

# Free at Last!

*A six-month senator says a not-so-fond farewell to Alabama politics—and particularly George Wallace*

*By Maryon Allen*

**I**F I could have done just exactly as I pleased at that sad, sad time, I would have gone quietly back to Washington, closed out my husband's office, sold my house in McLean, Va., and moved back home to Alabama. In our house on top of Lookout Mountain, I would have let the world pass me by without even a sidelong glance for at least a year.

But no one ever thought to ask me what I would have liked to do.

My husband, the late, and I think very great, Democratic Senator from Alabama, died of a heart attack on June 1, 1978, while we were vacationing at our beach condominium in Gulf Shores, Ala.

He died in the afternoon, and before it was good and dark, Gov. George Wallace's top legal aide called my brother, Jim Pittman, and told him the interim appointment to Jim Allen's Senate seat was mine if I wanted it.

It was several hours later before my brother and my husband's administrative assistant hesitantly brought it up as I was ironing Jim's shirt, preparing his clothes for my brother and son to take to the funeral home.

It's strange how you remember such tiny things, while huge changes are crashing and clanging and banging around you. I was tenderly pressing the French cuff on the left sleeve, when my only brother said . . . "Maryon, darling, we've got to talk to you about something. We know your mind is not on anything but Jim right now, but we know very well how he felt about your following him if he died in office."

I quietly and deliberately put down the iron, hung up the shirt on a hanger, turned around and looked at these two young men I loved so much and said, "Now you both know that succession thing was a theme Jim Allen had fallen in love with . . . and you both also know if I did such a thing I would totally disgrace his Senate record and his memory in a week. You aren't really serious . . . I know you're not."

The conversation about succession ended there for me that night, for I was swimming against a tide of demanding people, who

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phoned and came by singly, in pairs, in droves, hugging, kissing, patting, clawing, picking, sobbing, crying, standing around as though stuffed, sitting and eating tons of food that had seemed to drop from the sky.

Strange women I had never seen had taken charge of my condominium, were running my kitchen, feeding endless numbers of strangers with endless food and drink. I'm not sure about anywhere else in the country, but in the Deep South food and death seem to go hand in hand.

At one point in this teeming, unreasonable insanity, after talking with a truly caring, gentle man named Jimmy Carter—who rather incredibly was one of the very first persons to reach me—I went, like a thief in the night, into a big walk-in closet in our bedroom, turned on the light, closed and locked the door, buried my face in one of Jim's suits and screamed soundlessly and desperately inside me . . . "Jim Allen, what have you done to me? You've gone off and left me with the whole damned State of Alabama going wild crazy with grief over you, and I don't know what in the hell to do about it."

I honestly had not accepted what had happened yet . . . I couldn't . . . it had all been too sudden. No matter where I looked, all I could see was how Jim looked, when I left him at the hospital . . . so long, so tall, so big . . . so still, so quiet, so irrevocably dead . . . no longer breathing, but still warm as I said my last goodbyes alone with him in the emergency room.

Without a doubt, the hardest thing any human being is called upon to do in this life is to leave someone you love very much, alone, dead in a hospital emergency room, knowing the undertakers are going to take him away and perform their secret rites on that person you love.

The only people who didn't demand I comfort them in their grief over the death of my husband were my children and those dear, dear, staunch, good friends in blue, the Alabama State Troopers, who closed in around me and made life bearable until I went back to Washington to be sworn in to take Jim's place.

Let me change that . . . to succeed Jim . . . not take his place. No one ever takes another's place. You can only hope to make your own.

Gov. Wallace called eventually and before and after the two of us talked, he talked to my brother and the administrative assistant, and

he spoke to them quite unguardedly about appointing me to the Senate, something unusual for George, for a straightforward approach to any sort of appointment, big or little, is not his bag.

So the first ghastly night dragged by without sleep, and as the sun came up on the Gulf of Mexico, I found myself in the strange role of Grand Matriarch . . . Earth Mother to whom everyone was turning for marching orders and at whom all were looking expectantly.

**W**hen I flew Jim back to north Alabama to Gadsden, his birthplace and home, to begin the rather endless plans to bury him as befitting his rank and according to his wishes and mine.

The Senate was in recess for Memorial Day and consequently the senators were scattered all over the globe. Since they would not reassemble until Monday the fifth of June, I was asked by the Senate Chaplain and the Senate leaders to please postpone the funeral services until the sixth to enable the attendance of the vice president and many, many of Jim's fellow senators.

The time was actually needed by everyone, for the preparations for the funeral of a man loved and admired as extensively as Jim Allen were becoming quite complicated. Gadsden is a small city, not a small town, but still its facilities could barely hold all the humanity that poured into town to do homage to Jim. How I wished the children and I and a few close friends and kin could gather quietly and lovingly at the cemetery and commit this dear, loving man to Mother Earth. But of course, this simple wish was not possible.

As people do, Jim and I had talked about what we wanted done at our deaths. As far as I know, he never discussed it with anyone else, and before it was all accomplished, I would regret this lack, for Jim Allen's funeral would become a cause célèbre involving me and his church, the Church of Christ.

Jim's late mother had literally made him swear at her death bed he would never leave the church, as his two older brothers had done. But being something of a biblical scholar and a totally tolerant, unendingly kind and compassionate man, Jim Allen had many, many reservations about the unbending, unyielding tenets of the Church of Christ.

Furthermore, there is no place for comfort-



ing beauty, not even musical instruments to help man raise his voice in praise, in the Church of Christ, and as two people who were really big on reverence, dignity and gorgeous church music, Jim and I long ago decided to have our funerals in the First Methodist Church in Gadsden, to which I belonged and to which Jim's father had belonged all his life.

The dear man Jim and I had come to look upon as our pastor was Dr. Edward L. R. Elson, chaplain of the United States Senate, a Presbyterian, and on several occasions Jim Allen had told me he wanted Dr. Elson to bury him, whether he was in office or not. This most certainly precluded a funeral at the Church of Christ (for which Jim had donated the land and to which he had given thousands and thousands of dollars over the years) because the members of that church would have barred Dr. Elson from entering the door clad in his ecclesiastical robes, to intone his brand of outland, unacceptable prayers and service for the dead James Browning Allen.

Knowing all of this, I went ahead with our plans, holding the funeral in the First Methodist Church with Dr. Elson as the minister. My husband was honored and buried as a great and gentle servant of his nation should be. But it was a decision that the 80,000 members of the Church of Christ in Alabama were not to let me forget.

**I**t wasn't until later, after the funeral, that I became aware of all the Machiavellian maneuvering that had been going on about Jim's successor.

The main thing going on was that Gov. Wallace was beginning to thoroughly regret being so unguarded and uncharacteristically generous in his and his legal aide's precipitous offer of the appointment.

It seems that poor Jim had hardly been pronounced dead before the political ghouls began to circle like lusting bats.

First of all, there was George himself. He had already turned down the chance to jump into the wrestling match for retiring Sen. John Sparkman's seat. The governor had announced wearily that after thinking it over he just plain didn't want to go live in Washington alone, what with him and Cornelia having bitterly split after thrilling the state and courts for months on end by washing 'their piles of dirty linen all over Montgomery.

But now George was doing some fast rethinking. The trouble was that he would have to resign and let the lieutenant governor, Jere Beasley, succeed to the governorship. And then Jere as governor could appoint George to the Senate, giving him a big up on running in a special election for the remaining two years of Jim Allen's term.

But, you see, it was not so simple. George and Jere hate each other like rat poison and get along like two tomatoes in a sack, and George couldn't be sure Jere would sign that appointment paper, when it came down to the wire.

If the governor didn't elect to add U.S.S. to his list of titles, then there were about three of his jaded, Nile-green-leisure-suit mafia staff who would gladly have sold their mothers into white slavery to get it.

Several congressmen would have thought it a privilege to tote their desks on their backs across the Capitol lawn to move to the other side of the Hill.

Three university presidents stopped think-

ing about academia altogether. Suddenly their campus marble halls didn't look as grand as those in D.C.

The list of lusters for the Senate Middle Aisle were many and varied indeed.

And there I sat in utter shock . . . caring little or nothing about any kind of appointment . . . mauled, pawed, manipulated, entreated, used, misused, underused, overused, with all sorts of things being done in my name without my knowledge.

Jim Allen and I had a quite unique working partnership. We were a team from the very beginning—I was a newspaperwoman and he was an attorney/banker and two-time lieutenant governor of Alabama when we met—and I shared his professional, political and personal life as few wives are allowed. I was his sounding board on everything from land deals to prospective legislation. Above all, Jim valued my intuitive instincts, calling me his "good witch" because he had learned not to ignore my almost weird Scottish ability to "know and see" otherwise carefully hidden "things" about people.

The public outcry for the "rightness" of my succeeding my husband soon got to be more than anyone could ignore, even I . . . But there were several reasons I hung back. Number one was that for several years I had been becoming more and more fed up with the total servitude of our lives to the state of Alabama and to the United States Senate. The 10 years in Washington with absolutely no outside income had destroyed our financial soundness, and the insecurity of our future worried me no end. Then there was the fact that in 1970 I had had a major heart attack, and my children were afraid that I would literally work myself into a matching grave with Jim.

And then, of course, there was the natural worry to me of whether I could carry on Jim's work, his ideals and commitments with any amount of effectiveness. I was not worried about whether I could understand the work and be a decent senator . . . but remember, I am a daughter of the Old South, and I know from being a career woman that it is not the easiest thing on earth to be accepted as an equal in a man's sanctuary.

It was assumed by one and all that being that great man Jim Allen's wife, well, of course I would do what was expected . . . what Jim himself had told many people he wanted me to do . . . what he had made me promise I would do, prophetically enough on the day before he died, but many times before that fateful day. And that Great Expectation was, of course, that I, like it or not, want it or not, would succeed my husband in the Senate.

I've never said this before in print, but it is past due. The reason, the only reason, I accepted the appointment was so Jim's large staff in Washington and all over the state would not suddenly lose their jobs. When I saw them all together at Jim's funeral . . . the quiet desperation that accompanies the end of the line of a Hill job . . . I knew that if Gov. Wallace came through with the appointment, I would accept it.

Still, however, Old George was pussyfooting around, playing hide-and-seek and who-wants-it-the-most with a Senate seat. The one who wanted it worse than hell was George, but there just didn't seem to be any way to get his hands on it, particularly with the public cry for me to have it.

George Wallace relishes power as few people on this earth ever have, and as I've sat

a political prisoner on countless rostrums, stages and podiums listening to him rant and posture about "Polacks" in East St. Louis and Duluth and being "spat upon" in Chicago, I have wondered in fear and awe what this little swaggering, power hungry gamecock would do if he ever really had power. Real power . . .

Finally, a newspaper publisher friend of mine, in total exasperation two days after Jim's funeral, when no appointment had been forthcoming, reminded the governor what Jim Allen had said at the time George had announced he was running poor cancer-ridden Lurleen Wallace as his stand-in, thereby scuttling Jim's gubernatorial plans.

Jim Allen said with great quiet dignity, "I don't have to be governor, but I do have to be honorable." Wallace was very quiet for several seconds after my friend spoke Jim's words and finally said he would be back in touch with my intermediaries. Before the day ended the governor's office had announced he was offering the appointment to me.

The promise they had tried to extract from my people was that I would only accept the appointment for the interim term, and that I would not attempt to qualify and run for the two remaining years of Jim's unexpired term. Because, of course, if I ran George couldn't—for how could a governor run against his own appointee!

In my disgust I said NO . . . absolutely no deals. If he offered me the appointment, I would take it and I would run. I didn't figure two years of slavery would kill me; I was pretty conditioned. And after viewing the field of applicants, I knew that even on my worst day I was a lot more capable of succeeding my husband than any of that crew. After all, I had been sitting at the knee of the master for quite some time, and nobody had ever assessed me as a dumb broad and not been sorry for it.

An announcement of the offer of the appointment had been given to the news media, but not personally to me. An Associated Press man just happened to ask Wallace what I had said when he talked with me. Exhibiting great surprise, he admitted he hadn't talked with me at all. Hungry for a tidbit, the news people wanted to know what that meant, and realizing he had goofed, the governor hurriedly assured them it meant nothing except he hadn't had time to call.

In a few minutes he did find time. The trooper on duty at my house answered the call when it came in, and allowed to the unidentified caller that it was sort of late to be calling me and inquired just who was doing the calling. He paled when the governor finally identified himself!

After the classic exchange of overlong Southern-type greetings and condolences, George launched into telling me he had appointed me right off to Jim's seat 'cause I was just absolutely so splendid, remarkable and all-round wonderful in every way anybody on this earth could think up. I demurred beautifully and thanked the governor with all my heart, assuring him he wouldn't regret his appointment.

A short silence, then a big "well-I-I-I." George took a big breath and said, "Course you know and understand, Maryon, that I'm going to be running, don't you?" Long silence, for Maryon didn't say anything. "Maryon, you do understand that, don't you?" Once again Maryon was mum. "Maryon, you're there, aren't you?" This time I answered, "Yes, George, I'm here."



Sen. James Allen, Maryon Allen, President Carter at last year's National Prayer Breakfast.

"Well, what you got to say?"

"Nothing, George."

"Uh, well, OK, better go . . . got some calls to make."

And I thought . . . Yeah, I bet you have!

We rang off then, and that was that. I was appointed.

It was a magnificent start in every way. Here I had already launched a religious war with 80,000 members of the Church of Christ, and I had singlehandedly taken on the most famous gut and jugular virtuoso since Huey Long.

You think that's the extent of my enemies, don't you? Wrong! The list has only just begun.

**N**ext to leaving Jim in that hospital emergency room, the hardest journey I will ever make I elected to make alone. When I left Birmingham to fly back to Washington not as a Senate wife, but as a United States Senator-elect, I allowed only my sister and a Birmingham staff lady to see me off.

As the plane lifted from the runway, I saw below me the Air National Guard ramp where I had stood so proudly beside Jim that hot, windy day we had welcomed Secretary Kissinger to Alabama. I do believe that was the first private moment I had had since Jim died, and the long held back tears finally would no longer be denied, and left dark spots on my pale blue linen suit. Emotional indulgences such as that would be a missing luxury from that time forward.

I'll never be able to write or talk about my first night alone in our Washington house, when I had left my Jim back in Alabama in a cemetery. All I could think about was that he was even more alone than I. And I decided that night that the most hateful word I knew was *widow*. If there has ever been a word that rasps with loneliness, it's that word. You don't think of it as such an infinitely bad word until it's hung around you like a big, dead snake.

After my swearing-in on June 12, with most of my family in attendance, I had the unrelaxed task of taking over Jim's office. It turned out to be a sticky task as well. With my little chocolate poodle, Coco, who went to work with me that first day and every day

thereafter, I walked into the office hoping to have a few moments alone with all the throbbing memories. There sat my husband's—and now my—administrative assistant in my husband's enormous red leather chair, feet on the top of the beautiful desk, phone in hand, chewing on a cigar and talking importantly to someone out there in Constituent Land.

Waving expansively, he invited me to sit down on the sofa. I didn't. I stood meaningfully on the other side of the desk, looking unsmilingly from his feet to his cigar. He kept talking, and I kept standing and looking. Finally, the message began to drill through to him that I did not consider myself a guest in my own office, and I certainly as hell did not consider him the new owner of the desk and chair.

The feet slowly descended, the chair came upright, and after some more stoic standing and looking, his can came up off the chair and he, with very little grace, came from around that side of the desk. With freezing dignity I thanked him, and even though it swallowed me up like a whale, I determinedly sat down in Jim's chair. The dignity shattered—I couldn't even make the monster move. The next day a smaller version was found for me, and the big one was moved over to be enshrined in the closest corner.

People are insatiably curious as to how my new fellow senators treated me. The following list of words will probably surprise you . . . they treated me with the greatest respect for my abilities, intelligence, dedication and devotion to my new work . . . with tenderness and touching love for the wife of a fallen colleague, who was attempting to carry on for her man (a situation their own wives could inherit in a nonce) . . . with invaluable advice and encouragement and praise beyond anything I deserved . . . with heartfelt, true friendship with no reservations on my inclusion in the camaraderie, inside jokes and the utterly delightful irreverences . . . with the most splendid show of courtly manners any lady ever basked in.

One morning, when I was presiding over the Senate, John Tower had the floor and was belting forth some of his splendid oratory. When speaking, a senator punctuates about

every third sentence with "Mr. President," which is the manner in which one addresses the presiding officer.

Although he was looking at me as he spoke, and I was giving him my undivided attention, John persisted in saying, "Mr. President." Finally I crashed down the gavel and said, "If the distinguished senator from Texas would suspend for a moment, the chair would like to insist that the senator CALL ME MADAME!" John broke up, as did the others in the chamber at the time, and someone suggested that maybe the phrase would catch on and become the title of a musical! They seemed to love it when I insisted on my lady's rights.

Of all the duties and perks of being a senator, being on the floor was by far my favorite. My husband had all but lived on the floor, and I soon realized why. That's where the Senate is *really* the Senate. All the rest is hogwash dressed up in various disguises called constituent service, committee meetings, public relations, press relations and smiling until your teeth are dry.

On the floor you feel like a senator . . . you learn to listen like one . . . to appraise, to assess, to think, consider, decide and then to vote. That's the magic word . . . VOTE. That is quite simply the function for which a senator serves. To vote in such a manner that the wishes of the constituency in your state are served.

I took my voting duties too seriously, however, and it has been proved that one of the reasons I lost my election bid was because I stayed in Washington voting on desperately important legislation instead of immediately hitting the campaign trail. That's really strange, isn't it? And it certainly says something about something, although I haven't figured out just what yet.

**A**t first the main strategy on my campaigning was that I hardly needed to bother. Being Jim's wife and widow with the accompanying "sympathy vote" was thought to be magic of such potency it would make a voodoo queen sob with envy. In vain I tried to tell "them" (the staff, advisers in the state, the advertising people, in short all the old Jim Allen people) what Jim Allen had told my many times about how sympathy votes evaporate like rain puddles in the Sahara.

But, I was told, in effect, to vote and shut up! They knew how to market *Mrs. Jim Allen* (the name under which "they" had decided I was to run), and that was to be a thing . . . a wispy, wan, unsmiling, plodding thing, dressed from head to toe in widow's black; whose every word and sentence was something directly quoted from an old Jim Allen speech; whose every vote faithfully reflected Jim Allen's votes, commitments, philosophies and ideals.

Many more times than once came this sickening and sick advice: "Wrap that widow's veil around you, baby."

Other sterling advice was that I should never be photographed smiling and never lift my head to look up at the galleries while on the Senate floor; I should forthwith leave Coco at home, because a poodle was looked upon as a rich lady's dog and that would be bad for poor lady votes; invitations were turned down to be on "Today" and "Good Morning America" because people in the state would feel I had violated my mourning for my husband and I would be labeled crass, uncaring, callous and contemptible. No one considered how proud



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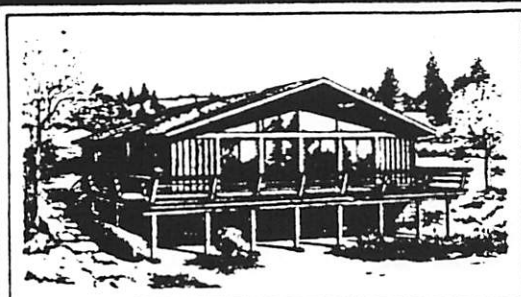
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the state might be to see me in an honored role on national TV.

My picture was allowed on television but not my voice, even though I had done worlds of TV and was considered quite good at it. "They" had spasms when I attempted to write personal passages into my staff-written pedestrian speeches, and I was considered a very good speechwriter, having been writing my own speeches on the lecture circuit for years.

In other words, there was no way "they" were going to let the real Maryon Allen stand up. I knew why and I thought "they" were wrong, but who was I to rant and rave against so many of "them"?

But, see, my witchhood had been zapped, and I was in such bad shape I guess I believed "them" when "they" said that the real Maryon was just too different from Sen. Jim Allen. Down deep I think they had begun to feel they were being magnificent allowing me to run instead of "them."

So, I let "them" dictate, run things, make all the decisions about the campaign. "They" wouldn't even listen to what Jim Allen had said I should do. All of a sudden, "they" all became total Jim Allen experts and I, his wife, didn't know from nothing about him.

If I quoted him, I was informed I was wrong... the Senator had said it another way. If I referred to something he had done... I was corrected. "They" were all in a hideous game of one-up-manship with me about who had known Jim the best, had loved him most, had been privy to his most intimate thoughts.

I suppose it was a victory for me that "they" didn't challenge the fact that I had been the one to sleep with him!!

**P**retty quickly, however, I took charge of my office in Washington. The AA was back in Alabama running the campaign in which I was not allowed to participate. Except for one, I gradually won over the men staff members. I worked out with them how we would work together on the different legislation, which lay in their individual areas of expertise. I like to think that in hardly any time



Alabama Gov. George Wallace

they had learned to respect me and know I was not just a johnny-mop-wielding broad suddenly transported to the poah portals of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

I worked, folks... I mean I worked, I earned every single dollar every single day. I do believe the greatest manifestation that my fellow senators thought of me as one of the Club and a contributing, knowledgeable U.S. senator was the day five different ones dashed onto the floor for a roll call vote on a very important issue and asked me for a rundown on what was happening and how I was going to vote. I was one of the BOYS at last. Jim would have been so proud.

The office was running "my way" and functioning very well, thank you. I was disturbed, however, by reports from friends in Alabama that a member of my staff was telephoning important constituents, telling them that I was erratic, subject to hideous temper tantrums, had to be led off the floor of the Senate out of control, sobbed and was in black depressions most of the time. In the calls, I was told, the staffer assumed the role of the Savior of the State who was "literally holding me together" and telling me what to do and how to vote. All a bloody lie, of course.

The only weakness I showed happened one day at 4:30 in the afternoon, after I had been constantly on the floor all day with no lunch and had had only one-and-a-half hours of sleep the night before. I began having chest pains bad enough to make me very nearly faint, and I

quietly said I thought I would go home before I dropped dead in the office.

The only two things I did buck "them" on were swathing my thin body in thick black and Coco. Coldly I told "them" the heavy black mourning bit went out with the Civil War and that I hardly needed their cloddish advice on fashions. And if "they" ever, under any circumstances, told me to lock up my little dog in an empty house for 18 hours at a stretch... if "they" said such a thing just one more damned time, then "they" could all just find themselves another girl to run for them.

That's not much of a "standing-up-to-them" record to be proud of, is it? ... refusing to be comical in heavy black widow's weeds and saying lay off my little poodle. Well, I did well to do that much!

**I** had four men opponents. That Mrs. Jim Allen could whip the fire out of them handily was taken totally for granted. But on her weekend forays, Maryon Allen was beginning to detect signs of inroads being made, which "they" couldn't see—it would have dimmed their omnipotence.

Though "they" had queered the TV show offers, "they" were charmed by Sally Quinn's offer to "do" me for The Washington Post. To "be done" by Sally was considered by "them" as the hottest thing there was. "They" warned I must be very careful of what I said because Sally had a reputation akin to Lucrezia Borgia and being a dame was nat-

usually "out to get any other famous woman."

A beginning interview luncheon was soon arranged between Sally and me, and predictably we hit it off like two old washwomen scrubbing in the same wash pot. The luncheon lasted almost three hours and we had such great fun and began to enjoy such total rapport, we all but propped our feet up on the table right there in the Senate Dining Room to talk and laugh and compare stories all night. She decided to go to Alabama campaigning with me that weekend, and then on to Birmingham to interview my mother and sisters.

Her long interview of "Maryon, Southerngirl Senator" is pretty famous and widespread by now. It has been run in almost every state, and with the screaming exception of Alabama, it was marvelously received and from the tone of the fan mail, I was thought to be not too bad a lady.

I don't believe the entire article ever appeared in an Alabama paper, but one of my opponents—a creepy, slimy person from Mobile—concocted some incredible ads, over which The Washington Post could have sued him and I devoutly wished they had, for he violated their copyright. He took my quotes according to Quinn, lifted them out of context, actually changed the order of the words and the punctuation, inserted words, changed words, even invented new quotes, and ran huge, bold-face ads in every paper in the state. I was made out to be the most irreverent, sarcastic, profane, constituent-hating, voter-contemptuous, late-husband-despising, naughty-merry-widow where lady who ever drove up the road to Washington, D.C.

These ads only fueled the fires already lit among members of the Church of Christ. Not only were they incensed that my husband's funeral had been held in a Methodist church, but letter after letter and bulletins from countless of their churches harped continuously on the fact that Jim Allen's affiliation with the Church of Christ had not been mentioned during the service. They felt they had not gotten the public recognition they deserved as a denomination. In my travels through the state at this time, many devout lay

people and ministers of other churches expressed to me shock and concern that members of the Church of Christ were, to them, letting their emotions run a trifle wild in their resentment of the decision I had made about burying my husband.

A well-known political kingmaker in Alabama, and a leading member of the Church of Christ, knowing that Jim had already accumulated a little under \$80,000 in his 1980 Senate race war chest, approached my administrative assistant with the suggestion that I put that money to good use by establishing memorial scholarships to the new C of C college in Jim Allen's and George Wallace's names.

Little doubt was left that such an act would help my fall from grace greatly. My banker and I put the skids to this, for we knew only too well there was no way they were going to remove their statewide boycott of my candidacy.

Well, the primary finally did come and while I led well, I did not have quite enough to win without a runoff. And something happened to me that night . . . the first election night I had been through without Jim, and the first one where I was the candidate. I felt like I was sitting alone on a desert island with no one near me for a thousand miles in any direction.

I looked around at "them" sitting there in shock, because Jim's name and the oh-so-comfortable-to-depend-and-lean-on sympathy vote had not brought the forsure results. Many, many things had gone wrong. But the main one had been the candidate herself. Nothing could cover up the fact that I had not been the Chief Lady In Charge as I very well should have been right from the beginning.

Every good political instinct Jim Allen had treasured in me had been summarily ignored by the "Jim Allen Men." His death had made them all think "they" had been his masterminds. In reality he had never needed anybody to guide him politically . . . he darned near invented it!

If there was ever a political master, it was he, and his chief idea girl had been his wife—that old girl "they" had just so successfully mas-

terminded into a stupid runoff with a vicious, young, labor-owned candidate.

My very first vote in the U.S. Senate had been a "no" against invoking cloture to cut off debate on the so-called Labor Reform Act. Jim had never been pro-labor, and it was not likely I would be. So with my subsequent votes against cloture and with its eventual failure, the labor bill was sent back to committee to die a natural legislative death, never to be seen again in the 96th Congress.

Let's see . . . are you keeping score? The troops now lined up against Maryon are: 80,000 Church of Christ-ers; the governor of Alabama and all the Wallace Gang and Worshipers; and George Meany and the entire labor movement in the U.S.A.

But wait . . . there are others. The ERA ladies think I'm a rat, because I've stated I think their amendment is a rotten one and they should get a new one, and I didn't vote for the extension.

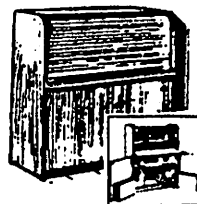
The Stop ERA'ers are cool toward me even though I'm anti-ERA, because in Sally Quinn's article I called their High Priestess, Phyllis Schlafly, an insulting, calculating bitch I consider about as feminine as a sidewalk drill.

Then the Right-To-Lifers have consigned me to hell, because I refused to condemn women for doing what they want to with their very own bodies and for adhering to their own religious beliefs . . . and then tore it with them completely for saying I would vote for federal aid for abortions resulting from incest and rape.

The blacks in my state were feeling kind and supportive of me until an Alabama congressman I thought was a staunch friend, and who was running in the Sparkman senate seat race, appeared before the Alabama Democratic Conference, the state's black political organization, and sold me out by telling them Jim Allen was an old-time segregationist and enemy of blacks and his wife would be more of the same. When I appeared before the group a few minutes later, they all but nailed me to the wall and dismembered me. The result was that, instead of the endorsement of me that I had been led to believe was forthcoming, the

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ADC issued a joint endorsement of me and the labor candidate, who went on to receive most of the black vote.

You ask, and rightly so, how on earth did you lead in the primary? The answer is . . . darned if I know! Just lucky I guess.

The end is near. During the runoff, which I certainly could not afford and had to borrow more dough to finance, I came to my senses and took charge of my life . . . right or wrong . . . too late or not . . . Maryon was the Lady In Charge of her own campaign.

We knew that Meany was pouring in money to support my opponent, and at last count Meany has many more bucks than I do. I made new TV ads, and this time the voice and the words and the scripts were mine. But for every one of my ads, there were about eight of his.

I turned to those I could really trust—my brother, his very closest friend, my sister, and my husband's best friend, banker and adviser in all things financial.

This time I did not return to Washington, except for one very important vote I flew back for. No more voting until the runoff was over.

The crazy nut calls—from person or persons unknown—had never ceased, but now they were hair-raising in the violence they promised, the filth they spewed, the ultimatums they laid down, the clarity with which they outlined what they would do to my body, my face, my car, my Alabama home, the motel rooms in which I stayed . . . and always went back to the sickness of what they planned to do with my dead husband's body if I didn't get out of the race.

My men companions were armed at all times, and the troopers kept a distant eye on me. Finally, I spoke with Attorney General Griffin Bell, who told me he had heard of my problems and asked if I thought I needed some sort of protection. But it would have looked so bad if I had had obvious guards on the campaign trail that I decided to keep my protections on a private basis.

I tried . . . very, very hard, but overcoming my obvious handicaps, particularly that of being an all but passive candidate before the pri-

mary, was impossible. Not enough had been done earlier and now it was too late. *We had beaten the hell out of ourselves by being complacent and stupid.* I honestly take most of the blame, but I do believe that I was used, misused and badly abused.

Also, I know I am a very lucky lady just to be alive. But I don't feel very good about it, for my brother isn't alive.

Jim Pittman could never stand to lose. Our father programmed us to be success-oriented—Jim most of all of us, being the one and only son. That super macho young man actually sobbed in disappointment the night we lost the runoff, saying he had let me down . . . the person he was closest to on earth . . . he had let down.

Of course, he hadn't, but hating losing like he did, he thought he had. Our vote was really quite good, but just not good enough to win, but to Jim Pittman losing was a disgrace, if it was by one vote or a million.

So he went to work campaigning hard for the conservative Republican candidate in the general election, and like zap, he became the recipient of the violent calls from unknown sources. If possible, his callers were even rougher and more explicit with Jim than they had been with me. He didn't hang up like I had, but gave as good as he got.

He armed himself and kept going, flying all over Alabama in small, leased planes working for the conservative candidate. One week before the election, as the twin-engined plane in which Jim Pittman, an aide and the pilot were flying was making its approach to the airport in Huntsville, Ala., the plane suddenly slipped to one side, without warning and fell to the ground, cartwheeling, crashing and bursting into flames. All on board were killed.

Jim's poor body, burned and mutilated, was flown back to Fairhope, his home outside Mobile, in a rubber body bag. We never got to see him . . . his family who loved him beyond imagining . . . his wife . . . his five children.

He's buried under the tall Alabama pines, by the woods where the quail and dove call to each other. Jim would like that. The night before he

died he told our sister Jeanne that he would be surprised if he lived until the next afternoon after the threats he had been getting. He didn't.

Before I left Washington to fly to Alabama for my brother's funeral, I personally requested the attorney general's office to call in the FBI and the FAA to investigate the plane crash. There are strange facts which don't add up . . . The weather was fine and the Huntsville tower told a member of my staff that no trouble had been indicated by the pilot when he requested clearance for landing . . . Indeed, the tower person said they had the plane in sight and all seemed fine. Suddenly, it spun in.

I do know these two agencies are working on their investigations and I'm grateful, because for six months I have lived with skin-crawling threats in my ears, and while at first you tend to scoff at cowardly phone terrorists, eventually you learn to take them seriously.

My trouble has been that I am really not a scary-type lady. I'm almost foolishly unafraid, but after a few face-to-face threats in football crowds and rally gatherings, you learn to cold believe that violence doesn't always happen to other people, never to you.

My calls, which still persist, tell me I can't go home to Alabama to live, and I believe them. Well, Thomas Wolfe said you can't go home again, anyway, so maybe it's just as well I stay in Washington.

My callers don't seem to believe I have no further political aspirations, but they can believe it . . . I have none. Politics and that rare form of prostitution called campaigning is a closed book for me. I have turned the last page and it will stay closed into eternity. I leave it for those whose stomachs are lined with lead.

On the night of the general election I granted myself a rare luxury. All by myself I sat down in my library with a glass of cold white wine, turned off the election returns just as they were beginning, raised my glass to my reflection in the mirror and said with a peaceful smile: "Martin Luther King, baby, I know what you mean . . . Great God Almighty. I'm free at last."