



**db**

by Tommy Smith

## **RESOURCE GUIDE**

compiled by Jessica Dart for CoHo Productions

### **ABOUT THE PLAY**

Thanksgiving weekend 1971. A man calling himself D.B. Cooper boards a plane in Portland, hijacks it for \$200,000 at the SeaTac Airport, then parachutes into a snow storm over Mount Rainier, never to be seen again. **db** brings to life this electric story, showing how the enduring myth of Cooper has created a canvas for regular Americans to act out fantasies of heroism, celebrity, revenge, retribution and rage.

**db** takes the audience on a thrill ride from tense moments aboard the hijacked plane to west coast spots where the conspiratorial mystery of D.B. Cooper's supposed triumph still echoes. Who is the real D. B. Cooper? And what does the story of the only unsolved air piracy in American aviation history offer to the people obsessed with it? While D.B. Cooper's exploits continue to fascinate and entertain, how do we reconcile the lasting effect of terror for those whose lives he endangered? The play, like the case itself, provides little in the way of answers, but delivers the riveting complexity of this contemporary American myth.

### **ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT**

Tommy Smith's **FIREMEN** was named by the Los Angeles Times among the [best stage shows of 2014](#). **FIREMEN** also [won five LADCC awards](#), including best writing. Tommy's other plays include **GHOSTLIGHT** (Labyrinth Theatre Company, d. Paul Budraitis), **WHITE HOT** (Here Arts Center, d. May Adrales & West Of Lenin, d. Braden Abraham); **ZERO, PTSD & PIGEON** (Ensemble Studio Theatre, d. Billy Carden); **THE WIFE** (Access Gallery, d. May Adrales); **CARAVAN MAN** (Williamstown Theatre Festival, music & lyrics by Gabriel Kahane, d. Kip Fagan); **DEMON DREAMS** (Magic Futurebox, music by DJ Spooky, d. Kevin Laibson); **A DAY IN DIG NATION** (PS 122, co-written and d. Michael McQuilken); **AIR CONDITIONING** (Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference, d. Steve Cosson); among others.



In addition, he co-created and directed the award-winning stage shows **DISINFORMATION**, **TRANSITION**, **RADIOPLAY** and **DUTCH A/V**, which played at The Public Theatre, Lamama, The Warhol Museum, MCA Chicago, ICA Boston, On The Boards and PICA: TBA, among others. As a director/writer, Tommy also created the environmental sound performances, **NECTARINE EP** (for Flea Theater) **LOTUS EATERS EP** (for IRT Theater, with voices of Neil Gaiman, Marin Ireland & Reed Birney) and **FORTH** (for MFB, d. Meiyin Wang). He is a graduate of The Juilliard School for playwriting.  
<https://smithsmith.wordpress.com/>

# The Legend of D.B. Cooper

“(Cooper) comes off as a kind of curious Robin Hood. Taking from the rich, or at least the big and complex. It doesn’t matter whether he gives to the poor or not. The symbolism of the skyjack was one individual overcoming, for the time being anyway, technology, the corporation, the establishment, the system.” - from SKYJACK by Geoffrey Gray

For more than 45 years, amateur sleuths, conspiracy theorists, and the FBI have been intrigued by America’s only unsolved skyjacking and the person responsible for it: D.B. Cooper. Though the [FBI announced they would no longer actively investigate the case as of July 2016](#), the legend of D.B. Cooper has endured thanks to the mystery that surrounds Cooper’s true identity and motivations, the love residents of the Pacific Northwest have for local legend/folklore, and the American obsession with the [anti-hero](#). Despite dozens of theories and reported confessions, no one really knows who Cooper was. Did he die during his jump from the plane? Did he survive and casually reassume the identity of an average citizen? Could your 80-year-old neighbor *be* D.B. Cooper? Will we ever know for sure? And do we really want to know?



In many ways, Cooper is the ideal anti-hero - a product of the challenging social, economic, and political climate of the late 1960s and early 1970s (see below). Like the fictional characters Dexter Morgan (*Dexter*), Don Draper (*Mad Men*), Walter White (*Breaking Bad*), Nancy Botwin (*Weeds*), and Omar Little (*The Wire*), D.B. Cooper has come to symbolize audacity, rebellion, and counterculture despite the real trauma he caused others.



## THE FACTS, or WHAT WE KNOW

- [On November 24, 1971: A man purchased one ticket for Northwest Airlines flight 305 from Portland to Seattle under the name “Dan Cooper.”](#)

- The suspect wore a dark suit, a black tie, and dark sunglasses. He reportedly looked like a “business executive,” not much different from the men who usually took the short flight from PDX to SEA-TAC.



- While in the air, Cooper passed a note to a flight attendant indicating he had a bomb.
- Flight attendants Tina Mucklow and Florence Schaffner were the only people on board who interacted with or could describe Cooper. The police sketch to the left is based on descriptions given by Mucklow and Schaffner.
- The flight crew did not alert the other passengers about the hijacking as a protective measure. Some passengers suspected something was wrong, but nobody was truly aware of their dangerous situation until after they had been safely evacuated.

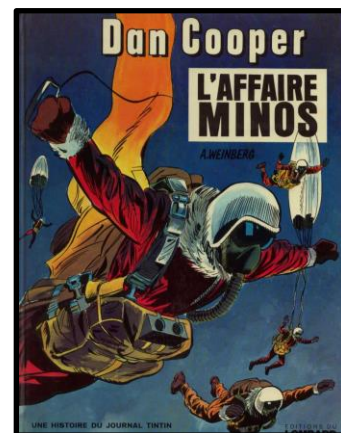
- Upon landing at Sea-Tac, Cooper demanded \$200,000 in cash, four parachutes, and food for the flight crew before releasing the passengers.

- When Cooper's demands were met, he asked to be flown to Mexico via Reno, Nevada. He allowed Tina Mucklow and three pilots to remain on board.
- About 45 minutes after takeoff, Cooper asked for help lowering the aft stairs, sent Mucklow to the cockpit, strapped the money and a parachute to his body, and jumped from the plane near Ariel, Washington, [leaving only his black clip-on tie from JC Penney behind](#).
- The FBI investigation began immediately and included 1,000 military troops searching the probable jump zone on foot and in helicopters. No sign of Cooper was found.
- As news of the skyjacking spread, the suspect's name was mistakenly announced as "D.B. Cooper," and that name stuck. In this [newscast from the day of the skyjacking](#), Walter Cronkite identifies the suspect as "D.A. Cooper."
- Additional [physical evidence](#) from the unsolved case includes [the tie, Cooper's airline ticket, the Tena Bar money, a warning placard from the aft staircase that became detached when the stairs were down during Cooper's jump](#), and a [pink parachute](#).
- [In 1980 \(9 years after the skyjacking\), a 9-year-old boy named Brian Ingram found 3 bundles of decomposing money totaling \\$5800](#) while digging a fire pit at Tena Bar. The serial numbers matched those of some bills given to Cooper as ransom. [In 1986, Ingram was allowed to keep half of the money](#), and he later [profited by auctioning off some of the bills](#).



## THE POSSIBILITIES, or WHAT WE THINK WE KNOW, BUT PROBABLY NOT, BUT MAYBE...

- [8 of the Most Intriguing Theories About Skyjacker D.B. Cooper](#)
- Or, wait...maybe it was one of [these guys](#)?
- [The Skyjacker That Got Away \(Full National Geographic Channel documentary\)](#)
- Was the hijacker paying homage to [Dan Cooper comics](#)?
- [The Mountain News](#) and [Citizen Sleuths](#) will keep you busy with theories, interviews, evidence, and breaking news about the Cooper case. Be careful - you'll be down the rabbit hole in no time!



## The Time Period - 1971



"When Cooper jumped in the fall of 1971, the nation was at war with itself. In government buildings and on college campuses, bombs went off. In cities, looters roamed as riots raged and buildings burned. At demonstrations against the war in Vietnam, protesters were arrested by the tens of thousands. A defeat in Vietnam was imminent. The nation was also mired in recession. [Labor strikes crippled the workforce](#). Unemployment soared. So did the crime rate. [Prisons were overcrowded and taken over in riots](#). Communes were built. Cults formed. Otherwise normal teenagers ran away from home, and had to be 'deprogrammed' after they were brainwashed... The underground was rising. Terrorists were homegrown. Communist fears were reborn." - from

“There is such a feeling of powerlessness in this country. We all have the feeling that we want to complain to the manager, but the manager is invisible. Nobody knows who he is and where to find him.” - John Gardner, former Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare (1971)

- [America in the 1970s: Photographs from the Pacific Northwest](#)
- [Nixon made some major changes in economic policy](#) that would have far reaching impact for the US
- [Portland in 1971](#)
- [1971 Billboard Hot 100](#) (*The Theme from Shaft* was #1 the week DB Cooper hijacked Flight 305)



- Airport security was lax in 1971, allowing Cooper to purchase a ticket without identification. Electronic records of airline ticket purchases were not kept.

- [Between 1963 and 1971, 160 planes were hijacked in American airspace.](#)

- Airline travel was still considered glamorous and comfortable. Passengers were allowed to smoke onboard, luxurious meals were served, and flight attendants were still known as “stewardesses.”

- [Becoming a stewardess was a highly competitive process.](#)
- Stewardesses were [portrayed as both mother and sex kitten](#) in order to appeal to the largely male airline travelers.



## The Characters

In addition to several possible iterations of D.B. himself, the play includes characters based on real people who directly encountered or claim to know/to be the real Cooper. Some facts and speculation about each character are below.

## Tina Mucklow

- A stewardess who was 22 years old at the time of the skyjacking
- Tina spent more time with Cooper than any other flight crew member, and was assumed to be the witness who could most easily identify him.
- She sat next to Cooper on the plane, lit his cigarettes and served him drinks while he kept one hand on the bomb trigger. She was the only stewardess Cooper kept on board during his getaway flight.
- Tina met with federal agents and gave [media interviews](#) about Cooper immediately following the skyjacking. She said Cooper “seemed rather nice. He was never cruel or nasty. He was thoughtful and calm.”
- Tina stopped speaking to the press about Cooper in the late 1970s, but remained cooperative with the FBI in their investigation.
- Tina disappeared from public life in the late 1970s (see the play to find out where she went)
- As of 2011, Tina has been living in central Oregon (supposedly the Springfield area) under a different name. [She refuses to talk to reporters](#) about Cooper.



## Florence “Flo” Schaffner

- A stewardess who was 23 years old at the time of the hijacking
- [Cooper actually handed Florence the note](#), not Tina as indicated in the script. Flo assumed the note was just another pick-up attempt from an ordinary male passenger and she put it in her purse without reading it.
- Florence asked Cooper to show her the bomb. She later described having seen eight red cylinders with red-insulated wires attached and a cylindrical battery inside the briefcase. She relayed Cooper’s demands to the flight crew, and was the only witness to see the hijacker’s eyes.
- In months following the skyjacking, Florence claims to have been stalked by a man who followed her and boarded several Northwest planes she was flying on. Flo claims the mysterious man told her, “I know the hijacker from prison. He wants to talk to you...I want to tell you, this guy is not just a hijacker. He was in the Bay of Pigs. This guy works for the CIA.”



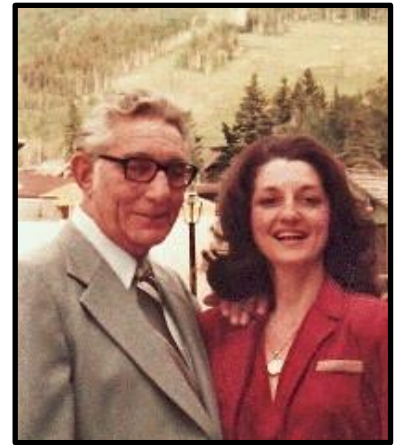
## Duane Weber (D.B. Cooper?)

- Duane [was once considered a credible suspect by the FBI, but was ruled out in 2007 based on DNA evidence](#). His wife Jo has a strong online presence and continues to insist the FBI is wrong and that Duane was Cooper.
- Duane died [in 1995 following a reported deathbed confession to his wife Jo that he was Dan Cooper. Jo and Duane were married for 17 years.](#)
- Duane worked as an antiques dealer in Florida before his death, and had the military experience necessary to successfully execute Cooper’s jump. He once told Jo that he “hurt his knee jumping out of a plane” but didn’t elaborate.
- He spent some significant time in prison, including a state penitentiary in Washington “near the Portland airport,” in Jefferson City, Missouri, the Ohio State Penitentiary, San Quentin, Folsom, and the Colorado Federal Prison in Canon City. Jo learned of Duane’s time in prison after his death.



## Jo (Collins) Weber

- According to Jo, Duane confessed to being DB Cooper on his deathbed. He reportedly said, "I'm Dan Cooper," and followed up with, "oh fuck it, let it die with me!" when Jo seemed confused by his admission.
- She is well known on [Dropzone.com](http://Dropzone.com) and other Cooper-centric forums for maintaining that Duane was the hijacker.
- Jo claims she found pictures, documents and IDs belonging to Duane that used the name "John C. Collins." Her investigation into Duane's life revealed that he'd been a career criminal and not the man she knew at all.



## Lynn Doyle "LD" Cooper (D.B. Cooper?)

- LD Died in Eugene, OR on April 30, 1999. His niece Marla originated the theory that LD was D.B. Cooper.
- LD was a veteran of the Korean War and later worked as an engineering surveyor. [Both kinds of experience could have helped LD pull off the hijacking. His brother, Dewey Max Cooper, has been implicated as a possible accomplice in the crime.](#) Dewey worked for Boeing in the 1960s, which may have provided him valuable information about the kind of plane Cooper hijacked.
- The FBI has considered him a credible suspect, though they [failed to link LD to the hijacking with DNA](#) evidence.



## Marla Cooper



- Though she was 8 years old at the time of the Cooper skyjacking, Marla claims to remember interacting with LD the day it happened. She began investigating her family's possible connection to the Cooper case in 2009.
  - Marla [Claims that her father, Don Cooper, knew that LD hijacked the plane](#) - she says she had a pivotal conversation with her father in 1995 where he said, "Don't you remember that your uncle LD hijacked that airplane?"
  - [Marla's mother, Grace Hailey, also believes LD was Cooper.](#)
  - A number of TV interviews with Marla are available on [youtube](#).
  - Robert Blevins interviews Marla [here](#) and [here](#)

## Barbara "Barb" Dayton (D.B. Cooper?)

- Born in Florida as "Bobby Dayton" on May 10, 1926. Died in Nevada on February 20, 2002 at the age of 76.
- Ran away from home at age 16 and ended up in Oregon, then joined the Merchant Marines at age 17, during WWII.
- Received the first sex reassignment surgery in Washington state ([1969](#)) after being rejected for the procedure at Johns Hopkins.

- Had the temperament, skills and knowledge needed to successfully hijack a plane
- Barb always wore long sleeves to cover the tattoos she got while in the military (as Bobby). While in the Philippines, she began getting a tattoo for every port she visited.
- Her friends Pat and Ron Forman claim Barb hijacked the plane and demanded ransom not because she actually wanted the money, but because she wanted to get even with the commercial airline industry that refused to license or hire her.
- The Formans claim that Barb encouraged them for years to write a story about her life, and that she confessed to being Dan Cooper.



## Pat and Ron Forman

- The Formans claim that Cooper was actually their long-time hanger-mate at Thun Field (a small airport outside of Puyallup, Washington), a fellow pilot named Barbara Dayton.
- They say Barb told them bits and pieces of her story over the course of a friendship that began in 1977 and ended in 2002 following Barb's death.



- Pat and Ron are celebrities among Cooper theorists. They were interviewed (and then edited out of) the National Geographic Channel's Cooper documentary. In July 2016 they were featured in the History Channel documentary *D.B. Cooper: Case Closed?*
- Their [website](#) includes extensive information about Barb and their friendship with her. Even more detailed information about Barb's childhood and several photographs can be found in their book, *The Legend of D.B. Cooper: Death by Natural Causes*.