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# Psychiatrist Who Was Expert Witness at Trial Says:

## Sirhan Would Rather Die Than Admit He's Insane

Sirhan B. Sirhan would rather die than admit he is mentally ill. The killer of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy cleverly covered up his mental condition and was able to fool the jury into thinking he is sane, said one of America's leading psychiatrists and criminologists who was an expert witness at the murder trial.

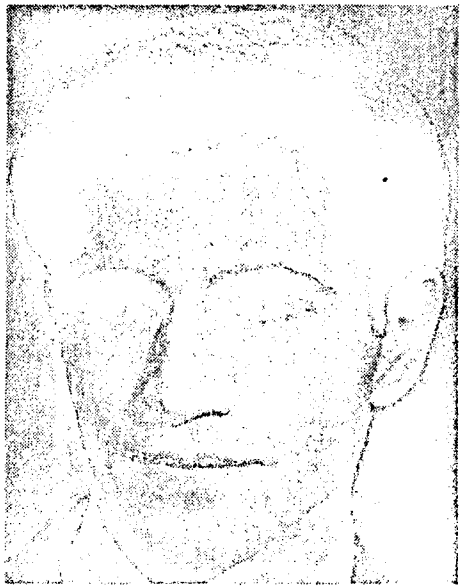
"It's ironic, but by convicting Sirhan of first-degree murder, the jury gave him exactly what he wanted," said Dr. Bernard L. Diamond, a psychiatrist who examined Sirhan eight times in his cell.

"Sirhan wants everybody to consider him a cool and rational assassin. He believes himself to be a fanatic martyr who by his noble act of self-sacrifice has served his people, the Arabs, and become a great hero.

"Sirhan is ready to die in the gas chamber to protect this heroic fantasy.

"The measure of how persuasive he can be was his ability to persuade the jury that he was a sane man who killed for political reasons.

"You know, the first time I met him he nearly succeeded in concealing the symptoms of his schizophrenia (split personality) from me."



**ASSASSIN:** Sirhan Sirhan believes he is a martyr and a great hero. He wanted to be convicted of murder.

Dr. Diamond, 56, is a professor of law and a professor of psychiatry at the University of California at Berkeley, as well as acting dean of the University's School of Criminology.

Dr, Diamond said Sirhan, who experimented with self-hypnosis, was in a dissociated state when he killed Senator Kennedy and when he returned to a normal state he actually could not remember committing the crime.

During Dr. Diamond's examinations and while under hypnosis, Sirhan reenacted the murder of Senator Kennedy. The psychiatrist said Sirhan started to shake hands with Kennedy, but then automatically carried out the hatred of Kennedy and all who might want to help the Jews.

"I worked with Sirhan from 20 to 25 hours, interviewed his family and of course studied the reports of all the investigators as well as the raw data from the full battery of psychological tests that were administered to him."

Ten of the 11 experts — psychologists, anthropologists and psychiatrists — who examined Sirhan's tests agreed he was a chronic paranoid schizophrenic.

Dr. Diamond said in Sirhan he found paranoid ideas focused around his bolder and his rage toward all Jews was aggravated by each radio or TV broadcast on the Middle East, he was withdrawing into a brooding isolation with a sense of personal failure.

"Working as an exercise boy, he dreamed of being a jockey, but an injury suffered by falling from a horse ended that hope. Later he bought a gun and slammed away, rapid fire, with hundreds of rounds on a target range. He fired each shot as if it would somehow make up for his impotence.

"Later he joined a mystical group called the Rosicrucians and bought their mail-order course on, 'How to control your mind-waves.' He would practice his lessons according to the instructions in the correspondence course by setting two candles in front of a mirror and staring into his own eyes. After going into a trance thinking of love and peace, he would emerge to find his notebook filled with incoherent threats of violence and assassination.

"He would have no recollection of having written anything, but he knew that it was his handwriting. Out of these experiences grew the fear that he was crazy and that if anyone knew about his notebooks, he would be locked up in a mental hospital."

The psychiatrist said that Sirhan had a total fascination with Kennedy, who was running in the California presidential primary. Sirhan seemed to worship Kennedy and he felt betrayed when his idol came out during the campaign for sending 50 bombers to Israel.

Dr. Diamond said Sirhan thought he and unlikely because the crime itself was a tragically absurd, unlikely and preposterous event. Sirhan executed the crime in a twilight state, knowing next to nothing as to what was happening."

Dr. Diamond said he was able to discover a great deal about Sirhan and the assassination by hypnotizing him.

"Hypnosis does not guarantee the truth, but taken with the other psychiatric evidence, it is convincing," Dr. Diamond said.

"I had grave doubts about hypnosis working on him, but it did, therefore I was able to ask him a number of questions on the conspiracy angle. I asked him if anybody had told him to shoot Kennedy. He said, 'No, no, no . . .'

"Then I asked him if anybody gave him money to shoot Kennedy, and he answered, 'No.'

"There is not the slightest hint of a conspiracy. He did it entirely on his own.

"But we had a more important reason for using hypnosis. I was surprised to discover in my first interview with Sirhan that he had no recollection of shooting Kennedy.

"He did not deny it, but he could not remember it. This amnesia presented an impossible barrier to me. If I could not crack it, I would have refused, as I have in previous cases, to testify on the question of criminal intent.

"But by having Sirhan under hypnosis, we cleared up many doubts about the assassination itself as well as the state of

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During Dr. Diamond's examinations and while under hypnosis, Sirhan reenacted the murder of Senator Kennedy. The psychiatrist said Sirhan started to shake hands with Kennedy, but then automatically carried out the plan he had fed to his subconscious and reached for his gun and killed Kennedy.

"Actually his self-hypnosis worked better than he knew," Dr. Diamond said.

"Without real knowledge or awareness of what was happening in the trances, he rigorously programmed himself for the assassination exactly the way a computer is programmed by its magnetic tape. In his unconscious mind there existed a plan for the fulfillment of his sick, paranoid is a martyr and a great hero. He wanted to be convicted of murder.

hatred of Kennedy and all who might want to help the Jews.

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Dr. Diamond said in Sirhan he found paranoid ideas focused around his hatred of Jews and going back to 1948 when, as an Arab boy in Jerusalem, he was shelled and bombed by the Israelis.

"War does brutal things to children," Dr. Diamond said.

"His mental illness continued to develop after he immigrated to the U.S. His whole personality altered and he became preoccupied with revolution, violence, dreams of glory, power and becoming the savior of his people.

"As his delusional fantasies grew having written anything, but he knew that it was his handwriting. Out of these experiences grew the fear that he was crazy and that if anyone knew about his notebooks, he would be locked up in a mental hospital."

The psychiatrist said that Sirhan had a total fascination with Kennedy, who was running in the California presidential primary. Sirhan seemed to worship Kennedy and he felt betrayed when his idol came out during the campaign for sending 50 bombers to Israel.

Dr. Diamond said Sirhan thought he saw Kennedy's face come before him in the mirror, blotting out his own image and in his trances began to write kill-Kennedy orders to his subconscious mind.

"In his conscious mind there was no awareness of such a plan or that he was to be the instrument of assassination," Dr. Diamond said. "But while in a state of hypnosis, he wrote, 'RFK must die,' and 'Robert F. Kennedy must be assassinated before June 5, 1968.'

"The June 5 date occurred to him because it was the anniversary of the Israeli victory over the Arabs. It took a series of unlikely events, unrelated and accidental, to put Sirhan in the physical situation — with a loaded gun, face-to-face with Kennedy — and to release this unconscious mechanism. Important here was the coincidence of the dates: The California Primary on June 4, which brought Kennedy to the Ambassador Hotel, and the Israeli victory celebration on June 5.

"Sirhan ended up half drunk on gin — Tom Collinses — at the hotel late on the night of June 4, when Kennedy won the primary. By the least likely accident of all he blundered into an alcove lined with mirrors and wall lights, which triggered him into his dissociated state. A few more blunders took him by a circuitous route into that pantry shortly before Kennedy happened to come through.

"I told the jury that the whole Sirhan story was absurd, preposterous, son for using hypnosis. I was surprised to discover in my first interview with Sirhan that he had no recollection of shooting Kennedy.

"He did not deny it, but he could not remember it. This amnesia presented an impossible barrier to me. If I could not crack it, I would have refused, as I have in previous cases, to testify on the question of criminal intent.

"But by having Sirhan under hypnosis, we cleared up many doubts about the assassination itself as well as the state of Sirhan's mind. We didn't even know until he grabbed at his belt on the left side, where he had carried that .22 revolver.

"I usually played back the tape recording I made each time I hypnotized him, and showed him the writing he did for us. But Sirhan never did admit that I had hypnotized him. When he would wake up, he would say that the tapes were fake or that I had had a handwriting expert fake his writing.

"I once gave him a post-hypnotic suggestion: When he woke up he must go climb the bars of his cell. It worked. He went over toward the guards and climbed the bars like a monkey. I asked him why. He answered in that cool way he affected, 'I am getting exercise.' Then I played the tape to prove to him that he had been instructed under hypnosis to do just that. But he denied it and complained that I was bugging him."

Dr. Diamond said that the first time he hypnotized Sirhan he was surprised by the results.

"Most people take an hour or more to go under hypnosis the first time, and a schizophrenic usually takes much longer, if he goes under at all. But it took less than 10 minutes for Sirhan to go into a deep sleep. He had obviously had experience with being hypnotized, though he'd had no experience of talking in a trance. I

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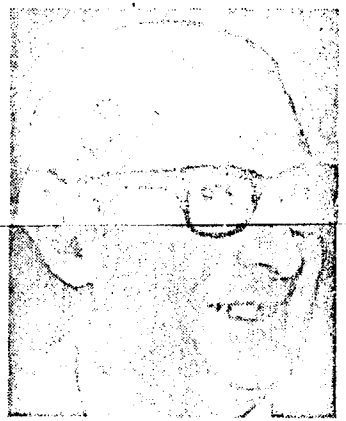
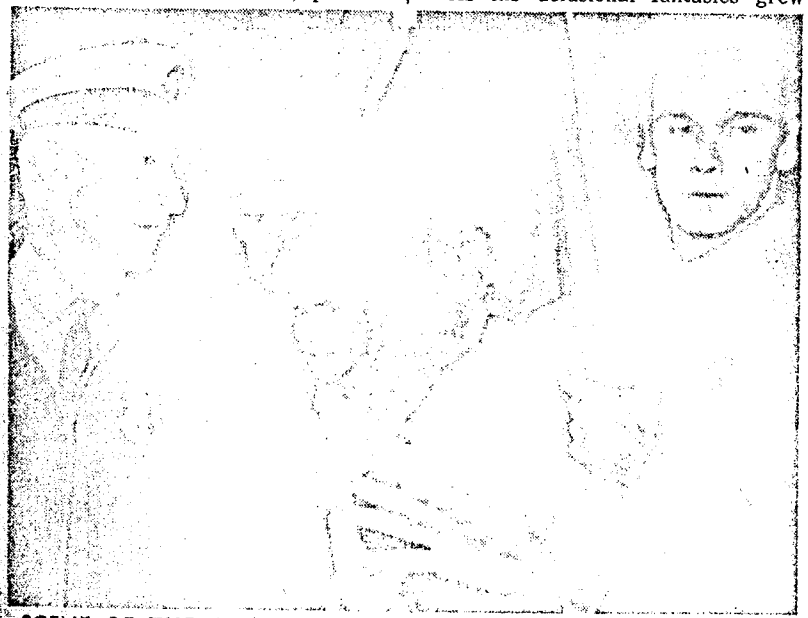


**PSYCHIATRIST** Dr. Bernard L. Diamond



**SCENE OF THE CRIME:** Just moments after he fatally wounded Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, frantic Sirhan Sirhan struggles with police who take him from Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles.

# Sirhan Would Rather Die

(Continued from preceding page)

was suspicious because I realized that he might have been hypnotized as part of a conspiracy and given a post-hypnotic suggestion to kill Kennedy.

"Later we found that he had done it to himself in the Rosicrucian exercises. Because of his experience, he answered questions better by writing than by talking. Writing under hypnosis is called automatic writing and the term aptly describes the way Sirhan would write like a robot and keep on repeating a word or phrase until I stopped him.

"I showed him a sample of his hypnotic writing and asked him, 'Is this crazy writing?' — and he wrote — Yes, yes, yes.

"I asked, 'Are you crazy?' — No, no, no.

" 'Well why are you writing crazy?' — Practice, practice, practice.

" 'Practice for what?' — Mind control, mind control, mind control.

"Then Sirhan hesitated and became more disturbed than he ever was about Kennedy questions. So I asked, 'Mind control for what?' and he groaned and wrote: Self improvement, self improvement.

" 'Who taught you to write this way?' — I, I, I, I, I . . . until we stopped him.

" 'Did you learn this yourself? Did you read it in a book?' — Yes, yes, yes.

" 'Who wrote your notebooks?' — I, I, I, I, I, I.

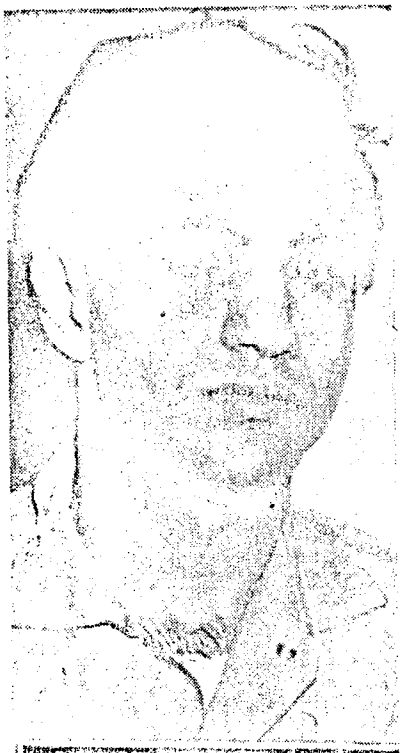
" 'Are you hypnotized?' — He avoided the question several times, then wrote: Yes, yes, yes.

" 'Were you hypnotized when you wrote the notebook?' — Yes, yes, yes.

" 'Who hypnotized you?' — Mirror, mirror, mirror.

" 'Pay attention. Open your eyes and look at the paper. Don't be afraid. Write the name of the person who taught you how to do the mirror.' — AMORC, AMORC, AMORC . . .

"AMORC means Ancient Mystical Order of the Rosicrucians. When he



DEATH ROW at San Quentin Prison is now Sirhan's home and his number is B 21014.

clear division in him between the two states of consciousness — one a controlled, cool state and the other a dissociated state of violence, fear and rage.

He said: "In the hypnotic state he can relive the childhood horrors, he can remember writing in the notebook and he can reproduce the automatic writing. He remembers the killing and he also remembers his experiences under hypnosis. He can remember none of these things when he is not in hypnosis.

"His mind is truly split, with part of his life on one side and part on the other."

bassador Hotel at the election-night headquarters of her father, Max Rafferty, who is running in a Republican Senate primary. Kennedy's victory rally is there, too. Drifting around the hotel for hours, he drinks four Tom Collinses and at about 11 p.m. decides to go home.

"That was the last conscious memory he had. He insisted in the trial that he had left his gun in the car when he went into the hotel. The prosecution made quite a point of this 'lie,' but I'm convinced that he told the truth.

"Under hypnosis, he tells us of walking out to his car but feels sick, too drunk to drive. He notices his .22 on the back seat and is afraid the Jews — that paranoia again — will steal it, so he hides it in the top of his pants and drifts back to drink several cups of coffee with a dark, attractive girl.

"On the way to get another cup of coffee he finds himself in this alcove with dazzling lights and mirrors. He feels bewildered and dazed.

"The mirrored doors in front of him lead directly into the pantry, but he did not go through them. I'm satisfied that the lights and mirrors triggered off the same kind of dissociated state that he had practiced in the Rosicrucian exercises.

"He sees a peculiar typewriter running by itself — it's the teletype in the press room — so we know that he has backed away from the mirrored doors and taken a roundabout route to the pantry.

"Nobody, not even Kennedy himself, knew that the Senator would suddenly decide to come through that pantry.

"Sirhan tells us of leaning on a table feeling sleepy and not sure where he is. He sees 'these people coming at me.' Then there's Kennedy and his first thought is to shake hands with the Senator.

"Going through this scene several times under hypnosis, I would slow him down to be sure what happened.

"I'd say, 'Kennedy is coming at you. Now what? Reach for your gun, Sirhan.' Then he grabs for his gun and shoots and shouts, 'You son of a bitch!' A few seconds later he is choking, an actual spasm of the larynx, re-experiencing the moment when Kennedy's men have grabbed him by the throat.

"Sirhan should have been found guilty of manslaughter under the doctrine of diminished responsibility. I'm not suggesting that he be turned back into society, nor sent to some mental health hospital outside the prison system, as he would be if he were found not guilty by reason of insanity. There is an excellent institution, the California Medical Facility at Vacaville, for treatment of convicted offenders who are mentally ill.

"If it had been anybody but Sirhan and his victim had been anybody but Senator Kennedy, this case would have shown how far we have come in handling this type of offender.

"But as it was, no matter how the trial might have been conducted, the verdict would have been essentially the same. The prosecuting attorney saw from the beginning that it wasn't necessary to contradict the psychiatric evidence.

"Perhaps this case will one day be seen for what it was, a public spectacle, a peculiar detour from the normal development of criminal law."

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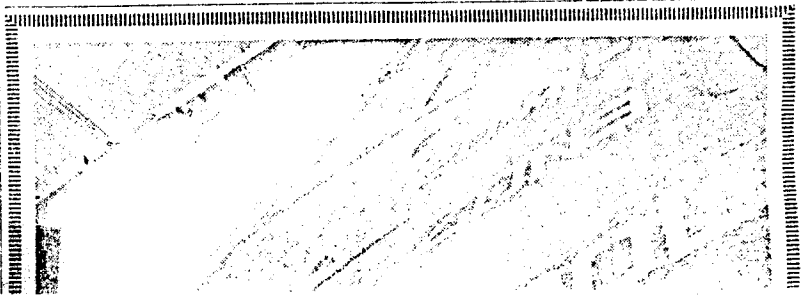

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"AMORC means Ancient Mystical Order of the Rosicrucians. When he was conscious, he would turn evasive at any question about the Rosicrucians.

"Then he would be very confidential and insist that we turn off the tape recorder.

"Sirhan acted alienated from the notebook, knowing that it was his handwriting but not wanting to admit that he had done something over which he had no control. He told us in advance that he was going to fire his lawyer and plead guilty if the notebook were entered as evidence in court.

**'The supercilious, arrogant, remorseless assassin suddenly crumpled in agony like a child, sobbing and shivering in terror. The tears poured down his face.'**

"The second time I hypnotized him, he went into the first of his many spells, as I call them. The supercilious, arrogant, remorseless assassin suddenly crumpled in agony like a child, sobbing and shivering in terror. The tears poured down his face.

"This happened the first time when I asked him about Jerusalem and the bombing. Later I found that any question about helping his people, the Arabs, would trigger the same kind of response."

Dr. Diamond said that Sirhan has a clear division in him between the two states of consciousness — one a controlled, cool state and the other a dissociated state of violence, fear and rage.

He said: "In the hypnotic state he can relive the childhood horrors, he can remember writing in the notebook and he can reproduce the automatic writing. He remembers the killing and he also remembers his experiences under hypnosis. He can remember none of these things when he is not in hypnosis.

"His mind is truly split, with part of his life on one side and part on the other."

The psychiatrist said that the investigation into the assassination showed that Sirhan exhibited many examples of inept conduct for a would-be killer on the day of the crime.

"The implication in the trial was that he went out to the pistol range that afternoon to practice shooting Kennedy," Dr. Diamond said.

"If so, he drew unnecessary attention to himself by raising a row when the rangemaster wouldn't let him empty his gun at the target after 5 p.m., the strictly kept time to stop.

"So he throws his loaded Iver-Johnson on the back seat of his car and drives off to pick up a friend for dinner before he's to go to a Rosicrucian meeting. The friend has a newspaper in which Sirhan reads an advertisement saying that on Wilshire Boulevard tonight there will be a parade celebrating the anniversary of the Israeli victory over the Arabs.

"It's typical of Sirhan that he doesn't realize he's reading an early edition of the next morning's paper — for June 5 — and tonight in the ad really means tomorrow night.

"He turns around, drops his friend off and goes charging back to watch 'The Jew parade,' as he calls it.

"He gets more confused when, it seems to him, the Jews are hiding their parade.

"Now he's lonely and remembers that Kathleen Rafferty, a girl he knew from high school, may be in the Am-

sen, knew that the Senator would suddenly decide to come through that pantry.

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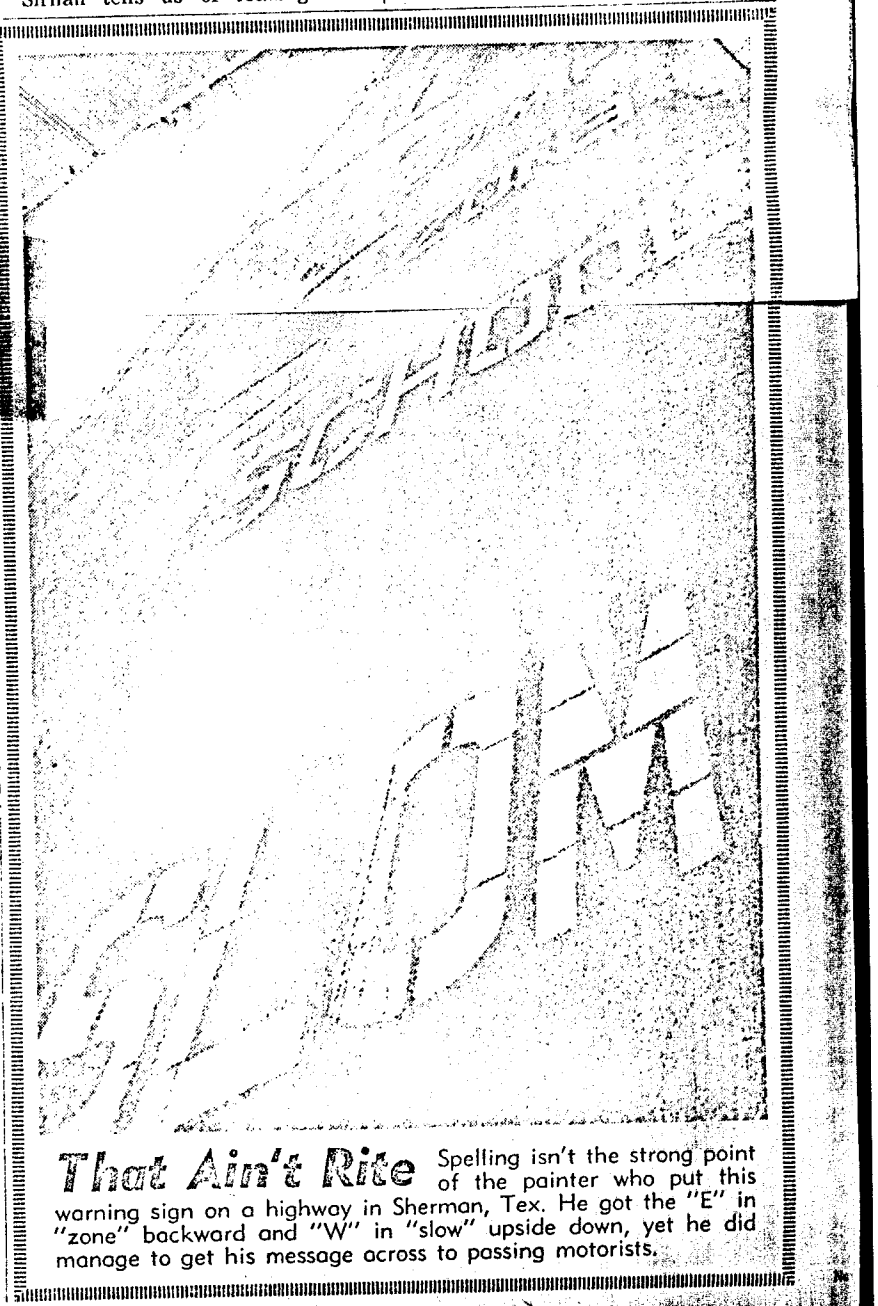

**That Ain't Rite** Spelling isn't the strong point of the painter who put this warning sign on a highway in Sherman, Tex. He got the "E" in "zone" backward and "W" in "slow" upside down, yet he did manage to get his message across to passing motorists.