

More Than One Sniper, Gunshot

By ERIC NEWHOUSE
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Robert Bemish considers himself remarkably lucky—lucky to have escaped with only a flesh wound from the sniper who fired on him from 50 feet away.

And from his hospital bed here yesterday, he indicated he hopes to be as lucky if the sniper returns to finish the job.

Asked if he could describe the gunman, he said, "Yes, I could, but discretion is the better part of valor because the man they shot on the roof (of the Howard Johnson Hotel here Sunday) is not the same man who shot me."

NUMEROUS ATTEMPTS to ask Police Supt. Clarence Giarrusso why a witness with information concerning a second sniper remains unguarded were unsuccessful.

Bemish looked to be a sitting duck in Baptist Hospital Tuesday.

An Associated Press reporter-photographer team entered the hospital's Magnolia Street entrance and caught an elevator to his seventh floor room.

Pockets bulging with tape recorders and carrying a bulky bag filled with camera equipment they asked directions at a nursing station and were cheerfully sent down the hall to the proper room.

THERE WAS NO police guard at the door, nor did

there appear to be one inside.

Bemish, 43, vice president of Starr Broadcasting Corp., who was being transferred here from San Francisco, had previously told colleagues in New Orleans that he was wary of receiving any publicity because he was afraid the sniper might return to slay him.

But he did describe how he had been shot and why he felt the man who shot him had not been killed.

Bemish first encountered the man when he discovered the hotel was on fire, and he was moving his luggage from his eighth floor room to the patio around a swimming pool which adjoined his room.

"I LOOKED UP and a fellow jumped out of some bushes about 50 feet away," Bemish said.

"He looked me in the eye for a full second, then he raised the rifle, cocked the bolt on it and took very careful aim.

"And I was saying it couldn't be for real — it was bad enough getting out of the fire, but you just aren't prepared to walk into the business end of a rifle."

The shot knocked Bemish into the heated pool, where his airfilled coat acted as a life-preserver.

"WHEN I HIT the water," he said, "I was thinking it



—AP photo.
ROBERT BEMISH

must have been a small bore because it didn't hurt as much as I thought it would. But then I thought it might be a .22 and there's a good chance it could go running around inside.

"So I was kind of happy to look around in the water and not see much blood."

Bemish floated in the water for more than three hours, playing possum and keeping as close an eye on the sniper as he could. When the sniper appeared to be busy elsewhere, firemen broke in to rescue the waterlogged broadcast executive.

He was reported in fair condition Tuesday with a wound caused by a bullet which passed through his abdomen, but missed his intestines.

BEMISH SAID doctors at Charity Hospital, where he had originally been sent for treatment, believed his wound had been caused by a 30.06-caliber bullet.

However, police said the only weapon found beside the body of the slain sniper was a .44-caliber Magnum, which fires much larger bullets.

Police had said Sunday that the sniper who was killed on the 18th floor roof was dressed

NEW ORLEANS

Victim Insists

in a black "liberation army" shirt and green Army fatigue pants.

"The man who shot me had on a light tan jacket and brown slacks," said Bemish.

FURTHERMORE THE corner's office—which tentatively identified the body as

that of Mark James Essex of Emporia, Kan. — said the sniper was only 5-foot-4.

"I would say this man was taller than 5-foot-4," said Bemish.

"He was slender and fairly light-colored," he added, "and about the same height as I am, 5-foot-8."