

Witnesses Tell Of Sirhan's Day On Gun Range

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LOS ANGELES, Feb. 19—A miniskirted blond testified today how Sirhan Bishara Sirhan graciously lent her his gun just a few hours before using it to shoot down Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

Shapely Claudia Williams, 26, said she ran into Sirhan at the San Gabriel Valley Gun Club where she had gone, she explained, to try out a little .22-caliber revolver her husband had given her for Christmas.

Sirhan struck her as a pretty good marksman, she said.

Struck Up a Chat

"He went and shot my gun and I shot his," she said. His shots were "very close to the center of the target."

Dressed in a neon orange dress with her hair done in a towering bouffant, Mrs. Williams, who waits on tables at a Temple City strip club, told the courtroom she struck up a chat with Sirhan after having trouble with her own revolver.

"I couldn't pull the trigger," she said. "So I asked him. There were only the two of us out there."

Husband Ronald, however, was nearby, practicing on an adjacent range with his .30-30 rifle. For the Williamses, it was simply a California family outing. He works as a milkman. She works at the Briar Patch which its manager describes as "a sophisticated nightclub. You need a jacket to come in."

Crucial Element

Mrs. Williams said Sirhan was alone on the pistol range "firing rapidly" with his .22-caliber Iver-Johnson when she

began trying to fire her weapon shortly after 4 p.m.

Sirhan, she testified, spent about 30 minutes calmly teaching her how to shoot. "He told me," she added, "that the mini-mags (the bullets Sirhan had) were better than what I was using."

Sirhan's day on the gun range is a crucial element of the prosecution's contention that Kennedy's death was calculated, cold-blooded murder. The defense maintains it was a last-minute decision made in a trance-like stupor.

Today's testimony could cut both ways. Several witnesses said they saw Sirhan on the range firing away furiously with the expensive and deadly "mini-mags" that are ill-suited for target practice. But the young Arab immigrant also let several people, including Mrs. Williams and her husband, handle his pistol without apparent concern.

On Range at 11:30 a.m.

The first witness, David Montellano, indicated that Sirhan was already on the gun range at 11:30 a.m. last June 4 when Montellano arrived with a friend, Henry A. Carreon.

"There was a gentleman in the last stall next to (the gun club's) office," Montellano said. He was firing very fast... as fast as you could pull the trigger."

Chief defense counsel Grant B. Cooper handed him the death weapon and called for a demonstration. The "click-click-click" of the empty .22 punctuated the silence of the courtroom as Montellano pulled the trigger in split-second sequence.

Montellano has a rifle with him on the range but eventually he walked over to the pistol range where Sirhan was.

"I wanted to find out what kind of a gun he was shooting," he said. "I thought it was a .38. He said, 'No, it's a .22.' I was surprised."

At Sirhan's feet, Montellano said, were some 400 spent brass bullet casings. Six empty boxes of bullets, including two mini-mag cartons, were lying on the bench of his firing stall. He was puzzled that Sirhan was using mini-mags, or "hollow points," which spread out on impact. Unlike others, Montellano was not impressed with Sirhan's accuracy. "He stated he wasn't shooting too good that day," Montellano testified.

Montellano and Carreon left the gun range around 1:45 p.m. "Sirhan," Montellano said, "was still there."

'Could Kill a Dog'

Besppectacled Michael A. Saccoman, 22, of Monrovia, noticed him next. He noticed the mini-mags, too.

"I asked him why he was using that ammunition for target practice," Saccoman said. "That type is used for hunting. He said he didn't know much about guns and that was the type of ammunition they sold him."

Sirhan, Saccoman said, also said that he "was going to go on a hunting trip."

"I said, 'that's against the law because it's a pistol... because of the (lack of) accuracy.' And he said, 'I don't know about that. It could kill a dog.'"

Target Riddled

Sirhan's paper target, the witness added, was riddled with about 100 holes clustered around the bullseye.

"Most of the shots were close together and in the black of the target," he said. "The target had also been patched up... I would say he was a good shot."

Saccoman thought less of Sirhan's gun. He called it "a piece of junk" in comparison with his own. "It had a small barrel and black plastic grips," he recalled, "and a very cheap finish."

Sirhan was still practicing rapid-fire shooting from "a slight crouch" when Saccoman first saw him. But then he

slowed down. Saccoman said they chatted for about 45 minutes, on and off, before he left the gun range about 2:45 p.m.

The Williamses didn't arrive until about 4. Sirhan was still shooting. Ronald Williams said he spent about five minutes on the rifle range with his .30-30, then walked over to the pistol range to see how his wife was doing.

"She was standing there talking with another guy," he recalled. "He had a little, short revolver."

Sirhan, Williams went on, told him his wife was "doing pretty good. But he said her gun was firing off to the left. He mentioned how nice a gun it was . . . then he asked me if I wanted to fire his revolver. But the rangemaster called (it quitting) time."

"We left a couple of minutes after five," Williams said. Sirhan "went one way and we went another."



Associated Press

Claudia Williams and husband Ronald left courtroom after Mrs. Williams testified that Sirhan showed her how to shoot her revolver at a firing range.