

# Martha Mitchell Buried

By Myra MacPherson  
Washington Post

## Pine Bluff, Ark.

Among the floral wreaths surrounding Martha Mitchell's grave on the sloping crest of Bellwood Cemetery was a display of white mums, spelling out in block letters six inches high a slogan that needed no interpretation: "Martha Was Right."

The flowers, sent by a California admiral (the family would not say who) spelled the epitaph for Martha Beall Mitchell — once America's most outspoken woman who warned of the sins of Watergate before many were ready to listen.

The estranged wife of former Attorney General John N. Mitchell died at the age of 57 of a painful and rare bone cancer on Memorial Day and was buried yesterday in a quiet and dignified — and some viewers said impersonal — service that gave no hint of her life of flamboyance and fame, loneliness.

With a southern passion for discretion, Mrs. Mitchell's closest Pine Bluff friends, the S. Ray Wests, among the wealthiest people in this town, assiduously obeyed the orders of John Mitchell — whose career and marriage were destroyed by the Watergate scandal — that the press and people of Pine Bluff be kept at a distance from him and the Mitchells' 15-year-old

daughter, Marty.

During the memorial ceremony, facing the closed steel casket topped with pink flowers, Mitchell displayed the same poker face that millions saw during the televised Watergate hearings.

Later, Mitchell sat in the living room of the Wests' estate and sent word through a friend that "it was a very fine service with all the dignity and grace that Martha deserved."

To some of Martha Mitchell's closest friends, Mitchell was gracious and concerned throughout yesterday's services.

But others among the 400 who sat through the Episcopal service, many of them elderly women wearing gloves and summer dresses, were less kind to Mitchell.

Over and over, one heard criticism of Mitchell because of remembered stories about his cutting comments about his estranged wife, about the \$36,000 in alimony owed by Mitchell or about her lonely death after a coma.

"I'm surprised he showed his face," said one woman.

Although flowers came from President and Mrs. Ford, no Washington dignitaries were present. Cornelia Wallace, the wife of the Alabama governor, who met Mrs. Mitchell a few years ago, came because, "I liked her. Being from

the South I feel I understood her."

Martha Mitchell was, as one friend said, "A mass of contradictions."

Terrified of the limelight, she would often weep before one of her "public performances" — her appearances were always performances — but once out there the blonde woman who tripped around on stiletto high-heeled sling-back shoes adorned with organdy and bows gloried in it all.

Before Watergate Martha Mitchell was the lightning rod for the polarization in this country.

To many she was a brazen and bombastic woman, to others she was a heroine who attacked a liberal permissiveness they felt had brought chaos to the land.

Not only should Senator J. William Fulbright be "crucified" for voting against the Supreme Court nomination of G. Harrold Carswell, she asserted, the Cambodian war was "100 per cent wonderful."

But she was often forgiven because her almost childlike naivete.

No matter the agony she suffered, Mrs. Mitchell insisted until the end to tie a ribbon in her hair, to wear lipstick and to have her fingernails polished daily. Yesterday she was buried in a pale pink organdy dress, her blonde hair pulled back in a pompadour, her nails the bright red she always

wore.

"When I was growing up," she said a few years ago, "come Sunday I couldn't wait to wear my go-to-Church clothes. Today, when I wear something fancy and pretty it still gives me a lift."

C. H. Kunz, a Manhattan businessman who knew her more than 30 years ago at the University of Arkansas, was the last to see her, on Saturday. In a telephone interview he said, "she was like a little Southern belle and it was hard for people to accept the fact that she could be serious and totally analytical."

But her intuitive fears about Richard Nixon's "dirty tricks" and her call for him to resign are the things people remember now, although time has dimmed the memories of the days when members of the Nixon administration implied that she was crazy.

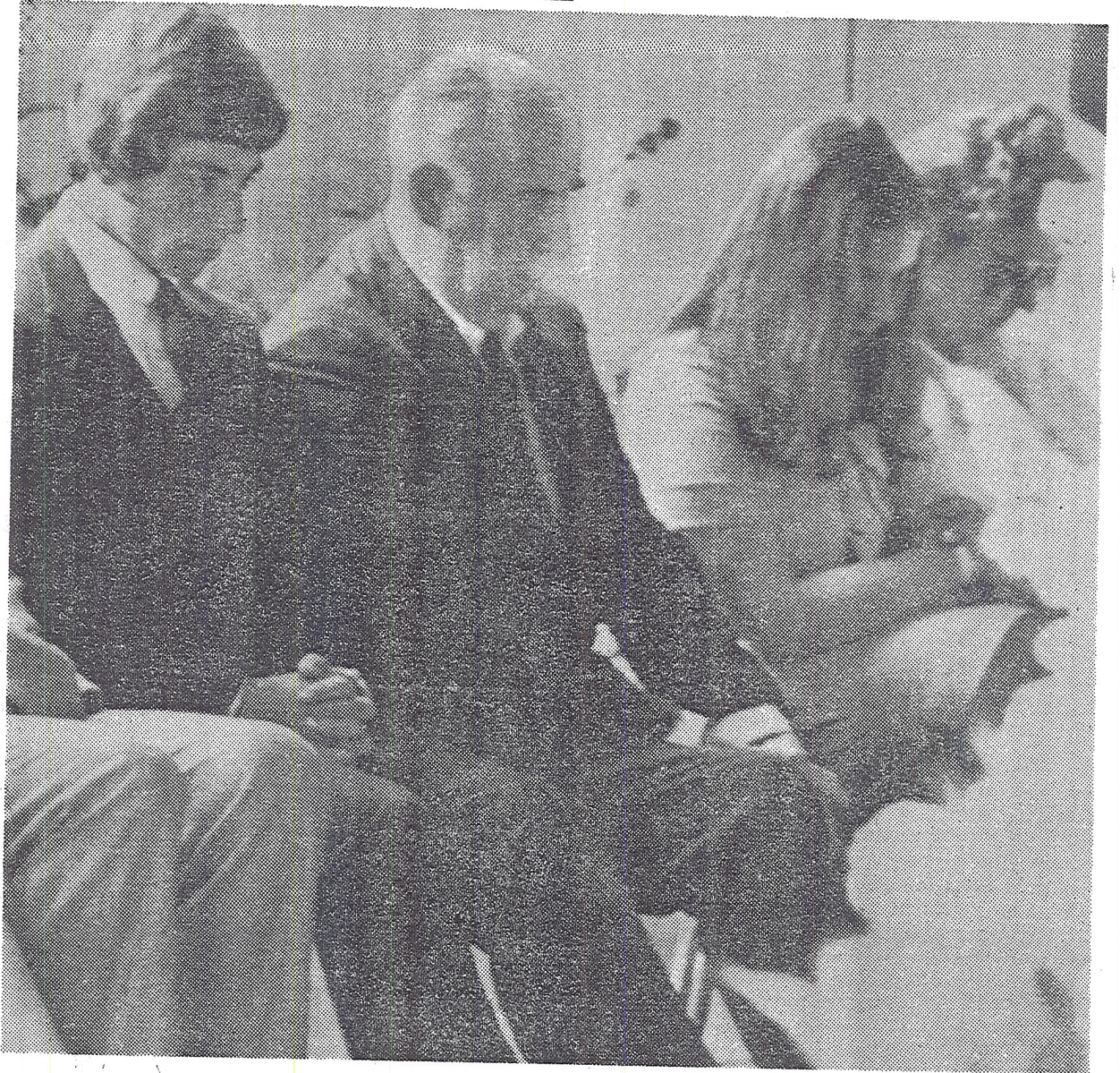
In yesterday's service John Mitchell stared straight ahead and her daughter, Marty, sat with downcast eyes as the minister said people would not forget Mrs. Mitchell's "zest for life, the breadth of her sympathy and the strength of her conviction."

Jay Jennings, 28, her son by a previous marriage, fought back tears and swallowed hard. He is a researcher for the Senate Subcommittee on internal security.

When the Mitchell family and the people of Pine Bluff and the pack of cameramen and reporters moved on, out of Bellwood Cemetery, with its ancient graves, some dating to pre-Civil War days, four workmen lowered the casket into the ground.

Martha Mitchell lies at the foot of her mother's grave and next to her grandparents.





JAY JENNINGS, JOHN MITCHELL AND MARTY MITCHELL  
Some were surprised that John Mitchell came to the funeral

UPI Telephoto