

THE UNSOLVED SKYJACKING

MY INVESTIGATION OF THE DB COOPER CASE

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NEVADA CONNECTIONS ACADEMY GRADE 4

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BACKGROUND



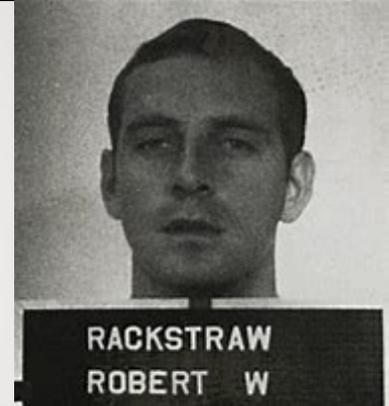
- On Thanksgiving eve, November 24, 1971, a man carrying a black briefcase approached the flight counter of Northwest Airlines at Portland International Airport. He identified himself as Dan Cooper and used cash to buy a ticket on Flight 305, a 30-minute trip north to Seattle.
- Cooper boarded the aircraft, a Boeing 727, and took seat 18C in the rear of the passenger cabin. He lit a cigarette and ordered a bourbon and soda. He also gave a flight attendant a note. The flight attendant put the note in her purse because she thought it wasn't anything special. Cooper then said "You might want to read that note, I have a bomb." The note read " Miss- I have a bomb and would like you to sit next to me." The flight attendant sat next to him and he showed her the bomb. He also asked for 200k in ransom, 4 parachutes, and a fuel tanker ready to refuel when they landed.
- When they landed he let the passengers off after his requests were met. Cooper then told the pilot that he wanted to go to Mexico City at the minimum airspeed possible without stalling the aircraft – approximately 100 knots at a maximum 10,000-foot altitude. He further specified that the landing gear remain deployed in the takeoff/landing position, the wing flaps be lowered 15 degrees, and the cabin remain unpressurized.
- The Co-pilot informed Cooper that the aircraft's range was limited to approximately 1,000 miles under the specified flight configuration, which meant that a second refueling would be necessary before entering Mexico. Cooper and the crew discussed options and agreed on Reno, Nevada, as the refueling stop. Shortly after take-off, the aft stairway was opened and shortly after the pilot noticed that the plane shook and needed to be re-levelled. This is the time that many people believe Cooper jumped out of the plane.
- When the plane landed, Cooper was discovered to no longer be on board. It has been confirmed that he jumped out of the plane near the Washougal River drainage area in Southern Washington state.

EVIDENCE

- Tina Bar Money Find
- Nearly 9 years after the skyjacking in 1980, a kid named Brian Ingram was walking on Tina Bar beach in Washington searching for firewood and found two packets of 100 twenty-dollar bills each, and a third packet of 90, all very disintegrated. These were sent to the FBI and were confirmed to be part of the Cooper ransom money.



SUSPECTS





Kenneth Christiansen

- : \$200k in the bank at the time of his death.
- Bought a house soon after the hijack with mainly cash.
- While dying of cancer in 1994, he told Lyle (his brother), "There is something you should know, but I cannot tell you." This led his brother to believe he was indeed D. B. Cooper.
- Christiansen was 45 years old at the time of the hijacking, but he was a little shorter (5 ft 8 in or 173 cm), thinner (150 pounds or 68 kg), and lighter than some eyewitness descriptions. Christiansen smoked and displayed a particular fondness for bourbon. He was also left-handed.
- Former Army paratrooper. May have chosen the older parachute as it was what he was used to.
- Worked at the airlines D. B. Cooper robbed. Didn't get paid enough from airlines. Might have attacked the airline for making him struggle. Also, Letters sent to family stating hard times.
- Secret hiding space in roof above bedroom in house he bought in 1972. Also cash found buried near the house many years later. From 1972 onwards, seemed to be more wealthy!
- Used to wear toupee before hijacking and never wore it after.
- I think it could be him.



Lynn Doyle Cooper

- L.D. Cooper was proposed as a suspect in July 2011 by his niece, Marla Cooper. As an eight-year-old, she recalled Cooper and another uncle planning something "very mischievous", involving the use of "expensive walkie-talkies", at her grandmother's house. The next day flight 305 was hijacked. and though the uncles said they were turkey hunting, L.D. Cooper came home wearing a bloody shirt—the result, he said, of an auto accident. Later, she said, her parents came to believe that L.D. Cooper was the hijacker. She also recalled that her uncle, was obsessed with the Canadian comic book hero Dan Cooper.
 - I don't think it's him.



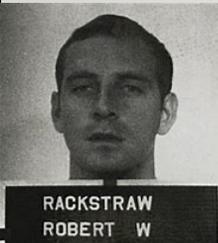
William J. Smith

- In November 2018, The Oregonian published an article that identified William J. Smith, as a possible suspect. The article was based on research from a U.S. Army data analyst who sent his findings to the FBI in the summer of 2018. Smith was a World War II Navy veteran and would have been 43 at the time of the hijacking. After high school he enlisted in the Navy and volunteered for combat air crew training, citing his desire to fly.
- The article states that particles such as aluminum spiral chips found on the clip-on tie could have come from a train maintenance facility. additionally, it states that Smith's information about the Seattle area may have come from his close friend from the railroad, Dan Clair.
- I don't think it's him.



Richard McCoy

- McCoy was an Army veteran who served two tours of duty in Vietnam, first as a demolition expert, and later, a helicopter pilot. After his military service he became a warrant officer and an avid recreational skydiver, with aspirations, he said, of becoming a Utah State Trooper.
- Although there is no doubt that McCoy committed the Denver hijacking, the FBI does not consider him a suspect in the Cooper case because of significant mismatches in age and description. Plus a level of skydiving skill well above that thought to be possessed by the hijacker, and credible evidence that McCoy was in Las Vegas on the day of the Portland hijacking, and at home in Utah the day after, having Thanksgiving dinner with his family.
- Its not him.



Robert Rackstraw

- Several letters were sent to the FBI by (supposedly) D. B. Cooper after the skyjacking. One of them included the words " And Please tell the lackey cops." its Letter code is 269, and that number also equals "I'm Lt. Robert W. Rackstraw."
- Very intelligent, made a working cannon when he was twelve. He was also very interested in planes (guns and explosives too).
- Also served in the military. Since leaving the army he has been in trouble with the law many times and is believed to be a con-man.
- Witnesses place him in the Portland area in the fall of 1971 and he did have the parachuting and survival skills needed to carry out the skyjacking.
- He has never denied being Cooper but has never admitted it either.
- I have a feeling that it could be him.



Walter R. Reca

- Claims to have done the hijacking, but the place where he claimed he landed is complete nonsense. That is around 120 miles away from the drop zone and also at least 50 miles away from the confirmed flightpath.
- Someone says that D. B. Cooper was their friend, but where's the evidence? In my opinion this is total fiction.
- Family says he bought a house and other items and put the rest in a safety deposit box in Canada.

- I am sure it's NOT Walter R. Reca.



The “He died in the jump” theory.

- Probably landed in Freezing water, would have died in 2mins. He also had 20lbs of money on him, to weigh him down.
- Body may have gone into the ocean, because the Columbia river sucks bodies into ocean after about 2-3 days.
- He jumped in the conditions of rain, night-time, high winds, freezing temperature.
- No body ever found plus where is the rest of the money and the parachute? Also no missing persons reported that weekend!

- I don't think he died in the jump.

FBI CURRENT CASE STATUS

- The FBI believe Cooper probably died in the fall, but a body was never found.
 - They never found enough evidence to arrest anybody, so they closed their case in 2016 and claimed Cooper was probably dead.
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- I don't agree

Conclusion

- I have eliminated 4 out of the 6 suspects, plus the idea that he died in the jump. The suspects I eliminated are McCoy, because there was credible evidence that McCoy was in Las Vegas on the day of the Portland hijacking. Recca, because his story didn't make any sense, Cooper, because I think he doesn't look anything like the sketch and why would you use your real name? and Smith because there is not enough evidence he did it.
- Now its down to Rackstraw and Christiansen. Although there is a lot of information that points towards Rackstraw..... I believe that KENNETH CHRISTIANSEN is D. B. Cooper because there are just too many coincidences in the evidence found about him.

• **CASE CLOSED**