

# Schweiker's JFK Probe A One-Man Crusade

Washington — In a town of gargantuan egos, nobody accuses Sen. Dick Schweiker of being a political hot dog. Like his Montgomery County, Pa., forbears, Schweiker is a solid Dutch burger not given to showboating.

So credit Schweiker with being sincere in his pursuit into the 12-year-old mystery of John F. Kennedy's murder. But on Capitol Hill, more and more Schweiker looks like a guy on a one-man crusade.

When Schweiker ran his JFK report up the flagpole yesterday, the silence was thunderous.

Schweiker had put in a hard six months on the report. He hired his own footpads to chase leads from Mexico to Florida. He wrestled the FBI bureaucrats for secret files. He fought the mossbacks inside his own intelligence committee. No wonder, when Schweiker uncorked his 106-page report, he was edgy and tense.

"I'm saying there was a coverup," said Schweiker. "J. Edgar Hoover and Richard Helms, at least, were part of it. The Warren Commission was never told of the plots against Fidel Castro. When one ingredient is missing, you can't conclude the product is sound."

Frank Church, sitting five feet away, squirmed like a deacon caught in a vice raid. Sen. Church, who is running for vice-president, had never wanted any part of Schweiker's JFK investigation. No other senator on Church's 13-member intelligence panel had the class to show up.

Even Sen. Gary Hart, who shared the JFK subcommittee with Schweiker, played hooky. Later Hart harumphed ponderously and said, "We shouldn't toy with such a serious matter. We shouldn't raise false hopes."

More ominous was the lukewarm response of Sen. Daniel Inouye. If the JFK investigation is going to be reopened, it will be up to Inouye's brand-new, permanent intelligence committee. Inouye said, ho-hum, his people would need "six months to study it."

That was the tepid mood on Capitol Hill. Nobody was saying, "Hey, Dick Schweiker's got a helluva idea — let's do this Warren Commission thing over again." Only a handful of senators, including Walter Mondale (D-Minn) and Charles Morgan (D-NC), privately back Schweiker. If this was a parade, Dick Schweiker was playing tuba, fife and drums.

In truth, the JFK murder is so laden with emotional freight — sorrow, bit-



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terness, guilt, anger — few politicians have the stomach to get involved. Two-thirds of Americans think the 1964 Warren Commission report was a crock of whitewash. But the pols here can't see any votes in chasing JFK killers.

And there is nervousness that one Schweiker theory — that JFK was shot in retaliation for the CIA-Mafia death schemes against Castro — could prove real. The possibility that Bobby Kennedy, who must have been privy to the Castro plots, helped trigger his brother's death would be tragedy beyond Sophocles and Shakespeare. The pols of 1976 say: Who needs that grief?

No wonder, then, the enthusiasm for Schweiker's crusade was not deafening. Schweiker was not surprised.

Unfortunately, like most people who wade into the JFK quagmire, Schweiker came out with more questions than answers. Schweiker's report — a rather disorganized mishmash — asks: Who was the mystery man who delayed a Mexico-to-Havana flight for five hours at the Mexico City airport the night of JFK's death? Who was the Cuban-American who traveled on an expired U.S. passport from Texas to Mexico to Cuba the next day? What was Lee Harvey Oswald doing at the Cuban and Soviet embassies in Mexico in September 1963? Why, as late as 1967, did the FBI balk when President Johnson wanted the "Cuban connection" probed about JFK's death?

"They had a shot at cracking the whole thing," said Schweiker yesterday, "and they missed it."

The trail gets colder each year. Hopefully, after the '76 elections, Daniel Inouye's committee — and the little Hawaiian proved during Watergate to be a tough, dogged pursuer — can set history straight. It may be the last chance.

Does it matter who snuffed out a President? Dick Schweiker thinks so. But when he looked around Capitol Hill last night, Schweiker found himself to be a committee of one.

(Sandy Grady's opinion column also appears Sunday and Tuesday.)