

A Fatalistic Chat With RFK

By JOSEPH MOHBAT
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Sen. Robert Kennedy had indicated, in private, he would not be surprised if an attempt were made on his life.

"I just don't care," he would say. "There's nothing I could do about it anyway."

Kennedy has been described as a fatalist, one who never looks beyond the next moment and who is prepared for tragedy every sunrise.

As he lay critically wounded today in a Los Angeles hospital, the memory of a long, introspective and rare conversation surfaced in the minds of the few who had heard it.

Robert Kennedy was relaxing in the rear of a four-engine Lockheed Electra winging through the night sky, taking him home to Hickory Hill after a rigorous week of midwestern campaigning.

He had a drink, and he idly swirled the ice cubes with an index finger as he spoke broodingly, gazing out at the stars and the lights of towns below.

Wasn't he concerned, he was asked, about the perils of such wild crowds as he attracted nearly every day?

"No," the candidate said, "I just don't worry about that. There's no sense in worrying about those things. If they want you, they can get you."

Did he think someone would seek to harm him one day?

He thought for perhaps 30 seconds and then said, "Well, let's not talk about that."

A reporter thought of his brother, John F. Kennedy, assassinated; of an older brother killed in wartime; of his wife's parents and his close friend, Dean Markham, killed in plane crashes.

But wouldn't it be a national crisis if one of his stature were to be harmed, after the violence to his brother and to Martin Luther King?

"Perhaps it would, I suppose so," Robert Kennedy said. "But what can I do about that?"

"I'll tell you one thing: If I'm elected president you won't find me riding around in any of those awful cars."

He was referring to the closed, armored presidential limousine President Johnson has used since John F. Kennedy's motorcade assassination.

Bobby Kennedy would ride in open cars, he said, so the people could see their president.

Security on the Kennedy campaign has been a 210-pound former FBI agent named Bill Barry. Faithful to a fault, Barry has ignored battered knees and wrenched muscles to lead his much smaller boss through the frenzied mobs that try to tear him to pieces.

With rare exceptions, the gentle but powerful Barry has not carried a sidearm in this campaign. He was not carrying one last night as far as is known.