

Story Behind

Washington

The arrest of James W. McCord Jr. inside the Democrats' Watergate headquarters last June 17 triggered Martha Mitchell's ultimatum that her husband, former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, leave politics, according to reliable Republican sources.

These sources gave the following account of the events leading up to the ultimatum she issued publicly five days later:

On June 17, when Mitchell and one of his closest aides, Fred LaRue, learned of the Watergate arrests, they realized that Mrs. Mitchell would be upset because she knew and liked McCord very much. As the security chief to the President's re-election committee, McCord had supplied the Mitchell's with security guards.

The Mitchells were in Cal-

ifornia that weekend to attend several fund raising and celebrity parties for the President's re-election. Mitchell was the campaign manager. After being told of McCord's arrest by phone, Mitchell "started planting the seed with Martha that maybe she should stay out in California and get some sun and not come back to Washington as planned," in the words of one of the sources.

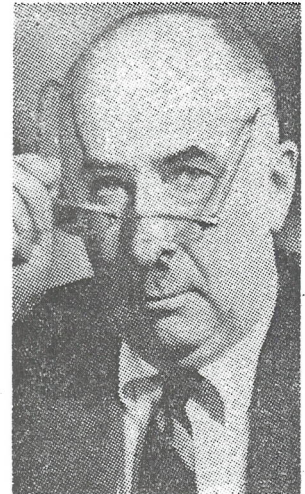
Mitchell and LaRue decided not to tell Mrs. Mitchell about McCord's arrest and hoped to leave for Washington before she learned," one of the other sources said.

They managed to keep the information from her on Sunday, June 18, even though the radio and TV carried the news. Mitchell, in fact, issued a statement about McCord's arrest from California.

That statement gave no



MARTHA MITCHELL
'She blew up'



JOHN MITCHELL
Arrest statement

hint of the relationship between the Mitchells and McCord.

It said in part, "The person involved (McCord's name was not used) is the proprietor of a private se-

curity agency who was employed by our committee months ago to assist with the installation of our security system. He has, as we understand it, a number of business clients and inter-

Martha's Ultimatum

ests and we have no knowledge of those relationships."

Testimony at the Watergate trial, however, showed that McCord was a full-time employee of the Nixon committee from January to June 17 and that the Nixon committee and the Republican National Committee were the only clients of his security firm, McCord Associates.

The sources said that Mitchell and LaRue were packing to return to Washington, afraid Mrs. Mitchell would see the morning papers. They ordered them thrown away.

After Mitchell and LaRue left, Mrs. Mitchell asked her security guard, Steve King, to get the newspapers. "When Martha read the papers and saw what happened and saw that John had been quoted about McCord, she blew up," said one source who had talked to Mitchell

later about the incident.

According to the sources, King and Mitchell's secretary, Lea Jablonsky, then had three days of intense difficulty with Mrs. Mitchell.

On Thursday, June 22, Mrs. Mitchell made her famous call to United Press International reporter Helen Thomas from California announcing that she would leave her husband unless he gave up politics.

"They left me in California with absolutely no information. They don't want me to talk," Mrs. Mitchell told UPI.

In another call Sunday, June 25, Mrs. Mitchell — then at the Westchester Country Club in Rye, N.Y. — said she was a "political prisoner . . . I love my husband very much. But I'm not going to stand for all those dirty things that go on."

A week later Mitchell re-

signed as the President's campaign manager, citing his desire to be with his family.

The Republican sources said that it is very doubtful that Mrs. Mitchell, then or now, has any information about the Watergate bugging.

In addition to LaRue, the others with the Mitchells in California that weekend were Robert C. Mardian, the former head of the Justice Department's Internal Security Division; Mrs. Mardian; Jeb Stuart Magruder, the No. 2 man on the Nixon committee; and Mrs. Magruder.

On Sunday, Mitchell ordered Magruder to fly back to Washington to begin an inquiry into the Watergate bugging. Delayed in Chicago en route, Magruder chartered an airplane from Chicago to Washington.

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