

Tapes Probe Calls Nixon's Secretary

Washington

Rose Mary Woods, President Nixon's personal secretary for more than 20 years, was summoned yesterday to testify in the federal court investigation into White House tape recordings.

One White House aide testified yesterday that Miss Woods had heard all the tapes being sought by the special prosecution force for the Watergate grand jury and typed up either full or partial transcripts of them late in September.

Another White House official told U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica that Miss Woods now has 14 recordings of presidential conversations in her desk, eight of which have been in her possession for more than a month rather than locked in a secret vault in the Executive Office Building.

Six of the tapes that Miss Woods has, according to John C. Bennett, deputy assistant to the President, relate to a conversation between Mr. Nixon and John W. Dean III, then the President's counsel, on April 16, the day after a similar meeting that the White House now says went unrecorded after the tape ran out.

LETTERS

According to Dean's testimony before the Senate Watergate committee, it was on April 16 that he refused to sign two letters of resignation given him by the President and told Mr. Nixon he was unwilling to become "the White House scapegoat for Watergate."

Sirica has been holding informal factfinding hearings in his court for the last week to explore the sudden White House announcement that part of the evidence the

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President had agreed to submit to the judge and the Watergate grand jury could not be delivered pursuant to his order.

Steven V. Bull, a special assistant to the President, had told the court earlier yesterday how he had taken a dozen of the tapes to Camp David, the President's Maryland mountain retreat, on the weekend of September 28-29, for Miss Woods to review.

When Bull described how Miss Woods typed up part or all of the subpoenaed conversations in a cabin separate from the President's residence, Sirica stopped Bull's testimony briefly to interject an order that Mr. Nixon's personal secretary be summoned as a witness.

TAKEN

Of the dozen tapes that were taken to Camp David, Bennett said, Miss Woods has never returned eight.

Douglas Parker, who was the principal White House lawyer at yesterday's hearing, indicated that Miss Woods would appear voluntarily later this week. So far, all current White House aides have testified at the fact-finding sessions without attempting to invoke executive privilege to justify remaining silent.

At the White House, deputy press secretary Gerald Warren had no comment when asked whether Miss Woods would be allowed to testify before Sirica.

MEETING

The judge held a one-hour closed meeting with the White House lawyers and prosecutors after the hearing adjourned. Sirica reported later that he "didn't hear any objection" to Miss Woods testifying.

For the first time yesterday, Leonard Garment, counsel to the President, and J. Fred Buzhardt Jr., special counsel, did not attend the open hearing, leading to speculation that the White House was working on a new approach to resolving the tapes controversy. They did show up for the closed session with Sirica, however.

Miss Woods has known Mr. Nixon since he first went to the House of Representatives in 1947. She has



AP Wirephoto

ROSE MARY WOODS
She has some tapes

been his personal secretary since he became a senator in 1951, serving him through three presidential campaigns, one for governor of California and a half-dozen years as a lawyer and private citizen.

CUSTODY

Bennett, a retired general who is deputy to Alexander Haig, special assistant to Mr. Nixon, told the court that he assumed responsibility for the full library of White House tapes last July 18, when the sound system was turned off and the Secret Service surrendered custody of the recordings.

After the closed meeting, Sirica said in response to a query that he "didn't think there was any question" that seven of the nine tapes subpoenaed by the Watergate prosecutors were still in existence, even if two of the conversations were said to have gone unrecorded.

Asked when he expected the White House to deliver

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the tapes to him for screening, Sirica replied: "Soon."

"Within a month?" a reporter asked.

"I would hope so," the judge answered.

Some of the closed conference was devoted to discussing what technical experts should be called to testify before the hearing on how tape recorders can malfunction.

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