

9 (a-g)

Those well acquainted with Parsons said he had a deep hatred for Robert Kennedy. The hatred dated back to the time Kennedy was a counsel for the Senate Rackets Committee which had been looking into Parsons' connections with the underworld.

Almost immediately after Parsons was named counsel for Sirhan, he created a furor in an interview that was covered by every television station and newspaper in Los Angeles. Parsons said Sirhan was getting mail from people "who thought he had done a good thing."

Despite that remark, Russell Parsons' legal qualifications were in outstanding order although his age, about 70, hardly made him a candidate for a gruelling criminal trial that would be the most publicized in American history. There was speculation that Parsons had been selected because the prosecution had an ironclad case and he would be the ideal choice to appeal the verdict. Parsons was an expert in the field of evidence. He was the author of the appeal that led to the famous Cahan decision by the U.S. Supreme Court which laid down new ground rules governing the use of evidence by police and the prosecution. He was also the author of another appeal that turned into a landmark case, the Caruso decision.

When Parsons took the Sirhan case his legal credentials were well publicized, but past and present connections were overlooked. The connection with former policeman Michael McCowan was a matter of public record. And soon McCowan would be at Parsons' side in the role of chief investigator.

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#9-a

In the early 1940s, in his role as a deputy district attorney, Parsons was one of three prosecutors assigned a licensing scandal involving former California liquor czar **William G. Bonelli**. Bonelli (who eventually fled to Mexico) began playing rough when he learned Parsons was on the case. Parsons was first accused of falsifying his civil service application by stating he had never been arrested. It was brought out that as a young man in 1928 Parsons was named three times in felony complaints that charged him with issuing bad checks. The previous year, in San Bernardino County, Parsons reportedly made good on a number of checks bounced by the bank. All of the checks were for small amounts of money.

Still again, in 1927, Parsons pleaded guilty to obtaining property under false pretenses in a Whittier Justice Court and was given a six-month suspended sentence. Responding to the charges, Parsons admitted he had been financially embarrassed in 1927 and 1928. He said the transactions resulted from an oil company he managed which ran into financial trouble. The ^{old} charges against Parsons were made public by a Los Angeles civic leader named **Clifford E. Clinton**, leader of a political organization named CIVIC. Clinton was a bitter political foe of the district attorney at that time, **Burton Fitts**. Parsons had Fitts' support all the way. Parsons managed to stay on the case and county officials refused to take action against him despite the false statement in his job application.

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In the late 1940s, Parsons went into private practice. One of his major cases involved the defense in 1949 of a number of high-ranking Los Angeles policemen who had been indicted by the grand jury on corruption charges. The word started spreading that Parsons could be counted on when a cop was in trouble. Then, too, there were rumbles that Parsons was a mouthpiece for the "mob."

In 1950, the reform mayor of Los Angeles, Fletcher Bowron, finally crumbled under too much political crossfire from his old enemy, the Los Angeles Times, and was singled out for a recall election. Among those who decided to oppose Bowron was attorney **Russell Parsons.** The rumbles of mob connections grew louder and finally the Bowron forces unveiled their most important piece of evidence to make the point, a letter Parsons had written in December 1944 to the chief county probation officer in Cleveland, Ohio. In that letter Parsons asked that probation be lifted in Ohio on ^{Mickey Cohen} ~~Sammy Cohen~~, the small time hood who made good as the number one mobster on the West Coast after he moved to Los Angeles. Mickey Cohen's name was a legend in 1950. Besides beating up other hoods who picked on little old ladies, Cohen managed to survive assassination attempts; keep control of a flourishing bookmaking industry, and enforce what had to be enforced in the circles of the underworld. So Parsons' letter on Cohen's behalf came as a mild surprise, particularly that part in which he wrote about Cohen's "rehabilitation."

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#9c
2.15

+230.2
Parsons

RUSSELL E. PARSONS
ATTORNEY AT LAW
SUITE 600 METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT BLDG
308 WEST THIRD STREET
LOS ANGELES 10, CALIFORNIA
MUTUAL 3093

December 18, 1944

Mr. William Dillon
Chief Probation Officer
Cuyahugo County
Cleveland, Ohio

In re **Mekie Cohen**

My dear Sir:

Please be advised that I have known Mr. Cohen for four or five years and am also acquainted with a number of substantial people here in the community with whom he is acquainted and associates. I understand that he is desirous of terminating his probation proceedings and I am sure that his conduct here indicates that he has rehabilitated himself. Anything you can do for him will be much appreciated.

Very truly yours,

RUSSELL E. PARSONS

REP:sk

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asked to comment about the letter, Parsons said he could not recall writing it. But he did recall that Cohen had gotten into some kind of trouble in Cleveland once upon a time. (The records in Cleveland showed that Cohen and one of his followers, Frank Niccoli, had been convicted of embezzlement in Cleveland in 1949. Parsons emphatically denied that Cohen was a contributor to his campaign. "As a matter of fact," he said, "I'm not very friendly with Cohen at the moment." It was the contention of the Bowron forces that the recall election was financed by the underworld. Parsons made a poor showing and that ended his career in politics.

Among Parsons' more famous clients was a local Mafia kinpin, Joe Sica. Defending Sica on charges of conspiracy and extortion in a case in which the underworld was accused of trying to muscle in and take control of welterweight boxing champion Don Jordan. Parsons described his client as "a neighbor who stuck his nose in a family affair and got hurt."

As a criminal attorney, Parsons was bound to associate with many shady characters. But, the fact is the Parsons' record is one of contradictions. One of the great problems during the trial of Sirhan Sirhan and the days leading up to it was that of security. Supposedly every person who came in contact with Sirhan was of unimpeachable character. Yet, at Parsons' personal direction, the man closest to Sirhan, the one who was constantly at his side, was a convicted felon, former policeman Michael McGowan.

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Under the law, because of his felony record, McCowan was not entitled to take the state bar examination and qualify as an attorney. Yet when there was a private conference in the chambers of trial judge Herbert V. Walker involving Sirhan, McCowan was always present.

The group that gathered in chambers also consisted of defense attorney *Emile Zala Berman* ~~Emile Zala Berman~~ of New York, a man of great distinction in Eastern legal circles who happened to be Jewish, and Grant Cooper. That case in federal court involving the Priars Club cheating scandal had turned into a nightmare for Cooper. His client had lost, and now a federal grand jury was investigating Cooper and other attorneys in the case because a copy of the secret indictment had made its way into the courtroom -- specifically, on the counsel table of Grant Cooper. Still another attorney frequently made his presence felt in the chambers of Judge Walker, a man whose interest in the case, on the surface, was much greater than that of the other members of the defense team. His name: Issa Nakhish.

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INVESTIGATION REPORT

Name McCowan, Michael A		Residence Address 11201 Gloria		City Downey	
L.S. No.		C.I.T. No.			
Sex M	Height C	Age 6-20-33	Weight 6-0	Build 175	Hair Brn
Business Address San Allen Det Agency		City L.A.		Business Phone 626-6421	
Color I Bird		Address CONVT		Color White	
Subscribed to		Address		Phone No. 626-599	

Name of individual for making report:

Subject removed to be heading burglary ring in S.F. Valley

Summary of Report:

3/17/66

Reporting Officers received information from EST-29 that subject heads a burglary ring in the San Fernando Valley. McCowan is a former L.A.P.D. officer who left the job as a result of a theft he committed in a U.S. Post Office. According to information subject is operating with the aid of several girls working as waitresses in Valley bars and several male burglars.

Recently his car was stolen (2/17/66) from in front of his home. He reported that a Webster Tape Recorder & golf clubs were in the trunk. However informant heard that the trunk contained numerous stolen firearms.

Subject claims to be working for the Ron Allen Det. Agency. (#9-9)

Supervisor Approving

Date & Time Typed

Work

Reporting Officer(s)

EST-29

EST-29