

# Author Says Sirhan Appeared 'Peaceful' and 'Purged' Amid Commotion at Scene of Kennedy Shooting

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LOS ANGELES, Feb. 19—George Plimpton, the author, recalled today that in the minutes after Sirhan Bishara Sirhan had shot Senator Robert F. Kennedy, the young Jordanian had seemed "peaceful" and "purged."

Testifying at the first-degree murder trial of the slight, dark 24-year-old defendant, Mr. Plimpton told, as a number of early witnesses have, of the struggle to subdue Sirhan and take away his gun after the assassination at the Ambassador Hotel last June 5.

Mr. Plimpton, the author of "The Paper Lion" and other books, was a Kennedy supporter and had accompanied the Senator to the Embassy ballroom that night to celebrate a victory over Senator Eugene J. McCarthy in the California Democratic primary.

A tall man, dressed in a gray suit and blue and white striped shirt, Mr. Plimpton spoke thoughtfully under cross-examination by Emile Zola Berman, a defense counsel, about the moments after midnight in which the Senator was shot.

Mr. Berman read from a deposition taken earlier from Mr. Plimpton, reminding him that

he had said of Sirhan at the time:

"I can tell you all about his eyes. They were dark brown and enormously peaceful."

Questioned by Mr. Berman as to what he meant by his description of the defendant's eyes shortly after Sirhan had been overwhelmed by Mr. Kennedy's friends in the serving pantry of the hotel, Mr. Plimpton said:

"He struck me, as compared to the rest of us, in the circle around me, as enormously composed. The rest of us, given this sudden tragedy, were not composed. In the midst of this hurricane of sound and feeling, he seemed almost the eye of the storm. He seemed composed and peaceful, the peaceful eye of the storm. He seemed purged."

Mr. Berman also reminded Mr. Plimpton that in his earlier deposition he had said of Sirhan:

"He was very strong for a small man."

Inquiring about taking the gun from Sirhan, who is about 5 feet 3 inches tall and weighs about 115 pounds, Mr. Berman asked:

"Was it an easy task?"  
"No, because there were so many hands and his finger was



Associated Press  
**Claudia Williams arriving at trial of Sirhan B. Sirhan in Los Angeles yesterday.**

that he was very strong for a small man."

Mr. Plimpton then agreed: "Yes, there was strength involved."

Although the defense has pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder, it has conceded that Sirhan fired the gun that killed Senator Kennedy. Defense attorneys have said they will attempt to prove "diminished capacity," which is permitted in this state, to try to show that the defendant could not have given the rational and mature consideration to his act that is necessary for a first-degree conviction.

Also taking the stand this afternoon was Paul Schrade, a regional director for the United Auto Workers, who was one of five other persons wounded at the time Senator Kennedy was shot.

Mr. Schrade, a Kennedy supporter in the primary, was struck in the head by a bullet and was the most seriously wounded of the five.

Appearing today in a brown suit and yellow shirt, his dark beard neatly trimmed, Mr. Schrade described the scene in the serving pantry before he lost consciousness.

"All hell broke loose. I heard crackling, like an electrical storm. I heard the shots. I felt I was shaking violently all

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over and I thought we were all being electrocuted.

"The only impression I had was the crackling of flashes—I was shaking and falling and that's all I knew until I regained consciousness later."

#### Practices at Gun Range

Earlier a series of prosecution witnesses pictured Sirhan as having spent hours on a gun range practicing rapid-fire shooting with his .22-caliber Iyer Johnson revolver, shortly before he shot Senator Kennedy.

They described how they had seen and talked with the young Jordanian at the San Gabriel Valley Gun Club range in Duarte on June 4, the day of the primary election.

Two of the witnesses, a young housewife and a youth, told of having swapped weapons briefly with Sirhan, taking a few shots at targets with the revolver the defense concedes Sirhan used to shoot Senator Kennedy.

On the stand in the crowded, 75-seat courtroom in the Hall of Justice, Michael A. Saccoman, a self-assured young man in a tartan sport jacket, told of having struck up a conversation with Sirhan during the afternoon at the range.

David N. Fitts, a deputy dis-

trict attorney, asked Mr. Saccoman at one point:

"Now, did you ever discuss with Mr. Sirhan anything about hunting?"

"To the best of my recollection I was telling him that you couldn't use a pistol for hunting," Mr. Saccoman said softly, "and I told him because of the [lack of] accuracy of the gun you weren't allowed to use it, at least that was to my knowledge."

Preceding Mr. Saccoman on the stand was Mrs. Claudia Williams, whose husband, Ronald, also testified today.

#### Defendant Held Good Shot

While her husband had been on the rifle range nearby, she recalled, she had gone to the pistol range to try out for the first time a gun she had been given for Christmas.

When she had trouble firing it, Mrs. Williams said, she asked Sirhan for help and he assisted her, later exchanging guns with her for a few shots.

Mr. Williams, who said he had joined his wife and Sirhan shortly before the range closed, agreed with her that the defendant had seemed to be a good shot.

David Montellano, who with a friend, Henry A. Carreon, who testified yesterday, had m-

said that in his opinion Sirhan was not a very good shot. Mr. Carreon had said the same yesterday.

He said he also had noticed that Sirhan had some mini-mag ammunition.

"Did you have some conversation with the defendant about the mini-mag ammunition?" Mr. Fitts asked.

"I believe I did," he replied.

"I believe I said it was a little more costly than long rifle."

"Did he have anything else to say about it?" Mr. Fitts inquired.

"Just upon impact, what it might do," Mr. Montellano said.

"Pardon me?" the prosecutor said.

"Just on impact, you know, how it spreads," Mr. Montellano went on.