

# Miss Woods Tied to Tape Gap

By Robert L. Jackson  
and Ronald J. Ostrow  
Los Angeles Times

Rose Mary Woods, President Nixon's long-time personal secretary, is prepared to testify that she erased an 18-minute segment of a key White House tape subpoenaed in the Watergate investigation, it has been learned.

A high administration source, confirming Miss Woods' responsibility for the erasure, said he presumed it had been done accidentally.

The Los Angeles Times learned that on Thanksgiving, a day after Mr. Nixon's Watergate lawyers disclosed that an 18-minute segment of the tape was blank, Miss

Woods decided to consult an outside lawyer—Washington attorney Charles S. Rhyne, a friend and law school classmate of Mr. Nixon at Duke University. She met Rhyne again Saturday.

The erased portion of the tape was potentially crucial evidence because it was part of a conversation between the President and H. R. Haldeman, then White House chief of staff, on June 20, 1972—three days after the Watergate break-in at Democratic Party headquarters.

Rhyne is expected to represent Miss Woods at a U.S. District Court hearing that will be resumed today on

See TAPES, A2, Col. 5



ROSE MARY WOODS  
... consults attorney

## TAPES, From A1

this latest problem involving the tapes.

Rhyne refused to comment on the matter Saturday and would not say whether he was representing Miss Woods. "I'm a lawyer, and I've known her for I don't know how many years," Rhyne said. "I can't tell you anything."

Although one administration official said he understood Miss Woods would take the witness stand at today's hearing before Judge John J. Sirica, another source said it was possible she would invoke her Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination and refuse to testify.

Any testimony by Miss Woods contending that the erasure was accidental is likely to draw intense ques-

tioning by Watergate special prosecutors because of her earlier sworn statements regarding the tapes.

On Nov. 8, at a hearing in Sirica's court on two other missing tapes, Miss Woods testified that she had spent more than 30 hours at Mr. Nixon's request trying to transcribe conversations on the June 20 tape, which would have included the erased portion.

She gave no indication during that testimony that anything was missing from Mr. Nixon's conversation with Haldeman. She grew increasingly irritated as Watergate Assistant Prosecutor Jill Vollner questioned her about what precautions she had taken to ensure that nothing was erased from the tape.

Miss Woods assured the persistent Mrs. Vollner that she had had no difficulty understanding instructions she was given on operating the tape-playing machine and would not have pushed the erasure button by mistake.

Miss Woods has worked for Mr. Nixon for 23 years.

James S. Doyle, spokesman for Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon A. Jaworski, declined comment on Miss Woods' involvement, saying: "We expect there will be a full fact-finding hearing on Monday, and

there is no need for anybody to do any speculating beforehand."

In disclosing the missing 18-minute segment last Wednesday, J. Fred Buzhardt, Mr. Nixon's Watergate counsel, said the June 20 discussion between Mr. Nixon and Haldeman broke off into "an audible tone and no conversation" for the 18-minute interval.