

The Instant It Happened

• C. H. H. n $\frac{2}{2}$ June 4, 1968
F. H. G. U. R. O. R $\frac{1}{76}$

And Yet Again

Boris Yaro, a reporter-photographer on the suburban section of the Los Angeles Times, has had too many tacos this day, June 4, 1968. So he leaves work early and, cuddled up to the TV with his Pepto-Bismol, he watches the California primary returns.

Robert Kennedy is clearly ahead and Boris is certain he will take it all — the primary, the nomination in Chicago, the White House. Recovered from his upset, the reporter-photographer picks up his camera and heads for the Ambassador, strictly on his own. No strobe unit. He will use only available light for something different, perhaps dramatic, to hang on his wall. He happens to like Bobby Kennedy.

A few minutes after midnight, the candidate delivers his victory statement in the Embassy Room of the hotel. A small joke about the unfair attack on his dog, Freckles. The peroration: "I think we can end the divisions in the United States ... the violence, the disenchantment with our society..."

The last crescendo: "So my thanks to all of you and it's on to Chicago and let's win there."

12:16 a.m. To avoid the crowd, the candidate moves toward the kitchen, where, among others in the crush, Boris Yaro waits. Also a dark little man named Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, a Jordanian Arab, who does not like the candidate's support of Israel.

Yaro hears what sounds like the pop of firecrackers and feels his face stung. Probably bits of the firecracker paper, he guesses, not yet thinking of gunpowder.



Suddenly, people are pulling back and only three or four feet away Yaro sees Sirhan fire at Robert Kennedy again and again and he watches in numbed horror and he begins to react only when someone yells, "Get him!" Two men grab Sirhan and shove him face down on a metal counter and the gun slips from his hand and Yaro grabs it and someone else takes it from him.

He first thinks about mechanical things. "The fire from the gun is orange. The color of the walls is..."

Then, the full thought erupts: "My God! My God! This is happening again — to another Kennedy!"

Robert Kennedy sinks to the floor and Boris Yaro begins shooting pictures and a lady next to him, in the hysteria of the instant, pulls his arm, shouting, "Don't take pictures. I'm a photographer and I'm not taking pictures." Boris Yaro yells, "Let go, lady. Goddammit, this is history!" and he shakes her loose and takes more pictures, six in all, and it is not until an hour and a half later, back in the office, all pictures processed, all information given to his news desk, that he goes alone into a tiny darkroom and, like many of his countrymen this night of revived shock and shame, he weeps.