

RFK Held Not Slain By Sirhan's Weapon

By Stephen J. Lynton
Washington Post Staff Writer

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Lowell W. Bradford, a forensic firearms specialist, said yesterday that evidence now open to public scrutiny indicates Robert F. Kennedy very likely was not shot by a bullet fired from the gun of Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, his convicted assassin.

Bradford, speaking at a news conference, asserted that some key evidence has not been made public and called for its disclosure. Without this, he noted, no final conclusion can be drawn, but he said that all the public evidence so far shows "it would be beyond the realm of practical possibility" for a bullet that was removed from Kennedy's body to have been fired from Sirhan's revolver.

Bradford, 56, who directed the Santa Clara County (Calif.) crime laboratory from 1947 to 1973 and is now a private consultant in San Jose, appeared at a news conference at the Sheraton Park Hotel called by Theodore Charach. Charach is conducting what he called "a moral crusade" to reopen the question of who killed Robert Kennedy. He also is promoting his film, *The Second Gun*, which examines the issue.

Charach and others are seeking to publicize a theory that Kennedy's death in 1968 was caused by gunshots fired by a second, hidden gunman and that Sirhan's bullets did not hit him. Charach said he is pressing for a congressional investigation.

Although many other issues have been raised in the new controversy over Kennedy's death, Bradford said the central question was whether a

bullet removed from Kennedy's body matched others fired from Sirhan's revolver. On the basis of photographs of the bullets, hearing transcripts and affidavits by forensic specialists, Bradford said, the bullets do not appear to match.

He stressed two points. One, Bradford said, was that tests of markings on the bullets carried out by William W. Harper, another forensic firearms specialist, showed a discrepancy between the bullets amounting to 23 minutes of a degree. There are 60 minutes in a degree and 360 degrees in a circle. Bradford said Harper's tests were precise within a 5- or 6-degree limit and termed the discrepancy statistically significant.

Harper was quoted by *The Washington Post* in December as describing the discrepancy as too insignificant for a firm conclusion to be drawn. Bradford said yesterday, however, that *The Post* apparently had misunderstood Harper's views and had incorrectly discounted the significance of his tests.

Bradford's second point was that there was another discrepancy between the bullets, centering on the number of visible cannelures, or grooves circling the bullets' circumferences. One fewer cannelure appeared on the bullet removed from Kennedy's body than on other bullets. The implication, he said, was that the bullet came from a different gun.