation underwent a drastic metamorphosis following the defeat. By the primary of 1962, Wallace defeated his mentor Folsom, among others, and in the run-off he defeated the rising young politician Ryan DeGraffenried. In the general election of November, Wallace polled the largest vote ever given a gubernatorial candidate in Alabama up to that time.



George Cory Wallace Jr., was the 45th governor of Alabama, served two nonconsecutive terms and two consecutive terms: 1963–1967, 1971–1975, 1975-1979, 1979 and 1983–1987.

Wallace's first administration was marked by social tension. Among the major incidents of the administration were racial demonstrations in Birmingham and Montgomery, desegregation of schools in Macon County, his dramatic "stand in the school house door," and the nationally publicized fire hose and police dog incidents of Birmingham. Furthermore, during this administration, Wallace made his first sortie into the North. In 1964, he entered the presidential primaries in Wisconsin, Maryland and Indiana and showed a surprising strength, receiving as high as forty-three percent of the vote.

In September 1965, Wallace called the legislature back into session, ordering them to draw up an amendment to allow a sitting governor to run for a second term, which had theretofore been emphatically forbidden; however, opposition to this amendment led by Wallace's political foe, Ryan DeGraffenried, stymied Wallace's attempt. After much contemplation, Lurleen Wallace, his wife, announced as a gubernatorial candidate.

Following an unsuccessful run for the presidency, Wallace returned to the state political scene. In the first primary election of 1970 Albert Brewer, Lurleen's successor and former Wallace ally, out polled Wallace 421,197 votes to 414,277 votes; however, Wallace out polled Brewer in the second primary. Subsequently, Wallace won the general election of November and was inaugurated in January of the following year.

In 1972, Wallace again entered the presidential primaries, this time within the Democratic party. He led off with a Florida victory in which he carried every county in the state. In May 1972, while campaigning in Maryland, Wallace was felled by would-be assassin, Arthur Bremer. As a result of the assassination attempt, Wallace was paralyzed in both legs. This spelled the end of Wallace's presidential aspirations; however, he did go on to garner subsequent presidential primary victories in Maryland, Michigan, Tennessee and North Carolina. After his hospital stay Wallace returned to his duties as governor. In the Democratic primaries of May 1974, Wallace easily won the gubernatorial nomination for a third term without a run-off election; a move allowed by Alabama Constitutional amendment 282, approved in November 1968. The amendment stated that all previously authorized laws regarding "self-succession" were thereby repealed and allowed gubernatorial officeholders to succeed themselves once, but not more than once.

During these successive administrations, Wallace sponsored the largest highway expansion program in the state's history. Additionally, federal revenue sharing funds were used to set up the Death Trap Elimination Program. In fiscal year 1973-74, Wallace made a record educational appropriation of more than five hundred million dollars. Capital investment in 1973 in Alabama exceeded 1.5 billion dollars, doubling the 1972 rate of investment and resulted in over 1,000 new or expanded businesses and approximately 43,000 new jobs for citizens.

Wallace also made vital improvements in the Alabama Law Enforcement Planning Agency. He doubled expenditures for improved health care, allocating revenue sharing funds to mental health care. The Alabama Office of Consumer Protection was established in 1972. In 1973, farm income exceeded 1.5 billion dollars, doubling the previous year's income. Maximum old age pensions were raised to \$115.00 per month. By 1974, unemployment compensation and workmen's compensation showed a 130 percent increase for the decade. Essentially, the state enjoyed a reasonably prosperous economic environment during this era without any exorbitant increase in state taxes.

In 1982, following a four year political hiatus, Wallace returned to the state political scene. In the first primary Wallace won easily taking 425,469 votes to George McMillan's 296,271 and Joe McCorquodale's 250,614.

Wallace subsequently defeated George McMillan in the second primary and Montgomery mayor Emory Folmar, the Republican challenger, in the general election.

Wallace's final gubernatorial conquest was characterized by an unprecedented amount of black voter support during the general election. For the former advocate and chief spokesman of the state's segregationists, this spelled a complete turnabout in his political career.

During his final term, Wallace masterminded a constitutional amendment that created an un-spendable oil and gas trust fund. Interest from the Alabama Trust Fund will be pumped into the General Fund which finances all non-education segments of state government. Furthermore, he sponsored a controversial bill that re-wrote the state's job-injury laws. He also worked quite closely with the legislature in the preparation of a \$310 million education bond issue. However, Wallace's attempts to get the legislature to raise property and income taxes in order to provide a stable pool of money for education were unsuccessful.

Wallace's final administration was marked by health problems; however, he continued to push for the state's economic stability. Furthermore, his final administration was characterized by ideological alignment with and overwhelming support of some of the state's more prominent political factions/interest groups, the so-called "Wallace Coalition;" this coalition included the Alabama Education Association, organized labor, black political organizations and trial lawyers.

George Wallace died in Montgomery on September 13, 1998.