

Why They Wait Outside the Court

Washington

The line began outside the United States Supreme Court at 9:20 a.m., Saturday and, by yesterday afternoon, more than 180 students, "history buffs," a Harvard law professor and some of his class already were sitting on the sidewalk with sleeping bags and picnic baskets.

They were waiting to be among the 423 spectators who will be allowed in the court's marble hall at 10 a.m. today to hear arguments in the historic test over whether a President may withhold evidence in a criminal investigation.

Harvard law professor Maurice Ford, a Supreme Court bar member, arrived on the sidewalk yesterday to insure he gets one of the public seats available.

Ford arrived armed with a bag of potato chips, Diet Pepsis and Bing cherries for his all-night vigil. He had sent letters around the country to members of his law school class on the concepts of judicial review, telling them, "The next meeting of our class will be on the steps of the U.S. Supreme court on Sunday, July 7."

Attendance at the summer "class," naturally, is not required, he said, but is something the students should want to attend.

"This is an historic occasion, one that you can tell your children and grandchil-

dren about," he said in his letter.

The Supreme Court's last sell-out performance, and one of the few it has ever had, was in June, 1971, when more than 1500 persons crowded outside the court attempting to get in to hear arguments over the First Amendment rights of the New York Times and the Washington Post to publish the secret Pentagon Papers.

The Pentagon Papers crowd appeared suddenly at the last minute. The line to hear the Watergate case began two days prior to the court session, when an 18-year-old New York girl decided "I want to be an eyewitness to history" and arrived outside the court with her sleeping bag.

Elena Sassower, a congressional intern for the summer and soon to be a freshman at Sarah Lawrence College, said her father was "a little worried" about her spending two nights on the sidewalk but yesterday gave permission for her 16-year-old sister to join her after he saw Elena pictured outside the court in a television news broadcast.

"Why not wait in line for this, to see the justices at work and history in the making?" Miss Sassower asked.

"People wait in line for days to get tickets for the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. I've waited in traffic jams and gas lines, and my history class waited for hours here last summer when we came down to watch the Senate Watergate hearings."

Jamie Sabino, a 20-year-old Wellesley College senior and summer intern to Representative Michael Harrington (Dem-Mass.) was second in the line later Saturday. "I decided it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity . . . and I also know (presidential counsel) James D. St. Clair. I'm a member of the Wellesley Town Meeting and, until he accepted this job, so was he."

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