

8217 Schweiker in the Air: 'A High

By Sally Quinn

The 7:50 plane is held over for five minutes in Kansas City. Every seat is taken except two conspicuous rows in the front of tourist class. A Secret Service agent appears, then another, then another.

"It's not Ford, not Reagan, not Dole, not Kissinger," someone offers. "Who else has Secret Service?" Then a tall, dark-haired man in a light-blue suit appears at the entrance to the plane.

"Hey, it's Schweiker," Somebody says.

ABOARD TWA FLIGHT 318 EAST-BOUND—Richard Schweiker has the air of a woman who has been crowned Miss America only to be qualified a day later.

His children sit quietly, seeming to

sense instinctively that he is not to be bothered. His wife fusses with the Schweikers' 7-year-old daughter.

Schweiker sits in the aisle seat, his wife at the window, daughter, Lara Kristi in the middle. The other children and Secret Service agents sit across the aisle and behind. There is virtually no conversation between husband and wife. Schweiker continues to stare ahead, devoid of energy. The other passengers, except for the initial moment of recognition and a few follow-up snickers, ignore him.

Breakfast is served—plastic waffles and plastic sausage. Schweiker picks at his food as if in a daze. The agents behind him are dutifully quiet. After he has finished, a reporter approaches him, aware that the day before he has been incommunicado, refusing to give

any interviews at all. He looks up, startled. It's over. Why would anyone pay attention to him? Except for the Secret Service there are no traces of his former celebrityhood. But he was prepared for that. At least he says so.

"Risks," the senator from Pennsylvania says almost to himself. "We pretty well all know the risks. I told the family it was a high-risk situation."

Schweiker is reacting for the bright side of his brief vice-presidential campaign. "One of the greatest things the family got out of it was to meet the Reagan family and the Reagan staff. We always got exceedingly VIP treatment from the family and the staff. We only campaigned with them for three weeks. Yet they welcomed us aboard like blood relations.

-Risk Situation

"But win or lose it was a great experience. We had a great formula to bring together the warring sections of the Party, which at the time seemed bent on the destruction. Reagan's choice of me was responsible for that—that he would choose a moderate like me.

"Well, I don't really see that many detriments. Other than losing, of course, which we were prepared to do. I educated the family a little bit about losing."

No matter how optimistic Schweiker tries to be he can't forget or erase the reaction of the liberal Republicans, especially those in his state of Pennsylvania, who labeled him a sellout, an opportunist, a man of fickle ideology.

"I was disappointed in that," he

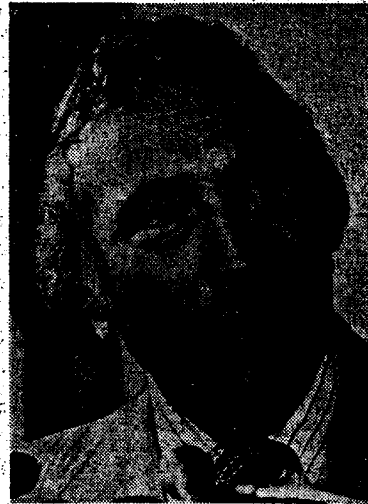
says. "Now I find out that when some liberal Republicans say open-door they mean the conservative wing should let the liberals in, not the other way around."

Richard Schweiker also feels that he got a bad rap from the press. Particularly when he said that he would have "a different constituency now" from that of his liberal supporters in Pennsylvania.

"I don't think the press adequately interpreted what I said," he said. "As Senator I represent one state. As Vice President I would represent all States."

He hasn't quite got that answer worked out yet. He looks around the plane, but no one is looking at him.

See SCHWEIKER, C2, Col. 1



Richard Schweiker

SCHWEIKER, From C1

Even the stewardesses bustle by without a glance. Nobody asks him if he wants anything. He doesn't notice. The Secret Service, though, ever on guard, continue their solemn searching gaze over everyone who passes by, a constant reminder of the inevitable dangers, the inevitable threats that come with national prominence.

Did he really really want to be Vice President?

He smiles. He doesn't actually say that he wanted to be Vice President. Instead he says, "I certainly wanted to accept Gov. Reagan's invitation, and I felt there was a long-range need to have a coalition. It was a very attractive thing to have Gov. Reagan, by sheer vent of personality, get the right wing to accept me. I also learned that Gov. Reagan is very imaginative, creative and unorthodox."

Sen. Schweiker says he certainly hopes that Mr. Ford will understand his support for Reagan. "The basis for my doing it was to build a new party," he explains, "and I felt Reagan had the best chance to win. I've always supported the winning candidate though. Even Goldwater in '64. I was one of the few Eastern liberals. I didn't walk away."

Schweiker seems genuinely confused, as though he still hasn't decided whether he did the right thing and, not least, what label liberal, moderate, conservative—he will now acquire.

Just another negative facet of the sudden public situation Schweiker has found himself in.

"I think I probably feel both relieved and let down," he says. "For one thing there was the whole thing of loss of privacy. No matter who you are you don't like to lose your privacy.

Yet you do feel let down because you had to gear up, had to psych yourself up for this. In some ways you feel relieved. You know, you don't have the burden of three months of campaigning. That's horrendous. And there's more time to think, to be with the family, to be yourself.

So he doesn't have to face three horrendous months of campaigning but he does have to face the Pennsylvania liberals. He's still working that one out.

"Keep in mind," he says, "that people have judged me on my voting record. It hasn't changed. That's been the secret of my success. I've always been popular with the rank-and-file and op-

posed the Party organization. My forte has always been the rank-and-file." Yet he says he completely supports the Republican Party platform.

"The present system of defining liberals and conservatives has a lot of loop holes," he says. "Despite my liberal ratings I've voted very conservatively on some issues like abortion, amnesty, gun control, forced busing and détente."

Mrs. Schweiker and Lara Kristi are walking back down the aisle of the plane. She steps over her husband as though his seat were empty, puts the child in her lap and, appearing less tormented about the experience of the past few days than does Schweiker

himself, says she "will be glad to get back to normal."

The Schweiker children across the aisle listen as their mother talks, but seem a bit uncomfortable. Schweiker turns away and stares off into space, apparently oblivious to her conversation.

"It was very exciting," she says.

"The best part was meeting so many wonderful people . . . I was saying to Dick last night it was probably just as well it turned out this way because it will be a good thing for the kids to have a chance to be normal for a few more years . . . Besides," she says brightly, "we still have the Senate for four more years."