

Sirhan Jury Still Seeks Decision

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LOS ANGELES, April 15 — Sirhan Bishara Sirhan's jurors spent a full day today mulling over a verdict in the assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, but quit for the night without reaching a decision.

Sirhan spent the day upstairs in his windowless jail cell on the 13th floor.

"This is only the start," he told attorney Russell Parsons during an afternoon visit. "We'll keep on fighting."

The elderly defense attorney said Sirhan was talking of appeals to higher courts in the event he should be convicted of first-degree murder.

Court officials said the jurors chose Bruce D. Elliott, a quiet, reserved bachelor, as their foreman. He holds a Ph.D. in engineering and a job as systems analyst for TRW, Inc., a Defense Department contractor and "think tank" in Redondo Beach.

The jury's choices boil down to a conviction for either first- or second-degree murder. It could knock the charge down to manslaughter or even acquit Sirhan, but the Palestinian's lawyers wound up their defense by pleading for a second-degree murder verdict.

In an open letter to the court published in Jerusalem today, Sirhan's father, Bishara, charged that the prosecution was "hanging American liberty in preventing my son from defending himself."

"My son died, but not at flesh and blood," Bishara Sirhan asserted in the Arabic text. "I am intent to kill the American policy which is causing harm to the American people and to the peace of the world."

Chief prosecutor Lynn D. Compton replied that Sirhan had "every opportunity in the world to defend himself" at the lengthy trial.