

Defense Motions Stall Trial of Sirhan

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LOS ANGELES, June 7 — With a bouncy step and a smile on his face, Sirhan B. Sirhan walked into court here today to go on trial for the assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

But a last-minute rash of defense maneuvers kept the trial from getting started.

Sirhan's chief defense attorney, Grant B. Cooper, asked for 30 days to thrash out the motions he filed—including a bid for two separate juries to determine the 24-year-old Jordanian's fate.

Superior Court Judge Herbert V. Walker, the bushy-browed judge who will preside at the trial, said he hoped the issues could be settled faster than that.

Under California law, a separate trial is held to determine the penalty in first-degree murder cases. The defense wanted one jury to determine Sirhan's guilt or innocence and another, in the event of conviction, to choose between life in prison and the gas chamber at San Quentin. The request was denied, but with the understanding that it could be renewed again later at the conclusion of the first trial.

Dressed in a blue-gray suit. See SIRHAN, A16, Col. 4



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Sirhan B. Sirhan is led to courtroom by one of his attorneys, Russell Parsons.



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Mary Sirhan, mother of Sirhan Sirhan, Jordanian immigrant accused of murder-

ing Sen. Robert Kennedy, arrives for the start of his trial with another son, Munir.

Defense Moves Stall Sirhan Trial

SIRHAN, From A1

with matching tie, Sirhan sat by his attorneys, occasionally whispering with defense counsel Russell E. Parsons, who had escorted the accused assassin from his isolated, 13th-floor jail cell.

Sirhan's mother, Mary, and his 21-year-old brother, Munir, watched together from the last row of the antiquated courtroom in the Hall of Justice here.

Cooper had indicated that he might seek that flat postponement of the trial because of his own involvement in a Federal Grand Jury investigation.

A pillar of the Los Angeles legal establishment, Cooper admitted to the grand jury last week that he had lied in court last year during the Friars Club card-cheating trial. A transcript of secret testimony before an earlier Federal Grand Jury was found on the defense table at the trial.

Cooper, who represented one of the defendants, subsequently admitted that he had four of the secret transcripts in his possession, but protested that

to have told the truth at the trial, would have pointed a finger at his client.

The Sirhan hearing ended shortly before noon. An hour later, Cooper marched across the street to the Federal Courthouse, where he was ordered to answer about 45 questions before the Grand Jury investigating the leak of transcripts in the Friars Club case.

Would Go To Jail

Cooper has indicated that he would go to jail for contempt if necessary and rely on an appeal, presumably based on the attorney-client privilege of confidential communication.

Prosecutors for Los Angeles District Attorney Evelle J. Younger have voiced fears that Cooper's headaches in Federal Court could cause the assassination trial to misfire. The issue, however, did not come up in open court today although a closed-door conference was held in Judge Walker's chambers for 50 minutes immediately after court convened.

The session opened in a 1925-vintage courtroom, complete with rolltop desk, on the Hall of Justice's eighth floor. A television camera shoved into the back of the small room sent pictures down four flights to another courtroom set aside for the overflow crowd of newsmen.

Security precautions were so tight that sheriff's deputies were seen frisking one another. Typewriters were banned from the fourth-floor courtroom of the tenuous theory that they might be concealing weapons that could kill via closed-circuit TV.

Request Denied

Other defense moves today included a motion to quash the indictment against Sirhan on the grounds that the Grand Jury that handed it down was illegally constituted. And another motion attacked the method of selecting trial juries in California.

Judge Walker withheld rulings on these while denying still another defense request to limit questioning of prospec-

tive jurors to written queries. Another hearing was set for Wednesday.

Cooper said he wanted separate juries because he felt it would be an "unconstitutional burden" to be forced to ask prospective panelists how they felt about the death penalty. Walker replied that he felt the problem could be overcome with "proper instructions" from the bench to the jurors finally selected.

After the session, Cooper told newsmen that the defense has no intention of denying that Sirhan shot Kennedy. But he denied that its task is simply to save Sirhan from the gas chamber.

"The defense," he said, "will be along other lines." These will reportedly include the contention that Sirhan's mental state was of such "diminished responsibility" that he was incapable of committing premeditated first-degree murder. In this effort, it is expected, the trial could turn into an attack on Zionism and its role in American political life.