

WXPost  
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

The latest Presidential insult to the American public is not to be tolerated. With some skepticism, I was willing to give Mr. Nixon the benefit of the doubt on his allegation that no tapes existed of two important White House conversations. To believe that a competent executive secretary accidentally erased an essential eighteen-minute segment of yet another tape stretches our credulity way beyond the breaking point.

I agree with constitutional experts who say that Article IV of the amendments to the U.S. Constitution was violated by the President of the United States in the first instance when he indiscriminately taped conversations without the knowledge of the persons being taped. His continuing dissemblance in the Watergate affair, aggravated by an apparent disregard for truth and manipulation of fact, leave us with no alternative but to doubt everything the administration says on any subject: from the energy crisis to domestic employment statistics.

I have always respected the office of the presidency, but I no longer have faith that this man is competent to govern the United States.

LESLEY GEROULD DUNN.  
Washington.

There are two conclusions that can be drawn from President Nixon's handling of the Watergate tapes. The first is that the President is innocent but an idiot. Assuming his innocence and looking at the incredible string of prevarications and reversals that have emanated from the White House in the past several months, we can only conclude that Nixon, the master politician, has completely lost touch with political realities in this country. Given his previous success in manipulating public opinion as evidenced by his landslide re-election just a year ago, this seems unlikely.

The second conclusion, of course, is that the President is guilty of obstruction of justice, knows it, and is using every trick in his repertoire to save his skin. Either way, the country and the presidency are in sad shape for the next three years and Mr. Nixon has no one to blame but himself.

DAVID M. CROWE.  
Alexandria.

I am a 50-year-old housewife with absolutely no training in electronics other than reading the instructions that come with various gadgets.

Nearly 20 years ago my husband bought my first tape recorder—so we could enjoy symphony and opera broadcasts at our leisure. Over the

years I have made hundreds of tapes on dozens of machines, from radio and television broadcasts, cylinders, records and yes, even other tapes and the telephone. I have used patchcord and microphones.

I have used every type of equipment—dictaphones, tape recorders, wire recorders, cassettes and cartridges. In this time I have lost only ONE recording—and that due not to my own carelessness, but due to a power outage which upset a timer.

Neither have I ever "accidentally" erased one.

I have never run out of tape in the middle of a recording because I know how long any length of tape will run when played at any speed—and if I am not sure, the time is usually printed right on the back of the box it came in.

If the White House, with all its highly educated, skilled and paid electronics experts can't find anyone to run a simple tape recorder, or a veteran secretary has trouble with an every-day dictating machine. I will be available at any time to "volunteer" for either of the jobs at the current "GS" rate and salary.

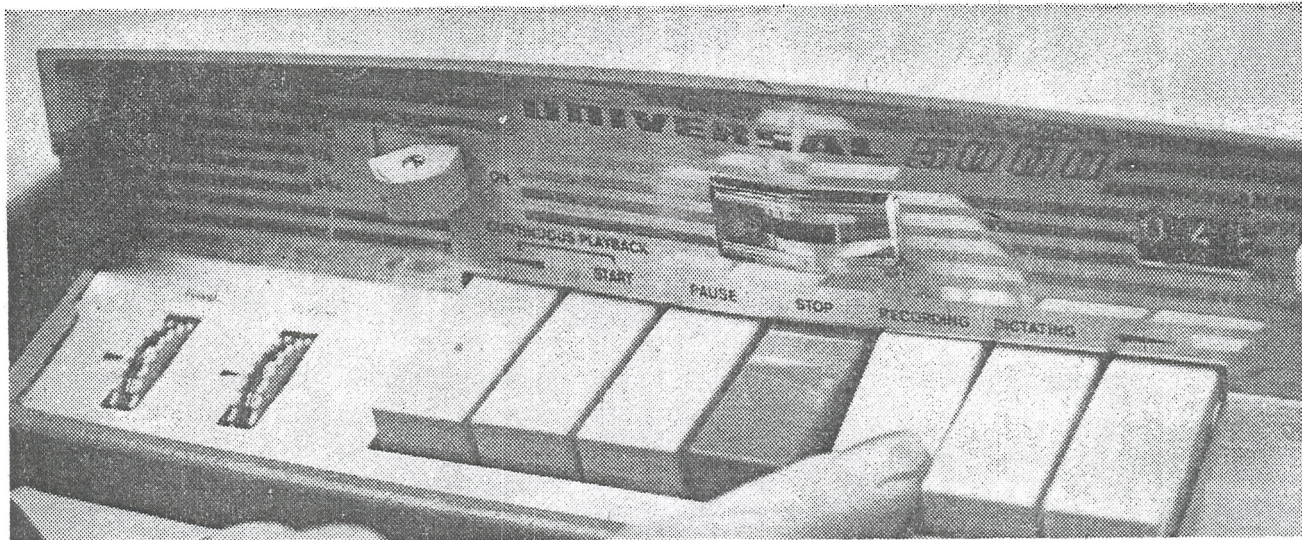
MRS. JAMES H. BROWN.  
Alexandria.

Jack Anderson's column on the CIA's practice of taping the most secret deliberations of Kremlin leaders suggests a way out of the Watergate tapes impasse. Surely the KGB has been just as efficiently doing to the Oval Office what the CIA does in the Kremlin. And surely, if Judge Sirica asked nicely, Brezhnev would be happy to help his old friend Richard Nixon by releasing the tapes the KGB made of the missing conversations. It could all go to show that detente has its uses.

RICHARD ZORZA.  
Cambridge, Mass.

For eight months I have witnessed an unbelievable assault on his character, his integrity and his ability to effectively lead this country. I watch with disbelief and disgust at the amazingly short memories of the all too numerous, apathetic and squeamish elements of our society who discount his accomplishments in foreign affairs, domestic affairs and in Vietnam. These elements seem to have forgotten the courage and dedication of this man who would choose to bomb the enemy to gain freedom for his fellow Americans rather than abandon them by a unilateral cessation of bombing on the eve of elections for party advantage or beg for them on bended knee. His political adversaries and large elements

# The President, the Tapes and Questions of Credibility



of the news media, failing to defeat him at the polls, now strive to eliminate his presence through impeachment or forced resignation. The continuous outflow of "network analysis," distortions, half-truths, insinuations and slanted reporting directed against him are not unlike the absurd rhetoric I was forced to hear for over six years. In the eyes of many, he is a convicted man . . . convicted without trial or proof of guilt. How ironic . . . isn't this the country where men are afforded the privilege of innocence until proven guilty? His plight is even more distressing for he is strongly criticized by his political opponents for speaking in self-defense. How absolutely disgusting.

I said it upon hearing of his election in 1968; upon learning of the Cambodian operation and the Son Tay raid in 1970; upon learning of the resumption of bombing and the mining of North Vietnam in 1972; upon hearing of his re-election in 1972 and witnessing the B-52 raids over Hanoi that followed; upon my return to freedom on March 4, 1973; and upon shaking his hand on May 24, 1973. To those panic-stricken Americans of so little faith and courage, I say it again today. Thank God for Richard M. Nixon . . . my President, my commander-in-chief and my fellow American.

ORSON G. SWINDLE, III,

Major, U.S. Marine Corps,

POW North Vietnam,

November 11, 1966 to March 4, 1973

Havelock, N.C.

I can see why judges, lawyers and other lay people to the secretarial field might conceivably believe how Miss Woods' tape could get "accidentally"

erased. And I can see why even other secretaries, such as myself, might find some truth in the possibility of pushing a wrong button without realizing it for a short time, but I don't see how this could go on for 18 minutes, or even "approximately" 5 1/2 minutes.

When a secretary stops transcribing because of an interruption, such as a telephone call, it would require a deliberate determination and a difficult and awkward physical effort not to take her foot off the foot pedal. This automatically stops the machine and it is unnecessary to turn the machine off. In addition, if Miss Woods kept her foot on the foot pedal as she claims while she "turned around" to answer the phone, her foot for those 18 (or "approximately" 5 1/2) minutes must have been turned backward from her body, or at least sideways, and she would have had to be both terribly uncomfortable and clearly aware of why she was.

SHIRLEE A. BROWNE.

Washington.

What a pity that the entertainment value of the current situation episode on The Tapes must be missed. Of course we are not supposed to believe the explanations of the disappearing tapes, and manipulated tapes, and "no more bombshells"—any more than we were supposed to believe Fibber McGee or Laurel and Hardy. With Laurel and Hardy the intervals between gag lines were in minutes, sometimes seconds; with The Tapes the intervals are in days or half days. The only question remaining is what they will use in place of custard pies to throw in

each others' faces. Laurel and Hardy were called inane fun. It's still inane but the current situation doesn't allow it to be fun.

However, it is diverting, in a more potent sense of the word. Magnetic tapes are no better reflection of the underlying reality than are a hall full of curved mirrors. But while we are guffawing over the mirrors—or the tapes—the real shape of the truth sits in a neighboring corner, overlooked by those who claim to be seeking it. It would be more productive if we could relegate The Tapes to the comic page and turn the serious attention to the supposedly serious original questions.

R. SLUSSER.

Washington.

Secretaries of the world—rejoice! Your little "goofs" are forgivable. Now, if your boss complains that you are anything less than perfect, simply point to that big-hearted fellow in the White House who so magnanimously overlooked his secretary's "biggie".

FLORENCE ORBACH.

Rockville.

We disrupt orderly political life among ourselves by indulging in unending speculations about the failings and fate of the President.

Indeed, it should be recognized that there may be in the current demands for investigation and impeachment, a considerable amount of silliness and self-indulgence, if not even hysteria. There may be as well too much of the

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political paranoia which has, for a quarter of a century, corrupted the crowd around Richard Nixon. Some of Mr. Nixon's crowd have long seen foreign subversion lurking behind every domestic dissenter. Some of his critics, on the other hand, now manage to see an incipient dictator even in a President who is very much on the run. Both camps of extremists should be counselled, along with the American people and the American press, to "take it easy" — a most salutary prescription for the perpetuation of constitutionalism in the United States.

GEORGE ANASTAPLO,  
Lecturer in the Liberal Arts,  
The University of Chicago;  
Professor of Political Science,  
Rosary College

Chicago.

President Nixon has urged full disclosure of all the facts involved in Watergate. However, his credibility in this endeavor is not served by according passive lip service to the investigation. In this connection, it is appropriate to inquire why he has not publicly and privately urged G. Gordon Liddy to reveal all he knows about the Watergate incident. An appeal to G. Gordon Liddy from the President suggesting that it is Liddy's patriotic duty to make full disclosure may prove fruitful. At the very least it would indicate that the President is affirmatively seeking the truth.

HOWARD S. BOROS.

Washington.

Originally, there were nine Watergate-related tapes in the possession of the President. Then, Nixon announced that two of the tapes were "missing." Then, it seems that a crucial portion of another tape was "accidentally" erased by the President's personal secretary, Rose Mary Woods. Now, the White House wants to keep another two tapes from the court on the pretext of protecting "the confidentiality of advice given to the President." On a scale of nine, the President's credibility is now at four . . . And counting.

MARTIN G. ANDERSON.

Fairfax.

I understand that the President has hired some new lawyers to supplement the staff he has already acquired to aid in his Watergate defense.

It would be interesting to know how much it is costing the public to defend the President against the public. Perhaps those funds can be included in the GSA under "presidential security" also.

BARBARA M. HEALY.

Rockville.