

Mrs. Nixon, on Her Own, Begins Campaign Swing

by Nan Robertson  
Special to The New York Times

Chicago, Sept. 18 - ..... At a news conference in her hotel this afternoon, Mrs. Nixon became flustered when asked whether she thought the Watergate bugging investigation would "hurt the President's chances."

She paused and then said tensely, "No, I don't. The polls haven't indicated that. They know he has no part of it."

A questioner asked: "When you and your husband discuss the election and the campaign, does the Watergate situation concern him?"

Mrs. Nixon answered: "We don't discuss it, because all I know is what I read in the paper. That's the only knowledge I have, so there's no reason to discuss it. I think it's been blown completely out of proportion. I think the chairman has answered all the questions on it."

It was believed she meant Clark MacGregor, chairman of the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

"Are you concerned about what you read?" she was asked.

"No, I'm not," she replied.

Mrs. Nixon was asked what she thought about "the wife of a former Attorney General and a former Nixon campaign manager" - Martha Mitchell - being "manhandled" by a security agent, Steve King, who now heads the security contingent of the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

The President's wife replied, "I don't know anything

about what happened in her [Mrs. Mitchell's] room."

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From another story, also by Nan Robertson, filed Nixon  
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[Mrs. Nixon, on a six-day campaign trip which began  
18 Sep] made no speeches - "remarks" would be a better word -  
mentioned the accomplishments of her husband's Administration  
just once, gave no interviews, held one impromptu news  
conference at the very beginning that she lived to regret and  
did not repeat, and never, never talked politics.

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Only once on this long journey was Mrs. Nixon forced to  
tackle, or at least parry, the issues. At a "press coffee"  
in Chicago that turned into a press conference, she turned  
tense and anxious as she was asked about the war, abortion,  
amnesty, the Watergate bugging, equal rights, Martha  
Mitchell's woes and other thorny topics.

It was, everyone who has followed Mrs. Nixon for years  
agreed, the toughest grilling she has ever undergone. Her  
discomfort was obvious. So was her relief when a reporter  
asked the type of question that has usually been her lot:  
"Mrs. Nixon, how do you keep your vitality?"

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