

Suspect's Father Shaken and Angry

El Taiyiba,
Israel-occupied Jordan

Bishara Sirhan's hands trembled as he talked about his son, Sirhan Sirhan, the accused assailant of Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

"He was an excellent student," Sirhan said. "We have five boys and he was the best of all of them at school. He was such an intelligent boy I had no worries about him. I was sure he would do well."

Sirhan's memories of his sons are memories of ten years ago, when he last saw them and their mother. Bishara and Mary Sirhan separated in 1957 in New York and have not seen each other since.

NEWS

Sirhan, who lives alone in a two-story stone house in this hillside village on the occupied West Bank of the Jordan river, first heard the news of the shooting over the radio.

But it was not until a reporter came to his house yesterday morning that he learned that his son had been arrested for the shooting.

At first, he just shook his head at the news. Then he said in a soft voice: "I'm deeply sorry for both of them, for my son and for Mr. Kennedy. I admire the Kennedy family very much. I prayed that Robert Kennedy would be elected President so he could do many of the good things for the world that his brother did."

ANGER

As he talked on, Sirhan dwelled on the tragedy of the shooting rather than on the situation of his son. He became angry as he talked and



UPI Telephoto

BISHARA SIRHAN

'... let them hang him'

finally said: "This news made me sick when I heard it today. If my son has done this dirty thing, then let them hang him."

Sirhan Sirhan was the fourth of five boys born to the Sirhans in Jerusalem, where the father was for 23 years the senior Arab officer in charge of the city water supply under the British mandate rule.

When their fourth son was born, the Sirhans were living in a small house in the Armenian quarter of the old, walled city. They were Greek Orthodox Christians.

Sirhan, along with his brothers, studied in a small school run by the Lutheran Church of the Savior inside the walled city. Like everyone else in Jerusalem, their lives were interrupted by the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, and they moved repeatedly after

that though always within the Arab sector of Jerusalem.

PLUMBER

After the British left Palestine, Sirhan took a job as a plumber for the Jordanian authorities who assumed control of Jerusalem on the west bank. Until 1957, when, in his words, "there was trouble between me and my wife."

In 1957 the family's economic situation deteriorated and the elder Sirhan, together with his wife and five sons, emigrated to the United States. The sons are Sharif, 36; Adel, 30; Munir, 26; Saed-Allah, 25; and Sirhan, 24.

Sirhan, the father, did not adjust to life in the United States and apparently there also was friction in the family. Thus, in 1960, he left them and returned to Palestine. He has not seen them since.

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