

Clerk to Judge Sirica Listens In on Tapes

By Wesley G. Pippert
United Press International

As chief U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica monitors President Nixon's subpoenaed Watergate tape recordings, another person listens, too: Todd Christofferson, a former Mormon missionary, who serves as the judge's law clerk and alter ego.

Sirica is in the process of examining the tapes to see whether any contain evidence that should be turned over to the Watergate special prosecution force. He listened to one tape, that of a June 20, 1972, meeting, for four hours last week.

Sirica and Christofferson, two men vastly unlike in backgrounds but bound together by one of the most serious internal crises in the country's history, sit together in a jury room behind courtroom No. 2 in the U.S. District Courthouse.

Christofferson, 28, joined Sirica as law clerk on Sept. 1, 1972, just two weeks before the original seven Watergate indictments were handed down. The assignment generally runs for a year, but Sirica asked him to stay on.

He will leave in May to begin a three-month military obligation.

Christofferson was born in Pleasant Grove, Utah,

where his father, Dr. Paul Christofferson, was a veterinarian. The father treated cattle who were suffering from a fluorine emission at a steel plant, and later he was Utah state veterinarian.

The family moved to New Brunswick, N.J., where the father worked for a Squibb laboratory, and then to Chicago, where he joined the William Cooper and Newpew's laboratory.

Todd, now a tall, soft-spoken, blond-headed young man, did his undergraduate work at Brigham Young in Utah, and took 1965 and 1966 off, as many Mormon young men do, to serve as a missionary in Argentina.

In the Mormon tradition, he does not smoke or drink.

Sirica, 69, grew up in rough-and-tumble circumstances, became a good friend of heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey, and legend has it that he himself once hit a policeman on the jaw.

Christofferson was graduated from Duke Law School, President Nixon's alma mater. He and his wife, Kathy, have two children, Todd Andrew, 3, and Brynn, 18 months.

Christofferson says of his relationship with Sirica: "For purposes of confidentiality, I am his alter ego."