

Bank Swindle

Will \$5 Flight Recorders Blow Financier's Obit?

NEW YORK — (UPI) — For a mere \$5 an American pilot has bought from Mexican peasants voice and flight recorders that may reveal if missing Argentine financial wizard David Graiver died in a Mexican plane crash two years ago.

A Manhattan grand jury two weeks ago ignored reports that Graiver was aboard a private jet when it slammed into a mountain near the resort of Acapulco, killing all three persons thought to be aboard, and indicted him as the kingpin in a \$50-million international bank swindle.

The indictment added fuel to the fires of speculation that the mysterious Graiver, 35 years old at the time and mastermind of a financial empire reaching into four continents, might still be alive and might have staged his own death so that he could vanish with impunity — and with untold millions of missing bank funds.

THE OFFICIAL Mexican report on the crash of the Falcon jet on Aug. 7, 1976, said the voice and flight recorders were not recovered by Mexican army and Red Cross investigators.

But an American pilot, Robert Meyer, has told UPI he bought parts of the voice recorder tape and the entire flight recorder tape for \$5 several months ago from Mexicans living near the crash site.

Meyer turned over the tapes to New York attorneys representing Graiver's wife in a \$20-million negligence suit against the private jet's owner and operator.

"Once it was established that the tapes had, in fact, come from the Falcon jet, the attorneys were asked to turn them over to the proper authorities," Meyer said.

"The voice recorder might pick up more voices than the pilots' and the flight recorder will tell us if there were any unusual occurrences during the flight."

CONTENTS of both tapes now are being analyzed, the attorneys said. A 10-minute segment of the voice recorder tape contained aircraft conversations, they said, but it was not immediately known which portion of the fatal flight it covered.

The attorneys said they would ask the National Transportation Safety Board and Federal Court Judge Charles E. Stewart, who is presiding in the negligence case, for guidance "on how to handle these two possible pieces of evidence."

The attorneys have set up a meeting with Judge Stewart for May 2 and say that the contents of the recorders may have been analyzed by then.

Graiver, who was indicted on 83 felony counts of misappropriating

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funds and doctoring the records of American Bank & Trust Co. in New York, had chartered the Falcon jet from Hansa Jet Corp., of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., for a flight from New York City to Acapulco.

THE ARGENTINE financier was in the process of buying ABT, which failed five weeks after the plane crash in the fourth largest bank collapse in U.S. history.

"The grand jury apparently believed they weren't indicting a dead man," Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau said. The grand jury still is investigating possible charges of homicide — presumably involving who actually died in the plane crash — and the FBI and Interpol are searching for Graiver.

The attorneys for Graiver's wife have asked the DA's office for any evidence the financier is alive. "We don't want to litigate a wrongful death action if Graiver is alive," one lawyer said.

The Mexican report identified two U.S. pilots and one unnamed passenger as fatalities in the crash. Graiver's brother claimed part of one charred body as that of the financier on the basis of a scrap of necktie.

THE MEXICAN government never invited the National Transportation Safety Board to investigate the crash as is customary in international accident cases.

The Mexican government also has refused to release air traffic control tapes and transcripts to U.S. authorities, according to Meyer.

Meyer is the owner of another charter jet service that Graiver had used twice in the past to fly between New York and his legal residence in Mexico. He has conducted an extensive private investigation into the Graiver case.

The Argentine financier owed Meyer \$10,000 for an earlier flight at the time of the Mexican crash.

Meyer said he went to the remote crash site in the mountains outside Acapulco several months ago and bought the recorder tape from local people who had pilfered it.