

Written “evidence” of D.B. Cooper’s clean getaway, held by the FBI for 46 years, is released through a court order

Embargoed until 11/19/17: An ongoing FOIA suit against the Bureau has uncovered a 1971 D.B. Cooper letter, mailed 17 days after the jump, with clues about a fugitive that appears to be very much alive.

Old memos disclose that the FBI felt this taunting note was so unique and alarming, agents in charge quickly seized all four carbon copies sent to newspapers in Seattle, L.A., NYC and Wash., D.C., stamped them as “evidence,” then discreetly filed them away. News editors and blogging “Cooperite” researchers have speculated about the typed letter’s fate for decades, but the FBI has remained stone-silent.

The Bureau was just compelled to release one of the four copies, along with its related communiqués, to a 40-member cold case team ironically led by former FBI agents. After forensic study, the gumshoes and their organizer, documentarian Thomas J. Colbert, concluded that some of the author’s bulleted facts could only be known by D.B. Cooper himself. Bureau documents and its follow-up investigative actions reveal the feds were operating under the same assumption (See pgs. 2-3).

The typed letter’s teasing tone and phrasing are very similar to four Cooper notes mailed the month before and also seized by the FBI. Working with ’71 news photos of the envelopes, the team discovered the first and last were postmarked from California mailboxes near the isolated mountain home of a one-time NORJAK “*person of interest*,” **Robert W. Rackstraw Sr.** (now 74). He is a former Army aviator, para-trooper, SF-trained explosives expert, 4-time felon, and the only hijack candidate to admit being in the jump zone at that time. He is also the subject of this team’s seven-year hunt (See [DBCooper.com](http://dbcooper.com)).

Through old news video and family photos, Rackstraw also has been roundly recognized by more than a dozen reliable seniors (i.e.: former councilman, priest and ex-roommates) in 2 Oregon towns as “Baron Norman de Winter,” a colorful Swiss grifter a paper claimed had lived among them in the months prior to the plunge. Two locals said he was on their couch until the day before. De Winter, likewise, sent notes afterwards to “pen-pals” – with the four mailings perfectly timed between the out-going Cooper letters.

FYI: *See the Cold Case Team’s **12 documented incidents that suggest an FBI cover-up** – pages 5-7

*Team received strong account of Cooper’s escape plan; see pgs. 2-4 at <https://dbcooper.com/research/>

*Grifter “Norman de Winter” background: <https://dbcooper.com/2016/09/d-b-cooper-mystery-deepens/>

*Full Rackstraw investigation and 50 pages of notes are in award-winning book, “*The Last Master Outlaw*.”

Photos/Video: Over 100 photos and 20 hours of video footage available – **video sample**: <http://bit.ly/2amxQOV>

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"D.B. Cooper" Letter, #5 (In-town mailing to Seattle Times)

Sirs,

I knew from the start that I wouldn't be caught.¹

I didn't rob Northwest Orient because I thought it would be romantic, heroic or any of the other euphemisms that seem to attach themselves to situations of high risk.

I'm no modern day Robin Hood. Unfortunately do have only 14 months to live.

My life has been one of hate, turmoil,² hunger and more hate, this seemed to be the fastest and most profitable way to gain a few fast grains of peace of mind.

I don't blame people for hating me for what I've done nor do I blame anybody for wanting me to be caught and punished, though this can never happen.

Here are some (not all) of the things working against the authorities:

I'm not a boasting man

3 I left no fingerprints

4 I wore a toupee

5 I wore putty make-up

They could add or subtract from the composite a hundred times and not come up with an accurate description; and we both know it.

I've come and gone on several airline flights already and am not holed up in some obscure backwoods town.⁶ Neither am I a psycho-pathic killer. As a matter of fact I've never even received a speeding ticket

Thankk you for your attention.⁷



D.B. COOPER

CC'd to LA, NYC & WA, D.C.

FOOTNOTES:

- 1) Typing led FBI Lab to compare typewritten notes from demoted pilots/aviation workers with "a grudge." The writing itself showed a lack of empathy and the grandiose self-admiration of a narcissistic sociopath – just like many described Rackstraw. As a former judge who faced him put it, "I've dealt with a number of clever sociopaths in court, but he has more smarts and nerve than the rest put together."
- 2) "Hate, turmoil": Five months before hijack, Rackstraw was booted from Army for lies about attending two colleges, fake medals, and beating his wife for years. She left base with 3 kids and divorced him.
- 3) "Left no fingerprints": True! FBI found none in back of airliner or on any of the 5 "D.B. Cooper" letters.
- 4) "Wore a toupee": Passenger across from Cooper described his dark hair as "shiny, as if it was dyed." Weeks after this letter's arrival, Seattle reporters learned the FBI was now looking for a "bald-headed" Cooper "wearing a black wig." Two years later, Rackstraw's Wife #2 found a toupee and a tape-on mustache in his left-behind briefcase – one of his 22 confirmed fake identities used in five countries.
- 5) "Wore putty make-up": First attendant who sat next to Cooper said he had make-up on. Second one described his skin as olive-colored. Passenger directly across aisle said he had old man's double chin. FYI: Brown-haired Rackstraw (28 at the time) had Special Forces training in deception and disguise.
- 6) "Obscure backwoods town": For 18 months after the jump, Rackstraw in fact lived in the foothills of California's Sierra Nevada Mountains in the remote community of Valley Springs – population 1500.
- 7) "Thanks for": This is third Cooper letter ending that way. A retired FBI man called it a "thought pattern."

Proof the FBI Believed the Typed Letter was from “D.B. Cooper”


***Cooper: “I left no fingerprints”** – This statement verified it was from the hijacker – the fact no “fingerprints of value” were found was the FBI’s greatest secret. No one outside of the Bureau knew his cup, seating area, bathroom, emergency-exit door, and stair ramps he held onto had all been wiped clean or were too smeared. This stayed secret until two separate FBI agents printed the fact in post-retirement books in ‘84 (Richard T. Tosaw, “DBC: Dead or Alive?”) and ‘91 (Russell Calame, “DBC: The Real McCoy”).

The fingerprint lifts made during the search of the interior of the aircraft in the area where the hijacker was known to have been, such as the rear door, the area around the door, the lavatory door, as well as the seat area, susceptible to dusting, were submitted for fingerprint examination, but no fingerprints of value were found on any of the latents thus obtained. ✓

FBI “302” IR by Reno Special Agent
John F. Ricks on 11/25/71; Page 76

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***Cooper: “I wore a toupee”** – FBI-Seattle agents leaked they were after a man “wearing a black wig.”

snowmman Oct 22, 2008, 10:15 PM Post #4783 of 58140 (64567 views) Shortcut	 Re: [377] Treasure Island [in reply to] 377, Apr 29, 1972 - The FBI has concluded that "DB Cooper," the ransom hijacker of an airliner last November, is bald headed, according to the Bremerton Sun. From CLUE TO DB COOPER---"BALD," PAPER SAYS - Los Angeles Times Apr 29, 1972 - .. search for Cooper, who escaped last Thanksgiving eve from a low flying Northwest Airlines 727 along with two parachutes and 'according to the Bremerton Sun. The newspaper said it learned from a reliable source the FBI is looking for a bald headed "DB but it ... From San Mateo Times (Newspaper) - April 29, 1972, Apr 29, 1972 - FBI agents have been showing residents here a photograph taken in front of a local wig shop and indications are that the suspect could be bald and be wearing a black wig. These are the most recent conclusions of the FBI in its search for Cooper, who escaped last Thanksgiving eve from a low ... From San Mateo Times (Newspaper) - April 29, 1972,
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http://www.dropzone.com/forum/Skydiving_C1/Skydiving_History_&_Trivia_F21/DB_Cooper_P3110098-192

***Search for Cooper’s Typewriter** – FBI thought a typed note from demoted airline pilot with “a grudge” had same keystrokes as Cooper’s. But day later, he’s found to have a jump-day alibi. **NOTE:** In these released FOIA pages, the Bureau just redacted the “D.B. Cooper” letter identifier 7 times (one example below). Why would agents hide the hijacker connection to the archived note now, 46 years later?

ASAC PAUL R. BIBLER

SAC, SEATTLE (164-81)

NORJAK

SUSPECT

12/29/71

Supervisor MATHEISON called from the Bureau.

He said that this [redacted] had the Bureau somewhat excited since the Laboratory had just compared a letter which they got from the files of the Airlines Pilots Association with the typing on the [redacted] letters which were sent to the WASHINGTON POST and several other newspapers.

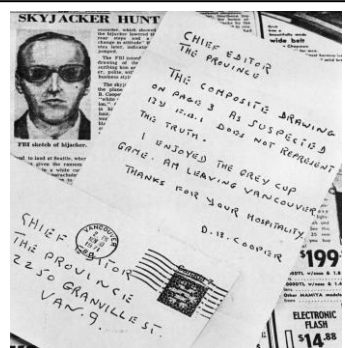
The Lab report says that this is the same style of type and certain limited characteristics suggest the possibility that they may have been prepared on the same typewriter. For this reason they want us to check him out today, if possible, and advise the Bureau by telephone or teletype.

FOIA redaction shows FBI’s cover-up of letter’s DBC identifier.

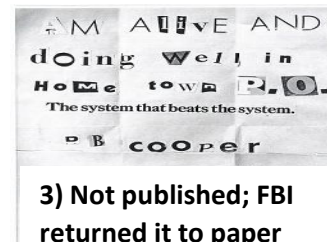
FYI: Copies of FOIA DBC letter, FBI Lab reports, agent memos and teletypes are available upon request.



1) Published; with FBI



2) Published; with FBI



3) Not published; FBI returned it to paper

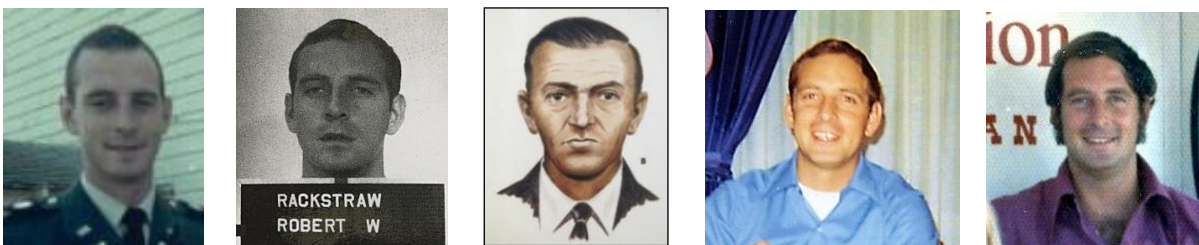


4) Only quoted; with FBI

FYI: In the first two weeks after the 11/24/71 hijack, a taunting "D.B. Cooper" author (in **red**) mailed five similar letters to newspapers (Last was "cc'd" to 3 more cities). The FBI Lab said none had prints, just like in Cooper's jet seating area. In between the mailings, conman "Norman de Winter" (whom many say looked like Rackstraw) sent four notes to pen-pal targets in Astoria (in **blue**). The long distances between the envelope drops suggests deliveries by private airmail. In the weeks leading up to the hijacking and mailings, both Norman and Rackstraw claimed to have a small plane in the Northwest.

NOTE: Former Los Angeles FBI Manager Jack Trimarco called the Cooper mail-drops near Rackstraw's hideaway town to be an "8 out of 10," evidence-wise. But when the Bureau agreed to join the 2016 History Channel's "Case Closed" production and appear on camera, producers sadly **cut the cold case team's top 18 pieces of evidence from the program – including these Cooper & Norman letter trails.**

The FBI Cover-Up



FBI sketch centered between Army & family pics (1969-71); town con-victims say one on right was his grifter look (#3).

In 2016, the Bureau told TJC his “*circumstantial case*” against Rackstraw (RWR) was “*unprosecutable*,” after 45 years – without even looking at the 102 pieces of evidence. Many of the former lawmen and women on his Cold Case Team believe the cancelation of the long-promised meeting was really about a fear of being shamed. Here are 12 time-lined incidents supporting that claim (support docs available):

1) RWR’s Grifter Identity in Northwest (7/16 to 11/23/71): More than a dozen credible residents from two towns – including a priest, councilman and senior firefighter – roundly recognized RWR in old news videos and photos as “Swiss Baron Norman de Winter,” a con-artist pilot who lived among them in the four months leading up to the hijack. Two said he was on their couch the day before. Old articles and grifter’s 7 pen-pal letters verify his scams and sudden vanishing. But after the Cold Case Team (CCT) turned in this development and contacts to Seattle Division on 8/24/17, **FBI chose not to investigate**.

2) Fly-Away Escape (11/23 & 11/24/71): The D.B. Cooper (DBC) getaway was witnessed by a half-dozen farmers in La Center, WA. FOIA records show they were questioned by FBI agents and, days later, by an investigative reporter. Both versions match dramatic details in a ‘97 oral escape story which was told by one of DBC’s suspected crime-partners and brought to the CCT. A summary of all the similar accounts was forwarded to Seattle Division case agents on 8/24/17, but so far, **no FBI action has been taken**.

3) Taunting “DBC” Letters #1-4 (Mailed 11-27 to 12-1-71): These four DBC notes sent to Western papers were confiscated by FBI. All feature cut-and-pasted words except letter #2, which was hand-printed. TJC noticed the first and last were mailed within 50 miles of RWR’s ‘71 isolated CA mountain home, 466 flying miles from OR crime scene. But **agents refused to discuss the new evidence of RWR’s home-mailing proximity to the “discounted” 4-letter theory. Bureau, however, still holds 3 of those letters**.

CCT offered up RWR’s DNA – gathered under retired agents’ supervision (in 2013 surveillance operation) and extracted by a Bureau-approved private lab – for comparison to FBI’s 4 confiscated DBC letters’ lick stamps and envelope flaps. But **Seattle Division refused to accept the DNA or look at private lab report**.

4) Taunting “D.B. Cooper Letter” #5 (Mailed 12/11/71): This typed note has a tone and phrasings like the earlier 4 DBC letters seized by FBI. But the Bureau treated this one real, stamping it “evidence” and acting on its author’s claims. **In its recent FOIA release**, however, there were telling redactions: In two old memos, the **FBI literally covered up the letter’s “D.B. Cooper” identifier seven separate times**.

5) Seattle FBI Division vs. California FBI (1978-79): Seven years after hijacking, the FBI first learned about California fugitive RWR and his DBC skill sets, similar looks, and admitting to have been in hijack zone at time. When agents first pressed the captured local felon if he was DBC on 2/20/78, he lawyered up. Weeks later, they asked his defense rep for a palm print – one of 11 partial prints found in DBC’s seating area. But two sources say the lawyer laughed, “*Are you crazy? I’d be pretty stupid to do that!*”

Without direct evidence, Seattle Division next chose to play down RWR: Seattle Times wrote that “*law enforcement sources*” claimed he had been “*ruled out... dismissed from serious consideration*” by FBI.

That leak angered California agents on the case: The next day, Senior FBI Agent Tom Kinberg told a local newsman he disputed the account of RWR’s clearing. He “*remains under investigation*” and “*information developed by investigators here is still being forwarded.*” Sources say Kinberg wasn’t the only one there to rile Seattle Division. The agent who told A.P. wire in 1978 that he linked RWR to DBC was sent back to his remote home-state office. **FYI: CA FBI agents leaked RWR was a serious suspect to media 11 times.**

6) River’s Two Money Discoveries (2/10/80): According to multiple sources, a secret cohort of RWR’s, the now-deceased Dick Briggs, planted the three DBC money bundles in the Columbia River’s surface sand in 1980. The FBI announced it “*probably*” meant DBC drowned. Soon after, RWR-DBC was freed from prison for local crimes and cleared by the FBI. But during the continuing river dig for the hijacker’s bones, thousands of DBC cash “shards” were found, 3 feet down. The FBI shore chief held up the cash pieces for TV cameras, but he couldn’t explain them. **The Bureau never spoke of the deep shards again.**

During the ‘71 “Fly-Away Escape” (See #2), the crime-partner storyteller said DBC and pilot dumped \$50K of ransom into nearby Vancouver Lake to make it look like DBC drowned. But it never surfaced – until agents dug deeper along the Columbia in 1980. TJC suspects Briggs’ cash bundle-planting was RWR-DBC’s second drowning stunt; the deep shards of Cooper \$20s are believed to have naturally buried themselves there after floating across a mile-wide flood plain following a documented 1976 dredging at Vancouver Lake. **Bureau refuses to consider Briggs’s plot and lake cash-dumping theories. FYI: Retired FBI shore chief and his Portland Asst. SAC Bill Baker both now think RWR should be re-investigated.**

7) Matching Print Style on DBC’s Airline Ticket and “DBC” Letter #2 (9/19/14): TJC noticed similar hand-printing on the “Dan Cooper” boarding pass and the “DBC” letter sent to a Vancouver, BC paper. When he asked Vancouver PD if it still had original note, chief said it was either lost or purged with other ‘70s records. But in a court-ordered 6/19/17 FBI FOIA search, TJC spots memos from the FBI requesting and receiving this DBC #2 note from VPD in December 1971. CCT offered RWR’s DNA to the FBI for note’s lick-stamp or envelope flap comparison, but the **FBI refused to accept DNA or the private lab report.**

TJC hired two Forensic Document Experts to compare printing on ticket and DBC letter #2. Both experts separately concluded that “*similarities*” suggest they “*were written by one person.*” So if this four-letter chain beginning and ending near RWR’s California remote home was his doing, this ticket match would put him on the hijack boarding line. But **FBI didn’t request either expert’s forensic letter/ticket reports.**

8) Across-Aisle Passenger Fingers RWR as DBC (Test on 9/21/15): A college student in back of the 1971 plane, responsible for the most credible sketch of hijacker (Page 5, middle), is tracked down by TJC. Now in his 60s, he looked at old mugshots from that era in a professional “six-pack” test and pointed right at RWR. A South Carolina state investigator noted there are “*nine points of match*” between sketch and RWR. But an **FBI liaison who viewed the test called the video-taped result “questionable at best.”**

9) FBI Collaborates with History Channel’s DBC Show (Shot 4/2016; premiered 7/10/16): **After six months of secret negotiations, Bureau agreed to participate** on air. Acting as both an FBI liaison and show host, former Assistant Director Tom Fuentes reviewed team’s evidence for three days in 9/2015. Then he gave his conclusion on camera: “*This is just the most outstanding example I’ve ever seen of a professional investigation...a tremendous circumstantial case.*” He promised to set up an FBI meeting.

But six months later on the production's last day and a week before CCT's assured meeting in Seattle, **the FBI canceled team's trip, wouldn't look at the 102 pieces of evidence, and DBC file was officially closed.** Three on-camera agents' scripted response: the FBI will only consider direct evidence, like the escape's cash or parachute. **Fuentes, now stone-faced, also claimed to have learned there were three pieces of evidence that prove RWR wasn't DBC (But in a week, TJC's team finds all three are false).**

On History Channel's 7/10/16 premiere night, CCT discovered that the **top 18 pieces of their evidence** – including DBC and grifter de Winter's letter trails, DNA and document forensics, testimony from RWR's two ex-wives and his lover on fugitive runs – **were all edited out. The last case agent, Curtis J. Eng, then told the American public on television and in print that he had seen TJC's evidence and rejected it.**

10) FOIA Suit against FBI (7/13/16 to 1/31/17): On 7/11/16, the man who formally closed the DBC case, FBI Seattle Division **Special Agent in Charge Frank Montoya Jr., told History Channel viewers “there isn't anything new out there.”** TJC and partner-wife Dawna immediately instructed the CCT lawyer Mark S. Zaid to file an FOIA for the archived records to see if that is true. A half-year later, a court judge ordered the case records to begin arriving in monthly batches at couple's website, DBCoooper.com.

Among this year's first 3,616 (of the estimated 70,000) DBC pages were **dozens of confidential memos that pertain to this investigation. Here are two:** A pilot in a “suspect aircraft,” touch-and-going on dirt strips in the jump zone, is identified through a “partial registration number” and is questioned by agents.

A woman “heard a low-flying jet airplane,” then soon saw “a well-dressed man walking along the road.” She “thought it strange to see such an individual in that [farming] area at that time of night.” Five weeks later, Seattle Division ordered an inquiry to “determine if [walking man] is identical with D.B. Cooper.” Lawyer Zaid asked for the FOIA redactions to be lifted, but **no response from the FBI.**

11) Escape-Story Delivery and Dig Site Location (2/27/17 to 8/12/17): Man who allegedly heard DBC getaway story from one of hijacker's 3 crime-partners contacted TJC on 2/27/17. While confirming the details, CCT believes it has found DBC's remaining 2 living crime-partners. Story source then took TJC's 8-member forensic team to the professed remote burial spot of the parachute and remaining ransom.

Seattle Division said it'd reconsider case if evidence dealt with the parachute or cash (See #9). So on 8/12/17, **agents there were surprised to hear** TJC and former FBI Supervisor Hadley McCann had turned in five dug-up fabrics, the dig site itself, research materials, and contacts for two alleged crime-partners.

12) FBI Deadline (8/13/17): Now 4 months later, the **FBI hasn't contacted dig-site's property owner; hasn't reported back on fabrics' lab results; and isn't believed to have contacted alleged DBC partners.**

In an official 11/6/17 letter to the FBI (available), **attorney Zaid briefed new Director Christopher J. Wray** on the CCT's efforts and **Seattle Division's failure “to live up to its Mission” by ignoring “crucial new evidence that could solve the case.”** Then Zaid ended with a deadline: “Unless we hear from a Bureau representative before November 13, 2017,” **the CCT “shall continue to excavate the site as well as directly contact the alleged co-conspirators.”**