

CW--LA

MY ONLY--NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
SIRHAN LAWYER BJT

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LOS ANGELES (AP)--VETERAN CRIMINAL ATTORNEY RUSSELL E. PARSONS SAYS HE'LL DEFEND SEN. ROBERT F. KENNEDY'S ALLEGED ASSASSIN WITHOUT FEE. AND HE INDICATES HE MAY ARGUE THAT SIRHAN BISHARA SIRHAN, 24, JORDANIAN IMMIGRANT CHARGED WITH THE MURDER, SUFFERED FROM BRAIN DAMAGE. PARSONS, 69, DECLINED TO SPECIFY HIS STRATEGY

AFTER SIRHAN CHOSE HIM WEDNESDAY FROM AMONG FOUR ATTORNEYS RECOMMENDED TO THE YOUTH FOR HIS DEFENSE.

BUT PARSONS DID MENTION TO NEWSMEN THAT HE IS DEFENDING ANOTHER CLIENT WHO SUFFERED A TYPE OF BRAIN DAMAGE. AND HE SAID HE WOULD SERVE SIRHAN WITHOUT FEE BECAUSE:

"I'M A LAWYER AND THIS MAN IS IN SERIOUS TROUBLE AND IS ENTITLED TO BE REPRESENTED."

HE SAID HE WILL HAVE A PSYCHIATRIST EXAMINE SIRHAN "FROM THE TOPS OF HIS SHOES TO THE TIP OF HIS HEAD."

A WISPY, SILVER-HAIRED MAN IN A RUMPLED BLACK SUIT, PARSONS TOLD NEWSMEN:

"I'VE BEEN FIGHTING FOR THE UNDERDOG ALL MY LIFE. I'M JUST A HARD-WORKING, JOURNEYMAN LAWYER."

AFTER AN AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION ATTORNEY ANNOUNCED SIRHAN'S SELECTION, NEWSMEN ASCENDED TO PARSONS' FOURTH-FLOOR CIVIC CENTER OFFICE AND FOUND:

--A LAW VETERAN WHO IN MORE THAN 40 YEARS HAS TRIED ABOUT 5,000 CASES AND ON APPEAL WON CALIFORNIA'S CELEBRATED "CAHAN DECISION" BARRING ILLEGALLY ACQUIRED EVIDENCE.

--A WIRY, 5-FOOT-7, 137-POUND MAN, HAWK-FACED, WITH THINNING HAIR COMBED STRAIGHT BACK. . . PIERCING BLUE EYES BEHIND THIN-RIMMED SPECTACLES. . . SNAPPY ANSWERS IN A SHALLOW VOICE.

A CASTING DIRECTOR MIGHT SEE HIM AS A SMALL-TOWN BANKER.

"HE SEEMS QUIET," SAID AN ASSOCIATE, "BUT IN COURT HE ROARS."  
SAID OTHERS: "HE

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"HE SEEMS QUIET," SAID AN ASSOCIATE, "BUT IN COURT HE ROARS."

SAID OTHERS: "HE'S AN ORATOR OF THE OLD SCHOOL. . . IN THE TRADITION OF CLARENCE DARROW. . . "A HEAVYWEIGHT CRIMINAL LAWYER, AN APPEALS EXPERT". . . "LAWYER'S LAWYER," AND--

"WHEN HE ARGUES TO A JURY, CHILLS GO UP AND DOWN YOUR SPINE."

ON THE STREET, THEY SAID, HE UNFAILINGLY CONTRIBUTES TO PANHANDLERS AND BLIND PEDDLERS. TWICE A GRANDFATHER, HE WALKS TWO OR THREE MILES A NIGHT, GOES DEER-HUNTING ANNUALLY IN UTAH AND ESCAPES ON WEEKENDS WITH HIS WIFE VICTORIA TO THEIR HOME IN PALM SPRINGS.

BUT HIS ONLY REAL HOBBY IS THE LAW, AT WHICH HE PUTS IN AN AVERAGE 12-HOUR DAY.

PARSONS WAS BORN NEAR DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES WHERE HIS CONTRACTOR FATHER HELPED BUILD THE 3RD STREET TUNNEL AFTER HELPING BUILD THE PALACE HOTEL IN SAN FRANCISCO, THE U.S. GRANT HOTEL IN SAN DIEGO AND HOTEL UTAH OPPOSITE THE MORMON TABERNACLE IN SALT LAKE CITY.

"I'M A JACK MORMON, WHICH MEANS NOT A VERY GOOD ONE," SAID PARSONS. "I DON'T SMOKE, I DON'T SWEAR MUCH AND I DRINK NOT AT ALL--I USED TO BUT NOT MUCH."

HIS LATE BROTHERS CHARLIE AND JOHNNIE WERE FAMOUS SPRINTERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, WHERE PARSONS GOT HIS B.A. DEGREE. WITH A LAW DEGREE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH, HE WAS TWICE ELECTED BEAVER COUNTY ATTORNEY IN UTAH AND THEN, IN 1938-40, WAS A LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY, IN CHARGE OF RACKET PROSECUTIONS.

SINCE THEN, HE SAID: "I'VE DEFENDED JUDGES, LAWYERS, DOCTORS, POLICEMEN, CROOKS."

HE DEFENDED ARMY MAJ. RAYMOND "RATTLESNAKE JAMES" LISSENBA, HANGED FOR KILLING HIS WIFE WITH RATTLESNAKE BITES.

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IN 1953 HE SUCCESSFULLY APPEALED CHARLES C. CAHAN'S BOOKMAKING CONVICTION TO THE CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT. THE LANDMARK RULING HELD THAT CAHAN'S CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS WERE VIOLATED BY SECRET PLANTING OF RECORDING DEVICES IN HIS PLACE OF BUSINESS.

WITH A CLIENT NOW ON DEATH ROW, PARSONS SAID: "I AM ONE OF THE LAWYERS FIGHTING TO OUTLAW THE DEATH PENALTY."

HE LOOKS UPON THE SIRHAN CASE AS "A BIG ASSIGNMENT, A TREMENDOUS RESPONSIBILITY. ANY CRIMINAL CASE IS."

PARSONS SAID SIRHAN WOULD CHOOSE ANOTHER ATTORNEY AND POSSIBLY A THIRD TO JOIN IN THE DEFENSE.

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