

'He Was Always Alone'

'I Am Going to Make a Bomb,' Hijacker Said

By Bill Richards

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PHILADELPHIA, Feb. 23—The last time Renee Goldstein saw Samuel Joseph Byck he was standing outside the door of her apartment Thursday night holding an armload of books and telling her how he was going to Washington to protest the gasoline shortage.

Mrs. Goldstein, who lived in the apartment below Byck in northeast Philadelphia, asked him why all the books. He was studying, he replied. She asked him what he was studying. "I am going to make a bomb," he said.

Only hours later, Byck's attempt to hijack a plane at Baltimore-Washington International early Friday resulted in three deaths, including Byck's, and left the plane's pilot in critical condition.

"We talked for a couple of minutes in front of my door as he was going upstairs to his apartment," said Mrs.

Goldstein, who lives with her two children in a neighborhood dominated mostly by modest two-family brick houses. She said she didn't believe Byck when he spoke of his plans to build a bomb.

Mrs. Goldstein described Byck as a loner who used to tell her of the times he had gone to Washington to picket the President and of his arrests outside the White House. In October, 1972, Byck allegedly made a threat against the President, which brought him to the attention of the Secret Service, according to spokesman Jack Warner. He said the investigation was resolved when Byck was committed to Philadelphia General Hospital for observation in January of last year.

Mrs. Goldstein said Byck was a gentle man who used to enjoy playing with her children. "I would see him while I was on dates and he was always alone," she said. "I would see him in restaurants eating alone. As far

as I know I was the only one he spoke very much to."

Byck's victims in the attempted hijack were airport security guard Neil George Ramsburg, 24, Simpsonville, Md., and Freddie D. Jones, 32, Dallas, Tex., the plane's copilot. The pilot, Reece Douglas Loftin, 39, Dallas, remained in critical condition at University of Maryland Hospital yesterday suffering from several bullet wounds, the most serious in his abdomen and shoulder.

Karen Smoot, 21, Chicago, a stewardess aboard the jet who fractured a vertebra while escaping through an emergency hatch, was listed in satisfactory condition yesterday at North Arundel Hospital.

Ramsburg was killed when Byck suddenly appeared from behind a wall near the loading point for Delta's 7:15 a.m. flight for Atlanta and shot him several times in the back of the head with a .22-caliber pistol.

Byck then ran down the ramp to the jet, clutching the gun and a small black suitcase containing a crude gasoline bomb. Charles B. Troyer, an Anne Arundel County policeman, gave chase when he heard the shots that killed Ramsburg and fired once at Byck as the door to the plane closed. The bullet bounced harmlessly off the door.

Byck then went to the cockpit and told the pilot and copilot to "fly this plane out of here." The pilots said there were still chocks under the wheels and the doors were not sealed, whereupon Byck fired three shots into the cockpit wall. "The next shot will be in your head," he told the pilots. He then shot both pilots, then went

back to the passenger compartment and pulled a woman passenger into the cockpit, telling her, "Help this man fly the plane!"

Officer Troyer, who had picked up Ramsburg's .357 magnum pistol and was standing outside the plane's locked door, fired through the door's porthole at Byck, hitting him twice in the chest. Byck then shot himself in the head killing himself.

Co-pilot Jones was shot in the shoulder and kidney region and died from a gunshot wound in the head.

The bomb was taken out on the runway and subsequently disarmed by bomb demolition experts.

Investigators have as yet turned up

no clue as to the motive for Byck's act. "We know he was a man who was troubled mentally and a loner who so far as we know had no close friends," said Special Agent Thomas Farrow, who heads the FBI's Baltimore office. "We are not coming up with anyone who knew this man's innermost thoughts."

At least a half-dozen times during the last year Mrs. Goldstein said Byck had indirectly mentioned suicide to her. "He would say he was not going to see the New Year come in," she said. "I kidded him about it after New Year's this year."

But she said she thought that Byck

See BYCK, M3, Col 1

BYCK, From M1

might try to commit suicide from the way he spoke. "He was always depressed and angry. I guess I would not have been surprised to hear he committed suicide but it's hard to believe that he would kill anybody doing it."

She said Byck mentioned building his bomb about 9 p.m. Thursday and that afterward he went upstairs to his own apartment. She said she heard him pacing the floor until 2 a.m.

"He must have left for Baltimore only an hour or two later," she said. "When he said he was building a bomb I guess I didn't believe him. It was the last thing I heard him say and I guess the last thing he told anyone before it happened."

Unemployed and divorced, Byck seems to have existed financially on a \$189.50 monthly check he received from the Social Security Administration for a mental ailment. Emotionally, according to Mrs. Goldstein, Byck nursed an intense dislike for President Nixon.

Most of his complaints, she said, centered on the President's handling of inflation, the Vietnam war and the gas shortage. FEB 18

On Monday, Byck called The Philadelphia Inquirer to discuss the paper's account of an Army private who stole a helicopter and landed on the White House lawn. Byck ended the conversation with the paper's reporter by saying, "I may have something for you later on. I'm not ready to break it now."

Secret Service spokesman Warner refused to comment when asked if

Byck's name was included on a list the service keeps of persons who have made threats against the President.

Warner would only say that Byck was "of record," meaning that his name was included in their files as a result of the 1972 investigation into the alleged threats.

Secret Service practice, Warner said, is that when the President goes into an area of the country, the Service wants to know the whereabouts of any person on the list who is also in that area of the country.

Presumably, that means if the President had been going to the Philadelphia area, the Secret Service would have a computer search its list of 180,000 names of potential assassins and Byck's would have come up. His whereabouts would then have been ascertained.

Several neighbors living near Byck's apartment said his beige and white 1968 Buick Century was plastered with "Impeach Nixon" bumper stickers until this week.

"Then on Monday he came out and pulled them all off," said a neighbor who asked that her name not be used. "It was very odd. That car really was covered with stickers. He made his feelings very clear about the President."

The FBI found the car parked in a lot at Baltimore-Washington International Airport several hours after Byck's hijack attempt Friday. Airport officials said the car had been checked into the lot about 6 a.m. Friday, and agent Farrow said that a search of the vehicle uncovered "nothing unusual or

anything worth commenting on." said they noticed a peculiar habit he had of bringing home armloads of newspapers.

"He would put a dime in a newspaper machine and remove all the papers just to take out his anger on the machine," said Mrs. Goldstein. "It was pretty apparent he was sick, but never that he was violent. He would come downstairs and play with my kids and we'd talk a lot about the things that bothered him."

Byck moved to this Philadelphia neighborhood, known as Torresdale, after his divorce from his wife Arline last year. The two-bedroom apartment he occupied was a virtual carbon copy of the one he shared with his wife and four children about two miles to the east.

Byck's former wife refused to speak with a reporter who rang the door bell today. "Go away," she said. "I'm not giving any more comments. I don't want to talk about anything."

Farrow said the woman told FBI agents Friday she has not seen her husband in more than a year and knew nothing of his hijack plans.

A spokesman for the Philadelphia General Hospital said today that Byck was a patient "under observation" at the Hahnemann Community Mental Health Services Center from January 22 to March 16 last year. Spokesmen for Philadelphia General and Hahnemann refused to release any additional information about Byck today.

Contributing to this story were Washington Post Staff Writers Bart Barnes and Jim Landers.