

Subdued, Overcast Day At Coast Medical Unit

NYTimes By JON NORDHEIMER NOV 1 1974

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LONG BEACH, Calif., Oct. 31 — Halloween trick-or-treaters haunted the corridors of Memorial Hospital Medical Center today as former President Richard M. Nixon lay critically ill in a seventh-floor intensive-care wing.

Student nurses in hobgoblin costumes entertained sick children in the pediatrics ward, but it was a subdued, overcast day at the hospital, as the medical reports on Mr. Nixon's condition were revised and studied.

Until this evening, Mr. Nixon's attending physicians had been as secluded as their patient, and the daily medical bulletins read by hospital spokesmen had been hesitant, short on details, and perhaps misleading.

When hospital had family spokesmen refused to respond to specific questions, it aroused among observers a suspicion that the former President had not regained full consciousness in the two-day period after postsurgical internal bleeding sent him into shock.

State of Disorientation

Those suspicions were supported today by an associate of the former President who said that Mr. Nixon had been in a state of disorientation until this morning.

"All day yesterday he didn't know where he was," said the associate, who has stayed near Mr. Nixon's room in the intensive-care section. "He didn't know he had been operated on until this morning when he woke up and saw the tubes in him."

He added that the former President's reaction had been to utter an expletive of disgust at his helplessness.

"He says he feels better," the associate went on, shaking his head several times, "but the machines tell differently."

The patient's condition is monitored by mechanical devices.

The associate said he had been told that new internal bleeding was confirmed early

in the day and that the complication was causing renewed concern about Mr. Nixon's recovery.

Family at Hospital

When asked to describe Mr. Nixon's condition, which is listed by the hospital as "critical," the associate shook his head again several times as he walked off. "He doesn't look good," he said, "he doesn't look good."

Mr. Nixon's wife and two daughters spent most of the day at the hospital, as they did yesterday, frequently going to his bedside for short visits.

Mr. Nixon's wife and daughters are spending nights at the local private residence of a friend, to stay close to the hospital instead of making the one-hour automobile trip to the Nixon seaside estate at San Clemente.

Ronald L. Ziegler, the former White House press secretary who has stayed with Mr. Nixon as his spokesman, said yesterday that Mr. Nixon retained his will to live as he approached surgery.

"He has faced this with great courage," Mr. Ziegler said. He refused comment on any medical aspects of the present recovery period other than to describe the number of intravenous tubes that have been attached to the patient.

Calls From Supported

Aside from the number of newsmen present, which swelled to about 200 on Tuesday, the scene at Memorial Hospital Medical Center has remained fairly routine. A surge of telephone calls from supporters of the former President kept the switchboard busy in spurts yesterday. A number of floral displays and plants sent to Mr. Nixon have been distributed among other patients.

There have been no demonstrators outside the 820-bed hospital, such as the amnesty activists who showed up at the time of Mr. Nixon's first hospital stay here last month.