

Court Told Sirhan's Behavior Changed After a Fall

By DOUGLAS ROBINSON
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LOS ANGELES, March 7— Defense witnesses at the murder trial of Sirhan Bishara Sirhan testified today that the behavior of the defendant was markedly different after he had received a head injury in a fall from a horse.

"He seemed more emotional and fidgety," said John Strathmann, an instructor in a military academy, who attended Pasadena City College with Sirhan several years ago. "His eyes seemed different, they were kind of glassy. He was always in a hurry."

Mr. Strathmann was one of a number of witnesses called by the defense in an effort to prove that Sirhan's emotional state after the injury was part of the involved process that led to the fatal shooting of Senator Robert F. Kennedy at the Ambassador Hotel last spring.

In his testimony this morning, Mr. Strathmann, a heavily bearded man who had befriended Sirhan during their days in college, said that before the injury that took place in September, 1966, the defendant was "ambitious" in wanting to learn foreign languages and that he was "open-minded" and "eager to learn."

Called Him Depressed

Although he only saw him once or twice after the accident, the witness said, Sirhan seemed "no longer interested in academic matters." He was, Mr. Strathmann said, "impa-

tient and particularly depressed."

Mr. Strathmann's wife, Alice, who also knew Sirhan at college, told the court that after his fall, he "became more brooding." She also said that he had developed a keen interest in occult philosophy following the accident.

"He once told me that there were bodies in the universe that we perhaps could see out of the corners of our eyes and could never seem to bring them into focus," she said. "He told me that 'if you study, you can learn to see them.'"

Foggy on the Track

Millard Sheets, a stocky, suntanned man whose watercolors are known nationally, said that Sirhan was riding his race horse, Jet Speck, at the time of the accident. The defendant, he said, was working as an exercise boy at the Granja Vista del Rio Ranch near Corona, Calif.

"It was a two-horse race and it was foggy on the track," he

said. After the horses passed the owners, they "disappeared into the fog."

"I went down the track," he went on, "and found Sirhan lying next to a fence post under the rail. He was unconscious and his face was messed up with blood and mud. I immediately thought he was badly hurt or dead."

Mr. Sheets said Sirhan began to moan after a few minutes and mumble "quiet prayers."

"I put his head in my lap and he calmed down after a while," the artist said. "The ambulance arrived about 20 minutes later and he was taken away."

Two days later, Mr. sheets continued, "I saw him walking a horse at the ranch and he appeared to be in good condition. I was surprised to see him back because I had had the feeling that the injury was more serious."

Another witness today was John H. Weidner, the owner of a Pasadena health food store where Sirhan worked for about six months before the two men argued and the defendant quit.

Speaking with a heavy Dutch accent, Mr. Weidner testified that Sirhan was always polite with the customers, was always neatly dressed and was honest.

"He would take up to \$1,000 to the bank for me, so I knew he was honest," Mr. Weidner said.

In several arguments with the defendant, however, Mr. Weidner said Sirhan "grew excited, waived his hands and shouted." The storeowner, who while a member of the underground in the Netherlands during World War II helped a number of Jews escape the Nazis, said also that Sirhan had exhibited a dislike of the Jewish people.