

## Drowning Given as Cause Of Whitney Young's Death

The National Urban League yesterday released the report of an autopsy performed here on the body of Whitney M. Young Jr., the league's executive director. It attributed Mr. Young's death in Nigeria last month to drowning—although he knew how to swim and was only about 100 feet away from friends.

The report noted that drownings of that sort were not unusual and that the circumstances and autopsy do not always offer an explanation of how the victim "loses control of the situation even though he can swim."

The autopsy, performed by Dr. Milton Helpern, the city's Chief Medical Examiner, at the request of Mr. Young's family, contradicted the findings of an autopsy performed in Lagos, Nigeria, on March 12, the day after Mr. Young's death.

The first post-mortem examination, performed by the chief internist at the Lagos General Hospital, found that the 49-year-old Mr. Young "died of a subarachnoid hemorrhage," that is, a break in the blood vessels in the space around the brain.

### Finding Is Explained

But Dr. Helpern found "no hemorrhage . . . anywhere in its [the brain's] substance," and wrote in his report that "the appearance of the surface of the brain was not that of subarachnoid hemorrhage. . . ."

He found, he wrote, "a very slight amount" of blood in the furrows of the brain surface on the right side, but he attributed the appearance of the brain "to the effect of vigorous attempts at resuscitation" made by Mr. Young's friends after he was pulled unconscious from the surf of Lighthouse Beach, near Lagos.

Following the description of the physical findings of the autopsy, Dr. Helpern wrote a lengthy "conclusion," giving a narrative reconstruction of the circumstances of Mr. Young's death, apparently pieced together from the accounts of those who were with him, including Ramsey Clark, the former United States Attorney General, and his wife.

Mr. Young and his companions had gone into the water about 10 minutes before. Four of them were standing on the beach when, Dr. Helpern said, "it was noticed by one of these four [still in the water], who was about 100 feet from him,

that the deceased seemed to be in some difficulty and had raised his arm but without bringing up his head."

"He was then seen to be submerged by a wave and did not come to the surface," Dr. Helpern continued.

"Two of his friends immediately went to his assistance and noted that his head had remained under water. They estimated that it did not take them more than a minute and a half to reach him. They grabbed him under the arms and carried him out of the water."

Despite immediate and continuing efforts to revive him, using the techniques of mouth-to-mouth breathing and the application of rhythmic pressure to his chest, the report continued, "it appears that he never responded or showed any vital signs. . . ."

He was pronounced dead by a physician more than an hour later.

### 'Not Unusual'

The circumstances and the lack of any significant contradictory evidence, Dr. Helpern wrote, "compelled" him to conclude "that the death resulted from submersion while the deceased was swimming in a fairly strong ocean surf, for reasons which are not demonstrable."

Such cases of drowning in persons who can swim are not unusual," he added.

Under such circumstances, the examiner said, "death from submersion or drowning can occur very rapidly. . . . In many similar cases, even when the victim is rescued promptly, the outcome is fatal. . . ."

According to Mr. Clark, Dr. Helpern wrote, "it was estimated that the entire interval during which he (Mr. Young) might have been submerged was not more than 90 seconds. . . ." Mr. Clark was one of the two persons who pulled Mr. Young from the surf.

Mr. Young and the others in the group had been attending a conference on Afro-American affairs in Lagos.

His body was flown back to the United States three days after his death, and a service at the Riverside Church in New York City was attended by more than 6,000 people.

President Nixon led the mourners at a graveside service in the cemetery in Lexington, Ky., where Mr. Young was buried. Mr. Young had been executive director of the Urban League since 1961.