

2 Classmates Recall Sirhan As Depressed

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LOS ANGELES, March 7 — Two old college classmates of Sirhan Bishara Sirhan testified today that he struck them as moody and depressed ever since he took a spill from a horse in the fall of 1966.

"He seemed considerably depressed, lonely and gradually becoming worse, as it appeared to me," John Strathmann said at Sirhan's murder trial for the assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

Strathmann's wife, Patricia Alice, who also met Sirhan at Pasadena City College five years ago, added that he seemed to pick up a mystical bent that neither she nor her husband had noticed before.

"He told me there are bodies in the universe that we perhaps see out of the corner of our eyes and he was trying to bring them into focus," Mrs. Strathmann recalled.

Powers of Concentration

Chief defense counsel Grant B. Cooper asked if Sirhan spoke, too, of gaining control over others by occult powers.

"He told me of concentrating on his mother's going to the bathroom and after a while, she did get up," Mrs. Strathmann allowed.

During his four days on the witness stand, Sirhan told of that and of getting, as he thought, a race horse to lose a race by willing it not to win.

Prosecutor David N. Fitts couldn't resist the temptation.

"Did he ever tell you of concentrating on getting somebody not to go to the bathroom?" he asked Mrs. Strathmann.

She said no.

The Strathmanns were part of a rapid-fire march of witnesses called by the defense today.

In his questioning, Cooper

tried to suggest that Sirhan plunged into mysticism only after his fall from a race horse on Sept. 24, 1966, at the Granja Vista Del Rio ranch where he worked as an exercise boy.

Applied to Rosicrucians

The admitted assassin's application for membership in the Rosicrucians, however, was sent to the sect more than three months before the accident. Sirhan has testified that he was simply following Rosicrucian advice to implant thoughts in his "subconscious" mind last year when he wrote down his repeated threats to kill Sen. Kennedy.

The Strathmann's testimony also made clear that Sirhan's coolness to them after the accident may have meant no more than that he had become somewhat bored with their companionship. They used to see each other frequently.

"He seemed a little less interested in what I had to say, frankly," Strathmann said of their last meeting. "He seemed to be in a hurry. Perhaps he looked at his watch."

Sirhan's last boss before the killing, John H. Weidner, a World War II Dutch resistance fighter who runs a health food store in Pasadena, told of Sirhan's hot temper and resentment of authority that used to flare up on the job.

Quit in Dispute

Sirhan worked as a stock clerk and delivery boy at Weidner's store near his home from Sept. 24, 1967, to March 7, 1968. The 24-year-old immigrant quit in a dispute over delivery schedules capped by an argument over back pay. At one point, Weidner said, Sirhan sat on his desk and refused to budge.

"He said, 'I will not leave

here before I am paid,'" Weidner recalled. "About 20 minutes later, I called the police."

Weidner's testimony also appeared to hurt the defense on a key point: Sirhan has testified that he left his wallet, with all its identification, in his car before the assassination last June 5 simply because he "never" carries his wallet in his pocket.

Sirhan had it in his pocket when the police came, Weidner said. He said he distinctly recalled Sirhan's pulling it out of his trousers when an officer asked him for an identification card.

Testifying in a thick accent, Weidner added that Sirhan once told him "there is no freedom in America" and rejected the thought that improvement could come through democratic, non-violent means.

Negro Violence Cited

Sirhan, Weidner said, told him that Negroes in America had to resort to violence and rioting to win their goals.

"I said the way to do so is the peaceful way, the way of Martin Luther King," Weidner testified. "He said he didn't think so, not that way."

Both Weidner and his wife, Naomi, said Sirhan was highly critical of Israel. Mrs. Weidner remembered one discussion with Sirhan about the 1967 war in the Middle East that ended in disaster for the Arabs.

From there, the talk moved to the atrocities the Jews suffered at the hands of Nazi Germany. "I told him some of the things that my husband saw," Mrs. Weidner recalled.

Sirhan, she said, blurted out, "Well, don't you think the Jews can be cruel?"

"He was excited and upset. I was shocked. He said, 'I'm going to tell you something I've never told anyone before, not even my parents.' Then he told me about seeing an Israeli soldier cut off the breast of an Arab woman."

Mother Recalls War

Sirhan himself did not repeat the claim on the witness stand. His mother, Mary, said he saw bleeding Arab women from Deir Yassin hauled through the streets of Jerusa-

lem in 1948 when he was four years old, but the defendant said he had no independent recollection of seeing even that.

Other witnesses included:

A Los Angeles police officer, Robert E. Austin, who told of Sirhan's kicking a cup of hot chocolate out of fellow officer's hand shortly after his arrest for killing Kennedy last June. Sirhan wanted some hot chocolate for himself, Austin said, and when his companion, officer Fred Willoughby, turned the defendant down, Sirhan said, 'Is it hot?' and kicked the cup, spilling it.

Cooper asked if Sirhan's speech was slurred.

"No sir," Willoughby replied. "Only very low . . . he appeared very sullen and hostile to me."