

Cautious L.A. Moves On Sirhan

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Los Angeles

The District Attorney's office will ask the Grand Jury today to indict Sirhan Sirhan, 24-year-old Jordanian emigrant for the murder of Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

District Attorney Evelle J. Younger said yesterday that evidence against the one-time health food store employee and race track exercise boy would include testimony of 17 witnesses—none of them members of the slain Senator's family.

Presentation of the evidence, he added, should be completed in one day. But, he noted, "It may be a long day."

Younger's office could have skipped the grand jury proceeding merely by filing a formal murder complaint against Sirhan.

But he decided to take the evidence to the Grand Jury, it is understood, in keeping with the maximum protection being afforded the slight, curly haired Pasadena resident.

Filing a complaint would have necessitated a prelimi-

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nary hearing, a courtroom proceeding requiring the defendant's presence. That would have meant transferring Sirhan from the tight security of his county jail cell.

The possible risk such a transfer might present will be eliminated through the secret Grand Jury machinery. Sirhan's presence will not be required.

After Senator Kennedy's death early yesterday, Municipal Court Judge Joan Dempsey Klein revoked the \$250,000 bail she previously had set for Sirhan.

The Senator's death automatically made the case a capital one, and in such a defendant is not bailable.

Besides a murder indictment, the district attorney's office also will seek indictments against Sirhan for the wounding of five other persons when Kennedy was fatally shot early Wednesday in the Ambassador Hotel.

The charge in those five cases, said the district attorney, will be either "assault with a deadly weapon to commit murder" or "assault with a deadly weapon," or both.

Meanwhile, Sirhan, who came to this country from Jordan at the age of 12, was

confined in a cell on the second floor of the jail.

Sirhan learned of the death of Senator Kennedy when given a copy of a newspaper.

A sheriff's deputy, asked if Sirhan had made any comment, replied that he hadn't, and added, "This is a cool cat."

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Three of the witnesses to be called before the jury, it is believed, will be Olympic champion Rafer Johnson and football player Roosevelt Grier, who disarmed and immobilized the suspect, and State Assembly Speaker Jesse Unruh, Kennedy's campaign manager in California.

If the grand jury indicts Sirhan, as Younger said he anticipates it will, the suspect must be arraigned in 48 hours in Superior Court.

After arraignment, Sirhan will have ten days in which to plead.

The law requires that the district attorney bring a defendant to trial within 60 days after his pleading.

Asked about the possibility of a change of venue, Younger replied: "If a motion is made, and we thought it was valid, we would not oppose it. But I'm not suggesting the defendant could not get a fair trial in Los Angeles."