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With Sirhan

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reporters who watched the trial of Sirhan Bishara Sirhan on closed circuit television in the courthouse Tuesday complained that the reception was bad and faces were indistinguishable.

"We received better pictures from the moon," was a typical comment in an auxiliary courtroom equipped with three large-screen black-and-white sets.

The sets provides an overview of the courtroom, making it impossible most of the time to tell which attorney was speaking. Reporters debated about the identities of the backs of heads.

The precedent-setting closed circuit system was set up when the Sheriff's Department said it could not accommodate all the newsmen seeking entry to the tiny courtroom where Sirhan is on trial on a charge of murdering Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. About half the reporters covering the trial were relegated to the auxiliary room.

The camera sending pictures from the main courtroom was hidden in an air conditioning unit near the ceiling. Three dark bars across the top of the TV screen appeared to be part of the air conditioner.

The tv sets showed only the front portion of the courtroom—the table at which attorneys and Sirhan sat and the judge's bench. When the jury is seated, it will not be in the field of vision to reporters watching TV.

Newsmen in the TV room are thoroughly searched—just as those in the main courtroom. Judge Herbert V. Walker has ruled that no part of the trial may be recorded or videotaped.

The sound on the closed circuit system worked well. In fact, a few times it provided TV-watching reporters with humorous asides that could not be heard in actual court.

When defense attorneys Russell B. Parsons and Grant B. Cooper entered the courtroom, Parsons surveyed the lineup of chairs and said to Cooper: "You will sit there, I'll sit here and what's-his-name — uh — Sirhan will sit here."

A few minutes later the TV microphones were turned off until the trial began.