

Built-In Guards On Tape Device

Washington

The tape recorder that President Nixon's personal secretary, Rose Mary Woods, has testified she used to transcribe a conversation of June 20, 1972, between the President and his former chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman, has built-in protections against inadvertent erasure.

An independent examination and tests with such a machine yesterday showed that more than one mistake must be made at the same time, whether the machine is operated by hand or by using a foot treadle.

Experiments in using the machine, however, show that the small, transformer-equipped, high-intensity lights that Miss Woods uses on her White House desk and typing table are capable of generating the kind of sustained hum that was heard during the 18-minute gap Tuesday when a copy of the tape was played in Chief U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica's courtroom.

Miss Woods testified yesterday that she never used the Uher Universal 5000 tape recorder before October 1, the day that White House aide Stephen Bull brought her the new fidelity equipment, and the day that she said at least four to five minutes of the gap was created.

She repeated her contention that she used the unfamiliar equipment, frequently interrupted by telephone calls on several lines, in a state of fatigue induced by 29 hours of weekend work at Camp David, in Maryland, in transcribing a nearly inaudible tape that included the conversation on June 20, 1972, between the President and Haldeman.

A section of the recording was obliterated, Miss Woods

testified, when, at the start of a telephone call, she inadvertently depressed the light gray "recording" key on the Uher's control keyboard, while keeping her foot down on the Fidelitape FP-10 treadle she was using to advance and rewind the tape for transcription.

By aiming her finger for the dark gray "stop" key and hitting the "recording" key instead, Miss Woods would have overridden a standard protection used by secretaries who are accustomed to depressing a foot-treadle so that both hands are free for typing a tape transcript.

There is a similar "fail-safe" feature for most tape recorders when they are operated by hand. Both a tape-advancing and recording button usually must be depressed. On the Uher, these keys are far enough apart to normally require using one finger of each hand.

For most tape recorders, the foot-treadle for transcribing does not involve recording at all, but merely advancing and rewinding the tape. The treadle supplied by Uher has two buttons, one for each operation.

The treadle used by Miss

Woods takes only slight pressure to operate. It is also easy to release. During a courtroom demonstration Tuesday, after a simulated telephone call interruption, Miss Woods took her foot off the treadle quickly, indicating this may be a natural reaction.

Photographs showing Miss Woods seated at her White House desk and typing table, which were exhibited in court yesterday, indicate

that Miss Woods had to stretch as she answered a telephone call. The indication was that some contortion was needed to keep the toe of a shoe on the treadle.

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