

# Wien Jet is Hijacked

Over 13 hours of tense drama ended for Wien Consolidated Airlines Monday afternoon when the man who hijacked their morning flight from Anchorage to Bethel surrendered to Royal Canadian Mounted Police (R.C.M.P.) in Vancouver, B.C.

For hours, the Wien jet flew without specific destination as the skyjacker, identified as Dale Lavon Thomas, 29, held a brand new stewardess as hostage and demanded to be flown first to Vancouver, then to Cuba, Mexico City and then back to Vancouver.

Twenty-two year old Nancy Davis of Seattle the stewardess on her first flight with Wien, is credited with convincing the skyjacker to first land in Anchorage and release the 30 passengers on the plane and then later surrender to R.C.M.P. She said Monday evening she was "very frightened" throughout the more than 13 hour ordeal "But I just fed him coffee and tried to keep him talking as much as I could."

Miss Davis said the hijacker first approached her to ask where the washroom was shortly after the Boeing 737 took off from Anchorage, then he stuck a gun in her face and told her the plane was not going to Bethel.

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# Skyjack

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Walt Dotomain, a planner for the Alaskan Federation of Natives, who was sitting directly behind the hijacker on the flight to Bethel described him as a slim man, about 5'10" tall with a moustache and goatee who was "noticeably nervous" as the plane took off.

Bill Kristovich, 38, Wien Assistant Station Manager at Bethel was aboard the plane. He and another man who frequently takes the flight were prepared to subdue the hijacker if necessary.

When Don Peterson of Fairbanks, a senior pilot with Wien, signaled the Anchorage tower that a hijacking was taking place they first thought it was a joke. Wien had only recently distributed hijack procedures. This was the first skyjacking in Alaskan history.

"It's absolutely amazing that anyone would hijack a plane to Bethel," said Jerry White of Anchorage who was seated next to the hijacker.

Earlier that morning, reported Anchorage airport security officer Don Everly, Thomas's bags had been searched before he boarded the plane after a ticket agent became suspicious of the man's behavior.

The search produced nothing. Thomas was never bodily searched, a procedure allowed only if something registers on a metal detector. Wien has no metal detector at the Anchorage terminal.

Most of the plane's 30 passengers were unaware of the hijacking and slept till the plane landed in Anchorage.

From there, with the hijacker holding stewardess Nancy Davis hostage and three flight crew members, the plane proceeded to Vancouver B.C. for a refueling stop. It arrived there about 10:25 a.m. and disembarked about 20 minutes later. R.C. M.P. officers standing by made no effort to interfere with the hijacker. At that time, Wien Vice President A.E. Hagberg said the hijacker had demanded to go to Cuba and the airline would honor that request.

Upon leaving Vancouver, pilot Don Peterson filed a flight plan for Mexico City. With him in the cockpit were first officer Ray Miller and engineer Keith Forsgren.

But, 45 minutes after take-off from Vancouver the plane was headed back to the Canadian airport under orders from the nervous hijacker who had apparently decided he wanted a bigger plane to fly him to Mexico City.

At the time, a Qantas Airlines 707 jet was on the ground at Vancouver, hidden from the hijacker, though the Australian airline agreed to put the plane at Wien's disposal if necessary.

Instead, Thomas released the four crew member hostages and left the plane with a RCMP sub-inspector, Bruce Northorp.

Dale Lavon Thomas, a former Kodiak resident, was convicted in 1966 in the December 19, 1965 barroom killing of Kenneth Cherry at Kodiak, according to an ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS report.

On August 23 of this year he was released on parole from the Palmer work farm.

The F.B.I. filed air piracy charges before Anchorage U.S. Magistrate J. Douglas William II Monday afternoon. On Tuesday morning the Canadian Immigration board ordered Dale Lavon Thomas deported to the United States and he was put on a plane to Seattle where charges of air piracy awaited him.

At the days end, Wien Consolidated was just returning to normal. Bethel passengers had

been taken to their destination aboard F-27 turbo prop Monday afternoon. The hijacking is expected to cost Wien thousands of dollars.

According to a report, a man who fit Thomas' description tried to buy a ticket Monday morning for an Alaska Airlines jet from Anchorage to Seattle. He was reportedly refused a ticket when the agent said he became belligerent. Ticket agents then became suspicious when Thomas asked when the next jet departed—no destination specified.