

Sirhan Wouldn't Reveal His Name

LOS ANGELES (AP) — They talked about everything that morning except Robert F. Kennedy whose life was ebbing. While the nation reeled with the news that another Kennedy had been shot, his assassin bantered amiably with police.

But he wouldn't give his name. He seemed to delight in being called John Doe, Joe Incommunicado, Jesse Incommunicado.

Not until hours later did police learn that the sallow, skinny, olive-skinned youth in their custody was Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, 24, a Jordanian Arab.

Tape recordings of Sirhan's conversations in police interrogation rooms during the hours immediately after the death gun was wrested from his hand were played yesterday for the jury trying him for murder.

How was he being treated? Sirhan was asked at one point. "Fine," he said. "I was lavished with your company, sir . . . I would say I was the most merrily entertained of anyone in this whole building."

"You're sort of the star of the show," said Sgt. William C. Jordan, now lieutenant, the watch commander.

"Better take acting, huh?" Sirhan said.

The jury will hear more tapes Monday when court reconvenes after a three-day recess, called to allow defense attorneys to attend a lawyers' conference.

In the early tapes, Sirhan's voice sounded slurred, often unintelligible. The defense has contended he was intoxicated. As the night wore on, he sounded far more relaxed and seemed to enjoy the officers' roundabout ways of trying to win his confidence.

The interesting part of his job, the interrogator said, is "to find out who John Doe is."

Said Sirhan: "Really, you know that's beautiful, beauti-

ful. Maybe we should keep it that way."

"You're just matching wits with us."

"You know there's a horse named that," said Sirhan.

"What?"

"Matching Wits."

Another time Jordan asked "Do you have any objection to telling us what you've done in your illustrious past — I mean what kind of work you indulged in?"

"Beautiful, beautiful," said Sirhan.

And so the conversation

went in the tapes introduced by the prosecution — casual sparring, some laughter, innocuous discussions, not mentioning Kennedy or shooting or the events at the Ambassador Hotel — through the dawning hours.

Not once did Sirhan ask what he was charged with. But he worried about his ill-fitting clothes when it neared time for his arraignment.

"You look very presentable compared to when I first saw you," said Jordan. "You're clean, you're neat, your eyes are clear."

And soon after, appearing before a woman judge for arraignment, Sirhan says he learned for the first time that he was accused of shooting six people, including Sen. Robert F. Kennedy who died the next morning.