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00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:05,000

Tonight, the only unsolved skyjacking case in history.

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00:00:05,000 --> 00:00:08,000

Today, after hijacking a Northwest Airlines jet,

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00:00:08,000 --> 00:00:10,000

description on one wire service,

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00:00:10,000 --> 00:00:12,000

mass drift from behind us.

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00:00:12,000 --> 00:00:14,000

The perpetrator leaps from a moving plane

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00:00:14,000 --> 00:00:19,000

with \$200,000 cash and is never seen again.

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00:00:19,000 --> 00:00:20,000

There's a lot of variables.

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00:00:20,000 --> 00:00:22,000

When did he jump out of the plane?

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00:00:22,000 --> 00:00:24,000

How long did he wait before he pulled the RipsCORD?

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00:00:24,000 --> 00:00:26,000

What was the wing speed?

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00:00:26,000 --> 00:00:30,000

People don't just disappear. He has to have gone somewhere.

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00:00:30,000 --> 00:00:36,000

Now, we explore the top theories behind the world's most elusive hijacker.

13

00:00:36,000 --> 00:00:39,000

Investigators are looking at a former cocaine dealer.

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00:00:39,000 --> 00:00:41,000

He's an ex-paratrooper.

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00:00:41,000 --> 00:00:43,000

Looks a lot like the DB Cooper sketch.

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00:00:43,000 --> 00:00:46,000

There are millions of Caucasian men with dark hair,

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00:00:46,000 --> 00:00:50,000

but there's only a few hundred thousand that would have worked in that kind of environment.

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00:00:50,000 --> 00:00:53,000

Can new evidence finally reveal his true identity?

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00:00:53,000 --> 00:00:57,000

This is a better lead than they could have ever anticipated.

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00:00:57,000 --> 00:01:01,000

Who is DB Cooper?

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00:01:01,000 --> 00:01:03,000

And will he ever be caught?

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00:01:23,000 --> 00:01:30,000

November 24th, 1971, Portland International Airport.

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00:01:30,000 --> 00:01:36,000

A man named Dan Cooper boards Northwest Orient Airlines Flight 305 to Seattle.

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00:01:36,000 --> 00:01:41,000

The flight crew and the passengers describe him as an unremarkable guy.

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00:01:41,000 --> 00:01:46,000

He's a Caucasian male. He's got a dark suit, black tie, carrying a briefcase.

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00:01:46,000 --> 00:01:51,000

He's one of the last to board the plane, sits in the last row in 18E.

27

00:01:51,000 --> 00:01:55,000

He orders a bourbon and soda and dons a pair of sunglasses.

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00:01:55,000 --> 00:01:58,000

The plane takes off at 2.50pm.

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00:01:58,000 --> 00:02:02,000

The flight from Portland to Seattle is a milk run flown several times a day.

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00:02:02,000 --> 00:02:04,000

It's about an hour in the air.

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00:02:04,000 --> 00:02:08,000

This time around, the plane's carrying 36 passengers and six crew members.

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00:02:08,000 --> 00:02:11,000

Everything's going to plan. Everything's on schedule.

33

00:02:11,000 --> 00:02:17,000

Until the man seated in the last row, Cooper, hands a note to the flight attendant, Florence Schaffner.

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00:02:17,000 --> 00:02:20,000

She doesn't read it at first. She puts it in her pocket.

35

00:02:20,000 --> 00:02:23,000

And then Cooper says to her, you might want to read that.

36

00:02:23,000 --> 00:02:27,000

The note says, I have a bomb and I'd like you to sit next to me.

37

00:02:27,000 --> 00:02:34,000

Florence Schaffner understandably sort of loses it, but she does comply and follows his instructions.

38

00:02:34,000 --> 00:02:39,000

Cooper opens his briefcase, revealing a makeshift bomb.

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00:02:39,000 --> 00:02:46,000

Schaffner describes the contents of the briefcase as something that looks like eight sticks of

dynamite, a battery, and a bunch of wires.

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00:02:46,000 --> 00:02:49,000

Cooper has her attention. She knows he's serious.

41

00:02:49,000 --> 00:02:55,000

He demands four parachutes and a ransom of \$200,000 when the plane lands in Seattle.

42

00:02:55,000 --> 00:03:00,000

Schaffner relays the hijacker's commands to Captain William Scott.

43

00:03:00,000 --> 00:03:05,000

But since it's such a short flight, ground forces need more time to react.

44

00:03:05,000 --> 00:03:11,000

So air traffic control keeps the plane circling around for two hours until they can gather the money in the parachutes.

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00:03:11,000 --> 00:03:17,000

Investigators write down the serial number of every bill and then bundle it up into a bank bag.

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00:03:17,000 --> 00:03:21,000

The plane finally lands in Seattle at 5.46 p.m.

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00:03:21,000 --> 00:03:25,000

Captain Scott parks the plane away from the building.

48

00:03:25,000 --> 00:03:31,000

Cooper sends out a different flight attendant, Tina Mucklow, and she goes out and interacts with the authorities.

49

00:03:31,000 --> 00:03:36,000

There she collects the money and the parachutes and returns to the plane.

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00:03:36,000 --> 00:03:43,000

She also brings printed instructions on how to use the parachutes, but Cooper tells her he does not need them.

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00:03:43,000 --> 00:03:46,000

Cooper agrees to let the passengers off the plane.

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00:03:46,000 --> 00:03:51,000

Two flight attendants, Florence Schaffner and Alice Hancock, also ask to leave and Cooper allows them to.

53

00:03:51,000 --> 00:03:55,000

But the ordeal isn't over for the rest of the crew.

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00:03:55,000 --> 00:04:00,000

Cooper wants the 727 to take off again and start the head towards Mexico City.

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00:04:00,000 --> 00:04:04,000

He's going to keep the four remaining crew members as hostages.

56

00:04:04,000 --> 00:04:09,000

There's a flight attendant, the flight engineer, the first officer, and the captain.

57

00:04:09,000 --> 00:04:14,000

For this second flight, Cooper makes more demands.

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00:04:14,000 --> 00:04:20,000

Cooper wants the pilots to fly with the wing flaps in an unusual configuration, a downward position.

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00:04:20,000 --> 00:04:24,000

Now that's how a plane normally takes off, but then they raise the flaps.

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00:04:24,000 --> 00:04:32,000

You wouldn't fly long haul with the flaps down because it creates enormous drag and means it can't go very fast, something like 200 miles per hour.

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00:04:32,000 --> 00:04:38,000

Cooper also asks that they keep the landing gear down and fly below 10,000 feet.

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00:04:38,000 --> 00:04:42,000

He wants them to be going super slow and super low.

63

00:04:42,000 --> 00:04:47,000

The pilots tell Cooper it can't be done. They're afraid the plane might just fall out of the sky.

64

00:04:47,000 --> 00:04:52,000

But the hijacker is adamant that it will work and they need to comply.

65

00:04:52,000 --> 00:04:57,000

At 7.40 p.m., the plane takes off for Mexico City.

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00:04:57,000 --> 00:05:03,000

But 20 minutes into the flight, Cooper does something completely unexpected.

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00:05:03,000 --> 00:05:06,000

He lowers the plane's rare air stair.

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00:05:06,000 --> 00:05:11,000

The 7.27 has a set of stairs that could be lowered out of the back of the airplane.

69

00:05:11,000 --> 00:05:13,000

The pilot gets a warning light when this happens.

70

00:05:13,000 --> 00:05:21,000

Once Cooper lowers the aft stairs around 8 p.m., he puts on his parachute, grabs his \$200,000 and jumps out.

71

00:05:21,000 --> 00:05:25,000

The hijacker is never seen again.

72

00:05:26,000 --> 00:05:30,000

At 11.02 p.m., the pilot safely lands the plane in Reno.

73

00:05:30,000 --> 00:05:36,000

At this point, the flight crew has stayed in the cockpit and they're not sure if Cooper is still in the plane or not.

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00:05:36,000 --> 00:05:40,000

But when the FBI searches the plane, Cooper is definitely gone.

75

00:05:40,000 --> 00:05:44,000

Almost immediately, the story spreads like wildfire.

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00:05:44,000 --> 00:05:49,000

E.B. Cooper bailed out of a Northwest Airlines jet going 200 miles an hour at about 10,000 feet.

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00:05:49,000 --> 00:05:54,000

The best guess is he jumped almost exactly over Liss Center, Washington.

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00:05:54,000 --> 00:06:02,000

The FBI takes the lead on the case, with assistance from sheriffs and state troopers in Washington, Oregon and Nevada.

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00:06:02,000 --> 00:06:07,000

They have very little to go on. This guy has committed an incredibly well-planned crime.

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00:06:07,000 --> 00:06:12,000

Authorities need to begin somewhere. They start with his name.

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00:06:12,000 --> 00:06:15,000

They know he bought a ticket under the name Dan Cooper.

82

00:06:15,000 --> 00:06:22,000

The FBI doesn't really suspect that's his real name, but criminals often choose an alias that's very close to their real name.

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00:06:22,000 --> 00:06:30,000

So they run this idea by the Portland police and as luck would have it, they know of a petty criminal who goes by D.B. Cooper.

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00:06:32,000 --> 00:06:38,000

D.B. Cooper lives about an hour and a half from Portland in the Dolls, Oregon.

85

00:06:38,000 --> 00:06:41,000

And he's got a minor record, so police have him in the system.

86

00:06:41,000 --> 00:06:44,000

It's a long shot, but they know they have to start somewhere.

87

00:06:44,000 --> 00:06:49,000

And they're hopeful they can nap him on his way home with \$200,000 of stolen money.

88

00:06:49,000 --> 00:06:57,000

A police officer drives D.B. Cooper's house in the night of the hijacking, planning to stake it out until Cooper comes home and catch him red-handed.

89

00:06:57,000 --> 00:07:02,000

But as soon as the officer arrives, he sees Cooper's already home.

90

00:07:02,000 --> 00:07:11,000

It seems unreasonable that D.B. Cooper would have committed the hijacking, jumped out of the plane and made it back home to his house in the Dolls that night.

91

00:07:11,000 --> 00:07:15,000

The timeline doesn't fit in any way, shape or form.

92

00:07:15,000 --> 00:07:22,000

So despite having a similar name and a criminal record, D.B. Cooper is quickly ruled out as the hijacker.

93

00:07:22,000 --> 00:07:30,000

Police may be done with D.B. Cooper as a suspect, but history isn't done with his name, thanks to an innocent error.

94

00:07:30,000 --> 00:07:34,000

A reporter named James Long for the Oregon Journal is covering the story.

95

00:07:34,000 --> 00:07:38,000

In all this chaos, no one knows what's happening and Long makes a mistake.

96

00:07:39,000 --> 00:07:49,000

The hijacker actually identified himself as Dan Cooper, but Long puts the hijacker's name out as D.B. Cooper and is immediately picked up by all the wire services.

97

00:07:49,000 --> 00:07:53,000

And just like that, D.B. Cooper becomes the name on everyone's lips.

98

00:07:53,000 --> 00:07:59,000

From that moment on, the case is known as the D.B. Cooper mystery.

99

00:07:59,000 --> 00:08:05,000

Meanwhile, at Reno Airport, authorities raced to gather evidence on the plane.

100

00:08:05,000 --> 00:08:11,000

Inside the plane, FBI agents find 66 latent fingerprints but can't identify any of them.

101

00:08:11,000 --> 00:08:17,000

They also find Cooper's black clip on tie and tie clip, some cigarette butts and two of the four parachutes.

102

00:08:17,000 --> 00:08:19,000

That's it. That's all they have.

103

00:08:19,000 --> 00:08:27,000

In 1971, we don't have fingerprint databases like we do today. We also don't have DNA at this time.

104

00:08:27,000 --> 00:08:31,000

The tie clip and the tie are pretty unremarkable, so they're going to be hard to trace.

105

00:08:31,000 --> 00:08:35,000

There's nothing on the plane that immediately tells us who the hijacker is.

106

00:08:35,000 --> 00:08:39,000

With little to go on, a large-scale manhunt begins.

107

00:08:39,000 --> 00:08:46,000

The FBI knows that he jumped out of the plane somewhere between Seattle and Reno, and now they need to know where to look.

108

00:08:46,000 --> 00:08:51,000

But it's hard to determine Cooper's landing zone because they don't know exactly when and where he jumped.

109

00:08:51,000 --> 00:08:59,000

There's so many variables involved. What was the wind speed? When did he pull the ripcord? When and where was the plane exactly when he jumped?

110

00:08:59,000 --> 00:09:07,000

It's next to impossible to establish an accurate search area, but they start with a massive section of really thick forest north of Portland.

111

00:09:07,000 --> 00:09:17,000

This is a huge deal. The Air Force actually loans them an SR-71 Blackbird to help them photograph the entire flight area in hopes of developing a clue.

112

00:09:17,000 --> 00:09:25,000

Though the Blackbird retraces the hijack plane's flight path five times, their search turns up empty.

113

00:09:25,000 --> 00:09:33,000

The Oregon National Guard brings out helicopters to search for Cooper. They find some plastic and broken tree limbs, but it turns out it has nothing to do with the crime.

114

00:09:33,000 --> 00:09:38,000

And then 200 U.S. Army soldiers search the forest on foot.

115

00:09:38,000 --> 00:09:49,000

There's also a private salvage company that searched Lake Merwin with a submarine looking for evidence of Cooper at the bottom of the lake. They don't find anything.

116

00:09:49,000 --> 00:09:53,000

Despite all this effort, no trace of Cooper is found.

117

00:09:53,000 --> 00:10:01,000

People don't just disappear. He has to be somewhere. The FBI wants to get his face out to the public hoping someone has seen him.

118

00:10:01,000 --> 00:10:06,000

With no actual photo to go on, the FBI enlists the help of a sketch artist.

119

00:10:06,000 --> 00:10:13,000

They talk to people who were at the Portland airport, who saw him buy his ticket, and people who were on the airplane.

120

00:10:13,000 --> 00:10:18,000

Both sets of witnesses give a near identical description of the man.

121

00:10:18,000 --> 00:10:23,000

He's a Caucasian man in his mid-40s with a somewhat dark olive complexion.

122

00:10:23,000 --> 00:10:29,000

He has a receding hairline, short dark hair, and is wearing a dark suit and sunglasses.

123

00:10:29,000 --> 00:10:36,000

This sketch, which has become world famous, comes out about a week after the hijacking on November 28, 1971.

124

00:10:36,000 --> 00:10:39,000

It generates hundreds, if not thousands, of tips.

125

00:10:39,000 --> 00:10:43,000

Tips that will soon break the Cooper case wide open.

126

00:10:48,000 --> 00:10:58,000

When the FBI releases a sketch of the unidentified hijacker known as D.B. Cooper in 1971, a flood of names begins to pour in.

127

00:10:58,000 --> 00:11:04,000

On April 8, 1972, one in particular grabs their attention.

128

00:11:04,000 --> 00:11:09,000

A concerned citizen called the FBI tip line. He said that him and his friend were talking over a beer,

129

00:11:09,000 --> 00:11:14,000

and his friend outlined a detailed plan on how to hijack an airplane.

130

00:11:14,000 --> 00:11:17,000

The friend's name is Richard Floyd McCoy Jr.

131

00:11:17,000 --> 00:11:21,000

At first it may seem like another one of these fake, my friend is D.B. Cooper stories,

132

00:11:21,000 --> 00:11:26,000

but as investigators dig deeper into McCoy's background, they realize this might really be our guy.

133

00:11:26,000 --> 00:11:30,000

Richard McCoy is a former student at Brigham Young University in Utah.

134

00:11:30,000 --> 00:11:34,000

He drops out, he joins the Army, he serves two tours in Vietnam.

135

00:11:34,000 --> 00:11:37,000

He was a helicopter pilot and demolition expert.

136

00:11:37,000 --> 00:11:42,000

After his time in Vietnam, he served with the Utah National Guard, where he became a skydiver.

137

00:11:42,000 --> 00:11:47,000

Based on his background, FBI agents believe he has some of the skills that Cooper has.

138

00:11:47,000 --> 00:11:52,000

He knows bombs, he knows planes, and he's a skydiver.

139

00:11:52,000 --> 00:11:58,000

There's a lot more to it than that, because according to the tipster, McCoy has just gotten away with another hijacking.

140

00:12:01,000 --> 00:12:11,000

On April 7, 1972, the day before the caller's tip, United Flight 855 from Denver to Los Angeles is hijacked.

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00:12:11,000 --> 00:12:17,000

This hijacking occurred just five months after the D.B. Cooper hijacking, and the similarities are uncanny.

142

00:12:17,000 --> 00:12:22,000

This hijacker uses the name of James Johnson to buy his ticket.

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00:12:22,000 --> 00:12:26,000

Like Cooper, he gives the flight crew a note announcing his intentions.

144

00:12:26,000 --> 00:12:29,000

He gives very specific instructions to the pilot.

145

00:12:29,000 --> 00:12:35,000

He asks them to fly to San Francisco, and he has a specific runway picked out. 19 left.

146

00:12:35,000 --> 00:12:42,000

He wants \$500,000 and four parachutes, and if he gets that, he'll let the passengers go.

147

00:12:42,000 --> 00:12:46,000

It's just like D.B. Cooper right down to the number of parachutes.

148

00:12:46,000 --> 00:12:50,000

The parallels don't end there.

149

00:12:50,000 --> 00:12:54,000

Johnson gets the cash, he lets the passengers off, and the plane goes in the air.

150

00:12:54,000 --> 00:12:58,000

He tells them to fly low and slow at 16,000 feet.

151

00:12:58,000 --> 00:13:02,000

Then he takes the cash, straps on a parachute, and jumps out the back stairs.

152

00:13:02,000 --> 00:13:08,000

But the Johnson hijacking has something the Cooper case doesn't, a prime suspect.

153

00:13:08,000 --> 00:13:14,000

The first thing the FBI does is a handwriting and fingerprint analysis of the note used in the Johnson hijacking.

154

00:13:14,000 --> 00:13:17,000

Both samples are a positive match to McCoy.

155

00:13:17,000 --> 00:13:22,000

And then the FBI conducts a search of McCoy's home, and they find a duffel bag full of cash.

156

00:13:22,000 --> 00:13:26,000

\$499,970.

157

00:13:27,000 --> 00:13:35,000

McCoy is caught red-handed for the James Johnson hijacking and sentenced to 45 years in prison.

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00:13:35,000 --> 00:13:38,000

But is McCoy also D.B. Cooper?

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00:13:38,000 --> 00:13:44,000

Unfortunately, unlike the Johnson hijacking, there's no evidence that ties McCoy to the D.B. Cooper hijacking.

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00:13:44,000 --> 00:13:52,000

First of all, none of his fingerprints match the 66 Layton prints that were found off of the D.B. Cooper hijacking airplane.

161

00:13:52,000 --> 00:13:57,000

Eyewitnesses are shown photos of McCoy, and they say it does not match Cooper.

162

00:13:57,000 --> 00:14:06,000

Also, McCoy claimed to be in Las Vegas at that time, and that alibi was actually verified and that his signature appeared on receipts and forms.

163

00:14:06,000 --> 00:14:12,000

None of this rules out McCoy, but it makes it a lot less likely he is the Cooper suspect.

164

00:14:12,000 --> 00:14:16,000

But there's one piece of evidence that could tie McCoy to the crime.

165

00:14:16,000 --> 00:14:21,000

McCoy's family's asked to look at the tie clip to D.B. Cooper left behind on Flight 305.

166

00:14:21,000 --> 00:14:25,000

According to the family, that tie clip belongs to Richard McCoy.

167

00:14:25,000 --> 00:14:32,000

Unfortunately, the FBI is never able to interview McCoy about the Cooper hijacking case.

168

00:14:32,000 --> 00:14:40,000

On August 10, 1974, soon after he's sent to prison, McCoy escapes.

169

00:14:40,000 --> 00:14:45,000

When he's found, he's shot and killed in a shootout with the FBI, and that kind of closes the case on McCoy.

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00:14:45,000 --> 00:14:54,000

The evidence against McCoy is thin, so in order to ID him as D.B. Cooper, they would need a confession, which they're never going to get now that he's dead.

171

00:14:54,000 --> 00:15:02,000

But the FBI agent, Nick O'Hara, who shot McCoy, was quoted as saying, when I shot McCoy, I shot D.B. Cooper.

172

00:15:02,000 --> 00:15:08,000

But without more concrete evidence against McCoy, it's impossible to make a definitive ID.

173

00:15:08,000 --> 00:15:12,000

And so, the FBI keeps investigating.

174

00:15:12,000 --> 00:15:20,000

At this point, there's not a lot the FBI can do on their own. They find themselves mainly running down tips from the public, and there are a lot of tips.

175

00:15:20,000 --> 00:15:27,000

You have to understand, D.B. Cooper almost becomes a legend. There's kind of a Cooper mania surrounding him.

176

00:15:27,000 --> 00:15:33,000

He's kind of like a Jesse James or a Billy the Kid, this kind of common man who beats the system.

177

00:15:33,000 --> 00:15:36,000

And in the 1970s, that's the coolest thing you can do.

178

00:15:36,000 --> 00:15:42,000

Claiming to be D.B. Cooper, especially in the Pacific Northwest, is just a way to get your 15 minutes of fame.

179

00:15:42,000 --> 00:15:47,000

This is a nightmare to these poor investigators, because they have to sift through all these false confessions.

180

00:15:47,000 --> 00:15:52,000

After a few years, many agents speculate that they will never really find the real Cooper.

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00:15:52,000 --> 00:16:01,000

The Bureau continues its work for decades, investigating some 1,000 serious suspects. But none are proven to be Cooper's.

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00:16:02,000 --> 00:16:08,000

Eventually, the fame surrounding this case gets the public interested in solving this case as well.

183

00:16:08,000 --> 00:16:15,000

It spawned all these armchair detectives and independent investigators to look at this case for themselves.

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00:16:15,000 --> 00:16:21,000

Among them, news researcher Tom Colbert and his team called the Casebreakers.

185

00:16:21,000 --> 00:16:26,000

In 2011, they announced a surprising new suspect.

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00:16:26,000 --> 00:16:30,000

Colbert has spoken to an informant named Ron Carlson.

187

00:16:30,000 --> 00:16:35,000

In the late 70s and 80s, Carlson said he worked in the cocaine business with Dick Briggs.

188

00:16:35,000 --> 00:16:40,000

And apparently, Briggs used to brag all the time about being D.B. Cooper.

189

00:16:43,000 --> 00:16:51,000

One night in 1980, Carlson stated that Briggs threw a party at Hayden Island, which sits in the middle of the Columbia River.

190

00:16:51,000 --> 00:16:55,000

There, once again, Briggs brags that he is D.B. Cooper.

191

00:16:55,000 --> 00:16:59,000

This time, party guests ask Briggs to prove it.

192

00:16:59,000 --> 00:17:06,000

Carlson says that Briggs points out a couple at the party. Their names are Dwayne and Patricia Ingram.

193

00:17:06,000 --> 00:17:13,000

Briggs says, if you don't believe me, just watch. They're going to find the Cooper money in five days.

194

00:17:13,000 --> 00:17:21,000

Five days later, Ingram's son Brian finds two bundles ferried in the sand on the banks of the Columbia River.

195

00:17:21,000 --> 00:17:26,000

Inside these bundles was \$5,800 in decomposing cash.

196

00:17:26,000 --> 00:17:32,000

My son ran up and said, wait a minute, Daddy. So he raked a place out in the sand there and there it was.

197

00:17:32,000 --> 00:17:34,000

It kind of tumbled up on the top.

198

00:17:34,000 --> 00:17:41,000

The bills have deteriorated quite badly, but the serial numbers on the bills match the ones given to D.B. Cooper.

199

00:17:41,000 --> 00:17:47,000

This is most definitely the Cooper ransom money, and it's found exactly as Briggs described it.

200

00:17:47,000 --> 00:17:52,000

This remains the only physical evidence ever found outside the plane.

201

00:17:52,000 --> 00:17:56,000

And the FBI tries to process the money to lead them back to the hijacker.

202

00:17:56,000 --> 00:18:03,000

Unfortunately, the bills are falling apart and there are no fingerprints or any other evidence to tie back to Cooper.

203

00:18:03,000 --> 00:18:10,000

At the time of the discovery in 1980, the FBI has no reason to suspect Dick Briggs.

204

00:18:10,000 --> 00:18:15,000

The hope Briggs connection doesn't come to light until the case breakers bring it up.

205

00:18:15,000 --> 00:18:19,000

By then, the FBI can't further investigate.

206

00:18:19,000 --> 00:18:28,000

Dick Briggs dies in a single car accident December 12th, 1980, and it's unlikely that this drug dealer was Cooper, but with him gone, we'll never really know.

207

00:18:28,000 --> 00:18:35,000

Once again, we're left with more questions than answers. How did Briggs, the money, and D.B. Cooper add up?

208

00:18:35,000 --> 00:18:40,000

Did Briggs plant the money? Did he know about the couple going to find it?

209

00:18:40,000 --> 00:18:44,000

Fortunately, the case breakers aren't done digging yet.

210

00:18:46,000 --> 00:18:56,000

It's November 2011, and while the FBI has investigated over a thousand suspects in the D.B. Cooper case, none have panned out.

211

00:18:56,000 --> 00:19:04,000

But a team of amateur researchers called the case breakers have uncovered a new person of interest.

212

00:19:04,000 --> 00:19:12,000

The case breakers have been looking at a former cocaine dealer named Richard Briggs who bragged that he was D.B. Cooper.

213

00:19:12,000 --> 00:19:19,000

Now, Briggs has been dead for 30 years, so there's no way to prove his claim. Plus, there's always been some problems about Briggs being the suspect.

214

00:19:19,000 --> 00:19:28,000

First, he doesn't look that much like the D.B. Cooper sketch. Second, there's no known records of him having any parachute training.

215

00:19:28,000 --> 00:19:37,000

This isn't the end of the story for Briggs, though, because the case breakers find one of his associates, former paratrooper Robert Rackstra.

216

00:19:37,000 --> 00:19:44,000

When they look at the picture of Rackstra and compare it to the sketch, they think, maybe this guy could be D.B. Cooper.

217

00:19:46,000 --> 00:19:55,000

This guy checks all the boxes. He's an ex-paratrooper, looks a lot like the D.B. Cooper sketch, and was even investigated as a suspect in the late 70s.

218

00:19:55,000 --> 00:19:59,000

The case breakers dig deeper into Rackstra's past.

219

00:19:59,000 --> 00:20:06,000

Robert Rackstra joins the Army in 1969, and he's assigned to the 1st Calvary Air Mobile Division in Vietnam.

220

00:20:06,000 --> 00:20:12,000

In the service, he gets extensive training on skydiving, use of explosives, and how to fly a plane.

221

00:20:12,000 --> 00:20:17,000

He makes a name for himself and quickly rises to the rank of 1st Lieutenant.

222

00:20:17,000 --> 00:20:23,000

But this guy is a total rule breaker. At one point, he even steals his own commander's jeep.

223

00:20:23,000 --> 00:20:31,000

In 1971, just five months before the Cooper hijacking, Rackstra finally gets kicked out of the Army for insubordination.

224

00:20:31,000 --> 00:20:35,000

From there, his bad behavior continues.

225

00:20:35,000 --> 00:20:40,000

In the 1970s, he racks up a lot of charges, everything from check forgery to domestic violence.

226

00:20:40,000 --> 00:20:49,000

At one point, he's actually charged with killing his own stepfather. He's actually his acquittal to that, but still faces other charges when he disappears.

227

00:20:49,000 --> 00:20:56,000

While out on bail, he fakes his own death. He rents a small plane, and he fakes a Mayday call saying he's going down in Monterey Bay.

228

00:20:56,000 --> 00:21:00,000

Investigators find the plane intact, repainted, and a nearby hangar.

229

00:21:00,000 --> 00:21:05,000

Rackstra's eventually re-arrested a few months later and receives a short sentence.

230

00:21:05,000 --> 00:21:12,000

All this attention with law enforcement has an unintended consequence. It puts him right on the radar for the DB Cooper investigation.

231

00:21:12,000 --> 00:21:23,000

In 1978, two stocked and California detectives look at Rackstra. They look at his background and criminal record, and they can't help but notice his similar appearance to the Cooper sketch.

232

00:21:23,000 --> 00:21:26,000

The detectives find too many connections to ignore.

233

00:21:27,000 --> 00:21:35,000

He knows bombs, he knows skydiving, he runs scams with airplanes, he knows fake identities, and by all accounts, he has nothing to lose.

234

00:21:35,000 --> 00:21:39,000

The Stockton detectives tip off the FBI.

235

00:21:39,000 --> 00:21:44,000

Rackstra gives a jailhouse interview to the Stockton, California newspaper, The Record.

236

00:21:44,000 --> 00:21:50,000

In it, he says he identifies with the spirit of DB Cooper, a guy who challenged the legal system and beat it.

237

00:21:50,000 --> 00:21:57,000

In the interview, Rackstra switches the first person and he says, I think I stand for the American people.

238

00:21:57,000 --> 00:22:01,000

Journalists find some more circumstantial links between him and DB Cooper.

239

00:22:01,000 --> 00:22:05,000

He admitted to being in the Pacific Northwest during the time of the hijacking.

240

00:22:05,000 --> 00:22:12,000

They also learned that he was introduced to skydiving by his favorite uncle, Ed Cooper.

241

00:22:12,000 --> 00:22:18,000

In another sit-down interview, Rackstra is asked if he thinks he's a good suspect for DB Cooper.

242

00:22:18,000 --> 00:22:25,000

He says, if I was an investigator, definitely so. I wouldn't discount myself or a person like

myself.

243

00:22:25,000 --> 00:22:37,000

Based on all this evidence, the casebreakers, Tom Colbert and Tom Salosi, publish a 2016 book, identifying Rackstra as DB Cooper.

244

00:22:37,000 --> 00:22:41,000

But their biggest bombshell has to do with the reason that Rackstra was never caught.

245

00:22:41,000 --> 00:22:47,000

Colbert and Salosi believe that Rackstra was protected by friends in high places, possibly the CIA.

246

00:22:47,000 --> 00:22:53,000

Colbert and Salosi have discovered evidence that Rackstra worked for the CIA.

247

00:22:53,000 --> 00:23:02,000

Court records show that Rackstra flew for CIA's Air America in Laos shortly after the DB Cooper hijacking.

248

00:23:02,000 --> 00:23:08,000

And he may have also been a pilot during the CIA's Iran-Contra affair.

249

00:23:08,000 --> 00:23:16,000

Colbert and Salosi believe that because Rackstra knows CIA secrets, he is shielded from the FBI investigation into DB Cooper.

250

00:23:17,000 --> 00:23:29,000

Despite this new evidence, the FBI doesn't further investigate Rackstra, because they officially closed the Cooper case just days after this revelation in 2016.

251

00:23:29,000 --> 00:23:35,000

The FBI has spent 45 years, countless man hours and millions of dollars investigating this case.

252

00:23:35,000 --> 00:23:38,000

And they don't have any firm evidence against any particular suspect.

253

00:23:38,000 --> 00:23:42,000

He didn't kill anybody. There's no families clamoring for justice.

254

00:23:42,000 --> 00:23:46,000

And at the end of the day, he really only stole \$200,000.

255

00:23:46,000 --> 00:23:50,000

They really can't justify spending all these resources on this case anymore.

256

00:23:50,000 --> 00:23:54,000

Robert Rackstra never confirms or denies he's DB Cooper.

257

00:23:54,000 --> 00:23:59,000

For the rest of his life, after the theory comes out, he seems to like people making their own assumptions.

258

00:23:59,000 --> 00:24:04,000

Maybe he was a CIA operative. Maybe he wasn't. Or maybe he's just some old guy having a bit of fun.

259

00:24:04,000 --> 00:24:11,000

We'll never know either way, because on July 9th, 2019, he died of a heart condition and took those secrets with him.

260

00:24:13,000 --> 00:24:24,000

When the FBI officially closes the DB Cooper investigation in 2016, the government assumes the public will finally lose interest.

261

00:24:24,000 --> 00:24:35,000

But in 2018, a new book reveals a shocking new theory, one that captures the world's attention and reignites speculation about the case.

262

00:24:36,000 --> 00:24:41,000

At this point, the FBI case has been closed for just over two years.

263

00:24:41,000 --> 00:24:45,000

So the only new suspects are coming by the way of amateur investigators.

264

00:24:46,000 --> 00:24:55,000

One in particular comes from author Carl Lauren. In his book, *DB Cooper and Me*, a criminal, a spy, my best friend.

265

00:24:55,000 --> 00:25:01,000

He alleges that his friend and former spy, Walter Recca, is DB Cooper.

266

00:25:02,000 --> 00:25:06,000

When this theory comes out, it makes huge headlines.

267

00:25:06,000 --> 00:25:13,000

Carl Lauren and his publisher, Vern Jones, start at full-scale media blitz to get their suspect's name out there.

268

00:25:13,000 --> 00:25:20,000

They make a documentary, and they contact the lead investigator in the Jimmy Hoffa investigation and ask him to write a book about this case.

269

00:25:20,000 --> 00:25:25,000

This book comes to the same conclusion that DB Cooper is Walter Reza.

270

00:25:25,000 --> 00:25:28,000

It all starts with a phone call.

271

00:25:28,000 --> 00:25:32,000

According to Lauren, in 2008, Reza calls him.

272

00:25:32,000 --> 00:25:39,000

Lauren can tell that he has something he wants to get off his chest, and his best friend tells him, I am DB Cooper.

273

00:25:39,000 --> 00:25:44,000

Reca is getting older, he wants to share his story with someone, why not his best friend?

274

00:25:44,000 --> 00:25:46,000

Carl wasn't surprised by this.

275

00:25:46,000 --> 00:25:54,000

In November of 1971, when he first heard the news of the skyjacking, he said out loud, I bet that's Walt.

276

00:25:54,000 --> 00:26:02,000

He knows Reca is a trained former paratrooper. They were even on a skydiving team together in the 1950s with the Michigan Air National Guard.

277

00:26:02,000 --> 00:26:05,000

Other details line up as well.

278

00:26:05,000 --> 00:26:13,000

In 1971, Walt would have been 37 years old. He looked similar to the hijacker and was living in Washington State at the time.

279

00:26:13,000 --> 00:26:19,000

Lauren thinks that Reca has the personality for it. He describes his friend as fearless and brash.

280

00:26:19,000 --> 00:26:27,000

Lauren states, I knew Walter Reca was DB Cooper because he was DB Cooper.

281

00:26:27,000 --> 00:26:37,000

Before sharing more details, Reca asks Lauren to sign a notarized letter stating he'll only release the information after Reca's death.

282

00:26:37,000 --> 00:26:46,000

Lauren signs a letter and then they can begin. Reca agrees to let Lauren tape record all their phone conversations where he will finally reveal everything.

283

00:26:46,000 --> 00:26:53,000

There's three hours of recordings where Walt confesses to the crime and describes exactly how he did it.

284

00:26:53,000 --> 00:26:58,000

If these tapes are true, there are details in here that only the skyjacker would know.

285

00:26:58,000 --> 00:27:05,000

Most importantly, Reca describes precisely where he jumped and landed.

286

00:27:05,000 --> 00:27:13,000

Reca says he left from the plane about 50 miles southeast of Seattle, just on the edge of the Cascade Mountain Range.

287

00:27:13,000 --> 00:27:18,000

He chose a spot where there was a highway running through it for an easier escape.

288

00:27:18,000 --> 00:27:24,000

In order to verify Reca's claim, Lauren goes to this location and begins to ask around.

289

00:27:24,000 --> 00:27:33,000

There he's amazed to find an eyewitness named Jeff Osottage, a former cop who claims to have seen Reca the night of the infamous hijacking.

290

00:27:33,000 --> 00:27:39,000

He stated that in the small town of Clay Ellum, he saw Reca walking on a road near a cafe.

291

00:27:39,000 --> 00:27:45,000

Reca is wearing a black suit, he's soaking wet and carrying a ring coat wrapped up under his arm.

292

00:27:45,000 --> 00:27:54,000

Reca seems disoriented and asks where he is. He calls an unidentified friend and has Osottage give the friend directions to their location.

293

00:27:54,000 --> 00:28:00,000

Before Osottage leaves, Reca offers to pay for his coffee and that's the last of their encounter.

294

00:28:00,000 --> 00:28:07,000

According to Osottage, he didn't notify authorities because he didn't think this could be Cooper.

295

00:28:07,000 --> 00:28:14,000

Osottage sees the news about the hijacking, but from what he saw, the hijacker jumped out in Oregon, not in Washington.

296

00:28:14,000 --> 00:28:19,000

Plus, he didn't think Reca looked anything like the composite sketch.

297

00:28:19,000 --> 00:28:26,000

Reca had a much rounder face, a little bit thicker build and a more crooked nose than what was

observed in the sketch.

298

00:28:26,000 --> 00:28:33,000

Despite the claims in Lauren's book, the FBI doesn't reopen the case to investigate Reca.

299

00:28:33,000 --> 00:28:37,000

Besides the sketch, the location also doesn't add up to investigators.

300

00:28:37,000 --> 00:28:41,000

Reca supposedly walks to a town in Washington called Clay Ellum.

301

00:28:41,000 --> 00:28:47,000

The town is over 150 miles northeast of the hijacked plane's flight path.

302

00:28:47,000 --> 00:28:52,000

Also, the only evidence they have that may implicate Reca is hearsay.

303

00:28:52,000 --> 00:28:58,000

The FBI isn't interested in reopening the case, so it's just another deathbed confession.

304

00:28:58,000 --> 00:29:03,000

But Lauren says there's another reason the FBI steers clear of Reca.

305

00:29:03,000 --> 00:29:10,000

According to Lauren's book, shortly after the hijacking, two government agents come knocking on Reca's door.

306

00:29:10,000 --> 00:29:15,000

They give Reca a choice. Come work for U.S. intelligence or spend a long time in jail.

307

00:29:15,000 --> 00:29:27,000

Lauren claims that Reca then begins working as a spy for the CIA, as well as Israel's Mossad, and even allegedly, the Soviet KGB.

308

00:29:27,000 --> 00:29:34,000

Lauren has evidence for this, as Reca gave him a bunch of passports, some of which have fake names.

309

00:29:34,000 --> 00:29:43,000

He also has a variety of covert identity cards from spy agencies like MI6, and a diary chock full of assassinations and covert operations.

310

00:29:43,000 --> 00:29:49,000

I suppose that all of these documents could be forgeries, but they really don't answer the question of if he's D.B. Cooper.

311

00:29:49,000 --> 00:29:52,000

We'll probably never know the answer to that question.

312

00:29:57,000 --> 00:30:08,000

When the hijacker known as D.B. Cooper disappears with \$200,000 in 1971, he leaves behind almost no evidence.

313

00:30:08,000 --> 00:30:13,000

The only things we know for sure that are left on the plane is the black clip on Ty and the Ty clip.

314

00:30:13,000 --> 00:30:22,000

You may be surprised that he would leave some things behind, but back in the 70s, nobody knows about DNA and nobody can test for it.

315

00:30:22,000 --> 00:30:29,000

Criminals are mainly concerned with not leaving behind hairs or fingerprints, neither of which are found on the necktie.

316

00:30:29,000 --> 00:30:36,000

But 50 years later, in 2011, technology evolves enough to make a breakthrough.

317

00:30:36,000 --> 00:30:42,000

Back in 2009, a paleontologist named Tom Kay assembled a group of scientists to investigate.

318

00:30:42,000 --> 00:30:45,000

They dubbed themselves as Citizen Sluice.

319

00:30:45,000 --> 00:30:51,000

Their plan is to use the up-to-date scientific techniques that have not been used in this case.

320

00:30:51,000 --> 00:30:56,000

In 2011, they're allowed by authorities to test the black clip on Ty.

321

00:30:56,000 --> 00:31:04,000

Kay and his team feel that the Ty is a great piece of evidence for one specific reason. You don't usually wash ties.

322

00:31:04,000 --> 00:31:11,000

There's a chance that this Ty was worn in many different situations, picking up various particles and fibers along the way.

323

00:31:11,000 --> 00:31:17,000

The team uses an electron microscope, allowing them to look closer at the Ty than ever before.

324

00:31:17,000 --> 00:31:25,000

They're shocked to find rare earth minerals on it. Specifically, these are cerium, strontium sulfide, and pure titanium.

325

00:31:25,000 --> 00:31:31,000

These aren't just lying around your house. These elements are used for very specific situations.

326

00:31:31,000 --> 00:31:36,000

Of course, they were hoping for a lead, but this is a better lead than they could have ever anticipated.

327

00:31:36,000 --> 00:31:46,000

In 1971, these materials would only typically appear in aerospace maintenance facilities or cutting-edge electronics labs.

328

00:31:46,000 --> 00:31:55,000

This narrows things down tremendously. There are millions of Caucasian men with dark hair, but there's only a few hundred thousand that would have worked in that kind of environment.

329

00:31:55,000 --> 00:32:01,000

Was D.B. Cooper an engineer or a scientist? Did he sweep up the lab at the end of the day?

330

00:32:01,000 --> 00:32:07,000

After the team releases its findings, engineer Bill Rollins joins the hunt.

331

00:32:07,000 --> 00:32:12,000

Rollins goes through the records of people who were employed by these companies in the 1970s.

332

00:32:12,000 --> 00:32:17,000

He compares these with thousands of persons of interest that the FBI looked at.

333

00:32:17,000 --> 00:32:24,000

He believes he finds the perfect candidate for D.B. Cooper, a production supervisor at an electronics factory named Joe Lacitch.

334

00:32:24,000 --> 00:32:36,000

Joe Lacitch is a retired U.S. Army major and war veteran, and at the time of the hijacking, he works at a technology plant in Nashville, where he could easily come in contact with the rare earth elements.

335

00:32:36,000 --> 00:32:40,000

But there's something else that catches Rollins' eye.

336

00:32:40,000 --> 00:32:47,000

He thinks Lacitch committed the hijackings not for money, but for revenge.

337

00:32:47,000 --> 00:32:58,000

When the FBI originally questions flight attendant Tina Mucllo in 1971, she mentions a conversation that investigators don't pay much attention to at the time.

338

00:32:58,000 --> 00:33:04,000

She asks Cooper why he's hijacking the plane. Do you have something against Northwest Orient Airlines?

339

00:33:04,000 --> 00:33:09,000

He responds, I don't have a grudge against your airline mess. I just have a grudge.

340

00:33:09,000 --> 00:33:13,000

For Rollins, that grudge is a critical detail.

341

00:33:13,000 --> 00:33:25,000

Rollins believes Lacitch has a serious grudge against the FBI. In 1971, the same year as the hijacking, Lacitch's daughter Susan dies in a tragic accident involving the bureau.

342

00:33:25,000 --> 00:33:33,000

Susan is kidnapped by her estranged husband George. He drags her on board a private plane against her will at gunpoint in Nashville.

343

00:33:33,000 --> 00:33:41,000

He demands the pilot fly them to the Bahamas, but this requires a refueling stop at Jacksonville International Airport.

344

00:33:41,000 --> 00:33:52,000

The FBI is waiting for them in Jacksonville, and they end up shooting the tires out on the plane, but before they can rush on board, George has killed everyone on board, including himself.

345

00:33:52,000 --> 00:33:56,000

Lacitch files a wrongful death suit against the bureau.

346

00:33:56,000 --> 00:34:03,000

And just two months later, D.B. Cooper hijacks the plane, creating a years-long headache for the FBI.

347

00:34:03,000 --> 00:34:11,000

For Rollins, the timeline of Susan's murder and the Flight 305 hijacking points directly to Lacitch as a suspect.

348

00:34:11,000 --> 00:34:17,000

In some warped sense of justice, he decides to stick it to the FBI by hijacking a plane himself.

349

00:34:18,000 --> 00:34:26,000

And Lacitch seems to be one of the few suspects who was ever on the FBI's radar who could have had access to the rare metals found on the tie.

350

00:34:26,000 --> 00:34:31,000

Unfortunately, Lacitch dies before Rollins can question him.

351

00:34:31,000 --> 00:34:39,000

But Rollins hasn't given up. He is still trying to track the ransom money, which he believes will lead to Lacitch's hometown of Nashville.

352

00:34:39,000 --> 00:34:43,000

Maybe if he finds it, he'll finally know D.B. Cooper's true identity.

353

00:34:47,000 --> 00:34:54,000

As amateur investigators continue to study the D.B. Cooper case in the late 2010s, some focus on one detail.

354

00:34:54,000 --> 00:34:57,000

That he's a man with a grudge.

355

00:34:57,000 --> 00:35:04,000

At some point during the flight, Flight Attendant Tina Mucllo asked D.B. Cooper if he had a grudge against her airline.

356

00:35:04,000 --> 00:35:07,000

And Cooper's response was no, that he just had a grudge.

357

00:35:07,000 --> 00:35:14,000

Now if we could just figure out exactly what D.B. Cooper's grudge was, it would be a huge clue to ultimately solving this case.

358

00:35:14,000 --> 00:35:22,000

In 2018, a reporter for the Oregonian newspaper, Douglas Perry, announces he's found the answer.

359

00:35:22,000 --> 00:35:29,000

The reporter has been handed a treasure trove of research that an army analyst had put together.

360

00:35:29,000 --> 00:35:33,000

The analyst wants to remain anonymous and is hesitant of the publicity that the case might bring him.

361

00:35:33,000 --> 00:35:36,000

He's right, it makes international headlines.

362

00:35:36,000 --> 00:35:41,000

The analyst has done years of research and shares it with both Perry and the FBI.

363

00:35:41,000 --> 00:35:48,000

According to him, D.B. Cooper didn't act alone. He believes there's a co-conspirator.

364

00:35:48,000 --> 00:35:53,000

The analyst claims his research began in the early 2000s.

365

00:35:53,000 --> 00:36:00,000

The analyst reads an obscure book that was written in 1985. The book was titled, D.B. Cooper What Really Happened?

366

00:36:00,000 --> 00:36:09,000

In the book, the author Max Gunter claims that he received a phone call from D.B. Cooper and later D.B. Cooper's widow.

367

00:36:09,000 --> 00:36:16,000

These people outlined to Gunter the real story of what happened and the name they give him is Dan LeClaire.

368

00:36:16,000 --> 00:36:27,000

The book gives further details such as biographical information and birthdays so the analyst is able to connect Dan LeClaire with a very real former army veteran named Dan Clair.

369

00:36:27,000 --> 00:36:29,000

He thinks that's who called Gunter.

370

00:36:29,000 --> 00:36:37,000

Clair died in 1990 and he doesn't resemble the Cooper sketch, but a colleague of his does.

371

00:36:37,000 --> 00:36:47,000

The analyst looks into Clair's family and friends and while doing so, he believes he's come up with a match, a man named William J. Smith.

372

00:36:47,000 --> 00:36:50,000

Smith is a manager at Clair's Rail Yard.

373

00:36:50,000 --> 00:36:56,000

Smith is a New Jersey native who graduates high school early to join the Navy.

374

00:36:56,000 --> 00:37:03,000

Smith trains as an aerial gunner and photographer where his job is to take reconnaissance pictures.

375

00:37:03,000 --> 00:37:13,000

He gets an honorable discharge in 1947 where he makes his way home to Jersey City and begins his job at Lehigh Valley Railroad.

376

00:37:13,000 --> 00:37:16,000

In the 1960s, he befriends Dan Clair.

377

00:37:16,000 --> 00:37:24,000

After working for the railroad for over 20 years, Smith is eventually promoted to the position of yard master.

378

00:37:24,000 --> 00:37:28,000

It's a management position that oversees everything that's going on in the rail yard.

379

00:37:28,000 --> 00:37:31,000

There are two key reasons why this is important.

380

00:37:31,000 --> 00:37:34,000

First, Smith would have worn a tie to work.

381

00:37:34,000 --> 00:37:41,000

Second, he would have been wearing that tie near the exotic metals present in the railroad's repair facilities.

382

00:37:41,000 --> 00:37:45,000

This could explain the rare materials found on DB Cooper's tie.

383

00:37:45,000 --> 00:37:50,000

Could the Duos work with railroads motivate Cooper's alleged grudge?

384

00:37:50,000 --> 00:37:55,000

In the late 1960s and early 70s, the railroad industry is in shambles.

385

00:37:55,000 --> 00:38:00,000

The rise in airplane travel and air freight has crushed their bottom line.

386

00:38:00,000 --> 00:38:05,000

Railroads nationwide are plagued with wage reductions and furloughs.

387

00:38:05,000 --> 00:38:10,000

In 1970, this comes to a head when Smith and Clair's railroad files for bankruptcy.

388

00:38:10,000 --> 00:38:16,000

It ends up being the biggest bankruptcy in history up to that time until the Enron collapse in 2001.

389

00:38:16,000 --> 00:38:22,000

Thousands of people lose their jobs and many of them lose their life savings and pensions.

390

00:38:22,000 --> 00:38:26,000

The analyst believes this incites the hijacking.

391

00:38:26,000 --> 00:38:34,000

He doesn't believe Smith and Clair got laid off, but he does believe that seeing all their coworkers get laid off did inspire their revenge.

392

00:38:34,000 --> 00:38:39,000

They decide to attack the air industry because that's what's ruining their business.

393

00:38:39,000 --> 00:38:45,000

The analysts suggest that Smith and Clair planned the hijacking together.

394

00:38:45,000 --> 00:38:49,000

He thinks they make DB Cooper's so-called bomb out of railroad flares.

395

00:38:49,000 --> 00:38:53,000

These could look a lot like dynamite when they're wrapped in wire.

396

00:38:53,000 --> 00:38:59,000

Then they study rail maps of the Pacific Northwest to plan the hijacking route.

397

00:38:59,000 --> 00:39:06,000

It's possible DB Cooper chose that flight path due to his knowledge of where the railroad tracks were to make it an easy getaway.

398

00:39:06,000 --> 00:39:13,000

Smith and Clair prepped together and Smith is the one that actually does the crime based on his aviation training.

399

00:39:13,000 --> 00:39:17,000

Smith does look a lot like the sketch of DB Cooper.

400

00:39:17,000 --> 00:39:21,000

He may be one of the closest resemblance of all the suspects.

401

00:39:21,000 --> 00:39:25,000

Maybe even Clair is out there in the night of the hijacking helping Smith escape.

402

00:39:25,000 --> 00:39:32,000

The analyst noted that Clair retired a year and a half after the hijacking and he was only 54 years old.

403

00:39:32,000 --> 00:39:35,000

Maybe he got a share of the ransom money.

404

00:39:35,000 --> 00:39:40,000

When Perry writes his story, he asks the FBI for comment.

405

00:39:40,000 --> 00:39:43,000

The FBI has received the analyst's file on Smith and Clair.

406

00:39:43,000 --> 00:39:50,000

That much we know, but as far as how seriously the FBI takes them as suspects, we actually have no idea.

407

00:39:50,000 --> 00:39:54,000

Because they give a strangely cryptic response.

408

00:39:54,000 --> 00:39:59,000

They officially closed the investigation in 2016, so they could have just said that.

409

00:39:59,000 --> 00:40:01,000

We're not looking into them.

410

00:40:01,000 --> 00:40:07,000

Or like many candidates before him, they could say Smith isn't the guy that he's not DB Cooper.

411

00:40:07,000 --> 00:40:09,000

But that's not what they say.

412

00:40:09,000 --> 00:40:13,000

Instead they said, quote, it would be inappropriate to comment on tips related to Smith.

413

00:40:13,000 --> 00:40:18,000

What does that mean? That's usually the language used in an active investigation.

414

00:40:18,000 --> 00:40:26,000

Sadly, it turns out that Smith died in January of 2018, just 10 months before the article was published, so we may never know the truth.

415

00:40:26,000 --> 00:40:33,000

Maybe the FBI is still looking at William Smith, or maybe it's just another red herring in a case full of red herrings.

416

00:40:36,000 --> 00:40:42,000

The unsolved case continues to captivate the public five decades after the skyjacking took place.

417

00:40:42,000 --> 00:40:51,000

Perhaps someday one of the many passionate sleuths still investigating this mystery will help us discover DB Cooper's real name.

418

00:40:51,000 --> 00:40:58,000

I'm Lawrence Fishburne. Thank you for watching History's Greatest Mysteries.