

the only visible only by night. He had no possible way to ascertain whether he had a duly or a citizen.

McCaughey later wrote me that Thomas is "the kind of person we all remember in grade school—the type who trudges into the cloakroom, hangs up his mackinaw, and then all the other kids rush in and stuff snowballs into his mackinaw hood and pockets."

One of the nagging problems about the story was the difficulty and near-impossibility of verifying any of Cooper's statements. To go to anyone, the airline, to Boeing, and certainly to the FBI to verify the story would not be intelligent. That would be blowing my story, and causing Cooper's arrest even before anything could be published.

If there was now a chance Thomas or someone else there might talk as seemed likely, then I would have to do something quick. I telephoned Morgan in Atlanta, and he rapidly devised a plan.

He left instantly for Washington, went to the Justice Department, and reported that he had a client, unnamed, who had knowledge of a serious federal crime, that the client planned to publish a story about it, and that the client would turn over the information he would print—10 days before publication—providing the client could get a promise of immunity. Here was the legal danger: were I to publish the story and Cooper take flight, then I might be liable for aiding and abetting a criminal to take flight to avoid prosecution, and other things. But if the FBI got the information 10 days ahead of publication, they'd have a fair shot at doing their jobs, and for that matter, possibly establishing whether Cooper's story was true. The promise of immunity was made.

Meantime, Morgan urged me to hurry

to call the FBI. It was not one of the better days.

McCaughey later wrote me that Thomas was in the alley. About the time of the Cambodian invasion they grew more populous, and emboldened enough to appear by day scuttling under cars and running across the streets. Now at the end of the term, with John Connally'sness deals by members of the Alessio family not in prison,

heading up the Democrats for Republican Committee, they're in parks, not running but standing still contesting with the pigeons for dry bread crumbs.

In this city of predators the rats have

no natural enemies. Yes, there's a rat abatement program, but like so much

under the Nixon Administration, it

doesn't work. People don't realize that

They think these Republicans are effi- cient because they don't make big, dreamy, Democratic promises and then

fail to carry them out.

You can break modest promises too, but that hasn't sunk in any more than the Watergate Scandal or the Milk Scandal or the Wheat Scandal or the You-Fill-in-the-Blank Scandal. Nor does the country, over which this capital presides know about another scandal: the almost nightly escape from Washington's jails. Since January they have averaged one escape every four days. They make good their get-aways not only singularly, but in groups.

Fat City, Rat City, who's to blame? One test of an administration is how it runs Washington. Do we blame the low caliber of Nixon's appointees or are the crooks bribing their way out? That accusation has been made but not answered. No questions get answered in the rat kingdom where the rodents come out of their holes, and a faceless President slips down and out of sight broadcasting modest radio messages in the Television Age from impenetrable places.

Many, many questions. There are questions to be asked about John Ales-

son, Brown, Johnson, and the rest of the bunch.

But what about the story? From the point of view of saving government, Murphy was also a rumor that the brother

Cooper had been located, and the sa-

Cooper did it because he was dying

an incurable disease.

The fraud case was yet to be tried,

but strong evidence seemed to be accu-

mulating that Donald Sylvester Murph-

my Cooper is not the real Cooper.

A private investigator checked aga-

in last week and says that Murphy had

been employed at Boeing, and had

military record of as a jumper. Neith-

er fact, of course, is proof that Murphy d-

or did not hijack the airplane. In theo-

anybody smart enough to pull it off wou-

be smart enough to concoct an elabo-

ately fictitious background for himse-

Or, anybody smart enough to do it wou-

be smart enough to do it and tell the

story for money, but tell it in such a wa-

that it appeared to be a hoax.

But in the end, or to this point, it seem-

appropriate to conclude that Murphy

not Cooper, which means I jumped high

I fell hard.

Long ago I played in a poker game wi-

a bristly-browed, old curmudgeon wh-

had run whiskey for Capone in Phil-

adelphia. He was one tough old man. H-

would try to goad me into calling hi-

bets, when my cards didn't indicate

should. "Go on. Take a chance," he taun-

ted. "Columbus took a chance."

Yes. Columbus took a chance and dis-

covered America. Now I had taken

chance, everything on the line, and

had discovered, what? A more than lik-

ely impostor, an actor, a pretender

herculean deeds.

Still there lingers a small gut feelin-

maybe self-serving, maybe not, that

had the right man all along. And if

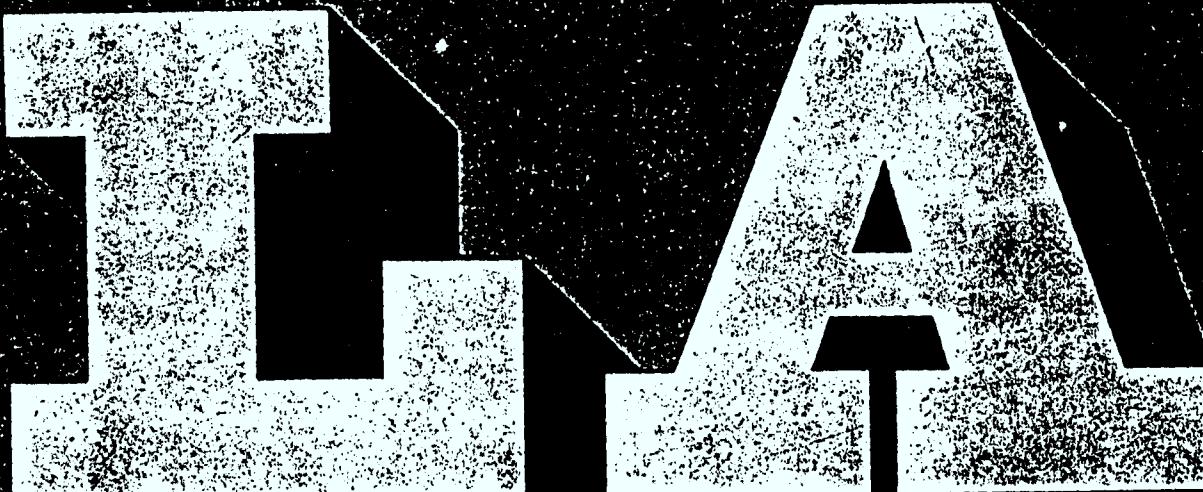
didn't, well, so be it. It was a breat-

taking story that didn't check out. An-

that is what a reporter is for.

# *THE D.B. COOPER SKYJACKING STORY*

Part II : 'Sex Is Better on Payday' (Page 18)



© 1972 by TIME Inc.

**Von Hoffman   Lance Rentzel   Politics  
Reporter Faces Jail   Encounter Groups**

# D.B. COOPER

## WHY HE HIJACKED PLANE FOR \$200,000

By Karl Fleming

In last week's first installment, the man claiming to be D.B. Cooper told how he planned the hijacking for more than a year, how he did it alone, how he decided where to do it, how after he parachuted to earth with \$200,000, he walked to his car and drove home. Now he

there that he would surface and expose himself to capture? If Cooper was smart enough to essay such a slickly pulled-off crime, he doubtless would be smart enough to know with what appetite agents of the law were seeking his capture. His getting away with it, after all, would only encourage others to mimic his deed, at God knows what cost to the airlines in hard dollars and possibly in human life.

Advertise!

ground revolutionary bomber group to tell his story: advertising.

Accordingly, I placed a classified advertisement in several Pacific Northwest newspapers, addressed to Cooper, inviting him to contact me, and assuring him we could talk without exposing him to capture. An imprudent and wasted effort, probably. I had not been one to shy away from risks. No, only was there but a tiny chance Cooper would respond, but a minefield of booby-traps and pitfalls lay in wait. I would be

secret? Or would I be obligated, as a citizen with knowledge of a crime, to turn Cooper in?

Moreover, suppose in fact someone came forward representing himself as Cooper. How could I know he was the right man? After all, the Clifford Irving hoax was much in the press. How could I be sure someone wouldn't try the same scheme on me? There was one way it seemed to prove his identity: if Cooper responded to my ad, I could demand that he produce the money from the

# By Karl Fleming

In last week's first installment, the man claiming to be D.B. Cooper told how he planned the hijacking for more than a year, how he did it alone, how he decided where to do it, how, after he parachuted to earth with \$200,000, he walked to his car and drove home, how he discovered he couldn't spend the money. This week he explains why he did it.

THREE WEEKS AFTER D.B. COOPER skyjacked a Northwest Airline plane and got away with \$200,000, the following letter appeared in a Reno newspaper:

"I didn't rob Northwest Orient (sic) because I thought it would be romantic, heroic or any of the other euphemisms that seem to attach themselves to situations of high risk. I am no modern-day Robin Hood. Unfortunately, I do have only 14 months to live. My life has been one of hate, turmoil, frustration and more hate. This seemed like the fastest and most profitable way to gain a few last grains of peace of mind. I am not holed up in some obscure backwoods town. Neither am I a psychopathic killer. As a matter of fact, I've never even received a speeding ticket."

Here, the long-trained reporter's instinct suggested, was a man who wanted to talk, to justify, to rationalize and to do verbal penance for his deed.

What he had done was to execute the most daring and ingenious airline hold-up in history—doing it all alone and diving out of the plane with \$200,000 booty—and to all appearances, getting away with it. Half the FBI agents in the country were looking for him. Hundreds of military troops fanned out on foot to search the countryside around Lake Merwin, Wash., where it was believed he landed after parachuting. Northwest

there that he would surface and expose himself to capture? If Cooper was smart enough to essay such a slickly pulled-off crime, he doubtless would be smart enough to know with what appetite agents of the law were seeking his capture. His getting away with it, after all, would only encourage others to mimic his deed, at God knows what cost to the airlines in hard dollars and possibly in human life.

## Advertise!

Still, there remained the fact of the letter. After several days of pondering, I decided to try a scheme I had successfully used once before to lure from hiding a member of a secret under-

The man who says he is D.B. Cooper

ground revolutionary bomber group to "secret? Or would I be obligated, as a citizen with knowledge of a crime, to turn Cooper in?

Moreover, suppose in fact someone came forward representing himself as Cooper. How could I know he was the right man? After all, the Clifford Irving hoax was much in the press. How could I be sure someone wouldn't try the same scheme on me? There was one way. It seemed to prove his identity, if Cooper responded to my ad, I could demand that he produce the money from the skyjacking. That would be strong proof.

Preparing for such an eventuality, I obtained the 34-page FBI booklet containing the numbers of every one of the stolen bills. The FBI was circulating it to banks and other money institutions.

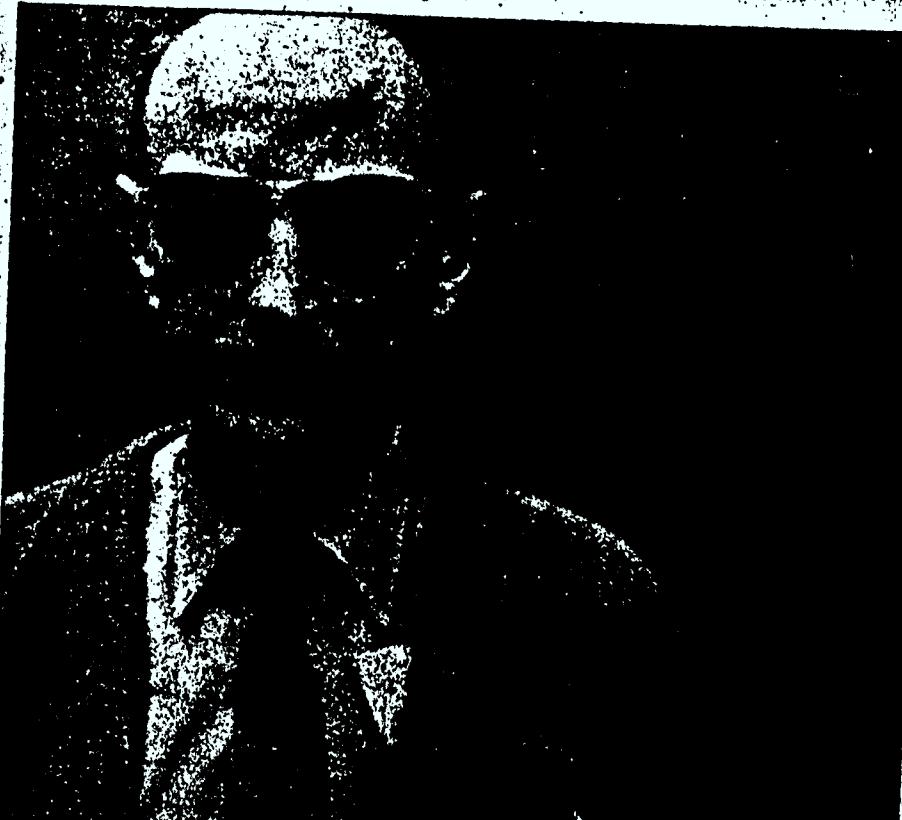
## Midnight Phone Call

Then an entire month passed. The few respondents to the ad were cranks. Nothing more. Then on the night of Jan. 31, precisely at midnight, my phone rang and when I answered a voice said: "This call is from the Pacific Northwest."

I was fully awake in an instant and said "Don't say a word more. Call me tomorrow night at 9 o'clock and I will have made arrangements for us to talk on a safe telephone."

As is many a reporter who has been involved in hairy, dangerous stories (I had covered Birmingham, Selma, Jackson, Watts, and four assassinations) I was careful almost to the point of paranoia about telephone tapping. Once down South, a reporter friend was dictating his integration story to his office by long-distance call when a voice, obviously white, probably cop, broke in and said "You goddamned nigger-loving son-of-a-bitch."

One learned to be careful about phones. By next morning, I had arranged an elaborate system involving four phones; my answering service was in



WADY-TV

...and when he had no place to go, he would have to go home. Life has been one ultimate, tumultuous frustration and more hate. This seemed like the easiest and most profitable way to gain a few last grains of peace of mind. I am now holed up in some obscure backwoods town. Neither am I a psychopathic killer. As a matter of fact, I've never even received a speeding ticket!"

Here the long-trained reporter's instinct suggested was a man who wanted to talk, to justify, to rationalize and to do verbal penance for his deed.

What he had done was to execute the most daring and ingenious airline hold-up in history—doing it all alone and diving out of the plane with \$200,000 booty—and to all appearances getting away with it. Half the FBI agents in the country were looking for him. Hundreds of military troops fanned out on foot to search the countryside around Lake Merwin, Wash., where it was believed he landed after parachuting. Northwest posted a \$25,000 reward. So no matter how urgently Cooper might have wanted to talk, he would be laying extremely low.

Nevertheless, I brooded, if a reporter could somehow get to Cooper, what a story there was to be had. Not only was the crime daringly unique, but Cooper's letter suggested an extremely uncommon and thus potentially fascinating motive. If a reporter was good at his craft, he looked for this extra dimension in a story—a situation or an occurrence of an extraordinary nature that instantly crystallized some aspect of the human spectacle.

Given the intensity of the search for Cooper, however, what real hope was

Copyright © 1972 Platypus Publications



and when he had no place to go, he would have to go home. Life has been one ultimate, tumultuous frustration and more hate. This seemed like the easiest and most profitable way to gain a few last grains of peace of mind. I am now holed up in some obscure backwoods town. Neither am I a psychopathic killer. As a matter of fact, I've never even received a speeding ticket!"

Here the long-trained reporter's instinct suggested was a man who wanted to talk, to justify, to rationalize and to do verbal penance for his deed.

What he had done was to execute the most daring and ingenious airline hold-up in history—doing it all alone and diving out of the plane with \$200,000 booty—and to all appearances getting away with it. Half the FBI agents in the country were looking for him. Hundreds of military troops fanned out on foot to search the countryside around Lake Merwin, Wash., where it was believed he landed after parachuting. Northwest posted a \$25,000 reward. So no matter how urgently Cooper might have wanted to talk, he would be laying extremely low.

Nevertheless, I brooded, if a reporter could somehow get to Cooper, what a story there was to be had. Not only was the crime daringly unique, but Cooper's letter suggested an extremely uncommon and thus potentially fascinating motive. If a reporter was good at his craft, he looked for this extra dimension in a story—a situation or an occurrence of an extraordinary nature that instantly crystallized some aspect of the human spectacle.

Given the intensity of the search for Cooper, however, what real hope was

and when he had no place to go, he would have to go home. Life has been one ultimate, tumultuous frustration and more hate. This seemed like the easiest and most profitable way to gain a few last grains of peace of mind. I am now holed up in some obscure backwoods town. Neither am I a psychopathic killer. As a matter of fact, I've never even received a speeding ticket!"

Here the long-trained reporter's instinct suggested was a man who wanted to talk, to justify, to rationalize and to do verbal penance for his deed.

What he had done was to execute the most daring and ingenious airline hold-up in history—doing it all alone and diving out of the plane with \$200,000 booty—and to all appearances getting away with it. Half the FBI agents in the country were looking for him. Hundreds of military troops fanned out on foot to search the countryside around Lake Merwin, Wash., where it was believed he landed after parachuting. Northwest posted a \$25,000 reward. So no matter how urgently Cooper might have wanted to talk, he would be laying extremely low.

Nevertheless, I brooded, if a reporter could somehow get to Cooper, what a story there was to be had. Not only was the crime daringly unique, but Cooper's letter suggested an extremely uncommon and thus potentially fascinating motive. If a reporter was good at his craft, he looked for this extra dimension in a story—a situation or an occurrence of an extraordinary nature that instantly crystallized some aspect of the human spectacle.

Given the intensity of the search for Cooper, however, what real hope was

KARL FLEMING was associated with Newsweek magazine as correspondent, Los Angeles bureau chief and contributing editor for 11 years before resigning April 15 to found LA. While with Newsweek, he covered virtually every significant civil rights story of the turbulent '60s, including Birmingham, Selma, Ole Miss, Little Rock and Watts. He covered the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert and those of Martin Luther King and Medgar Evers. He was assigned to Richard Nixon during the last Presidential campaign and has covered Lyndon Johnson, George Wallace, Hubert Humphrey, Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan. He also reported on the Charles Manson and Jack Ruby trials for Newsweek and the trial of Pueblo spy ship captain Lloyd M. Bucher.

LA

October 28, 1972

19





The D. B. Cooper Story, an artist's conception of what he says he was, is, and might be: a Boeing engineer, a skyjacker riding the plane he parachuted from; a vacationer enjoying his spoils; or a convict, caught and dispatched to jail.

Robert Blue

# COOPER THOUGHT ABOUT SUICIDE BUT IN THE CHURCH IT'S A SIN

structed to take the call and refer it to another number, where a friend was standing by with instructions to take the call, refer the caller to yet another number—where I was waiting—and then get out of the house. In case the call was traced to that number, the friend would be absent if anyone came knocking.

At 9 p.m., I was waiting, and at 9:10, the phone rang. The caller identified himself as "Mr. Thomas" and said he was acting as an intermediary for Cooper. He said Cooper was interested in explaining to the American people the reason for the skyjacking, but Cooper was having a hard time financially. He wasn't able to spend the \$200,000, for the money was hot. The FBI had the numbers of the bills, therefore, he wanted to sell his story for \$45,000, to be paid in three segments: \$15,000 when I was sure I had the right man; \$15,000 when my interviews were completed (he suggested a filmed interview, with masks); and \$15,000 upon publication of the story.

### Seth Thomas Shows Up

Next week, the intermediary came to Los Angeles, and we met at the Airport Marina Hotel, where I had taken a room. "Seth Thomas" was a plodding, black-haired, spade-bearded, real estate broker and investment counselor—or so he described himself—and he brought with him several Polaroid photographs of his client, pictures that looked

felt guilty even when stealing cookies from a jar when he was a child.

He had been married to the same woman for 25 years, had never cheated on her once, belonged to the country club, the PTA and had been so faithful an upward-aspiring engineer at Boeing that he carried two cheese sandwiches to lunch every day, and often toiled into the night at his job. He was a perfect Free enterprise specimen.

### Feathers His Neck

Item: "You don't laugh at motherhood. You don't laugh at tradition, at religion, at everything possible that a man could hold dear," he said.

Item: "When you're at the football game and somebody gets up and sings the 'Star-Spangled Banner,' it still makes the feathers come up on my neck when I hear it."

Item: "When I had my first sexual experience with a girl, I was 17 years old. This was an older woman. I was so dumb, I was drinking beer with her. I was away from home and it was Christmas Eve. We went to her apartment. She asked me if I wanted to play cards. So I said 'sure.' So we're playing strip poker. For real. So, the next thing, I had to go to the bathroom and when I came back, she was in bed. So I said 'Well, I guess I'll be going, Irene.' And she said 'Oh, it's cold in here. If you'd just come over and warm me up a bit.' Well, I'm a pretty

stupor following. I just sat in there and

phase out everybody in their 40s because it would be cheaper, and better economics to keep the young blood coming in. If you can suck the last drop of gray matter from the ones you're going to dump and put it into the brains of the younger ones, then see how much more money you're ahead!"

The first shock passed, and Cooper realized that his situation—though he had a \$300 a month mortgage on a suburban home, two cars, a boat, a camper and two children to support—wasn't too bad. After all, this executive at Northwest, upon whom occasionally Cooper paid service calls, had "made" a standing offer that any time I wanted to change companies...it would be great to have me on the Northwest team." The Northwest man had been buttering him up, courting him even.

So Cooper telephoned him. The secretary said he was on another line and would call back. When he didn't, Cooper phoned again. He was not in the office, the secretary said, but she would have him call. He didn't. Cooper telephoned again. He was in conference, the secretary said. Finally, another bolt of truth: his old pal at Northwest, his occasional golf partner, was avoiding him. There would be no job.

As the out-of-work days passed, Cooper began dipping into his savings, and thinking of what he would do with the rest of his life. His pride had been hurt. "Any man who lets up and goes to work

He said Cooper was interested in explaining to the American people the reason for the skyjacking, but Cooper was having a hard time financially. He wasn't able to spend the \$200,000, for the money was hot. The FBI had the numbers of the bills, therefore, he wanted to sell his story for \$45,000, to be paid in three segments: \$15,000 when I was sure I had the right man; \$15,000 when my interviews were completed (he suggested a filmed interview, with masks); and \$15,000 upon publication of the story.

### Seth Thomas Shows Up

Next week, the intermediary came to Los Angeles, and we met at the Airport Marina Hotel, where I had taken a room. "Seth Thomas" was a plodding, black-haired, spade-bearded real estate broker and investment counselor—or so he described himself—and he brought with him several Polaroid photographs of his client, pictures that looked remarkably like the composite drawing of D.B. Cooper which the FBI circulated to newspapers. He also produced a paper containing three serial numbers, which coincided with three numbers on the FBI list.

That, I told him, was hardly real proof, for nearly anyone could obtain the list and copy numbers out of it. How about the real bills?

As we dickered over the interview fee, he promised the real bills would be produced. We agreed on a price, \$30,000, and on Feb. 15, I nervously boarded a Western flight to Seattle, carrying cameras, two tape recorders, and \$30,000 in \$20 and \$50 bills, concealed in several envelopes and buried in my tennis equipment case.

Shortly after checking into The Swept Wing Motel near the Seattle airport Thomas arrived, and minutes later, Cooper himself appeared, entering my room furtively from the parking lot. He was a nervous, slightly-built, balding middle-aged man who wore a black raincoat, black shoes and black gloves. He kept the gloves on while he chain-smoked filter cigarettes. He spoke in a raspy voice that reminded me instantly of the Pueblo spy ship commander Pete Bucher.

Cooper was anxious to have the money

Item: You don't laugh at motherhood. You don't laugh at tradition, at religion, at everything possible that a man could hold dear," he said.

Item: "When you're at the football game and somebody gets up and sings the 'Star-Spangled Banner,' it still makes the feathers come up on my neck when I hear it."

Item: "When I had my first sexual experience with a girl, I was 17 years old. This was an older woman. I was so dumb. I was drinking beer with her. I was away from home and it was Christmas Eve. We went to her apartment. She asked me if I wanted to play cards. So I said 'sure.' So we're playing strip poker. For real. So, the next thing, I had to go to the bathroom and when I came back, she was in bed. So I said 'Well, I guess I'll be going, Irene.' And she said 'Oh, it's cold in here. If you'd just come over and warm me up a bit.' Well, I'm a pretty sharp fellow. I just got in, clothes and all. I took my shoes off. That's all. I'll tell you what: she gave me an education before I was much older."

Item: "A woman is different from a man. A woman comes from some other place. She comes from the land of Nod or something. If a man doesn't take the dominant role in the bedroom, there's something wrong with him. A man can go out into an alley or the back of a car or something. But a woman has to have some feeling of security in her lovemaking."

Item: "A man's feeling of manhood, his masculinity, is directly associated with his ability to provide for himself and to earn a good living. When all of sudden he is unable to do this, if he has been a red-blooded man who stood on his feet and worked all his life and asked no quarter from anyone, asked for nothing, then you in effect have emasculated this man. It means cut the balls off him."

Item: "I guess you would have to say that sex is better on payday."

Item: "You work hard for Dear Old Ironworks and do a good job and put in your years there and do the best you can and make money for them and get along well with everyone and you will be rewarded. Because besides your pay check and your annual leave and your

After all, this executive said, Northwest, upon whom he occasionally made a service call, had made a standing offer that any time I wanted to change companies...it would be great to have me on the Northwest team." The Northwest man had been buttering him up, courting him even.

So Cooper telephoned him. The secretary said he was on another line and would call back. When he didn't, Cooper phoned again. He was not in the office, the secretary said, but she would have him call. He didn't. Cooper telephoned again. He was in conference, the secretary said. Finally, another bolt of truth: his old pal at Northwest, his occasional golf partner, was avoiding him. There would be no job.

As the out-of-work days passed, Cooper began dipping into his savings, and thinking of what he would do with the rest of his life. His pride had been hurt. "Any man who gets up and goes to work in the morning is a proud man," he said. He had been fired, so he suffered constant embarrassment.

"People look at you with a sympathetic eye, and this is the thing that kills you. Sympathy is the one thing I could never stand all my life."

### Abortive Business Attempts

He tried to get a construction company going, but couldn't raise the capital. He made an abortive attempt to go into the house trailer business, but he had no money.

Finally, he gritted his teeth and did something inimical to everything he stood for: he went to the unemployment office. A typically crisp, impersonal, juiceless woman bureaucrat, he said, coolly interrogated him about his qualifications, then suggested he take a job as an "aide." He left in a boiling rage. The humiliation of that experience, the anger at being fired and tossed on the junkheap, the betrayal of his friend, they all came together at once and washed over him in tear-sealding anger.

He couldn't get work. His pride was deteriorating. He began to contemplate suicide. Pills, he finally decided, would be the way. He tried, but he couldn't do it. The Catholic Church had instilled

er and two tape recorders, and \$30,000 in \$20 and \$50 bills, concealed in several envelopes and buried in my tennis equipment case.

Shortly after checking into The Swept Wing Motel near the Seattle airport, Thomas arrived and minutes later Cooper himself appeared, entering my room furtively from the parking lot. He

was a nervous, slightly-built, balding middle-aged man who wore a black rain coat, black shoes and black gloves. He kept the gloves on while he chain-smoked filter cigarettes. He spoke in a raspy voice that reminded me instantly of the Pueblo spy ship commander Pete Bucher.

Cooper was anxious to have the money handed over. But I insisted on seeing the real money, whereupon Thomas extracted a wallet and produced three crisp \$20 bills. I checked their serial numbers against the FBI list. They matched.

Cooper asked if I would like to have the three \$20 bills. "And I have \$199,940 more of them buried in the ground that I will be happy to give you in exchange for other bills," he said. I told him I didn't think I wanted to have any stolen bills in my possession.

I continued to hesitate, prodding Cooper to yield up details of the hijacking—few of which had appeared in the press. He began hesitantly, but soon convinced me I had the right man. Subsequently I handed over the money, with the stipulation that it be held for Cooper's legal defense were he caught. What helped convinced me was what Cooper said was his motive.

He was raised in an authoritarian Catholic household, Cooper said, and

his masculinity (directly) associated with his ability to provide for himself and to earn a good living when all or

sudden he is unable to do this; if he has been a red-blooded man who stood on

his feet and worked all his life and asked no quarter from anyone, asked for nothing, then you in effect have emasculated

this man. It means cut the balls off him."

Item: "I guess you would have to say

that sex is better on payday."

Item: "You work hard for Dear Old

Ironworks and do a good job and put in

your years there and do the best you

can and make money for them and get

along well with everyone and you will

be rewarded. Because besides your pay

check and your annual leave and your

vacation, if you get a little higher up,

you can look forward to a bonus and the

pension and be well-fed and, of course,

you'll get the gold watch or whatever."

That was D.B. Cooper, and that was the way he had lived his life, patiently hoeing out the row, obeying the rules, and waiting to cash in on the American Dream, as advertised.

#### Bitter Payoff

His payoff, he related bitterly, came one day when he went to his Boeing desk and found a pink slip of dismissal. He was crushed.

"It made me feel just like the first time I jumped out of an airplane... just bereft of everything that's inside you, that's all," he said.

He was being replaced, he discovered, by a man 15 years his junior, a junior man he had carefully trained. He had been a believer, an unquestioning cog, but now a jolt of hard truth hit him: "You're dead wood. If they could, they'd

Finally, he gritted his teeth and did something inimical to everything he stood for: he went to the unemployment office. A typically crisp, impersonal, juiceless woman bureaucrat, he said, coolly interrogated him about his qualifications, then suggested he take a job as an "aide." He left in a boiling rage.

The humiliation of that experience, the anger at being fired and tossed on the junkheap, the betrayal of his friend, they all came together at once and washed over him in tear-scalding anger.

He couldn't get work. His pride was deteriorating. He began to contemplate suicide. Pills, he finally decided, would be the way. He tried, but he couldn't do it. The Catholic Church had instilled too strongly in him that suicide, like marital infidelity, is a sin.

At home every day, he read a lot of newspapers. They were full of hijacking stories, which he read after vainly searching the classified job section.

"So then, I started thinking about it," he said. "The more I thought about it, the more I thought how easy it would be. Because the security is very weak, very lax, almost non-existent. So I started to organize, mentally, to do this. I would go on with everyday living. But I would begin to think about this in earnest."

Then followed a period of moral wrestling. "There's the code: you can't take what's not yours. But wait a minute. Who says it's not mine? Where would this money come from? Either the stockholders or the company that insures them. Now, wait a minute. Insurance. Who has a strangle hold on the American economy? Insurance companies. And



Karl Fleming and D. B. Cooper

the insurance companies, they're trying to hide the money. They're buying land. They're loaning money. They're building skyscrapers. They're into everything. And then you get thoughts like: how many millionaires made \$1 last year and didn't pay taxes. And look at the oil companies. I could put the money I would steal down as a depletion allowance," Cooper said.

So he planned. "I didn't want to give anything I had up, and in order to even maintain what I had, I had to do something. And then I was, if you'll pardon the expression, very much pissed off right then. So more and more, I planned, for over a year, and still I was not sure I would go through with it. But my bitterness was changing to hard cynicism."

If he did it, how much money would he ask? Had he worked at Boeing to retirement, his annual income, with company

October 28, 1972

21





benefits and his few investments, would be about \$12,000. He went to "Seth Thomas," investment counselor, who had approached him several times previous about putting his money into land.

#### Wax in Ears

When we finished some eight hours

even all of it I had more coming than that, I didn't do anything wrong," he said.

the rat race again? Or would be fulfill his fantasy and travel?

"If anything, I've done the people a favor," he said. "I've shown them that it can be done. You don't have to be the disconnected individual that hijacks

and their escape through drugs. Well, I showed them. I'm not over the hill. I can make another jump tomorrow. I can make one 10 years from now, God willing. You bet."

And: "I proved to the Establishment



benefits and his few investments, would be about \$12,000. He went to "Seth Thomas," investment counselor, who had approached him several times previous about putting his money into land. How much of a capital sum, Cooper asked, would a man have to invest to yield an annual income of about \$12,000? Thomas took his pencil and worked it out: \$250,000. Cooper thought about it, but then decided his needs were modest, so he scaled down the figure to \$200,000. And that was how he decided to hijack the plane for \$200,000.

After relating how he hijacked the plane and drove home in his car with the money, he insisted he didn't feel guilty over the crime, or over the possibility that he might encourage others to stage hijackings, until someone got killed.

"I took what I figured was mine, not

even all of it. I had more coming than that, I didn't do anything wrong," he said.

#### Wax in Ears

When we finished some eight hours of taped interviews, he put on make-up and a wool cap and allowed himself to be filmed by a freelance cameraman and soundman I had brought up after instructing them to hear nothing, see nothing, ask no questions. I made them stick wads of wax into their ears while I interviewed Cooper, and made them turn their backs from the camera when he raised the photostats of the stolen bills to be filmed.

That afternoon, we rode-along with Seth Thomas, whose name I now knew to be Jack Lewis-down Interstate 5, and he showed me all the key spots in the hijacking. As we drove, he talked about his future. Would he get back in

the rat race again? Or would he fulfill his fantasy and travel?

"If anything, I've done the people a favor," he said. "I've shown them that it can be done. You don't have to be the stereotyped individual that hijacks planes. You don't have to even raise your voice. You don't have to use any violence. You don't have to use any threats, and you can still tell that plane where to go and not jeopardize all those people. I showed them their screening system doesn't work."

He "never dreamed I would be saying anything against the Establishment" but here he had hijacked this plane in a cold vengeful rage. Now he had a message "to the younger generation that wants to shoot everybody over 30. They've botched every single one they've ever done, with all their bombings and all their riots and cold-blooded murders

and their escape through drugs. Well, I showed them. I'm not over the hill. I can make another jump tomorrow. I can make one 10 years from now, God willing. You bet."

"And, "I proved to the Establishment that I'm not just a faceless number. I'm a person. I'm a human being. I proved that Old Dad can still do it."

Jubilantly, I packed my film, my tapes, my copies of the bills and headed home.

I was still euphoric when the plane reached Los Angeles. I felt that if I never wrote another story, I had justified my existence, by creating something worthwhile, something that would stand - I presumed to imagine - as a classic commentary on American society.

NEXT WEEK: a gift, a book publisher's betrayal of trust, some indictments, and the growing suspicion that it was all a hoax.

40

LA

October 28, 1972





# Will This Happen to the Man Who Says He Is D.B. Cooper? **NEXT WEEK: THE AFTERMATH**

**LA**

1516 Westwood Blvd.  
Los Angeles, California 90024

- \$8.00 One-year subscription
- \$10.00 Out of state
- \$13.00 Foreign
- \$15.00 Two years
- \$21.00 Three years
- \$100.00 Life Subscription
- \$2.50 LA Shoulder Bag
- Please bill me.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

2 4 6 8 0 2 1 3 5 7 9 0 8 6 0 4 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0



Will This Happen to the Man Who Says He Is  
D.B. Cooper? **NEXT WEEK: THE AFTERMATH**

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

D. B. COOPER GOT \$30,000

# Weekly's Hijacking Story Turns Into Tall Tale--Later

BY ALEXANDER AUERBACH  
Times Staff Writer

What happens to people is news. What happens to reporters isn't. A swing Boston city editor shout at reporters who in first-person accounts of they had witnessed.

What happens if the reporter sleuth who solved one of the publicized crimes in recent or (B) the victim of the clew hoax since Clifford Irving's autobiography of Howard As, or (C) both?

In a new weekly newspaper the Los Angeles area, just ended a three-installment series defining the "solution" of the successful \$200,000 hijacking of a Southwest Orient Airlines jet last

Only at the end of the series did it tell its readers that the whole act was an apparent hoax that the paper's backers \$30,000. Karl Fleming, L.A.'s editor, says he chose to tell the story in a way that the readers found misleading in order to let them vicariously understand the same experience he did without realizing it, they were reading a story about Fleming, not simply by him.

The first installment told of D.B. Cooper ("an ordinary, God-fearing, patriotic, country club-oriented, upward-climbing WASP engineer") leaving his suburban Seattle home with a briefcase stuffed with two wigs, an altimeter and compass, a makeup kit, gloves and three red flares wired to look like a dynamite bomb.

Fleming, a respected veteran newsman (formerly bureau chief

and contributing editor with Newsweek for 11 years) went on to describe every detail of Cooper's hijacking, in an article that ran some 4,000 words and took five pages of the tabloid, not counting a cover photo and a last-page teaser for the next installment.

One illustration showed Xerox copies of three \$20 bills given to Fleming as proof of Cooper's identity; their serial numbers matched those on the FBI's list of bills that made up the ransom paid by the airline.

The second piece described how Fleming got the story. While still on Newsweek's staff, he put a classified

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

I-10 Los Angeles Times  
Los Angeles, Calif.

Date: 11/8/72  
Edition: Wednesday  
Author: Alexander Auerbach  
Editor: William F. The  
Title: Norjak

Character:

or

Classification: 164-497  
Submitting Office: Los Angeles

Being Investigated

164-2111-804

Continued from 10th Page  
ad in newspapers around Oregon and Washington, asking Cooper to contact him.

Later, while Fleming and millionaire Max Palevsky were organizing LA, an intermediary offered to put the newsman in contact with Cooper—for \$30,000. Palevsky put up the money and Fleming flew up to meet Cooper, dragging along two tape recorders, a motion picture camera, two cameramen and \$30,000 in cash.

The headline on the third and final instalment read: "Is D. B. Cooper the real D. B. Cooper?" There is considerable reason for doubt, since the men who police say talked to Fleming — and who allegedly took his \$30,000 — have been arrested by the FBI on charges of defrauding Fleming of his money.

#### Arrested Before Story

The arrest took place on May 2, long before Fleming wrote his story for LA.

Why did Fleming publish the story in a manner that led some readers, unaware of the fraud arrest, to believe that the early installments were the real thing?

Fleming doesn't feel that the initial installment was deceptive, noting that "there were disclaimers in it," referring to two lines near the end: "The foregoing narrative was related to me by the man I believed to be Cooper . . ." and, "Doubts about whether I had the right man would arise later . . ."

"I wanted the reader to experience it just exactly

as I did," Fleming says. "It's an adventure story, as much about me as about D. B. Cooper, and I wanted to put the reader in my shoes. If the reader was reasonably alert, he would have seen in the press that these guys had been busted by the FBI."

If the man Fleming interviewed was not D. B. Cooper — and Fleming isn't totally sure he was not the hijacker — then he was a masterful con man, to hear Fleming tell it.

#### Paid at First Meeting

"I gave him the whole \$30,000 at our first meeting, after I was convinced that this was D. B. Cooper," Fleming says. "At that point a con man would have taken the money and run like hell, but this guy, Cooper, came back and submitted himself to eight hours of taped interviews, 30 minutes of filmed interviews and still photographs. His intermediary signed a contract (saying the \$30,000 would be used for Cooper's legal defense) with his real name and left his fingerprints all over the contract."

The story was to have been in the opening issue of LA. To avoid charges of aiding a fugitive from justice, Fleming turned his material over to the FBI 10 days before publication (he had told Cooper not to tell him anything he didn't want the police to know.) Included were Xerox copies of the \$20 bills Fleming had been shown as proof of Cooper's identity. The serial numbers matched those on the list of ransom bills but FBI documents experts said that the photocopies indicated that the bills were counterfeit.

With all the information Fleming's subjects had supplied, the FBI had no

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12 trouble rounding them up.  
13 With their trial sched-  
14 uled to begin Nov. 27,  
15 Fleming says he still finds  
16 it "difficult to accept" the  
17 possibility that he was  
18 duped. "I asked that guy  
19 questions no con man  
20 could have prepared for,"  
21 he says. "I went over him  
22 like a vacuum cleaner."

23 Fleming notes that  
24 "Cooper" went into detail  
25 on matters of air naviga-  
26 tion and parachute proce-  
27 dure—unaware that Flem-  
28 ing is a licensed private pi-  
29 lot with some 700 hours in  
30 the air.

31 Because of the magni-  
32 tude of the story and be-  
33 cause of its intended role  
34 as the kickoff piece for his  
35 new newspaper, Fleming  
36 says, he was extremely  
37 careful in his questioning.  
38 "At the risk of sounding  
39 immodest," he adds, "I  
40 wouldn't want to do any-  
41 thing to damage my own  
42 very good reputation as a  
43 reporter."

44 He has an ingenious,  
45 mirror-within-a-mirror  
46 theory of his own.

47 "I'm not saying that the  
48 FBI was wrong, and I  
49 would never suggest that  
50 they would deliberately  
51 distort the facts—though  
52 if I, one lonely reporter,  
53 could get the story when  
54 8,000 FBI agents couldn't,  
55 then that's not the kind of  
56 publicity that J. Edgar  
57 Hoover, then alive, would  
58 want for the FBI."

59 Noting that "Cooper"  
60 was aware the information  
61 would be published and  
62 get to the police, Fleming  
63 says, "It is very, very diffi-  
64 cult for me to accept the  
65 fact that a mind brilliant  
66 enough to concoct a story

67 as sophisticated as the one  
68 this guy told me, would be  
69 stupid enough to turn  
70 around and expose himself  
71 to capture this way.

72 "I don't exclude the pos-  
73 sibility that he was both  
74 smart enough to pull off  
75 the hijacking, sell me the  
76 story and spread enough  
77 false clues in the story so  
78 it would not look right and  
79 the FBI would say he isn't  
80 the hijacker. So, if he does  
81 do any time, it's for fraud,  
82 not for hijacking. And  
83 when he comes out, the  
84 \$200,000 is still there."

85 In that case, of course,  
86 Fleming's series would be  
87 a true account of the hi-  
88 jacking, as readers of Part  
89 One might have thought,  
90 not the account of how a  
91 reporter got duped, as  
92 Part Three indicates, or  
93 perhaps it would be both.

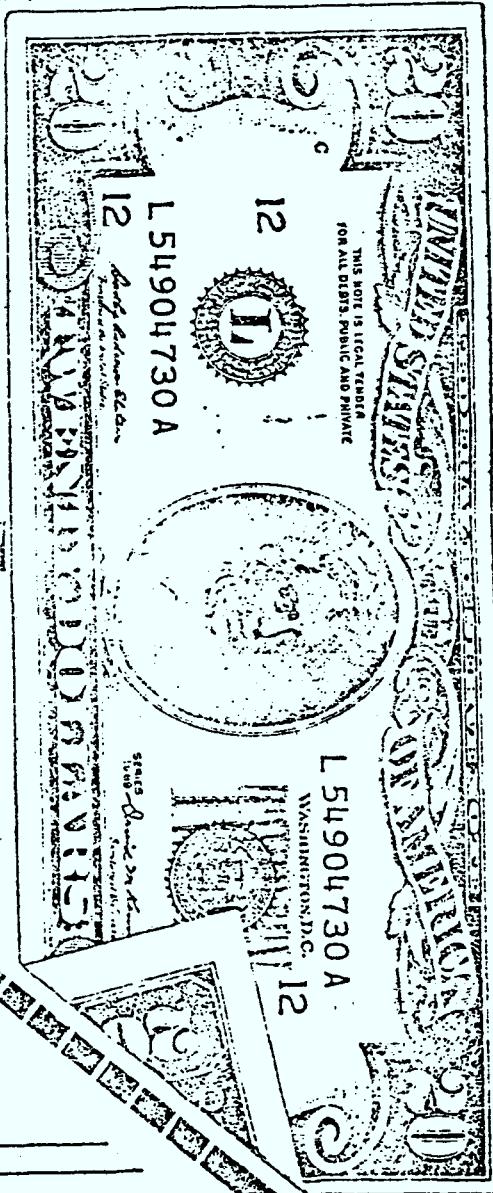
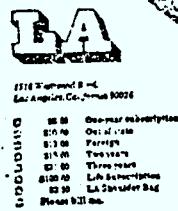
94 In any event, Fleming  
95 has no regrets about the  
96 adventure. "I've always  
97 been a reporter who takes  
98 risks. You don't get the  
99 plums at the top of the  
100 tree unless you jump  
101 high."

102 Fleming may have some  
103 lingering doubts about the  
104 man he interviewed, but  
105 Platypus Publications,  
106 publisher of LA, appears  
107 to have none. It has filed a  
108 \$30,000 civil suit against  
109 the men arrested by the  
110 FBI, claiming it was de-  
111 frauded because the men  
112 were not the people they  
113 claimed to be.

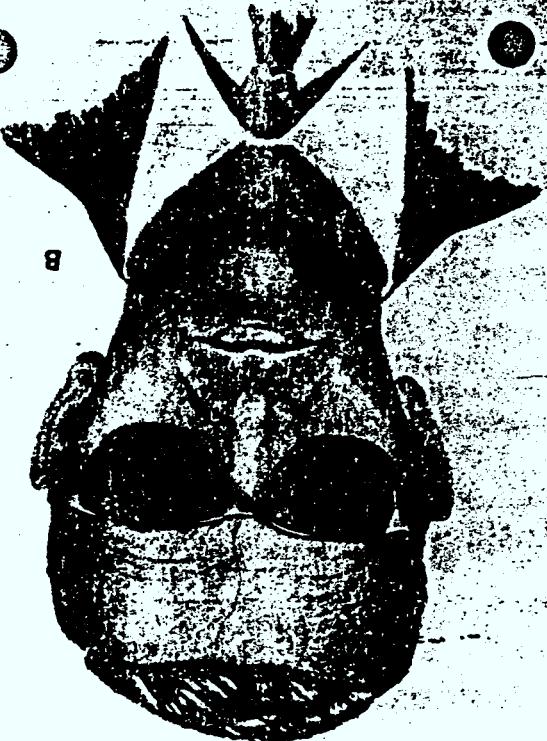
1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65  
66  
67  
68  
69  
70  
71  
72  
73  
74  
75  
76  
77  
78  
79  
80  
81  
82  
83  
84  
85  
86  
87  
88  
89  
90  
91  
92  
93  
94  
95  
96  
97  
98  
99  
100

NEXT WEEK:

Why  
D.B.  
Cooper  
Did It,  
And  
Why He  
Demanded  
Only  
\$200,000.



A NON-STORY—When L.A. began this series it knew—but didn't tell its readers—that its "D. B. Cooper" was not an airplane hijacker but, according to FBI charges, only a con man.



BUR 164-2111 SE 164-81  
164-2111-805 UV 10 1972

1  
2  
3  
4 STAN PITKIN  
5 United States Attorney

6  
7 1012 United States Courthouse  
8 Seattle, Washington 98104

9  
10 (206) 442-7970

11  
12  
13  
14 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
15 WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON  
16 AT SEATTLE

17  
18  
19 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

20 Plaintiff,

168-723

21 ) NO.

22 v.

23  
24 WILLIAM JOHN LEWIS, a/k/a,  
25 JACK LEWIS, and DONALD SYLVESTER  
26 MURPHY,

27 ) INFORMATION

28 Defendants.

29  
30  
31 The United States Attorney Charges that:

32  
33 COUNT I

34  
35 1. Beginning on or about February 1, 1972 and  
36 continuing thereafter through or about May 2, 1972, within  
37 the Western District of Washington, defendants WILLIAM JOHN  
38 LEWIS (also known as Jack Lewis) and DONALD SYLVESTER  
39 MURPHY devised and intended to devise a scheme and artifice  
40 to defraud Karl Payne Fleming, *Newsweek Magazine*, Platypus  
41 Publications, and other persons, businesses and corporations,  
42 by means of the following false and fraudulent pretenses,  
43 representations and promises, well knowing the same would  
44 be and were false when made, for the purpose of obtaining  
45 money in excess of \$5,000 by means thereof.

164-2111-833

1       2.     was a part of said scheme and artifice to  
2     defraud that on or about February 1, 1972, WILLIAM JOHN  
3     LEWIS phoned Karl Fleming in Los Angeles, California; that  
4     defendant LEWIS identified himself as "Seth Thomas" and  
5     told Fleming that he could arrange an interview between  
6     Fleming and "D. B. Cooper."

7       3.     It was further a part of said scheme and artifice  
8     to defraud that on or about February 13, 1972, defendant  
9     WILLIAM JOHN LEWIS made a reservation for Karl Fleming at  
10    the Swept Wing Inn, Seattle, Washington.

11      4.     It was further a part of said scheme and artifice  
12     to defraud that on or about February 16, 1972, defendant  
13     WILLIAM JOHN LEWIS met with Fleming at the Swept Wing Inn,  
14     Seattle, Washington, and informed Fleming that an interview  
15     with "D. B. Cooper" would be arranged by WILLIAM JOHN LEWIS  
16     for the sum of \$45,000, payable in three installments; and  
17     that defendant WILLIAM JOHN LEWIS knew said representation  
18     and promise would be and was false when made.

19      5.     It was further a part of said scheme and artifice  
20     to defraud that on or about February 23, 1972, defendants  
21     WILLIAM JOHN LEWIS and DONALD SYLVESTER MURPHY met with Karl  
22     Fleming at the Edgewater Inn, Seattle, Washington, and  
23     represented that defendant MURPHY was "D. B. Cooper," well  
24     knowing said representation would be and was false when  
25     made.

26      6.     It was further a part of said scheme and artifice  
27     to defraud that on or about February 23, 1972, defendants  
28     WILLIAM JOHN LEWIS and DONALD SYLVESTER MURPHY took the sum  
29     of \$30,000 from Karl Fleming as payment for an interview  
30     with "D. B. Cooper".