# Supreme Court Drama Shapes Mood of City

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For the historians who will record the day, let it be noted that on July 24, 1974, Washington wasn't entirely preoccupied with the court and the Congress and the impeachment of a President.

The tourists were out at the White House, Capitol and National Archives, lined up patiently in the muggy Washington weather to see the symbols of their government and nation. Throughout the city the trivial and the ordinary grist of government went on as usual.

A Republican congressman from Illinois introduced a prize-winning chili cook, together with samples of his dish; an American Legion Boys' Nation delegation was briefed at the Pentagon, and the House and Senate droned on interminably with few members present and even fewer paying attention.

But the rest was history of a special kind, a day that signaled perhaps the beginning of the end for the 37th President of the United States.

Richard Nixon, the embodiment of the executive branch of government, was in California when the other two separate but equal branches began to move against him.

The first act in the drama came at the Supreme Court in mid-morning. As a cab pulled up at the curb, the flag was flying at half-staff in memory of Earl Warren. The driver looked at the crowd massed before the marble steps, and in long lines twisting around the corner and out of sight, and said:

"They're waiting where the history is going to be made."

Some of them had been waiting since 1 o'clock in the morning. They were a patient crowd, those men, women and children, pleas-

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ant and good-natured. They bore no signs or political placards; they were not there to demonstrate.

The only sign that they were witnesses to an extraordinary event came shortly before 11 o'clock. Across the street on the Capitol lawn, two men, dressed in black suits and wearing rubber masks of Henry Kissinger and Mr. Nixon, unfurled a large white banner. In bold, black upper-case letters the banner spelled out the words:

**"I DON'T GIVE A SH— WHAT HAPPENS. I WANT YOU ALL TO STONEWALL IT. LET THEM PLEAD THE 5th AMENDMENT, COVER UP OR ANYTHING ELSE THAT WILL SAVE THE PLAN. THAT'S THE WHOLE POINT."**

—Richard M. Nixon, March 22, 1973.

Some in the crowd smiled, but most paid little attention.

At 11:07 a.m. there was a stir, and then a massive break in the crowd. First one, and then another, news reporters began running from the side door of the court clutching copies of the decision. The crowd broke and surrounded them.

"Eight to nothing. Eight to nothing," came the cries.

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed a young woman. She clasped her hand over her mouth and stepped back as though she had been struck.

A great cheer went up from the throng. It was followed by sustained applause. A massive circle gathered around Carl Stern and Douglas Kiker of NBC as the news was instantly broadcast from in front of the steps of the court.

More applause, more cheers, as the verdict was spelled out for television viewers.

In one of the strangest, most surrealistic scenes of the day, several hundred yards away another large crowd was clustered on the steps of the Capitol. These were supporters of the President, and they were camped on the same steps where twice Richard Nixon took the oath of office.

They were young men and women, some 650 in all, gathered together as followers of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon's National Prayer and Fast Committee and of Rabbi Baruch Korff's National Committee of Fairness to the President.

Although history had been made virtually before their eyes, they didn't get the word. It wasn't until nearly 2 o'clock when Rabbi Korff came before them to report on the court's decision.

"We were certainly disheartened," said Joseph Stein, 24, from Pittsburgh. "Deeper prayer is indicated at this time."

By then, the President's supporters had been keeping their vigil for 27 consecutive hours. They sat on the steps, surrounded by at least 15 large American flags, underneath a red-white-and-blue banner strung across four of the Capitol's Corinthian columns. The banner said: "National Prayer and Fast Vigil."

They took turns in holding up their placards. "God has the answer." "We have faith in the presidency." "We have faith in the Congress." "Pray for America." "God bless America and our President Richard Nixon."

Down front, before a microphone, Becky Miles, a vigil coordinator, was giving instructions. If they felt ill or faint, they should leave, she said. A cold towel was available for them, and there were bandages in the event of an accident.

They were solemn and quiet, stupified from lack of sleep. Some rested their heads on their arms, others stared straight ahead. They will continue their vigil until 11 a.m. today. After that, their plans are uncertain.

While they were pursuing their silent cause, on the other side of the Capitol the last touches were being made for the final act in the day's deliberations.

On the second floor of the Rayburn Buidling, off a marble corridor, the stage was being set for the beginning of the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment debates last night.

It was, literally, a stage that had been constructed, for from that small room and through the eye of the television camera millions of Americans would personally participate in the fateful actions taken there. Behind the two rows of long, mahogany tables for the congressmen, two television cameras had been installed in the bottom of two long windows. A third camera was placed at the rear of the room, aimed directly at the members. Overhead, 20 lights were strung across the ceiling to give better television illumination.

The room itself has a fittingly Spartan look. Some 200 straight-backed, folding chairs covered in black set out neatly, row after row. Of these, about 135 are reserved for the press. The names of the papers, networks and radio stations were written in fine flowing script across small white cards attached to each chair.

More than 50 seats had

been reserved for personal use of the congressmen. The rest — scarcely 20 in all— were for the public.

In the background, looking down on the scene, were two large portraits of former committee chairmen, Emmanuel Celler and Hatton M. Sumners. Neither ever had to preside over such a momentous undertaking. But then, neither has any congressman in more than a century been called upon to exercise such a historic responsibility as deciding whether a President should be impeached for high crimes and misdemeanors.

Outside in late afternoon, as the hour for the impeachment proceedings was nearing, Capitol Hill was still. The tourists had gone home, the vigil continued.

On the way back downtown, a cab driver volunteered his own thoughts on the day.

"Eight to nothing," he said, shaking his head. "Man, he should have known better. He can't ever appeal that. My. My. My. I don't know what's on those tapes. Anything could be on them after what we heard before. Man, I feel for him Man, I feel for him. He put his own self in the trap. He's got to give up now.

"You know, those Supreme Court judges, they're a pretty fair bunch of people. Pretty fair bunch of people up there. But I'll be glad when this thing is over. I'm so tired of Watergate I don't know what to do. I have on the average of 75 to 100 people a day and two-thirds of them talk about Watergate. I'm sick of listening to them."

He talked generally about the country. "Prices are jumping up, the government is falling apart, and the inflation is rising. That's enough to give any man a bad heart. And it doesn't look like we're going to have any football this year. We're screwed up, man. This '74 is *the* year."