

Fitz



By Tom Fitzpatrick

Here comes Sherman Skolnick in his red Pinto station wagon, coming right through the driving rain on April Fool's Day, to the Federal Building for yet another of his press conferences.

Sherman looks ruffled. His eyes are red-rimmed. But he is clean shaven, and there is a layer of powder on his face so he will be ready for the television cameras.

It's noon on a Sunday when anyone with any sense is indoors. But here on the sidewalk waiting are the television cameramen, the newspaper photographers and the reporters.

This is what I know about the newspaper business by this time. This is not a news story. It's a stage presentation designed to get Sherman Skolnick on the 10 o'clock TV news.

SHERMAN IS GETTING OUT of his car now with his crutches. Life is not easy for

2c worth on April Fools

Skolnick gets his press conference

him. But he is one hell of a little fighter. Here comes his driver, David Hoffman. Life is not easy for Hoffman, either. He lost part of his left arm and serves as Skolnick's personal driver even though he must use a hook for a left hand.

This is Sherman Skolnick, the legal researcher, who disappeared last Monday with what his followers in the Citizens Committee to Clean up the Courts hinted ever so broadly was a kidnap plot by the FBI.

Here comes Sherman down the sidewalk now. He has been helped into his wheel chair, which is now being pushed by Leland Cole, one of Skolnick's top lieutenants.

It was Cole who called the press conference last week and assured everyone Skolnick would not risk his years of credibility as a legal researcher to pull a phony disappearance to gain attention.

So now Skolnick is back. He walks a kidnap-ed, after all. Now he tells a story of a high-speed chase that lasted three days over the back roads of Indiana, Ohio and Michigan and ended up with Skolnick seeking political asylum in Canada.

"I KNOW MY SECURITY is not worth 2 cents at this time," Skolnick says, and the television lights go on.

A windrous change takes place once those lights go on. Skolnick does not play a defensive game. He is all offense. He's asked where he was the three days he was missing.

Skolnick came here to make the same charges about the connection between the Midway Airport crash of last Dec. 8 and the Watergate break-in that he was making before he disappeared.

But this is not the only charge. There is a fundlaid of others, and they come so fast you can't follow them all.

After a while, the television crews leave. Sherman has already conducted two TV press conferences at the same site. This could set the modern record for a non-story. But after all, what else is there to do on a rainy April Fool's Day?

Older freshmen do better in test

ARLINGTON, Tex. (UPI) — According to the results of an experimental admissions program at the University of Texas, persons who enter college after the age of 25 make better students than those entering colleges immediately after high school.

The study was made on 43 students 25 and older who were accepted without taking the college entrance Scholastic Aptitude Test. They had been out of high school from seven to 13 years.

Analysis of the data relating to the students' work indicated they had a lower dropout rate than the rest of the freshman class, grabbed more than their share of straight A report cards and beat the failure average.



Skolnick's back

Sherman Skolnick, legal researcher who disappeared a week ago, returned to Chicago Sunday and conducted a sidewalk press conference outside the Federal Building. Skolnick said he fled to Canada after an encounter last Monday with men he said were from the FBI. The man wanted his file on the Watergate bugging case, Skolnick claimed. Fitz's column is on Page 22. (Sun-Times Photo)

NOW SHERMAN IS WITHOUT cameras. Will he finally tell what happened the day he disappeared and the alarm went out he'd been done away with?

"I went to a meeting a few blocks from my house," Sherman says. "Two men were there in a dark green car. I got in. They didn't identify themselves, but I know they were from the FBI."

"They told me they wanted my John Mitchell file or they would see I was put away like my investigator Alex Bortos (who is being tested in an asylum for acute paranoia)."

"I got out of the car under the pretext of going to get the papers. But I know that neighborhood (the lives at 9800 S. Oglesby) and my driver and I eluded them."

Skolnick goes on this way. He couldn't make a phone call to either his parents or associates in Chicago to say he was alive. Skolnick couldn't call the police for help be-

cause his enemy was the FBI. Besides, he was traveling on back roads all that time and there were no phones.

SKOLNICK SAYS he and David Hoffman stayed awake for three days without once going to sleep.

"Were you on speed?" "We just kept nudging each other," Skolnick says.

"We drank a lot of coffee," Hoffman adds. The story of the high-speed chases over back roads eluding FBI cars is colorful. They make movies out of stories like this.

But all the movies about spies and high-speed chases I've ever seen, not one of them ended up with the heroes driving up to a U.S. Federal Building to hold a press conference.

The red Pinto is still shiny and without a scratch. Skolnick has had the car nearly three weeks. And after all that dramatic driving over back roads to Canada and back, the speedometer still shows only 1,379 miles.

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