



# History's Greatest Mysteries: The Unsolved Case of D.B. Cooper

*Charles River Editors*

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\*Includes pictures.

\*Provides a detailed account of the hijacking, theories over what happened to Cooper, and a discussion of some of the main suspects.

\*Includes quotes by important participants in the case.

\*Includes a bibliography for further reading.

"Maybe a hydrologist can use the latest technology to trace the \$5,800 in ransom money found in 1980 to where Cooper landed upstream. Or maybe someone just remembers that odd uncle." – FBI Special Agent Larry Carr

On November 24, 1971, there was little to suggest that the skies above the Pacific Northwest would produce one of the greatest mysteries in American history and a criminal investigation that is still ongoing over 40 years later. However, on the day before Thanksgiving, a man calling himself Dan Cooper boarded Northwest Orient Flight 305 from Portland to Seattle and sat in the rear of the cabin. Shortly after takeoff, the man handed a flight attendant warning that he had a bomb and informed her that he was hijacking the plane. Cooper demanded \$200,000, several parachutes, and a truck to refuel the plane when it landed in Seattle. Another flight attendant would later inform authorities, "He seemed rather nice. He was never cruel or nasty. He was thoughtful and calm all the time."

When the plane landed at Seattle-Tacoma Airport, Cooper's demands were met, after which he let all of the passengers and most of the crew off. He then told pilot William Scott to fly towards Mexico at no higher than 10,000 feet and at the slowest possible speed, which would also require a refueling stop in Reno, Nevada. About 30 minutes after the plane had taken off, Cooper manually activated the aft air staircase near the back of the cabin and apparently jumped out of the plane shortly after. The plane landed without any problems at Reno about 90 minutes after Cooper had activated the staircase to exit.

Despite leaving dozens of fingerprints, as well as a couple of personal effects, authorities could not identify Cooper, even though Cooper was being actively investigated within minutes of hijacking the plane on its way to Seattle. Furthermore, nobody was sure where Cooper landed, or if he even survived the jump, and few clues were found even after one of the most intensive manhunts in American history. Adding to the mystery is the fact that Cooper couldn't possibly have known his precise location when he jumped due to the cloud cover at 5,000 feet obscuring visibility.

Since that night in November 1971, only a little light has been shed on the mystery. In 1980, a boy playing along the banks of the Columbia River found some of the stolen money still banded together but in bad shape. This heightened the belief of many that Cooper didn't land safely, and that he may have fallen into a body of water, but the inability to locate other money and the fact that some bills were missing from the discovered packets alternatively suggest that Cooper survived the jump and intentionally buried the money.

Either way, the additional findings have only added to the intrigue and speculation over who Cooper was, and the mystery and fascination with the case has only made things more difficult, as it produced apparent copycat attempts and a host of individuals who claimed to be D.B. Cooper on their deathbeds, forcing

investigators to check out and refute claims. To date, those in charge of the investigation have enough evidence to eliminate the names traditionally listed as suspects, either through fingerprints or alibis. As a result, the identity of D.B. Cooper and his fate remain unsolved, and over 40 years after he jumped out of that plane, the FBI doesn't know much too more than it did in 1971.

History's Greatest Mysteries: The Unsolved Case of D.B. Cooper comprehensively covers the facts, mysteries, and theories surrounding the only unsolved hijacking case in America.

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