

# Death, schemes found during 11-year probe

By JOHN MOULDER  
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The tangled web of international intrigue spun by one-time San Antonio wheeler-dealer Jack L. Dickie has a strange cast of characters — a knighted English barrister, a polio-crippled mining company owner, a Hollywood film actor, a Russian agent and a fugitive financier.

The investigation spanned 11 years and involved local, state and federal authorities in four states, five nations and three continents before it was concluded last week in Great Falls, Mont.

A Great Falls federal grand jury accused Dickie, 60, and an associate, Beverly Hills, Calif., mining company owner Chester A. Adams, 55, of racketeering. Adams is a wheelchair-bound polio victim.

In short, the complex 24-page indictment accuses Dickie of making murder a business with complicated transactions involving nine "shell" corporations.

## Insurance policies

Dickie was accused of luring three men into his corporate web over a 15-year period, causing them to take out \$1-million-plus life insurance policies, murdering them and then bilking their estates and the insurance companies.

Some of the characters that popped up in the investigation were injected into the scam through Dickie's imagination, authorities said. One such character is fugitive financier Robert Vesco.

Vesco's name came up during the investigation of the death of Robert Edwin Ermev, 54, a Washington State vineyard owner and wine-making impresario who was found dead at the bottom of a deep gorge near Las Padres National Forest in Ventura County, Calif.

The racketeering indictment alleges Dickie killed, or had Ermev killed, Jan. 13, 1975. Ermev had been shot twice in the head with a small-caliber weapon.

The indictment alleges that Dickie convinced Ermev that he "could arrange a foreign financial business deal that would make Ermev a rich man."

Ermev was told Vesco would provide the money for the venture, but Assistant U.S. Attorney Carl Rostad of Great Falls said investigators concluded that Vesco was never actually involved.

## S.A. probe

According to the indictment, Dickie arranged a \$1 million life insurance policy for Ermev, then got Ermev to sign \$400,000 in promissory notes.

Ventura County Sheriff's Detectives Larry Weimer and Brade McKinley began investigating Ermev's



JACK L. DICKIE

... faces racketeering charge

“With Clanton's death, we established jurisdiction in Texas because we had information Dickie and others plotted the death in San Antonio.”

— John Quinlan

death. They learned that Ermev was on his way to Los Angeles to meet with Dickie when he was killed. The California detectives came to San Antonio to investigate Ermev's association with the globe-trotting Dickie.

After checking in with the San Antonio Police Department, the detectives enlisted the aid of attorney John Quinlan, then with the Bexar County district attorney's special crimes section, and then chief district attorney's investigator Rudy Garza. Quinlan is now in private practice and Garza, a former U.S. Marshal, is county tax assessor-collector.

The investigators interviewed Dickie, then a man taller than 6 feet and weighing about 250 pounds. Dickie has reportedly been in ill health and has lost a lot of weight since his imprisonment in the El Reno, Okla., federal prison after a January 1965 conviction in an unrelated conspiracy.

Quinlan, in an interview last week, said Dickie told them he was staying at a hotel at the Dallas-Fort Worth

airport at the time Ermev was killed. The attorney said investigators could find nobody at the hotel who could remember seeing Dickie at the hotel during the time.

The racketeering indictment alleges that Dickie arranged a telephone call from Los Angeles to the Dallas hotel the day of the Ermev murder to establish an alibi.

“We had evidence that Ermev had met with Dickie in San Antonio in early January 1975,” said Quinlan.

During the investigation of Ermev's murder, said Quinlan, authorities learned of the violent death of another Dickie associate, Charles Fox Clanton, on May 3, 1972.

Clanton's body and a pickup he had been driving were found at the bottom of a 1,200-foot cliff at one of the highest points in Mexico in a mountainous area near Durango. The investigation showed Dickie had been in Mexico with Clanton to look at a gold mine Dickie was talking about buying.

“With Clanton's death, we established jurisdiction in Texas because we had information Dickie and others plotted the death in San Antonio,” said Quinlan.

According to the racketeering indictment, Dickie arranged for a \$1-million life insurance policy to be taken out on Clanton, then had the beneficiary changed from Clanton's wife Pauline to a "shell" corporation, Clancia Enterprises.

After Clanton's death, the indictment alleges, Clancia Enterprises received a \$230,185 settlement, of which \$100,000 was transferred back to Dickie through Adams, the government charged.

## Lawmen cooperated

“I have never seen such cooperation between law enforcement agencies in an investigation,” said Quinlan. In Texas alone, the investigation team was made up of the DA's office, San Antonio police, the Texas Department of Public Safety and then Assistant Attorney General John Blanton.

In tracing Dickie's business dealings and associates, investigators traveled extensively. In Hollywood, said Quinlan, a television film star was interviewed about his knowledge of Dickie and Co.

“A Soviet agent's name also kept popping into the picture,” said Quinlan.

Mexican authorities had ruled Clanton's death accidental. Because Ermev had been shot in the head, Texas authorities were suspicious. Investigators talked to a relative of Clanton, who had viewed the body. The relative said Clanton's head had been severely mangled.

Clanton's body had been taken to



**RUDY GARZA**  
... saw casket opened



**JOHN QUINLAN**  
... heard Soviet agent's name



Photo by JOHN MOULDER

# Deaths, schemes lead to indictment of two

Continued from 6-C

Lubbock for burial. Quinlan obtained a court order for an exhumation and autopsy. Clanton's body was unearthened and taken here for examination.

## Casket opened

Rudy Garza recalled that he went to the county medical examiner's office and was present when the casket was opened. "The head was missing, but there was some skin around the head," Garza said in an interview last week. "Most of the head had been cut away, and it was therefore impossible to determine if he had been shot."

Despite their efforts, California

trolled corporation United Western received \$1.2 million, Chester Adams received \$100,000 and Wasson received \$214,000.

**FROM LEFT, CUSTOMS AGENT DAVID SMITH, U.S. ATTORNEY CARL ROSTAD**  
... with U.S. Attorney Pete Dunbar, announcing indictments in Great Falls



wanted, federal authorities in San Antonio developed an unrelated case that would lead to the conviction of Dickie in a conspiracy alleging violations of federal neutrality laws by smuggling firearms and explosives into Mexico.

Authorities contended Dickie bilked two Florida men out of \$200,000 by luring them to Piedras Negras, Mexico, in an alleged money laundering scam, then arranging for Mexican police to arrest them in a hotel room planted with munitions and explosives.

## **20-year sentence**

Dickie was sentenced to 20 years in January 1985. Last week, authorities were rerouting Dickie from the El Reno prison to Great Falls to begin court appearances in the murder-for-insurance case.

Evidence that came out at court hearings in connection with the San Antonio smuggling conspiracy case led to U.S. Customs Service agent David Smith's successful investigation that led to the murder-for-insurance indictment.

Smith pieced together the various corporate transactions involved in the death of Craig Carroll Young, a 31-year-old 1977 graduate of the University of Montana. Young's body was found near a roadside park beside Interstate 10 in Colorado County in January 1983. He had been shot twice in the back of the head.

The indictment alleges Dickie killed Young, or had him killed, and made it appear to be a robbery-murder.

Dickie insured a firearms collection with the National Rifle Association, then reported to San Antonio police 29 guns had been stolen.

On May 1, 1982, he received a \$15,800 payment on the insurance claim, the government contends.

Ten days later, the government alleges, Dickie, using the alias Alfredo Speck, paid a London barrister, Sir David Wilson, to obtain four Panamanian share corporations to be used in Dickie's dealings with Young.

## **Inflated mining claims**

According to the indictment, Dickie convinced Young that "fraudulently inflated mining claims could be sold to investors as tax shelters or as vehicles to launder money, or to borrow against, which could make Young a rich man."

On July 6, 1982, Dickie had Young apply for a \$3-million "key man" life insurance policy "to provide false legitimacy and substance to the fraud."

The government contends that Dickie then lured Young to San Antonio and killed him.

During the scheme, the government charged, Dickie had Young sign over promissory notes totaling \$2.5 million to a shell corporation, Vanguard World Holdings S.A.

Dickie is accused of hiring an associate, John Wasson, to hold himself out as legal representative of Vanguard and to claim Dickie had no connection with the corporation.

According to the indictment, Dickie directed Wasson's activities and authorized him to settle Vanguard's claim against the Young estate for \$2.14 million.

Dickie engaged barrister Wilson to negotiate the settlement, the government contends. Wasson received the \$2.14-million check and traveled with Dickie to London, where Wilson distributed the proceeds of the check at Dickie's directions, prosecutors say.

According to the indictment, Dickie received \$150,000, Dickie-con-



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