

# What Sirhan's Really Like...

## Tattler's Exclusive Look at His Records in San Quentin Show the Strong, Bright, Mystical Mind That Rules Him

BY TOM AYRES  
Of the Tattler Staff

Diminutive Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, a believer in the occult and self-hypnosis, claims he found himself at the Ambassador Hotel on the night of June 4, 1968, quite by accident.

Sirhan, now 30, claims he never wrote in his diary the statements attacking Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, as prosecutors have claimed.

The Jordanian-born immigrant's detailed recollections of the events on the night Kennedy was assassinated are found in his confidential prison records — obtained exclusively by TATTLER.

The documents also give an insight into the kid-gloves treatment San Quentin prison authorities afforded Sirhan. It was feared he would be attacked by other inmates on the prison's death row.

His prison records reflect a man of contrasting personalities. For example, Sirhan, a Christian Arab, refused any visits from a Protestant prison chaplain Byron E. Eshelman, who remarked that the refusal "is most unusual for a person on death row."

However, he accepted visits from Catholic Chaplain Thomas F. Ahern, who found Sirhan was "courteous and affable, and seems to accept his present situation with equanimity."

IN A LETTER, he was gracious in rejecting an offer by San Francisco Attorney Melvin Belli to intervene in his case — "I sincerely appreciate Mr. Belli's interest in my predicament. However, I feel that my new attorneys are sufficiently competent to tender

me the best and strongest legal counsel."

But the young Arab's fiery temper showed through when he actually wrote a threatening letter from Death Row to his older brother, Adel.

"I want you to bring (his attorney Grant) Cooper here immediately," he wrote, underlining "immediately" three times. "Fall him that he will not get his \$10,000 until he sees me. If you fail to bring Cooper here, you're going to regret it. I'll have my chance to make you regret it — laugh at me because I am in prison."

Since he has been imprisoned, Sirhan has remained "extremely concerned" with developments in the Middle East and becomes moody at times, according to his guards.

Death Row Sgt. J. J. Kentzel said most condemned prisoners in San Quentin viewed Sirhan's arrival at the prison one of two ways:

(1) He's one of us now; he's just killed a person of note.

(2) He'll be safe among us because we don't want any adverse publicity caused by an attempt on his life.

However, Sergeant Kentzel did single out four inmates who he believes would kill Sirhan, if only for the notoriety, and a fifth who might kill him, "but only" if he was pushed.

After Sirhan had been in San Quentin for some time, various authorities found "no evidence that there is any political response to Sirhan ... that is, that someone would want to harm him because he killed Robert Kennedy."

THREE YEARS AFTER he was incarcerated associate warden James W. L. Park wrote in a memo:

"Sirhan has been wooed by militant Arab groups, but has not responded to them. If he were to cooperate, there would be a chance of rescue by them."

Perhaps the greatest insight into depths of the Sirhan personality is set forth in correctional counselor W. O. Cross' reports of detailed interviews held with Sirhan behind the walls of San Quentin.

Though Sirhan had strong pro-Arab, anti-Jewish feelings dating back to his childhood in strife-torn Jordan, he told Cross he did not see himself as a social or political activist "but as one who preferred to view social situations at a distance and evaluate them intellectually."

"He claims to have delved into philosophy at an early age and then went to mysticism and Rosicrucianism," Cross wrote in a report.

"He claims to have practiced self-hypnosis and became proficient at inducing anesthesia in various parts of his body. He claims he felt his mind was very strong and could do all sorts of things."

Sirhan had maintained an interest in the occult from 1966 until the time of the assassination.

COULD THIS HAVE PLAYED some role in Sirhan's actions on the night of the assassination?

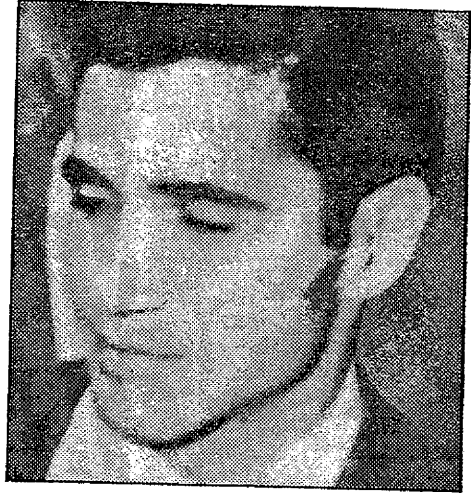
Cross sized up that question in his report this way:

"(Sirhan) mentioned how he had successfully completed experiments on men-

**DO YOU THINK THIS MAN IS A KILLER?**



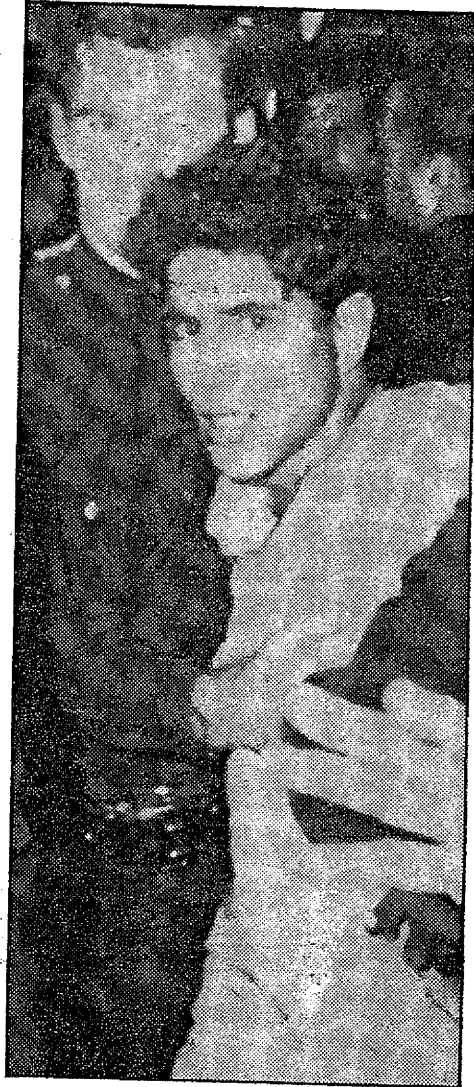
HE IS LED AWAY TO JUDGE AFTER SHOOTING.



A VEILED LOOK AS HE MEETS THE PRESS.



HE ARRIVES FOR TRIAL IN 1969.



HIS CURIOUS STARE IN THE PANTRY.

talistic phenomenon and he was sure there was substance to what he was studying.

It is of note that this interest in 'unusual ways of influencing events and material things' came at a period when Sirhan was having to deal with a great deal of personal loss in attempting the usual ways of influencing events and material things.

During the same period his behavior showed 'some increase in irritability and possibly an easier arousal to anger when confronted with Arab-Jewish conflicts reported on television or radio.' "

Cross said the six-day Arab-Jewish war in 1967 was an extremely provocative topic with Sirhan. He felt the United States had sold out the Arab people. He felt betrayed by Sen. Kennedy's favorable attitude toward Israel.

Here is a capsule version of what Sirhan told counselor Cross he remembers about the night of the assassination.

**HE STARTED OUT** at the Pasadena City College having coffee with a friend, a foreign exchange student from India. He saw an advertisement of a pro-Zionist rally in the Los Angeles Times. It infuriated him and he could think of nothing but to reach the rally.

"He made a point that this type of compulsion was very unusual for him, as he avoided gatherings of this sort," Cross wrote.

Sirhan rose from the table in a trance-like state, got into his car and drove down the Pasadena freeway "like a madman."

He drove up and down Wilshire Blvd., looking in vain for the rally. A crowd of people attracted his attention, so he stopped his car. Somebody in the crowd told him a party was going on at the nearby Ambassador Hotel. Sirhan headed there.

He tipped a waitress \$20, but she refused to

serve him a drink. But he bought one or more Tom Collins' for \$1.25 each at a bar.

**SIRHAN HAD A BRIEF FLASH** of memory: He recalled sitting with a girl at a coffee table, drinking coffee and offering her some. Then, Sirhan told Cross, his memory lapsed completely.

Sirhan, of course, was seized with a smoking .22-caliber pistol a few minutes past midnight in the Ambassador kitchen-pantry area as Sen. Kennedy lay dying and five other persons lay wounded.

Robert A. Houghton, Los Angeles chief of detectives at the time, wrote in his book "Special Unit Senator" that Sirhan was not intoxicated and was not under the influence of drugs when he fired the shots.

**WAS HE UNDER** a state of self-hypnosis?

Associate Warden Park, 2 1/2 years after Sirhan's imprisonment at San Quentin, recommended that he be allowed the freedoms granted other prisoners on Death Row and noted that Sirhan's prison record was clean except for two hunger strikes.

During his various interviews with prison authorities Sirhan had a facial tic. He blinked and squinted his eyes "to release his tension." He bit his fingernails to the quick and they bled.

According to Chief Prison Psychiatrist Dr. David G. Schmidt, Sirhan "claims he really didn't mean to commit homicide, but merely to call attention to the plight of the people."

Dr. Schmidt found that while Sirhan had "a neurotic, emotionally unstable, paranoid personality," he wasn't likely to try to kill himself.

