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Summary of Police Probe Says Sirhan Acted Alone

By MYRNA OLIVER, *Times Legal Affairs Writer*

Nearly 18 years after Robert F. Kennedy's assassination, the Los Angeles Police Commission on Tuesday released a 1,500-page summary of the police investigation concluding that convicted killer Sirhan Sirhan acted alone.

"Sirhan Sirhan fired the fatal shots that killed Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and wounded five others," the report stated. "There was no evidence of a conspiracy in the crime."

The report also concluded that Sirhan was neither insane nor intoxicated and that he fully intended to kill Kennedy.

The senator was shot at 12:15 a.m. on June 5, 1968, in the pantry of the Ambassador Hotel following his victory speech after winning the California Democratic presidential primary election. He died 25 hours later at Good Samaritan Hospital.

Sirhan, then 24, was immediately apprehended and never denied firing the fatal shots.

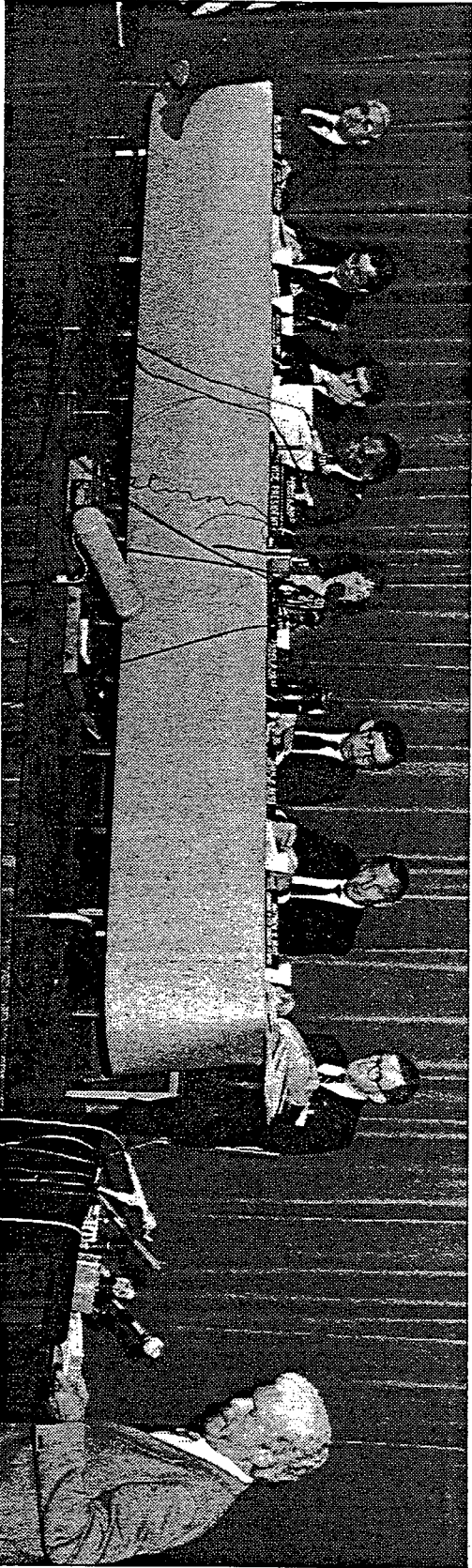
Release of the 1,500-page summary Tuesday did little to mollify critics who have long sought access to the full 50,000-page police file on the assassination.

In spite of promises made in 1969, after Sirhan's trial, by then-Atty. Gen. Evelle J. Younger and then-Police Chief Thomas Reddin that the investigation would be open to public scrutiny, the police file has remained sequestered despite repeated requests for public access under prevailing law.

The American Civil Liberties Union joined commission critics Tuesday in urging release of the complete report as quickly as possible.

Paul Schrade, a United Auto-

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Paul Schrader, wounded during the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, accused the commission of "arrogance of power." In not releasing the full 50,000-page file.

MICHAEL EDWARDS / Los Angeles Times

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bile Workers official who co-chaired Kennedy's campaign and who suffered a head wound in the Sirhan fusillade, accused the police commissioners of "arrogance of power" and said they were only making a "PR gesture" in releasing the summary.

He said the 1,500-page summary contained no new information.

Schrade and others say they believe that the complete report might support a "second-gun theory," in which at least one other gunman is said to have shot Kennedy and was never apprehended. They argue that 13 shots were fired from two guns, rather than eight from Sirhan's single .22 caliber Iver Johnson, as police reported.

Schrade challenged Police Chief Daryl F. Gates during Tuesday's Police Commission meeting to prove "how a bullet going through Kennedy's coat could have ever gotten into my head."

Shots Described

The police summary released Tuesday clearly stated: "The first shot had struck him [Kennedy] in the head behind the right ear; the second went through the padding of Kennedy's coat and struck Paul Schrader, United Automobile Workers Union official, in the head."

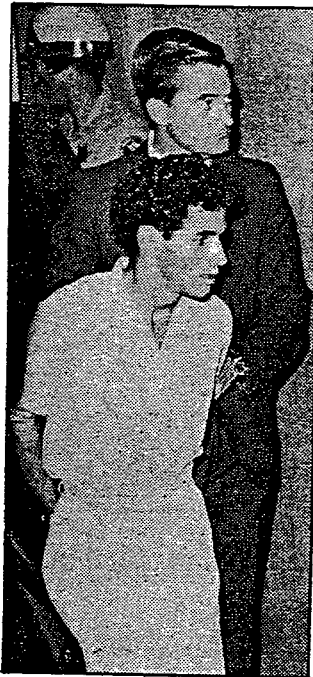
Commission Vice President Barbara L. Schlei ruled Schrader's question out of order, and Gates said nothing.

After releasing the summary, the commission unanimously approved release of the complete 50,000-page file, but left the next step to Mayor Tom Bradley.

Bradley, they agreed, should name a committee including the city archivist, city librarian and Cultural Heritage Commission president, to recommend a timetable for the release, oversee censoring of certain material, and find a proper repository.

A threshold question to be addressed by that committee, Schlei said, is whether the material is a historical document. If so, the full report must by law remain in city archives. If not, it could be donated to any interested library or other appropriate non-municipal organization.

Schlei made it clear, however, that the commission will never permit release of autopsy photos of the slain senator. The commission also released a five-page explanation, prepared by Assistant City Atty. Lewis N. Unger, of standards for making deletions throughout the summary. Most deletions were made to protect individuals' privacy—names, addresses, phone num-



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Sirhan in custody in 1968.

'Sirhan Sirhan fired the fatal shots that killed Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and wounded five others. There was no evidence of a conspiracy in the crime.'

bers, or their use of vulgar language—Schlei said. Other paragraphs or pages were blacked out because of "governmental privilege," or information given to government officials on the promise of confidentiality or involving future criminal investigations, Unger's explanation said.

"I don't believe anything was cut out or redacted," Schlei said, "that would shed any light on this investigation."

Reached Tuesday by telephone at Soledad State Prison where he is serving a life term, Sirhan said: "The report says that I killed the senator and acted alone. That is true, and I have already admitted that. Beyond that, it is impossible to comment on any points without seeing the full report."

Sirhan pleaded not guilty under California's "diminished capacity"

provision, with attorneys arguing that he was under the influence of three gin drinks and was too mentally impaired from a childhood in Arab-Israeli fighting to plot anybody's murder.

He was convicted on April 17, 1969, of first degree murder and subsequently a death sentence was recommended by the same jury. On June 15, 1972, the state Supreme Court upheld the murder conviction but reduced his sentence to life imprisonment after scrapping the death penalty earlier that year.

Schrader's protests Tuesday again raised the perennial question of the second-gun or conspiracy theory.

Despite perhaps the most exhaustive investigation in the history of the Los Angeles Police Department and a thorough examination of 90 witnesses and mountains of evidence in the Sirhan trial, the second-gun question has never gone away.

In 1971, then-Dist. Atty. Joseph P. Busch announced after a five-month investigation that Sirhan alone was involved in the assassination. One day later, a Los Angeles Police Department board of inquiry reached the same conclusion.

Expresses Doubt

Subsequently, William W. Harper, a Pasadena criminalist, reported that photographs taken of bullets introduced as evidence at the trial indicated that they all could not have been fired from the death weapon, and speculation mounted that Sirhan did not act alone.

In January, 1975, Sirhan's attorney asked the state Supreme Court to reopen the Kennedy investigation on grounds that his client had been convicted by false ballistic testimony. The court refused.

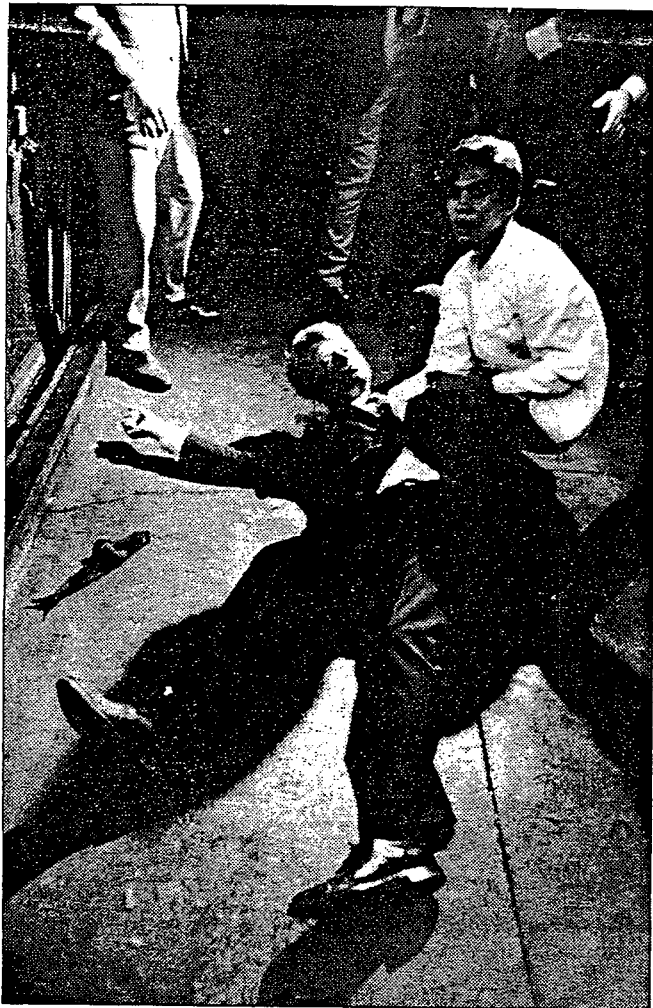
In August of that year, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors voted to reexamine the ballistic evidence. Thomas Kranz, an attorney, was selected to review the case.

Seven ballistic experts from around the country were gathered for a Los Angeles Superior Court hearing. The criminalists fired Sirhan's gun in September, 1975, examined the evidence bullets, and jointly responded on Oct. 5 that:

"There is no substantive or demonstrable evidence to indicate that more than one gun was used to fire any of the bullets examined."

In his evaluation of the investigation, Kranz concluded that the hearing had answered the second-gun question to all but "die-hard doubters, conspiracy lovers, publicity seekers or the uninformed."

In Kranz' view, the LAPD did an "excellent job" in probing whether



BORIS YARO / Los Angeles Times

The mortally wounded Robert Kennedy at the Ambassador Hotel.

Sirhan was part of a conspiracy but was "sloppy" in its scientific work and exhibited mistakes and poor judgment that led critics to question the entire Kennedy investigation.

Kranz called for the LAPD to release the entire file of its investigation a decade ago.

On Tuesday, Kranz, now a Department of Defense counsel in Washington, reiterated that request.

"You'll never resolve this problem of trying to prove a negative until they do," he told *The Times*.

'Girl in Polka Dot Dress'

The summary released Tuesday dwelt at length with more than 20 suspected conspiracy theories suggesting that Sirhan acted in concert with other Arab students, with anti-Castro Cubans, or with communists.

Perhaps best known was the theory of the conspiracy with the "girl in the polka dot dress."

A young woman, whose name was deleted from the summary released Tuesday, reported that she saw a girl in a black and white polka dot dress running from the

scene of the shooting yelling, "We shot him. We shot him."

Asked who she shot, the girl supposedly responded, "We just shot Sen. Kennedy."

Police began to question the story after physical evidence indicated that she could not have been where she said she was at the time of the shooting, the summary stated.

"She was given a polygraph examination," the summary noted, "and the results revealed that she was lying completely about the occurrence."

It was later learned that a Kennedy worker had been wearing a green dress with gold polka dots. No black and white dress was ever found.

"The notoriety which accompanied the assassination, and the mystery surrounding Sirhan's character and background," the summary stated, "made the subject of conspiracy fertile ground for evoking unusual responses from the general public."

"Opportunists, political adventurers and publicity seekers came

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forward to volunteer that they had seen or spoken to Sirhan or that they had information which was valuable to the investigation.

"The majority of the persons making the allegations," the report said, "were found to be lying for one reason or another."

A few allegations, the summary conceded, remain partially unresolved because of the failure of the witnesses to cooperate.

The summary released Tuesday went to great lengths to explain that Kennedy and his political entourage had repeatedly thwarted police efforts to provide security and had requested none that evening. Kennedy, who advocated public accessibility to politicians, was accompanied by a lone private bodyguard.

The summary also clearly indicated how scrutinized the LAPD itself fell from the outset of the investigation.

"His death followed the recent assassination of civil rights leader Martin Luther King [Jr.] and the murder of President John F. Kennedy. The massive task confronting this department must be viewed in this light," stated the introduction of the summary prepared in 1969 for then-Chief Reddin by Robert A. Houghton, Reddin's deputy chief. In 1970, Houghton wrote a book on the investigation called "Special Unit Senator," the code name of the investigative unit.

"The department's reputation quite literally was on the line, and

we were being watched by most Americans to see if we could perform the job which law enforcement in America is charged with doing," the introduction stated. "It was obvious that history would

look upon the results of our investigation to ascertain if we had exhausted all possible means to uncover the complete truth about the event."

Eventually, the investigation

was to consume 5,000 officer days and result in the still-sequestered 50,000 pages of information, 1,700 photographs, and 155 items of evidence that include Sirhan's gun and spiral notebooks in which he had

repeatedly jotted "R.F.K. Must Die."
Times staff writers Jerry Cohen, Bill Farr, John Kendall and Kenneth Felch contributed to this article.