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Kennedy-eyewitness 320 w takes total 790

By ROBERT HEALY

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LOS ANGELES AP - In that narrow, darkened corridor, there was terror, profanity, tears, blood and the violence of a nation.

Sen. Robert Kennedy of New York had walked down the same back corridor in the kitchen of the Ambassador Hotel just 15 minutes before. He was in a good mood. He had won California. And he came over to shake my hand. I congratulated him and we talked about his big win.

Now, I was standing on a steel serving table directly over the same place where we had shaken hands. He lay there struck down by bullets. His right hand held a bleeding side. His face was white. His eyes were open. His lips moved just slightly.

But he did not cry.

Against the steel serving table, Roosevelt Grier, the huge Negro lineman for the Los Angeles Rams, had the assailant pinned. He held tight to the man's right wrist and he smashed it against the side of the serving table. He tried to free the gun from his hand.

There was this great man, towering over the small man and with all his strength it took him more than a minute to take that gun.

Another man, atop the table, was trying to kick the gunman in the face. "Bastard...kill him," he shouted. And he would have.

Kennedy waited until his victory was secure in the California primary before he came down to talk to his workers. There was a huge crowd in the ballroom. They had waited for several hours.

About 12:15 a.m., 3:15 EDT, the senator's press aides entered the working press room adjoining the ballroom. They said Kennedy would come in a matter of minutes to thank his workers and make a statement for television.

A big crowd filled the lobby outside, and it was decided it would be easier to bring the candidate through the kitchen corridor into the ballroom.

Then the senator came. He had been in Malibu during the day and picked up a fresh sun tan. His press aide, Richard Drayne, preceded him. There were few people in the corridor—some kitchen workers and some television cameramen forwarned of his arrival.

Kennedy began his speech with a remark about the shut out victory that Don Drysdale had just pitched for the Los Angeles Dodgers. It went over big.

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