

# Excerpts From the Defense Arguments

Special to The New York Times  
**LOS ANGELES, April 10—**  
 Following are excerpts from  
 the closing arguments of Rus-  
 sell E. Parsons and Emile  
 Zola Berman, defense attor-  
 neys for Sirhan B. Sirhan.  
 The chief defense counsel,  
 Grant B. Cooper, began his  
 argument today. He is ex-  
 pected to finish tomorrow:

## Persons

I want to first start and  
 review the background and  
 history of Mr. Sirhan and the  
 family.

The mother took the stand  
 and told you that she and  
 her family were Palestinians;  
 they had lived in Palestine;  
 they had been there for years.  
 There had been a conflict—  
 and I trust you won't feel  
 that I am trying to force the  
 Israeli-Arab conflict upon you  
 —time has done that. For  
 centuries they have been  
 quarreling; they are today.  
 Men are dying over this con-  
 flict.

These people were Palestin-  
 ian Arabs, lived in their na-  
 tive country with a back-  
 ground of civilization behind  
 them, when all of a sudden  
 they had to give up their  
 home, their home that had  
 been their home for years.  
 That is bound to have an ef-  
 fect upon people, when you  
 have to just pack up and  
 leave.

Do you remember what she  
 said? She said, "We thought  
 we'd be home in two weeks.  
 We thought we'd be back."

They never got back—not  
 to this day.

He came to this country  
 and did pretty well. And  
 when his sister was lying  
 with an incurable disease, he  
 played hookey from school  
 that he might tend the wants  
 of the poor dying sister.

He loved his sister and  
 throughout this case it ap-  
 peared he loved human be-  
 ings. He even had some re-  
 spect for Mr. Kennedy.

I am not condoning for a  
 moment the death of a hu-  
 man being.

My opinion doesn't amount  
 to much, but I don't even be-

lieve in the death penalty.  
 I don't believe we have the  
 right to take the life of an-  
 other man. Only God can do  
 that. That is what they  
 taught me.

I've come to kind of like  
 Sirhan. You can't be around  
 him without feeling sorry for  
 him, as close as we are. I've  
 sat here and had him reach  
 out and take hold of my  
 hand, like a baby—You've  
 seen him. Sure, one minute  
 he appears to be smart as a  
 whip; the next minute he  
 can't tell right from wrong,  
 apparently.

Now, ladies and gentle-  
 men, we conceded a lot here.  
 We conceded that he shot  
 Senator Kennedy. We were  
 not trying to pull the wool  
 over your eyes. We know  
 that a million people saw  
 that. We know that.

I would like your verdict  
 to spell in every hamlet on  
 every desert in the Arab Re-  
 public, in Europe, that a man  
 can get justice in America,  
 and that is neither life im-  
 prisonment or the death pen-  
 alty, because this case doesn't  
 warrant it—not for this poor  
 sick wretch. No matter what  
 he did. Think that over.

## Berman

I do not intend to repeat  
 any of the matters that were  
 so broadly touched upon by  
 Mr. Parsons, but I do want  
 to talk to you specifically  
 about a thing called trauma,  
 t-r-a-u-m-a.

Now, trauma is a blow or  
 an insult and the term of  
 which I propose talk to you  
 —when I talk about trauma,  
 it is to one's personality —  
 trauma to what makes the  
 person — a blow to what  
 makes the person become  
 what he is, no matter in what  
 reference or framework in  
 any part of the world or the  
 period of life he is con-  
 fronted with.

And so I am going to talk  
 to you about the traumatic  
 events upon Sirhan, to his  
 personality, from a young  
 boy to a 24-year-old man.  
 What it was that step by  
 step put him in the posture

which created the tragedy  
 that blighted our nation.

I will start not back in  
 Jerusalem; I will start right  
 here in this country.

Papa—dear old ever-lov-  
 ing dad, you might say—ar-  
 rived with Mama, Adel, Aya,  
 Sirhan and Munir in 1957,  
 through the help of friends,  
 and settled in Pasadena.

Not very long after their  
 arrival here, came the day  
 when working in the back  
 yard—Sirhan—then about  
 14—interfered as a careless  
 kid in some work that his  
 father was doing and his  
 father was about to strike  
 him when Adel stepped be-  
 tween the father and Sirhan  
 and would not allow Papa  
 to beat the young Sirhan.

Papa immediately con-  
 fronted Mama, and laid down  
 the gauntlet that shet must  
 make a choice between him  
 and the children.

Now just try and contem-  
 plate such a scene as that,  
 in the presence of children,  
 the youngest of whom sits  
 here now—scared by that,  
 his first trauma, because  
 what happened was that  
 Mama said, "You are my  
 husband and he"—referring  
 to Sirhan—"is my child."

Dear ever-loving Dad took  
 all the family's money—  
 every cent of it—and depart-  
 ed for Jordan and has never  
 been heard from since, to  
 this moment as I stand  
 speaking with you.

Now that was Trauma  
 No. 1 in the U.S.A. Sirhan  
 obviously felt some portion  
 of guilt for his father's con-  
 duct and for his father's be-  
 trayal of the family and the  
 family interests.

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 ○ All Subjects ○ B  
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 B At Our ★  
 O O 845 STORE B  
 K S. WEISER, Inc. O  
 S 845 B'way., N.Y.C. O  
 ★ Between 12th & 13th Sts. K  
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## Sirhan Called a 'Little Sick Boy' By Defense in Final Argument

### Defendant Depicted as a 'Poor Wretch' Too Ill to Plot Kennedy's Murder Second-Degree Penalty Is Asked

4/11/69 By DOUGLAS ROBINSON  
Special to The New York Times

LOS ANGELES, April 10—A battery of defense attorneys began an intensive effort today to keep Sirhan B. Sirhan from the death penalty, describing him as a "poor wretch" and a "little sick boy" who was too mentally ill to have premeditated the murder of Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

The jury of seven men and five women listened attentively as Grant B. Cooper, the chief defense lawyer, Russel E. Parsons, who has been in the case since last June, and Emile Zola Berman of New York defended Sirhan against the prosecution's charge that he was able to plan and carry out the killing with malice aforethought.

Mr. Cooper, the last of the three attorneys to speak in behalf of Sirhan, began his closing speech to the jury shortly after the luncheon break by telling them that he was not there "to free a guilty man."

"We are not asking for an acquittal," he said solemnly. "Under the facts of this case, whether Mr. Sirhan believes it or not, he deserves to spend the rest of his life in the penitentiary."

Mr. Cooper, a tall, bulky man with a kind and gentle manner, told the jury that lawyers were not required to set a guilty man free, only to represent him. He then started a long discussion of the various sentences the jury could decide upon, including first and second degree murder and manslaughter.

"Under the facts of the case, you could find him guilty of manslaughter, but I wouldn't want Sirhan Sirhan turned loose on society," Mr. Cooper went on to say.

"There are two sides to Sirhan—the good Sirhan and the bad Sirhan," he said. "The bad side is a nasty side. I have learned to love the good little

Sirhan, but we as lawyers owe an obligation to society."

"I am going to ask you," he said dramatically, "to find him guilty of murder in the second degree."

Under California law, murder in the second degree carries a penalty of five years to life imprisonment. Only the California adult authority, which controls sentencing and parole for prisoners, can determine the length of the sentence.

Earlier, Mr. Parsons, who opened for the defense, spoke with impassioned, old-fashioned rhetoric as he told the jury that "we are not trying to pull the wool over your eyes," referring to the constant admissions by the defense that Sirhan did shoot Senator Kennedy.

"I would like your verdict to spell in every hamlet on every desert in the Arab republic, in Europe, that a man can get justice in America; and that is neither life imprisonment or the

death penalty, because this case doesn't warrant it—not for this poor sick wretch," he said.

In his summation, Mr. Parsons, who is 69 years old and spoke in a sometimes quavery voice, traced Sirhan's days as a boy in Jerusalem and the grisly scenes he had witnessed in the early days of Israel's fight for independence.

The family, he said, "lived among the barbed wire almost like the camps of Hitler" and saw a great deal of death and destruction. "They came to this

country, not as immigrants," he continued, almost in a whisper, "but as refugees in peril."

At one point, the attorney suggested that in the struggle to wrest Sirhan's revolver from him after he had shot Senator Kennedy it was impossible to say whether all eight shots had been fired by the defendant.

"Two powerful men were lying on him," Mr. Parsons said, "and the gun was waving backwards and forwards. Who can say who pulled the trigger? "Can you be sure?"

Occasionally Sirhan seemed bemused by some of Mr. Parsons' oratorical flights, such as once, in speaking of mental illness and efforts of psychiatrists to do something about it, he said that even today "there are doctors reaching behind the forehead to find out what in the name of God is wrong."

#### Psychologists Defended

Mr. Parsons, a white-haired man with a deep tan, told the courtroom that Sirhan was so mentally sick that "he tried to discharge his lawyers from the case" midway through the trial.

He defended the psychologist and psychiatrists who had testified that Sirhan was mentally incapable of premeditating the killing in a "reasonable and meaningful way" by saying that they were learned men from throughout the country and were "the best men we could get."

Of Sirhan himself, Mr. Parsons said: "I kind of like him."

"You can't be around him without feeling sorry for him," he continued in a sad voice. "I've sat here and had him hold my hand like a baby. One minute he's as smart as a whip and the next he can't tell right from wrong, apparently."

"It's going to take a little courage to return a proper verdict in this case," the attorney said in conclusion, "but it must be done—it must go down in the history books."

For his part, Mr. Berman opened by saying that he wanted to "talk to you specifically about a thing called trauma," which he defined as a "blow to what makes the person become what he is."

Sirhan, he said, suffered at least six major traumas ranging from the time his father left the family home in Pasa-

dena to the defeat suffered by the Arab nations in the six-day war in the summer of 1967.

The elder Sirhan — and Mr. Berman sardonically referred to him as "dear, old ever-loving dad" — left home with all the family savings after a dispute with his wife and Sirhan "obviously felt some portion of guilt for his father's conduct and for his father's betrayal of the family and the family interests."

#### Recalls Sirhan's Failures

Mr. Berman recalled how Sirhan had been frustrated in his efforts to succeed in college, had failed to become a famous jockey and how he turned more and more to the study of the occult.

Eventually, his personality became so warped, the lawyer continued, that he wrote a "declaration of war against American humanity" in his notebook. In this declaration, he said, Sirhan wanted to be remembered as "the man who triggered off the last war."

After all his frustrations, Mr. Berman went on, "there was nothing else in the whole world for him except the belief that because of his power he was a big man."

"Instead," he said softly, "he was just a little sick boy."

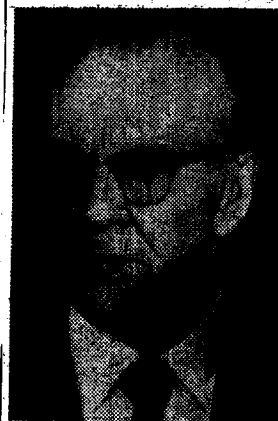
Mr. Berman stressed to the jury that the defendant had signed his name and address on the register of the gun clubs where he went target shooting in the days preceding the killing, adding that "obviously he was not trying to hide anything."

At the Ambassador Hotel on the night of the shooting, he continued, Sirhan, far from planning an escape after the crime, parked his car "three solid blocks from the hotel."

Mr. Berman renewed his contention that Sirhan was in a self-induced hypnotic trance at the time of the shooting, a trance that was brought on in part by the alcoholic drinks he had consumed and by the flashing lights in the mirrors outside the pantry where the shooting occurred.

"Never has there been a case in which mirrors played such an important part," he said.

He described Senator Kennedy's decision to change his route through the hotel and his unplanned passage through the pantry as one of the "terrible freakish things which changed certainly the history of our country and possibly of the world."



Associated Press

**BEGINS SUMMATION: Russell E. Parsons, a defense attorney for Sirhan Sirhan.**