

Sirhan and Mother Take Stand at Trial

By DOUGLAS E. KNEELAND
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LOS ANGELES, Feb. 4—Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, erect and neat in a gray suit and blue buttondown shirt, took the witness stand today for the first time in his trial for the murder of Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

As he stood to be sworn "to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth," the short, slight Jordanian immigrant clenched his right hand into a tight fist.

But his manner was calm, and his voice was firm and resonant in the muted eighth

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floor court room at the Hall of Justice as he replied: "I do."

The 24-year-old defendant and his mother, Mrs. Mary Sirhan, who followed him on the stand, had been called to testify on a defense motion that the first-degree murder indictment be set aside because the grand jury did not represent a broad cross-section of the community.

Two of the principal arguments by Grant B. Cooper, chief defense counsel, were that young adults and poor people were regularly excluded from the panels from which the county's 23-member grand juries are drawn.

Mrs. Sirhan and her son were put on the stand to show that they were from the lower economic class, which, the defense contended, was not represented on the grand jury that indicted Sirhan.

As Sirhan's mother, thin and gray, her dark face set against tears, left the stand, she said in her soft, accented English:

"I thank God He give me strength and I thank the United States also that I never go hungry and I have a roof over my head."

While she was speaking, her son leaned forward at the defense table, his eyes fixed on her strained face as they had been throughout her testimony.

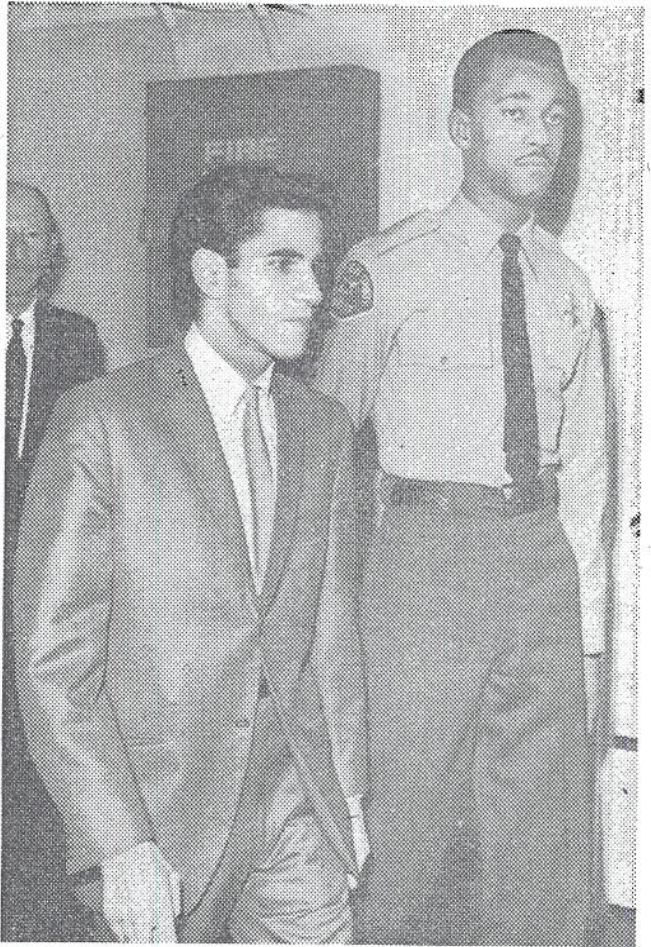
Motion Is Denied

After Mrs. Sirhan left the stand, Superior Court Judge Herbert V. Walker, who is presiding at the trial, recessed the proceedings until this afternoon.

Returning to the courtroom after the recess, Judge Walker immediately denied the defense motion on the ground that it was "irrelevant."

He then recessed court until tomorrow, when the selection of six alternate jurors will begin. None of the main body of 12 jurors, who have been seated but not yet sworn in, was present today.

Most observers at the Hall of Justice expect that the selection of the alternate jurors



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Sirhan B. Sirhan entering the courtroom in Los Angeles yesterday in the custody of a deputy sheriff. At left rear is one of his attorneys, Emile Zola Berman of New York.

will take up the rest of the week, thus delaying until Monday at the earliest the prosecution's opening arguments.

In court this morning, Sirhan sat quietly as Dr. Raymond A. Schultz, a professor at Long Beach State College, testified about a study that he and his brother, Dr. Robert Schultz of the University of Southern California, had made of questionnaires returned over the weekend by most of the Superior Court judges in Los Angeles County.

In California, grand jurors are selected from panels nom-

inated by the judges. The defense sought to show that the method of nomination tended to exclude racial minorities, the poor, the uneducated and the young.

The judges had been asked to submit written answers to questions on these points or testify in court. Only three judges appeared in person, all last Thursday before the trial was recessed for four days.

Testifying for the defense, Dr. Schultz indicated that an analysis of the judge's questionnaires had shown that the defense was right in contending

that Negroes, Mexican-Americans, young adults, the poor and the uneducated were not widely represented on the grand jury panels.

Shortly after a morning recess, Mr. Cooper called out in a loud voice:

"Sirhan, will you please take the stand."

Escorted by two sheriff's deputies, one white and in uniform, the other a tall Negro in plain clothes, the young defendant walked briskly to the stand.

His testimony was limited to his earnings. As Mr. Cooper showed him income tax statements from 1964 to 1968 to identify, Sirhan leaned over them intently. Each time he was asked whether he recognized a tax form, he replied eagerly: "Yes, Sir, I do."

The tax forms recorded net income from a variety of minor jobs as \$1,437 in 1964, \$984.90 in 1965, \$2,212.46 in 1966, \$430.96 in 1967 and \$752.35 in 1968.

Sirhan Cross-Examined

In cross-examination, Lynn D. Compton, chief deputy district attorney, questioned whether Sirhan's low income constituted poverty.

He elicited from Sirhan that the defendant would not be 25 years old until next month, that he had lived with his mother during the years in question and that he had been a student in 1964 and 1965.

Sirhan answered his questions briefly and politely, seldom neglecting to add, "Sir." A slight smile played nervously at the corners of his mouth.

When Mrs. Sirhan took the stand, she sat stiff and solemn, agreeing as Mr. Cooper read tax records that she had earned between \$1,471 and \$1,752 in net annual income since 1958 at the Westminster Nursery in Pasadena. She had worked there since shortly after the family's arrival in this country from Jordan in 1957.

Two other sons who lived at home, Munir, now 21, and Adel, 30, had earned, respectively, a maximum net income of \$2,698 and \$5,559, she testified.

Asked by Mr. Cooper about each of her sons in turn, Mrs. Sirhan shook her head slightly and replied that they had not paid room or board. Questioned as to whether Sirhan had ever given her money, she said:

"If I needed it . . . very little."

The same, she added, had been true of the others.

As court was recessed after her testimony and her brief speech before leaving the witness stand, tears welled in her dark eyes.

"I was glad to make a home for my children," she said