

It's a Full-Time Job

The Man Prosecuting

By Kevin Leary

Assistant Attorney General Albert Harris Jr., the dogged and tenacious prosecutor in the Angela Davis trial, sat in his San Francisco office the other day and admitted he was tired.

He had just completed his sixth week of presenting the state's case against Miss Davis, and the strain of the lengthy courtroom drama and the even longer pre-trial investigations showed in his heavily lined face.

"The case has dominated my life for more than a year and a half," said Harris. He first became involved with it in August of 1970, a week after the Marin Civic Center escape attempt which Miss Davis is accused of engineering.

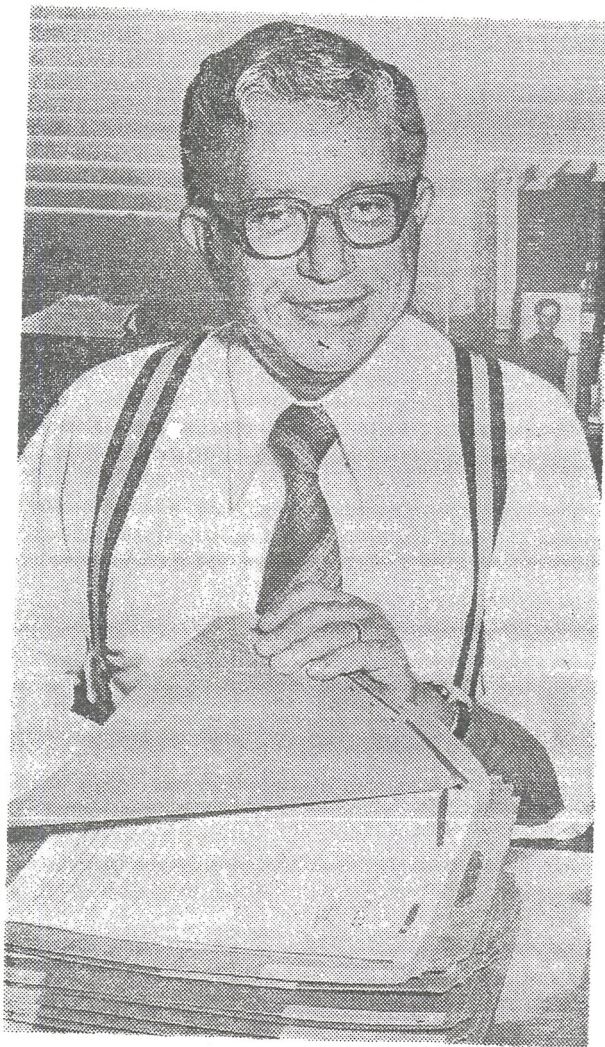
In December of that year he was assigned full charge of the case, and he has been up to his neck in it ever since.

IMAGE

At ease in his office, his sleeves rolled up, surrounded by charts and documents and with a wry smile frequently creasing his ruddy face, Harris, in private, projects a different image than he does as the stern inquisitor of the San Jose courtroom. There, he seems bent on sending Miss Davis to prison for life.

"I have no personal animus towards her," he said, but because of the "enormity" of the Civic Center gun battle in which four were killed, "it became necessary that anyone connected with it be identified."

"I feel a high degree of re-



ALBERT HARRIS JR.
'A high degree of responsibility'

Angela

sponsibility in trying this case," said the 41-year-old prosecutor, noting that the case is under close scrutiny by the press throughout the world.

'FAIR'

"I have tried to handle it in a professional way so as not to reflect any discredit on the attorney general's office or myself."

"It is awfully important that everything be fair and appears fair to the public . . . It makes you feel very conscious of everything you

do in court."

As a result, his presentation of the state's case has been careful and sometimes plodding — his daily victories and setbacks each accepted with poker-faced equanimity.

RESPECT

If his courtroom manner lacks the flair of your TV barrister, his low-keyed competence is respected by his adversaries.

"I have a high respect for him," said Leo Branton Jr., one of Miss Davis' attorneys. "I don't think he has the usual prosecutorial bombast that you find among many. But in his quiet, plodding, intensive and persistent way he is a highly effective prosecutor."

Since most of the regular courtroom observers are ar-

Booing and hissing — indeed any undue sounds from the audience — are strictly forbidden under the strict security and protocol regulations in San Jose, but the hostility is still there, said Harris, and he can feel it.

But it doesn't appear to affect him as he proceeds day by day to build his case of circumstantial evidence.

FIGHT

Although he is relentless in his fight to build the case, Harris noted that "I can't exclude the possibility that I'm wrong."

"But we've been over and over and over the case many times, and I'd be extremely surprised if the defense came up with anything to change my mind.

"We've never interviewed the defendant — maybe she can explain, but if she can, she's got a lot of explaining to do."

JOB

In recent years, Harris' job with the attorney general's office has been primarily supervisory. He is in charge of the criminal law section of the San Francisco office, trials and investigations and the statewide organized crime unit.

But when the Davis case came along, he was assigned to it by former Attorney General Thomas Lynch. Among the reasons for the selection were Harris' extensive experience in court and his successful track record in criminal trials.

CASE

Significantly, Harris' previously most sensational case was the prosecution in 1967 of Los Angeles Deputy Attorney Jack Kirschke, accused in the double murder of his wife and her paramour.

The state's case against Kirschke was circumstantial, there were no witnesses to the crime. After the four-month trial, Harris won a conviction.

Among Harris' other pro-

fessional credentials is the fact that he has pleaded seven cases before the United States Supreme Court.

Harris' legal career has been marked by success since he graduated second in his class from Boalt Hall at the University of California Law School in 1954.

He had been graduated from UC Berkeley in 1951 and drifted rather casually into law school.

"I was an economics major, and I really had no particular interest in law," he said. "I didn't like to debate and I never knew a lawyer or a judge."

"But while a college degree was nice to have, it really didn't mean much, so law school seemed like a pretty good idea.

FAMILY

"I did better than I thought I would and enjoyed it — it was the first time in my education that I found teachers who were really interested in their trade."

After a two-year stint in

the Army, Harris joined the attorney general's office, where he has been ever since.

He and his wife Ursula live in Marin county with their three children: Joanne, 14, Stephen, 12, and John, 10.

From Sunday night to Thursday night Harris lives in San Jose — "We work night and day on the case; all we do is work, eat and sleep, nothing else."

On weekends he goes home where he reads, swims, plays with his kids and generally tries to become a family man for a couple of days before resuming his role as prosecutor.

dently pro-Angela, Harris has been cast in the role of the heavy since the beginning. It's a role he doesn't like, but one he has to live with.

During the pre-trial hearings in Marin county, he was ritually hissed at every day as he entered the courtroom, and each day he acknowledged the greeting with a rueful grin.

One day he responded to the hisses with an upraised clenched fist — the black power salute. Although it didn't win over anyone to his side, it broke up the courtroom and earned him a solid round of applause.