



AP Wirephoto

A recorder of this type was used by secretary Rose Mary Woods when, she says, she believes she inadvertently pushed the wrong button

Recorder Expert Says Mistake Hard to Make

Washington

The service manager for an electronics company distributing the tape recorder used by presidential secretary Rose Mary Woods is skeptical that she could have inadvertently erased 18 minutes of a Watergate tape, as she has claimed.

Contacted by telephone at the Los Angeles headquarters of Martel Electronic Sales Inc., which markets the German-made Uher recorder used by Miss Woods in transcribing the tapes, Carl Bennett said yesterday the chances of such a mistake were "poor . . . very, very low because of the way it is designed."

Bennett and other recording experts contacted emphasized there are built-in

safeguards on nearly every tape recorder against the kind of accidental erasure described by Miss Woods. "To erase, you have to manually depress two buttons simultaneously," said Bennett. "If you press either one first, it won't do anything."

"It's not easy to do at all. It's hard for me to see where it's a mistake," the service manager said.

The only other way erasure could have occurred, Bennett said, would be if Miss Woods had been using the tape recorder with a microphone which has a one-stage record mechanism. It was unlikely though that, as a secretary, Miss Woods would be using the microphone. "Most secretaries don't use a mike. They use a

foot switch which has 'play' and 'rewind', but no 'record' capability," Bennett said.

Bennett said that for Miss Woods to have accidentally put the tape recorder into an erase position, as she testified before U.S. district Judge John J. Sirica yesterday, it would be necessary to press the foot pedal to 'play' position and simultaneously press a key labeled 'record.'

Bennett also was puzzled by the source of the audible hum which replaced the President's conversation with H. R. Haldeman on an 18-minute portion of the tape. "That baffles me," he said. "There shouldn't be anything but a slight hissing noise. There's nothing in the equipment which could cause that tone."

Bennett described the Uher 5000 model used by Miss Woods as "a professional piece of gear" which sells for \$500.

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