Sirhan Sentenced to Death Despite Plea by Kennedys By George Lardner Jr. in the first degree, you are to

Washington Post Staff Writer

Sirhan Bishara Sirhan was by law." sentenced to death in the gas chamber yesterday despite a set until after review of the last-minute plea for his life case by the California Su-from the Kennedy family.

from the Kennedy family.

The dark-eyed Palestinian, who assassinated Sen. Robert F. Kennedy in a hotel kitchencorridor last June, took the decision calmly, shrugging his shoulders as he sat down.

In pronouncing the sentence in Los Angeles, Superior Court Judge Herbert V. Walker ignored a handwritten letter from Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, asking for compassions of the same jurors who had continuous to the gas chamber April 23 by the same jurors who had con-Kennedy, asking for compas-the same jurors who had consion.

Court that the jury was right," the Judge said, "and I have no reason to change my opinion now."

Then he told Sirhan: "Stand

up."
The 25-year-old immigrant stared fixedly at the Judge as he reviewed the case, beginning with the first-degree murder indictment handed down against Sirhan shortly after Kennedy's death.

Finally, the Judge announced: "It is the judgment and sentence of this Court that for the crime of murder

die in the manner prescribed

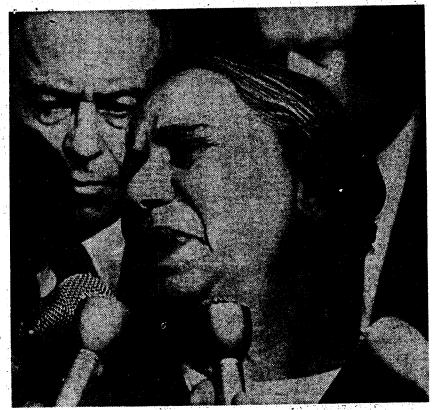
No execution date will be

"It is the feeling of this victed him of first-degree mur-

See SIRHAN, A12, Col. 5



SIRHAN B. SIRHAN ... review pending



United Press International

Sirhan's mother weeps over Kennedy family's effort to save him.

Sirhan Doomed Despite Kennedy Plea

SIRHAN, From A1

As the trial judge, Walker

family, the verdict in this case cess and burst into tears. Of plea from Sirhan in return for a long way off. The appeal to would have been entirely different," Chief Defense Counties and Sel Grant B. Cooper protested good man like his brother."

a guarantee of life imprison the State Supreme Court is ment. Judge Walker vetoed the automatic. If the conviction proposal, insisting that the and sentence are upheld there, before the death penalty was imposed. "I think your Honor tic. "As far as we are con-has more than ample reason cerned," he told newsmen, "it letter had a familiar ring to U.S. Supreme Court. to bring back a sentence other than death."

love and sentiment and compassion," Edward Kennes, wrote. "He would not have penalty. for the taking of another life.'

The letter, addressed to District Attorney Evelle J. Younger, took the courtroom by surprise when it was made public yesterday morning. The Massachusetts Senator, who wrote it Sunday, made it clear that he was speaking for the entire Kennedy family, including his brother's widow, Ethel. "We all realize that many

other considerations fall within your responsibility and that of the court," Younger said. the note to

"But if the kind of man my brother was is pertinent, we believe it should be weighed in the balance on the side of

could have reduced the sent-had called capital punishment have been inappropriate." ence to life imprisonment, but the only "proper penalty" for during his years on the bench, Sirhan, turned it over to the he had done so only once be- Court with copies for the de-

came a little late."

"My brother was a man of the trial-proper began and then King. Edward Kennedy ors began mulling over a United States is not violence Judge Walker denied the mo-de would not have penalty.

United States is not violence Judge Walker denied the mo-or lawlessness," the Demo-tions before passing sentence.

District Attorney Younger "Had this jury known about Sirhan's 56-year-old mother, between prosecution and decided on the gas chamber. It describes the attitude of the Kennedy Mary, looked at it during a re- fense attorneys over a guilty. For Sirhan it is in any or

it: a passage quoting the late

compassion, mercy and God's Senator Kennedy said in the cratic presidential candidate gift of life itself." letter that the family felt a said then "but love and wisletter that the family felt a said then, "but love and wis-Younger, whose prosecutors reply on either occasion would dom and compassion towards one another."

Defense Attorney Cooper had sounded out the Kennedys quoted the same passage to in February during dickering the jury shortly before it de-

For Sirhan, it is in any case a guarantee of life imprison the State Supreme Court is ood man like his brother."

proposal, insisting that the and sentence are upheld there, cooper was less enthusias jurors fix the penalty.

Cooper has vowed to continue Part of Edward Kennedy's with appeals all the way to the

Most of the hearing was The Kennedy family's views Sen. Kennedy's remarks on devoted to defense motions for Futilely, he read the letter had been sought in the past learning of the assassination a new trial, including a protest first by the prosecution before of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther that the notebooks found at Sirhans home after the shoot-"What we need in the ing had been illegally seized.

Kennedy Letter on Sirhan's Fate

LOS ANGELES, May 21 (UPI) - Text of the letter from Sen. Edward M. Kennedy to District Attorney Evelle Younger dated May 18, 1969:

"Dear Mr. Younger:

"Some weeks ago you inquired whether the Kennedy family wished to express any views on the possible penalties available to the court under the law in the trial involving the death of my brother.

The issue then was the position to be taken by the prosecution on the offer of a plea of guilty and that involved the question whether there would be any trial at all. We felt that any answer to your inquiry at that time would accordingly be inappropriate.

"At the time of the hearing on the sentence a simi-

Iar inquiry was made by defense counsel. The matter was then before th ejury and again my response seemed inappropriate.

"I now understand that the trial judge will be called upon to exercise his discretion concerning the penalty. Since this is now a question of clemency and the trial proceedings have been concluded, I feel I can appropriately convey to you, for whatever consideration you believe to be proper, how we

'My brother was a man of love and sentiment and compassion. He would not have wanted his death to be a cause for the taking of another life. You may recall his pleas when he learned of the death of Martin Luther King. He said that 'what we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not

hatred: what we need in the United States is not violence or lawlessness, but love and wisdom and compassion toward one another.

"Moreover, he' young man totally committed to life and living. He stood against injustice, poverty and discrimination, for those evils lessened life. He grew to despise war for war denies the sacredness of life. And he had a special affection for children for they held the promise of life.

"We all realize that many other considerations fall within your responsibility and that of the court, but if the kind of man my brother was is pertinent we believe it should be weighed in the balance on the side of compassion, mercy and God's gift of life itself.

Sincerely. EDWARD M. KENNEDY"