

Conversation Number 347-4  
June 30, 1972, 12:55-2:10 P.M.  
Executive Office Building  
President, Haldeman and Mitchell

[Note: While the audio quality always makes it challenging to understand the EOB office recordings, this conversation was made more difficult by the fact that the participants were seated at the table in the EOB office where they had lunch, and this location is even further from the microphones located in the desk. (Thus, there is a high hissing noise throughout, and when the voices are soft, it is impossible to make out what they are saying. Accordingly, there are a few more bracketed words and phrases.) In addition, this conversation is laced with some eleven withdrawals of personal material, which probably exceeds 35 minutes—almost half of the 75 minute meeting. Withdrawal No. 10 has no time listed, but the others total some 33 minutes, and given the length of the others, No. 10 is no doubt about two minutes.]

[The president later described this lunch as “a painful session.” He noted that “Mitchell looked worn out and his hand shook so much that he had to put his soup spoon down after the first taste.”<sup>1</sup> The president greeted his guest with comments about Iran grey caviar, which he was served on his last trip to Iran and visit with the Shah. The president uses the Supreme Court to break the conversational ice, talking about his four appointees. The audio on this conversation is marginal. It seems they are sitting across the office from the president’s desk in the sofa seating area, which is a strain for the microphone planted in his desk. After a discussion of Supreme Court journalists (no real complaints) and a crack at Justice Potter Stewart, one of the president’s least favorites, he gets to the reason they are meeting. The president moves slowly onto the subject, with empathy, telling Mitchell that he understood the type of problem Martha was experiencing created an impossible situation. After the withdrawal of just over two minutes of personal material, the president continued.]

[Tape 347a originally began here at 0:28:46.0]

**PRESIDENT:** Let me say this, that, I've always had a theory about politics. I've covered the situation, I covered it somewhat in *Six Crises*, I've, I ded-, I dedicated that book, on the flyleaf you may recall, to Pat—"she also ran"— and, ah, it's always seemed to me, course, well Martha is that, for a woman being the wife of a politician is infinitely more difficult than probably being one. Because you see, the man gets out there, slugs, gets around, dressed, rushes around and so forth, and the wife, who doesn't have to be a politician, in other words, doesn't much give one damn about it, just simply doing it for public service, it sure beats being, I suppose being the wife of a politician is very tough.

**MITCHELL:** I think you're right on.

**PRESIDENT:** And, ah, Martha's been a great asset to us, I mean, she's a star, she has star quality, she always will, but I can see what happens here. The [reason she's] damaged after three years as attorney general, that's over, all of a sudden you're out of that, in a new area, you're in the line fire, and kicked around and you're not home, and this, that, and the other

thing. What the hell is this all about? And as time goes on, and, ah, it doesn't get better, and so forth and so on. Until finally she reached the breaking point. My own view is that [clears throat], probably, I say this [unclear] with the greatest reluctance but understanding [of your desire and the situation], probably it's correct. I think the real problem is how to handle [unclear], because I, I think too, when you're dealing with situations involving men, but even more so women, who are emotionally upset, involved, about matters of this sort, you cannot run, you cannot press them to far, that you sure, be sure what's going to happen in the campaign, the pressures are never going to get less, they're going to get a hell of a lot worse, and [I would never want her to put her through all that, so take her back home.] [Unclear.] I just wanted to give you [a little background], I totally understand. I, ah, I, the affection, you know, I feel about her—

MITCHELL: [Unclear.]

PRESIDENT: You're the best judge of that. You're a good judge of [unclear.] But the only thing I would say, the only thing is that, [unclear], you can't put amateurs in running [for example] California, or New Jersey, you know, you know the ones where, also some of the southern strategy, don't you agree Bob?

HALDEMAN: Absolutely.

PRESIDENT: I just think, I mean, we can say, will we'll have Fred LaRue do this, or somebody, it's to big a thing for Fred. They don't talk to them, they don't talk to him, as a matter of fact, put in a new man, that, they're going to insist they talk to me, and that I can't do.

MITCHELL: Well, Mr. President, Martha's around the point where she understands it's crucial that you get reelected president.

PRESIDENT: I appreciate that.

MITCHELL: And, ah, she wants to do everything she can, without going back and forth, she probably—

PRESIDENT: [Unclear.]

MITCHELL: And she wants to protect herself, and if I can keep a lid on it, I can be a consultant just so long as I wasn't the object of all the—

PRESIDENT: All, all the shouting.

MITCHELL: So, ah, I would hope that it would work out, where I intend to keep a hand in sensitive areas. I, I think regarding this I've come to the conclusion about two things, and number one is, she really went over the brink this time around and [if I continue] it would probably destroy herself.

PRESIDENT: You can't let that happen, can you?

MITCHELL: Can't let that happen. The second thing, because she was involved we've created something of a Frankenstein with the press, you know.

PRESIDENT: She's a, she's a celebrity.

MITCHELL: That is correct. [Unclear.]

PRESIDENT: You can't do anything, like for example, ah, you know, moderate the strain of the situation where you have some friends, have her take a trip, or something like that, because, easily done in '68, you could no more do that now than fly. She's in the public eye, I see that.

MITCHELL: That's right.

[The conversation described below originally ran from 0:34:33.0 to 0:54:20.0]

[Mitchell said they created that situation, and the conversation is interrupted with a thirty second withdrawal of personal information. Then on-the-record, the president again expressed the importance of Mitchell's "services" in the campaign. There is a two minute withdrawal of personal information, which is followed by a discussion of an incident when Martha traveled from the Westchester Country Club, which was made difficult because of all the reporters there. The president shared with Mitchell his position on welfare reform, legal services and salaries of those at Public Broadcasting compared with his Cabinet and for the Supreme Court. Segments are interrupted with the withdrawal of personal material throughout. Relevant discussions regarding timing of the announcement and the Watergate investigation have been transcribed, as best as the quality of the audio permits.]

HALDEMAN: Well, there's another practical point, if you wait, the more risk each hour, really, you run the risk of more stuff, valid or invalid, surfacing on the Watergate caper type of thing.

PRESIDENT: You couldn't possibly do it if you got [unclear.]

HALDEMAN: [Unclear] you've got a medical problem, then you're stuck.

PRESIDENT: That's the other thing, if there is something that does come out, we hope nothing will, it may not, but there's always the risk.

HALDEMAN: As of now there's no problem there, 'cause as of any moment in the future there is every single potential problem.

PRESIDENT: Nope, I'd cut the loss fast. I'd cut it fast. If we're going to do it, I'd cut it fast, that's my view, generally speaking. And I wouldn't, and I don't think though, in America, I don't think the story, if we, if you put in, in human terms, I think the story is positive rather than negative, because as I said I was preparing the answer for that press conference, I just wrote it out, as I usually do, the ones that I think are terribly sensitive. And I know but, by

golly, a hell of a lot of people will like that answer. They will. And if it made anybody else that asked any other question on it look like a savage son-of-a-bitch, which I thoroughly intended them to look like.

[The conversation described below originally ran from 0:55:32.0 to 1:01:42.0]

[Withdrawal of over six minutes of personal material. As the meeting was coming to an end, the president shared “in confidence” that he had spoken with Billy Graham, who he calls “a great admirer of Martha’s,” who offered to help. The president reported he’d told Graham it was a personal problem, but the president thought Graham’s reaction telling, for others too were likely to feel sympathetic. Mitchell agreed, saying he had been reading Martha’s fan mail. As they head for the door, Haldeman added, and repeated, his thought about timing.]

HALDEMAN: With you taking this move, which people won’t expect you to do, it will be a surprise.

PRESIDENT: Oh, it is a surprise. [Pause]. Otherwise, you’re right, it will be tied right into Watergate. It won’t tie in. [Unless] you wait too long, and it simmers down—

HALDEMAN: And if other stuff develops on Watergate. The problem is, it’s always the potential of something—

PRESIDENT: And that will make it that much harder.

HALDEMAN: That's right, it would be hard to hard line Mitchell's departure under [the proposed arrangement.]

PRESIDENT: Can’t do it. I just want it to end—

[Tone for withdrawn material begins before the sentence ends, running for almost five minutes from 1:04:09.0 to 1:09:09.0 on the original tape.]

UNIDENTIFIED: Sorry about the problem. [Unclear and unrelated exchange with an unidentified person.] Alright, sir. [Door closes.]

PRESIDENT: Let me just say this. And I won't say anything further. If you, if you leave Martha aside, and what she's been through, I've been through a few of the things in my life.

MITCHELL: Without a doubt you have.

PRESIDENT: Sometimes it’ more difficult than others in the public life, very, very [unclear.]

MITCHELL: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: As a matter of fact, I really think Sam Rayburn and Joe Martin were right. No politician should ever be married.

MITCHELL: I agree, it would make it a hell of a lot easier.

HALDEMAN: Really.

MITCHELL: [Unclear.]

PRESIDENT: I think that, I think frankly that the Catholic Church was right; the Pope, and the priests, and the rest, damn it—

HALDEMAN: Just [unclear]to shut if off, it's hard as hell.

PRESIDENT: This, this, [unclear] and all the other things, God damn.

HALDEMAN: You've got a built in terrible problem—

MITCHELL: I agree.

HALDEMAN: A total conflict of interest.

PRESIDENT: And that, ah, and so there you are, and so it's just people in public life have one hell of a time because of there— [silence.] Well, anyway, we'll try to work it out.

MITCHELL: Right, we sure will.

[The conversation originally ended at 1:10:48.0. The recording ends with a snippet that was accidentally left in it. After Haldeman and Mitchell depart at 2:10 P.M., the president tells an unidentified person, probably Manolo, "I think maybe I'll take a little nap. I got up early this morning at 5 o'clock." He wanted to be awakened in 45 minutes.]

Copyright © 2014 by John W. Dean

---

<sup>1</sup> RN, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 648-649.