

Tape testimony--Nixon 'moved the buttons'

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WASHINGTON — President Nixon manipulated the buttons of a tape recorder while his personal secretary was transcribing a conversation which later turned up with an 18½ minute gap of silence, according to evidence released yesterday by the House Judiciary Committee.

The disclosure came from Rose Mary Woods, the President's longtime secretary, in her testimony before a Watergate Grand Jury last Nov. 26.

Miss Woods said she spent 29 hours the weekend of Sept. 29-30, 1973, at Camp David, attempting to transcribe a June 20, 1973, conversation among the President and former chief of staff H. R. Haldeman and former domestic adviser John Ehrlichman.

It was this tape on which the highly controversial gap later was discovered.

Miss Woods had testified on two occasions that she felt she had erased a small section inadvertently while answering her phone and pressing the wrong button of her tape recorder while keeping her foot on the pedal. She could not account for the entire 18½-minute gap.

But, evidence released by the judiciary committee raises new questions on the tape gap.

Here is part of Miss Woods' testimony before the Grand Jury, presided over by Federal Judge John J. Sirica, heretofore kept secret:

Q—During the time you were at Camp David did you have any discussions with anybody concerning either the — let's start with the accountability of the tapes?

A — Yes. The President.

Q — What did you tell him?

A — He came over and lis-

said, "I am sorry this is such a terrible job."

Q—Which one did he listen to?

A — The one that I worked on up there.

Q — When you said them, you meant the one you worked on?

A — That is right. Well, them — I meant by them the three of them and part of the time all three were talking at once; not three tapes, three people . . .

Q — Now the portion that the President listened to at Camp David you said involved three voices?

A — That is right, and as I mentioned, I started with the Ehrlichman tape to type but the President moved the buttons back and forth to hear parts of the tape . . .

Q — Did he listen through earphones?

A — I think he held one earphone up. That is my recollection . . .

Q — Did he listen to the June 20th tape at any time other than on the 29th of September at Camp David?

A — No.

Q—Do you know that for a fact?

A — He didn't listen to it in front of me. I don't know that for a fact. no . . .

Q — You say he listened to several portions of it. What did he do, listen and push it forward?

A — Yes.

Q — Can you describe what he did?

A — He held those big earphones that go to the other machine and listened to just two or three parts and just skipped around.

Miss Woods testified that in her presence at her cabin at Camp David, Nixon lis-

She told the Grand Jury that upon her return to the White House on Oct. 1 — after the weekend at Camp David — she resumed work on the tape discovered a