

Sirhan's Threat Notes Seen Free of Hypnosis

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LOS ANGELES, March 28 —A handwriting expert testified today that Sirhan Bishara Sirhan showed no signs of being under a trance last year when he scribbled out his venomous threats to kill Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

Choosing his words with precision, the expert, Laurence W. Sloan, said he found a marked contrast between the writings in Sirhan's notebooks and lines he jotted down under hypnosis in his jail cell last month.

From that, Sloan said, he concluded that Sirhan's repeated reminders to himself that "RFK must be assassinated" — discovered in his Pasadena home after the shooting — "were not done under a state of hypnosis."

The 25-year-old Arab immigrant's lawyers and psychiatrists contend that he was in a psychotic trance, completely unaware of what he was doing, both when he shot Sen. Kennedy last June and when he made the rambling notebook entries that foreshadowed the assassination.

A handwriting expert for the district attorney's office, Sloan hit directly at the defense contention. Called as a rebuttal witness by the prosecution, he said he had pored over both the notebooks and four pages of "automatic writing" that Sirhan churned out in a trance Feb. 1.

Hypnotized by Dr. Bernard L. Diamond, the chief defense psychiatrist, Sirhan subconsciously wrote down questions as they were put to him in his cell and at one point rambled on to scratch out: "RFK must die . . . Robert Kennedy is going to die."

Sirhan's lawyers introduced the automatic writings earlier this week in an effort to show he was under similar trances last year when he made his homicidal notebook entries.

Sloan disagreed. He said the handwriting in Sirhan's admittedly hypnotic passages showed a "physical breakdown" that was not evident in any of his notebook entries.

Apparently ruffled by the analysis, chief defense counsel Grant B. Cooper pointed to various pages of Sirhan's notebooks where the handwriting also seemed to degenerate into a hastily written scrawl.

On the witness stand, Sloan agreed that the handwriting in Sirhan's notebooks was not of uniform quality. But he insisted that there was "no comparable breakdown" on any of the pages that could be likened to his hypnotic penmanship.

Other prosecution witnesses called to the stand today as the trial moved into its final stage included a Los Angeles police sergeant who had Sirhan fingerprinted at central police headquarters after the shooting.

The officer, Sgt. Frank Patchett, said he asked Sirhan his name, but got no response.

"Then I asked him if he was ashamed of his name in view of what he'd pulled that evening," Patchett recalled.

Sirhan, he testified, "looked up and said, 'Hell no.'"

Sirhan has said that he was still in a daze for hours after his arrest, still unaware that he had even shot the New York Senator.

Friday's session opened with an abrupt switch in the lineup of jurors, prompted by the hospitalization last night of Lawrence M. Morgan, a 32-year-old IBM systems analyst.

One of the 12 regular jurors, Morgan was apparently suffering from a bleeding ulcer. He was replaced this morning by Ruth A. Stillman, a quiet, soft-spoken Los Angeles insurance adjuster who has been sitting in at the trial as one of six alternate jurors.

Defense lawyers were not unhappy about the change. They told newsmen during a recess that they felt Morgan was not overly sympathetic to the claims of their psychiatrists and psychologists.

The trial was interrupted briefly later on when Superior Court Judge Herbert V. Walker announced news of former President Eisenhower's death in Washington and called for a moment of silent prayer. Sirhan sat in his seat quietly, staring straight ahead.