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# WATERGATE "WHITE HOUSE HORRORS" THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN MITCHELL, Former Attorney General of the U.S.

COMPILED BY DON MOLNER

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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WATERGATE / "THE WHITE HOUSE HORRORS" THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN MITCHELL

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# WATERGATE "WHITE HOUSE HORRORS" THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN MITCHELL, Former Attorney General of the U.S.

Questioning by members of the U.S. Senate Watergate Committee  
SENATORS: Ervin, Baker, Inouye, Talmadge, Weiker

COMPILED BY DON MOLNER





## WATERGATE, Vol. 4

### "White House Horrors": The Testimony of John Mitchell, Former Attorney General of the U.S.

When John Mitchell's nomination for Attorney General was being considered by the Senate Judiciary Committee in 1969, Senator Sam Ervin made a pointed observation. "To my mind," said Ervin, "there is something incompatible with marrying the function of the chief political adviser and chief agitator with that of prosecutor of crimes against the government."

The President's confidant, legal adviser, and political strategist puffed thoughtfully on his pipe. "Senator," he said, "I would hope that my activities in a political nature and of a political nature have ended with the (1968) campaign. From the termination of the campaign and henceforth, my duties and functions will be related to the Justice Department and as a legal and not political adviser of the President."

Now the former Attorney General, John Mitchell, was again appearing before Senator Ervin, chairman of the Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities. Serious charges had been made regarding Mitchell's involvement in the Watergate case and related matters. Jeb Magruder, testifying before the Senate committee swore that while serving as Attorney General, Mitchell had approved an elaborate political bugging plan presented to him by G. Gordon Liddy. Mitchell denied the charge, but it was obvious that he had not divorced himself from political activity during his sojourn as Attorney General.

Senator Ervin expressed disappointment with the picture of a politically involved Attorney General and Mitchell voiced his regrets. "Unfortunately," said Mitchell, "it is very, very difficult to turn down a request by the President of the United States."

### A Friend of the President

John Newton Mitchell won the personal and professional admiration of Richard Nixon soon after the two men met. According to Mitchell, they had a "casual relationship" prior to 1963, when Nixon came to New York to practice law.

Former P T boat commander Mitchell was a prosperous New York bond lawyer at the time, a cool and confident practitioner earning approximately \$200,000 a year.

In 1966, Mitchell and Nixon became law partners. When Nixon decided to run for the Presidency, Mitchell was appointed campaign director.

Richard Nixon achieved his White House goal and, with a victorious campaign to his credit, Mitchell was awarded one of the grand prizes: he became Attorney General of the United States.

### The Attorney General

Nixon had glowing words of praise for his appointee: "If we are to restore order and respect for law in this country, there's one place we are to begin. . . a new Attorney General of the United States. . . John Mitchell is more than just one of the nation's great lawyers. I have learned to know him over the past five years as a man of superb judgement, a man who knows how to pick people and to lead them. . . a man who is devoted to waging an effective war against crime in this country."

There was a world of difference between the philosophy of the new Attorney General and Mitchell's predecessor, Ramsey Clark. "I think this is an institution for law enforcement, not social improvement," said Mitchell of his new job. "Don't watch what we say," he told a group of civil rights leaders, "watch what we do."

As chief of law enforcement, John Mitchell often heard from outraged civil libertarians. He advocated no-knock and stop-and-frisk laws, wiretaps, and preventive detention. During the Mayday confrontations in Washington in 1971, Mitchell swiftly moved against anti-war demonstrators. Approximately 13,400 persons were placed under mass arrest.

He put together several dubious conspiracy indictments against those who disagreed with White House war policy, including the famous case against Daniel Ellsberg.

Mitchell was criticized for his apparent failure to research the backgrounds of two Nixon candidates for the Supreme Court, Clement F. Haynsworth and G. Harrold Carswell. When both were found lacking and rejected by the Senate, Mitchell made an angry statement: "They - Haynsworth and Carswell - weren't deficient: they were shot down on philosophical grounds. . . The civil rights groups and labor organizations brought extreme pressure; all the senators were sensitive to the view of the news media on the subject."



### Mitchell the Man

Some White House staffers found Mitchell to be cold and aloof. Others, like John Dean, describe him as a father figure, preoccupied with the efficient running of his office. In any case, there was no question of who was boss at the Justice Department. Once, when asked if he agreed with the opinion of a subordinate, Mitchell replied, "I really don't have the practice of subscribing to the theories of my aides. It generally works the other way around."

Throughout his term as Attorney General, Mitchell maintained a very close relationship with the President. He was the only original Cabinet member invited to buy a residence in the Nixon compound on Key Biscayne.

Of his boss the President, Mitchell once said, "I guess I see him once a day or more, when I go over to the White House. And during the course of the day we usually talk on the telephone several more times. In the evening he frequently calls me at home; I have a direct line from the White House switchboard."

With the approach of another Presidential election, Mitchell was again asked to organize campaign activities. Expressing considerable regrets, he resigned as Attorney General and became Director of the Committee for the Re-election of the President. His staff included Deputy Campaign Director, Jeb Stuart Magruder and Campaign Finance Chairman, Maurice Stans. Further down the chain of command were G. Gordon Liddy and James W. McCord.

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### The Horrors

The White House horrors began with the arrest of a number of intruders found inside the Democratic National Headquarters at Watergate, a complex of offices and apartments in Washington, D.C. James McCord was among those arrested and he, threatened with a lengthy jail sentence, told an incredible story of political espionage. McCord said that he was informed that a master plan calling for illegal buggings and break-ins had been approved by John Mitchell.

In time, Jeb Macgruder also testified that his former boss Mitchell had cleared a detailed bugging operation prior to the Watergate break-in and added that Mitchell and White House counsel John Dean had prompted him to commit perjury in order to hide the facts. Finally, Dean offered testimony which implicated John Mitchell and Richard M. Nixon.

At the time of his appearance before the Senate Committee on July 10, 1973, Mitchell faced other charges. He and Maurice Stans were indicted along with financier Robert Vesco in connection with a secret \$200,000 contribution to the Nixon re-election campaign. The 16-count federal indictment charged "deceit, craft, trickery, and means that are dishonest."

Indeed, John Mitchell had had his fill of White House horrors.

Don Molner

**FD 5553 WATERGATE, VOL. 3: "I HOPE THE PRESIDENT IS FORGIVEN."** Former White House Counsel John W. Dean III testifies, June 25, 1973. The 34 year-old star witness in his "standing room only" appearance before the U.S. Senate Watergate Investigating Committee. Senator Edward J. Gurney of Florida, loyal to President Nixon, vigorously cross-examines Dean, who maintains his mood of solemn deliberation. Invaluable to all students of history and government, to all Americans who have an interest in democracy. Edited by Don Molner. Notes enclosed. (1-12" LP, \$6.98)