

AMERICAN NOTES

Dialing Butterfield Hate

When he revealed the existence of Richard Nixon's tapes, Alexander Butterfield doomed the President. A former White House aide, Butterfield was only truthfully replying to the questions of Senate investigators, but he incurred the enduring hatred of Nixon loyalists, who thought that he should have covered up for his old boss.

Nearly two years later, Butterfield is still being hunted down by hardcore Nixonians. Now head of the Federal Aviation Administration, which is under attack for neglecting safety standards, he has been hampered by the undercutting and sandbagging of Nixon allies in the Department of Transportation, the parent body of FAA. What is more, Butterfield has been getting midnight phone calls from old associates who have berated him for coming clean about the White House tapes. One call came from Rose Mary Woods, the former President's longtime secretary, who angrily assailed Butterfield as a "son of a bitch" and charged: "You destroyed the greatest leader this country ever had."

But outside Washington, Butterfield has found that his forthright revelation about the tapes has created quite a different reaction. On trips, Butterfield is constantly sought out by people who want to congratulate him for his honesty and candor. In Los Angeles, one woman asked him if he would shake her son's hand. "His father was killed in Viet Nam," she said. "You're the kind of man he would want his son to grow up to be."