

Autopsy Reveals Severe Damage

LOS ANGELES — (AP) — It may be days or weeks before the full medical story of Sen. Kennedy's assassination is told, but one fact apparently has been established: Death was due to a bullet in the brain.

The coroner's chief medical examiner said yesterday after a six-hour autopsy:

"The cause of death was ascribed by me as a gunshot wound of the right mastoid penetrating the brain."

Dr. Thomas T. Noguchi said pieces of the bullet and the mastoid bone behind the right ear "severely damaged the main portion of the right side of the brain and reached about the center of the brain."

He said the damage was so extensive "it could not help but cause death" but he would not speculate on reports the senator was partly paralyzed during the 25 hours he clung to life after the shooting Wednesday.

Noguchi said routine tests of brain tissue and vital organs removed during the autopsy would continue for

days or even weeks but he is confident they will not change his decision on the cause of death.

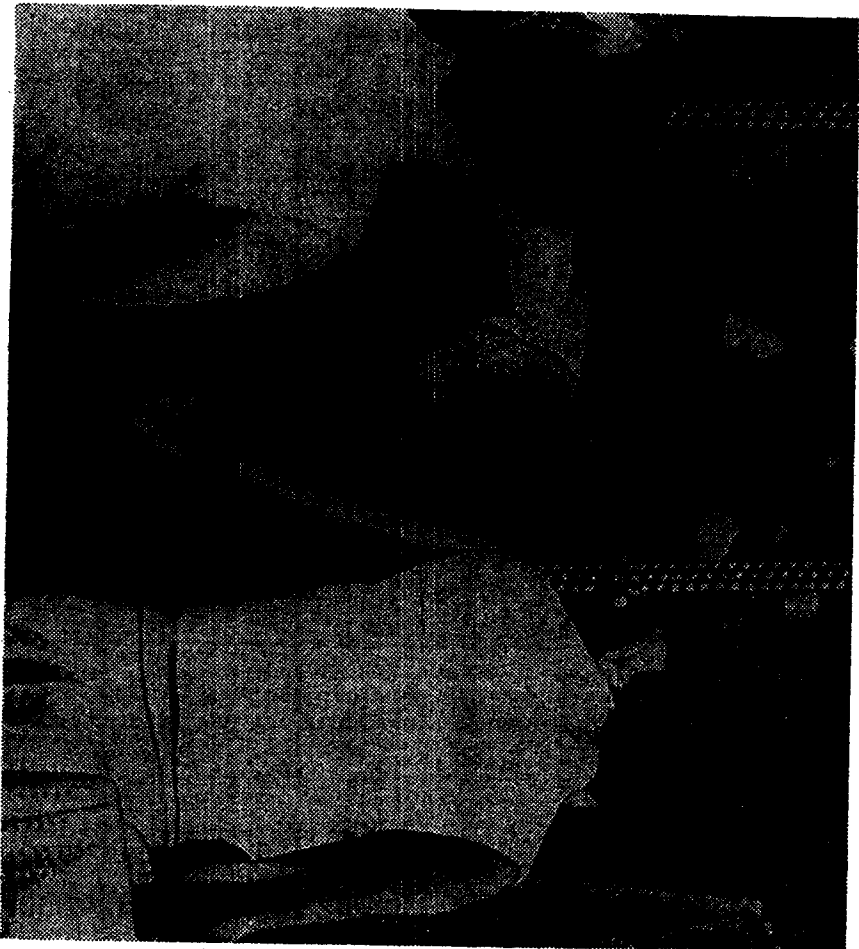
"Quite a few fragments of the bullet were still in the brain," Noguchi said.

Surgeons who operated on Kennedy shortly after the shooting reported they had obtained all but one fragment.

"It is remarkable that the attending physicians were able to remove as many fragments as they did," Noguchi said.

An indication of the force of the 22-caliber bullet, fired at close range, was seen in X-rays showing fragments in the cerebrum, the forepart of the brain that is the seat of thought processes. The pathologist said further study will be needed to determine whether the fragments were bits of bone or bullet.

A second bullet, not a cause of death, was found in the back of the neck just beneath the skin. Noguchi said the bullet entered the right armpit and coursed upward.



Final Tribute to RFK

A mourner leans over to kiss the closed casket holding the remains of Robert F. Kennedy in St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York this morning. A thousand were on hand at dawn

when the church opened and scores of thousands more are expected to file through the church to pay their respects before the day ends.

—AP Photo