

# How Martha Mitchell Was Held

By Helen Thomas

KEY BISCAIYNE—(UPI)

— Martha Mitchell apparently wasn't kidding when she said she was held as a "political prisoner" last June, in the first few days after the Watergate case broke.

The wife of former Attorney General John Mitchell was speaking out long before the White House wall of secrecy around the Watergate affair crumbled this week.

A variety of sources, including Mrs. Mitchell, have provided the basis for a recapitulation of the events surrounding her widely publicized telephone call to this reporter from Newport Beach, Calif., last June 22.

On Friday, June 16, the night before five men were arrested inside Democratic National Committee headquarters on the other side of the country, the Mitchells attended a gathering of leading Republicans and Hollywood celebrities at the Beverly Hills home of movie executive Taft Schrieber. Pat Nixon was the guest of honor.

Afterwards, the Mitchells drove for the weekend to the Newporter Inn at Newport Beach.

On Sunday, June 18 local newspapers carried a brief story about the arrests inside Democratic offices at the Watergate complex in Washington. That evening the Mitchells were invited to dinner at the nearby Corona Del Mar home of Mrs. Donald K. Washburn, widow of the "7 UP" soft drink manufacturer.

Mitchell, then President Nixon's 1972 campaign manager, and his wife had a heated argument, apparently over Mitchell's insistence that they leave the party early.

Other guests of the embarrassed hostess included actor John Wayne and his wife and Herbert W. Kalmbach,

the president's personal attorney, who has since told FBI agents he gave at least \$30,000 in GOP campaign funds to an alleged political espionage agent at the direction of the President's appointments secretary at the time, Dwight Chapin.

Mitchell told guests he had "a very important meeting" to attend. Finally he grabbed his wife and they departed.

At 10 p.m. that Sunday evening, Mitchell flew back to Washington, leaving Martha behind with their daughter Marty, 11, and Mitchell's secretary, Lee Jablonsky, along with Mrs. Mitchell's bodyguard, provided by the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

The next morning, the newspapers carried big photographs of James W. McCord Jr., then security chief for the re-election committee, as one of the five men charged with the Wa-

tergate break-in.

The Washington Post has quoted Republican sources as saying it was because Mrs. Mitchell knew McCord that Mitchell instructed his aides to make sure she knew

nothing from the newspapers about McCord's arrest.

In the following days, from making any outside telephone calls from the "Villa Roma" where she was

staying. Only non-English-speaking Mexican help entered her room.

For three days Mrs. Mitchell tried without success to make a long distance call to UPI. Finally, at 9

p.m. Thursday, Mrs. Mitchell got through to this reporter. She sounded subdued and somewhat sad. When the Watergate case was brought up, she became agitated.

"That's it, I've given John

an ultimatum. I'm going to leave him unless he gets out of the campaign," she said. "I'm sick and tired of politics. Politics is a dirty business."

As she spoke, she suddenly

about his wife's aborted call. He did not appear concerned.

"She's great," he said.

"That little sweetheart, I love her so much. She gets a

## a 'Prisoner'

ly got excited when someone tried to grab the telephone from her. "You just get away—get away," she said several times. Then the line went dead.

Several attempts to reach Mrs. Mitchell failed. The switchboard operator at the Newporter Inn said: "Mrs. Mitchell is indisposed and cannot talk."

This reporter reached Mitchell at his Watergate apartment and told him

little upset about politics, but she loves me and I love her and that's what counts."

He then said he wanted to leave Washington after the campaign, having promised Martha he would give up politics.