

Miss Woods's Lawyer Denies She Intentionally Erased Tape

By JOHN M. CREWDSON

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LOS ANGELES, Jan. 31—An attorney for Rose Mary Woods, President Nixon's personal secretary, expressed certainty today that his client had not intentionally erased part of a crucial White House tape recording but held open the possibility that someone else might have done so.

Charles Rhyne, a former dean of the Duke University Law School, said that he expected Miss Woods to repeat her public statement on her role in the mysterious disappearance of the Presidential conversation before the Watergate grand jury tomorrow.

In open testimony in Federal District Court in Washington last month, Mr. Rhyne noted that Miss Woods had asserted only that she "might have" been responsible for about five of the 18½ missing minutes in the tape of a conversation on

June 20, 1972, between the President and H. R. Halderman, then his chief of staff.

Reached by telephone at his law office in Washington, Mr. Rhyne declared that "I know it's not my client" who might have been responsible for the disappearance of the conversation. A panel of six recording specialists has told Federal District Judge John J. Sirica that the erasure was probably caused by an intentional starting and stopping of Miss Woods's tape machine while the Nixon-Halderman conversation was being replayed.

Asked where he thought the responsibility might lie, Mr. Rhyne suggested that "either the [tape] was played with by somebody and they're ashamed to come forward and admit it," or a "defective diode" in the Uher 5000 recorder purchased for Miss Woods's use might have been at fault.