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BULLETIN

Sirhan Bht 2nd NL

By ARTHUR EVERETT

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES AP - Sirhan Bishara Sirhan took the witness stand at his murder trial Monday and quietly identified himself as the assassin of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. But he said that at the time of the shooting "I was not aware of anything."

"Did you on or about the fifth of June, 1968, shoot Sen. Kennedy?" asked defense attorney Grant Cooper as he began his examination of the young Jordanian Arab, who is on t

ial for his life.

"Yes sir," replied Sirhan in an even tone.

Cooper then referred to the grand jury indictment which also charges Sirhan with the wounding of five bystanders in the Ambassador Hotel, the scene of Kennedy's slaying.

The defendant testified that he knew none of them, bore no malice against them and when he was asked if he was aware of shooting them he answered:

"I was not aware of anything."

His mother, Mary, preceded Sirhan to the stand. She testified he was exposed to childhood horrors that sent him into shaking fits.

*How long; 2nd graf A250LA

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Sirhan Bht NL 400 2 takes total 650

By ARTHUR EVERETT

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES AP - Mary Sirhan testified at her son's first degree murder trial Monday that Sirhan Bishara Sirhan was exposed to childhood horrors that sent him into shaking fits.

"How long would he shake?" she was asked.

"Two weeks," replied Mrs. Sirhan, whose son assassinated Sen. Robert F. Kennedy June 5, 1968.

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URGENT

LOS ANGELES - Sirhan 2nd NL A256LA add: anything." eliminating last graf: "His mother."

Cooper quoted from a page of the notebook found in Sirhan's home in which was written, "My determination is more the more to kill Sen. Robert F. Kennedy."

Q. Did you write that?

A. Yes I did.

Cooper read a passage in which Sirhan had written "RFK must die" and asked, "Is that ytur hand writing?" Sirhan said it was.

"Does the ph

ase 'port wine' mean anything?" Cooper asked.

"Yes, sir," said Sirhan. "It's the name of a race horse."

The words Port Wine were written four times in the notebook on the same page which Sirhan wrote more than two dozen times in different phrasing that Kennedy must be assassinated.

The jury of eight men and four women paid close attention as Sirhan spoke, his hands spread out in front of him on the rail of the witness chair.

Occasionally the defendant smiled slightly and more than once began answer before Cooper completed the question. He appeared tense but collected.

He followed his mother, Mary, to the stand. She testified he was exposed to childhood horrors that sent him into shaking fits.

"How long would he shake," she was asked.

"Two weeks," recalled Mrs. Sirhan.

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URGENT

LOS ANGELES Sirhan 2nd NL A256-261LA add: Mrs. Sirhan.

Sirhan, seventh defense witness in the nine-week-old trial, began testifying at 3:05 p.m.

Cooper began leading Sirhan through a recital of the hooor and poverty that he experienced as a child in Jerusalem during Arab-Zionist warfare. The defense claims this is a key to Sirhan's emotional development and the state of his mind at the time he killed Kennedy.

Sirhan referred to what he called frequent bombings in the area of his home.

Cooper noted that these might be confused with aerial bombardment and began groping for another word.

"Cannon sounds - how's that?" Sirhan volunteered.

Sirhan told of huddling for heat around an open brazier in a bombed-out building where seven or eight other families lived.

"We had to rehabilitate the building. We had to cement it and whitewash it," he said.

The family got a ration of staples from United Nations headquarters and a can of kerosene each month for heating.

"How cold does it get there?" Cooper asked.

"Pretty damn cold, sir," Sirhan replied.

"Watch your language, Sirhan," Cooper said.

Sirhan couldn't recall having starvation pangs, but "if there had been more we could have eaten more." People in the neighborhood died of starvation, he said.

Sirhan was still being questioned about his childhood in Jerusalem when the trial was recessed for the night at 3:56 p.m. He was expected to resume the stand Tuesday.

MORE

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Sirhan add 130

LOS ANGELES Sirhan NL A256-268LA add: Tuesday.

Another factor cited by the defense as underlying the Kennedy assassination was Sirhan's extreme pro-Arab attitude and his feeling that the senator favored the Israelis.

Cooper asked Sirhan to summarize conversations with his mother concerning their being forced out of a comfortable home in Jerusalem during 1947 warfare. He replied of himself and his brothers and sisters: "We were told the Jews kicked us out of our home, the Zionists kicked us out of our home. We were frightened and terrorized out of our home."

Sirhan's mother sat forward on the edge of her chair in the second spectators' row during the testimony.

After he came with his family to the United States in 1957, Sirhan said: "From history books here I read that the West wanted to bring in the persecuted Jews of Germany and evict the indigenous Arabs from their homes."

Q. That's what you learned?

A. Yes, sir.

Bringing to; etc. 4th graf A250LA as before.

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Bringing to the witness stand in her son's behalf a maternal heritage from centuries of Arab civilization, Mrs. Sirhan's testimony was intended to bolster a defense claim that Sirhan had a background of emotional and mental instability when he shot Kennedy, much of it the residue of a childhood in war-torn Jerusalem.

In an emotional aside at one point, the 4-foot-11 mother said to the jury of four women and eight men: "I tell you we are lucky in this country. I want you to know this. WQE ARE BLESSED TO BE IN THIS COUNTRY, AFTER WHAT WE WENT THROUGH."

Sirhan, 24, is on trial for his life, charged with the premeditated murder of Kennedy, who was campaigning for the Democratic Presidential nomination when shot. The defense contends Sirhan was strongly pro-Arab and became unhinged over what he considered pro-Israeli campaign declarations by the senator from New York.

Sirhan listened quietly and at most times attentively as his mother testified in his behalf. Through his attorneys, he apologized to Superior Court Judge Herdert V. Walker for an outburst last Friday. At that time, in the absence of the jury, Sirhan vainly demanded the right to fire his lawyers, plead guilty and be executed.

Mrs. Sirhan, 56, wore a black suit with gold leaf trim. She spoke fairly clear, but quite rapidly at times.

In the small, crowded courtroom there may have been some during her testimony who fleetingly envisioned another mother a continent away, graciously regal, who loved and raised four sons. The first-born gave his life in World War II. The second was assassinated in Dallas in 1963. And the third was shot down here in Los Angeles by Sirhan.

But this small figure with graying hair drawn back in an unfashionable bun had in common with the other mother only the tragedy of Robert Kennedy's death. Mary Sirhan never knew the luxury that was familiar to Mrs. Joseph Kennedy.

Mary Sirhan, instead, enjoyed but scattered happiness, and saw it collapse into poverty and meanness. She too had sons, five of whom live.

Sirhan was perhaps his mother's favorite, the one for whom she held the highest hopes, the one she affectionately called "Sol." As she spoke he sat 20 feet to her right, the son who killed Robert Kennedy and whom the jury could send to the gas chamber.

MORE

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LOS ANGELES Take 2 Sirhan NL Bjt A250LA & decree.

"Oh, yes, we had money and property," Mrs. Sirhan said of her life before the 1947 Arab-Zionist warfare. "My husband had a very good job with the English. He provided very well . . . it was a very nice place and we were very happy."

But the war forced the Sirhans to flee their home in the new city of Jerusalem in 1948 and take refuge in a partially-wrecked, 900-year-old building in the old walled city.

"All our money gone," Mrs. Sirhan recalled. "All our furniture gone. We didn't know where to lay our heads. We didn't have beds, we didn't even have a blanket to put on my baby . . . we slept on the floor and that was made of tile."

"It was drafty. It was dark. We used to go thirsty for many days before we could get a drink of water."

And there were the atrocities of war, she recalled - explosions that blew victims to pieces, young men and women tortured and bloodied. After one such occurrence witnessed by the then 2-year-old defendant, Mrs. Sirhan said: "He took a blanket and covered his face with it . . . he stayed in bed for two days. For two weeks he doesn't want to take his little brother from near the house."

Sirhan had fits of trembling after seeing blood, his mother said, and shook for two weeks after seeing a neighbor's body against a fence.

He was the first to see the body of a brother, killed by a truck while running from a shooting, and every so often he would cry and say, "Mama, when does he come back and play with me?"

"He became fearful of the Zionists?" his mother was asked.

"Yes," Mrs. Sirhan replied.

On cross-examination, the state sought to bring out that any anti-Jewish sentiments Sirhan developed were the result of prejudices he drew from others or things he read.

As for the atrocities Mrs. Sirhan described, the state suggested that little effort was made to spare Sirhan the knowledge or sight of them.

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