

Martha Mitchell Testifies in Civil Suit

NYTimes **MAY** 4 1973

By CHARLOTTE CURTIS

Mrs. John N. Mitchell, clutching a Bible, said again yesterday that she trusted and prayed that her husband, the former Attorney General, was not guilty of wrongdoing in the Watergate affair.

She told reporters after giving her first sworn testimony in the case that Mr. Mitchell "has always assured me that he has not been involved." If he was, she said, in answer to another question, "I didn't know it."

"I trust and I pray to God" that he was not, she said.

Mrs. Mitchell spoke from the steps of the West End Avenue offices of Henry B. Rothblatt, lawyer for James W. McCord Jr., the convicted Watergate conspirator.

Asked if news reports of the case jibed with her supposed knowledge of what she had called "that dirty business," she answered, "Very well."

Her testimony, a deposition in connection with the Democrats' \$6.4-million civil suit against officials of the commit-



The New York Times/Barton Silverman

Continued on Page 18, Column 2

Mrs. John N. Mitchell leaves home on way to testify

Martha Mitchell Testifies in Civil Suit

Continued From Page 1, Col. 2

tee for the Re-election of the President, took an hour and 49 minutes.

Although a transcript was not immediately available Mrs. Mitchell is reported to have repeated much of what she has already told reporters in telephone conversations. There apparently was little that would shed new light on the case.

"You know I've never really known anything about the Watergate case," she told The New York Times late in a telephone interview. "But I'm glad it's all coming out. It's like a breath of relief—a breath of fresh air."

Suspicious of Magruder

While sipping Cokes, she told the lawyers of her efforts to get her husband out of the campaign because "Mr. President was going to be re-elected anyway." She described the California episode in which she was thrown to the floor and stuck with a hypodermic needle. She added the name of Jeb Stuart Magruder, a former special assistant to President Nixon, to the list of people she has said she "suspected" all along.

"I wanted him fired from the beginning," she said.

Mr. Rothblatt said her testimony was "interesting," but "not very helpful to the case itself."

"She indicated she had no knowledge either before or after other than what she read," he said.

He added that at the start of her deposition, Mrs. Mitchell asked that there be no questions that might violate the husband-wife relationship. Her request was granted.

"She testified freely, articulately and was her own usual charming self," he said.

Comments About City

In private conversations, Mrs. Mitchell also complained again about New York City. She said "something should be done about the city," which is one of her favorite themes, and suggested, as she has in the past, that she might be persuaded to run for Mayor.

When she arrived at Mr. Rothblatt's offices, she had to push her way through a relentless crowd of "my friends, the press."

"Hello, everybody," she cried, as reporters and photographers rushed her blue limousine.

Then, when they shouted questions at her, pushing and shoving so she couldn't get to the sidewalk, she looked displeased.

"You know how I live all you're throwing so many questions at me I can't answer."

She was accompanied by her attorney and her chauffeur. Asked why she was carrying the Bible, she laughed.

"I wouldn't want to have to swear on a dictionary," she said.

When she returned to her apartment, she said she had been "frightened" outside the law office "that one time they got my arm twisted it, but I carried on." She said she had made the crack about the dictionary because "I always like a little humor despite the sadness of it all."

"I really have put everything into the hands of God," she said.

Mrs. Mitchell is a Presbyterian. She often goes to Marble Collegiate Church and says she likes the Rev. Norman Vincent Peale. She said she received the Bible she carried when she graduated from kindergarten Sunday school.

"I haven't been going to church lately," she said. "I can't get through all those people outside."

In recent weeks, particularly since her husband admitted attending meeting at which bugging proposals were discussed, Mrs. Mitchell has avoided the press.

Phone Number Changed

Since mid-March, she has had her telephone number changed at least three times. Her statements have been relayed through Winzola McLendon, a former reporter.

Mrs. McLendon, flatly denying that she had acted in any capacity other than "a close friend and a writer doing Martha's book," has visited the Mitchells' apartment frequently, once spending the night.

"I have no contract," Mrs. McLendon said of the book.

She would not discuss published speculation that bidding for the as yet unwritten, untitled book had reached \$1-million. But New York publishers, including two supposedly hot contenders, have said that they know only of "vague talks," "preliminary discussions" and "no bidding at all." Mrs. Mitchell told The Times she did

not wish to discuss the book at all.

Besides Mrs. McLendon, a school days sorority sister has also been Mrs. Mitchell's house guest recently. Another old friend, from the days before Mr. Mitchell got into politics, has lunched there regularly. All three women have answered her telephone for her.

'I'm Not Worrying'

Mrs. Mitchell's days seem to focus on the odds and ends of getting a vast new household together and talking with her friends. She has, she said yesterday, "been very busy."

"But I'm not worrying and I'm never nervous," she told The Times.

Breakfast apparently is something of a ritual in the Mitchell household, and it often includes grits, because, as Mrs. Mitchell says, "I'm a Southern girl at heart." She drinks enormous amounts of Coca-Cola.

"I guess I had two or three during the testimony," she said with a laugh.

The scandal surrounding Mr. Mitchell does not seem to have changed 11-year-old Marty Mitchell's routine. She has gone to school as usual. During spring vacation, she visited friends.

"What's going on," Mrs. Mitchell said.