



# THE AMAZING MARTHA MITCHELL

Washington's most uninhibited woman tells why she says all those things and gives her plan for America



The Attorney General, says Martha, is "sweet and soft and cuddly and warm."

MARTHA MITCHELL can't understand why the liberals don't like her. "They are so against me, and I'm doing their thing!" cries the wife of the U.S. Attorney General. "I'm trying to have some freedom of speech, just as they are, and they're trying to take mine away." She says that it must be a shock to liberals to find a vocal political conservative, but she thinks that she also has some ideas that are quite liberal. For one thing, she thinks the country needs change. America as it would be if Martha Mitchell could remake it, or, in her own words, "if I were in my power to do it over," would be an America where:

*There would be no war. She hates what she calls "this miserable war." Although Martha has come to realize that there's no such thing as getting out immediately, she admits that once she was so opposed to it she "was ready to get out and march with anyone," she even advised friends with draftable sons to send them to Canada. A close friend says: "Actually Martha is against all wars. She thinks there's only one that ever should have been fought, the Revolutionary War."*

*There would be racial equality for*

*all minority groups and equal opportunity for all people.*

*The United States would abstain from foreign involvement "in any way, shape or form, except for trade."*

*The crime problem would be solved. "That's easy to do if Congress would pass the pending crime bills and if foreign governments would cooperate with the United States on drug controls. That's the main cause of crime drugs."*

*There would be temporary wage, price and rent controls. "This would take care of inflation and strikes too."*

*Politicians, as politicians, would be eliminated. She says they're not representative of themselves or of the people. "The Senate will be after me and I don't care, if I can help the country." Politicians have been able to operate any way they want, she claims, because the voters have been lethargic. "My speaking out has jolted people into thinking about their government and the people who represent them in Congress. What I've said has caused excitement, and excitement awakens people. Americans need to be awakened."*

*Universities would solve their own*

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BY WINZOLA McLENDON PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRED WARD





MARTHA MITCHELL CONTINUED

problems "instead of casting them on the public and on law-enforcement officials . . . those who dissent are a small minority and the faculty and board of regents could handle them."

Young people would have the right to express their own opinions, but without violence or riots. As for the revolutionaries (she uses the words "radicals" and "revolutionaries" interchangeably): "Ship 'em to Russia, or Cuba. Preferably Russia, Cuba's too close."

THESE ARE my ideas, and not those of my husband or the Administration," she says. "But wouldn't Martha Mitchell's America be wonderful—an America free of war, with the solution of all social problems, and everyone with love in his heart and affection for his neighbor?"

She has other ideas too—like the plan for Cabinet people to live in a high-class protected compound similar to those enjoyed by some top-ranking military families. She figures the group of houses could be located on the green slopes of the National Arboretum grounds. "They have so many acres, they could spare some."

Traditionally, Cabinet wives have kept quiet and let their husbands do the talking in public; the fact that Martha Mitchell doesn't has made her the most controversial woman in Washington, if not the nation.

Thousands of admirers consider her something of a national heroine and deluge her with long-distance telephone calls, telegrams and letters. An Ohio woman says her voice is the only one crying out in the wilderness of a nation where even its lawmakers have "sold out for a vote." But one Californian writes that she's a "pitiful, prating, mincing, giggling, illiterate child-woman."

As the live-wire enfant terrible of a dull Administration, she is offered book contracts and her own TV show. Her clipping service delivers 5,000 newspaper items in a 30-day period. She's made the butt of jokes, some of them sick, a sign of national recognition usually reserved for the President's wife. And she receives threats so frightening that President Nixon personally orders FBI protection for her and her child.

Martha Mitchell's reactions to all this range from total enjoyment to stark fear. Sometimes, her brown eyes, usually twinkling and full of mischief, register near panic.

She comes home and finds a 14 x 14-inch cardboard box on the entrance-hall table. No packages are supposed to be delivered unless they've been cleared. The FBI takes the box away. Opened, it reveals several bottles of Chanel No. 5, the gift of an admirer.

The house telephone rings. "A man from the FBI is on his way up with some classified papers for the Attorney General." Her husband is not

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Martha Mitchell talks to the world the way most women talk to their best friends



In the White House Blue Room (left), Martha is formal with Pat Nixon and Mamie Eisenhower; in the Beth Israel Medical Center, she checks out the odor of methadone, a synthetic drug used to treat addicts.

Martha on one of her surprise visits to the Attorney General in his office (above) and at The Four Seasons in New York with Mrs. Charles Yost, wife of the U.S. Ambassador to the UN.

"These things I do," says Martha Mitchell, "are the only fun that poor man has."



Martha's many roles: musician playing the electric organ (above); mother kissing daughter (left). Her size 6AA pumps are custom ordered from Saks Fifth Avenue. Salesman Seymour Hoffman tells her: "I couldn't believe it was you when I read the papers... Who would ever think that you had such a big mouth?"

home; no one has telephoned in advance. Turns out that the man is, indeed, from the FBI; a secretary has neglected to call.

The Mitchells' nine-year-old daughter, Martha Junior, whom everyone calls Marty, wants to go downstairs to the bookstore, but there's no one available to take her. She reminds her mother, "You know I can't go alone; I might be kidnapped!"

The Attorney General's wife is puzzled that people care, one way or the other, what is said by, as she puts it, "little old me."

Martha Mitchell is something of a puzzle herself. She receives dozens of invitations; yet she's so lonesome she often calls a friend in Rye, N.Y., "two or three times a day." She owns 100 pairs of stiletto-heeled, open-toed, sling-back pumps; but she often paddles around the house barefoot—and gets furious when reporters criticize her pencil-slim, high-heeled shoes: "Who sets the fashion anyway? I happen to be five-foot-two, and I need the height, I look stumpy and dumpy and fat in low heels." She loves to lunch with friends, on gourmet fare, at chic, expensive New York restaurants; at home, she eats grits for breakfast, has her favorite supper of hamburgers and French fries when her husband isn't home and tops off every evening with a bed-

time snack of crackers and milk.

She is frightened and terrified of the media, yet submits to lengthy interviews, patiently answering every question. ("Everyone in public life has a responsibility to the American public and should not say 'no comment' unless they have no opinion.")

According to Martha, she's been misquoted, or quoted out of context, and untruths have been written about her and her husband so many times "it has thrown a new light on the way I read." She'd like to set the record straight on some things:

**H**ER HUSBAND is not the closest man to the President, "many are as close. He's the President's lawyer." Whether he's the "closest" might be debatable, but the Mitchells are close to the Nixons. They have spent weekends with President and Mrs. Nixon at Camp David, vacationed in the Nixons' house at Key Biscayne, Fla., and were in San Clemente, Calif., conveniently located in a house nearby, when the President spent several weeks at the Western White House last summer.

"I am not a Democrat. I was one but changed my registration when I moved to New York. I even worked in Eisenhower's campaign.

"I've never said I was against integration; it should have started right

after the Civil War. But why single out the South? The South has been imposed on long enough. It's the orphan of the nation."

She did not make her 2 a.m. telephone call to the *Arkansas Gazette*, asking them to "crucify" Sen. J. William Fulbright, "on the spur of the moment, as many reporters think." She had planned to make the call several weeks before, if Senator Fulbright voted against the confirmation of Judge Clement F. Haynsworth, but he didn't. When Senator Fulbright voted against Judge G. Harold Carswell, she telephoned. "As for calling at 2 a.m., I had guests that night who stayed late, and I waited until they left before calling."

The call prompted a bit of advice from Mrs. Fulbright to Mrs. Mitchell, delivered in a local newspaper. Seasoned politicians know how to take defeat, said Mrs. Fulbright, adding, "You have to live with each other."

"I think it's rather improper for a Senate wife to be giving advice to a Cabinet wife," says Martha Mitchell before going into gales of laughter.

Her laughter (some call it giggle) probably infuriates people more than, or at least as much as, the things she says. It is incredible to some people that a Cabinet wife can have so much fun being controversial.

But President Nixon encourages her to "give 'em hell" and calls her spunky. The Attorney General, asked to comment after one of her verbal blockbusters, said, "I love her. That's all I have to say."

He also says his wife never consults him before saying something quotable and claims that nothing she says or does surprises him any more.

Riding down Constitution Avenue with a reporter and photographer recently, she suddenly asks, "Would you like to stop at Justice and see John's office?" Unannounced, the three drop in on the Attorney General, who is in the midst of being interviewed by a *New York Post* reporter. Without a sign of annoyance in his steady blue eyes, he exchanges pleasantries with his wife and her guests until they sweep on into his newly redecorated private dining room and kitchen. With notable irritation, she says, "We don't have one cent for entertaining. When John's counterpart from Mexico was here, I had to pay out of my own pocket for a gift, a Steuben vase." She confided that the redecoration is a secret; General Services Administration was going to do it, but she didn't approve of their plans. Taking over herself, she "did it for half what they were going to spend." She thinks GSA spends money unnecessarily while doing mediocre work. Flashing her dimples, she announces, "I think I'll take on them next." Was the Attorney General annoyed because she made an unexpected visit with two members of the media in tow? "Oh, not," she answers. "These things I do are the only fun that poor man has."

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