

RFK Had No Chance-

By HOWARD F. ANGIONE
BOSTON (AP) — Almost from the instant an assassin's bullet pierced his skull, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was doomed to death, says the Boston neurosurgeon summoned to Kennedy's side in Los Angeles by the family.

"There has been no survival in any patient that had any injury like the one Sen. Kennedy received," Dr. James L. Poppen of the Lahey Clinic said yesterday.

"I saw him at about 10 a. m., an hour or so after the operation," the doctor said. "I knew it was fatal then and I prayed he would die."

He said some who were close to Kennedy when he was shot early Wednesday say they heard him say, "Water," but "I'm surprised he was even able to say that."

THE SENATOR DIED more than 25 hours after being shot, Poppen said, from "Overwhelming, irreversible damage to the pons and mid-brain," two narrow but vital communications paths next to each other deep in the center of the brain.

All the vital information exchanged between major parts of the brain must pass through

them, including the data that specialists in brain research believe is linked with controlling consciousness, heart rate, blood pressure, and all the body's automatic processes.

By 6:30 p. m. Wednesday, about 18 hours after he was shot in a narrow passageway at a Los Angeles hotel, Kennedy met the legal requirement for death — his brain waves could not be recorded on a special machine, Poppen said.

He said a slim hope remained, however, because the waves "sometimes fade out and come back," and shortly

afterwards Kennedy's "pulse and heart rate actually improved for a time."

BUT THE BRAIN waves did not revive, the senator's kidneys and other vital organs shut down, and finally his heart stopped beating, Poppen said.

Although government aircraft sped him to Los Angeles, the 65-year-old friend of the Kennedy family said he arrived after the operation on Robert Kennedy and "my only value was to keep the family informed and give them moral support."

ORLEANS STATES-ITEM

JUNE 8, 1968

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Poppen said the bullet which pierced the mastoid bone behind the senator's right ear also shattered the temporal bone, at the side of the head and over the ear.

HE SAID BLEEDING and swelling in the pons and mid-brain was touched off by the force of shock waves from the bullet and its fragments, although these did not actually penetrate that far.

In time, this bleeding and swelling caused the pons and midbrain tissues to die, Poppen said.



—AP WIREPHOTO.
USING A SKULL, Boston neurosurgeon DR. JAMES L. POPPEN describes the path the bullet took in the assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. Dr. Poppen said in a Los Angeles press conference yesterday Sen. Kennedy died from massive, irreparable damage to a small but vital communications section of his brain.