

Martha's Painting

By Myra McPherson

Several painters worked a total of 154 overtime hours through Wednesday night—at an overtime cost of approximately \$1,300, according to a GSA spokesman—to finish a Martha Mitchell approved pale blue face-lift on Justice Department walls.

Mrs. Mitchell picked out the color Monday for the nearly 500 feet of corridor hallways leading to the fifth floor offices of her husband, Attorney General John Mitchell.

However, according to

both General Service Administration and Justice Department spokesmen, Mrs. Mitchell had nothing to do with the dusk-to-dawn Wednesday rush job.

"We made the decision to rush it to finish this morning because the President would be in the building today," a GSA spokesman said yesterday.

The last of 22 painters left at 7 a.m. yesterday—just three hours before Mr. Nix-

See PAINT, C2, Col. 6



By Frank Johnston—The Washington Post

Camera crew photographs the hall in the Justice Department that was painted blue in an all-night effort.

Overtime for Painting

PAINT. From C1

on arrived to sign the anti-crime bill. But the President never went near the fifth floor corridor, transformed through the night from GSA beige to "steel blue." signed the bill in the auditorium, which was outfitted with a red carpet, blue chairs and plastic greenery in pots.

Ten painters had worked a day shift Wednesday. They were joined by 12 more GSA painters in the late afternoon. GSA officials said painters left at various times during the night and through the morning, although Justice Department spokesman John Wilson was stating yesterday that the last man left at 11:15 p.m.

Two painters who left shortly after 1 a.m. told a reporter they had been painting since 7 Wednesday morning and had painted through two shifts. They said they had then been asked to paint eight more hours overtime and were so tired they had to refuse.

One reason it took so

long, they said, was because they were painting a darker blue border around the ceiling molding.

A GSA spokesman denied a report that painters who begged out of the project were cautioned that failure to show up would make them liable to "reprimand or reprisal."

"We couldn't do that even if we wanted to — the unions would be on our neck," he said.

The finished corridor is a similar shade to the wedge-wood blue Mrs. Mitchell used in her Watergate Apartment. It drew mixed reactions. Some visitors thought it an improvement. Others thought it "too baby blue." One secretary said, "It's terrible. It's enough to make me throw up."

Wilson said the fifth-floor paint job was the start of a several months project to spruce up the Justice Department Building, built in the Thirties. The fifth-floor corridor was last painted eight years ago. Some other public hallways have not

been painted in 13 years, Wilson said. GSA said they did not yet have an estimate on the total cost of painting, cleaning of marble floors, and installation of modern lighting.

Initial plans for the painting began in September. Mrs. Mitchell's desires were followed in detail and a directive outlining her color choices circulated on Oct. 2.

The memo—headed "Painting of Corridors"—stated Mrs. Mitchell felt the Attorney General's area should be decorated different from the rest of the building.

Mrs. Mitchell, now vacationing in Florida decided on Primrose Yellow No. 3033 for other walls still to be painted. Forsythia, No. 3035, was to be used on metal doorway strips. "But after they tried it," Wilson said, "they decided it wasn't the right color. They're going to something a little deeper yellow."

"The color names are GSA's," Wilson added, "not Mrs. Mitchell's."