

Links it to Watergate

Sabotage in jet crash: Skolnick

By Thomas Buck

CHARGES OF murder, sabotage, and robbery were among the accusations made yesterday at a National Transportation Safety Board hearing on the jet crash near Midway Airport last Dec. 8 in which 45 persons were killed.

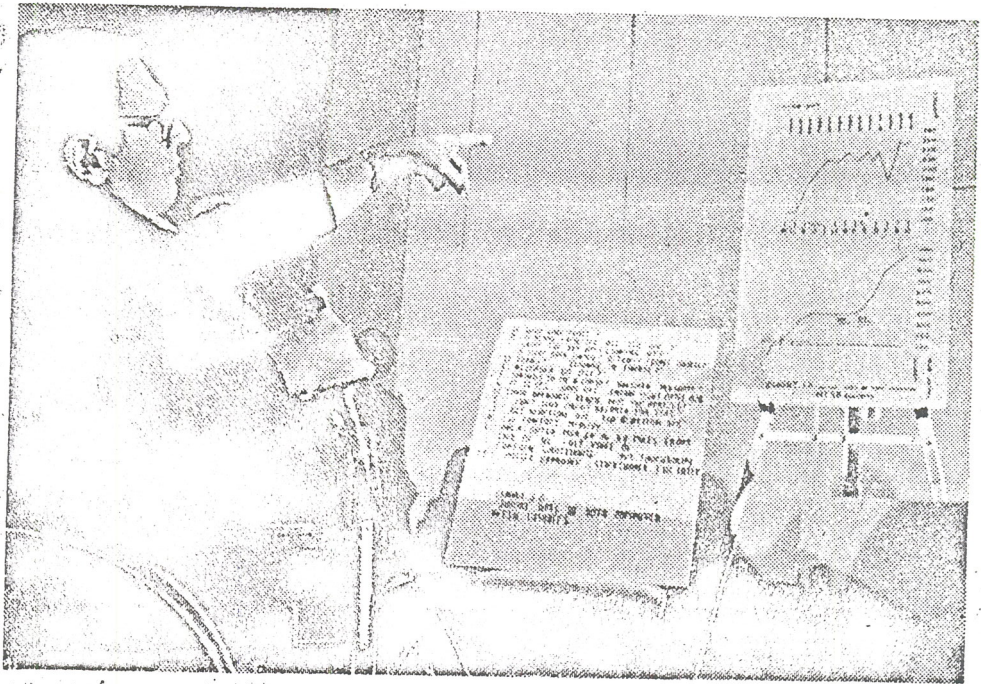
No documentation was produced to substantiate the charges made by Sherman Skolnick, a self-styled legal researcher. Skolnick charged the plane was sabotaged because, he said, 12 of its passengers had links to the Watergate scandal.

One of those on board was the wife of E. Howard Hunt, a convicted participant in the Watergate burglary. Skolnick said she carried documents that could have led to the impeachment of President Nixon.

OFFICIALS OF United Air Lines asked the board to hear Skolnick's version of the disaster because he has said frequently that the airline was among the forces that have kept him from offering his explanation of the crash to the agency.

Skolnick, a frequent visitor in Chicago courtrooms, filed the Federal District Court suit that led to the redrawing of Illinois' congressional districts. Information he provided about transfers of bank stock resulted in the resignations of two Illinois Supreme Court justices.

He was reported missing in March by one of his assistants, who told newsmen federal agents might have arrested Skolnick to keep him from continuing his investigation of the Watergate affair.



TRIBUNE Photo by Hardy Wieting

Sherman Skolnick testifying before National Transportation Safety Board on the crash of United jet at Midway Airport.

He showed up three days later in Windsor, Ont. He said at a press conference there that he had been fleeing federal agents who were bent on destroying his evidence linking the Watergate scandal to the plane crash.

KNITTING SCORES of facts and assumptions together loosely, Skolnick in two hours of testimony accused the Federal Bureau of Investigation, traffic controllers at Midway Airport, the Columbia Broadcasting System, United Air Lines, and the safety board itself of working together to conceal a cold-blooded plot.

As part of the plot, Skolnick said, President Nixon placed a "hit man" aboard the plane to make certain that Mrs. Hunt died. The man, in turn, was to have died in the disaster.

MRS. HUNT WAS carrying \$2 million in traveler's checks and money orders, Skolnick claimed, and \$50,000 in currency. Investigators found \$10,000 in her belongings after the crash.

SKOLNICK SAID the \$2 mil-

lion was stolen from the Committee for the Reelection of the President.

There were snickers in the audience as Skolnick linked the crash not only to the Watergate affair, but also to a pipeline lobby, investment scandals in Switzerland, legislative acts in Costa Rica, and underworld dealings in stolen currency.

The hearing was held in the Sheraton-O'Hare Motor Hotel, 6810 N. Mannheim Rd., Rosemont.