

TWENTY-TWO

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Bobby Kennedy Top Leader, Friend Says

By FERREL GUILLORY

When Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was shot, "We lost America," a close personal friend of the senator said in an interview today.

Rafer Johnson, who was with Sen. Kennedy when he was killed and who, along with professional football player Roosevelt Grier, helped subdue the accused assassin Sirhan Sirhan, said he was campaigning for Sen. Kennedy because he thought the senator was the greatest leader in the country today.

JOHNSON IS IN New Orleans to attend the convention of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, which began this morning. For the past two years he has been a sports reporter for the National Broadcasting Comp. in Los Angeles, though he resigned his position when he joined the Kennedy campaign for president.

A soft-spoken man, Johnson requested that he not be asked questions about the assassination itself or about the Ken-

ned family's personal life since then.

Johnson said he personally has done nothing since Sen. Kennedy died. He said he has had a few job interviews but nothing else.

HOWEVER, JOHNSON was very willing to talk about Sen.



—States-Item Photo.
RAFER JOHNSON

Kennedy and about the implications of the assassination.

"No man in political life came close to Sen. Kennedy," declared Johnson.

He said Kennedy was great because he was willing to search for problems and had the courage to try to find solutions for them.

It is important, Johnson said, for the Democratic Party to adopt in its platform the ideals of Sen. Kennedy and, he said, the nominee also should commit

himself to what Kennedy was working for.

Johnson himself is a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. He was elected as a Kennedy delegate.

Now, he said, he is going to the convention uncommitted and will make up his mind for whom he will vote when he gets there.

JOHNSON CONSIDERS the major problem facing the country "closing the gap between the ethnic groups in America." And, he said, Sen. Kennedy would have helped close this gap better than any other man.

How do the Negroes feel about Sen. Kennedy's death, Johnson was asked. "If you lost a friend, what would your reaction be?" he responded.

He said Sen. Kennedy had a genuine concern for all the underprivileged — Negroes, Mexican-Americans, Indians.

Johnson said he did not know any of the future plans of Sen. Edward Kennedy.

Johnson, who is a former Olympic decathlon gold medal winner, also said he does not know if the death of Sen. Kennedy will inspire America to follow his ideals.

"It would be better for him to be here," he said.