



0. THE SHOOTING - Story Preface

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Boris Yaro, working for the *Los Angeles Times*, was with Senator Kennedy when he was shot. [He took this photograph](#) at the crime scene, after he reportedly removed the gun from Sirhan Sirhan's hand. Image online via the LA Times. Copyright Boris Yaro, all rights reserved. Image provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

His body still operating on east-coast time, Bobby was relaxed, but tired, as midnight approached. It had been a long, good day.

Watching the returns in the hotel's Royal Suite with [Rafer Johnson](#) (a Decathlon champion) and [Roosevelt Grier](#) (a football star), Kennedy had considered staying out of the limelight that evening. But ... campaign workers, waiting to see him in the Embassy ballroom, were happy and excited when it became clear the Senator would pick-up California's 174 delegates to the Chicago Democratic Convention.

Bobby decided to thank them personally.

After his short [victory speech](#) (click on "play video"), Kennedy had to talk with reporters who were waiting for him in the Colonial Room. As a grinning candidate left the crowd, they chanted: "We want Bobby! We want Bobby!"

Covering the story for his highschool newspaper, Scott Enyart had his Nikon camera poised to take as many pictures as he needed. The young reporter was allowed to accompany the Senator as he passed through a food-preparation area.

Stopping to shake the hand of busboy Juan Romero, Kennedy moved through the [narrow aisles of the kitchen](#). Karl Uecker, the Maitre'd, led the way. No Secret Service agents, or LA police officers, were present. Protection, provided by the hotel, consisted of hotel security employees and a few guards from Ace Security.

As Scott Enyart continued to take pictures of Bobby, witnesses saw a young man with a gun. It was an [Iver-Johnson .22 caliber revolver](#), capable of shooting eight bullets. Four shots hit the senator, three piercing his skin. Five additional people were injured, including a member of Kennedy's campaign team, [Paul Schrade](#).

Juan Romero knelt [at Bobby's side](#), pleading with him: "Come on, Mr. Kennedy, you can make it." Pressing a rosary into [the senator's hand](#), Juan strained to hear Bobby's voice, now barely audible, asking: "Is everybody all right?"

Stanley Abo, a doctor, was the first to help the [mortally wounded](#) man. He found a bullet wound at the [back of Bobby's head](#), just below his right ear. A clot had already formed, so Dr. Abo gently touched the wound to allow blood to flow again. "You're doing good, sir," he said.

Meanwhile, Grier and Johnson—among others—pounced on the gunman, a young Palestinian named [Sirhan Bishara Sirhan](#). It had taken about forty seconds for his gun to empty. [George Plimpton](#), one of Bobby's friends, told police [the assailant](#) had "peaceful eyes" and didn't really seem aware of what was going on.

From all witness accounts, Sirhan was [standing in front of Bobby](#). He was not positioned at point-blank range. But after Bobby died of his head injury, the following day, the Los Angeles coroner found some interesting things:

- The fatal shot was [fired at such close range](#)—at the back of the senator's head—that it left thick powder burns

on Bobby's skin.

- The shooter had been less than three inches away from his victim.
- The bullet—which fragmented as soon as it impacted Bobby's head—traveled upward.
- The back of Bobby's suit jacket had two bullet holes, surrounded by powder burns.

Given his physical findings, did Dr. Thomas Noguchi (the coroner) believe that Sirhan had fired the fatal shot? He answered that question in a book—*Coroner*—which he wrote ten years later:

Forensically, we see, after the fatal shot, three bullets traveling in different directions through Kennedy's body. That means that Kennedy was spinning. But it also means that time was consumed as he turned...Secondly, the testimony of the most strategically placed witness is daunting. Karl Eucker, the maitre'd, led the Kennedys into the pantry. He was the man actually standing between Sirhan and the Senator...Eucker was perfectly placed, and even years later he insisted, "I told the authorities that Sirhan never got close enough for a point-blank shot. Never!"

...Until more is positively known ... the existence of a second gunman remains a possibility. Thus I have never said that Sirhan Sirhan killed Robert Kennedy. (Thomas T. Noguchi, M.D., Coroner, pages 108-110)

No one was thinking along those lines at Sirhan's trial, however. His defense lawyers stipulated to his guilt. And the Los Angeles Police Department confiscated *all* of Scott Enyart's film.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-SHOOTING-Bobby-Kennedy>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-SHOOTING-Bobby-Kennedy>

Media Stream

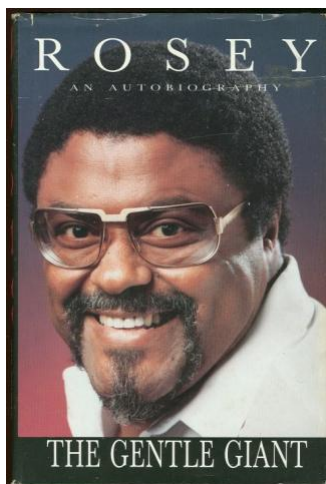


Rafer Johnson

Image online, courtesy NAACP.

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View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Rafer-Johnson>



Rosey: The Gentle Giant

Book-cover image online, courtesy Amazon.

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Sirhan Sirhan's .22 Caliber Iver-Johnson Revolver

Image online, courtesy [LA Public Library Visual Collection](#).

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Sirhan-Sirhan-s-.22-Caliber-Iver-Johnson-Revolver>



Bobby Kennedy with Rosary

Photo by Reuters, used in the investigation of Senator Kennedy's death. Online, various websites.

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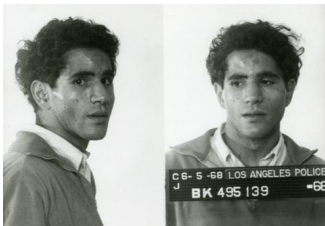
View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bobby-Kennedy-with-Rosary>



Bobby Kennedy - Mortally Wounded

Image online, courtesy the *Los Angeles Times* website.

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Sirhan Bishara Sirhan - Alleged Assassin

Image, California Department of Corrections.

Public Record

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Sirhan-Bishara-Sirhan-Alleged-Assassin>

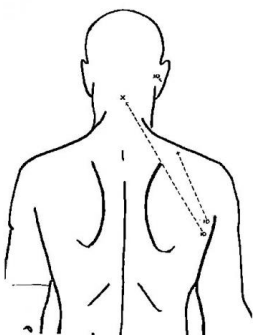


Diagram of Kennedy's Wound

Image maintained at California State Archives.

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George Plimpton

Image online, courtesy Dartmouth College.

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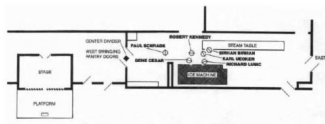
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Kennedy Assailant - Sirhan Sirhan

Image online, courtesy Murderpedia.

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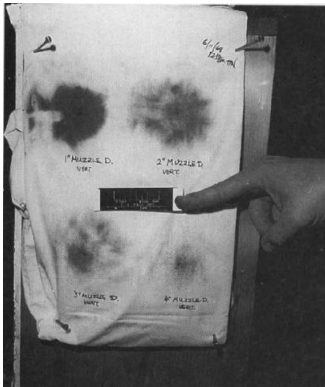
Police Diagram - Layout of RFK Shooting Scene

Diagram created by the LAPD.

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View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Police-Diagram-Layout-of-RFK-Shooting-Scene>



RFK - Tests Showing Bullets Fired at Close Range

Image showing test firing into cloth showing the shots were fired at close range. Image maintained by the California State Archives.

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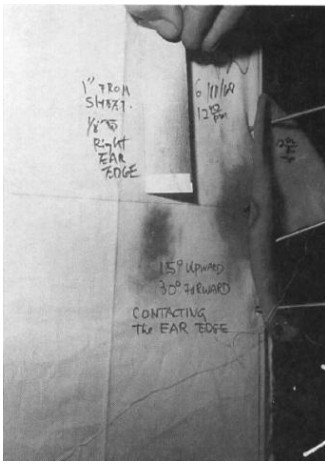


Kennedy's Jacket with Two Bullet Holes

Image maintained by the California State Archives.

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Powder Burns - Senator Kennedy's Suit Jacket

Image maintained by the California State Archives.

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Sirhan in Custody

Image online, courtesy Murderpedia.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Sirhan-in-Custody>



RFK Shooting - Crime Scene Passageway

Image maintained by the California State Archives.

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Thomas Noguchi - Coroner in Bobby Kennedy Shooting Case

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