

Father of Sirhan Asks,

Special to The Washington Post.

TAIBETH, Israeli-Occupied Jordan, June 6—"I am stunned by what my son did," the 57-year-old father of the man accused of assassinating Sen. Robert F. Kennedy told newsmen this morning.

Bishara Salma Sirhan, who heard of his son's role in the shooting only a few hours earlier, received reporters in his new two-story house in this village 20 miles northeast of Jerusalem. He was still in a state of shock, subdued but in control of his emotions.

But at one point, to repeated questions about his own reaction, he snapped, "What do you think a father must feel when he is told his son has committed such an act."

"If my son has done this dirty thing, then let them hang him," CBS News quoted the elder Sirhan as saying.)

A short, slight, clean-shaven man, the father was neatly dressed in a Western-style dark suit and matching tie. On his head he wore the traditional flowing Arab headdress.

The Senator's accused killer, 24-year-old Sirhan Sirhan, is the youngest of five sons. He grew up in Jerusalem where the family lived until they emigrated to the United States in 1957, when Sirhan was 13.

"My son was a talented boy, more than his four brothers. How he came to this is beyond me." Sirhan was an outstanding student and did not associate with street gangs,

the father said. Teachers praised the youngster's diligence, he added.

After a quarrel with his wife, Mary, the elder Sirhan returned to Jordan in 1960. He said he last saw his son three years ago on a visit to the United States and knows nothing of his political beliefs.

He said the boy went to a Lutheran school in Jerusalem and the family belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church.

"I am a religious man and have been all my life," he said. "I still am a steady churchgoer and read the Bible every day. My son as a child used to go to the Orthodox Church with me in Jerusalem every Sunday. We studied the Bible together."

On the wall of his house there is an inscription in Arabic which reads:

"Jehovah the High, You gave me happiness in the world. Give me eternal life. You are the only God and nobody shall be worshipped before you."

The father, who chain-smoked cigarettes during his meeting with newsmen, said that during the British mandate in Palestine he was a senior inspector in the public works department. The family's financial situation deteriorated in the early '50s and this prompted the move to America.

The elder Sirhan said during his years in the United States he developed a "deep admiration" for the Ken-

nedy family, expressing special regard for the late President Kennedy whom he considers an idealist who tried to lead humanity to progress and prosperity.

He said he likes the way the Kennedys help one another, this reminding him of the extended family structure of the Arab culture.

He said that since his return to Jordan he has lived off the income from property he had accumulated in previous years.

His house, where he lives alone, is situated in the northeast corner of Taibeh. The village is inhabited by about 4000 Arabs, most of them Christian. An Eastern Orthodox Church dominates the center of town.

Taibeh was completely unaffected by last year's Middle East war. The villagers continue to sell their fruit and vegetables across the Jordan River, 20 miles away, as they did before the fighting.

Bishara Sirhan's shocked and grieved reaction is typical of the Arab man-in-the-street. While some of them do not hide their hope that the shooting will dramatize the Arab cause, the majority seem to have a sense of shame that one of them had been implicated in such an act.

'What Do You Think I Feel?'



United Press International

Bishara Sirhan, father of the accused slayer of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, talks to newsmen in his Jordanian village.