

# PROTECTING SIRHAN SIRHAN, Robert Kennedy's Killer

## Part 4

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### PREVENTING A SNIPER

Sheriff Pitchess was concerned that a sniper could fire a rifle from across the street and kill Sirhan. In order to prevent this from happening, all of the windows in the Module 1310 area were covered with  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch steel plates. Because of this, there were no windows to look out at the outside world.

In the corridor where Sirhan was escorted from his cell to the courtroom, all of the windows were also covered with  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch steel plates. The difference with these windows was that the steel plates were mounted four inches from the window frame, which allowed light to enter the corridor during daylight hours.

### DEFENSE ATTORNEYS

When Sirhan's attorneys visited him each morning to discuss what was to take place in court that day, the deputy would sit outside the cell and the attorneys would sit in the cell with him. The deputy was close enough to hear everything that was discussed. Each day, his attorneys coached Sirhan on what to remember and what to forget that was going to be discussed in court that day. They also told him what things not to mention and how to present himself.



Steel plates covering the windows to prevent a sniper from shooting Sirhan as he was escorted to court

Anything that was brought into the jail for Sirhan was thoroughly searched. Magazines and books were searched page by page. Everything was checked very extensively.

### DEFENSE PSYCHIATRIST

The defense attorneys scheduled a psychiatrist to examine Sirhan in his cell. As this was taking place, Deputy Paul Harman was the security deputy who was sitting right outside of Sirhan's cell. The psychiatrist pricked Sirhan's hands with needles. He also hypnotized Sirhan and led him through the entire assassination. During the hypnosis, the psychiatrist told Sirhan, "You're entering the Ambassador Hotel; what are you doing?"

Sirhan said, "I'm looking for a place to hide where I can surprise Kennedy."

The psychiatrist then asked, "Where did you go?"

Sirhan: "I went in the kitchen."

"What are you doing in the kitchen?"

"I'm waiting."

"Kennedy's coming through the door; what are you doing now?"

"I'm looking at him." At the same time Sirhan was saying this, he reached for his waistband as though he was retrieving the gun.

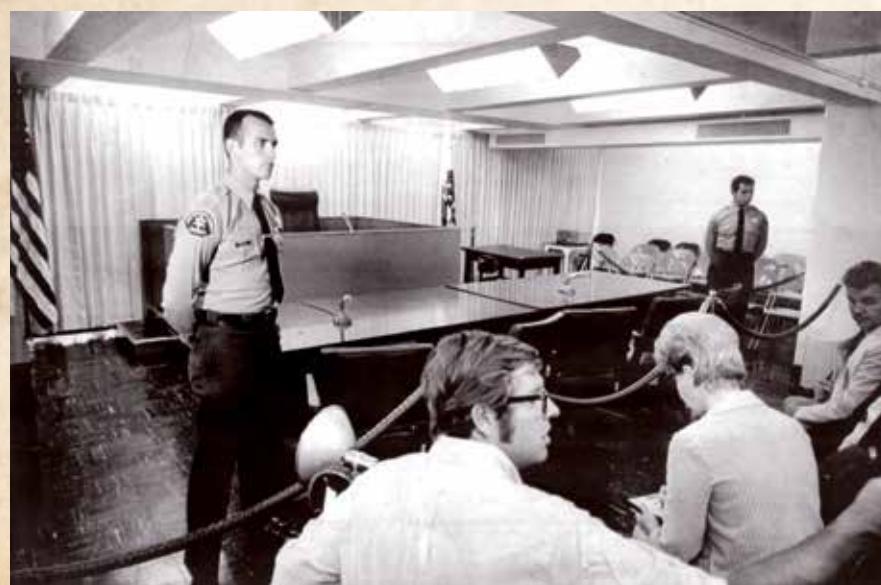
The psychiatrist said, "He's coming at you."

Sirhan brought his hand up as though he drew the gun from his waistband and pointed his arm as though he was firing a gun. Then he began rapidly pulling his finger back as though he was pulling the trigger over and over again. He continued to fire the make-believe gun even after it would have run out of ammo. When the psychiatrist brought Sirhan out of hypnosis, Deputy Harman sat there stunned at what he had just witnessed. There was no doubt in his mind that Sirhan had done the killing.

### COURT

For security reasons, a makeshift courtroom was set up in the Jail briefing room on the 13th floor, just 60 feet from the entrance to Sirhan's cell. Sirhan entered his plea of "not guilty" in this temporary courtroom. His trial was held in a permanent courtroom on the eighth floor of the Hall of Justice.

When Sirhan was scheduled to appear in court, security team deputies escorted him to the elevator, where another group of deputies joined them. All of the deputies stepped onto the elevator with Sirhan and rode it down to the eighth floor. As they exited the elevator, they were met by



The makeshift courtroom set up in the HOJJ briefing room for Sirhan's arraignment

deputies from the Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB), who escorted Sirhan from there to the courtroom lockup.

Sirhan's trial began in February 1969. The responsibility to search and secure the area outside the courtroom prior to each day's proceedings was handled by an SEB sergeant, a squad of SEB deputies, Metro deputies and two female deputies on loan from SBI. Once this area was secure, the public and local, national and international news media were allowed inside the hallway just outside the courtroom. Once they were searched and cleared, they were allowed to enter the courtroom.

On March 3, 1969, while on the stand, Sirhan testified that he indeed shot Senator Kennedy but did not bear any ill will toward him. Sirhan also testified that he killed Kennedy with 20 years of malice aforethought. He was referring to the creation of the state of Israel 20 years prior. When asked why he attacked Kennedy, Sirhan launched into a tirade about the conflict between Arabs and Jews.

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## CONVICTED

After Sirhan was found guilty, his attorneys arranged a press conference, where he said he was sorry for what he did and felt sorry for the Kennedy family. When he returned to his cell, he told Deputy Harman, "I hope that's what the bastards wanted. I don't feel sorry for what I did; if I had it do over again I would do it exactly the way I did."

## TRANSFER TO STATE PRISON

Sirhan was transported by vehicle to the Hall of Administration just two blocks away. A helicopter landed at the Hall of Administration. Sirhan was loaded into the helicopter and flown to Aero Bureau. Aero Bureau Captain Pete Montgomery, along with a female deputy, placed Sirhan into the back of an Aero Bureau plane and flew him up north to San Quentin Prison.

## PROMISE HONORED

The captains of Men's Central Jail and the Hall of Justice Jail honored their promise to transfer all of the deputies assigned to the Sirhan security team to the patrol station of their choice. Deputy Paul Harman requested a transfer to West Hollywood Station and was transferred shortly after Sirhan was moved to state prison. ☆



Deputies escorting Sirhan and his attorney to court



Deputies providing security for Sirhan's jury as they board a Sheriff's bus