

has its roots in the harsh admiralty laws of the previous centuries, for demonstrating against conditions that existed in the stockade, is, in my opinion, a miscarriage of justice."

By week's end, two more privates had been sentenced. Lawrence W. Reidel, 20, was given 14 years, and Louis S. Oszczepinski, 21, got 16—presumably because he had two previous AWOL convictions. Both men had been labeled "sociopaths" by their attorneys, but after three days with Army psychiatrists, they were adjudged sane. During the trial, Oszczepinski attempted suicide by slicing both his wrists with a razor blade.

Extremely severe judgments in military courts are common. It is a foregone conclusion that those who have been charged will appeal. The first step of the complicated but fairly liberal review procedure is the staff judge advocate, who can approve the sentence, reduce, or dismiss it. From there it goes to Washington. All this takes time, of course, which the accused must spend in prison, since there is no provision for bail in military law. However, despite the rigmarole of court-martial, there is little likelihood that any of the convicted "mutineers" will spend anything like 15 years in jail.

The Man Who Loved Kennedy

The opening defense gambit in Sirhan Bishara Sirhan's murder trial was a variant of the tactics often used by those accused of "crimes of passion." But instead of claiming that "everything went black" at the moment of the crime, Sirhan's attorneys contended last week that the defendant was "in a trance" when he fired the shots that killed Senator Robert Kennedy in Los Angeles' Ambassador Hotel.

In his opening statement for the defense, Attorney Emile Zola Berman de-

scribed Sirhan, 24, as an "immature, emotionally disturbed and mentally ill youth." Sirhan's behavior in court sometimes seemed to bear him out. He smirked, grinned and chatted with his attorneys. He gave the impression of enjoying a good story at times; other times he seemed not to be listening at all. When Berman related the Jordanian's long list of failures in school, in work and in life, Sirhan stiffened and angrily whispered protests to his other lawyers. Later, one attorney explained that Sirhan had not read Berman's statement before it was delivered, and "when you're saying unkind things about him, he doesn't like it." Berman later claimed that Sirhan actually "admired and loved" Kennedy until the day the Senator said that he favored sending 50 Phantom jets to Israel. As always, Sirhan's mother, Mary, was in court.

Berman, who is a New Yorker and a Jew, spoke with compassion of the woes of the Palestinian Arabs (he pronounced the word "Ay-rab" and referred to Sirhan as "Saran"). He dramatically underlined the word "intoxicated" ("... while in a disturbed mental state, intoxicated and confused..."), an indication that the defense intends to bolster the contention that Sirhan was "out of contact with reality." This condition was induced, Berman said, when Sirhan "concentrated in front of a mirror in his own room and thought and thought about Senator Kennedy until at last he saw his own face no longer, but that of Senator Kennedy."

Six-Dollar Chip. The opening statement for the prosecution by Deputy District Attorney David Fitts was factual and low-keyed. It included the detail that Sirhan had chipped in only \$6 in the purchase by his brother Munir of the \$25 murder weapon. Fitts also noted that the day before the shooting, Sirhan went to the San Gabriel Valley Gun Range for target practice. While on the range, one Mike Socoman asked Sirhan what he intended to do with the small Iver Johnson .22-cal. pistol. Sirhan said he could use it for hunting, adding: "It could kill a dog." Ballistics evidence revealed that the fatal shot was fired into Kennedy's head from a distance of approximately one inch. Later, one of the prosecutors, Lynn Compton, said that Sirhan had "stalked" Kennedy for days.

With the opening statements out of the way, the prosecution began calling witnesses to prove that Sirhan had killed the Senator. Two Ambassador Hotel employees identified the defendant as the assassin—a fact that is not disputed by the defense. A third, Busboy Juan Romero, when asked if anyone in court resembled the murderer, looked around and said, "No." When Sirhan was pointed out to him, Romero insisted, "No, sir. I don't believe that's him." Surprised, Sirhan leaned toward an aide, Michael McCowan, and asked, "What did he say?" McCowan replied, "He said it wasn't you." Laughing, Sirhan answered, "No kidding!"

PHILLIP H. GUARISCO



RUSSO & COURTHOUSE SPECTATOR
Case of the shakes.

Dallas Revisited

In New Orleans last week, judge, jury and court relived the murder of John F. Kennedy. District Attorney Jim Garrison and his staff flashed onto a portable screen the color film of the assassination in Dallas that had been taken by Businessman Abraham Zapruder.

The prosecution hoped the film would convincingly demonstrate that at least one of the bullets that struck the President came from the front. Assistant District Attorney James Alcock argued: "If the state can prove that the President was shot from more than one direction, the state in effect has proved a conspiracy." One sequence—which was shown in slow motion and frame by frame—clearly shows the President falling backward in his seat, an unlikely occurrence if he were being struck by bullets from the rear. However, the Warren Commission Report has already met this objection by noting that Kennedy fell backward because his chauffeur had speeded up the car when the shooting began.

As the jurors leaned forward intently, Businessman Clay Shaw, accused of having conspired to commit the murder, stood next to the jury box, chain smoking, his face impassive.

Truth Serum. The state's key witness, Book Salesman Perry Russo, was severely handled by Defense Counsel Irvin Dymond. On cross-examination, Dymond led Russo carefully through the events of the party at which he said that he had heard Shaw, Lee Oswald and David Ferrie, a former airlines pilot, discuss ways of killing the President. After two days of contradiction-riddled testimony, Russo made the state's case as shaky as Jell-O. He also displayed considerable antagonism toward Garrison and his staff, who had extracted depositions from him under hyp-



MUNIR & MARY SIRHAN
That face in the mirror.