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Sirhan Lead

By HARRY F. ROSENTHAL

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES AP - Attorneys for Sirhan Bishara Sirhan expressed apprehension before opening his defense today over whether he will "behave himself" when he takes the witness stand.

"We just don't know how he'll react," said Russell E. Parsons, one of the three defense attorneys. "We don't want to take a chance on him blowing on the stand."

With the prosecution needing but a little time to wind up its case against the 24-year-old Jordanian, charged with murdering Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, Sirhan's lawyers still had not decided on their opening witness.

On the list were the defendant's 55-year-old mother, Mary, and his brothers, Adel, 29, and Munir, 21. Also listed were a boyhood friend from Jordan, Ziad Ashimeh of Chicago, and a man described as being with the United Nations, Sarkees Nahas.

Sirhan has sat quietly and attentively most of the time during the trial, now in its eighth week, but on occasion has risen in anger and tried to interrupt proceedings.

Judge Herbert V. Walker warned him in chambers Wednesday that he would be brought into court in a restraining jacket if necessary.

The state wound up its case Wednesday "to all intents and purposes," but said it would not rest until a few more items were introduced into court records.

The trial resumed today after a one-day recess.

When Sirhan would testify was uncertain. His attorneys are basing his defense on the contention that the killing was "unplanned and undeliberate, impulsive and without premeditation or malice, totally a product of a sick, obsessed mind and personality."

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LOS ANGELES AP - In the pandemonium that followed the mortal wounding of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy last June, his assailant was heard to mutter: "I can explain. Let me explain."

Sirhan Bishara Sirhan will have his chance starting today when his lawyers begin building the defense that the killing was "unplanned and undeliberate, impulsive and without premeditation of malice, totally a product of a sick, obsessed mind and personality."

In California, such a defense is called "diminished responsibility." Sirhan's attorneys do not deny that he killed the New York senator but hope to show that he did not have the mind to "maturely and meaningfully" plan the assassination.

The prosecution called 56 witnesses in nine days of testimony seeking to establish not only that Sirhan killed Kennedy, but that it was premeditated—a necessary element for a first degree murder conviction.

The maximum penalty for first-degree murder in California is death in the gas chamber.

The three lawyers defending the 24-year-old Jordanian have said they will call Sirhan, his mother and two of his four brothers as well as psychologists and psychiatrists. There estimates of the number of witnesses have ranged up to 30.

Court resumes 12:30 p.m., EST

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