

Formal Charge Is Filed Against Suspect Sirhan

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Jordanian Arraigned in
RFK Murder Case

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LOS ANGELES (AP) — A slender, swarthy Jordanian was formally accused in a grand jury indictment Friday of murdering Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and was later arraigned — in jail, in a wheelchair — under the strictest security wraps in local annals.

The arraignment provided the first public look at 24-year-old Sirhan Bishara Sirhan since his arrest at a hotel early Wednesday after eight gun shots felled Kennedy, fatally wounded, and less seriously hurt five others. It happened moments after Kennedy had proclaimed victory in California's Democratic presidential primary.

Sirhan spoke but twice — in a quiet, calm, clear voice that did not carry to the rear of the third floor chapel of Central Jail as he was surrounded by four burly policemen.

He first corrected the judge's pronunciation of his name, saying it is "Sir-han," not "Seer-han" as the judge had said it.

The second statement was "yes" when asked if he was satisfied with his arraignment.

ENTER PLEA

The judge ordered him to return June 28 to enter plea.

Sirhan wore a white shirt open at the collar and blue denim pants. He was in a wheelchair because of injuries to an ankle and finger when arrested.

Earlier, at 4:45 p.m., the Los Angeles Grand Jury returned an indictment charging Sirhan with one count of murder and five counts of assault with intent to commit murder.

The arraignment began at 5:47 p.m., an hour and two minutes after the indictment, and ended at 6:27 p.m.

About 200 newsmen — with no cameras or tape recorders al-

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lowed — witnessed the arraignment. All were searched before being admitted, past approximately a dozen security check points.

Superior Judge Arthur L. Alarcon, repeating an admonition made when the indictment was returned, ordered attorneys and court officials to say nothing that might affect Sirhan's right to a fair trial.

Sirhan listened with perfect composure as the indictment was read, charging that he did "wilfully, unlawfully, feloniously and with malice aforethought murder Robert Francis Kennedy, a human being."

RECEIVE TRIAL

The judge, advising him in detail of his rights, told him: "You will receive a jury trial in this case unless you personally give up this right. No one can force you to give up this right."

Sirhan was represented by Wilbur F. Littlefield, chief deputy trial lawyer in the public defender's office, at whose request the entering of a plea was continued to June 28.

The judge also granted a Littlefield motion to permit two psychiatrists to examine Sirhan before the next hearing.

An attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union told the judge Sirhan had expressed a preference for a prominent attorney to represent him. The judge said he lacked authority to make an appointment, but would take the matter under consideration as an informal request.

JUDGE FRISKED

A color sidelight of the pro-

ceedings: Even Judge Alarcon was frisked before being admitted.

Sirhan was all but invisible at times behind his screen of policemen, but in occasional glimpses his black hair was seen to be unruly. His left foot was wrapped in a bandage and he held it straight out. With his right hand he bracked his left. His index finger was in a heavy bandage.

The grand jury hearing was at the Hall of Justice a mile away.

The jury of 13 women and 8 men, who the foreman described as coming "from all walks of life," began the hearing at 9:30 a.m.

The indictment was announced at Superior Court at 4:45 p.m. They took 35 minutes out for lunch, eaten in the jury chamber. They heard 22 witnesses.

KEPT SECRET

Superior Judge Arthur L. Alarcon — short, graying, brisk — said to foreman L.E. McKee after the jury was seated in his court: "Mr. McKee, do you have an indictment?" McKee said he did. The judge ordered that its contents remain secret.

The judge said there would be no bond.

Later foreman McKee identified the charges in the indictment, then added in a statement: "Because of the national importance of this case and in line with the instructions of the judge we cannot make any further comment on this matter."

The judge also ordered court officials to keep proceedings secret.

The judge said he had invited A.L. Wirin, chief local counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union, to be an official observer at the proceedings so he could testify as to protection of constitutional rights of Sirhan.

Wirin said he was not acting as counsel for the accused, although he has consulted with family members.

Sirhan for hours after his arrest declined to say anything. When he did talk, police said, he declined to identify himself or discuss the shooting. He was identified late the day of the shooting when the death gun

was traced to him, officers said. Wirin told newsmen he had talked to Sirhan each morning for three mornings and "he seems to be under great anguish." Police earlier had called him "calm, cool."

Wirin said Sirhan told him: "I find no fault with the public defender, but I would prefer to be represented by private counsel—preferably leaders of the Los Angeles Bar Association, because I realize the seriousness of the case."

COURT LOCKED

The court was locked while the jury returned the indictment and received the judge's instructions. No cameras or tape recorders were allowed. The courtroom audience was almost entirely newsmen.

The grand jury hearing was closed, but some witnesses talked to newsmen outside.

Hotel dishwasher Jesus Perez, a slight young man wearing dark glasses, gave this account:

He was shaking Kennedy's hand in the kitchen area when the shots sounded. At first he thought they were noises made by someone trying to clear a path for the senator.

Then Kennedy began slipping to the floor, his hand pulling from the dishwasher's grasp.

Perez didn't see the shots fired. A man he identified as Sirhan waited in the kitchen area for about 30 minutes before the shooting, shuffling papers in his hands, Perez said.

The man asked him three or four times if Kennedy would pass through the passageway where he stood.

Asked if the man seemed nervous, Perez replied: "He looked worried—not nervous."

Witness Ira Goldstein, 19, of suburban Encino, suffered a bullet wound in the left hip but

was released Thursday from a hospital.

"I feel okay. I'm walking, but I'm a little tired," he told reporters. "It's remarkable I have recovered and I wasn't wounded more."

Asked where he was when Kennedy was shot, Goldstein replied: "I was where he was a few seconds before I was."

Goldstein said he did not see the killer.

OTHERS APPEAR

Other witnesses included: Paul Ziffren, former Democratic national committeeman, who identified Kennedy for the legal record as the victim.

Dr. Henry Cuneo, one of three surgeons who operated to remove a fragmented .22-caliber pistol pellet from the senator's brain.

Dr. Thomas T. Noguchi, county coroner and chief medical examiner, who headed a team of six pathologists in performing an autopsy on Kennedy's body.

Sgt. Albert J. LaValle, police department cartographer, who made detailed drawings of the assassination scene.

Irwin Stroll, 17, shot in the lower left calf. A blanket across his lap, he was wheeled into and

out of the grand jury chamber by two men.

Vincent Di Piero, a hotel employe; Arthur Placencia, an arresting office, and Karl Uecker and Eddie Miansian, Maitres d'hotel at the hotel.

Minasian, Di Piero and Uecker helped subdue the accused after the shooting.

After lunch the jurors heard testimony from Harold Burba, a Los Angeles city fire department inspector who photographed Sirhan struggling with two men just after the shooting.

Another witness was Henry Carreon, who said he talked to Sirhan Tuesday at a shooting range in suburban San Gabriel.

Until his arrest Sirhan lived in nearby Pasadena with his mother Mary and brothers Munir and Adel. He attended Longfellow Elementary School there and was graduated in 1966 from Pasadena City College.

The same year he was licensed as "hot walker" for cooling off horses at Hollywood Park racetrack. But records show he did not renew the license the next year.

John Shear, who worked with Sirhan at the track, has called

him "violently pro-Jordan and anti-Israeli."

A neighbor has described the youth as a handyman at home who mowed the lawn and worked on a shed in back of the house.

Washington records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service show that Sirhan was born March 19, 1944, in Jordan. Authorities say he was admitted to the United States Jan. 12, 1957, as a permanent resident. This means he can stay indefinitely without applying for citizenship, which is considered a privilege rather than a requirement.