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**COURT HEARS TAPE
WITH 'BUZZING' GAP**

**Rest of Recording of Nixon
Talk With Haldeman Is
Scratchy and Fuzzy**

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 27—A copy of the tape recording of President Nixon's June 20, 1972, conversation with H. R. Haldeman—the conversation in which Mr. Nixon ordered "public relations" actions to be taken in the wake of the Watergate break-in three days earlier—was played in Federal District Court here today.

The tape is one in which 18 minutes of conversation have been erased, and as a result, the discussion of the public relations plans, which took place during those 18 minutes, was not heard.

In another Watergate matter, it was learned that the Senate investigating committee had issued subpoena for the 1,001 hundred-dollar bills that Charles G. Rebozo, the President's friend, accepted from aides of Howard R. Hughes and reportedly kept in a safe deposit box for three years. [Page 34.]

The recording played in court today was scratchy and fuzzy sounding and, in the portions where the President and his aides could be heard conversing, it was almost totally incomprehensible to most of the spectators who craned forward in their seats to listen.

But the portion of the recording containing the 18-minute "gap," as the White House

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terms it, heard in the first public playing of any of the disputed Presidential tape-recordings bearing on the break-in at Democratic headquarters in the Watergate complex, was unmistakable. For 18 minutes and 15 seconds, the tape simply buzzed—a buzzing similar to the noise that a malfunctioning electric shaver might make, varying at times in intensity and consistency.

The recording was actually played by the President's personal secretary, Rose Mary Woods, at the behest of the special Watergate prosecution.

It is Miss Woods who, according to the White House at least, is responsible for the entire 18-minute erasure. She herself feels she may be responsible only for part of it.

After listening to the tape, two prosecution lawyers, Jill Volner and Carl Feldbaum, went to the White House to inspect Miss Woods's office to determine whether she could have accidentally erased the segment.



Associated Press

Rose Mary Woods, personal secretary to President Nixon, arriving yesterday at the U.S. District Court in Washington. She was flanked by Charles H. Rhyne, left, and William H. Rhyne, his son, lawyers. She later played a tape recording in court.

According to the prosecution's spokesman, John Barker, a White House photographer was present during the lawyers' visit. Mr. Barker reported no results of the visit other than to say that "our purpose was to view." Technical experts are expected to inspect the office at a later date.

Miss Woods testified in Federal Court yesterday that she accidentally pressed the wrong button on her tape recorder while reviewing the tape last Oct. 1, and that when she discovered her mistake, she found a "gap."

The White House said in a document presented to court yesterday that her mistake had apparently caused the entire 18-minute gap—and thus obliterated, the document indicated, the conversation in which President Nixon instructed Mr. Haldeman, then one of his assistants, to take certain "public relations" moves to counteract the effect of the Watergate break-in.

Did Not Understand

But in her testimony yesterday as well as today, Miss Woods said she did not understand how her "terrible mistake," as she phrased it, could have caused the entire 18-minute erasure.

Today, moreover, she testified that the White House did not even know the full extent of the erasure until a short time ago—and some six weeks after the day she said she had made the mistake and immediately reported it to the President. And when the length of the erasure became known, she testified today, she told Mr. Nixon that she did not think "there was any way" she could have erased the entire sequence.

The questions the prosecution is trying to find answers to are thus whether Miss Woods did indeed make the mistake she described yesterday, whether she reported it in the manner and at the time she testified to and, in addition, whether her mistake, if it happened as she described, could have caused the full erasure.

The prosecution's questioning thus far has indicated its skepticism on all three questions. Chief Federal Judge John J. Sirica, who is presiding over the questioning as part of his inquiry into whether the White House is complying satisfactorily with the Watergate prosecution's subpoena of tapes and materials on nine Presidential conversations, has also been openly skeptical—and critical as well—for when Miss Woods testified before him last Nov. 8, she made no mention of any gap.

And the testimony and evidence presented today did little to lessen the general aura of skepticism—and confusion—in Judge Sirica's courtroom. Among other things, Miss Woods was asked by Mrs. Volner to act out the sequence of events surrounding the Oct. 1 "mistake." In acting out the sequence, the President's secretary made one move, apparently instinctively, that was total-

ly at variance from the description she had given the day before.

According to Miss Wood's account yesterday, she was on Oct. 1 sitting at her desk at the White House working on a transcript of the tape recording of Mr. Nixon's June 20, 1972, conversation with John D. Ehrlichman, then another Presidential aide.

The subpoena calls for the materials on the President's meeting that day with both Mr. Ehrlichman and Mr. Haldeman. A prosecution description of the meeting, attached by the Court of Appeals here to its opinion directing the President to comply with the subpoena, notes that Mr. Ehrlichman "and then" Mr. Haldeman went to see the President that morning.

But Miss Woods and the White House counsel have contended that they did not realize until Nov. 14 that the subpoena covered the Haldeman conversation. So, the secretary said yesterday, she was listening to the tape to determine when the Ehrlichman meetings ended and the Haldeman one began, in order to know when to stop making her transcript.

Wrong Button

She heard the Haldeman meeting begin, she said. And then, she went on, her phone rang. She reached for the phone and "through some error on my part," pressed the "record" button on the tape recorder rather than the "stop" button.

She said, too, that she must have pressed her foot on the pedal—an action that, according to technical experts, would apparently have been necessary if the machine were to erase.

She talked on the phone for a few minutes, she said—variously suggesting, four, five or six minutes—and then, when she hung up, she noticed that the record button was still pressed down. She replayed the tape, she said, and heard a "gap." Shortly thereafter, she said, she informed Mr. Nixon.

Today, after first eliciting from Miss Woods the testimony that the recorder was on a typing table and the phone on a desk at a right angle to the left of the typing table, Mrs. Volner asked her to demonstrate what occurred Oct. 1.

Miss Woods donned a pale blue set of ear phones and turned on the tape recorder in front of her, the same one she had used Oct. 1. Mrs. Volner instructed her to reach for the phone. Miss Woods reached for the phone and, as Mrs. Volner was quick to point out, lifted her foot from the pedal.

Visit to Office

The prospect of visiting Miss Woods's office arose in connection with the demonstration, for, according to Mrs. Volner, the prosecution's technical experts needed the typewriter and the lamp that were on the secretary's desk at the time of the incident.

But when Mrs. Volner asked for these items, Charles Rhyne, Miss Woods's attorney, insisted that Miss Woods's desks should be brought to court at well. Judge Sirica brushed aside the suggestion—"I'm not going to open up the big double doors and bring in a big desk," he said.

Whereupon the White House agreed, and Mr. Rhyne said he not only agreed but also insisted that the prosecution see the office itself.

At another point today Miss Woods testified that on Oct. 1, after realizing her error, she listened to the gap for only about the same amount of time that she had been on the phone—four or five minutes. She testified that she had then gone to Mr. Nixon and told him what had happened.

"Weren't you curious" about how long the gap lasted?, Mrs. Volner asked.

"I was not curious because we didn't need it," Miss Woods replied.

Did the President ask if there had been "additional erasure?" Mrs. Volner asked.

"No, the President told me not to worry about it since it was not a subpoenaed tape," came the answer.

It is Miss Wood's contention, apparently, that she could have

erased only as many minutes of the tape as the number of minutes she was on the phone. The copy of the tape played today did indeed change in tone after about five minutes; beyond that, though, the tape itself gave no indication of what might have happened.

Miss Woods testified that it was not until the White House made its copies of the tapes, pursuant to preparing to comply with the subpoena, that it realized that the gap lasted 18 minutes. She said she was not sure of the date—Nov. 15 or 18, she suggested. According to the document presented by the White House yesterday, however, the copies were apparently made by Nov. 14.

In any event, by Miss Woods's account, she told the President at that point that she didn't think she could be responsible for the entire erasure.

"I told them," she said, apparently referring to Mr. Nixon and Alexander M. Haig, his chief of staff, "I didn't think there was any way my hitting the recorder button could have caused that long a gap, because I thought I would have remembered that long a telephone conversation."

She testified too that last Wednesday she received a subpoena from the Watergate prosecution, delivered to her by Leonard Garment, the White House counsel, who had accepted it for her and who, she said, "sent it over with a little note, saying, here's your subpoena."

Miss Woods said that after she received the subpoena, Mr. Haig told her that "none of the White House lawyers would come down with me." He told her, she said that because of the gap, "I should get a lawyer of my own."

In another action today that seemed to add to the confusion over the tape recordings, Mrs. Volner read into the record some notes written by Steve Bull, a White House aide, which had been in Miss Woods's file. In the notes, Mr. Bull described several of the tape recordings as being of "good" quality.

Miss Woods, who testified earlier this month that many White House tapes were of poor quality, spoke up. It should be noted, she said, that the tapes described by Mr. Bull as "good" were all taken in the President's Oval Office.

Some of the tapes in dispute were made in the Executive Office Building.

The original tape recordings are now in Judge Sirica's "protective custody" and are being guarded by United States marshals. Judge Sirica has indicated previously that he does not intend to listen to the originals until a panel of technical experts selected by both the White House and the prosecution examine them.