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Kissinger to Withhold Transcripts

Not all of Henry Kissinger's papers will be donated to the Library of Congress. He will withhold from history the transcripts of his telephone conversations.

They are now locked in a CIA-style safe on Vice President Rockefeller's estate.

A spokesman explained that Kissinger obtained an opinion from the State Department legal office last January that the "secretarial notes" of his telephone conversations are personal. The spokesman didn't mention that the notes, for the most part, consisted of verbatim transcripts.

During the Nixon years, Kissinger's White House office contained two tiers of tape recorders, according to sources familiar with the layout. In each tier were three recorders armed with half-hour cylinders. Thus Kissinger could tape three hours of telephone talk without changing cylinders.

All telephone calls, including his conversations with Presidents and girlfriends alike, were recorded. Two of the four secretaries in the anteroom adjoining his office spent most of their time transcribing the conversations.

Kissinger told us that only official calls were transcribed. He kept the transcripts, he explained, so he would know exactly what was said. This is important in diplomacy, he said, in order to prevent inaccuracies and misunderstandings. All the tapes were destroyed, he added.

When Kissinger moved to the State Department, the use of tapes had become sensitive. So he relied on his secretaries, listening on an extension, to

take down the conversations in shorthand.

Kissinger told us he intended to use the transcripts merely to revive his recollections when he writes his memoirs. He will not quote directly from the transcripts, he said.

Desert Song—The desert lands of southern California hold many fragile secrets. It is ageless country, rugged and scrubby, a spectrum of browns and purples. Underfoot, the soil is tawny and acrid; footprints from hundreds, even thousands of years ago can still be identified.

They remain unmolested on the empty desert, preserved by the dry, still air. They can be found among the stunted, woody shrubs, which themselves are some of the oldest living plants on earth.

Yet federal officials have allowed motorcycles, jeeps and dune buggies to invade the desert. Permits have been issued for at least two desert races—one a free-for-all motorcycle race; the other a hare-and-hound race.

Under the law, an environmental analysis is supposed to be made before such events are authorized. Yet both races had been held before the environmental analyses had been completed.

Other desert events have been authorized, including a treasure hunt for a case of Canadian Club whiskey in the foothills of the Avawatz Mountains. A caravan of jeeps and dune buggies was admitted to the Kelso Dunes. Both are protected areas.

The Bureau of Land Management also wanted to develop motorcycle

courses in the Mojave Basin, which would mean clearing out small trees and scrubs. BLM aides were instructed to take representatives of the American Motorcycle Association into the Mojave Basin to choose a course, although regulations prohibit motorcycle racing in this area.

A confidential BLM memo, signed by 18 specialists, asserts that these encroachments have been permitted by the agency charged with protecting the desert. As a result, precious desert resources have been destroyed in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act, according to the memo.

Fifteen per cent of the protected desert is so badly managed, according to the memo, that it is no longer usable even as a recreation site. "Some areas are now so degraded," the memo states, "that the motorcyclists themselves find them unappealing."

The memo also describes "growing discontent" among the staff, which is trying to preserve the desert and enforce the law.

The BLM boss in California, Ed Hasty, admitted that his agency has failed to protect the desert in some cases. He said that violators hadn't been controlled firmly because, until October, the BLM had no law enforcement authority.

Even with the new authority, he said, the enforcement can't be implemented for at least a year. He had no comment on charges that the agency had violated federal law, he said, since those charges are under investigation.