

Bullet Clues Point To Single Rifle

New Orleans

A New Orleans police ballistics expert said yesterday that examination so far indicated the persons shot Sunday at the Howard Johnson Hotel had been hit by one weapon—the .44-caliber magnum rifle found beside the body of Mark James Robert Essex.

Ballistics expert Alex A. Vega Jr., said bullet fragments taken from a wounded fireman also came from shells fired by the rifle found near Essex, whom police have identified as the sniper.

The rifle also caused the death of Deputy Police Superintendent Lewis J. Sirgo, Dr. Robert V. Steagall, a hotel guest, and Police Cadet Alfred Harrell. The cadet was killed on New Year's Eve in New Orleans.

The others who died from the gunshot wounds, including Steagall's wife, all were hit with slugs which passed through their bodies and which were not recovered, Vega said. Vega said there could be more slugs removed in the future from wounded persons and that he did not expect to have all of them examined for weeks.

The ballistics information was a further piece of evidence in the continuing controversy about whether only one sniper faced police on

Sunday night or if there were two or more. Police originally thought there was more than one.

Vega said police had found only two rounds of ammunition on the roof with Essex, and so far had found 17 shell casings from the rifle on the roof.

New Orleans police questioned the roommate of Mark Essex yesterday, but released him without charges.

Police were kept busy yesterday pursuing several groundless gun scares.

"We're stretched a little thin right now," a police spokesman said, referring to officers attending funeral services for Deputy Superintendent Sirgo and Patrolman Phil Coleman.

"If they'd only let us bury our dead, we'll take care of everything," the officer said.

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A Victim Is Sure of a 2nd Gunman

New Orleans

Robert Bemish considers himself lucky to have been only wounded by a sniper, but he is worried that the gunman might try to return to finish the job.

From his hospital bed Tuesday, Bemish, asked if he could describe the sniper who shot him from 50 feet away, said:

"Yes, I could, but discretion is the better part of valor because the man they shot on the roof (of the Howard Johnson's hotel here Sunday) is not the same man who shot me."

Numerous attempts to ask Police Superintendent Clarence Giarrusso why a witness with information concerning a second sniper remains unguarded were unsuccessful.

UNGUARDED

Bemish appeared to be a sitting duck in Baptist Hospital Tuesday with no police guard visible.

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 kill him.

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

Bemish 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

The Sniper's Parents Talk

Emporia, Kan.

The parents of the slain young man identified as the New Orleans rooftop sniper said last night they blame the Navy and society for the death of their son and the shootings in which six other persons were killed.

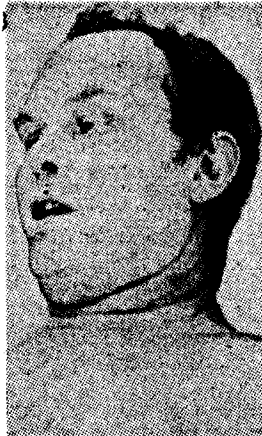
"It all started in the Navy," Mrs. Mark Essex said. She said her son came home to Emporia last Octo-

ber to "think about the injustices the black man receives in the service."

She said her son was "harassed" with petty annoyances and "racist mistreatment. It was just these little things on top of one another that made Jimmy do what he did."

TERROR

Mark James Robert Essex, 24, was killed Sunday



AP Wirephoto

ROBERT BEMISH
He fears new attack

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."

POOL

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 must have been a small bore because it didn't hurt as much as I thought it would."

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 gunman appeared to be busy elsewhere, firemen broke in to rescue the broadcast executive.

CONDITION

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

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

Associated Press

night by policemen in a helicopter that swooped over the roof of the 18-story hotel after a day of terror in which six persons, including three policemen, were killed and 17 persons were wounded by gunfire.

"He was mistreated in the Navy," Mrs. Essex said. "It was prejudice. I don't know if the Navy is doing it deliberately, but they are doing it. I have talked to other young men, white men, and they confirm what Jimmy told me. Young blacks are not going to accept the white racist society."

"If he had not been mistreated in the Navy, he wouldn't have been guillible or easily influenced by outside influences," his father said, "and he'd be here now."

'SIGNAL'

Mrs. Essex said the New Orleans shootings are "a clear signal for white America to get off the seat of its pants and do something."

"I don't want my son to have died in vain. If this terrible thing will awaken white America to the injustices that blacks suffer, then some good will have come of it."

Essex added, "We must cease provoking people to the point that they must seek revenge to get even with society. I blame society."

"My Jimmy did not hate the white man," Mrs. Essex said.

"He hated what the white

man stood for, the white system. He knew whites, he went to school with whites, he dated a white girl and then he told me that he didn't know why blacks dated white girls because they're no different than black girls and they're not as beautiful. That's what he told me.

"Jimmy wasn't doing this to be a martyr. He didn't want to be a hero. He just wanted to change things."

SISTER

Earlier yesterday, young Essex' sister told a CBS interviewer, "I think it was this white racist society that drove Jimmy to do what he did."

"When Jimmy went into the Navy he really saw what life, the world, was all

MRS. MARK ESSEX
'It all started in the Navy'

AP Wirephoto

about," said Penny Fox of Waterloo, Iowa. "He saw that white people control the world, and blacks were being oppressed by the white man. He didn't like society the way it is. He wanted to change things. The Navy to Jimmy was his own private hell."

Mrs. Essex told CBS she had talked with her son in New Orleans by telephone on Christmas Day. "He was the same old Jimmy. He was getting along well in school and enjoyed the South. He said he thought he had found himself in the South and planned to stay there."

"Jimmy wanted to be a man. This was his philosophy — he wanted to be a man."

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