



**ROSE MARY WOODS**  
... finds gap in tapes



**JOHN C. BENNETT**  
... describes playback



**JUDGE JOHN J. SIRICA**  
... seeks expert analysis

## WXPost Tapes Have Puzzling 'Gap'

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### Nixon Aide Testifies

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President Nixon's personal secretary, Rose Mary Woods, has found a puzzling "gap" in one of Mr. Nixon's Watergate-related tapes, a White House aide testified yesterday.

Deputy presidential assistant John C. Bennett said in federal court here that Miss Woods complained to him on Tuesday that one of the recordings she was reviewing for the President seemed to trail off in mid-conversation.

"She apparently had found a gap in what she expected to be a recorded conversation," Bennett said. He said he presumed it involved a talk between the President and former White House counsel John W. Dean III.

The White House aide said that Miss Woods mentioned the problem to him when he returned to the White House Tuesday evening following his first day's testimony on the tapes before U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica.

"Did Miss Woods seem to be surprised?" Judge Sirica asked him.

"I think she was puzzled," Bennett said. "The tape was on the machine. She said, 'I've got a gap in this.'"

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#### TAPES, From A1

Bennett, the official custodian of Mr. Nixon's secret tapes since last July 18, said he told her: "Rose Mary, I don't know what portion of the tape you're interested in, but do the best you can."

Bennett said that he was not certain just what tape Miss Woods was having a problem with. She has had eight of Mr. Nixon's secret Watergate tapes for more than a month and another six were given to her Monday. But not all of them are covered by the subpoenas that were issued either by former Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox

or by the Senate Watergate committee.

The White House asserted last week that two of the tapes that Cox subpoenaed for the Watergate grand jury here—one of them a crucial April 15, 1973, talk between the President and Dean about the Watergate scandal—never existed.

Miss Woods was told on Monday, however, that the President wanted an account of a conversation he had with Dean on April 16—which was not subpoenaed. Bennett said he gave her half a dozen tapes, any one of which might contain a recording of that encounter.

Under questioning by Watergate Assistant Special Prosecutor Richard Benveniste, Bennett said Miss Woods was playing the tapes back on an ordinary machine without any special devices that he knew of for preventing inadvertent erasures or mutilations.

If any chance damage were done to the tapes, Bennett acknowledged, there would be no way to retrieve the conversations.

"So far as I know," he said, "there is no copy of the tapes in existence."

Bennett testified Tuesday that White House chief of staff Alexander M. Haig Jr. told him Miss Woods was "transcribing" conversations on the tapes in her possession for the President. Yesterday he said she might simply be summarizing them instead of making word-for-word transcripts.

Miss Woods, Bennett explained, walked into his White House office yesterday morning after reading of Bennett's Tuesday testimony about her "transcribing" Mr. Nixon's

conversations about the Watergate scandal.

"She said, 'I want you to know that's not the right word,'" Bennett related. She said, "I did not transcribe the tapes. That's the wrong word to use."

"I said, 'Rose Mary, just tell the truth when you go over there,'" Bennett said of Miss Woods' expected appearance as a witness.

White House lawyers said Miss Woods would testify, but it was not clear when she will be called. Former White House chief of staff H.R. (Bob) Haldeman is expected to be on the stand today.

The lengthy hearings on the missing conversations—one with Dean and the other a phone call that Mr. Nixon placed to former Attorney General John N. Mitchell on June 20, 1972—are certain to continue into next week.

Judge Sirica announced yesterday that he wants an analysis and testimony by electronic experts to explore "the reasons that might exist for the non-existence of these conversations." He said that phase "may well be the most important and conclusive part of these hearings."

White House lawyers and witnesses have said the tape ran out before Mr. Nixon's talk with Dean in the Executive Office Building on April 15, a Sunday night. They say the phone Mr. Nixon used to call Mitchell was not hooked up to the long-secret system for recording presidential conversations.

The Secret Service agent who helped install the system in February of 1971, Randy Nelson, testified yesterday that fresh reels of tape were not normally installed on weekends.

But Nelson, who went to a new assignment early in 1972, said under cross-examination that he never knew of a tape running out on a weekend either.

"Not to my knowledge," he said. But he added: "I've heard that a tape ran out."

The last witness of the day, Alfred Wong, now deputy assistant director of the Secret Service, said that he unsuccessfully opposed White House demands in 1971 that the Secret Service install the system, but was overruled by then presidential assistant Alexander Butterfield. He said Butterfield told him "the President wanted a historical record of the activities of his office."

Wong said he eventually agreed to the system only on condition that Secret Service technicians and agents not listen to any of the tapes.