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RFK's Brain Damage Was Past Repair

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LOS ANGELES, June 6—An autopsy of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's body today revealed that his brain was damaged beyond repair by a single shot from his assassin's .22 caliber pistol.

"The injury was so severe," said Los Angeles County coroner Thomas T. Noguchi, "that survival was impossible."

Dr. Noguchi drew that See **MEDICAL, A14, Col. 7**

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conclusion after he, two deputy medical examiners and three pathologists from the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology in Washington performed a six-hour autopsy on Senator Kennedy that did not end until 12:15 p.m. EDT.

The autopsy took place at Good Samaritan Hospital, where Senator Kennedy died at 4:44 (EDT) this morning without once coming out of a deep coma.

It was a miracle that Senator Kennedy lived as long as he did, doctors implied, and a tragic stroke of bad luck that he was shot the way he was.

Point-Blank Range

If the assassin's small caliber revolver had not been fired at point blank range and if the bullet had not struck Kennedy just behind the right ear where the mastoid bone lies, the New York Senator might still be alive, doctors said.

But the .22 caliber bullet hit the mastoid with such close-up force that it scattered pieces of both bone and bullet deeply and widely into the brain.

The bullet also struck the top part of the petrous ("stoney") bone that is just behind the mastoid and is known as the hardest bone

in the body. Broken pieces of this bone then penetrated the brain as "secondary missiles," doctors said, and might have caused almost as much damage as the bullet itself.

Dr. Noguchi said that both X-ray and physical inspection of the brain revealed "quite a few fragments of bullet and bone" scattered throughout Sen. Kennedy's head.

The bullet and bone bits damaged the right halves of his cerebellum and cerebrum, the upper parts of the brain that control muscle movement, thinking, memory and judgment.

Arteries Severed

Bullet fragments also severed several arteries in the brain, including the superior cerebellar artery, a large and vital artery that supplies blood to some of the main parts of the brain.

The tearing of this artery cut off blood and oxygen to the cerebellum, which had already been damaged by pieces of bone and bullet.

It also served to damage Sen. Kennedy's brain stem, which is located in the center of the brain and which relies on the cerebellar artery for its nourishment.

The brain stem, which controls breathing and heart functions, was harmed in a second way when the largest fragment of the bullet lodged just centimeters away from it.

Two Bullets

This caused a swelling of the brain tissue against the stem, forcing it down on a tough membrane that divides the upper and lower halves of the skull.

Dr. Noguchi said the surgeons found that only two

bullets had struck the Senator. The second bullet was found just beneath the skin in the back of his neck. It had apparently entered behind the right armpit, penetrated soft tissue and muscle but did no damage to any bones or vital life processes.

The bullet that did all the damage was described as entering from left to right through the right mastoid, whence it changed direction and moved upward and forward in the brain.

Damage to the brain was so severe, doctors said, that had Sen. Kennedy lived it would probably have been on his back, breathing with the aid of a respirator, being fed by tubes and without awareness of where he was or who he was.

He probably would not have been able to recognize anybody and most likely could not even speak.

Today's autopsy report ascribed the death to a "gun-shot wound of the right mastoid penetrating the brain."

Dr. Noguchi said a final report would not be issued for several weeks, during which time microscopic portions of Sen. Kennedy's brain and vital organs would be exhaustively examined by pathologists from several institutions.

Bouquet Placed On Senate Desk

United Press International

One desk-top was clear of all papers yesterday as the Senate resumed its deliberations.

Pages had placed the Senate calendar and other papers on the tops of the 99 other desks in the Senate chamber. No papers were on the top of the desk assigned to Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

In the drawer of that desk was the new inscription, "Kennedy, N.Y.," scratched into the wooden bottom by a page. It joined the names of "Mrs. Carraway, Ark.," "Thomas, Utah" and "Lodge."

Later Charles D. Ferris, counsel for the Senate Democratic policy committee, placed a small bouquet of pink rosebuds on the desk top. He said it was a tribute from the Senate and staff.