

Justice Douglas said 'undergoing evaluation'

WASHINGTON (AP) — Justice William O. Douglas, silver-haired dean of the Supreme Court, underwent medical evaluation and therapy Wednesday after suffering an apparent stroke while vacationing in the Bahamas.

Douglas, 76, a member of the court longer than any man in history, was flown to Washington by Air Force medical evacuation plane from Nassau, where he was stricken Tuesday night. A hospital spokesman said the justice was "undergoing evaluation."

Douglas was reported alert and resting comfortably in an intensive care unit. "Although his condition is officially categorized as serious, his vital signs are stable," a court spokesman said. He would not say whether there was any paralysis.

Nor would the spokesman say whether Douglas might be unable to continue on the court. "It would be premature to make any speculation of that sort," the spokesman said.

The court spokesman said Douglas had suffered "an apparent cerebrovascular accident." Medical authorities said this, in common terms, was a stroke.

Chief Justice Warren E. Burger and Douglas' wife, Cathy, 31, spent Wednesday morning at the hospital. President Ford, vacationing at Vail, Colo., asked Burger to report to him by telephone on the justice's condition.

Douglas was appointed to the court by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1939. In the more than three decades since, he has become the court's most frequent dissenter. In many of those dissents, he defended constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression.

He became the target of a serious impeachment drive in 1966 after it was revealed that he received a \$12,000 annual expense allowance from the Parvin Foundation, which received part of its money from Las Vegas gambling properties.

The impeachment drive was sparked by Ford, then minority leader in the House of Representatives. But a House subcommittee reported no grounds for impeachment. Douglas resigned from the foundation, and Ford said later he had no quarrel with Douglas' conduct.

It was Ford who arranged Douglas' return flight from the Bahamas after he was notified by Burger late Tuesday that Douglas had been stricken.

Barrett McGurn, information officer for the court, said the justice and Mrs. Douglas had left Washington Tuesday afternoon for a short vacation.

He said Douglas was stricken at 7:30 p.m., shortly after their arrival in Nassau.

Douglas has had an electronic pacemaker in his chest in recent years to control the rate of his heartbeat. When the pacemaker was implanted, doctors said the heartbeat was abnormally slow.