

Steps Leading to Shots Given

Word Given at Midnight:
He's on His Way

By HAROLD V. STREETER
LOS ANGELES (AP) — It was midnight.

The restless crowd packing the ballroom of the Ambassador Hotel had waited hours for this moment.

They got the word. Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was on his way. A buzz of tangled small talk merged and rose to an ear-piercing roar.

He had campaigned so frenziedly down to the wire that he had seemed near collapse only 24 hours earlier.

But now he was sunned and relaxed after slipping away from his hotel to Malibu beach while Californians were voting him their Democratic presidential preference Tuesday.

GRIN IS THERE

The familiar boyish-grin was there as he emerged into the glare of television floodlights. The crowd went wild. "Thank you, thank you," he said over

and over until he could be heard above the din.

His opening remarks set the jovial mood.

"I first want to express my high regard to Don Drysdale," the grinning Kennedy said.

Laughter, applause and cheers drowned out his tribute to the Los Angeles Dodger pitcher for his record-setting sixth straight shutout, hurled a few hours earlier against the Pittsburgh Pirates.

"I hope we have as good fortune in our campaign," Kennedy managed to go on.

The crowd laughed when he voiced "gratitude to my dog, Freckles, who has been maligned (in the campaign)." It shared his embarrassment in saying, "Not in order of importance, but I also want to thank my wife, Ethel."

Mother of his 10 children and two months along in bearing his 11th, she pushed her face close to his at the microphones. Her smile had pride in it.

"On to Chicago, and let's win there," Kennedy concluded with a raised hand, two fingers form-

ing "V" for victory.

Then he headed away for a promised appearance in a nearby press room. Taking a short cut, he started down a narrow corridor behind the ballroom stage, leading from the kitchen. His easily spotted head of tussled, thick hair bobbed up and down in the sea of humanity that flowed with him.

Now it was 2:15 a. m.

ARM SEEN

"I saw an arm come out of the crowd," said Richard Drew of the Pasadena Independent Star-News, one of a horde of newsmen trying to keep close to Kennedy.

"It was holding a gun.

"As soon as I saw the gun—it

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was pointing right at me for a second—I ducked and tried to get out of the way.

"Just then I heard two shots. Then there was a half-second pause and then five more."

Blood flowed down the right side of Kennedy's face. The bullet had entered his ear and lodged in his brain. A second pierced his shoulder. A third grazed his forehead.

KENNEDY SLUMPS

Kennedy slumped to the floor, eyes open.

"Get a doctor, get a doctor," repeatedly rose the cry from out of the confused and milling crowd.

"Get back and give him air,"

the fallen Kennedy's associates pleaded as they knelt in protection on the floor.

Huge Roosevelt Grier, Negro tackle for the football professional Los Angeles Rams, saw a man with a gun.

Grier, a Kennedy bodyguard, seized the man and with his great strength wrestled the eight-shot pistol free. Two other Kennedy aides, decathlon champion Rafer Johnson and bodyguard Bill Barry, grabbed the weapon together.

SECONDS DRAG

The seconds dragged like painful hours.

A priest jammed in the

crowd managed to reach down and put his rosary in the motionless Kennedy's hand.

A doctor finally managed to squeeze through the shoulder-to-shoulder mass of people, summoned from the ballroom to give aid.

Kennedy's stunned wife, Ethel, was literally lifted over the milling people to her prostrate husband's side shortly before he was placed on a stretcher and taken to an ambulance.

"Oh, no, No, don't," Kennedy managed to stammer just before the ambulance door closed, his wife Ethel at his side, for the trip to an emergency hospital.