

Jaworski Asserts 1 of 3 Persons Caused Main Watergate Tape Gap

Leon Jaworski, former Watergate Special Prosecutor, said yesterday that his investigation had determined that one of three people erased a crucial 18½-minute conversation between former President Nixon and his chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman, three days after the Watergate break-in on June 17, 1972.

Mr. Jaworski would not give the names of the people, but he concurred with an interviewer who said it had to be Mr. Nixon, Rose Mary Woods, who was Mr. Nixon's personal secretary for more than 20 years, or Steven Bull, who was the President's personal aide.

"I'm not certain, but it's my judgment that only one of them did it," said Mr. Jaworski in response to a statement by Dan Rather on the CBS-TV program "60 Minutes."

The 18½-minute gap is one of the last remaining mysteries of the Watergate episode. The gap consisted of a buzz sound that obliterated a conversation in which Mr. Nixon instructed Mr. Haldeman to take certain "public relations" moves to "top" the effect of the break-in at Democratic National headquarters at the Watergate complex three days earlier. "We should be on the attack—for diversion," Mr. Haldeman's notes of the conversation say.

It was crucial because it would have shown how much the President knew about the break-in immediately after it took place.

Following is a transcript provided by CBS of the interview on "60 Minutes."

Q. Who erased that 18½-minute section of the very important tape, a conversation between Richard Nixon and H. R. Haldeman just after the break-in?

A. In my own judgment, it came down to three people. I will not mention their names because it would be unfair for me to do so since we didn't have enough proof to indict any of them. But, as I said once to some member of my staff, when you have three

who could have done it, you have two too many to return an indictment.

Q. Well, you can't mention the names, but it's obvious that it's Richard Nixon, Rose Mary Woods and Steven Bull. Now, you say you don't want to mention the names, but, question: Are you certain in your own mind that only one of the three people could have done it?

A. I'm not certain, but it's my judgment that only one of them did it. Now, the early erasure Rose Mary Woods admitted, but she said it couldn't have taken over four or five minutes, where we had 18½ minutes gone. And, very frankly, the first few minutes was not the most damaging part as we constructed the events.

Q. All right, who, indeed, erased the rest of it?

A. I don't know.

Q. I have to believe that you have in your own mind a pretty good idea, or you think you have an idea who erased that.

A. I think you are correct in your suspicion. But I'm not going to say who I think erased the rest of it.

Q. Are we ever going to know who erased it?

A. I don't think so...unless somebody confesses. And I don't think anyone's going to confess.

Later in the interview, Mr. Jaworski said that he did not think that President Ford had made a deal with Mr. Nixon for a pardon. He also said that he had not been surprised at the pardon, because Mr. Ford's counsel, Philip W. Buchen, had asked him numerous questions about the investigation and

W. Buchen, had asked him numerous questions about the investigation and about whether it thought it would have been possible for the former President to get a fair trial.

Mr. Jaworski said he did not think Mr. Nixon could have gotten a fair trial after all the publicity that the case had received.