

Merrill nabs senator 'rambling' in office

By **ALECIA SHERARD**
Asst. News Editor

University Police were called to Ferguson Center at 11:20 Thursday night to investigate an alleged break-in of SGA Vice President John Merrill's office.

Merrill, a candidate for presidency in Thursday's SGA elections, said he found a University student in his office and another in the SGA's outer office.

Merrill, backed by the anti-Machine-based Alabama Student Party, said SGA Arts and Sciences Sen. Scott Miller was "rambling" through his SGA office while High Tide Director and SGA Publicity Chairman Phillip Sauer looked on.

AT PRESS time, Miller and Sauer, both members of Machine fraternity Lambda Chi Alpha, had not been charged in connection with the alleged break-in.

Merrill said early this morning that he plans to press charges against Miller but will spare Sauer, since "he had every right to be in the SGA office."

Merrill said he suspected Miller and Sauer had "rummaged through my office" in early November.

Merrill said he was returning to Ferguson to allow students Jerry Jackson and Greg Clazy in the SGA office to use the office's typewriter. The trio discovered Sauer in the SGA's lobby and Miller behind Merrill's desk.

MERRILL then asked Jackson to summon a CW staff member, who reported the alleged break-in to University Police.

Miller was apprehended by University Police and taken in for questioning, but Sauer had left before authorities arrived. Sauer later was

approached by University Police for interrogation, but because he was not read his rights, he refused to submit to questioning.

Although charges had not been filed early this morning, University Police Sgt. Dennis James said, "It will depend on how Merrill and the University want to handle it. John (Merrill) will have a lot to say about it since it was his own personal office."

Sauer and Miller refused to talk to **The CW**, but Sauer telephoned Merrill early this morning to apologize for the incident.

ACCORDING to Merrill, Sauer

said Miller was solely responsible for the alleged break-in.

While talking to Merrill, Sauer said he was unsure how Miller entered Merrill's office. According to Merrill, Sauer added that Miller "probably will lie to University Police" about how he gained entrance to Merrill's office.

Merrill, quoting Sauer, said the pair did not climb through the roof of the adjacent Union Programs office and descend into Merrill's office.

Merrill said he surprised Sauer and Miller. Merrill, again quoting Sauer, said, "I looked up and saw you. You scared the doody out of me."

MERRILL said he found Miller

"coming from around my desk" as he entered his office. He added that no items seemed to be missing from his office after Miller had been questioned by University Police.

Explaining the alleged break-in, Sauer told the candidate that Miller would "like nothing more than to become (SGA) executive assistant, and he probably was trying to score points."

Merrill said he thinks Miller was searching his office for "campaign literature. Anything they could get their hands on to incriminate me."

Merrill told **The CW** that Sauer, speaking of Miller, said "He was rambling. He sure as heck was."

MERRILL said he reconsidered his decision not to press charges after talking with his wife, Cindy, and Joe Perkins of Perkins and Associates, a Tuscaloosa advertising and marketing firm that is handling Merrill's campaign.

"After I talked to a couple of friends," Merrill said, "I changed my mind."

Both Miller and Sauer are "friends helping out" on Machine-backed Buck Phillips' presidential campaign, Phillips said Thursday.

The Machine is a campus political coalition of select fraternities and sororities. It has been in existence for more than 80 years.

ASP IS a campus political party formed in the fall to fight the Machine and its politics. It is open to all independents and non-Machine greeks.

Phillips said he knew nothing about the incident, but Miller called him after Merrill had found him in the SGA vice president's office.

"Scott (Miller) called and said 'you're not going to believe what

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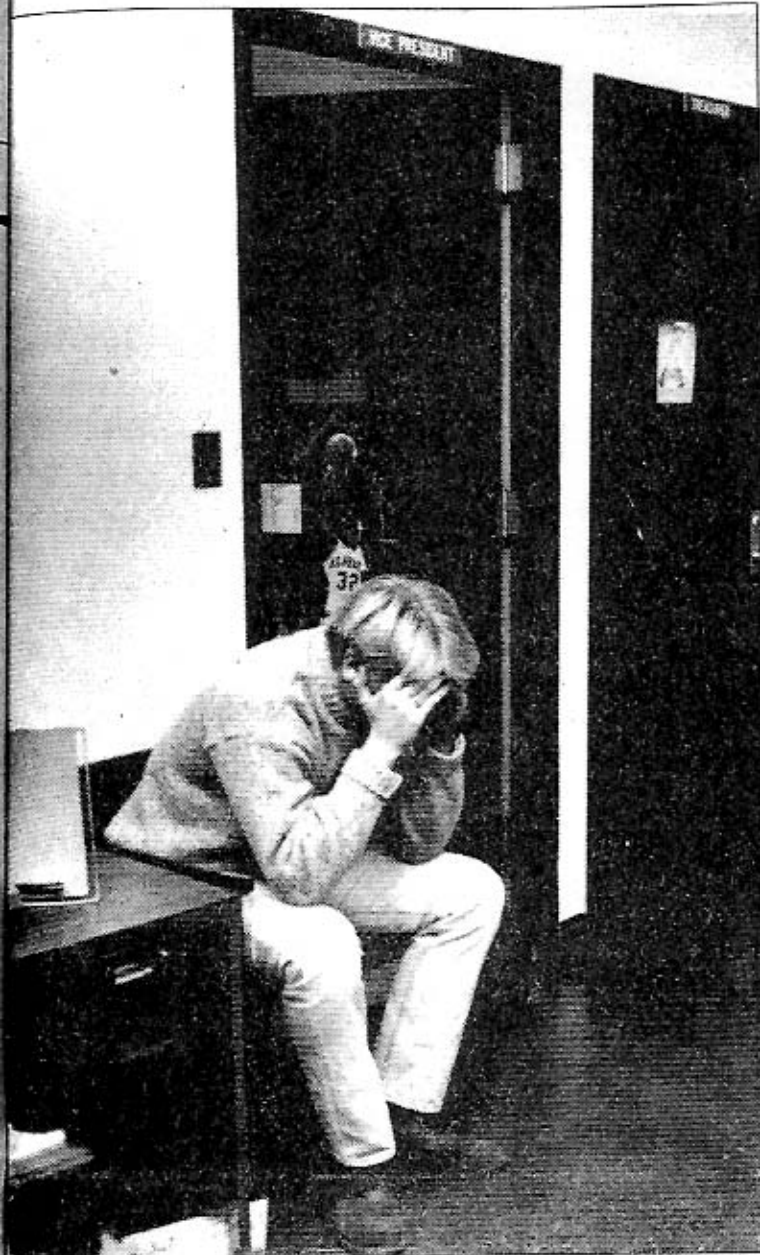


Photo by Fred Waugh

senator Scott Miller appears downhearted after being caught allegedly "rambling" through the office of SGA Vice President John Merrill, according to a presidential candidate.



Photo by Fred Waugh

John Merrill examines his desk drawer after surprising a late-night prowler in his office.

Merrill reported that no items had been removed.

Merrill

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happened. I'm sorry, I'm sorry What should I do?" I told him to be honest about it," Phillips said.

"I guess he just got a little excited and wanted so badly for me to win that he just got out of hand and made a mistake," Phillips said.

MERRILL said he did not think Phillips was responsible.

"I don't think Buck had anything to do with it. I don't want to think he did," Merrill said. "I know Buck's above that."

Merrill said this is not the first time someone has been in his office without his authorization.

"I kept campaign information up there and I guess that's what they are looking for — either that or a list of the Machine reps," Merrill said.

MERRILL said he keeps important documents in his apartment for protection because the keys to his

Ferguson office fit any door in the SGA offices. "If I had anything I didn't want people to see I'd take it home."

Machine president and SGA Sorority Sen. Michel Nicrosi said Thursday she knew nothing about the incident.

Nicrosi said she did not know what Sauer and Miller were looking for. "The only thing they could find in his (Merrill's) office is senate business."

Phillips said he did not think the alleged break-in would effect his campaign.

"People that know me know that I would never do anything like that," he said. "If you can't win by playing fair and you cheat to win, then the win wasn't worth it."

This article was compiled with reports from John Archibald, Eric Gwinn, Elizabeth McKenzie and Chris Roberts.