

Betty Beale: Washington [column]

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I have never and will never discuss any part of the Watergate. I don't know anything about it," said Martha Mitchell in New York one morning this past week.

What about printed insinuations she had inside information on the bugging? "They (reporters) misinterpreted me. They have made repeated rumors that I have given leads in bits and pieces. The people up here are sick and tired of hearing about it. They just consider all of this part of the political game."

As for the story insinuating that she's being driven around New York by chauffeur Tom Wince in a Lincoln Continental leased to the Secret Service, she replied, "Isn't that great! I wonder if I can get a Secret Service agent with it."

"I get up at 6:30 in the morning and I drive Marty to school and I drive my husband to the office most of the time. My sta-

tion wagon is parked in a garage across the street. This doesn't involve any taxpayer's money."

During this telephone conversation, not initiated by Martha, the woman whose mail is second only to Pat Nixon's and sometimes exceeds it, sounded

very calm, cool, collected and happy. Happier than at any time when living in the Watergate. Living there was probably the reason she didn't like Washington.

"Oh I am sure of it," she instantly confirmed. "That was not a home. I always felt like I was in a motel."

"I am so happy here you don't know how I love it, and Marty is as happy as a lark. She loves the school. She comes home and does her homework without anyone asking her to and she is taking up the organ. I don't know whether she's really talented musically or not but we will find out." As for John, he has been down to see the President only one afternoon since they moved.

Out of the blue last weekend the Committee

for the re-election of the President issued a statement that rumors about her physical and her emotional health were "outrageous" and that the committee deeply appreciated her assistance to help reelect President Nixon. A spokesman for the committee would neither confirm nor deny that the sudden statement was made at the request of Mrs. Mitchell.

Maybe this was the public finale to the Martha Mitchell imbroglio that began last June and involved accusations of rough treatment from security agent Stephen King who is now, contrary to her wishes, security chief for the Re-election Committee. Maybe this is what Martha meant when she said, "I just don't care about this mess any more."

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