

Sirhan's Mental Illness Severe, Witness Says

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L.H.T.
Psychologist Describes
Suspect's Condition as
Approaching Incurability

BY DAVE SMITH

Times Staff Writer

Clinical psychologist O. Roderick Richardson described Sirhan Bishara Sirhan Wednesday as a paranoid schizophrenic whose mental illness was "about as severe as you can get without being unchangeable."

Dr. Richardson testified that when he administered psychological tests to Sirhan last July, the accused slayer of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was then "getting worse. He was a very ill person who was descending further into mental illness." Richardson also said he felt Sirhan had been acutely ill "for a year or two" before the June 5 slaying.

But Sirhan had not then passed the point of no return, Richardson said. He was close to being incurable, but still capable of either improvement or regression.

Richardson said he felt Sirhan's

condition had worsened by November, when he was tested by Dr. Martin M. Schorr, clinical psychologist who, after six days on the stand, admitted he lifted from a psychiatrist's book the language he used in describing Sirhan as a paranoid schizophrenic.

Scoring Method Differs

On the whole, Richardson's conclusions tended to support those of Schorr, though Richardson admitted under cross examination by Dep. Dist. Atty. David N. Fitts that he scores tests differently from Schorr and would not have made certain conclusions that Schorr did.

In describing Sirhan's paranoia, Richardson said he found Sirhan to be "blaming, suspicious, wordy, power-oriented, judgmental and moralistic" in his relationship with other people.

He said Sirhan showed signs of delusions of omnipotence and grandeur and wishes to associate himself with symbols of prestige and status. Sirhan also felt himself the victim of unidentified influences, Richardson testified.

Richardson said Sirhan had a superior intelligence and likened him to "a good engine out of tune" because of erratic functioning in his daily emotional life.

He said the Palestinian Arab defendant regards himself "as a soldier or representative of his nation" and as such, goes beyond what normal, healthy people would regard as their duty to uphold the laws of this country.

Because of this concept of himself, Sirhan could not meaningfully and maturely premeditate murder, Richardson testified.

Anxiety Shown

Richardson testified that Sirhan's reactions to the Thematic Apperception Test revealed depressive, suicidal, hostile tendencies heightened by anxiety over anything suggesting sex.

One reaction, to a picture of a man and woman in a bedroom, "suggests a sexual problem," Richardson said. Sirhan interpreted the picture as showing a man after he had either raped or strangled the woman. "This emphasis on aggression and hostility in connection with sex," Richardson said, "makes the sexual topic a frightening one" for Sirhan.

Throughout Richardson's testimony, Sirhan sat calmly at the defense table, rummaging delightedly through more than a dozen birthday cards or telegrams. He became 25 Wednesday, and his mother, Mary, and brothers, Adel and Munir, each sent him two cards apiece. Members of his defense team also sent him cards, and Sirhan told one, "Thank you for remembering, sir."