

Why Martha's Phone Was Ripped Out

By Jack Anderson

A lot has happened since Martha Mitchell complained last June 23 that a security guard had ripped her telephone out of the wall and inculcated her indelicately in the derriere.

For close to a year, witnesses have kept silent about the incident. But in the wake of the Watergate revelations, the new spirit of confession has now loosened their tongues. We have learned, at last, the details that housewives have been hounding us for.

The implication of their inquiries has been that poor Martha knew too much and was shut up by Republican security guards. The truth is less sinister. Martha Mitchell is a delightful, if loquacious lady. She has color and sparkle and a sense of humor. But she sometimes becomes volatile when she drinks too much.

This was her condition on June 23 in Newport Beach's Newporter Hotel on the California coast. As she became more shrill, her security guard, Steve King, tried to

calm her. She screamed that he was holding her prisoner, and she lunged for the telephone to call for help.

King was worried that, in her condition, she might reach a reporter and say something that would embarrass her later. So he yanked the telephone cord out of the wall while she was talking to UPI reporter Helen Thomas.

Martha became violent, assaulting the furnishings. Once she slashed the air with a karate swing, and her hand crashed through a window pane. The broken glass cut her hand deeply, increasing her hysteria.

Getting The Needle

King summoned the hotel doctor, but Martha refused to let him look at her hurt hand. To quiet her, King pinned her down while the doctor gave her a tranquilizer shot. It had little immediate effect on the agitated Martha, who continued to rave. At one point, she wrapped a washrag around her hand to stop the bleeding but still wouldn't let the doctor treat it.

The harassed security guard, meanwhile, decided

Martha Mitchell was more than he could handle. So he phoned her husband, ex-Attorney General John N. Mitchell, in Washington and gave him a blow-by-blow account of the altercation.

Immediately, Mitchell placed an urgent call to President Nixon's personal attorney, Herb Kalmbach, who happens to live in Newport Beach. Mitchell asked Kalmbach, as a personal favor, to hurry to the hotel and take charge of the situation.

When Kalmbach arrived, he found Martha still at full lung power, a blood-soaked washrag around her hand, protesting that she was being held prisoner. He finally got her calmed and brought in his own doctor to examine her hand.

Martha Mitchell got her hand stitched, spent the next day with the Kalmbachs and then flew to New York for a few days of seclusion at the plush Westchester Country Club.

John Mitchell, meanwhile, discussed the incident with the President, who was under-

standing and agreed Mitchell should leave the campaign to straighten out his marital problems. The former Attorney General may also have felt the Watergate developments closing in on him. But Watergate was not mentioned, according to knowledgeable sources, as his reason for resigning.

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