

Witness Claims Sirhan Vowed to Shoot Kennedy

Former Friend Tells of
Talk About King Murder;
Says He Hated Defendant

BY DAVE SMITH
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Soon after the assassination of Martin Luther King last April 4, Sirhan Bishara Sirhan was described as arguing with a Negro trash collector he had befriended about Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and demanding:

"What are you going to vote for that son of a B for? Because I'm planning on shooting him."

Sirhan did, less than two months after that conversation, and prosecution witness Alvin Clark testified to defense attorney Emile Zola Berman Friday that he told the FBI the following September he was unwilling to testify against his accused friend—but the reason was not friendship now.

"Didn't you tell the FBI you did not want to take the oath because you hated Sirhan so much you'd do anything to see him convicted?" asked Berman.

"Yes, I did," said Clark.

Dramatic Moment

Dep. Dist. Atty. David N. Fitts quickly interjected: "Have you told the truth here, sir?"

"Yes," Clark replied firmly. "I have."

The testimony of the bearded Clark was the most dramatic thus far in the seven-week-old trial of Kennedy's admitted slayer. Clark told Fitts of a casual friendship reaching back nearly three years with the 24-year-old Palestinian immigrant.

"I thought very much of him," said Clark, adding that Sirhan fell into the habit of bringing out coffee, soft drinks and sometimes sandwiches when Clark made the usual Wednesday trash pickup at the Sirhan home at 696 E. Howard St. in Pasadena.

Clark testified to jurors in Superi-

or Judge Herbert V. Walker's court that shortly after the King assassination in Memphis, Sirhan was "upset somewhat about the death of Luther King. He asked me how the Negro people felt about it."

"I said we felt there wasn't just one person responsible.

"He asked me what the Negroes were going to do about it and I said, 'What can they do about it? You're just one person.'"

"Then he asked me how I felt about the election and I said I was going to vote for Kennedy.

"He said, 'What do you want to vote for that son of a B for? Because I'm planning on shooting him.'"

'One of the Best Men'

"I said, 'If you do, you'll be killing one of the best men in the country.

"I told him of Kennedy going down to Tennessee to bring back Luther King's body and paying all the expenses.

"Sirhan—but I never knew him by the name of Sirhan, I knew him by the name of Saul—said he (Kennedy) did it just for publicity."

Two other witnesses, Irwin Stroll and William Weiser, told of having been among the five wounded in the fusillade that killed Kennedy in a kitchen hallway of the Ambassador last June 5.

Stroll, 17, testified that he was a Kennedy volunteer worker guarding doorway that night, and that he was about to follow the victory party to another party at the Factory nightclub in West Hollywood when he was cut down by a bullet in his left calf.

"I felt someone kick me," said Stroll, adding that he didn't know at first that he had been shot. "Then I noticed—because I had on blue pants—that one of my legs was red."

Defense attorney Grant B. Cooper cross-questioned Stroll briefly, and asked finally, "Incidentally, didn't you bring an action of a million and

a half dollars against the defendant for the injury to your leg?"

Stroll flushed slightly and said "Yes." (The suit, filed earlier this month, actually seeks \$1,050,000.)

Two other witnesses told of seeing Sirhan at a Kennedy preelection party on June 2 at the Ambassador, not far from where Sen. Kennedy later was killed.

Dr. Stanley Abo, a phy-

sician who attended the Kennedy victory party, told of going to the stricken senator's aid moments after the shooting.

Abo said Sen. Kennedy's right eye was open, "staring aimlessly," and the left eye was closed. As he bent to see if Sen. Kennedy needed artificial respiration, Abo said, Kennedy's left eye opened "very quickly, with a puzzled look."

Abo said he had earlier mistaken another wounded man, Paul Schrade, for Sen. Kennedy's brother-in-law, Stephen Smith, and thus told Sen. Kennedy that his "brother-in-law (actually Schrade) had a superficial scalp wound."

"Good," he quoted the dying Sen. Kennedy as saying.

Abo said Mrs. Ethel Kennedy arrived then at her husband's side, and Sen. Kennedy "reached out and took her hand and spoke to her."

The defense objected that the conversation was immaterial and the objection was sustained.