

Here's more on today's court proceedings, from David Selvin in our Washington Bureau.

Selvin: Stephen Bull once again took the stand in Judge John Sirica's court today. Bull ... told the court that on September 29th of this year he took some seven or eight tapes to Camp David, for Nixon to review. Apparently these are the same tapes subpoenaed by ... Cox. During the same weekend, Bull testified, he stayed around to cue the tapes for Nixon's personal secretary, Rose Mary Woods, who then listened to them while in some way transcribing them. Bull said he wasn't sure if Woods was simply making notations about the tapes or whether she was making direct transcripts. Bull then said he returned about five of the tapes to the White House that next Monday [1 Oct], leaving the remaining tapes with Woods. At that point Judge John Sirica took over the questioning from assistant special prosecutor Richard Ben-Veniste, asking Bull how long Woods had kept the tapes after that weekend. According to Bull, she kept them at least another week.

Sirica: Do you know what happened to those seven or eight tapes? Bull: No, sir.

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Later Bull testified, somewhat contradicting his earlier testimony, that the tapes were locked up in a safe deposit box, under 24-hour-a-day Secret Service guard, until about October 4th, when they were taken to Key Biscayne, where Woods once again listened to them, typing as she listened.

Anyway, getting back to what happened to the two missing tapes - or, as Bull continued to stress, the two unrecorded conversations - last week, Bull told the court that while setting up equipment for Nixon to listen to the tapes, he heard the April 15th tape end in mid-sentence, apparently some hours before Nixon's meeting with Dean. Today, Bull testified that as a result of that he asked John Bennett, an assistant to ... Haig, to look for another box of tape which he expected would pick up where the last tape had ended. Bennett found another box of tape, but according to Bull, the conversation picked up late Sunday afternoon [15 Apr] or early Monday morning, leaving a gap of a few hours. However, Bull never fully explained how he knew that the conversation picked up Sunday afternoon. The few hours' gap, of course, was that time during which President Nixon had his meeting with John Dean.

Anyway, after this morning's session Bull was questioned by reporters about his testimony. [Taped insert.]

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Q: Mr. Bull, there's been all sorts of testimony as to when the President knew that he didn't have these conversations on tape. Was it as much as a month ago, as much as four months ago, or as recently as just a week ago?

Bull: It would be very difficult for me to characterize when the President believed or thought anything. But I have said that on September 29th, based on the materials that

I had, it was very difficult for me to find a certain conversation that was in question. But I never said that the President knew at that time that the conversation - particularly that April 15th conversation - was non-existent.

Q: When you told him did he show any surprise at all?

Bull: I don't recall exactly what his reaction was.

Q: Did he seem surprised?

Bull: I really just don't recall what his reaction was, but it was my understanding that a search was continuing for that tape in question, and it was only until very, very recently - perhaps the day on which Mr. Buzhardt came to Judge Sirica - that it appeared that the conversation that was requested had never been recorded.

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