

Huge Throng

HOMAGE TO KENNEDY

San Francisco

★★★★

SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 1968

★★★★
FINAL

Chronicle

Huge Crowd

---Assassin

at Kennedy Bier Suspect Indicted

Tight Security For Sirhan

United Press

Los Angeles

Sirhan Bishara Sirhan was indicted for the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy and later arraigned under super-security precautions in a jail chapel.

If convicted, the 24-year-old native of Jordan could be executed in the state gas chamber.

The first degree murder indictment was voted by the Los Angeles county grand jury after it heard testimony from 22 witnesses at a day-long hearing. Sirhan also was indicted on five counts of assault with intent to commit murder.

Kennedy was felled in a barrage of bullets that also left five other persons wounded.

For Sirhan, the arraignment was his first public appearance since he was seized in a wild melee in the Ambassador Hotel.

CHAPEL

He was brought into the third floor chapel in a wheelchair. He had a bandage on his left ankle, which was sprained during his capture. He wore a white shirt, blue jail trousers and black cotton slippers.

At 5 foot 3, slender, dark-eyed Sirhan was dwarfed by the officers escorting him into the courtroom. His face was clean shaven but his black, bushy hair was unkempt.

He told the court he couldn't afford an attorney, and the public defender was formally assigned to handle his case. Sirhan's next court proceeding was set for June 28 when he will be asked to enter a plea to the indictment.

As 200 newsmen and officers crowded into the chapel, Sirhan's wheelchair was pushed up to the altar. He then got out of the chair, walked up two steps and sat in a chair for the half-hour proceeding.

SECURITY

Security was so tight that presiding Superior Court Judge Arthur L. Alarcon was searched and many officers, including a police captain, had to surrender their pistols. All newsmen were frisked before entering the chapel. No cameras or recording equipment were permitted.

Sirhan's chair was placed so that his back was to the crowd. Massed behind him were four burly sheriff's deputies, making it impossible

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for anyone to shoot or attack him.

When he was wheeled into the room, Sirhan looked curiously at the newsmen. He tapped a foot during the proceedings but showed little emotion or concern for his ankle and left index finger on which he wore a splint.

DEFENDANT

When Judge Alarcon read his name, Sirhan corrected the pronunciation. Alarcon called him "SIR-han" and the defendant said he was "Sir-HAN."

When asked if he had money for counsel, Sirhan replied, "no sir."

The lengthy indictment was read count by count by Deputy District Attorney John Howard and the jurist appointed two psychiatrists to examine Sirhan at the request of the public defender.

When a representative of the American Civil Liberties Union said Sirhan wanted to be represented by counsel other than the public defender the judge said this was not the proper time to consider the request.

Alarcon presided from the marble-topped altar flanked by a United States flag on the left and a California flag on the right. Two hooks were visible on the wall behind the altar where the cross had been taken down.

PROCEEDINGS

In opening the proceedings, Alarcon said:

"Department 100 of Superior Court is now in session. The record will show that Department 100 of Superior Court is sitting at this time in temporary courtroom provided by the sheriff because of the defendant's present physical condition and to avoid the possibility that any incident might occur that would deny the defendant the right to a fair trial.

When Sirhan was asked by the jurist if the arrangements were agreeable to him, he replied in a firm voice, "Yes, sir."

The grand jury heard testimony that Sirhan loitered in a corridor of the Ambassador hotel at least half an hour before Kennedy was shot there.

After appearing before the Grand Jury, Jesus Perez, a dishwasher at the Ambassador hotel, told newsmen that a man he identified as Sirhan had lingered in the pantry corridor nervously shuffling papers, and had asked him "three or four times" if Kennedy would be going through the corridor.

FIRED

Perez said he himself was shaking hands with the Senator at the moment the bullets struck him.

He did not see the shots

fired, he said, and in the crush their sound was so drowned out that he realized something had happened only when Kennedy's hand suddenly pulled from his grasp and the victim slumped to the floor.

Another witness, Henry Carreon, told reporters that he had encountered Sirhan at a shooting range in San Gabriel, a suburb adjoining Pasadena, Tuesday afternoon.

He said Sirhan attracted his notice and that they had had a conversation because of Sirhan's rapid-fire shooting, which was against range rules. Sirhan, the witness said, was firing a .22-caliber revolver — the same type of weapon that felled Kennedy.

The witness list included seven police officers, four hotel employees, eight ambulance attendants, two doctors who treated the Senator, County Coroner Thomas Noguchi, one casual acquaintance of Sirhan, one friend of the Senator and two other casualties in the shooting.

The Senator's friend was Paul Ziffren, who is a Los Angeles lawyer and a former Democratic national committeeman.

ROLES

Former Olympic decathlon champion Rafer Johnson and professional football player Roosevelt Grier — credited with major roles in Sirhan's capture — were excused from testifying because they were in New York for final rites for the Senator.

Two of the five persons injured in the burst of gunfire that felled the Senator were among the witnesses before the jury.

They were Irwin Stroll, 17, who was brought to the hearing on a hospital-type roller bed, and Ira Goldstein, 19, a radio newsman. Both suffered leg wounds but Goldstein was released from a hospital Thursday and was capable of walking without assistance.