

# Sirhan Warned to Calm Down or Get Another Attorney

BY DAVE SMITH

Times Staff Writer

Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, uneasy about his defense strategy and unruly at his murder trial this week, is "going to have to calm down or get another lawyer," one of his defense attorneys warned him Wednesday.

Two other warnings came from Superior Judge Herbert V. Walker:

1—If Sirhan should lose or fire his three-man defense team and then undertake his own defense, the jurist said, "There is one thing I have always told all (defendants acting as their own counsel): when they are being tried for murder in a case before me they usually go to the gas chamber."

2—If Sirhan doesn't control his courtroom outbursts, he will be physically restrained—perhaps by being strapped in his chair during court sessions.

These developments came to light Wednesday as the prosecution wound up its case against Sirhan and opened the way Friday—after a recess today—for the defense effort to prove that the admitted slayer of Robert F. Kennedy is not guilty, by reason of diminished mental capacity.

The defense team would not discuss its opening tactics. Attorney Grant Cooper, who earlier warned Sirhan about calming down, said "we have some problems," but would not amplify.

The problems were reliably reported, however, to involve Sirhan's frame of mind about the conduct of his defense.

Early Tuesday morning, before the trial resumed, Sirhan surprised

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the judge, the prosecution and even his own defense counsel with the impulsive decision to change his plea of innocence to one of guilty of first-degree murder.

His attorneys calmed him at that point, only to have to calm him down after a outburst in court later in the morning, when Sirhan's writings were discussed. A second public outburst that afternoon caused an early adjournment and continued pacification efforts by defense attorneys.

Throughout court proceedings Wednesday, Sirhan appeared angry in conversation with his defense team, and for long periods sat in sullen silence. Cooper told newsmen, "we're trying to control him," but he appeared obviously uncertain how firm the controls were or how long they would last.

Just as court was convening Wednesday, even before Judge Walker was seated, Sirhan showed his displeasure at two documents handed him by defense investigator Michael McCowan.

Shaking his head negatively and muttering, Sirhan grabbed a pen and quickly slashed through several paragraphs of one document described as a list of prospective defense witnesses.

He also shook his head in seeming disagreement as he read a list of legal points yet to be introduced by the defense. These were believed to relate to alleged childhood trauma, a likely foundation of the defense contention that Sirhan's capacity to premeditate Sen. Kennedy's death was diminished.

Munir Sirhan later sent Sirhan a note in Arabic, which read, "Please be good."

A transcript released Wednesday of an in-chambers session Tuesday morning confirmed that Sirhan wanted to change his plea from innocent to guilty, and that he'd nearly had a blowup Monday

afternoon when the prosecution began its lengthy introduction of his controversial notebooks. It said in part:

"Your honor, if these notebooks are allowed in evidence. I will change my plea to guilty as charged.

"I will do so, sir, not so much that I want to be railroaded into that gas chamber, sir, but to deny you the pleasure, sir, of after convicting me turning around and telling the world: 'Well, I put that fellow in the gas chamber, but I first gave him a fair trial,' when you in fact, sir, will not have done so.

"The evidence, sir, that was taken from my home was illegally obtained, was stolen by the district attorney's people. They had no search warrant. I did not give them any permission, sir, to do what they did to my home.

"My brother Adel had no permission to give them permission to enter my own room and take what they took from my home, from my own room."

It was expected, however, that barring continued difficulty with their mercurial client, the defense would call Sirhan himself, his mother, Mary, and brothers Munir and Adel early in the defense.

The prosecution case, though virtually complete, was not formally rested Wednesday.

Dep. Dist. Attys. John E. Howard and David N. Fitts and Chief Dep. Dist. Atty. Lynn D. Compton said they must organize prosecution exhibits and finish testimony from one witness, handwriting analyst Laurence Sloan, who is out of town until Monday.

Their case can, however, be formally rested Friday with the stipulation that the defense case may be interrupted Monday to finish Sloan's testimony.

Transcript of another in-chambers session Tuesday afternoon revealed that counsel for both sides debated with Judge Walker whether Sirhan's outbursts

might have been, in Compton's words, "malingering or putting on some kind of an act."

Cooper assured Judge Walker and Compton that Sirhan's behavior was not an act and that both de-

fense counsel and Sirhan's family had tried to curb his explosive behavior.

They debated whether to call in a psychiatrist to examine Sirhan Tuesday afternoon, but decided against it when all agreed there was no evidence that Sirhan's outbursts indicated he didn't understand the nature and import of the courtroom proceedings.

Oddly, Sirhan was composed and quiet Wednesday during the one thing he was most alarmed about Tuesday — jurors' examination of the notebook evidence.

The jurors appeared deeply absorbed as they read the chaotic scribbles of Sirhan's political views, mixed with unintelligible phrases and the repeated statement that he would kill Sen. Kennedy.

Several jurors looked frankly bewildered at what they read in the sometimes disjointed, sometimes repetitious narrative.

Howard drew from Police Lt. William C. Jordan the description of Sirhan after his arrest on June 5 as "extremely intelligent. He speaks very well. He denied any formal education

but speaks as if he were well-educated. He was emphatic on certain points and showed an inquiring mind.

"In 15 years (of Jordan's police work) I'd have to say he is one of the most alert, intelligent people I've ever interrogated or attempted to interrogate."

Jordan testified, however, that Sirhan revealed almost nothing in the interrogation, not even his name.

But he admitted to Cooper that Sirhan, while uninformative, was "extremely polite. Under the

circumstances, we had a very pleasant relationship."

"You talked about things unrelated to this case?" Cooper asked.

"We specifically avoided discussing this case," said Jordan.

"But in your talk, you laughed, and he laughed?" asked Cooper.

"Yes, sir," said Jordan.

Jordan said it was his opinion that Sirhan was not at that time under the influence of either alcohol or drugs, and thus he administered no test for drunkenness.