

After 17 Years, 'I's' Still Haunt Sirhan

Assassin of Robert F. Kennedy Up for His 7th Parole Hearing

By BILL FARR, Times Staff Writer

SOLEDAD, Calif.—Seventeen years have passed since Robert F. Kennedy was shot to death at the Ambassador Hotel, and Sirhan Sirhan says he still cannot remember pulling the trigger that night.

But he takes full blame for the assassination, denying there was a conspiracy and maintaining that he did not plan to kill the senator before their fateful and fatal crossing of paths in the hotel pantry.

Sirhan attributes his murderous act to "a pent-up political rage that unfortunately was fueled that evening by four Tom Collins drinks."

And while willing to be held fully accountable for what he did, Sirhan hopes that the state Board of Prison Terms "will be fair enough to give back the parole date" that was revoked three years ago.

On Wednesday, the parole board will conduct the seventh hearing on Sirhan's suitability for release from prison. His attorney, Luke McKisack, said, "All we are asking is that the parole board not go in with a preconceived notion about what their decision should be."

In a series of interviews over the last year, the most recent being on the 17th anniversary of the June 5, 1968, assassination, Sirhan also:

- Explained why he has not voiced remorse for the killing during his appearances before the

Board of Prison Terms, saying: "I have deep sorrow for what I did, but to put on an act for the parole board is not the way to show it."

• Complained that "the only reason" his scheduled 1984 parole date was canceled was "because (then-Los Angeles County Dist. Atty.) John Van de Kamp wanted to whip up a furor against me to help him become attorney general."

• Compared his case with that of Dan White, whom Sirhan described as a "killer of not just one but two popular politicians in San Francisco and who came here into this unit where I live at Soledad long after I was sentenced but already is out."

'Evealing Fuzzy'

Recalling the assassination, Sirhan said: "That whole evening is fuzzy. I remember some things but I honestly have no recollection to this day of firing at Kennedy or shouting 'You son of a bitch' at him. That part is a total blank."

Sirhan, who is now 41, says his time in the Ambassador is "pretty much a blur." He remembers the dizzying effect of the hotel's mirrored hallways, compounded by the effect of the drinks he had consumed earlier in the evening. He says he initially went to the hotel "to get some coffee to help sober me up."

If he had no memory of the shooting, Sirhan was asked by a reporter what was the last thing he remembers?

"This is a funny thing. What I remember, in my confused state, was a typewriter typing without anybody doing the typing. Now I know that I was in the press room and what I was looking at was a Teletype machine. There was a lady there who saw me and told police that I seemed to be in a trance. That report, by the way, couldn't be found at the time of my trial but I understand they found it later."

Sirhan said his first recollection after the shooting is of "being choked by someone. I thought I was going to be choked to death. Then I remember someone prying that person's hold off my throat. I think the person who did the prying that saved me was Rosevelt Greer. I thought I was going to die right there."

Sirhan talked about the many "ifs" that might have altered the tragic outcome of that evening. "I had planned to go to the races that day but because the track was closed, I ended up having the whole day free. If the horses had been running, I would not have ended up downtown at all."

When he learned the track was closed, he went to a private firing range and practiced

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Sirhan Sirhan

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