

3-Week Delay Given Sirhan Prior to Plea

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, the slender Jordanian accused of assassinating Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, has been granted a three-week delay in entering a plea to give his attorney more time to study the case.

Superior Court Judge Richard Schauer, standing in a jail chapel that served as a courtroom, postponed yesterday the 24-year-old immigrant's plea of guilty or not guilty to July 19.

VETERAN CRIMINAL lawyer Russell E. Parsons, who took over Sirhan's defense 10 days ago at the accused's request and without fee, said he had had only "limited time" to study the transcript of grand jury testimony.

Parsons told newsmen later that Sirhan's mother Mary would visit him Monday for the first time since his arrest. The family lives in suburban Pasadena.

The 5-foot-2 Sirhan, clad in a light blue shirt, tight black pants and polished black loafers, walked into the hearing room erect and expressionless. Three times he politely answered the judge, "Yes, sir," in a calm, low voice amplified by a loudspeaker.

ABOUT 175 newsmen and others attended the nine-minute hearing in the Los Angeles County Central Jail's third-floor chapel—a large, oblong room with oak pews facing a platform at one end. No cameras or recorders were allowed in the room during the hearing. Everyone was searched twice.

Adel Sirhan, 29, one of the defendant's four brothers, sat among front-row spectators. For Adel's protection he was escorted by several police detectives.

The indictment charges one count of murder and—for the wounding of five bystanders in the volley that fatally injured Kennedy—five counts of assault with intent to commit murder.

YOUR NAME is Sirhan Bishara Sirhan?" the judge asked.

"Yes, sir."

Judge: "Is your client ready to plea, Mr. Parsons?"

Parsons, graying, 69, wearing a rumpled black suit: "No. Because of the limited time I have had, I request a recess of three weeks."

Parsons asked that Sirhan receive a general psychiatric examination "as expeditiously as can be done."

In granting the postponement, Judge Schauer said this "comes dangerously close" to the end of the 60 days in which by law, Sirhan must be brought to trial or the indictment dismissed. He asked: "Mr. Sirhan, do you give up your right to go to trial in a 60-day period and agree to go to trial at a later date?"

"Yes, sir, I do," Sirhan said.

REPORTERS' QUESTIONING of Parsons included:

Does Sirhan understand the nature and consequences of his alleged act?

"I cannot say . . . there may be grave doubts about that." He has indicated he might try to prove brain damage to Sirhan in a fall from a horse. If he can prove such evidence, could this lead to a reduction of the charge from first- to second-degree murder?

Parsons admitted this possibility, saying that the prosecution must prove "specific intent" to get a first-degree conviction.

"I've been interested in insanity all my life," the lawyer said.

N. O. STATES-ITEM

ADJ- 29 JUN 68