

# Sirhan's Reenactment of Slaying Described

## Psychiatrist Tells How Suspect Recalled Night of Assassination While Under Hypnosis

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Sirhan Bishara Sirhan's own memory of the killing of Robert F. Kennedy came vividly to life Monday for the first time in public, as psychiatrist Bernard L. Diamond revealed Sirhan's reenactment of the slaying under hypnosis.

The courtroom was spellbound as Dr. Diamond described Sirhan's drunken, circuitous route to a meeting Diamond said Sirhan never expected.

Diamond said he put Sirhan under hypnosis last Jan. 26 for the second of six times and then took him step by step through the night of last June 4 and 5.

Both the Palestinian Arab defendant and newsmen who listened to Sirhan's testimony of amnesia about the killing sat in an electric silence as Diamond's narrative went back 10 months.

Just past midnight on June 5, Sirhan was standing, drunk and confused, in the pantry of the Ambassador when Sen. Kennedy and his followers burst through the far door — "rushing at me," Sirhan thought.

### Sudden Change of Mind

Suddenly Sirhan thought he'd like to shake hands with Sen. Kennedy, who in seconds was almost upon him, almost in physical contact.

Instead, Sirhan whipped a pistol from his belt, shouted "You son of a bitch!" and shot Sen. Kennedy almost point-blank in the head.

As Sirhan shouted these words in his hypnotic reliving of the scene, both Diamond and Dr. Seymour Pollack jumped, startled. Sirhan's face was contorted with a violent rage, Diamond said.

Then Sirhan was silent for a few moments when suddenly he began to choke. "He was gasping for breath and actually turned a little blue," said Diamond. "I became fearful

myself."

But then Sirhan dropped into a deep hypnotic sleep, and after he had rested and was awakened, he had no recollection whatever of the scene he had just enacted, Diamond said.

### Post-Hypnosis Fails

Diamond, a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who is also a full professor of law, criminology and psychiatry at UC Berkeley, said that despite his post-hypnotic suggestion to Sirhan that his amnesia would be wiped out after hypnosis, Sirhan still cannot remember the killing except when in hypnotic trance.

The hypnotic trance is a psychiatric reproduction of the dissociative state the defense contends Sirhan was suffering when he killed Sen. Kennedy.

Diamond testified that what a subject says under hypnosis may not be the truth but a remembered fantasy about what happens during an alleged period of amnesia.

A person is also capable of deliberate lies under hypnosis, Diamond said, but not of concealing things he doesn't know the importance of. Hypnosis overcomes unconscious resistance and evasions, he said.

The psychiatrist's diagnosis of Sirhan as a paranoid schizophrenic agrees with the opinion of five previous defense psychiatrists or psychologists who said it was perfectly consistent with Sirhan's paranoia that after hypnosis Sirhan became suspicious that "somebody had done something to him."

### Sirhan Denied It Worked

Diamond said Sirhan at first denied that hypnosis had worked and bragged privately to defense investigator Michael McCowan that he had tricked Diamond while in a feigned trance.

To prove hypnosis didn't work on him Sirhan told McCowan he would raise the middle finger of one hand in an obscene gesture, to prove he wasn't "under."

Tipped off, Diamond said he watched the next time and saw Sirhan making an effort to give McCowan his little signal "but under hypnosis, he couldn't budge it."

Another time, Diamond said, he gave Sirhan the post-hypnotic suggestion that his arm would be paralyzed after he came around. Sirhan didn't notice this, he said, until he reached for a cigaret and became alarmed when he couldn't move his arm or feel anything.

### Restores Use of Arm

Diamond said he restored the use of his arm by putting him back under and removing the suggestion.

Diamond said that Sirhan, under hypnosis, denied that anyone put him up to shooting Sen. Kennedy, paid him for it, advised him about how to do it or knew in advance that he would.

"Were you the only person involved?" Diamond asked.

"Yes," said Sirhan.

"Why did you shoot Sen. Kennedy?" Diamond asked.

"The bombers," Sirhan replied.

On the witness stand, Sirhan said earlier that his former love for Sen. Kennedy turned to hate when he learned that Sen. Kennedy advocated giving 50 jet bombers to Israel after the six-day Arab-Israeli war of June, 1967.

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Diamond testified that the first time he hypnotized Sirhan, he was surprised at Sirhan's reaction.

He asked Sirhan what he hoped to do for his Arab people and how he felt about the Jews, and to each question, he said, Sirhan would break into convulsive rage, fists clenched, arms rigid, face contorted, sobbing hysterically with tears running down his face.

Diamond said that Sirhan normally appeared to him as supercilious, smart-alecky and profane, but that under hypnosis and questioned about Arabs or Jews, he showed "his first real emotional depth." He reacted that way, Diamond said, only to those two questions.

#### Tells of Night's Events

For the hours leading up to the shooting of Sen. Kennedy, Diamond said, Sirhan filled in this picture under hypnosis:

After having four Tom Collinses at various political victory parties at the Ambassador June 4, Sirhan went back to his car to go home, but felt "dizzy, drunk, sickish-tired." He opened the car door, saw his pistol on the back seat and thought, "The Jews will steal my gun." He tucked his gun under his belt and returned to the hotel for some coffee to sober up on.

He wandered around the hotel until he found a coffee bar in an alcove between the Embassy Room, where Sen. Kennedy was speaking, and the Colonial Room, where the senator headed after his speech.

The alcove was walled with mirrors, and Sirhan became confused with the brightly lighted chandeliers reflecting in the mirrors, and the crowds of people, multiplied by the dozen in the floor-to-ceiling looking-glass.

He had several cups of coffee with a girl—described as brunette and beautiful—and Diamond said Sirhan "was absolutely consistent in denying that there was any thought of doing anything with his gun."

Diamond discounted the possibility that Sirhan might be faking mental illness, saying that among paranoid schizophrenics like Sirhan, their chief wish is to "fake sanity, rather than insanity," because they don't want to be thought of as psychotic.

The psychiatrist cited one previously undisclosed family scene which, he said, contributed heavily to Sirhan's mental deterioration. In the summer of 1957, Sirhan's father, Bishara, and brother, Adel, were digging an irrigation ditch around a tree, while Sirhan skipped around in the mud.

After warning Sirhan to stop, Bishara started to beat the boy but was stopped by Adel. Bishara, Diamond said, stormed into the house and told his wife, Mary, that she must choose between him or the children, because he demanded to be master of his house. She chose the children, Diamond said, whereupon Bishara took the family savings, returned to Jordan and has not been in touch with his family since.

Diamond said he once considered using sodium pentathol—"truth serum"—on Sirhan instead of hypnosis.

Superior Judge Herbert V. Walker, it was learned, ruled this out after learning that in rare cases a subject could die from its effects. Judge Walker felt that the death of Sirhan, a Palestinian Arab, from a dosage of sodium pentathol administered by Jewish doctors—Diamond, psychologist Eric Marcus and psychiatrist Seymour Pollack—would create endless political controversy.

Diamond said that under hypnosis Feb. 1 he also had Sirhan write down answers to questions, and that in this disassociated state the writing "astounded" him because it was extremely similar to his notebook writing.

He said Sirhan was in a very light trance when he began, but soon "flipped automatically into a hypnotic state," and then wrote pages of repetitious words and phrases, including "Robert Kennedy is

going to die" over and over.

Asked who killed Sen. Kennedy, Sirhan wrote, "I don't know." Asked if Kennedy were dead, he wrote, "No, no, no, no . . ." Asked if he were alive, Sirhan wrote, "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes . . ." Diamond said this represented Sirhan's subconscious wish.

Sirhan admitted under hypnosis that he was doing "crazy writing," said he was doing it for "practice" in "mind control." Sirhan said he was hypnotized by "the mirror, my mirror, my mirror," when he wrote in his notebooks in his room, and said he was taught by "AMORC."

The letters stand for the Ancient and Mystical Order of the Rosae Crucis, or Rosicrucians, to which Sirhan belonged.

Diamond said he was puzzled by Sirhan's deep sleep and reluctance to talk during hypnosis until he learned from Sirhan himself that he had undergone self-hypnosis many times without realizing it.

Diamond capped his testimony with a comprehensive summary of his view of Sirhan's emotional deterioration:

"The combination of events which led to the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy by Sirhan, I think, started with Sirhan Sirhan's exposure to violence and death in Jerusalem in 1948, and it continued with his immigration to the United States, the development of his mental illness in which his whole personality altered and he became preoccupied with revolution, violence, destruction, paranoid fantasies of glory, power and becoming the savior of his people.

"As his delusional fantasies grew bolder, his fanatical hatred and fear of the Jews increased with each radio and television broadcast concerning the tension in the Middle East, while in real life, Sirhan was withdrawing into a ruminative, brooding, isolated sense of failure and insignificance. To improve his mind and to gain control, he hoped, over his personal destiny, he read

mystical books and subscribed to and studied the Rosicrucian correspondence courses in self-hypnosis and mind power.

"He practiced his lessons diligently to the point where he became frightened by his own magical, supernatural powers of concentration. He actually believed that he could stop the bombers from reaching Israel and thereby save the Arabs, simply by willing the death of all who would help the Jews.

"His experiments in inducing the magical trances worked better than he realized—they worked so well that they frightened

Sirhan and convinced him that he was losing his mind, that he was going insane. Repeatedly, he would practice his lessons doing all that his correspondence courses prescribed, looking in the mirror, thinking thoughts of love and peace, only to emerge from his trance—a trance that he did not really believe had actually happened—to find his notebook filled with incoherent threats of violence and assassination.

"He knew it was his writing, but he had no knowledge or recollection of writing them. He concluded he was crazy and he feared to let anyone know what was happening. He thought they would lock him away in a mental hospital.

"He sought the remedy in his books on mysticism and the occult, and he day-dreamed of the power of his gun, taking every opportunity on many different days to shoot it, firing hundreds and hundreds of shots as if each shot would somehow make up for his ever growing sense of helplessness, impotence and fear of loss of self-control.

"With absolutely no knowledge or awareness of what was actually happening in his Rosicrucian and occult experiments, he was gradually programming himself, exactly like a computer is programmed by its magnetic tape, programming himself for the coming assassination. In his unconscious mind there existed a plan for the total fulfillment of his sick, paranoid hatred of Kennedy and all who might want to help the Jews. In his conscious mind there was no awareness of such a plan or that he, Sirhan, was to be the instrument of assassination.

"It is my opinion that through chance, circumstances, and a succession or unrelated events, Sirhan found himself in the physical situation in which the assassination occurred. I am satisfied that he had not consciously planned to be in that situation. I am satisfied that if he had been fully conscious and in his usual mental state he would have been quite harmless.

"But he was confused, bewildered and partially intoxicated. The mirrors in the hotel lobby, the flashing lights, the general confusion—this was like pressing the button which starts the computer.

"I agree that this is an absurd and preposterous story, unlikely and incredible. I doubt that Sirhan himself agrees with me as to how everything happened.

"Sirhan would rather believe that he is the fanatical martyr who by his noble act of self-sacrifice has saved his people and become a great hero. He claims to be ready to die in the gas chamber for the glory of the Arab people.

"However, I see Sirhan as small and helpless, pitifully ill, with a demented, psychotic rage, out of control of his own consciousness and his own actions, subject to bizarre dissociated trances in some of which he programmed himself to be the instrument of assassination, and then in an almost accidentally induced twilight state he actually executed the crime, knowing next to nothing as to what was happening."