

Chicago  
**Free Press**

PUBLISHER  
BRIAN D. BOYER

EDITOR  
CHRISTOPHER CHANDLER

MANAGING EDITOR  
JACK ALTMAN

ART DIRECTOR  
DONALD MARRS

STAFF  
MARILYN KINCAID  
RICHARD M. MENGES  
TERENCE SHERIDAN  
MARCO TRBOVICH  
JAMES TUOHY

PHOTOGRAPHY DIRECTOR  
PAUL SEQUEIRA

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS  
NELSON ALGREN  
BARBARA BOYER, FOOD  
JIM BROSNAN, SPORTS  
JAMES C. CLARK, MUSIC  
MAX GROSSMAN, MOVIES  
LEWIS Z. KOCH, TV

CONTRIBUTING ILLUSTRATORS  
HY ROTH  
WARREN LINN

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR  
MARTIN BROWN

MARKETING DIRECTOR  
SAMUEL GUARD

(312) 368-4480  
CHICAGO FREE PRESS  
236 N. CLARK ST., CHICAGO, ILL.  
60601

The Chicago Free Press is published weekly on Monday for the metropolitan Chicago area. Copyright 1970 by Media Enterprises, Inc. All rights reserved.

All unsolicited manuscripts, articles, letters, photographs and art sent to the CHICAGO FREE PRESS are sent only at the owner's risk. The Chicago Free Press expressly repudiates any liability or responsibility for their safe custody or return.

**CONTENTS**

NEWS OF THE WEEK, P. 7

SEN. RALPH SMITH: THROUGH HIM  
THE MAJORITY SPEAKS?, P. 14

BY JACK ALTMAN

The campaign of a man who smiles without his eyes.

LET US NOW PRAISE SHERMAN SKOLNICK, P. 19 ✓

BY TERENCE SHERIDAN

Why the gladiator in a wheel chair takes on the courts.

NELSON ALGREN IN VIETNAM, P. 22

With a little help from astrology,  
corruption, and the "Open Arms Program,"  
America is still trying to win a peace.

THE \$394 MILLION SANITARY DISTRICT SCANDAL, P. 28

BY EMIL MARCUS

This boondoggle has been costing taxpayers  
money since 1934.

CHICAGO FACTS, P. 36

BY LJW

What do you get when you lay the John Hancock  
Building from end to end? Here's where to find out.

DILL, P. 31

BY BARBARA BOYER

About an aromatic herb which spices pickles and  
omelets, and can be used to cure hiccups.

EDITORIAL PAGE, P. 5

JAMES TUOHY, P. 35

SPORTS, P. 33

BY JIM BROSMAN

NELSON ALGREN, P. 37

MUSIC P. 39

BY JAMES CLARK

WHAT'S HAPPENING P. 40

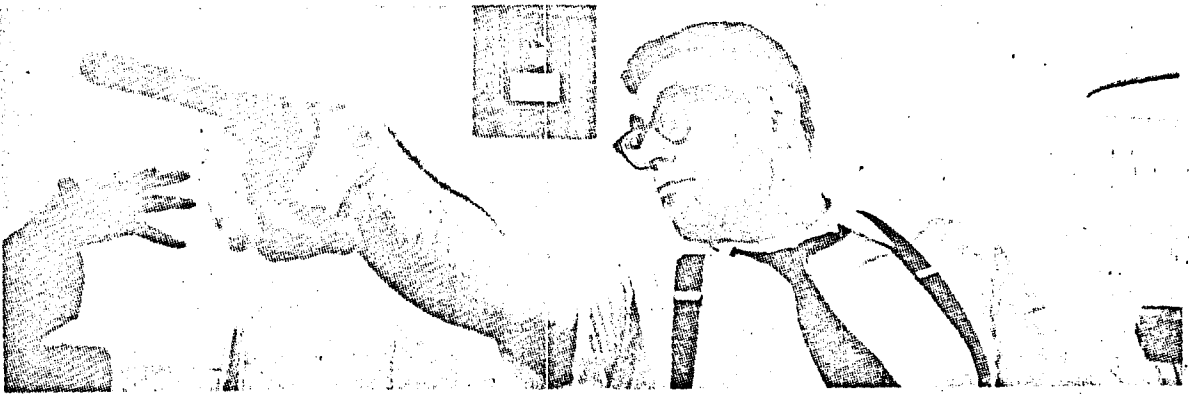
DAN ROTTENBERG

MOVIES P. 43

BY MAX GROSSMAN

MOVIE LISTINGS, P. 44

Keep



by TERENCE SHERIDAN

Chicago Free Press  
10/15/70

## why Sherman Skolnick fights the courts

*We are societies of pegged-trouser, strapless  
brassiered nylon wads  
Who bolster unprincipled promises with  
backless stageprops  
With reinforced cardboard foundations mass-produced  
That hold up and silhouette and exaggerate  
What we think the savages should see.*

---Sherman H. Skolnick

Sherman H. Skolnick, paraplegic poet and free-lance malcontent, puts a silver star on the blackboard of his mind when he scores on the world. And for a guy who sees himself as an armed hand grenade he scores well.

"Skolnick!" screamed a court attache. "This guy is like a whore in a church!" This is wrong for two reasons. Skolnick is not a whore. Maybe a little anti-social, perhaps slightly paranoid, but not a whore. It is also wrong because the attache made a common mistake, imposing ecclesiastical sanctity on Chicago courts. Skolnick has no such illusions.

Skolnick, a famous man, is chairman of Citizens Committee to Clean Up the Courts, a vigilante group of vague membership and

unpredictable tactics. The group did the legal research leading to the resignations last year of Chief Justice Roy J. Solfisburg Jr. and Justice Ray I. Klingbiel of the Illinois Supreme Court.

Skolnick charged that the justices, prestigious names in state Republican circles, had benefitted from accommodating stock deals with the Civic Center Bank & Trust Co., which was involved in a case before the court. The judges resigned without acknowledging any wrong doing.

On constitutional issues, Skolnick has brought state, county and city government to its knees. Skolnick is perverse democracy in a wheel chair, a Napoleonic complex on crutches. Fool with him and he will investigate you. You

don't just walk up and interview him. You call up and ask nicely. Unless he wants to talk to you, and then you can't get him off the phone.

You walk past the phlox, the cannas and the forsythia to the door of the small home on Chicago's South Side. There are just four rooms. On the living room wall is a small plaque, which says, in Hebrew, Shalom. Peace. Superb. One wall of the living room is books, floor to ceiling, 182 volumes of the Federal Reporter. There are 6000 other volumes, most of them law books, in the attic, in Skolnick's room, in the garage.

"His room is a library," says Skolnick's mother, Pauline. "He wants to take out the television. He needs the wall for books. 'For what do we need a television?' he asks." Her parents were killed in Poland during the war. So were most of her other relatives. "So what's there for me? Nothing. This is our home. To Chicago we are grateful. I'm only sorry about Sherman, that he is handicapped. But I thank God for his courage."

Sherman the youngest of three sons, was afflicted with polio when six years old. It was during the depression and his father, Max Skolnick, a tailor, was locked out of his job.

Mrs. Skolnick, in desperation, wrote to President Roosevelt, a polio victim. The president replied personally three days later, and young Sherman was admitted to Billings Hospital. After 16 operations, over nine years, artificial muscles were placed in his abdomen, making it possible for him to walk, actually drag himself, on crutches.

When Skolnick arrives with his chief investigator, Harriet Sherman, housewife, Mrs. Skolnick gets a comb. "Just to touch up for the pictures," she says. You want to know about the committee, a reasonable inquiry. "People who have joined us one way or another," says Skolnick. How many? "Over a thousand." Very impressive, but are they fulltime? "There is no fulltime anything. No one gets paid. We are all just researchers and we exchange information and compile it." But there is no hedging on the objectives.

Skolnick acts and courts react. Sometimes this means victories, more silver stars. In July, 1968, the U.S. District Court in Chicago, after Skolnick filed suit, declared the City Council unconstitutionally structured and ordered re-districting of the 50 wards, which is to begin next month.

In 1969 Skolnick's one-man, one-vote suits resulted in three-judge federal district court panels ordering the remapping of Illinois Senate and House districts, and of Illinois U.S. Congressional districts.

Pending are two similar suits. One calls for constitutional representational standards to be applied to Chicago's ward committeeman system. The other, a suit to re-district the Cook County Board of Commissioners, was scheduled to be heard Monday, Sept. 28 in the U.S. Court of Appeals.

"We got three out of five already," beams Skolnick. "They are illegal; why don't they just go away?"

This kind of talk, coupled with Skolnick's regal attitude, some-

times perturbs people. Two court attaches got so perturbed they pushed Skolnick and his wheelchair out of a U.S. District Courtroom in 1967. Naturally Skolnick filed a suit against them; but he came up a loser in this one.

Last week Skolnick was back in federal court to hear witnesses in a Circuit Court case—a \$10 million damage suit filed by nine members of the South Side Contract Buyers League on Aug. 25. The suit alleges that John Cardinal Cody, Archbishop of Chicago, as a property owner, initiated eviction action against some league members.

Lawyers in the case asked U.S. District Court Judge J. Sam Perry for an injunction against Skolnick, enjoining him from interfering. Skolnick, in turn, filed a motion charging that Judge Perry "is prejudiced against Skolnick and cannot be fair with him." Skolnick, for several years, has been trying to have the judge impeached. In 1966 Skolnick filed a complaint in the U.S. Court of Appeals, alleging that the judge had discriminated against him as "a citizen of the Jewish faith" and had refused to allow Skolnick's attorney to represent him in a Civil Rights case charging that Jews and Negroes were systematically excluded from jury service. The appellate court declined to act on the alleged "misconduct" of Judge Perry.

Insults, real or fancied, Skolnick does not forget. He attended Spalding School for the Handicapped and still has dark opinions of some of his teachers. "One teacher always separated me from the rest of the class," he recalls. "She would say, 'you're stupid. You can't sit with the rest of the class.'" Skolnick investigated her and her colleagues, finding that some of them had been shuffled out of other schools because of personal or professional shortcomings, according to Skolnick. He also found out that he was far from stupid. His IQ was 154. He graduated second in his class and his salutatorian speech was a minor classic of pessimism.

"There was no point in the principal and the others puffing us up," he says. "To all intents and purposes, Spalding was the end of

the line for most of us."

It was not, however, the end of the line for Sherman Skolnick, budding social critic born in 1930. He received a five-year scholarship to Roosevelt University, where he was an "A" student and paid a cop \$5 a week for the privilege of parking his specially built car near the entrance. In 1951, after two and a half semesters, he dropped out of Roosevelt. Six years later there was a crisis. It was the smithy that forged Skolnick's single-minded antipathy to courts, despite the fact that courts would later make possible his successes.

"Thirteen years ago my dad was about to retire from his work because of old age. He was a ladies' tailor. Later he was an assistant to a rabbi, making all of one dollar a year, which he reported. My parents didn't know in what way they could protect me as their son. We own this house here, that's all. So my folks wanted to put their money where it would earn an income for me. They saw an ad in the paper for mutual funds, or trust fund, and some silver-tongued slicker called up my folks and one thing led to another and he separated them from about \$14,000, all in the disguise that he was going to put it in trust for me.

"Over a period of 10 months he plundered all my parents' savings. We found out later that this man was working as a salesman for stockbrokers and that he had speculated with the money without written permission."

After Skolnick dropped out of the university, he assisted relatives with bookkeeping, sold a Jewish magazine by phone, read philosophy and wrote poetry. But now he had a crusade.

"We spent nine years banging around in courts," he says. "Five years ago, when part of the case came up, I promised the judges if they didn't do right by me I hoped to live to come back and wreck them." In one form or another the case was five times before the U.S. Supreme Court, but the Skolnicks did not recover any of their money.

On the living room wall of the Skolnick home there is a framed newspaper clipping, photographs

of Skolnick and Justices Solfibus and Klingbiel. All three are smiling. A measure of Skolnick's new stature was that a Chicago newspaper now carefully touched up photos of his protruding buck teeth, making him appear less splenetic. Skolnick felt he had paid his dues. He wouldn't forget eating all those lunches out of brown bags while he pursued the case of the family's missing money from court to court. He now had his own group and other crusades. Following the resignations of Solfibus and Klingbiel, Circuit Court Judge Walter P. Dahl, after hearing arguments that only the judiciary should investigate the judiciary, granted a permanent injunction barring a special Illinois House committee from spending state funds to investigate the state's judges. The committee appealed to the Illinois Supreme Court and Skolnick, predictably incensed, sought to have Supreme Court Justice Thomas H. Kluczynski disqualified.

The irrepressible Skolnick, in a petition to the high court, charged that Kluczynski was under "investigation" by a federal agency he refused to name the committee's investigator, William G. Hundley, a former U.S. Justice Dept. investigator, said he was "99%" sure that Skolnick was incorrect. Skolnick then investigated the investigator and said he wasn't 100% sure about Hundley. In the meantime, the Illinois Supreme Court upheld the Circuit Court decision that restricted power of the legislative committee to investigate judges.

Skolnick is not happy about this, and, of course, he will not forget.

On Jan. 4, 1967, Skolnick showed up in the courtroom of the Hon. William J. Campbell, chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the northern district of Illinois. The case was *Skolnick v. Mayor and City Council of Chicago*, which was to be a success. Skolnick was ready to argue the motion, the judge wasn't. There is some confusion as to what happened next. Attaches say they politely removed a belligerent Skolnick from the courtroom. Skolnick contended he was as-

saulted. Judge Julius Hoffman granted the defendants, Judge Campbell and two court attaches, summary judgment, dismissing Skolnick's suit.

Skolnick shifted his assault and battery case to the U.S. Court of Appeals. "The defendants conspired to ceter him, by force, intimidation, and threat, from attending the court," he charged. The defendants were Judge Campbell, B. Franklin Chiles (the



MRS. SKOLNICK

judge's court crier) and James Guadagno (deputy marshal). Skolnick charged that he had, in a "very low" voice, asked to be heard whereupon there was "grabbing of Skolnick's wheelchair first by the armrests and then by the rubber steering handles, and with great force and violence swinging the wheelchair in a U-turn, nearly tipping over the wheelchair."

The appellate court, in upholding the ruling in favor of the defendants, noted: "Judge Campbell had received warnings concerning the plaintiff's antagonism to judges and the possibility that plaintiff might have an impulse to violence with firearms." The appellate court affirmed Judge Hoffman's decision on July 24, 1968.

On Aug. 15, 1969, barely able to repress his glee, Skolnick charged that a U.S. District Court official, chief deputy clerk Robert P. Steine, had collected thousands of dollars on false burglary claims to insurance companies.

Judge Campbell dismissed Skol-

nick's letter demanding that Steine be fired as a "typical diatribe by Skolnick." But a federal grand jury, on Sept. 4, 1969, indicted the \$17,000-a-year clerk on 15 counts of mail fraud, alleging that he bilked 12 insurance companies out of \$86,000 by reporting fraudulent burglary losses totaling \$114,000.

"Skolnick is crazy as hell," says a court attache, who for obvious reasons wants to remain anonymous. By many standards Skolnick is a little *funny*. He broods a lot about conspiracies and writes poetry. He has theories on the assassinations of President Kennedy and Black Panther leader Fred Hampton. "I'm pinning it all down," he says. He says he has a copy of the Blakey Report, a Chicago crime syndicate report compiled three years ago by G. Robert Blakey, criminologist, for the President's crime commission. As a public service, Skolnick sued to force disclosure of the secret report, under the federal Freedom of Information Act. The suit was dismissed on the grounds that the commission, which submitted the report to the President in 1967, was no longer in business. Why doesn't Skolnick reveal what is in the report? "Because if my friends get in a jam we can hold this over the heads of important people," he says.

It was suggested to Skolnick that he might be a little paranoid.

"The way the world is now," he said, "they need screwballs like me. If I lived an ordinary life in Skokie and I came across some of this information, I would ignore it, I would be more interested in the mortgage on the house, and the family."

Skolnick knows that he is removed from ordinary life, but he is convinced, with an absolute certainty, that if he and his friends can only expose the way a corrupt oligarchy of rulers runs our country—expose the military industrial complex, the court system, the scoundrels in government—that the great majority of people would join him in his contempt for the system, that "the rulers could no longer rule because the people would say 'to hell with you.'"