
Washington Hot Line

Mitchells' Lincoln-- Who Pays?

By Maxine Cheshire

WASHINGTON — The Committee for the Re-election of the President is paying for Martha Mitchell's chauffeur, but who is paying for the Lincoln Continental in which he is driving her around New York these days?

Tom Wince, the driver who also doubles as Mrs. Mitchell's bodyguard and butler, is still on the payroll of the committee, a spokesman confirmed Friday night.

But it is not a simple matter to establish who is footing the bill for the limousine Wince drives for the Mitchells.

The dark blue, 1972 Lincoln bears a District of Columbia license plate number "886-328." The vehicle is registered as belonging to the Ford Motor Company's Civic and Governmental Affairs Division here at 815 Connecticut Ave.

According to Ford Motor Company records, the Lincoln was leased for a year last April to the Secret Service at an annual rental of \$1000.

The car, which is parked daily by Tom Wince in a garage across 58th Street from the Mitchells' Essex House apartment in Manhattan, still carries a green-and-yellow Secret Service identification sticker on the rear window.

Early last Friday, a Ford spokesman, George Trainor, consulted his files and could not find anything which would indicate that the Lincoln is not still leased to the Secret Service.

But that is not what the Secret Service said later that their records show. A press officer, Jack Warner, insists that they rented the car in question for only one month, that it was not used to transport the Mitchells and that it was returned to Ford on May 19.

At the suggestion of the Secret Service, Trainor checked his records again and found he was "in error." The car had indeed been relinquished by the Secret Service he said. It was then leased "to the Republican National Committee."

"The Secret Service didn't like the blue color," Trainor explained. "They prefer black."

When the Republican National Committee checked their records, they denied any knowledge of Mrs. Mitchell's Lincoln.

The only Lincoln rented by the committee, according to Tom Wilk, is one used by GOP Chairman Robert Dole.

Trainor's response to that denial was: "Oh, my God."



HAPPY couple at recent party, the John Mitchells.

It had only been an assumption on his part that the Republican National Committee had taken over the lease, he conceded. At that point, Trainor gave up trying to find out who is paying for the car.

"The man who knows about those records is away," he said. "Maybe I can find out next week. The only thing I know for certain is that we are not leasing the Lincoln to the Mitchells themselves."

He explained:

"We don't lease to individuals. We lease only to government agencies, the Republican National Committee and the Democratic National Committee."

He could not check to see who paid the leasing bill, he said, because the leasing bill is still unpaid.

The Mitchells could not be reached for comment.

Mrs. Mitchell's chauffeur, photographed as he load-

ed her matching red luggage into the Lincoln late on Friday afternoon, shed no light on the matter.

"Don't you photograph that car," he shouted at a photographer. "You leave Mrs. Mitchell alone."

Wince, described by one of the Mitchell's former neighbors at the Watergate, as a man "absolutely devoted to John Mitchell," has been assigned to Mrs. Mitchell almost exclusively in recent months.

"When I don't see Tom around," a Watergate security employe said last summer, "I know Mrs. Mitchell isn't around here either."

A reporter who visited the Mitchells' Watergate apartment several months ago found Wince helping her pack her glass and china for the movers.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the Committee for the Re-election of the President, says that "it is possible" the Lincoln is being billed to that organization.

Mitchell rode in a Lincoln when he was still head of the committee, according to press aide Devan Shumway.

"As a senior consultant to the committee, he would be entitled to keep it," Shumway explained, adding that he had no immediate access to records which would show if that were the situation.