

Mitchell, Stans Enjoy the Victory

By Joseph M. Treen
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John Mitchell was having a ball.

Across the room, the man who had been his co-defendant, former Commerce Secretary Maurice Stans, was sitting on a couch with his wife being interviewed by ABC's Gregory Jackson.

The TV lights went on. "Catherine," the former attorney general interrupted, "you look beautiful. Smile." Mrs. Stans smiled.

Mitchell leaned over to a reporter. "She's a wonderful lady. Look at the color of her cheeks."

"S-h-h-h," commanded Stans' secretary, Arden Chambers, from across the room.

"Within an hour," Mitchell said holding his second Scotch and water, "I'll have my first drink." He smiled.

Jackson asked Stans how it had felt a year ago when he was indicted. "Frightening," Stans said. "When you see the first two words on that indictment — United States — and you see your name under it and you realize that 210 million people are against you . . ."

Mitchell laughed. "Awww, now's he's claiming top billing." Some people laughed

with him.

Mitchell's own secretary, Sandy Hobbs, gave him a dirty look. She put her fingers to her lips. Mitchell leaned over again. "How's Newsday doing, anyway?" he asked.

Miss Chambers made a downward movement with her hand.

Mitchell sat back and listened as Stans began discussing grand juries. Too often prosecutors indict people without enough facts, he said. There ought to be some way, Stans said, for grand jury witnesses to have their attorneys with them and to present evidence on their own behalf.

Mitchell started applauding and was quickly joined by the others crowded into the room, Suite 555 of the Essex House, the room of Stans' attorney, Walter J. Bonner.

The TV cameraman changed his film. Mitchell's attorney, John Sprizzo, came over. "We can't keep you quiet," he said. Miss Chambers came over. "We gave you our attention," she said as sweetly as she could, "when they interviewed you." She went over to a table lined with food. Until Saturday it was a table that had seen much work and stacks of legal briefs were off to one side.

The TV lights went on again. "Swing to Walter Bonner," Jackson told the cameraman. "Our hero." Miss Chambers cheered. Mitchell, in honor of Stans' tough Irish attorney, began to sing: "When Irish eyes are smiling." Some people laughed.

"I'll do three choruses," Mitchell said. "You should have heard him in the Gold Room," Miss Chambers said. The "Gold Room" was the defendants' joking reference to the courthouse waiting room, a plain brown room with a table and chairs. "He was so funny." "What are you, kidding?" Sprizzo said. "He sang so much we all had to leave."

The 6 p.m. news came on the television and the room fell silent. The Mitchell-Stans verdict was at the top of the show. "Yeaaaaaa," cheered Stans' son, Steven, as the verdict was announced. Everyone sh-h-h-ed him.

On the TV set, they began interviews with jurors. Mitchell was impressed. "They were great people," he said several times, "great people. Middle Americans. True Americans. Real Americans. Honest people. He knew a lot about each one of them, their backgrounds, their problems."



AP Wirephoto

SANDY HOBBS AND JOHN MITCHELL
His secretary gave him a victory kiss

Real people, he said.

The television commentator said the White House had issued a statement about the verdict. Had Mr. Nixon called him? Mitchell was asked. "I wouldn't tell you that one way or the other," he snapped.

In between posing for pictures, he began to talk about the press. Sometimes it lied; sometimes honest reporters couldn't get stories past their editors. But the press is important, Mitchell said. Very important. "The Fourth Estate is fabulous.

You guys have got to keep your perspective. You've got to keep your integrity. Because the future of this country — not just John Mitchell and Maurice Stans, America — is resting square on your shoulders."

People were beginning to leave. One man, a doctor whom Mitchell had just met for the first time, came up to say good-bye. "If you ever need a psychiatrist," the man said, "look me up."

Mitchell smiled. "If I ever need a psychiatrist," he said, "I'll plead guilty."