

Mayor Sam misses perfect chance to keep mouth shut

LEONARD BROWN
LET US SIT UPON THE
GROUND AND TELL SAD TALES
OF THE DEATHS OF KENNEDYS.

The grief of Los Angeles over the recent murder of Robert Kennedy has all the seemliness of an old whore bawling out a charge of rape at rush hour on Saturday night.

Los Angeles is surely one of the most brutal and violent cities in the world, indeed the only city which sets consistent precedents in eager and willful assault upon its own citizens, their institutions, rights and causes. The anniversary of Redding's Massacre at the Century Plaza is coming up shortly, and we should stand reminded that Los Angeles created what may be the terminal crisis in this country's history as a country by senseless assault upon the same advocates of non-violent action. In a short and savage sequence, the peace movement was advised to change its hair shirt for body armor, and the era of reason was postponed indefinitely.

But in L.A. all important issues

are confused. Events are obscured here by the disreputable vision of a buffoon who blunders on stage gracelessly, just as the blood begins to clot on wounds which will never heal, just as the tears of the bereaved begin to fall—and, just as the shadows of an ominous night begin to foreclose on a landscape of ambush which would not be tolerated in Sicily.

The no-sense of political murder is jangled rudely by the non-sense of political vulgarity.

Mayor Sam appears; and "Till" lights up.

Last week, like a rubbery-faced crocodile, Mayor Sam Yorty vented his original and competitive version of civic grief in a transparent shrouding of an old hatred of the young senator who put Sam down so hard a few years ago that the Yorty star fizzled out permanently, a remarkable same effect in California's otherwise mad political galaxy.

Yorty is a side effect of the Politicus Pathologicus wherein public responsibility may be seriously offered to such bizarre political mutants as Raftery!

and Reagan. (If Raftery! is to have that raffish touch of punishment as its retaliation of restraint, Yorty might well be styled as Yorty? in acknowledgment of his dubious taste.)

Yorty's grudge against the late Senator Kennedy was born in a Senate hearing on urban affairs.

Unable to answer serious questions about his own city, Yorty exposed himself as ignorant and useless, and Senator Kennedy could not conceal his disgust. Mayor Sam conceded that his functions were ceremonial—and had something to do with rubbish, but whether with the creation or collection of the latter was left unclear. Sam left D.C. with an abiding loathing for R. F. K.

It was his interpretation of the ceremonial function which fucked Sam up last week. Rubbish was supposedly under control, so Sam pre-empted some of the purported evidence in the alleged (or however the hell you describe these matters) assassination, and played Sherlock Yorty for the media. It was the Commies again. (And one recalled Sam rushing a copy of the Higgins book about the Diem

regime to a departing statesman, as a refresher course in Saigon affairs, long after the author and the subject of the book were both dead. When Sam went to Vietnam, it was thought that his presence would assure an easy victory: Charley would laugh himself to death.)

Last week Sam screwed around with what he claimed was evidence, and then had the preposterous gall to invite himself to the funeral, even after a pointed snub from the Kennedy family at L.A. International. Sam is about as easy to snub as a bag of worried skunks, and almost as welcome.

Pained innocence is as much a part of his act as his obnoxiousness, and after a Superior Court judge found it necessary to issue an order restraining the Yorty mouth, he was quoted as saying that he would abide by the order "now that the accused has been indicted by the Grand Jury." As there are several ways of reading that, does it mean that Walchdog Sam put the pressure on the Grand Jury and got results? Or does it say that Sam only exercised his

ceremonial rights as mayor in prattling on about the case? Whichever, in his next sentence Slippery Sam is off in guiltless pursuit of the media. How come he has to shut up and they don't? And one L.A. paper answers in a stiff, parenthetical rebuke that it reports the news, while the mayor makes it. He tries, he tries.

California Attorney General Lynch and Los Angeles District Attorney Younger both warned Yorty about his remarks on materials purportedly pertaining to the investigation, and his response was that he had to "try to exercise my judgement as to what the public is entitled to know about this case and still protect the accused and his right to a fair trial." Just why Yorty should assume the role of information officer is as ambiguous as anything else the mayor of Los Angeles does.

The job of mayor of a large American city is one which always invites a certain degree of theatricality. New York has its narcissistic Lindsay, Chicago has its blood-thirsty Daley. And Los Angeles is being had...