

Martha Gives Her Testimony

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New York

Martha Mitchell, clutching a worn, childhood Bible, said again yesterday that she trusted and prayed that her husband, the former U.S. Attorney General, was not guilty of wrongdoing in the Watergate bugging case.

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

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

She "just couldn't say" whether President Nixon had prior knowledge of the bugging.

Mrs. Mitchell spoke from the steps of the west end avenue offices of Henry B. Rothblatt. He is a lawyer for

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James W. McCord Jr., the convicted Watergate conspirator.

Asked if news reports of the case jibed with her supposed knowledge of what she has 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 Committee 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 report-

ers in her famous telephone conversations. There apparently was little that would shed new light on the case.

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 detailed the California episode during which she was thrown to the floor and stuck with a hypodermic needle. She added that 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.

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

COMMENT

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.

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

ENTRANCE

When she arrived at 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 yelled questions at her, pushing and shoving so she couldn't get to the sidewalk, she looked displeased.

"You know how I love all you boys," she said. "Now 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.

Later, when she returned to her apartment, she said she had been "frightened" outside the law office, "that

one time they got my arm and twisted it, but I carried on." She said she had made the joke 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 received the Bible she carried today when she was 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 meetings at which bugging proposals were discussed, Mrs. Mitchell has avoided the press.



UPI Telephoto

Martha Mitchell, clutching her Bible, arrived at attorney's office