

Sirhan Retains Cooper, Parsons as His Attorneys

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Sirhan Bishara Sirhan said Monday he will stick with attorneys Grant B. Cooper and Russell Parsons "and none other" to fight his conviction and death sentence for the murder of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

It was the first word from Sirhan himself in response to stories that celebrated San Francisco attorney Melvin Belli would handle Sirhan's appeal.

Belli was quoted Friday in Tucson as saying Sirhan's family had contacted him and, "They want me to do the appeal."

In a statement Monday released through Cooper, the convicted assassin said:

"I, Sirhan Sirhan, having full confidence in my present attorneys, Grant B. Cooper and Russell Parsons, members of the California State Bar, hereby engage them and none other to handle my appeal to the Supreme Court of the State of California and, if necessary, to the Supreme Court of the United States."

Witnessed by Adviser

The statement was signed by Sirhan and witnessed by Sheriff's Lt. Rudolph Berteaux and Baron Sarkees Nahas, an Arab who served as unofficial adviser to Sirhan's defense throughout his 15-week trial.

Sirhan's brother, Adel, 30, said Monday he and his mother, Mary, 56, had met with Belli once, but that the meeting had been indecisive. He said Belli had not been engaged either to assist or replace Sirhan's present attorneys.

Asked if the family was dissatisfied with Sirhan's defense, in view of his conviction, Adel Sirhan said, "No, we are not—not in any way."

He said it was his understanding that Belli's involvement in the case probably would be in filing a friend of the court brief. Belli himself was quoted earlier as saying he did not expect to participate personally in any further court sessions, but would probably restrict his efforts to a written appeal.

Belli was not immediately available for comment Monday. *end*