

# The Tape Battle's Origin

Washington

It was a hot, muggy afternoon last July. President Nixon was in the hospital suffering from viral pneumonia. A surprise witness was called before the Senate Watergate committee.

Within a few short moments, a former White House aide named Alexander P. Butterfield had spilled the political beans:

The President, it seemed, had bugged himself.

Butterfield appeared composed as he testified that approximately three years before President Nixon had installed automatic listening devices in his private offices and on his telephones.

For posterity's sake and with Mr. Nixon's agreement, the devices recorded presidential conversations without discrimination, Butterfield said.

Gasps rippled through the hearing room. Reporters scrambled for telephones. Almost everyone present appeared to recognize the grave implications of Butterfield's testimony: that all of the President's conversations in his White House and other offices had been taped.

And that's when the battle of the tapes began.

*Associated Press*