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LA TIME  
10-9-91

## Lensman's Stunning Story

**N**EW YORK—"This is for history!" is what the photographer Harry Benson found he was whispering over and over to himself back on June 5, 1968.

He had been walking just two yards behind Sen. Robert F. Kennedy when the declared presidential candidate was shot in the Ambassador Hotel kitchen in Los Angeles. And his tale of that terrible day when history was changed is mind-blowing!

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Harry decided to tell me his story after reading in this space several days ago about the coming Philip H. Melanson book "The Robert F. Kennedy Assassination: New Revelations on the Conspiracy and Cover-Up."

This book, with its forewords by Kennedy experts Anthony Summers and John Davis, makes accusations against both the Los Angeles Police Department and the FBI, claiming that evidence in Kennedy's death has been altered, suppressed, ignored, covered up, destroyed and neglected—as well as kept from the public for almost 20 years.

Well, speaking of neglect—Harry Benson's story is a stunner. It's incredible!

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Benson is a legend in the photojournalism business. In 1968, he was working for the London Express. He says, "I was in the kitchen with Kennedy before, during, and after the shooting. I was also the last person to leave the kitchen. No policeman ever interviewed me, or asked me what I was doing there, or who I was, I just kept shooting film, saying to myself: 'Don't screw up now, Harry. Don't do it today. This is what you're in the business for!'"

"I remember when they brought Ethel in a few minutes after Bobby was shot. She was screaming, 'Give him air! Give him air!' And then she lifted his head in her hands and whispered: 'I'm with you, my baby, I'm with you.' He was going; his life was just bleeding out of his head onto the floor."

"You know I was also busy putting exposed film into my socks because I wanted to have something in case somebody suddenly decided to take my camera away or confiscate my film. It was pandemonium—five others were shot and wounded at the same time, and I remember to my left there was a commotion, but primarily, I just instinctively stayed on Bobby."

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When it was all over, Benson left the kitchen and called the FBI in Los Angeles to tell them he had film of the entire shooting. "I thought my pictures might be real evidence—someone else in the kitchen who was saying they had not been there . . . you know what I mean. For instance, I remember there was a man in the kitchen with a little flag in his mouth and he kept saying 'Hail to the Chief!' There were lots of strange people there, and I thought anyone with photos would have been invaluable to the investigation."

"But no. The FBI was not interested. Then when I got back to New York, I called them again. They just ignored my offer. A lot of my photos, of course, were sold and some became kind of famous. But no one has ever interviewed me about it all, asked to see my photos, or bothered to pay any mind!"

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And now a few words on the photographer himself. Harry Benson is a Scotsman, a Presbyterian, a man of moral purpose who believes deeply in his work. He has a devoted family and his wife of over 20 years, Gigi Benson—formerly of Sequin, Tex.—is his partner. Soon you'll be able to see many of Harry's photos in a collection titled "People" (Chronicle Books.)

And I'm proud to say I'm in there, along with the likes of Jack Nicholson, Fred Astaire, Diana Vreeland, Farrah Fawcett, Michael Jackson, the Beatles and Garbo.