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Sirhan 'Can't Remember' Assassination

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Convicted assassin Sirhan Sirhan claimed yesterday that he has a mental blackout about the events on the night he shot and killed Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

But Sirhan said if he could go back to the scene of the assassination, he might remember the details of the night of June 5, 1968.

Sirhan, 33, met with two Los Angeles county supervisors and his own attorney for three hours yesterday. The supervisors, Baxter Ward and Kenneth Hahn, are investigating the assassination.

Sirhan had refused to talk to investigators, but agreed to talk to the supervisors as long as his attorney, Godfrey Isaac, was present.

Dressed in white T-shirt, blue jeans and white tennis shoes, Sirhan met with the three men in a Soledad Prison conference room.

After the meeting, Ward, Hahn and Isaac held an informal press conference at the entrance to the prison.

The supervisors said Sirhan was "very cooperative and friendly," but to the crucial questions of why he killed Kennedy or whether there had been a conspiracy, Sirhan pleaded a loss of memory.

When asked why he was in the pantry of the Ambassador Hotel on the night of the assassination and who told him Kennedy would pass through there Sirhan responded: "I can't remember. I can't remember."

"This is not a closed chapter yet," Hahn told the 30 reporters and photographers clustered outside the gate.

The supervisors said they believe it would be useful to have Sirhan undergo psychological testing and hypnosis to jog his memory of the assassination.

Hahn said he would like to see psychiatrists work "to pull back the curtain of his mind and get the real story."

The supervisors said that at one point in their discussion Sirhan told them he had no knowledge of a conspiracy, but he did not reject the "Manchurian Candidate" theory that he had been programmed to commit the assassination without his knowledge.

Ward said that on the basis of yesterday's interview, he believes that anyone attempting a psychological probe of Sirhan "faces a formidable mind," indicating his respect for Sirhan's intelligence.

Attorney Isaac said Sirhan agreed to the interview with the supervisors because he would "like to make peace with society" and that he wants Ward and Hahn to

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refute the charges that he "has refused to cooperate in an investigation of the assassination."

During his three and a half month trial, Sirhan claimed that he went into a trance shortly before the fatal shooting and did not remember anything until later, when he was restrained by Kennedy's aides.

"He wants to go back to the pantry of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles so he can visualize it," said Isaac. "He wants to know himself, did he or did he not kill Bobby Kennedy?"

The supervisors said they spent the first ten or 15 minutes in the locked and guarded conference room with Sirhan "getting acquainted and asking each other questions."

Then they asked him a list of questions that had been prepared by the Los Angeles district attorney's investigators going over the case step by step.

Isaac said the next step would be for him to return to Soledad next week to discuss with Sirhan whether he would allow psychological testing and hypnosis.

Sirhan, a Palestinian immigrant, was convicted of the Kennedy assassination and was sentenced to die in the San Quentin gas chamber. He was spared when the California Supreme Court declared the death penalty unconstitutional.