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LOS ANGELES Take 2 Kennedy eyewitness A128 big 470

I listened to him speak for a few minutes, then walked into the press room, because you could not hear the senator in the roar of the crowd. The reception was better on the television in the press room.

Kennedy had said that after his speech he would meet with a small group of reporters in the working press room.

A few seconds before he ended his speech, I left the television and went to the door that led to a corridor behind the ballroom stage and off the kitchen. Kennedy would come off the stage and walk down this corridor.

I was only a few feet inside the corridor, walking toward Kennedy, when I saw his head bobbing in the crowd. We were 25 or 30 feet apart. The assailant was between us.

Then there were the shots.

They said there were eight of them. Their flash lit up the corridor. I remember thinking there were about five. They came quickly and I wasn't counting.

Someone said they were firecrackers. There had been some of that in the rally in San Francisco's Chinatown Monday.

But there was no mistake about this. Someone had been shot.

I ran down the corridor. People bunched in front of me and I jumped on the steel serving table, past the assailant beneath me on my left, and saw Robert Kennedy on the floor in the gray light.

People were screaming: "Get a doctor.."

"Get back and give him air."

They swore and cursed each other.

For a few seconds I did not notice the struggle directly beneath me. Then I looked down and saw the gun. Grier held the assailant and was attempting to take the gun from his hand. The man next to me was shouting, "Kill him!"

When Grier finally shook the gun from the assailant's hand, a man next to me picked it up. Bill Barry and Rafer Johnson, Kennedy's other two bodyguards, scrambled to get the weapon—they were afraid the man would kill the gunman.

Then there was a struggle to hold the assailant. They did not want to let him go and Rosie Grier did not want him killed and said so. They picked the assailant up by the legs and hauled him away from Kennedy.

I did not hear this, but one of those walking beside Kennedy said that the gunman shouted: "Let me explain...let me explain," as he fired the shots at Kennedy.

There was turmoil in the ballroom, Kennedy's brother-in-law, Stephen Smith, went to the stage and asked the people to clear the room. The assailant was still in the corridor behind the stage, and so was Kennedy. A doctor came in and attended him.

~~It seemed that the special officers assigned to the party were reluctant to act. They kept away from the assassin and it seemed a long time before they started to take any one of the four persons who were shot to the hospital.~~

Then a squad of Los Angeles regular patrolmen moved in with rifles and shotguns. They picked up the assailant by the legs and the arms and carried him from the room.

Jesse Unruh, speaker of the California House, who was with Kennedy, followed the police out of the hall, warning them that nothing should happen to the assassin.

The crowd was beating on the chairs and the walls. Men and women broke down and cried.

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