

# His Doctor Knew Bobby Couldn't Live

BOSTON — (UPI) — Robert Kennedy's brain waves stopped and he was medically dead seven hours before his heart ceased to beat, a prominent neurosurgeon reported. Even had he lived, the senator's intellectual faculties would not have functioned.

Dr. James L. Poppen said he knew immediately when he saw Kennedy at 10 a.m. Wednesday the senator would not pull through.

Even if Kennedy had survived, Poppen said, his life would have been a "grave and devastating existence."

## PARALYZED

He said Kennedy's right side would have been paralyzed, he would not have been able to see things to his left and he would have suffered a "Parkinson's disease type" of facial disorder.

Poppen, 65, said at a news conference at Lahey Clinic that Kennedy "would not

have been the same man — not the individual who his family knew."

Poppen said Kennedy's electrical brain waves stopped at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, about 18 hours after the shooting, and never started again although his heart continued to beat. He said the senator was legally and medically dead when the brain waves ceased.

He said if the .22-caliber bullet which hit Kennedy had been one inch lower the Senator would have been killed outright.

## TRACES PATH

Using two half skulls to demonstrate, Poppen traced the path of the bullet with his index finger from where it

entered at the mastoid bone behind the right ear, proceeded to the temporal bone and fragmented through the pons (midbrain) and cerebellum.

The pons, which is connected to the brain stem, controls respiration and other bodily functions.

"This is where we live," Poppen said. "This was an overwhelming, irreversible damage to the pons."

Poppen, who practices at the Lahey Clinic and the New England Deaconess Hospital, among others, said he had known the Kennedys since the 1940s. He said Pierre Salinger called him about 4 a.m. Wednesday and asked, "Can you come? Can you get ready immediately? The Kennedy family needs you."

Poppen said he received telephone calls immediately afterward from the White House and from Vice Presi-

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# Brain Died Long Before His Heart

—From Page 1 which is pretty serious business.”

dent Humphrey, who arranged his transportation.

Poppen acted as a consultant to the operating surgeons and as a liaison between them and the Kennedy family.

He said Ethel Kennedy told him that while her husband was lying on the floor at the Ambassador Hotel he requested a glass of water and asked, "How bad is it?"

Poppen said Kennedy was a "dead man" from the moment he was hit. He soon lapsed into a coma and never recovered. Poppen added, however, that "destruction was not complete from the moment of impact."

The doctor said Kennedy still had reflexes in both eyes, arms and legs, but "the eye pupils were wide and did not react to light,

which is pretty serious business."

## BLOOD CLOT

Poppen said the operation was intended to explore for a possible blood clot in the cerebellum rather than to remove bullet fragments.

He confirmed earlier reports that Kennedy died of massive hemorrhage.

Asked if a .22 caliber bullet wound usually was fatal, Poppen replied, "You can kill an elephant with a .22 if you hit the right spot, and it hit the right spot."

A native of Denton, Mich., Poppen treated the late President Kennedy and Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), the last of the four Kennedy sons, when he was near death from a 1964 plane crash in which he suffered a broken back.