

WXPost
JUL 25 1973
Crowd Called Largest Since Start

By Ken Ringle

Washington Post Staff Writer

According to Capitol Police Sgt. C. J. Mills, who ushered it through, yesterday's crowd at the Watergate hearings was the largest "since John Mitchell's first day" when "they all came wanting to see Martha."

It was a crowd that cheered Committee Chairman Sen. Sam Ervin, hissed the day's chief witness, John Ehrlichman, and snickered occasionally at Ehrlichman's

sometimes imperious testimony.

But the majority, if an unscientific sampling is any indication, came not to see Ehrlichman particularly but just to see the Senate committee's hearings.

"Actually, I thought it was Haldeman who was testifying," said Gary Ditto, a 30-year-old bearded and bluejeaned landscaper from Silver Spring. "This just happened to be the day I could get free to attend the hearings."

The crowd included actor

Lorne Greene of "Bonanza", who "just happened to be in town" and Robin Symonds, a 5-foot tall woman of 22 from Milford, Mass., who drove down over the weekend "so I could say I saw the hearings."

"Don't ask whom I voted for," she implored. "I voted for Nixon. I'm so ashamed. I'm probably the only person under 25 in the whole country who did. I just thought he was the lesser of two evils but obviously I was wrong."

Harold Baldus, 66, a retired sewing machine salesman from Sarasota, Fla., said he came to the hearings yesterday "because it was the most convenient day and my daughter works for Sen. (James) Buckley and she got us in."

Standing outside the hearing room with his white linen coat and straw hat, Baldus alternated defense of the administration with asides to two unhearing NBC television reporters who were conducting interviews down the hall.

"Let's say we're Republicans but we're not for a bunch of screwed up stuff," he said. "AND I'LL TELL THAT TO YOU, TOO, MR. (DOUGLAS) Kiker, and Stein, too!"

"Stern, dear, Carl Stern," said his wife.

"Well, him too," said Baldus. "We want to see this thing done fairly, and I'll tell you it looks more like an inquisition than an inquiry from what I've seen."

He then observed, "Why, there's the fellow from the Ponderosa show," and wandered down the hallway after Greene.

The Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Ron Hankey of Meadeville, Pa., showed up at 5:30 a.m. with a sack of food and supplies for the day at the hearings.

With them they brought their children Ron Jr., 10,

and Polly Jo, 9, and a determination to "give the kids a taste of history."

Yesterday was simply a day long since set aside for the hearings on the schedule of the Hankeys' three-day visit to Washington. "At the time," Hankey said, "we didn't know who would be testifying."

"Our children follow the hearing all the time," said Nancy Hankey. "They are very interested in there and keep asking me whom they should believe. I don't know what to tell them."

The Capitol Police line up the crowd in the rotunda of the Old Senate Office Building, admitting about 200 spectators at the start of the morning session to the room that holds about 275.

As those inside come out, others come in — picked from the line in the rotunda.

"When it's boring up there or they have a break or have to vote, we get a lot of turnover," Sgt. Mills said. "Other times, very little."

Yesterday's crowd, he said, moved relatively well, but was hard to estimate in size because it kept renewing itself with arrivals and with people coming out and getting back in line to go in later.

At the end of the day yesterday some 30 persons had waited through the day and never made it to the hearing.

One was Willie Zamorski, 43, a school teacher from Bettendorf, Iowa, who said she had nevertheless had "a wonderful day."

"We didn't realize you practically had to be born here to get in, so we lurked around the Senate subway and dashed out when we saw senators and television reporters and shook ever so many hands.

"It was all great fun," she beamed. "The aura of excitement was irresistible."