

WXPost

Expectant Air of Historic

By Douglas B. Feaver

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Five people gathered around the floor model television sets in the Hub Furniture Co. store at 7th and D Streets NW yesterday afternoon, but the only thing for them to watch at that moment was a soap opera.

"We're all waiting," said a TV salesman. "I don't think I'm going to live another 200 years to see this again, and I don't want to miss it now."

The expected resignation of Richard Nixon as President was the object of the salesman's anticipation and a strange presence yesterday in the lives of many workers, residents and visitors in Washington.

At Lafayette Park, across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House, a steadily growing crowd of several hundred people continued a watch begun when the resignation rumors surfaced on Tuesday. Many had transistor radios yesterday and a television crew set up equipment in the crowd's midst.

The size and membership of the crowd was constantly changing, as people came, looked around for a while, then moved on. There were about 150 in the park at 6 p.m.

"I hope it's a once-in-a-lifetime thing, and I didn't want to pass it up," said Mary Beth Allen, who works for an export-import bank.

During the noon hour, the First Baptist Church Youth Choir of Marianna, Fla., sang "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" on the steps of the Capitol.

"I can't believe that we're in Washington on the day this is happening," said Dennis Sheffield, 16, a member of the choir. "We've been on tour since last Friday and didn't know what was going on until we picked up the paper this morning. Imagine."

On Connecticut Avenue, people were buying, selling eating, chatting, loitering and hurrying yesterday. The ticker tapes at brokerage houses drew their usual lunchtime audience. In the paneled rooms of Brooks Brothers, tailored businessmen sorted through piles of paisley ties.

Chris Liebert, a 24-year-old saleswoman at Joe's

Place, said, "Everybody's talking about the resignation. And everybody seems to be glad. One customer said he had bought some champagne to celebrate."

Crime in the District of Columbia was occurring at about the normal pace yesterday according to Thomas Estes, deputy chief of the

police department in charge of the patrol division. "We've had a couple of bank robberies," Estes said. "Today's pattern is consistent with that of the past few weeks."

For some people, yesterday still was like any other day. To a crew of Metro construction workers sitting

around traffic barricades drinking beer and eating lunch not far from the White House, the travail of day-to-day existence seemed of more concern than the affairs of state. "So I told the foreman," one burly hardhat said to his colleague, "I told the foreman that under no circumstances was I go-

ing to do that kind of a job that way..." The conversation about the overbearing foreman continued uninterrupted by thoughts of Watergate for another 10 minutes.

In the minds of some, Mr. Nixon's plight was secondary to interest in Mr. Nixon's favorite sport.

In the elevator at the Fairfax County office building, a voice asked if Mr. Nixon had resigned.

"Nine o'clock, on television," a woman replied.

"Mess up a perfectly good football game," a man grumbled. World Football League games are televised here on Thursday nights.

Moment Hung Over Area

Most of the people who were interviewed by Washington Post reporters yesterday, from Leesburg to Bowie, were in favor of the President's resignation.

"I definitely think he should," John M. Anderson, 54, said as he stood in front of the Broyhill for Congress headquarters on the main street of Leesburg. "Not only did I vote for him," said Anderson, "I contributed to his damn campaign, and that's what really gripes me."

At Tysons Corner shopping center, Priscilla A. Ames said, "It's the best thing that has happened to this government in a long time."

Clerks and customers were massed around the cosmetics counter at the Garfinkels, and somebody said, "It is very sad for our country."

In Springdale, a century-old pocket of black homes near Baileys Crossroads, school bus driver Earl Watson said he did not want to see Mr. Nixon resign. "He should be impeached," Watson said.

Louise Grant, a teacher in a Head Start program, echoed Watson's view. "He has hurt a whole lot of people. He was totally wrong. He has to pay..."

M.L. Jones, a retired Air Force officer interviewed at Andrews Air Force Base, said he had "heard plenty of evidence and much of it seems realistic. Mr. Nixon seems to have misconstrued so many things. It makes the citizens of this country lose faith in their government."

But Nancy Stevens, a Democrat and a member of the county's landlord-tenant commission, said, "I feel sorry for him. I think he's been railroaded and I think he shouldn't resign."

In the television department of the Sears store at Montgomery Mall, salesman Mike Waters predicted that "there'll be a lot of people in here tonight." Waters said that until this week people seemed to have tired of Watergate, but "the last couple of days, every time there's a bulletin people come in off the aisles..."

In the Free State Mall in Bowie, William James, a

New Hampshire resident visiting the Washington area, said, "I think he's being railroaded. I'm no lover of Nixon, but I think he's being given the choice to either resign or be impeached. All of them are guilty; Nixon just got shafted. He's getting what he deserves but there's a lot of others that deserve the same thing..."

But Bill Howes, a salesman in a department store in the mall, said, "I think it's about the best thing he could do, the best thing for the country."

Howes said he voted for Mr. Nixon in 1972, and although he has been disappointed by the President's performance, would probably vote for him again "given the same alternatives." He said he has to reserve judgment on whether he would vote for Gerald Ford in 1976.

But whether there was or was not interest in the streets yesterday, officials at the Kennedy Center reported that their phones were busy as people called and tried to exchange their tickets for future performances so they could watch Mr. Nixon on television.

But the prime attraction at the center was the Russian Moiseyev dancers, and all performances had been sold out.

Loudspeakers were set up at the center so those in attendance there last night could hear Mr. Nixon's address during an intermission.

On K Street NW yesterday, a girl who said her name was "Misty, from Arizona," stopped passersby and told them, "Jesus loves you."

"What about the President," a man asked.

"I don't know much about that," Misty said, "But Jesus loves him too."

Contributing to this story were Washington Post Staff Writers Laura Kiernan, Charles Krause, Gail Robinson, Deborah Yaeger, Jane Rippeteau, Margot Hornblower, Joanne Omang, Alfred E. Lewis, Ken Ringle, Harold J. Logan, Paul W. Valentine, Judy Nicol, Lee Daniels, Ron Taylor and Alan Crawford.