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LOS ANGELES AP - Authtr George Plimpton says he lacked the courage to look at dying Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, but instead lunged against the senator's assailant—a man he describes as "composed and peaceful."

"My eyes were solely on the hand of the defendant which had the gun," Plimpton testified Wednesday at the trial of Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, charged with Kennedy's murder.

"He struck me as enormously composed," Plimpton said of the young Jordanian who has been pictured as disturbed with Kennedy for supporting Israel. The senator was felled shortly after midnight last June 5 in the flush of his California presid

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tial primary victory.

"The rest of us, given this sudden tragedy, were not composed," said Plimpton of Sirhan. "He seemed almost like

the eye in

"He seemed purged."

One of the 16 prosecution witnesses who described the chaotic scene when Kennedy and five others were shot in the Ambassador Hotel pantry, Plimpton's account was perhaps the most dramatic. Although he was called by the prosecution, his testimony lent support to the defense contention that shooting gave Sirhan "a strange sense of release."

Did he look back after he heard the shots, asked John E. Howard, a prosecutor.

"I didn't have the courage to look back in that direction," Plimpton said quietly. Plimpton's book "PAPER LION" is about his adventures with the Detroit Lions in which he—a tall, slightly build man—takes part in pro football scrimmages.

Plimpton said he flung himself at Sirhan, pinning him against

a steam table. Others piled on at the same time—former football player Roosevelt Grier, decathlon champion Rafer Johnson and Kennedy advance man Jack Gallivan.

Sirhan was still firing at that time.

On cross examination, defense attorney Emile ZOLA Berman asked: "Was it an easy task to let the gun away from him?"

A. No. Because, as I say, there were so many hands . . .

Q. Didn't he show great strength?

A. I think it surprised us that we couldn't get the gun so easily.

Later, Plimpton said, "he was very strong for such a small man."

The 3rd prosecution witness was on the stand as the fourth day of the testimony ended.

David N. Pitts, one of the state's attorneys, indicated that only about 20 more prosecution witnesses will be called—thus sharply shortening the trial which had been estimated to last three months.

The defense has said its witness list is small, consisting mostly of testimony by Sirhan, his mother

and brother, and

several psychiatrists.

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