

Pilot Gives Details of Desperate Flight

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KEY WEST, Fla. (AP) — Despondent because he could not feed his family, Alben Truitt, grandson of the late Vice President Alben Barkley, has taken an escape route followed by many other troubled men—a hijacked plane into Communist Cuba.

Charles Oliveros, Key West charter pilot who flew Truitt to Havana Wednesday with an explosive device held at the back of his neck, returned without him Thursday.

"He told me the honeymoon was over and we were going to Cuba," Oliveros said. "He told me that if I did not cooperate, he would not hesitate to kill me."

Behind him in his desperate flight, Truitt left his attractive brunette wife, Allison, and their three children, living in two tents pitched on a campground on the beach of Stock Island.

"He was worried over putting food on the table," said Al Knowles, Key West grocer whom Truitt had patronized since the family's arrival two weeks ago on this island at the far tip of the Florida Keys.

Police said Truitt had written some bad checks and one merchant had threatened him with jail if he did not make good Tuesday. The campground owner, Mrs. Boyd Hamilton, said she had given Truitt until Wednesday to pick up another check.

Oliveros, a 26-year-old American of Spanish ancestry, flew back Thursday, looked at an Associated Press Wirephoto of Alben William Barkley Truitt and said, "That's the man."

U.S. Commissioner William V. Albury issued a warrant Thursday afternoon charging Truitt with air piracy and fixed bond at \$100,000.

Truitt's family was reported in seclusion at an undisclosed location. Neighbors at the campground said Mrs. Truitt—who had declined to talk to newsmen earlier in the day— and her children left the tents in mid-morning, taking some of their possessions with them.

Oliveros added that the FBI, which questioned him on his return, told him the hijacker was one of four grandsons of the man who was vice president

from 1949 to 1953 under President Harry Truman.

Key West acquaintances said the 35-year-old Truitt, known here as "Bill," told them he brought his family to the island to "get away from the rat race" and because Washington was not a good place to raise children.

He also related, they said, that he and his wife felt they were "being stifled by their families" and wanted to get out on their own.

But it was tough sledding, Knowles commented. He said Truitt offered him a utility trailer for \$80, then in desperation reduced the price to \$35 in order to buy food for his family.

Loaded with camera equipment, Truitt chartered a small Cessna 177 for a photographic flight over the Dry Tortugas, historic site of Fort Jefferson 70 miles west of Key West.

The plane circled the Tortugas four times and then Oliveros said Truitt told him suddenly to head for Cuba.

"I turned around and laughed because I thought he was teasing me," the pilot said. "He wasn't joking. He told me not to turn around any more."

"He held a weapon at the back of my head and there was no doubt that my life was in danger. He used a little device that looked like a fountain pen, and told me it was an explosive device."

"I know for a fact that it was real. The Cuban guards discharged it and it went off like a gun."

When the plane landed at Jose Marti airport in Havana, the pilot said Truitt handed down his weapon, then his photographic equipment.

He instructed the guards, Oliveros said, to make sure that his wife got his equipment because "she's got to make a living, too."

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Alben Barkley Grandson Hijacks Plane to Havana