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Kennedy 3rd Lead

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LOS ANGELES AP - Sen. Robert F. Kennedy brother of the assassinated president John F. Kennedy, was shot in the head twice early today by a gunman whose bullets turned a scene of political triumph into one of shock and confusion.

Three others also were wounded.

The apparent gunman was captured.

Frank Mankiewicz, his press secretary, said Kennedy's condition was "stable."

"He is breathing well and has a good heart," he told newsmen. "I do not think he is conscious."

He said Kennedy was shot in the forehead and near the right ear.

A curly haired man, about 25 and of Latin appearance, was seized immediately as he brandished a small pistol.

The shooting occurred as Kennedy finished a victory speech after surging ahead of Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy in the California Democratic presidential primary.

Kennedy's wife, Ethel, was at his side during his victory talk. He mentioned his dog Freckles and said the pet had been mangled during the campaign.

Kennedy then waved to his supporters and was ushered backstage through a kitchen passageway enroute to a room where he was to hold a news conference.

Four or five pistol shots rang out.

Rafer Johnson, the Olympic decathlon champion, said that one shot went through the senator's neck and wounded another man.

Johnson was credited with capturing the apparent gunman, pinning him against a dishrack in the passageway to the hotel kitchen.

The man arrested as the suspected assailant was hurried through the Ambassador Hotel lobby amid a crowd screaming at news of the shooting.

Word of the shooting spread through McCarthy's election headquarters at the Beverly Hilton Hotel, and silenced a noisy election night crowd there.

McCarthy had retired when the shooting occurred. He was awakened, went to the ballroom of his hotel, and asked the crowd there to join him in a moment of silent prayer.

President Johnson also was advised of the shooting.

The shooting occurred as Kennedy was being ushered offstage after delivering his victory statement on the primary election.

An unidentified doctor treated Kennedy at the scene. He said the senator was conscious and talking at that time.

Edward Minasion, a hotel employe, said he saw the assailant with a snub nose revolver fire at Kennedy from four or five feet away. Minasion said the gunman had to reach around other people to fire the weapon, and others were hit as well.

The witnesses said after the shots were fired the man shouted:

"Let me explain. I can explain."

Stephen Smith, Kennedy's brother-in-law and campaign manager, also was reported wounded but later said this was incorrect.

The American Broadcasting Co. said William Wiesel, its unit manager, was wounded in the hand.



Kennedy was taken by ambulance to Central Receiving Hospital.

The Rev. Thomas Peacha said he administered the last rites of the church to Kennedy in the emergency room.

The priest said Kennedy appeared unconscious.

After emergency treatment, Kennedy was transferred to Good Samaritan Hospital, carried on a stretcher, covered by a gray hospital blanket.

Police said the man in custody was about 25 years old, 5 feet, 5 inches tall, weighing 135 pounds and clad in blue jeans.

President John Kennedy died of a shot in the head while on a visit to Dallas, Texas.

A priest who was at the hotel celebration said he attempted to administer last rites there, but the crush of people prevented it.

"I gave him the rosary and he clutched it tightly before I was pushed away by the crowd," he said. "There was blood on his head."

Marcus McBroom said Kennedy looked a little anxious and seemed to be searching for his wife as he headed backstage after his victory statement.

"Then the shots rang out, four or five of them, and he slumped," McBroom said.

He quoted the gunman as crying: "I did it for my country. I love my country."

About 200 people were crowded into the kitchen passageway at the time of the shooting.

As the suspect was hastened through the hotel lobby with a police shotgun at his back, there were cries of: "Lynch him, lynch him."

Some in the crowd tried to grab the man.

Five doctors were said to have treated Kennedy at the hotel.

Brooker Griffin, who described himself as a member of the Kennedy campaign team, said he saw Ethel Kennedy bend over and talk with her husband after the shooting.

He said Ethel cradled her husband's head much as Jacqueline Kennedy held the head of her assassinated husband, President John F. Kennedy in Dallas on Nov. 21, 1963.

In the ornate lobby of the Ambassador, people wept openly, some hysterically.

The Embassy Room, in which the celebration had been held, was sealed off by police.

An associate who saw Kennedy briefly at the hospital, said he had seen a bandage on the abdomen near the belt line, but Mankiewicz said the doctors had not told him of such a wound.

Los Angeles police posted heavy security and used physical force to keep reporters from entering either hospital.

Mankiewicz said Kennedy had received "no threats I know of" in recent days preceding the shooting.

He said a regional labor leader, Paul Shrade, whom Kennedy had thanked moments before the shooting for his help in the California primary, also was wounded but not seriously.

A fourth person, identified by friends as Irwin Stroll, 17 of Los Angeles, also was said to have been wounded, but not seriously.

END LEAD

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