

The skyjacking of 1971



My investigation of the DB Cooper case

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Age 13

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Background



- **On Wednesday November 24 1971, a man going by the name of Dan Cooper boarded the 727 Northwest Orient Airlines, flight 305 from Portland to Seattle. After the plane took off, Cooper handed a note to flight attendant Florence Schaffner, at first she put the note in her pocket thinking it was nothing, Cooper then told her “Miss you better look at that note again, I have a bomb”. She looked at the note and it read, ‘I have a bomb I’d like you to sit by me’. Cooper showed her the bomb and told her to give more notes to the pilots with his ransom demands. His demands were - “I want \$200k by 5:00pm, 2 back parachutes and 2 front parachutes and a fuel truck waiting at Seattle”. The plane circled Seattle Tacoma airport for 2 hours so the FBI could get his demands ready.**
- **When the plane landed Cooper asked that the plane be taken to a remote location of the airport. The money was delivered onto the plane, and Cooper told the pilots he wanted to go Mexico City flying at 100 knots (115 mph) and at about 10,000 feet above sea level. The pilots told him they would need to refuel, and Reno Nevada was chosen. Cooper then let off all of the passengers and 2 flight attendants. Cooper also asked to take off with the aft air-stairs deployed, the pilots told him that it would create too much drag and they wouldn’t be able to take off. So they took off from Seattle with the stairs up. Then around 10 minutes into the flight the pilots got a warning light saying the rear stairs had been deployed and a few minutes later they felt a bump, presumably when Cooper jumped, and he was never seen again.**
- **After 40 years he still hasn’t been found. After the skyjacking there were many searches by 30-40 agents at a time. Cooper left very little on the plane, just his tie and tie pin. Many attempts to solve the case including recreating the jump, interviewing flight attendants and eye witnesses, and even trying to find dna on his tie have taken place but still nobody knows for sure who Dan Cooper was.**

Evidence



- **Almost no evidence was found by the FBI or anyone else. The two flight attendant's descriptions of Cooper were almost the same, 5 feet 10 inches to 5 feet 11 inches, 170 to 180 pounds mid-40s, with brown eyes and tanned skin.**
- **The only significant physical evidence that remains are 3 bundles of \$20 bills found at Tina Bar beach in South Washington state in 1980 (nearly 9 years after the skyjacking) plus his clip on tie and tie pin.**



Suspects

- There were many suspects in the DB Cooper case. I have investigated five of them.
- Robert Rackstraw, Richard McCoy, Walter Reca, Kenneth Christiansen, Lynn Doyle Cooper.
- Richard McCoy is the first person to rule out, because he was responsible for one of the copycat hijackings that happened at a later date. He made many mistakes including leaving all the notes on the plane with his fingerprints. There is also proof that he was home in Utah on the night of the Cooper skyjacking.
- Next is Walter Reca. He says that he was DB Cooper and that after jumping he landed near Cle Elum, which is over 50 miles away from the confirmed flight path and is on the other side of Mt Rainier to where the plane was flying.
- Another one is Robert Rackstraw, who was a former paratrooper in the army and a helicopter pilot, but has nothing to support that he was DB Cooper. The flight attendants also said that it was not him
- Lynn Doyle Cooper has a story told by his niece Marla Cooper which says that her uncles went turkey hunting on the night of the skyjacking and Lynn came back with blood on him. Years later her father told her that Lynn was hiding from the FBI because he hijacked a plane. But his fingerprints and the ones on the ticket don't match.
- Kenneth Christiansen is the most interesting, because he worked for the airline on international flights and was an aircraft mechanic at one point. He also was a paratrooper in the army, he had motive to do it to the airline because he didn't get paid much as the other workers were always going on strike. After the skyjacking he bought a house and paid in cash, money was found at the house in the yard and in the attic there was a hatch that could have been used for hiding money. Flight attendant Florence Schaffner said that the picture of him looks more like Cooper than any other suspect picture she's seen.

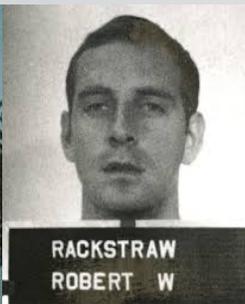
Kenneth



Lynn Doyle



Robert



Walter Reca



Richard McCoy





FBI Current Case Status

- **The FBI closed the case in 2016 and it is still closed now. The FBI believes that DB Cooper died during the jump, despite the fact that McCoy survived a similar jump and no body was ever found. But still after over 40 years they still haven't found a person who is 100% without a doubt, DB Cooper.**





My Conclusion



- In conclusion I think the 1971 skyjacker is Kenneth Christiansen, because all of the circumstantial evidence make sense. He was an aircraft mechanic and worked as a flight attendant for Northwest Airlines. Working that job wasn't getting him much because other workers and pilots kept going on strike. He wore a hairpiece before, but not after the heist. After the heist he was still working with Northwest Air, but not on domestic flights. He was never a suspect until after he died. Shortly after the heist he bought a house that he paid for in cash. He wasn't making lots of money, so that was a lot to have saved. In that house's yard, money was found, and in the attic there was a hatch that could have been used for hiding money.

- In this picture Kenneth is seen wearing what Cooper was said to have been wearing and holding a bag and a briefcase.



The developer's stamp on the photo reads "Mr. 72" or "about four months after the hijacking. But the 3 months' reaction on the door says it was taken earlier and developer later hijacker carried a suitcase and a paper bag as well. Chris Christiansen had no other children in his family, so pressing his photographs with Northwest Airlines and was a former mailman. We think he staged this and kept it as a memento.