



**Richard Bennett, president of the Hagoth Corporation, with the system he manufactures to analyze stress in voices on the telephone.**

## Telephone Voice Analyzer Is Designed to Spot a Liar

By H. R. KLEINFELD

Watch out about lying over the phone. There may be a Hagoth on the other end.

A Hagoth is a voice-stress analyzer. It purportedly measures changes in inaudible microtremors of the voice in order to detect when someone is lying. But unlike counterparts in this new and increasingly controversial field, the Hagoth can work directly over a phone. Other voice analyzers require tape recordings.

This means that a Hagoth user

can subject someone to a lie-detector test without the person knowing what is going on. People tend to be uneasy about lie-detector tests. Nonetheless, tests have become an increasingly common practice at numerous companies in the business world. And when the lie detector tests can be carried out without a trace, the issue is even more sensitive.

The Hagoth Corporation is based

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in Issaquah, Wash. Richard Bennett, the puckish president and founder of the company, says he is selling almost all his devices to businessmen (virtually all of them, he insists, the heads of corporations with sales exceeding \$10 million). A smattering are bought by lawyers, psychologists and movie stars who like to fool around with them. Mr. Bennett says it is his understanding that the Hagoth is usually used covertly.

The thing looks a bit like a portable tape recorder. It sells for \$1,500. It has eight green lights and eight red lights. Green means no stress. Red means stress.

Business executives, Mr. Bennett says, employ the Hagoth to detect how reliable suppliers are likely to be, whether another company discussing a merger is really interested or just shopping around, whether a suit can be settled out of court, how honest fellow executives are. "The mind swims with possible applications," he says.

## Invasion of Privacy Denied

In no way does Mr. Bennett see the device as impinging on someone's privacy.

"Heavens, no," he says. "No possible way. This is no more an invasion of privacy than watching for eye movements or analyzing handwriting. Everyone has the right to see if someone is smoking or not."

Ethics aside, some uses of the device might be illegal. A muddle of confusing laws prohibit or restrict polygraph and voice-analyzer testing in various states and communities. For instance, Pennsylvania outlaws forcing a polygraph test on anyone. Moreover, Senator Birch Bayh has proposed a bill that would greatly limit lie-detector testing everywhere.

However, since it is impossible to detect when a Hagoth is being used on the phone, it would be troublesome to enforce any laws affecting it. Although Mr. Bennett discourages illegal use of the device, he speculates

that the Hagoth is probably being used outside the law by some customers.

Mr. Bennett says he is hoping to sell upward of 8,000 Hagoths this year. That would bring in \$12 million for his company, which makes no other products at the moment. He declines to disclose how many sales have been chalked up so far, or whether he has made any money. The Hagoth company came into being in April 1976 with six prototypes and \$54 in the bank.

Not everyone thinks the Hagoth works. Dektor Counterintelligence and Security of Springfield, Va., which makes an analyzer called the Psychological Stress Evaluator (1,300 sold since 1971 at \$4,400 apiece), says it tested the Hagoth and found it wanting. It says it played the identical tape several times through the device and got totally different readings each time.

Dektor and Law Enforcement Associates, a Belleville, N.J. concern, are believed to be the only other marketers of voice analyzers. Both sell chiefly to the law enforcement community.

## Claims of Reliability

Polygraph makers think all voice analyzers are useless mainly because they monitor only one supposed indicator of stress, whereas polygraphs typically monitor three (blood pressure, respiration, and the electrical conductivity of skin surfaces).

Voice analyzer makers claim their devices are as reliable as polygraphs, the voice machines, they point out, do not involve a tangle of wires to be connected to a subject.

Comments from actual Hagoth users are hard to come by. As general policy, Mr. Bennett does not divulge customer names. He says many customers have threatened to sue him if he unmasked their identities. Nevertheless, he did furnish a couple of names of users willing to talk.

Bill Singer is executive producer with Mai Tai Film Productions of Hollywood. He has used his Hagoth for four months.

"I use it to protect myself," he says. "I get calls all the time from people who want to have a meeting or come to see me. Often, they're trying to do a project that they don't want us to do but are after free advice. That's Hollywood, you know. So when I see a lot of stress, I just say no."

He adds, "My opinion of the Hagoth is it's an executive toy that can help a person make decisions. It allows you to weed out obvious liars."

Biron Valier runs a sports-management agency in St. Louis, Mo., called the Valier Creative Management Group. Right now, he represents two racquetball players and a tennis pro. He has been a Hagoth man for a year and a half.

## Use in Negotiating Contracts

"I use it to negotiate contracts," he says. "There have been instances where I would have settled for less money but the machine suggested I should press further and I wound up with a better deal. It's not a cure-all. You have to know how to interpret it. It's another club in the old golf bag."

What of the ethics? "I'm talking to a man on the phone, and if he's lying it's probably better for both of us if I find out. It will save us both time."

As for Mr. Bennett, he has been heavily promoting his analyzer in full-page ads in airline magazines, which tend to catch the eyes of traveling businessmen. Early on, he attracted a hail of publicity for himself when it came out that he analyzed the 1976 Presidential debates between Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter and concluded that Mr. Carter was considerably less candid than Mr. Ford.

And what if the Hagoth is outlawed? Mr. Bennett is not troubled. "Over the next 18 months, I expect to come out with a whole family of new products unlike anything seen before," he says. "You can call them sophisticated electronic toys for executives. And the Hagoth is easily the least exciting of the lot."