

An Overnight

Best Seller

3.46 Copies a Minute

By B. D. Colen

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By simply installing a few tape recorders around the house, President Richard M. Nixon has done what thousands of authors have sweated for years to do: He has created an overnight best seller.

By 11:21 a.m. yesterday, three hours and 21 minutes after they went on sale, the 792 copies of the transcriptions of the President's tape recordings had been snapped up by eager readers—at \$12.25 a copy.

The massive volume produced by Mr. Nixon with a little help from his friends bears the title: Submission of Recordings of Presidential Conversations to the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives, by President Richard Nixon.

And while it is unlikely to set any sort of long-term sales records, the book's initial sales rate of 3.46 copies per minute put even such

nongovernment best sellers as "The Exorcist" to shame.

"I've never heard of anything like it," said Lillian Friedman, hardback buyer for the Brentano's book store chain, when told of the pace of sales at the main Government Printing Office book shop on North Capitol Street between H and I Streets NW.

Edward Brink, manager of book stores for the Government Printing Office, said the GPO "sort of expected" the run on the President's book, because "along with the information contained in it, it's kind of a historical first: what other time in life can you hear what the President says on the telephone?"

Howard Pallik, of Suitland, agreed with Brink that the book has historic importance.

"If the man gets impeached, these could be

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BOOKS, From C1

worth a lot of money," said Pallik, waving the two copies he had just purchased. "I understand there were only 5,000 printed.

"I'll keep one always, and I can sell the other sometime," said Pallik, who said he is 26 and unemployed, but was willing to make a \$24.50 investment in the works of the President.

Louis L. DaPra, a Washington attorney in private practice, purchased a copy of the 1,308-page volume because "I'm very curious to discover what the actual truth is in this case. What I'm trying to do is find out for myself what's in here."

DaPra said he also bought a copy of the GPO report on the President's tax troubles (which has not been selling particularly well, according

to GPO officials) because "I like to know if people are taking deductions I'm not taking. This is all history in the making," he said.

Shortly after 11 a.m., when the television newsmen, cameramen, sound men and light men who had jammed the store were thinning out, a man in the formal black livery of a chauffeur, complete with peaked cap, entered the store and purchased two copies of the President's best seller.

"Are those for you?" a reporter inquired.

"No," he replied. "They're for a novelist-historian from Connecticut. I'm not allowed to say who he is."

Kathy Pitegoff, a 20-year-old college sophomore who is doing volunteer work for Common Cause, was struggling with an awkward stack of six of the 2½-in-thick vol-

umes. A reporter suggested that she set her burden down before being interviewed.

"Why not? They're not worth anything anyway," she said. "I think anything of any importance has been taken out. I think he (Nixon) is a very shrewd man. . . I think this is a waste of paper."

Robert Catz, a 30-year-old attorney from Arlington, was carrying two copies of the President's latest book out of the store.

"I think I'll probably send one to my family in California, and keep one myself," he said. "I also have a copy of the original Watergate indictment. I think a lot of people in Washington have made Watergate a hobby. I got hooked on it when the Senate hearings were on public television."

While the GPO store was

sold out of the book by noon yesterday, there will be another thousand copies on the shelves today, and yet another thousand in the store on Friday, according to GPO spokesman David H. Brown.

The book was scheduled originally for an initial printing of 5,000, said Brown, but after yesterday's run on the store, the first edition was increased to 15,000.

The GPO has had at least one item sell more briskly than the President's book: The Warren Commission Report on the Kennedy Assassination.

When that volume initially went on sale, customers stood in lines around the GPO building, and the store ran out of change.

However, it is hard to compare the sales of the two books, said Brown, because

there was much more advance notice of the publication of the Warren Commission report.

Not only didn't the public have advance notice the book was going to be available, but the publication came as a surprise to the GPO.

It is not unusual for the GPO to be called upon to produce reports and books on short notice, between its productions of such scintillating reading as "Use of Concrete on the Farm" and "Labor Law and Practice in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia."

But it is unusual for the agency to be asked to produce such a massive volume on short order.

"We were alerted by the White House on Friday that there was a special print job for the weekend," said

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Brown. "We got the first copy at 2:45 a.m. Monday, and we delivered the first batch of 50 to the White House at 8 a.m. Tuesday, that's roughly 29 hours."

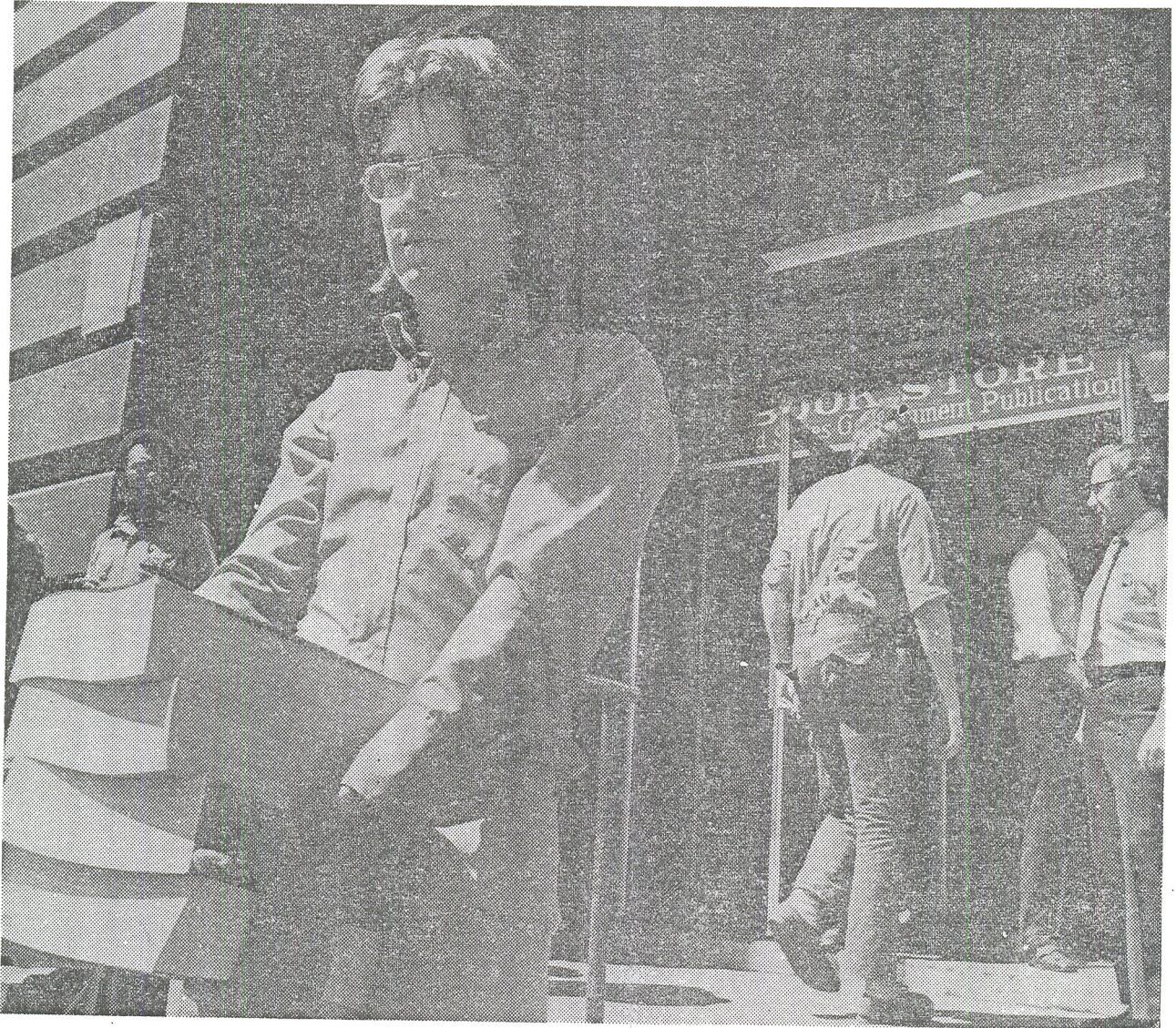
"For a one-volume document (in paper back) it's one of the thickest we've ever produced. We had to bind one part, then the other, then put them together," said Brown, explaining that the President's book will thicken for the GPO binding machines. All GPO publications are sold for cost plus 50 percent.

Despite its unquestionable historical value and the current interest in Watergate, the resident's book will have to go some to become the GPO all-time best seller. That title has been held for more than 15 years by a little pamphlet that has sold in excess of 16 million copies. Its title: "Infant Care."

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By Linda Wheeler—The Washington Post

David Mills, a messenger for a law firm, carries away the last four copies of a book of transcripts.