

RFK 'Medically Dead'

Compiled From AP and UPI

BOSTON — Robert F. Kennedy's electrical brain waves stopped and he was legally and medically dead seven hours before his heart ceased to beat, a prominent neurosurgeon said yesterday. Even had he lived, the senator's "intellectual faculties" would not have survived, the doctor said.

"There has been no survival in any patient who had an injury like the one Sen. Kennedy received," Dr. James L. Poppen of the Lahey Clinic said.

"I saw him at about 10 a.m., an hour or so after the operation," the doctor said. "I knew it was fatal then and I prayed he would die."

He said some who were close to Kennedy when he was shot early Wednesday say they heard him say, "Water," but "I'm surprised he was even able to say that."

The senator died more than 25 hours after being shot, Poppen said, from "Overwhelming, irreversible damage to the pons and midbrain," two narrow but vital communications pathways next to each other deep in the center of the brain.

All the vital information ex-

changed between major parts of the brain must pass through them, including the data that specialists in brain research believe is linked with controlling consciousness, heart rate, blood pressure, and all the body's automatic processes.

By 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, about 18 hours after he was shot in a narrow passageway at a Los Angeles hotel, Kennedy met the legal requirement for death—his brain waves could not be recorded on a special machine, Poppen said.

He said a slim hope remained, however, because the

waves "sometimes fade out and come back," and shortly afterwards Kennedy's "pulse and heart rate actually improved for a time."

But the brain waves did not revive, the senator's kidneys and other vital organs shut down, and finally his heart stopped beating, Poppen said.

Although government aircraft sped him to Los Angeles, the 65-year-old friend of the Kennedy family said he arrived after the operation on Robert Kennedy and "my only value was to keep the family informed and give them moral support."

Even if Kennedy had survived the wound, Poppen said, his life would have been a "grave and devastating existence."

He said Kennedy's right side would have been paralyzed, he would not have been able to see things to his left, and he would have suffered a "Parkinson's disease type" of facial disorder.

Poppen said Kennedy "would not have been the same man — not the individual his family knew."

He said if the .22-caliber bullet which hit Kennedy had been one inch lower the sena-

7 Hours Early

tor would have been killed outright.

Using two half skulls to demonstrate, Poppen traced the path of the bullet with his index finger from where it entered at the mastoid bone behind the right ear, proceeded to the temporal bone and fragmented through the pons (midbrain) and cerebellum.

The pons, which is connected to the brain stem, controls respiration and other bodily functions.

"This is where we live," Poppen said. "This was an overwhelming, irreversible damage to the pons."

Poppen, who practices at the Lahey Clinic and the New England Deaconess Hospital, among others, said he had known the Kennedys since the 1940s. He said Pierre Salinger called him about 4 a.m. Wednesday (1 a.m. California time) and asked, "Can you come? Can you get ready immediately? The Kennedy family needs you."

Poppen said he received telephone calls immediately afterward from the White House and from Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, who arranged his transportation.

Poppen said the operation was intended to explore for a possible blood clot in the cerebellum rather than to remove bullet fragments.

He confirmed earlier reports that Kennedy died of massive hemorrhage.