

down, but they wouldn't know if I was planning to take somebody down with me, so I asked them for two complete sets of chutes, two chest packs and two back packs, so they would think that if they gave me bogus chutes they would in effect be signing the death warrant of whoever went with me."

He said:

"I went up and down about a spot with and back when he landed near each it to his special harness as he could suitcase, along with the money, and a jacket and some other items into the his pack. He planned to put his special harness to be attached across and sent out in a suitcase. He had built a line. The only slip-up was over the money. Cooper demanded that it be His logic was sound. The chutes were



EXHILARATION FILLED HIM

the follow-on planes from spotting him. The free fall carried him to about 4,500 ft. where he opened the chute. Below, he could pick up familiar landmarks—fields, barns, roads, and the power line he needed to avoid. The wind was from the east, which was fine. He needed to drift westward, closer to the freeway and his car, anyway. He landed skillfully in a big open field (it was the first jump he had made in several years) fearing only one thing: that dogs might spot him and begin barking. They didn't. He gathered up the white parachute, walked downhill to a weedchoked gully beside a small dirt road and there stashed the money and the chutes.

Then he simply walked up the road to his car, ducking off into the weeds three times when cars passed. When he reached his car, he got in, drove back, collected the money and chute, picked up his radio transmitters, packed everything in the trunk, got on the freeway, and drove home.

Exhilaration poured over him. "I felt like I could have walked all the way to Chicago," he said. "Not only did I have the money, but I had a plan and carried the plan through under conditions that a lot of people would be reluctant to jump in. But then the reaction hit me, I became extremely nervous driving up the freeway. I became almost paranoid. Because if I were ever stopped, if I had to open the trunk, I was dead in the water. I considered stopping and getting out of all the visible evidence. But where? So I figured the best thing I could do was keep on going. And this is what I



in a shopping bag, and returned it to the car trunk.

Next morning, he drove to a remote spot, burned part of his gear and buried the rest, along with the money, "in a spot where nobody will ever, ever find it."

Several days later, Cooper inadvertently discovered that although the money was not marked, authorities had the serial numbers of every \$20 bill he possessed. So though he had the money, he couldn't spend it. What to do? He thought of taking it to Mexico, or Europe, and "fencing" it. But he was an engineer, not a criminal. Therefore, operating on alien turf, he figured to lose not only the money, but his life as well. He was furious. He felt he had been double-crossed. Here he had a fortune, and couldn't spend a dime of it.

That is roughly where I came into the picture. The foregoing narrative was related to me by the man I believed to be Cooper in a series of taped interviews in a Seattle motel that ran for some eight hours over a period of three days last February. He also guided me by car over the route of his crime.

It had started when a man calling himself "Seth Thomas" contacted me by phone on the night of Jan. 31, saying he was acting as intermediary for Cooper. He said Cooper was interested in telling his story, but wanted to be paid, because he couldn't spend the money he had stolen. He said he and Cooper realized that the recent Clifford Irving Howard Hughes hoax would devalue the Cooper story in the minds of potential publishers, but that they had thought and thought and finally agreed on what

the amount of the fee—\$45,000.

Therefore, I paid Cooper \$30,000 for his story, I handed it over in cash \$20 and \$50 bills, to his intermediary, Seth Thomas, on condition the money be set aside and used for Cooper's legal defense if and when he was captured."

Next week:

Why Cooper hijacked the plane, how he contemplated suicide, and why he asked for precisely \$200,000.



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NEXT WEEK:

Why
D.B.
Cooper
Did It,
And
Why He



and drove home.

Exhilaration poured over him. "I felt like I could have walked all the way to Chicago," he said. "Not only did I have the money, but I had a plan and carried the plan through under conditions that a lot of people would be reluctant to jump in. But then the reaction hit me, I became extremely nervous driving up the freeway. I became almost paranoid. Because if I were ever stopped, if I had to open the trunk, I was dead in the water. I considered stopping and getting rid of all the visible evidence. But where? So I figured the best thing I could do was keep on going. And this is what I did," he said.

How Did It Go?

What he feared was a roadblock. There was none. In his planning, he had figured that law enforcement wouldn't really begin to react until the next day. It takes a while for a bureaucracy to crank up. So he didn't spot a single lawman all the way home.

He got there at about midnight. His wife awoke long enough to say "How did it go?"

He had told her he was going on a business trip. "The same," he said. "Same old story."

She went back to sleep. Cooper went to the kitchen, turned on the radio and listened to news bulletins about the skyjacking while he had coffee. Then he went out and brought in the money and examined it with a "black" light to see if he could detect whether it had been marked by the law with special paint. It hadn't. He stowed the money



Photostats of three \$20 bills, given to LA editor Karl Fleming as proof of D. B. Cooper's identity, matched serial numbers on the list of stolen bills distributed by the FBI below. Cooper showed Fleming the actual bills, but said the rest of the money was buried in a remote hiding place.

L33 524 933A 69	L54 899 276A 69	L20 150 975A 69
L33 526 898A 69	L54 904 730A 69	L20 153 074A 69
L33 528 092A 69	L54 907 155A 69	L20 154 044A 69
L33 529 797A 69	L54 929 823A 69	L20 163 957A 69
L33 530 471A 69	L54 984 623A 69	L20 168 977A 69
L33 532 853A 69	L54 986 729A 69	L20 173 789A 69

After Cooper hit the ground, he stashed the money and parachutes in this marsh, walked to his car, returned to collect everything, and drove home.

eight-hour overnight period of three days last February. He also guided me by car over the route of his crime.

It had started when a man calling himself "Seth Thomas" contacted me by phone on the night of Jan. 31, saying he was acting as intermediary for Cooper. He said Cooper was interested in telling his story, but wanted to be paid, because he couldn't spend the money he had stolen. He said he and Cooper realized that the recent Clifford Irving Howard Hughes hoax would devalue the Cooper story in the minds of potential publishers, but that they had thought and thought and finally agreed on what they considered to be a fair price: \$200,000.

In subsequent negotiations, "Seth Thomas" he soon revealed to me as Jack Lewis, a Bremerton, Wash., real estate promoter, and Cooper showed me three of the \$20 bills, they said were part of the \$200,000. I checked the serial numbers against the list distributed by the FBI. They matched. Doubts about whether I had the right man would arise later, but at that moment, I believed he was Cooper. I saw the money, and the incredibly detailed account of the skyjacking which he spun was too logical to be fiction.

Therefore, I paid Cooper \$200,000 for his story. I handed it over in cash, \$20 and \$50 bills, to his intermediary, Seth Thomas, on condition the money be set aside and used for Cooper's legal defense if and when he was captured.

Next week:

Why Cooper hijacked the plane, how he contemplated suicide, and why he asked for precisely \$200,000.





BUR 164-2111 SE 164-81



BUR 164-2111 SE 164-81

THURSDAY, APRIL 13, 1972

PLEASE HELP

The family of Richard Floyd McCoy, Jr., who is a native of Craven County in the Cove City area, are asking friends who would like to contribute to his legal defense, to send funds to Russell E. McCoy, Box 7, Cove City, N. C.

He has served his country in the army nine years and has three different missions to Vietnam. He was in the Special Forces, a helicopter pilot and suffered head wounds in action and underwent head surgery. He was awarded the Purple Heart and many other decorations.

He was attending Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, as a law enforcement officer, and was to graduate in August 1972. His only funds for support was the G.I. bill. He has two minor children, ages 2 and 4, and his wife is in the hospital.

Your help will be greatly appreciated.

FEBRUARY 1971

AIR LINE PILOT

THE MAGAZINE OF PROFESSIONAL FLIGHT CREW

AROUND THE WORLD — THE LONG WAY

MLSE: A STATUS REPORT

BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING

747'S FUTURE BRIGHTENS



the briefing

Air Safety Forum to ask 'What Price Safety?'

"What Price Safety?" will be theme of the 1972 ALPA Air Safety Forum to be held May 23-25 at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington. Captain Richard Heller, Region Three safety chairman, has been named general chairman of the 19th annual Pilot Division safety conference. Margie Slagle (PAI) will be chairman of the 10th S&S Division Forum.

Tentative agenda for the pilots' forum calls for a closed luncheon meeting Tuesday, May 23, followed by closed sessions in the afternoon and meetings of the five regional safety committees in the evening.

Open sessions begin Wednesday morning, May 24, with a welcome by ALPA President John J. O'Donnell. Wednesday morning programs will discuss hijacking. There will be a formal luncheon. The afternoon will be devoted to disaster planning, two-segment approaches and noise-abatement procedures.

Thursday morning sessions will be devoted to airport safety, status of the airport certification program and ALPA's plan to accelerate installation of airport facilities. Thursday afternoon will schedule workshop action groups on air traffic control, collision avoidance systems, airworthiness and performance and accident prevention. Honors night reception and banquet is set for Thursday evening.

Buses will leave the Mayflower Hotel at 10 a.m. Friday morning for a special VIP preview of Transpo '72 at Dulles International Airport.

NAS Planning Review Conference set for May

The Fourth Annual National Aviation System Planning Review Conference will be held May 1-3 at the Twin Bridges Marriott Hotel in Washington according to FAA.

Papers have been invited on following tentative list of subjects: Human Factors and Biomedical Factors in Aviation; National Airspace System of the Future; Airport Development Assistance Program; Aviation Trust Fund; Balanced Transportation; New Technology, and Environmental Factors Affecting Aviation.

Registration is open to anyone interested. Registration fee of \$5 is required of those who wish to receive



Have you seen 'D. B. Cooper'?

The man calling himself "D. B. Cooper" who hijacked a Northwest 727 and extorted \$200,000 in the process last November is the subject of a widespread manhunt. During the episode, "Cooper" demonstrated more than a passing knowledge of the air environment, especially parachuting. He also showed a fair familiarity with airline aircraft operation.

It is possible that "D. B. Cooper's" path may have crossed that of airline personnel at some time under another name. He expressed a bitter hatred for the airlines and may have worked for one.

From descriptions furnished by those involved, the FBI has provided the following description and artist drawings of "Cooper" in the hope that ALPA members and other readers may be able to furnish some lead as to his whereabouts, dead or alive:

Race: White
Age: Mid-40s

Height: 5 feet 10 inches to 6 feet
Weight: 170 to 180 pounds
Build: Average to well built
Complexion: Olive, Latin appearance, medium smooth
Hair: Dark brown or black, normal style, parted on left, combed back, sideburns, low ear level
Eyes: Possibly brown; during latter part of flight put on dark wrap-around sunglasses with dark rims
Voice: Low, spoke intelligently, no particular accent
Characteristic: Heavy smoker of Raleigh filter-tip cigarettes

Wearing apparel: Black suit, white shirt, narrow black tie, black dress suit, black rain-type overcoat or dark topcoat, brown shoes; carried paper bag 4 inches by 12 inches by 14 inches and dark briefcase or attaché case

If you have any information that might lead to the identity of this individual, please contact the nearest FBI office.

all conference papers and the 1972 editions of the NAS Policy Summary and the 10-year plan. Register by writing to FAA, Attention: HQ-200, 800 Independence Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20591.

U.S. limits housing near noisy airports

The federal government is discouraging community development around airports by withholding funds for housing loans where it thinks noise complaints are likely to occur.

The Department of Housing and

Urban Development is working closely with FAA to develop guidelines called "noise exposure forecasts," which are based on FAA's composite noise rating calculations. New construction is "unacceptable" to HUD in an area where noise exceeds 80 db for one hour out of every 24, or 75 db for eight hours of every 24. Locations are normally acceptable if noise does not exceed 65-75 db more than eight hours a day.

In FAA's composite noise rating calculations, takeoffs and landings under 100 db and run-ups under 80 db are rated acceptable by HUD.

The D.B. Cooper Story

THE SKYJACKER WHO GOT AWAY WITH IT (P. 20)



No. 16: Oct. 21, 1972

25c

SUGAR RAY (P.9)

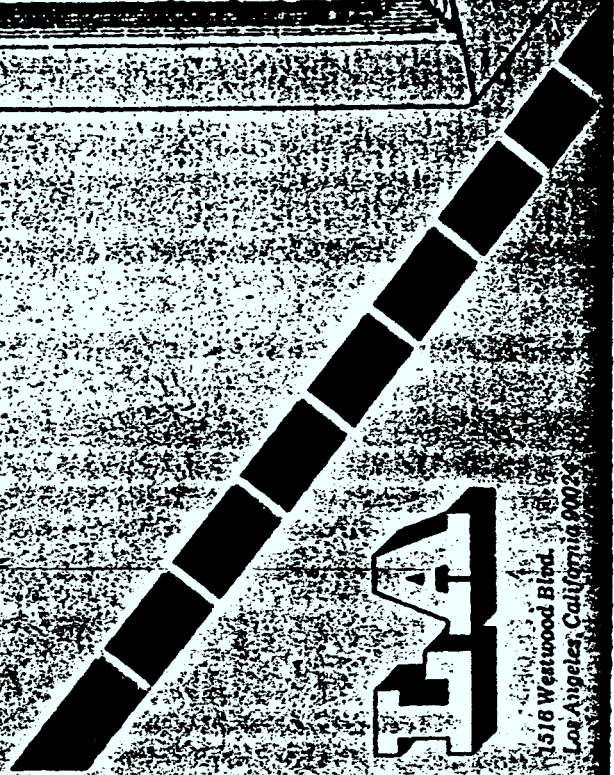
SOUNDER SOUNDED (P.15)

GOSEECALGOSEECAL (P.11)

THE D A TWING (P.4)



And
Why He
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\$200,000.



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Los Angeles, California 90024

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THE D.B. COOPER SKYJACKING

Part III: Doublecross Leads to the FBI

Election Predictions ★ Another ITT Scandal

p. 5

Brwindale Blackmail Caper ★ A Child of War

p. 15

p. 14

p. 5

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No. 18: Nov. 4, 1972: 25¢

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IS D.B. COOPER THE

LEGAL TROUBLES, MORAL PROBLEMS

STOP PUBLICATION OF THE STORY

By Karl Fleming

In the previous two segments of this series, the man who called himself D. B. Cooper described how he singlehandedly hijacked a Northwest Airlines plane last Thanksgiving Eve and parachuted to safety with \$200,000, and why he did it—mainly to prove he wasn't "over the hill," the implied message he got when he was fired by Boeing where he had worked for 15 years as an engineer. He showed author Fleming three of the stolen bills, and told part of the story, whereupon Fleming paid him \$30,000, and then got the rest of the story in vivid detail on tape and film. In this concluding installment, Fleming tells what happened after that.

my classified ad in the *Seattle Times*, and decided to make contact with me—purely to sell Cooper's story for money. Having sold it, they expressed a desire to keep in touch. Before leaving Seattle after my interviews, I asked Lewis, who said he was an engineer, to send me

aerial maps showing the area where Cooper claimed he landed, 30 miles north of Portland. When the maps arrived, they came in a package containing a worn brass and wood hat rack—that being the antique "Gift" Lewis mentioned in his letter.

By the time he wrote, I had resigned from *Newsweek*, had been married, and had completed the backbreaking job of transcribing the eight-odd hours of taped conversations with Cooper. Ordinarily, a reporter doesn't do that. He

takes notes, and if he uses a tape recorder, he merely selects nuggets from the tapes as he plays them back.

But this was important stuff. I had, in fact, recorded my clandestine conversations with Cooper with two tape machines. I also had a 30-minute filmed interview with him, as well as several rolls of film, and photostats of some of the stolen money.

Curtain Act

Originally, I saw the Cooper story as but a fitting curtain act at *Newsweek*, which I was leaving, with mixed emotions, after 11 eventful and satisfying years. And it would be, if the timing



for 15 years ago, and most of the stolen bills and told part of the story, whereupon Fleming paid him \$30,000, and then got the rest of the story in vivid detail on tape and film. In this concluding installment, Fleming tells what happened after that.

THE NOON MAIL OF MARCH 31 brought a convivial note from D. B. Cooper's intermediary, "Seth Thomas," whose real name is William John (Jack) Lewis. "Best wishes on the marriage," he wrote. "Hope you have received the gift. That jack came around The Horn to Bainbridge Island in Puget Sound in 1853. I'll keep you posted of any newsworthy stuff."

Lewis was a candid Babbitt who said he had aligned himself with Cooper just for the money. "I'm strictly a percentage man," he said. He was negotiating and acting as planner and arranger for Cooper, who professed to want to lie low rather than risk capture. Lewis said he went to Cooper's suburban home one night just before Christmas—about three weeks after the skyjacking—and while he and Cooper were sitting in the den discussing an investment plan, he looked up and noticed two skydiving trophies on Cooper's mantel.

The skyjacker was obviously an experienced parachutist. The news reports had all said so. Suddenly it hit him.

"Say, you wouldn't happen to have about \$200,000 in \$20 bills that you can't spend," Lewis said to Cooper.

Cooper blinked once, then replied calmly: "Well, what if I did. What could a fella do with that money?"

The FBI had, and was circulating, the numbers of all the stolen bills.

Some days later, both of them saw

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 L.A. While with Newsweek, he covered virtually every significant civil rights story of the turbulent 60s, including

and acting as planner and arranger for Cooper, who professed to want to flee, rather than risk capture. Lewis said he went to Cooper's suburban home one night just before Christmas, about three weeks after the skyjacking, and while he and Cooper were sitting in the den discussing an investment plan, he looked up and noticed two skydiving trophies on Cooper's mantel.

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The FBI's D.B. Cooper

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November 4, 1972

LA

11

REAL D.B. COOPER?

happened to be right, a fitting curtain-raiser for LA. It soon became apparent, however, that the newspaper would not be launched in time to have the story.

Another possibility arose. The best man at my wedding was a trusted old friend from the South, Charles Morgan Jr., a brilliant and courageous civil rights lawyer who had been a classmate of George Wallace at Alabama and later infuriated Wallace and other such prehensile hatemongers by legally representing blacks trying to get into white Alabama schools.

When Morgan arrived, I explained the story to him. He had agreed to legally advise me. He said I should try to get the story into print as soon as possible, in order to prevent even the appearance that I was overstepping my Constitutional rights as a reporter by withholding information about a wanted criminal. As he saw it, I didn't have a legal obligation to turn Cooper in, only to print my story as quickly as possible, and then possibly turn over my information to the authorities.

Morgan said, and I agreed, that the story seemed a natural for a book. Mor-

gan had recently represented Col. Anthony Herbert, the officer who spoke out on military scandal cover ups, had done a book with him. He suggested I contact Col. Herbert's agent, Gerard McCauley, in New York.

There were enormous problems ahead, complicating either publication of a magazine article or a book. There was a possibility, of course, that the whole story was a fraud, a la Clifford Irving. Cooper had readily and thoroughly answered every question I asked him, and I asked him some pretty tough ones over three days of intense interviewing, ques-

tions I didn't believe anyone—say, a con man—could have predicted. The details he spun on the performance of the crisis, and his motives for doing it, were endless.

He yielded up so much information, in fact, that I soon felt I knew a lot more than I wanted to know—details I believed, that would result in his being captured if they were published. I urged him to turn himself in and take his chances with 12 fair-minded jurors who might be impressed with the story of why he said he did it—out of rage and out of a desire to prove he wasn't the used up old man Boeing implied he was when the company summarily fired him at age 49.

He said he'd think about it. He said, meantime, he wasn't worried that any details he'd given me would endanger him. He just said he didn't want to talk to me anymore until after the story was published.

Criminal At Large

Contemplating publication, I was in a dilemma. To print it would lead most certainly to Cooper's capture. For the law to catch Cooper would be fine, but for him to be caught on the basis of information I had gathered as a reporter? I didn't like it. Nonsense, Morgan urged, the man was criminal; he knew what he was doing; so print the story and quit worrying about it. I couldn't. At one time, I strongly considered destroying all the





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In any case, it seemed important to publish the story, if it was true, Cooper's account of how he robbed the airline, and the eloquent explanation of why he did it—striking back at the Establishment for selling him an American Dream that turned out to be a nightmare—seemed an important if perhaps clichéd commentary on the problems of mass production capitalism. And Madison Avenue huckstering.

As I discussed a possible book with McCauley, it occurred to me Cooper might be induced to turn in the money, by giving him a share, say 20 per cent, of the book proceeds, or arranging with a publisher a plan by which royalties would be put into a legal defense fund.

The return of the \$200,000 in \$20s would, naturally, be proof that we had the right man.

I had stored the tapes and other documents in a friend's safety deposit box and was reading stories in the press that posers of 500 military hands were searching the woods around Lake Merwin for Cooper's body. In New York, McCauley made a quiet inquiry about a book with a friend at Harpers Magazine Press. Any negotiations he could make would have to be extremely discreet because of a chance the story would get out. Harper & Row was eager to do it, especially after McCauley told them any contract would be contingent on Cooper returning.

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Still, a book began to look like a reality. McCauley called to say he was arriv-

Still, a book began to look like a reality. McCauley called to say he was arriv-

Our D. B. Cooper

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D.B. COOPER:

ing with four Harpers executives. It was a touchy book. Still, they were coming, with contracts, the conditions being that Cooper would have to be induced to turn in the \$200,000 before they paid out any money—except for \$5,000 they would put up as security against their making the story to someone else.

The Harpers executives were esconced in one of those pleasantly airy cottages at the Beverly Hills Hotel, having coffee when I arrived. After awhile in California, the memory dims of what a hard core Eastern Establishmentarian looks like: tweeds, and pin stripes, rep ties, paunches, and gray, pasty faces. Among them was Brooks Thomas, the firm's chief legal counsel, a careful gentleman who later would distinguish himself by turning over a book which Harper & Row commissioned on the CIA involvement in Southeast Asian drug traffic to the selfsame CIA for pre-publication approval.

Not knowing Thomas at that time, I assumed his role would be to keep Harpers' position in *l'affaire Cooper* delicately committed—but ignorant and thus not legally culpable. But no. After some dallying around, Thomas said, without blinking an eye, that there were new terms: before Harpers would commit itself, Cooper would not only have to turn in the money, he would have to surrender, and would have to be convicted or plead guilty. That I told them, obviously was impossible. I concluded that Harpers had become increasingly nervous about the whole affair, and was trying to get off the hook by establishing impossible conditions. Finally, in fact, Thomas said they were not interested

to New York and get the story into print. *Newsweek* was naturally excited about the story. An elaborate cover article was planned, but a mood of caution prevailed. My old colleagues in the top editorial positions—"The Flying Wallendas," they were called by subaltern writers—trusted me. We had gone through a lot of important stories together. They had printed a story on no evidence but my say-so before, but this was a bigger thing. One had to weigh the risks. The possible benefit of such a story was great. If it were a phony, it could wreck the magazine, one editor said. If only some of the facts could be checked.

The FBI began checking some of them upon receipt of the material Morgan had turned over. Sitting in New York, I expected word of Cooper's arrest to come at any minute. The week passed, and nothing happened. The tension was incredible.

Then word came through a pipeline at the Justice Department that the FBI thought the bills which Cooper had shown me and given me photostats of were not for real. How that deduction was made from examining the photostats, without seeing the real bills, I did not and have not learned. But the FBI said "Cooper" had superimposed

fake numbers over the actual serial numbers on the three \$20 bills—making them appear to be part of the skyjack loot.

That was enough warning to hold up publication of the story. Within weeks, on June 3, the FBI arrested William John (Jack) Lewis, 32, alias Seth Thomas, and Donald Sylvester Murphy, 49, who said he was Cooper, and charged them with four counts of federal fraud. Lewis later complained that the FBI dug up his lawn looking for money and other evidence, but didn't find anything.

Murphy, it developed, was divorced, the father of three children, and lived not in a suburban home but at the modest Higgs House Hotel at 540 4th St. in Bremerton, Wash., a shipbuilding town of about 35,000, near Seattle. He was said to do business as a realty investment promoter out of the Renard Development Company at 6608 Kitsap Way.

Practically next door, Lewis, married, father of three, assistant city manager of Bremerton for a time (until he couldn't pass the civil service exam) was operating as a land investment broker and as a representative of World Wide Engineering and Product Development.

When they were arrested, I naturally

itched to hurry to Seattle and investigate. Morgan dissuaded me, saying that if Lewis and Murphy were in fact con men, their best "made up" defense would be to suggest that I was implicated with them in a scheme to bilk a publishing company and therefore since we were all conspirators, then how could they be guilty of defrauding me. Morgan cautioned, therefore, against any contact.

Afterwards, still seeking information I sent a private investigator to Bremerton to check on Lewis and Murphy. Both he learned, had financial troubles in the past that got them involved with the law. Lewis had been part owner of a dance tavern, an automobile speedway, and once had been arrested for stealing a raft of 15 logs.

Murphy had been divorced by his wife Jacqueline Rose Murphy, in 1970. They had three children. He had been arrested for drunken driving, and in her several divorce proceeding documents, his wife had complained of his being drunk and verbally abusive. He once was a heavy equipment operator.

He and Lewis often were seen together at the Melody Lane Bar and Restaurant at 527 Fourth St. in Bremerton, near their offices. Murphy, people told my investigator, had been on the wagon for a year and only drank coffee when he hung around the Melody Lane Bar. He was paying alimony and child support and had little visible means of income.

Nevertheless, a private investigator in Bremerton who has known Murphy for five years would not rule out the possibility Murphy in fact skyjacked the plane. "He is smart enough to do it," he said. Not only that, Murphy was noticeably absent from Bremerton and the Melody Lane during the period of the

Nicholas von Hoffman

Is It Fat City or Rat City?



HEY PUT A PICTURE IN THE
papers the other day of a fig-

Washington

sio, a large Nixon campaign contributor
and a business associate of C. Arnholt

Harper's involvement in Southeast Asian drug traffic to the selfsame CIA for pre-publication approval.

Not knowing Thomas at that time, I assumed his role would be to keep Harpers' position in l'affaire Cooper delicately committed—but ignorant and thus not legally culpable. But no. After some dallying around, Thomas said, without blinking an eye, that there were new terms: before Harpers would commit itself, Cooper would not only have to turn in the money, he would have to surrender, and would have to be convicted or plead guilty. That I told them, obviously was impossible. I concluded that Harpers had become increasingly nervous about the whole affair, and was trying to get off the hook by establishing impossible conditions. Finally, in fact, Thomas said they were not interested under any conditions.

Aside from the obvious, this presented another problem: McCauley had approached the Harpers people confidentially; Harpers said it was interested; McCauley delivered a manuscript; Harpers read it and made an offer, but now was saying it wasn't interested. At least four, and possibly more, Harpers executives now knew the whole story. I asked Thomas for a collective promise of absolute secrecy. He said he didn't know if that was possible. He was uncertain, he said whether he had a duty as a citizen to call the FBI. It was not one of the better days.

McCauley 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

thought the bill, which was shown me and given me photostats of, were not for real. How that deduction was made from examining the photostats, without seeing the real bill, I did not and have not learned. But the FBI said "Cooper" had superimposed

of Bremerton (or a similar name) on the civil service exam, was originally a land investment broker and as a representative of World Wide Engineering and Product Development. When they were arrested, I naturally

heavy equipment operator. He and Lewis often were seen together at the Melody Lane Bar and Restaurant at 627 Fourth St. in Bremerton near their offices. Murphy, people told my investigator, had been on the wagon for a year and only drank coffee when he hung around the Melody Lane Bar. He was paying alimony and child support and had little visible means of income. Nevertheless, a private investigator in Bremerton who has known Murphy for five years would not rule out the possibility Murphy in fact skyjacked the plane. "He is smart enough to do it," he said. Not only that, Murphy was noticeably absent from Bremerton and the Melody Lane during the period of the skyjacking. His erstwhile drinking companion didn't see him around the Melody Lane for two weeks.

Lewis and Murphy are out on bond awaiting trial Nov. 27. Larry Finegold, the U.S. district attorney who will prosecute for the government was a passenger on the plane which D.B. Cooper hijacked. Like the other passengers, he didn't see much, but he doesn't think William Sylvester Murphy is D.B. Cooper. Nor does the FBI. Last week, military troops were dispatched again, to search for Cooper's body. There was also a rumor that the brother of Cooper had been located, and he said Cooper did it because he was dying of an incurable disease.

The fraud case was yet to be tried but strong evidence seemed to be accumulating that Donald Sylvester Murphy Cooper, is not the real Cooper.

A private investigator checked again last week and says that Murphy had been employed at Boeing, and had military record of as a jumper. Neither, of course, is proof that Murphy did or did not hijack the airplane. In the end, anybody smart enough to pull it off would be smart enough to concoct an elaborately fictitious background for himself. Or, anybody smart enough to do it would be smart enough to do it and tell the story for money, but tell it in such a way that it appeared to be a hoax.

But in the end, or to this point, it is appropriate to conclude that Murphy is not Cooper, which means I jumped

Nicholas von Hoffman

Is It Fat City or Rat City?

THEY PUT A PICTURE IN THE papers the other day of a fine, sleek-coated, long-tailed rat taking in the sun near two old ladies in a park a few blocks from the White House. The sound of scratchings and scrabblings are audible in this capital of the world. Claws and fingernails on cement. The news media mice on tilting sheets of glassy no comments...and Washington's rats.

In the first days of the Nixon Administration the rats were like those of any other city, visible only by night, and then just in the alleys. 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 heading up the Democrats for Republicans 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 efficient 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 know the Blank Scandal. Nor does

do a large Nixon campaign contributor, and a business associate of C. Arnholt Smith, a San Diego buddy-buddy of the President.

Last year John and Angelo, his brother, pleaded guilty to incomplete evasion and were sentenced to the Federal slam at Lompoc, Calif. Unlike the crooks in Rat City they didn't need to escape, because the "New Republic" (October 21st) reports, "...the Alessios had things much their own way at Lompoc. Fine food, liquor and women were enjoyed by them behind bars...they made regular unauthorized trips from the institution, often staying overnight. Meanwhile, the prison officials who made all this possible were being entertained royally and treated favorably in business deals by members of the Alessio family not in prison..."

Do they have a rodent problem at Lompoc too? The media mice might like to ask that question also, but they're kept on a starvation diet by Ron Ziegler, the humanoid-keeper press secretary the President has set over them to feed them occasional pellets of information and grains of news. With presidential press conferences abolished for all practical purposes, the mice must live off Ziegler briefings, and they only have half enough of them because he has the cut the daily briefings from two to one.

With their rations reduced to the level of pernicious anemia last week, they squeaked at their keeper as he stood in front of the blue curtain in the White House. Ron Ziegler