

COAST JUDGE GETS SIRHAN TRIAL DATA

Prosecutor Scores Handling of Exhibits in Slaying of Robert Kennedy in '68

LOS ANGELES, Sept. 16 (UPI)—A prosecutor said today that there had been "substantial irregularities" in handling exhibits connected with the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy in 1968, and handed over the pistol and part of the fatal bullet fired by Sirhan B. Sirhan, Mr. Kennedy's convicted assassin, to a county judge.

The exhibits, packed in a brown cardboard box, and a wrinkled paper bundle of some of the clothing Senator Kennedy wore on June 5, 1968, when he was fatally shot at the Hotel Ambassador in Los Angeles, were turned over to Judge Robert A. Wenke of Superior Court for examination later this month by a panel of seven independent experts.

Judge Wenke gave final approval to a court order of instructions to the panel, whose key question was:

"Do the exhibits in any way support a conclusion that a second weapon was fired at the time of the assassination?"

The Los Angeles District Attorney's office has reluctantly agreed to the partial reopening of the case, although it has stated repeatedly that there is

no doubt that Mr. Sirhan, now serving a life sentence, was guilty of the murder and that no second gunman was involved.

At today's session, Dinko Bozanich, the Deputy District Attorney, said there had been "substantial irregularities" in the handling of the exhibits in the office of the county clerk since Mr. Sirhan was convicted at his trial in 1969.

The District Attorney contends that such irregularities may make inconclusive any results obtained from refiring the .22-caliber pistol and comparing the bullet markings with those removed from Mr. Kennedy's body and bystanders wounded in the shooting.

The experts, who are to be flown here from all over the country, had originally been scheduled to conduct their tests independently but on the same day in seven separate rooms.

The court ruled today that such an arrangement was impractical and ordered the tests to be held in one main "laboratory," with the forensic scientists using the same equipment.

The court also ruled that the experts be ordered not to talk with one another about their tests or their findings until the results were published.

Mr. Sirhan, now in San Quentin, must give his written consent before the re-testing is undertaken, Judge Wenke ruled. There was little doubt, however, that Mr. Sirhan would agree.

The motion to re-examine the evidence was brought by the Columbia Broadcasting System and Paul Schrade, a former executive of the United Automobile Workers who was at Senator Kennedy's side in the hotel and was wounded in the shooting.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the Senator's son, has said the family does not believe any useful purpose would be served by reopening the case.