

Kennedy's Letter Fails To Save Sirhan's Life

LOS ANGELES — (UPI) — Sirhan Sirhan just sat there, chewing on a cellophane-wrapped cigar, as the judge sentenced him to death for the murder of Robert Kennedy.

The melodramatic reading by his defense attorney of a letter from Sen. Edward Kennedy asking that Sirhan's life be spared did not move him at all. He said nothing and he showed nothing.

Within a few days he will be taken to Death Row in San Quentin Prison. There he will wait while appeals go up to the U.S. Supreme Court over a period of more than a year.

Suspense

What was expected to be a routine formal sentencing of the 25 year old Arab immigrant turned into suspense when the Los Angeles district attorney introduced a letter from the youngest brother of the Kennedy clan.

In a hand-written note, Ted Kennedy recommended clemency.

"My brother was a man of love and sentiment and compassion," Kennedy wrote. "He would not have wanted his death to be cause for the taking of another life."

Judge Herbert Walker made no mention of the letter in passing sentence.

"It's the feeling of this court that the jury was right and I have no reason to change my opinion now," Walker said.

'Stand Up'

Then he turned to Sirhan and said, "Stand up."

"It is the judgment and sentence of this court that for the crime in the first degree you are to die in the manner prescribed by law."

Walker ordered that Sirhan be transported to San Quentin within 10 days. It is expected that the tiny former racehorse exercise boy will be moved there secretly within the next few days and isolated from prisoners who might try to attack him.

After the sentence was imposed, chief defense attorney Grant Cooper and co-defense attorney Russell Parsons approached the judge's bench to ask for a stay of execution on sending Sirhan to San Quentin.

The request was denied.

Nearly a Year

The sentence came little less than a year after Sirhan shot Kennedy down in a pantry of the Ambassador Hotel after a victory party celebrating his triumph in the California presidential primary.

Walker turned down a motion for a new trial.

Sirhan's mother, Mary, 55, broke into tears when she was shown the letter from Ted Kennedy.

"We always knew he (Ted) was a good man like his brothers," she said.

Sirhan, shown the letter, only nodded his head.

Mrs. Sirhan said she had always felt terribly sorry that Robert Kennedy was killed.

"Of course we are sorry," she said. "How can I make it plain?"

Cooper said he had asked the Kennedy family if they wished to testify at the penalty phase of the trial before the jury recommended the death penalty.

Asked about Ted Kennedy's letter, Cooper said:

"As far as we are concerned, it came a little bit late."

Man Shot by Sirhan

Sues for \$500,000

LOS ANGELES — (AP) — A man who was shot by Sirhan Bishara Sirhan in the shower of gunfire that killed Sen. Robert F. Kennedy filed a \$500,000 damage suit yesterday against the convicted assassin and the Ambassador Hotel.

Ira M. Goldstein, 20, was one of five persons wounded before Sirhan was subdued.

Two others who were wounded also have suits pending against Sirhan.

And it is separated from the other cells on the row by a special mesh fence. And never will any inmate, even the prison trustees who serve Death Row, be permitted to get close to Sirhan. A guard will feed him.

The idea is the same as in Los Angeles where Sirhan has been lodged since last June 5 for the murder of Sen. Robert Kennedy.

The idea is to keep Sirhan segregated from men who might want to get into the history books as the killer of an important assassin.

Cell 33 Waits for Sirhan

By Mary Crawford

Sirhan Sirhan breakfasted today in his special cell in Los Angeles County jail where he has lived for almost a year.

Within nine days his new address will be Cell 33, South Side, Condemned Unit 1, San Quentin Prison.

That's his special isolation cell on the prison's old Death Row, where he'll live until he goes six floors below to the prison's apple-green gas chamber — if and when all of his appeals fail.

Just when and how he will be brought to San Quentin was the best-kept secret in the prison's history.

He may be flown from Los Angeles to Oakland or San Francisco, or he may be brought under heavy guard in a sheriff's car.

'John Smith'

If he comes by commercial airline it is likely that his reservation will be made in the name of, say, John Smith. In the past the airlines have refused to accept a reservation — knowingly — for a famous prisoner.

Why the secrecy surrounding Sirhan's trip north?

For the same reason that Sirhan will be the most isolated and most protected prisoner in San Quentin's history: The State wants to keep him alive for an execution day, a year away at least, if it comes.

Sirhan's cell is like all the cells for those who await death in the gas chamber. It is 4½ feet wide, 7 feet high and 11 feet deep, illuminated by a large bare overhead bulb which can be turned off and on from within the cell.

Empty Cells

But it is different in that it is flanked on both sides by empty cells, which will be kept empty, regardless of the need for cells for newly condemned men.