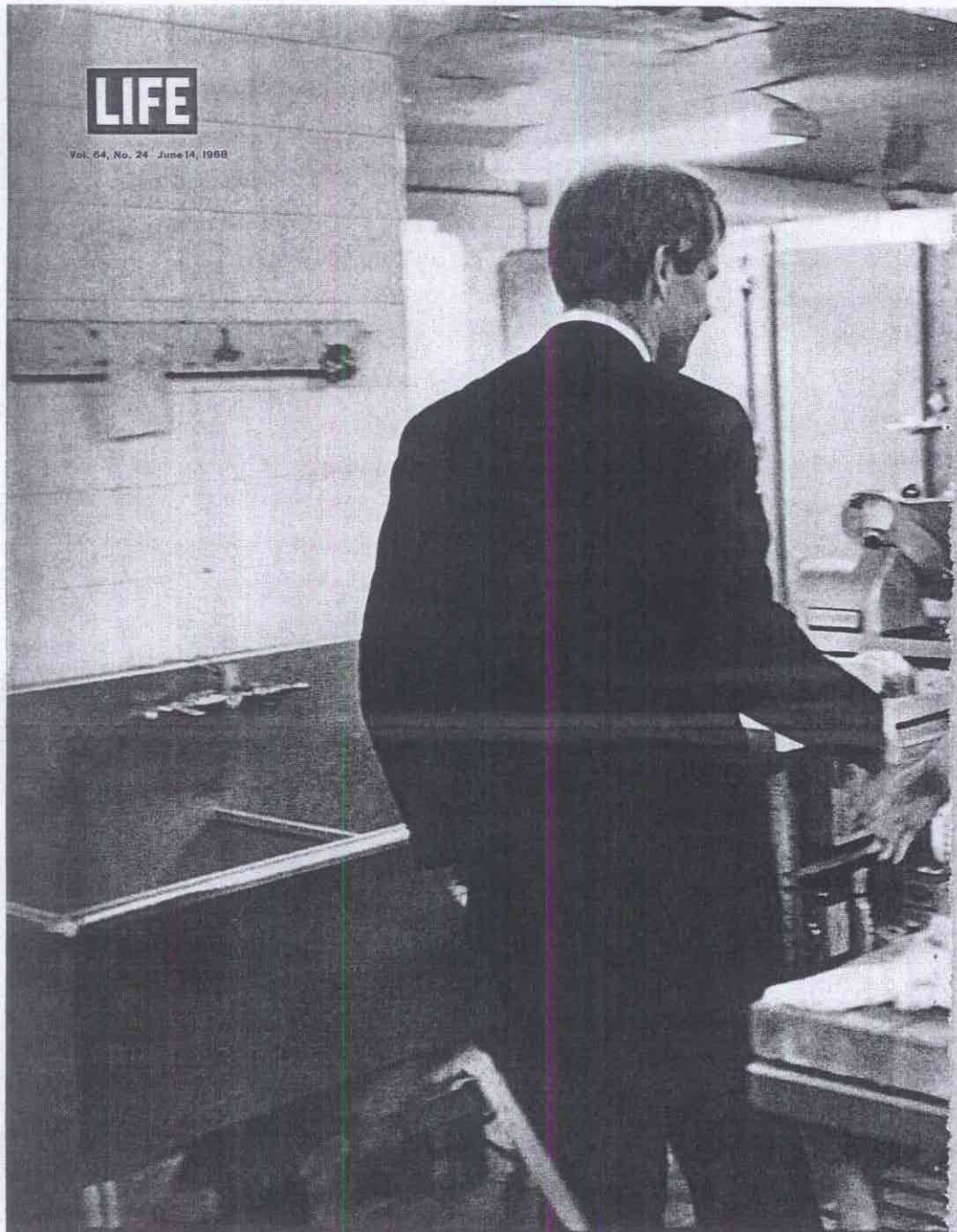


LIFE

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Heading for his victory speech in the Ambassador Hotel ballroom, Robert Kennedy stops in the kitchen to shake hands. A few minutes later

Friendly pause on



the gunman was waiting for him in the corridor just outside this kitchen.

the way to a rostrum . . .

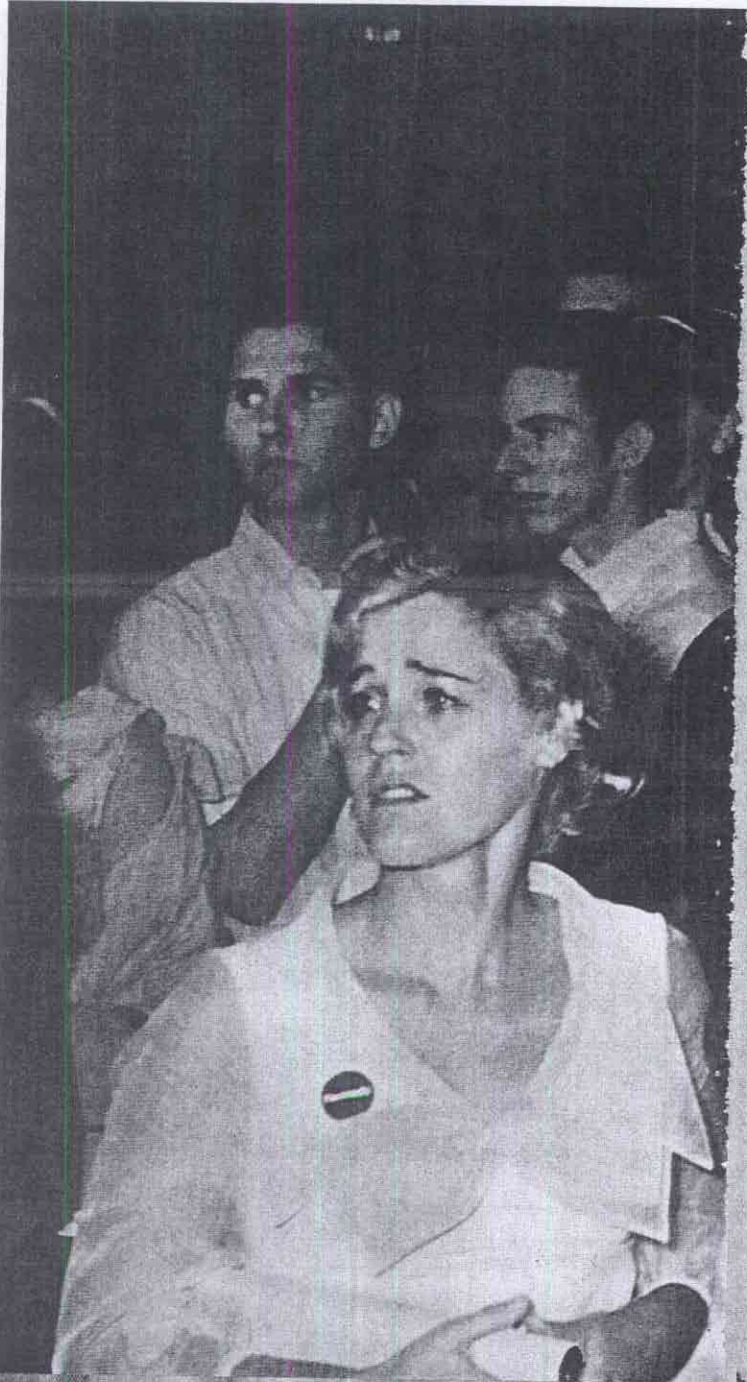
Suddenly, a mass of screaming men and

by LOUDON
WAINWRIGHT

For those who had cared for him and watched him closely in these past hectic weeks, Robert Kennedy's going totally disjoints the sense of time. There he was, a moment ago, walking alone with the dog in a patch of grass in Oakland while the motorcade waited, and now he is dead, and there seems no possible way to link the two things together in the same chain of events. There he was, crossing a Portland hotel room on the night of his defeat in Oregon to shake hands with a friend, and now the campaign is a crushed, beribboned hat thrown in a corner of the Los Angeles ballroom where he joked, moments before he was shot, about his last victory. There he was, his blue shirtsleeves rolled up, walking and softly talking his way down the aisle of a plane bound for San Francisco, but suddenly there was a mass of screaming men and women in a passageway spattered with blood, and finally there was the hospital, its heavy stone face taking shape in the sunless dawn. The truth of death is belied by echoes of life which bounce around the chambers of the mind and dizzy the listener with false hope. Kennedy, moving his very fastest in a race he had entered too late, was dropped in midstride, and the watchers keep searching futilely ahead for quite another sort of finish.

The possibility of violence and danger was very much in the minds of the people who accompanied Robert Kennedy in his campaign. Surely the memory of his brother's death had something to do with it, and sudden recollections of that awful moment from the past were revived by fragments of sight and sound from the present. In April, in Logansport, Ind., the campaign party was chilled by the view of armed police standing on rooftops overlooking the block where Kennedy was speaking. "He's our guest," an official told me. "There haven't been any threats, but we just want to make sure he leaves town the same way he came in." Outside Gary in May the open convertible in which Kennedy and his wife were riding suddenly pulled off the road and people in the press busses gasped at the sight of the figures crouching over in the back seat. As it turned out, the stop had been made because Ethel Kennedy had got cold and needed to put on a coat. In San Francisco's Chinatown

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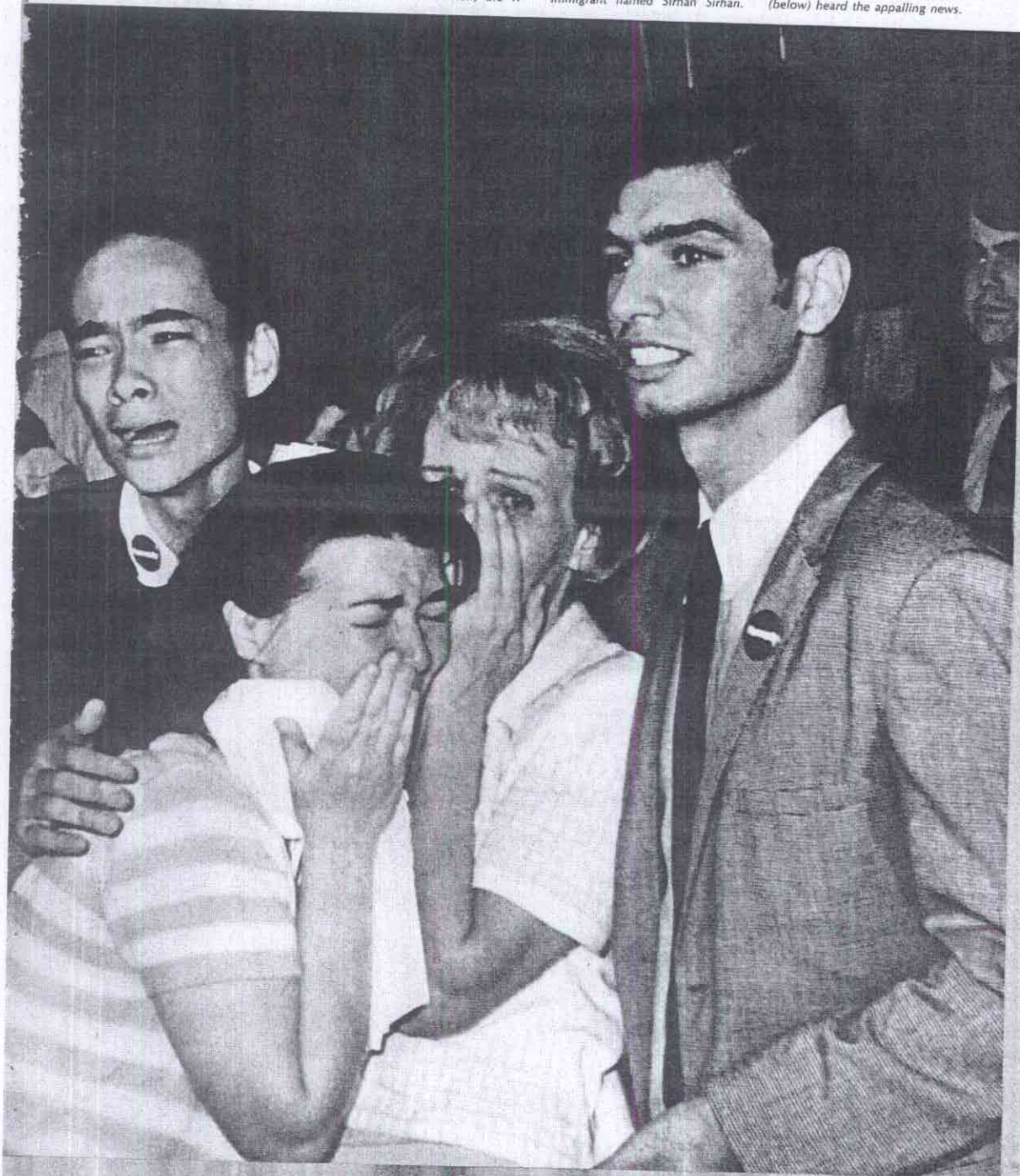


women

In the hotel ballroom, buoyed by his crucial victory in the California primary over Senator Eugene McCarthy, Senator Kennedy had spoken of "the division, the vi-

olence" in the U.S. he felt he could overcome. He left through a kitchen, where, standing by a table, was a 24-year-old Jordanian immigrant named Sirhan Sirhan.

With a .22 pistol, Sirhan shot Kennedy twice and wounded five others. Moments later, back in the ballroom, the senator's workers (below) heard the appalling news.



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on the last day of the California campaign, virtually the whole party flinched at the sound of exploding firecrackers and there were other bad moments with balloons. People were frightened for him and kept saying so to each other; and Bill Barry, the devoted and powerful ex-FBI agent who guided Kennedy through crowds and clutched his waist as he stood up in the cars, often fell instantly into exhausted sleep in the airplane as we hopped from one tumultuous motorcade to another.

And of course Robert Kennedy deliberately and repeatedly exposed himself to the bad possibility. It was not that he sought the danger; rather it was that he seemed very much to need the actual physical contact with great masses of people. In crowds where people did not always reach up to grab or strike his hand, he reached out for theirs. It was quite literally a giving of himself, as if that were the best way he could renew the pledges he was making in speeches. Surely there has never been anything like this frenzied exchange of love in the history of American politics. And the prospects for trouble, accidentally or deliberately produced, were everywhere. He definitely did not want to be protected. And it was in a ludicrously insecure place—a narrow and jammed space which virtually any determined man could enter with a minimum of difficulty—where he suddenly needed it most desperately.

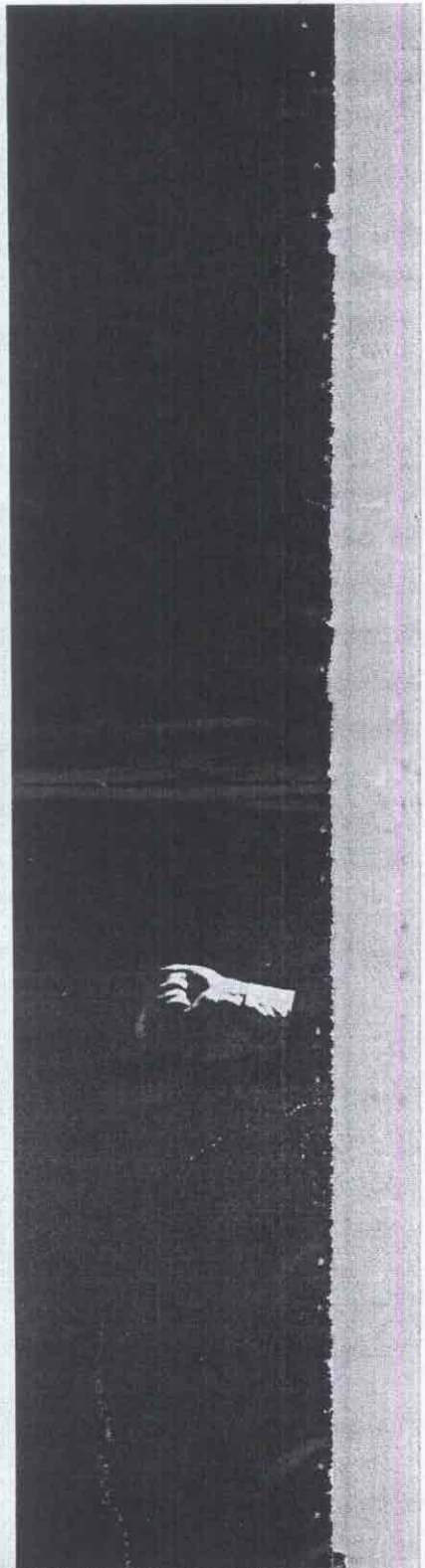
On the final day of the California campaign, Senator Kennedy invited me to ride in his convertible when he toured some of the poorer areas of Los Angeles, including the Watts district. The crowds that day were not as large as they had been on other occasions; still, people surged along the sides of the car in great waves, and it sometimes took three men—Barry, the Olympic decathlon champion, Rafter Johnson, and the huge football player, Roosevelt Grier—to hold Kennedy in his position as he stood on the trunk. Out of one crowd a fierce-looking and quite drunken young man with a goatee suddenly flung himself on the hood of the car and, sprawling there with his back against the windshield, began screaming at the people to "Make way for Kenne—dee! Make way for Ken-

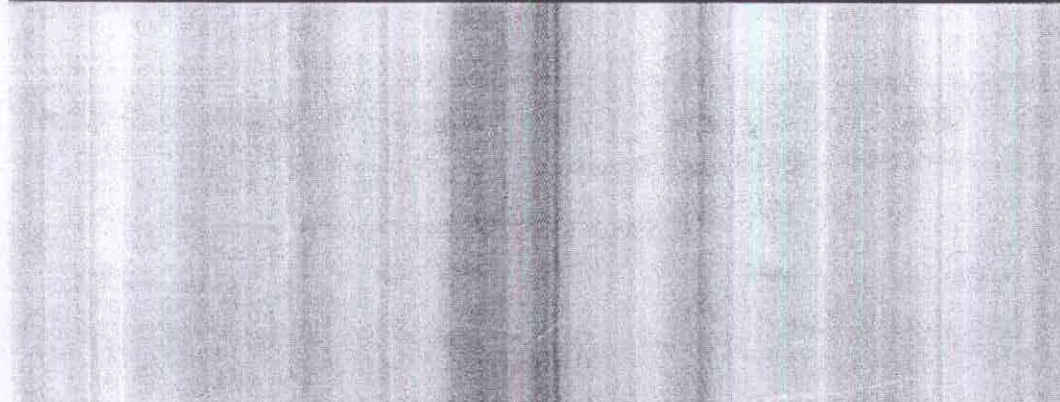
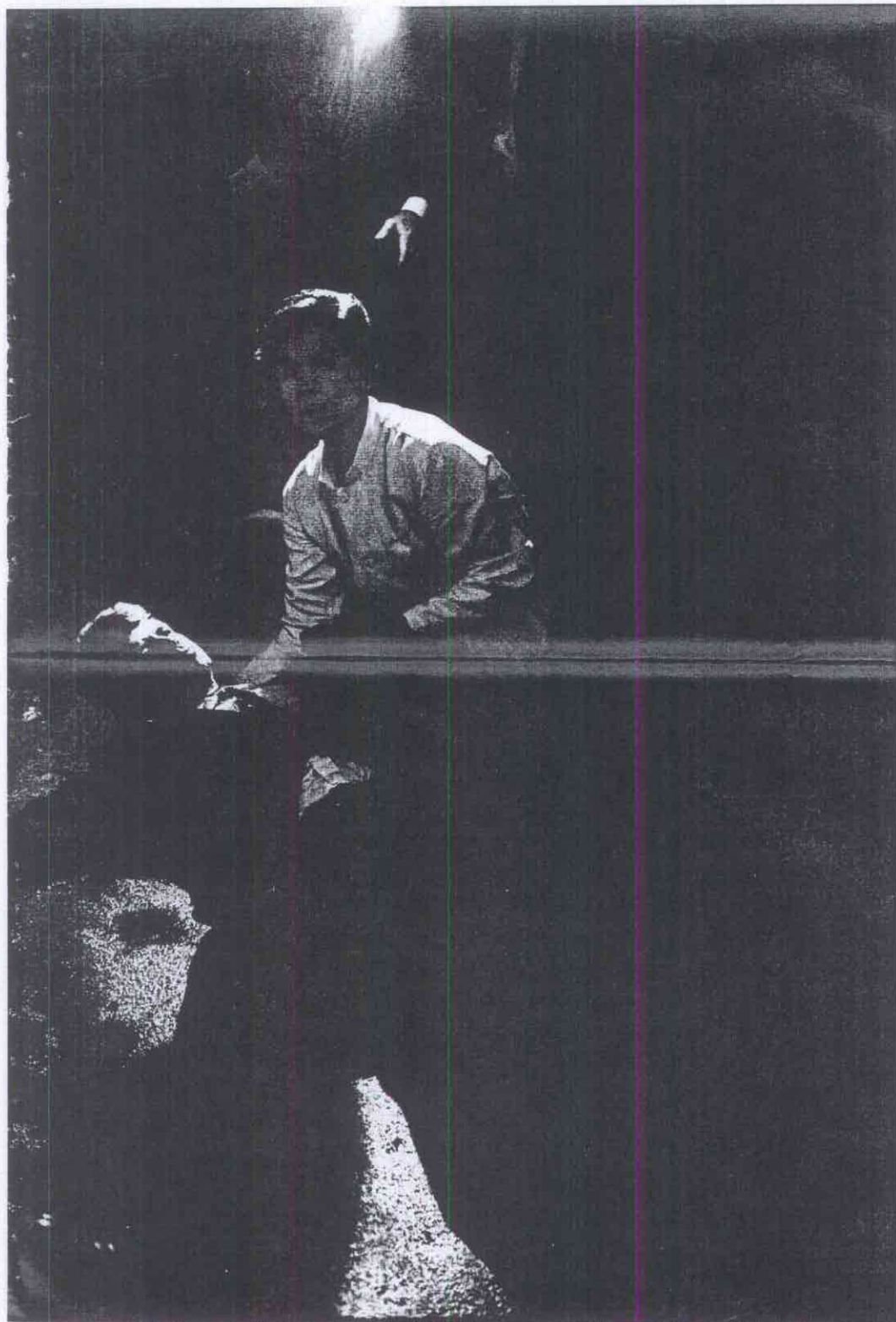
ne—dee!", and they did as he directed. The smack of hands against Kennedy's was constant, and his body shook under the impacts. When we got through one crowd and picked up speed to travel to the next place, the candidate climbed down into the back seat and his face was totally without expression. The eyes unmoving and distant, the whole look of him battered and stunned. Then he began to whisper into the ear of a pretty black child of about 5 or 6 who had somehow been put in the car and was now seated entirely happily between Kennedy's knees and, surrounded by huge strangers, was playing with a big white stuffed rabbit. The child knew her phone number and when we stopped a few moments later, Robert Kennedy gave her a hug and directed one of his workers to drive her home. Then he rose and got ready to meet the new crowd that was now moving toward him.

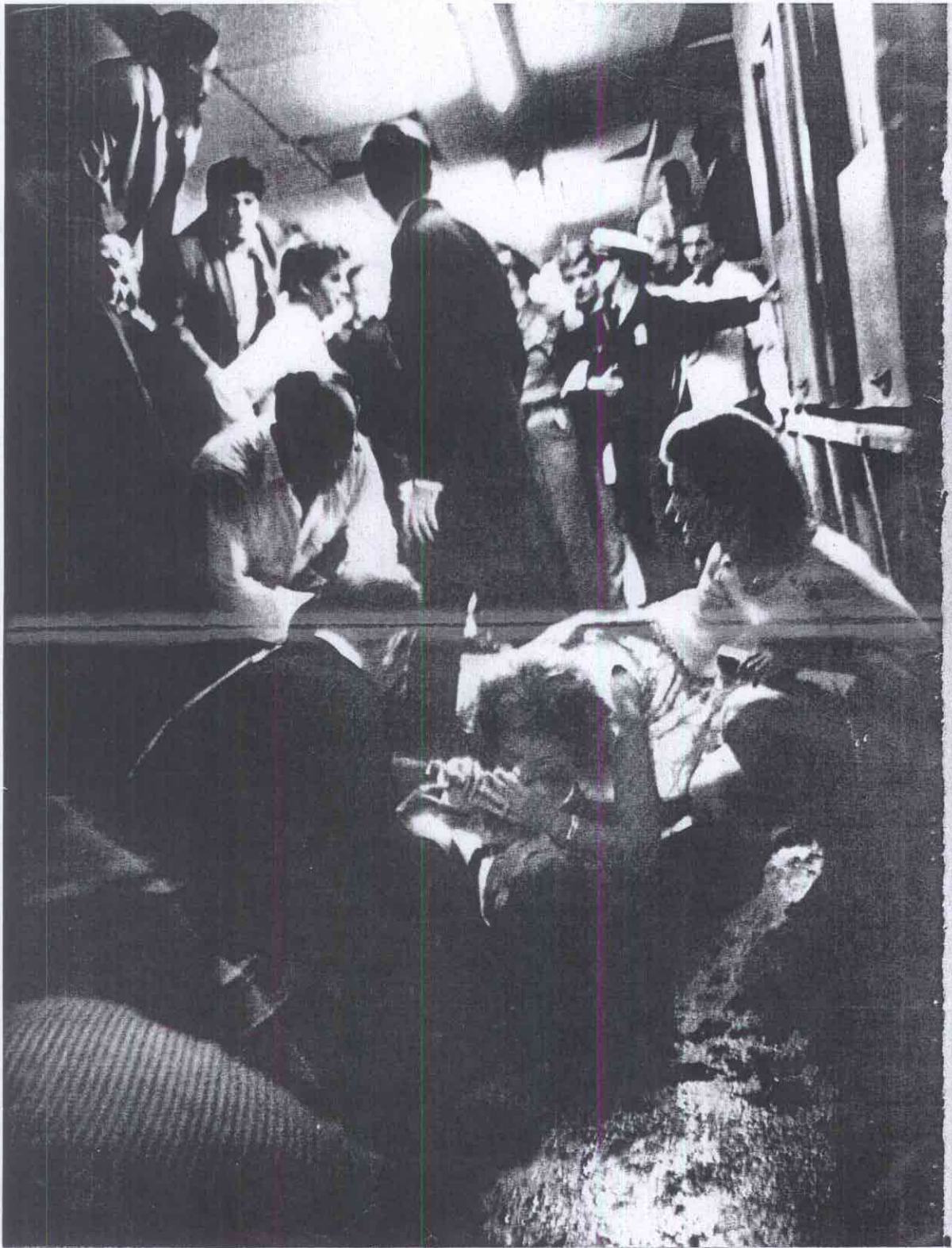
Outside the hospital in Los Angeles, a few hours after the shooting, the enormity of the tragedy began to settle in the minds of the weary men and women waiting in the street. Though some hope was held out, no one really had much. A woman reporter wept as she told of an invitation to a party Kennedy had planned that night. Somebody mentioned a train trip we had taken through Indiana and a joking song the press had written to tease the candidate. He had laughed at "The Ruthless Cannonball," and it was very hard to think about that good face moving in a laugh. In fact, it was hard to think that early morning, as it will be for many people for a long time, of that graceful man so mortally hurt. His campaign was over, and because of the quality of Robert Kennedy and the quality he wanted of his country, he had made it a tremendously promising one. From their headquarters, across town, several McCarthy supporters came and they looked absolutely stricken under the glare of the television lights. "Why did they shoot Robert Kennedy?" one of them asked. Another replied: "They shoot stars," and there can be no doubt that a real one came down that night.

An awful moment from the past again

Rigid, semiconscious, his face an ashen mask, Senator Kennedy lies in a pool of his own blood on the concrete floor, a bullet deep in his brain and another in his neck. Juan Romero, a busboy whose hand Kennedy had shaken before the shots, tried to comfort him,







The wearing last weeks and a precious last day

by THEODORE H.
WHITE

All that week he had been tired. The deep tan, burned in by weeks of campaigning in the sun in the open car, lay over the exhaustion; the hair bleached blond, the fine fibers on the forearms almost flaxen. But he did not show the weariness except when you talked to him alone.

The Tuesday of the Oregon voting had been the worst day in weeks. He used the day to barnstorm through California's southland, from Los Angeles to Lakeview to Santa Barbara to Ventura to Oxnard to Los Angeles; and the crowds, as usual, were wild. They fed him the adrenalin to carry on; but in the plane, in conversation, the exhaustion was always there, under the determination.

He had few illusions. His last Oregon poll had shown him 30-29 over McCarthy, but the undecided vote was huge. And, usually, he knew, the undecideds came down on the other side. He rambled on about Oregon, returning constantly to its beauties and the spectacle of its fir-covered slopes and green valleys. But it had been a cold state to him; Oregon, a great white suburb, had no problems; he knew he frightened Oregon by what he spoke of and his visions.

It was going badly back east too. Pennsylvania's delegation had been raided by Humphrey the night before. He had felt he had a pledge from Mayors Tate of Philadelphia and Barr of Pittsburgh to wait before committing to another—to wait and give him the chance to show his strength with the voters at the polls, in the primaries. Governor Hearnes of Missouri had been for him. But Hearnes was switching too. He thought Mayor Alioto of San Francisco had been with him—but Alioto also was now leaning to Humphrey.

He talked: about the huge crowds in California and crowds as a serious index of response;

about Vietnam—the negotiations should have begun much earlier, but he trusted Harriman to make the case. If we *did* have a case in Vietnam, this was the way to show it to the world—by talk, not by bombs. He felt we had already gained much in Paris by exposing the intransigence of the enemy; but he was not hopeless of solutions—perhaps cantonment in South Vietnam, some new frame to give both sides in the fighting the security they needed.

Yet, always the conversation came back to the exercise in power which is a campaign for the Presidency. Oregon was lost, he already feared. So he had to make it big in California. Then, showing his strength in the most populous state in the Union, he might turn back east to deal with the local power-brokers. We haven't begun to fight that battle yet, he said. New York was uppermost in his mind. Unless he could show real muscle in California, his own faction-ridden state would be the arena of the most bruising clash this season.

People criticized him, he knew, for this extravagant spending of energy in the primaries. But, he kept saying, "Is there any other way of convincing them? Can you think of any other way?" If California went well, then he would rethink it, and might get those four or five days of rest before plunging into combat in New York. But now he was worn to the bone.

Then, that evening, winging north to Portland on a plane crowded with newsmen and cameras, with no crevice for privacy, the returns from Oregon had come in. Ethel gently held his hand, her fingers entwined through his or curled about his muscular wrist. He would not show his hurt; he smiled, talked to friends, strolled the aisle, encouraging the downcast, making clear he was going on with it.

The last week began badly, but he carried it off with courage, skill and animal energy. When, on Sunday, California began to turn up—when he could sense, as a politician does, the return of enthusiasm in the surge of the crowds—he would not slacken his pace.

For he was an old-fashioned man of politics. And politics were people, a concept descended to him from his grandfather, who had

known that truth three generations ago. He understood as well as any man the new technology of media and organization. His California campaign, pulled together finally, was running smoothly. The themes, pouring out of radio and television, were coming clear: an end to war in Vietnam; a new orientation for the federal government—which had come to him, after he could view the Executive from the outside, seeing government as cold, overcentralized, needing to be brought back to the people in their communities; and—a third theme—law-and-order, an end to violence.

Yet, the old politics meant this message had to be brought directly to people—by talking to them; had to reach their hearts and yearnings in person. Thus the last crescendo of barnstorming.

When he moved through a black district, or a Mexican-American district, the campaign reached a terrifying frenzy. It frightened one to drive in the open car with him—the screaming, the ecstasy, the hands grabbing, pulling, tearing, snatching him apart. To them he was The Liberator. In the other districts, always he pleaded—trying to explain America to Americans and show them the direction in which it must move. His staff insisted that he cool it; they, too, were frightened by the emotions he raised.

But he could not completely cool it. Briefed and briefed again on how to meet McCarthy in TV debate, he did so visibly with superb control. But though the voice and words were calm, his hands were moving, reaching, pleading.

Even when his polls in the final weekend turned upward, he kept at it until one or two every morning, then rose after five or six hours sleep, again to reach out, be with people. Until, finally, on Monday night, having barnstormed through San Francisco, Long Beach, the southland and reached San Diego, he collapsed. He could not finish the last speech; the enormous vitality had reached its end. He must rest.

Election day he slept late at the beach home of Evans and John Frankenhelmer. Six of the children had been flown out to be with him, giving him the solace of a family day. Shortly after noon, he went out on the beach to frolic

Mrs. Robert Kennedy, who had been walking with the senator, crouched over her dying husband, whispering to him as he lay on the floor. Beside her, waiting for the ambulance attendants to arrive, knelt her sister-in-law, Mrs. Stephen Smith, and Dr. Ross Miller.

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with them. It was no time for a solitary friend there to talk politics. So they kicked the rubbery, dark green kelp on the sand, and talked of the pollution of this beautiful coast and the disappearance of the great old kelp beds; they compared the Pacific to the Atlantic, and he preferred Cape Cod.

The sun would not break through, a chill mist hung heavy; but he stripped his flowered sun-shirt and plunged in nonetheless. A huge roller came in and the bobbing heads of two children went under. Bobby dived; for a moment one could not see him in the surf, until he came up with David, whom he had pulled from an undertow. A large red bruise now marked his forehead. He had

bumped either sand or the boy, but the boy was safe.

Now they came back up the beach to the pool, and children tumbled over him. Max, the 3-year-old, wanted to walk the beach and bury coins in the sand. So they did. Then back to the pool, where Bobby tossed little ones through water, one to the other, as their glee rang out. Ethel, as tired as he, her hands placid in her lap, watched as he growled, teased them, let them roughhouse him.

Only once did he talk politics. He porpoised up, swam to the pool's edge and, with the inevitable curiosity of one politician about another, discussed his opponents' style and tactics—bitter

about one of them, fond of the other. Yet, as always during these last few days, his conversation came back to New York, his home state, and how difficult it would be unless California turned out good, today.

It was not until after 3 in the afternoon that he received a private first flash. CBS had done some early sampling of voters as they left the polls and now guessed it might wind up as high as 49/41 Kennedy over McCarthy, with 10 for the Lynch-Humphrey slate. He sat there in the mist, in blue pull-over and flowered beach trunks, and did not react to the news. Ethel asked whether it was good enough. He made no response. He wanted to know about South

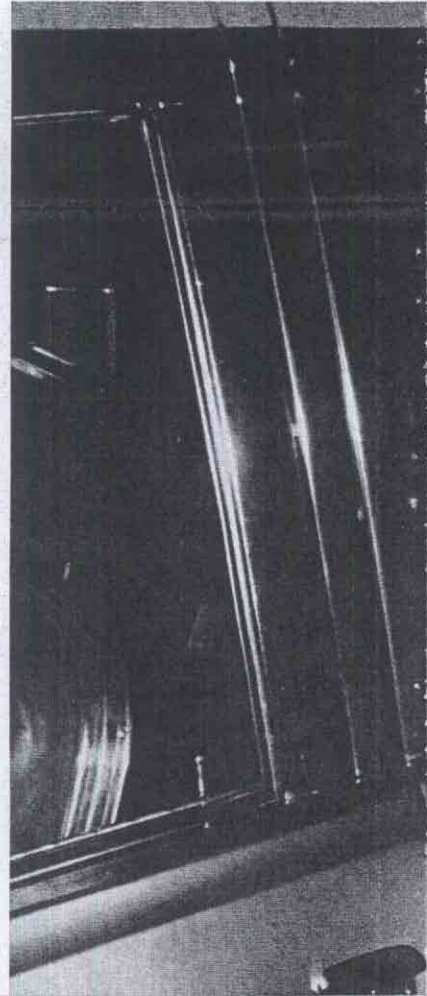
Dakota—were any early returns in yet? If South Dakota, rural, and California, the nation's most urban state, both went for Kennedy on the same day—then there was a real chance, not only in New York but with the key brokers.

By now Richard Goodwin and Fred Dutton had joined him; they were pleased. Slowly the warmth and taste of victory came over him—and hope, too. He yawned, stretched his arms, suddenly drowsy, and said he thought he would take a nap. He left relaxed and confident.

It was the last time one would see him alone again. That evening in his huge suite, the rooms

In the hot, jammed corridor where her husband lay behind her, Mrs. Robert Kennedy implored the crowd of shocked onlookers to move back and give him some air.

A wife pleads as the tragedy



thronged with old friends, campaign workers, newsmen, there was no escape to share the joy privately with Ethel; friends and newsmen hunted them down from room to room as they tried to be alone for a moment, together. But the script of election night dictated otherwise. The votes were slow, but what was coming in was good and strong, a solid win, and the TV nets demanded their time. So he must wander from studio to studio to talk, answering again and again the old questions.

At midnight, ritual demanded that he go down to the screaming throng in the Embassy Room where, before the cameras of the nation and his supporters, he

would accept victory. Then, after that, there would be a real party—Pierre and Nicole Salinger had invited the old friends to a celebration at their discothèque, The Factory. So they watched him go down the corridor, moving in a boiling mob through the entanglement of television cables—to the people, who were waiting downstairs.

The people. To him they were not numbers, nor digits, nor blank faces to be manipulated only by the new techniques. They were the very essence of politics. Impatiently, furiously, he had fought for them, and the passions he stirred were a response to the emotions inside himself, the deep feeling that the very purpose of

government is to do things for people. For this, they called him "ruthless," an epithet that seared his spirit.

Once, overwhelmed by a Midwestern mob, he quipped: "All this for a *ruthless* man? Just think what they would do for a kind one." Although he joked about the word, it cramped his thoughts and public behavior.

Robert F. Kennedy wore his heart open at all times, and though strangers hated him with a venom almost irrational, it was what this impetuous heart dictated that they feared. All those who knew him best knew its kindness and courage, gallantry and tenderness. Its outer shell was the armor and lance he bore in public; and the

style others hated was that of a man who jostled for the things he loved and never wavered in his faith.

There was no party at the end. His friends rushed to the hospital or to the hotel where the forlorn children slept. One could not explain this faith to the brave youngster, still awake, fighting back his tears at the horror he had seen on television. One could only hold the child, order hot chocolate for him, try to comfort him, fighting back one's own tears while recognizing the father's image in the good strong face of the child. And hope that he would keep the faith, as all his family had, in his country and people, hard now as it might be.

rushes on

Rushed to Los Angeles' Central Receiving Hospital, Senator Kennedy was given emergency treatment. Then, his wounded head pillowed and nearly concealed by

bandages, he was taken in an ambulance (below) to Good Samaritan Hospital. There a hastily assembled team of neurosurgeons

operated on his brain for nearly four hours, removing all but a tiny splinter of the fatal bullet. But a huge blood clot formed and he never regained consciousness. He died 25 hours after he was shot.





In her Pasadena home, Sirhan's mother, after learning of her son's arrest, is comforted by a friend (top). She later sent a telegram of sympathy to the Kennedy family. Sirhan's father, above, now lives in the village of Taibeh in Israeli-occupied Jordan where his ancestors have lived since the days of Saladin. He has not seen his family in California for 10 years. "America may be good for young

people It is a country of go, go, go. A man over 40 cannot stand it so I returned to Taibeh." He remembers Sirhan as a "religious boy, quiet and intelligent" whom he taught "true Christianity." "I raised Sirhan to love," he says. "Now I am against him." Sirhan's aunt Nurrah in Taibeh was even more bitter about what her nephew had allegedly done. "May Palestine cut off his hand," she spat.

The notebook that read

'Robert Kennedy must be killed'



There were eight shots. Then the sounds, the cries and shouts of people caught in a corridor of exploding panic. And it was over, caught on film that would be replayed countless times.

Accused of the murder of Senator Robert F. Kennedy was Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, 24. Heavily guarded, he was put in a Los Angeles County jail; bail \$250,000.

Yet, much of the evidence against him was unclear.

No one could remember who first entered that corridor or in what order they came or even exactly where the assailant was. Sirhan, a Jordanian in the U.S. 11 years without asking for citizenship, may have acted alone or with at least two other accomplices, including a girl in a polka-dot dress—although later a girl surrendered voluntarily, claiming she had been only a frightened spectator wearing a polka-dot scarf. And Sirhan was a bitter nationalist and blamed the U.S. for the Israeli victory last year, some said. Others claimed he showed little interest in politics. His mother said only that he had been difficult to talk to for several weeks since his fall from a horse. He had a notebook which was claimed to either prove him sympathetic to Communism or just a beginning student in Russian grammar.

What was unmistakable, however, was that in the past few weeks Sirhan Bishara Sirhan had developed an implacable hatred for Robert F. Kennedy. According to Los Angeles Mayor Sam Yorty, Sirhan had written on one of the 8x10 wide-line-spaced pages of that notebook where he kept his private account of goals and grudges: "Robert Kennedy must be killed before June 5, 1968."

This report of a family of Arab immigrants, put together by LIFE correspondents, gives some clues to the character of the man accused of killing Robert Kennedy.

Sirhan Bishara Sirhan was waiting at a bus stop in Pasadena, Calif. several years ago when a woman, looking slowly over the rich, deep brown of his skin, the dark, flashing eyes, and the fine-featured face, asked enviously, "What kind of a suntan lotion did you use to get that color?"

Sirhan, drawing himself up to his 5 feet, 2 inches, replied stiffly, "God gave me that color."

God gave Sirhan and his family, all of them refugees from the Arab-Israeli war of 1956, everything the immigrant traditionally is supposed to need to make his way in a new world—looks, intelligence, vocational skills, industry, determination. But God also gave Sirhan that color.

Like his brothers who had also migrated to the U.S., Sirhan was small, wiry, slim-wristed, with smoldering eyes, broad shoulders and tapered waist, and blessed with a catlike physical grace. But when a member of the Sirhan family got into trouble, his neighbors did not rush, as so often happens when tragedy surprises another unsuspecting American neighborhood, to testify that "he was such a nice boy." To talk about Sirhan there is only a one-time Pasadena masseuse who believes herself to be one of the few friends of the family during their first years in the U.S.

"They were in one hell of a bind," says Frances Rosemond. "They were treated like Negroes. They were Christians but most people didn't know or care; they were intelligent, sensitive, proud—they really didn't belong anywhere. They were really displaced people."

The father, who brought his five sons and a daughter (now dead) to America, was an auto mechanic by trade—a position, Mrs. Sirhan has pointedly informed her neighbors, of some importance in Jerusalem. But it was some-



Ron Sibbrel
Anna Silvera
Bonny Simmons
Marie Sims
Sirhan Sirhan
Elenore Skarsten
Beuna Smith

Sirhan was accustomed to calling himself by only one name. When he entered Eliot Junior High in Altadena, Calif., the school insisted on two names—and it is printed that way on his page of the classbook (left). Below, minutes after the shooting of Kennedy, Sirhan is rushed from the hotel by police.

thing else in Pasadena. And so the father, Bishara Salameh Sirhan, left job after job at each new offense he took from his disrespectful customers. "One day he just disappeared," says Mrs. Rosemond. "The family got a letter from him. He had gone back to Jerusalem."

The Sirhans live today in a modest-appearing frame house in a pleasant neighborhood where a lush magnolia blooms in the front yard and a horseshoe hangs over a front door. But the garage is full of junk and old clothes; the back yard, littered with pop bottles, is overgrown with weeds, and a rusty lawnmower sags against the house.

"Still, there was an air of elegance about them," Mrs. Rosemond says. "They were all very well educated, British schools in Jerusalem, I think. They spoke the King's English beautifully, musically. The boys wore dark, conservative, British-cut suits and English shoes when they dressed up. They could be quite dandy. They complained to me: 'What kind of culture is this when you can't even speak your own language properly? English is not even our language and yet we even speak it better than you!'"

The mother waited slavishly on the sons at table, sewing, ironing, washing for them, walking several blocks to buy groceries rather than ask her eldest son to drive her. "Women are nothing in our country."

Until last fall, Sirhan had been an exercise boy at Hollywood Park race track. One horse threw him, injuring his back and right eye. Sirhan went to work at \$2 an hour in the Pasadena Organic Health Food Store. He walked off the job last March when the store owner, John Weidner, had criticized him for mixing up a delivery. Sirhan had shot back: "You're telling me I'm a liar. I'm quitting."

"I could never understand that," says Weidner. "I didn't mean he was lying. But we always had to be careful with him. We had to make suggestions to him rather than give orders. He was a stockboy and a driver, but he'd never wear an apron. That was a menial symbol to him."



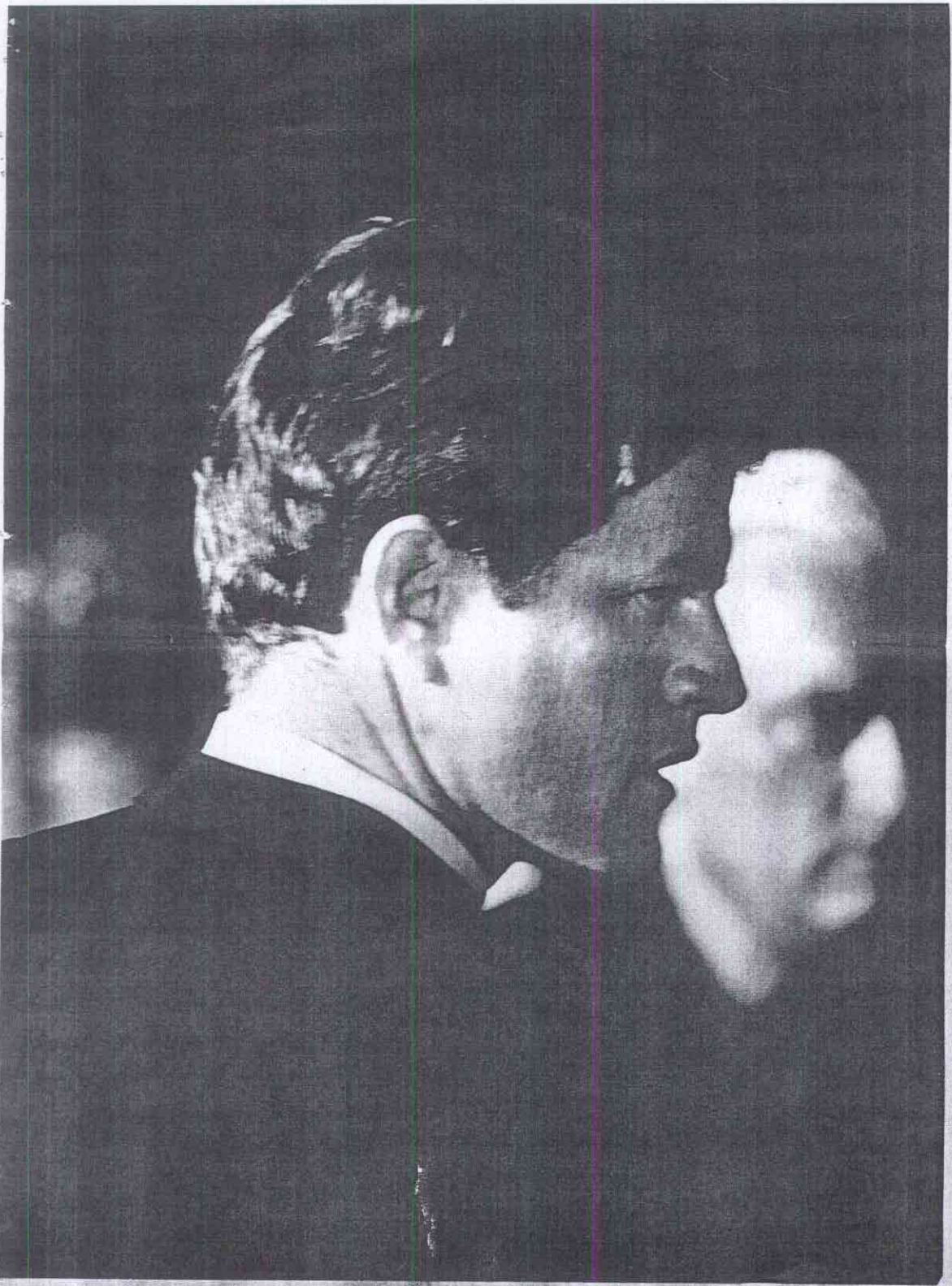


The Kennedy family came together once again to share their anguish. They accompanied the body as it was flown from Los Angeles to New York, where it lay in state at St. Patrick's Cathedral. There, the senator's three eldest children (beginning second from left, above), Robert Jr., 14, Kathleen, 16, and Joseph, 15, gathered with their mother to pray. A Secret Service man accompanied Mrs. Kennedy (right) as she arrived at the cathedral. At far right, Senator Edward Kennedy departed St. Patrick's—he alone in public life now carrying the Kennedy name.

**Once more,
anguish
met with
composure**

**On Page 75
TRAGIC HISTORY
OF THE KENNEDYS**





'For God's sake, live under the law'

Lyndon Johnson traveled his separate political way from Robert Kennedy and the bitterness that sometimes flared between them was real. But just as real was the President's concern for Kennedy's well-being—strong men both, they attracted the same strong antagonisms and hatreds.

It showed itself first in the dark days of 1964 when Kennedy, about to leave his post as attorney general, volunteered to be ambassador to South Vietnam, which was perilously close to collapse. Johnson thrust the offer aside instantly and he was accused of hoarding power. Maybe there was a little of that in the gesture, but running deeper was the President's fear that something would happen to Bob—and neither this nation nor that tortured family could stand more.

This spring, through the heat of the primary campaigns, Johnson worried about the security of the presidential candidates and particularly about Kennedy. He brooded with friends about the climate of violence in America and the ever-present threat to all national leaders, more than anything to the Presidency. When he was trying to get the crime bill passed, he had an aide quietly sound out congressmen about the possibility of including a provision assigning Secret Service men to the candidates. The response was negative and, since there was no real incident to set off the alarm, the matter dropped. But it rested uneasily in the President's mind.

Meantime he felt, hovering near him, the spectre of danger. Some 12,000 threatening letters came to the White House in

a year. A dozen men scaled the eight-foot White House fence and were caught on the grounds. At least one person was taken into custody every day by the Secret Service someplace in the U.S. for threatening the President. The men who were running for the Presidency were bound to attract some of this madness—and particularly Bob Kennedy. Johnson, flying in his jet or with friends in his small study, would talk about the danger as a hindrance to his Presidency. He felt a prisoner within his country. Secrecy was a weapon against warped minds and so there was the odd spectacle of a President moving unannounced from city to city. Last week he went to address the graduating class of Glassboro State College in New Jersey. But the final acceptance of the invitation came so late that his name was not even printed on the commencement program.

The news of the shooting of Robert Kennedy came clacking over the wire into the Situation Room in the White House basement. One of those anonymous men who attend the room to watch the world through the night for the President ripped off the yellow bulletin from the machine and called National Security Aide Walt Rostow, asleep in his suburban home. Even on the most grave national crises Rostow generally waits a few minutes to gather more information before disturbing the President. But on Wednesday morning at 3:31 his call went instantly to the white bedside phone of the President. The muted jangle roused Johnson, now conditioned to wake and expect bad tidings. "Senator Kennedy has been shot," Rostow said simply. "I don't know how seriously." The President wanted more information but Rostow had only the bare details and he suggested that Johnson turn on his TV set just as his own wife Elspeth was doing. Johnson hung up the phone, pushed the remote control TV switch at his bedside, woke Lady Bird and together they watched the triple-screened color set at the foot of the bed.

Lyndon Johnson is never immobilized. But he was in those first minutes absolutely unbelieving. Then, still in bed with the telephone cradled on his shoulder and his eyes on TV, he began to make calls and do things he felt he had to do. First he called Attorney General Ramsey Clark to set the federal investigative machinery in motion. Then calls went to Secret Service Chief James Rowley, back to Clark again, then J. Edgar Hoover. He wanted a Secret Service detail with every candidate who would accept it. The Service was to get agents from wherever they could to fill out the details. The President does

not have the legal authority to do this but he told his men never mind about authority. He would get it some way. He was back on the phone to Clark and then to Rowley and to Senators Mike Monroney and Mansfield and Congressman Tom Steed who handle legislation pertaining to the Secret Service. By 4:41 the President's own information network was functioning and he had a full report direct from Good Samaritan Hospital. By 6:35 he was talking with Kennedy's aide, Ted Sorensen, and a few seconds later to Edward Kennedy and then brother-in-law Steven Smith. There was not much to say. He quietly told of his sorrow and asked that it somehow be passed along to Ethel Kennedy. He wanted to do whatever he could to ease the family's pain. But there was nothing much that could ease the pain and he knew it. By now Secret Service agents were on their way to all candidates. Air Force planes were ready to take the oldest Kennedy children—Joe, Kathleen and Bobby from McLean to Los Angeles, and to bring the youngest ones back home from California.

Rufus Youngblood, the Secret Service agent who had thrown himself on top of Johnson in Dallas more than four years before, came by and briefed the President. Disbelief still clung to Johnson. The questions he asked the few staff members around him needed no answers. How can this still happen? How had it gotten that bad? He talked of Dallas, of Martin Luther King's death, of the gunman who had climbed to the University of Texas tower and killed 14 people. "How many times did we try to get that gun legislation through?" he asked, knowing how fat the file on that issue had become, remembering his own harsh words in insisting on the bill, some of the toughest he has ever addressed to Congress. "What does it take to make them see our need?" He called Everett Dirksen and kept calling others.

The misty and melancholy dawn came to the White House. Below the President's bedroom window the signs of tragedy began to gather. The huge television vans lumbered through the gates and spread their electronic ganglia. Reporters and cameramen collected in stunned knots. White House police checked their weapons and watched everyone sharply. Clint Hill, head of the White House Secret Service detail, who had leaped aboard the death car in Dallas and held Jacqueline in her seat in that frantic ride to a hospital, came down the drive under those big elms, his face stricken.

To those who watched, what had happened was so far away and yet so close.



In a television speech the President expressed his sorrow at Senator Kennedy's death and, in a burst of emotion, said,

"... let us, for God's sake, resolve to live under the law. Let us put an end to violence and to the preaching of violence."