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Daily News Summaries Prepared

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The three weeks since the release of President Nixon's taped White House conversations on Watergate may have been a time of good reading for his critics. But not for him.

Every day since the transcripts have been out, intensifying Mr. Nixon's impeachment dilemma, the President has been reading all about it in his daily news summaries—with the bark off.

The daily report of what network television news and the press are saying, which goes to Mr. Nixon's Oval Office desk in two parts each morning and afternoon, has been playing Watergate and the tape transcripts front and center.

In mid-afternoon, he gets the digest of newspapers printed that morning; by 8 a.m. the next day, he receives the previous day's TV news highlights. Each segment usually runs more than 20 single-spaced pages.

On the morning after the transcripts were released,

the President learned from the staff-prepared report that TV news and the press had zeroed in immediately on the key question of whether he knew about and had authorized the payment of hush money to Watergate defendants.

Since then, a review of the summaries shows, news reports of the legal tug-of-war between Mr. Nixon's lawyers and the House Judiciary Committee over access to additional tapes have been before him daily.

Unlike the transcripts themselves, nothing is screened out and as unintelligible and no characterizations by newscasters and columnists are deleted. The digest in many places makes for very critical reading for Mr. Nixon.

On May 1, the day after the transcripts were made public, the news summary led off this way:

"16-20 minutes on transcripts dominated each of the evening shows: All nets focused on crucial 3/21 session at which RN told Dean 'the prime thing you damn well better get done' was pay Hunt \$120,000 in hush money. RN never rejected proposal but did reject clemency.

"Lengthy 3-6 minutes of

for Nixon Bear Bad News

excerpts on nets from that session which NBC's Stern said concluded w/RN approving hush money to buy time while WH organized its story. 'Keep the cap on the bottle' was RN phrase noted by all shows from 3/21.

"NBC offered only mitigating factors re: 3/21 as it noted HRH has said RN often took devil's advocate role in order to draw people out by asking leading questions and it re-emphasized the no exec. clemency statement as being of some help to RN....

"All nets noted that, as RN said (ABC film), transcripts had many ambiguities and could be read in drastically different ways... CBS noted 'literally' hundreds of omissions and unintelligibles, etc.... ABC's Reynolds, said if profanity were impeachable, RN might be packing his bags, for he talks like a longshoreman w/a sore back.

"...All in all, to Observer who has watched the nets handle W'gate nightly over past year, the total impact Tuesday was very damaging."

Although that day's summary had other headings "Mideast," "Other Foreign Affairs," "Economy," "Other Domestic Affairs," "Administration"—Watergate-related matters occupied nearly 18 of the 22 pages that went to the President.

The reports of press coverage were equally tough:

"AP says the feet-high stack of transcripts RN displayed to Nation sharply shrunk in physical size when transferred to public version" (an obvious reference to the many loose-leaf binders the President displayed on television and the single thick blue book turned out by the Government Printing Office).

Also, a UPI man-in-the-street reaction story in the digest could not have made pleasant presidential reading.

It quoted a Cleveland suburbanite as saying "she didn't like RN's 'suggesting he's Lincoln reincarnated,'

and a Hallandale, Fla., man who said: 'He's lying. The accused shouldn't be the one to decide what's relevant. But the summary goes on to quote the same man as say-

ing the President is 'smart and clever. I'd hate to see him impeached. I'd rather have a smart crook in the White House than a dumb one.'"

In the three weeks since then, Watergate and related affairs led the news summary about half the time, and were included in all summaries. About 45 newspapers and 30 magazines are reviewed for excerpting, not including The Washington Post and The New York Times, both of which are available to the President in entirety each morning.

The May 21 summary led with "Dragnet for Patty Hearst," reflecting the predominant network news judgment that day, but the No. 2 item said:

"Jaworski charged RN is making 'a farce' of special prosecutor's office by refusing to comply w/subpoenas despite public pledges of cooperation. Led NBC: No. 2 on the others w/stress on the angry letter to Senate Judiciary and accusation that RN was reneging on his promise to Jaworski and to Hill not to interfere w/the investigations and prosecutions."

In addition to the President, whose copies of the daily report are placed in a blue binder on his Oval Office desk, about 140 White House aides are on the circulation list.

About 15 key assistants who use government limousines to commute to and from work find the summary on the rear seat each morning as they climb in for the drive downtown. At about 5 a.m., an employee of the White House garage picks up the finished copies.

By then a process has been completed that started early the previous morning, with the viewing of NBC's "Today" show and the CBS "Morning Show" and continued through the day and early evening with monitoring of important TV news programs and the clipping of newspapers from every part of the country.

Tapes of the important shows are made, and through an internal U.S. Army Signal Corps closed-circuit television system in the White House and the Executive Office Building, the President and any inter-

ested White House staffer can see them.

For example the May 2 news summary included this notation: "CBS Special—'W'Gate: The WH Transcripts' (8-9 p.m. Wed.—recorded by VTR and available for viewing by calling 4125)."

Of that TV special, the summary observed at one point: "Rather went on to not frequent expletive terms obviously a biological function. Such talk isn't unfamiliar—except when it comes from RN who criticized HST for swearing and worked so hard to create a different impression in WH. No, said Rather, RN will never again be seen as quite the same."

The man directly in charge of giving "RN" a summary of the news with the bark off is Lyndon (Mort) Allin, a 33-year-old former Wisconsin history teacher with no professional news experience. Allin oversees a small staff that occupies three rooms in the Executive Office Building strewn with newspapers that seldom are read by anybody in Washington. At Mr. Nixon's direction about four years ago, Allin says, the list of papers screened was expanded to include more views from outside the East.

Allin works for Patrick J. Buchanan, the presidential speechwriter and media expert who started clipping news stories for Mr. Nixon when he was considering another presidential candidacy in advance of 1968, and continued the job into the first Nixon administration.

Buchanan functions as publisher of the summary, Allin says, and takes both the heat and the credit for what the staff turns out each day.

Allin and his staff pride themselves in the "warts and all" flavor of what they send to the President, and a review of three weeks of recent transcripts tends to bear out that characterization.

Just how thoroughly the President reads the news summaries is hard to say. In the early days of his presidency, he often made handwritten observations on the margins of his copies, tore out pages and had the remarks typed as memos to various staff members.

"But that was five years ago," Buchanan says. "I just can't say now. We do know it goes on his desk by 8 o'clock every morning. Recently there were a few times when it wasn't there, and we got complaints."