

SFChronicle
A Million or Two

Editor — Clement Stone's statement, "What's a million or two, particularly when you can change the course of history according to the principles for which you stand?" is the second most frightening remark in my memory.

For what principles does he stand? As one of the manipulated, I'd like to have some inkling of my destiny. I do have a pretty good idea, however.

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An Easy Task

Editor — With respect to the White House tapes, it would be vitally important to prove conclusively that they are, in fact, historical record tapes to which no one with any interest in the issue of their contents has ever had access. Unfortunately, any access to such tapes immediately destroys their credibility. . . .

Having been for more than 18 years in the motion picture production business where tape recordings are extensively used, I can assure you that the doctoring of tape recordings is one of the world's easiest tasks and in most cases there is no way of detecting the alteration. Over the years that I have edited sound tape, I have, for cinematic purposes, transposed words and sentences so as to quite alter the meaning of the original recording. It is a simple matter to change the tense of a sentence from present to past, or vice versa. It is equally easy to change a sentence from negative to positive, or vice

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versa. In at least one instance we were able to put a word into a speaker's mouth which he never spoke. The word was created quite artificially from other sounds uttered by the speaker during a recording of only a few minutes duration. . . . Beyond access to a couple of tape recorders, the sophisticated and highly refined equipment usually referred to in discussions of this sort of thing consists of a pair of scissors, some scotch

tape and an ear that is not totally tone deaf. Nor does the manipulation of this sophisticated equipment require vast experience. . . .

With respect to whether tapes have been doctored or not, the point is simply that when audio tape recordings are used for political purposes they should immediately be suspect if only because there is no way of detecting alterations, if any.

I can urge anyone to accept tape recorded evidence only with the most extreme caution. Seeing may be believing, but anyone who uncritically accepts hearing as believing is a fool.

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