

Hijacker Wanted Aid

Psychiatrists Discuss Byck's Tapes

By Jim Landers

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Samuel J. Byck, the 44-year-old Philadelphian who attempted to hijack a jet airliner and planned to force it to crash-land into the White House, was a man filled with grandiose schemes who was reaching out for help from the confines of a sick mind, according to several psychiatrists known for their studies of violent behavior.

Byck, whose plan ended when he shot and killed himself after killing an airport policeman and the copilot of a Delta Airlines DC-9 on Feb. 22 at Baltimore-Washington International Airport, described himself as a "hero" and a "terrorist."

But, based on at least six tape recordings and four letters he mailed to a variety of public figures and newspapers only hours before his death, Byck was a man who eluded an agonizing sense of worthlessness in a world of fantasy, according to the psychiatrists.

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The psychiatrists interviewed about Byck all agreed that a complete diagnosis of the hijacker's mind was impossible now that he is dead. But based on the tapes and letters and what is known of Byck's life, they agreed that Byck was a disturbed man deadly earnest in his intent to assassinate President Nixon.

"He was apparently a man who wanted help very badly," said Chicago psychiatrist David A. Rothstein, author of "The Presidential Assassination Syndrome" and a former consultant to the Warren Commission in its investigation of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

"There are thousands of people like him in our country who are friendless and desperate," said Dr. Slican

A. Pasternack, associate professor of psychiatry at Georgetown University. "When psychotic fantasies strike them, it provides them with a sense of delib-



SAMUEL J. BYCK
... told of plans

erate purpose in life that they didn't have before."

Byck was investigated by the U. S. Secret Service in October, 1972, for allegedly threatening to kill Mr. Nixon, but was not prosecuted after being committed to Philadelphia General Hospital for mental observation.

A spokesman for the hospital said that Byck was a patient "under observation" at the Hahnemann Community Mental Health Services Center in Philadelphia from January 22 until March 16 of last year. Both the hospital and the center have refused to release any additional information about Byck.

"Most people who commit violent crimes like this cry out for help in some way, often by making threats," said Dr. John Lion, director of the clinical research program for violent behavior at the University of Maryland Medical School in Baltimore.

"The more grandiose and

the sicker the individual, the more likely it is that he will plan, plot, and seek to let others know of his plans," said Lion.

Byck described himself as a manic-depressive under medication for his illness who visited a psychiatrist every four or five weeks. (Efforts to locate the Philadelphia psychiatrist were unsuccessful.) But according to the psychiatrists interviewed by The Washington Post, Byck appeared to be troubled by a far more serious mental disorder.

Rothstein speculated that Byck might have suffered from schizophrenia — a disorder in which a person lives in two separate worlds of emotion and logic.

"It's certainly indicated," said Rothstein, who said he has found the same mental symptoms in studying the life of Lee Harvey Oswald, the man who assassinated President Kennedy.

"It's entirely possible that someone who appeared to be manic depressive might later turn out to be schizoid," he said.

Schizophrenia is commonly described as a serious mental illness in which the mind is gradually overcome by dreams and fantasy that prove more satisfying than reality. The word itself describes a splitting mind, where a dream world breaks away from a person's normal perceptions of reality. The disease seems to progress from confusion to isolation and withdrawal from contact with the outside world, where the fantasy world created in the person's mind is confronted with contradictions.

"In the overt, psychotic stage," a schizophrenic person "is not in contact with reality and may even suffer hallucinations," Rothstein said.

In a tape recorded only an hour before the hijack attempt began, Byck attacked those who would describe his actions as those of "a madman, a mad dog."

"It's always easy for the authorities to look outward for the causes, say, . . . this guy acted like a maniac, when basically these hostile actions, or at least my hostile actions, are inward, that of being robbed and cheated out of my dignity, and seeing my country raped and ravished almost before my very eyes," he said.

"His words say two things about him," said Rothstein. "One, that he suffered internal feelings of low self-esteem, of feeling deprived. This resonated with his perception of external events. The people he looked to for guidance, the government, had disillusioned him."

Byck called his scheme to assassinate Mr. Nixon "the diabolical Pandora Box," through which he hoped by crashing the jet airliner into the White House to show "that one person can strike fear into the hearts of the affluent, wealthy, powerful ruling class."

"It's almost a wish to set everything straight by one magical action that in his fantasy would set things right in the world," said Rothstein.

"Pandora's Box seems to

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IT HAS BECOME QUITE EVIDENT TO ME OVER A PERIOD OF TIME THAT THIS GOVERNMENT, ONE THAT I LOVE DEARLY (CAN'T AND WILLN'T RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THE MAJORITY OF THE AMERICAN CITIZENS.

THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE IN GOVERNMENT ARE BOIKED BY SPECIAL GROUPS AND THEY ARE SERVANTS TO THESE GROUPS.

NOW IS THE TIME FOR INDEPENDENT CITIZENS TO TAKE BACK THEIR GOVERNMENT BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT TAKE COMPLETE ~~CONTROL~~ CONTROL OF US ALL.

I, FOR ONE, CAN'T LIVE IN A CONTROLLED SOCIETY AND I WOULD PREFER TO DIE AS A FREE-MAN

Sam Byck

One of notes Samuel J. Byck wrote.

be a particular mental association of his," said Dr. Pasternack. "Now the real danger is that the idea is out, the box is opened. It's some example of the real grandiose, psychotic thinking he must have gone through."

In Greek mythology, Pandora's Box was a box containing the ills of mankind. It was opened by Pandora against the command of Zeus.

Byck's efforts to let others know of his plans by mailing the tapes and letters were evidence to the psychiatrists of his desire to be helped in coping with his troubled mind.

"Most violent people are bothered by their violent urges," said Dr. Lion. "If you're ever been angry yourself, compound that feeling a hundred times and imagine how unhappy they feel. Violent people hate it, they want help, and often they'll say threatening things in order to get help."

After leaving his apartment in Philadelphia for the airport the morning of the hijack attempt, Byck mailed tape recordings to the homes of columnist Jack Anderson, Common Cause chairman John Gardner, and at least four U.S. Senators: Edmund Muskie (D-Maine), George McGovern (D-S.D.), Richard Schweiker (R-Pa.), and Birch Bayh (D-Ind.).

He also mailed letters and poems to three newspapers and to a U.S. Magistrate

here who presided over two trials in which Byck was charged with picketing the White House without a permit. (The charges were dismissed both times).

"The tapes seem to be an effort on his part to identify with the president," said Rothstein. "The amount of public attention devoted to the Watergate tapes undoubtedly affected him, and to his mind, he was doing the same thing that the president does" by making his own tape recordings.

Rothstein said Byck's mailing of the tapes to public figures was his way of "seeking an external mirroring of himself."

"It's more than a question of seeking fame, this external mirror," he said. "When persons like him see their name in the (news)paper, it's not just their day in the sun—it proves that they actually exist in the world."

"A person with such grandiose ideas is different from the rest of us," said Lion. "He cannot live with the limitations of his own personality, and prefers to build a high wall around himself where he can entertain his fantasies."

On the tapes and in several of his letters, Byck quoted an "anonymous Persian-philosopher" as saying, "I would rather live one day as a lion than live 100 years as a sheep."

"There's a lot of virtue in the lives of many sheep, and most lions don't live for just one day," said Pasternack.