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Sane or Insane? A Case Study of the

By ROBERT LINDSEY

Garrett Brock Trapnell, whose five-week trial for skyjacking ended in a hung jury Monday, was born 34 years ago into a patrician world populated by famous war heroes. His father was a graduate of the Naval Academy at Annapolis, and his mother attended Radcliffe.

By the time he was 15, he was living in a brothel in Panama City. At 20, he boasted of running guns to Fidel Castro and was expelled from Cuba by the Batista government.

Since then, Trapnell has robbed at least seven banks, forged thousands of dollars worth of checks, pulled off a \$100,000 jewel theft in the Bahamas and been implicated in numerous other serious crimes.

He has been arrested at least 20 times for major crimes, but has spent less than two years in jail.

For almost 15 years, Trapnell once said, he made a point of trying to fool psychiatrists and psychologists in Florida, Texas, Maryland, New York, California and Canada into believing that he was a genuine "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde"—normally a sane, honest man, whose mind, every so often, was taken over by a sinister alter ego called "Gregg Ross."

"Because he got away with it for so long, it is an amazing case," said Dr. David Abrahamson, a Manhattan psychiatrist who is a specialist in aberrant criminal behavior and who said he was not fooled by Trapnell's masquerade of madness.

'Gregg Ross' Blamed

Trapnell evaded prison once again this week. He admitted trying to extort \$306,800 from Trans World Airlines after hijacking one of its jetliners last Jan. 29. But he claimed that he was not the skyjacker, that "Gregg Ross" was.

During a five-week trial that ended Monday, an assistant United States Attorney, Peter R. Schlam, convinced 11 jurors that Trapnell was lying. The 12th—a middle-aged social worker—did not agree, and the case ended in a mistrial. It will be retried starting March 5.

Six days before the case went to the jury, Trapnell had predicted to a reporter that the trial would end in a hung jury, and also who the holdout juror would be.

The Nixon Administration has followed the case closely. Federal Aviation Administration security officers say they are concerned that if "insanity" can be established, without foundation, as a defense for skyjacking, the result

might be a wave of airline extortion attempts by hijackers claiming to be insane.

The case has also raised broader issues regarding the role of psychiatric and psychological testing within the nation's legal and penal systems.

"If it's true that one guy can get by fooling psychiatrists for so long, it really says something about the system we now have," a Federal official close to the case said.

How Trapnell evaded prison for more than a dozen years prior to the skyjacking has been pieced together by The New York Times from interviews, official documents, and other sources.

Trapnell is a wiry man with dark hair and a dark mustache, who stands just under 6 feet tall and weighs 175 pounds. A high school dropout, he has an I.Q. of 131, has been married at least twice and has two small children.

A Military Family

According to investigators, he has a penchant for high living: With the proceeds from some of his robberies, he bought a \$10,000 Mercedes-Benz and a \$26,000 airplane that he flew himself, and he tried to buy a \$306,800 yacht. Perhaps, some investigators said, they were meant to be symbols of

achievement to make up for a troubled youth.

He was born Jan. 31, 1938, near Brockton, Mass. His mother, the former Elizabeth Brock, attended Radcliffe for one year, was a member of an old Massachusetts family, and drank heavily.

His father, Comdr. Walter Scott Kennedy Trapnell, was a 1921 graduate of the Naval Academy who married five times. According to the Justice Department, the father was forced to leave the Navy after an investigation indicated he was operating a bordello while stationed in



Associated Press

Garrett B. Trapnell after capture last January in hijacking of a Trans World Airlines jet. His arm was injured during the incident.

T. W. A. Hijacker



Associated P...

Cousin Foiled a Hijacking

Approximately five months before Garrett B. Trapnell hijacked a Trans World Airlines jet airliner, his cousin helped to prevent a hijacking.

The cousin, Joseph W. Trapnell, 41 years old, is a captain for Eastern Airlines. On Sept. 3, 1971, a Cuban refugee tried to commandeer a jetliner between Chicago and Miami. Captain Trapnell and another pilot overpowered the man and thwarted the hijacking attempt.

The son of Adm. Fred M. Trapnell, who won fame as a naval test pilot, Captain Trapnell attended college, became an Air Force officer and, in 1957, joined Eastern as a pilot.

the Panama Canal Zone. However, a Navy spokesman said official records did not indicate this.

Garrett Trapnell came from a family proud of its military tradition: An uncle, Lieut. Gen. Thomas J. H. Trapnell, retired, was decorated for heroism in the Bataan death march, became commander of the 187th Airborne combat team in Korea and was one of the first United States military commanders in Vietnam. Another uncle, Frederick M. Trapnell, won fame as a naval test pilot and was a grad-

Source: *Annals of the*

Garrett Trapnell's parents were divorced when he was 4 years old. He then lived with his younger sister and his mother and grandmother near Boston. The sister, Mrs. Rachel Poulton, now a widowed waitress who lives in Ohio, recalls that, partly because of her mother's drinking, the two women "were always fighting and pulling at each other's hair, and their arguments pulled us apart."

"We moved at least five times during a six-year period," Mrs. Poulton said. "The police were always coming to the house."

When he was about 11, he was sent to live with his father and his latest stepmother in the Canal Zone. The father died a year or two later and Trapnell was soon kicked out of the house by the stepmother. He took up residence in a three-story brothel in Panama City called the "House of Love."

Joined Army at 17

Trapnell had his first brush with the law—an arrest for petty theft—at 15. An Episcopal minister who befriended him arranged for him to be sent to the St. Francis Boys School in Salina, Kan., where he stayed for a year or so. At 17, he joined the Army and served for a while at Ft. Hood, Tex., where his uncle was the commanding general.

Trapnell showed a keen interest in guns while in the

Army, but had a long record of rule infractions and was finally discharged after he shot himself, apparently accidentally. He later re-enlisted, continued to get into trouble and was separated again.

After a period in Cuba, where his activities are not known fully by United States authorities, he went to California, picked up a hitchhiker named Edgar E. Flury, 31, and they pulled a series of armed robberies in New Mexico, Iowa and Maryland. They were arrested in Maryland after Flury called the police because, he said, Trapnell had threatened to kill him.

Years later, when Trapnell was being interviewed by a freelance writer who talked

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about writing an article for True magazine on his criminal exploits, Trapnell recalled what happened then:

"A lawyer came to me and said: 'Trap, you are going to prison for 20 years, or you can go to the state hospital [by pleading not guilty by reason of insanity].'

"So I went to the state hospital, and I dug the whole action. I read more damned books on psychiatry and psychology than probably any psychology student will in any school in the world."

Trapnell was sent to a mental hospital at Spring Grove, Md., for one year. His partner Flury received a 20-year sentence for armed robbery and was released after serving five years and eight months.

There followed a period of years when Trapnell continued to get into trouble with the law and gradually to refine his insanity defense.

In 1964, he was arrested for impersonating a policeman in New Mexico. He had fraudulent traffic tickets printed with the words "Garrett Township, N. M.," on them; bought a used car and masking tape to affix "police" symbols on it, and acquired a policeman's outfit. For several months he cruised New Mexico highways after midnight and stopped passing motorists for speeding and extorted \$20 apiece from them on the spot.

He was arrested for robbery, forgery, auto theft or other charges at least once a year during most of the years between 1961 and 1969. In almost all cases he evaded criminal prosecution by being sent to a mental hospital — from which he usually escaped promptly.

In the beginning, Trapnell pleaded simple insanity. This meant he could be required to spend at least a year in a mental hospital.

Then he devised a new strategy, claiming he was insane only during the periods when he committed crimes.

"It's a classic Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde situation," Trapnell said in the transcript of his recorded interview with the freelance writer, Cyrus Burlowitz, which was admitted as evidence in the airline hijacking trial but was never published. "The tem-

porary shot, which is much harder and more intricate, takes a bit more finesse, but it precludes hospitalization," he said.

Trapnell described the disease he mimicked as "paranoid schizophrenia, with a surfacing and submerging nature . . . the classic dual personality, compounded by paranoia, the sense of being persecuted. The result is an inability to differentiate between right and wrong due to this split personality."

"Take Gary B. Trapnell and Gregg Ross," he said. "They're both the same physical person, but they are two mentally different people. If Gregg Ross commits a crime and the Gregg Ross aspect submerges after he is put in prison, and the Gary Trapnell aspect emerges than Gary Trapnell is not responsible legally for what Gregg Ross does."

"Whether it [the mental illness] exists can never be proved," he continued, "because psychiatry as a science is the only science in the world that deals with extreme intangibles. I probably know more about psychiatry than your average resident psychiatrist; I can — the hell out of one in 10 seconds."

At Trapnell's recent trial, one psychologist and four psychiatrists testified that he was mentally ill during the hijacking, while two psy-

chiatrists, including Dr. Abrahamson, asserted that he was sane and was "malingering." None of the medical witnesses had read or heard the taped interview in which he discussed his techniques before they testified, according to the United States Attorney's office.

"I have committed all of these crimes," Trapnell said in the interview, which was recorded in April, 1971, "and have never gotten a number for any of them. It's the fallacy of your legal system."

While Trapnell was developing his legal defense, his criminal appetites were expanding from small time to bigger time, according to police records. In March, 1970, while he was running a legitimate business — renting German shepherd dogs for protection—he met a topless go-go-dancer named Kathleen Huntziger near Hollywood's Sunset Strip.

Although he was married at the time, he persuaded the girl to elope with him and

took her to Las Vegas and got her so drunk that she thought they were married. Then Trapnell disappeared with a number of her credit cards and some money.

With one of the cards, Trapnell rented a light plane and flew to the Bahamas, where he met a man named Roger Michael Peterson, who also carried a gun. After Trapnell felt that he had been snubbed by a clerk at a store called Emeralds of Colombia, the authorities contend, the two of them returned, took \$105,000 worth of jewels, and then escaped to Florida in the plane as police cars arrived at the airport.

Held in Canada

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Canadian authorities, once a month, from March through September of 1970, Trapnell and Peterson flew to Canada and robbed a bank in Montreal or Toronto. Their total take, authorities said, was more than \$130,000.

As a child, Trapnell loved to dress up in his father's naval uniform and play with his sword. As an adult, he tended to relate to other figures. Talking about flying, he once compared himself to Charles A. Lindbergh; when he skippered a yacht, he compared himself to Captain Bligh.

During the string of bank robberies in Canada, he and his friend referred to themselves as "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid." Once Trapnell signed "Butch Cassidy" on a holdup note.

"We were doing the thing," he told the interviewer later. "Paul Newman and Robert Redford—they were just acting."

After a wild chase toward the United States border, holding a guard and a secretary who had been hired by the fraudulent lawyer as hostages, Trapnell let them go near Syracuse. The guard alerted the police, and Trapnell was arrested. But instead of extraditing him to Canada, United States authorities decided to return him to Florida for prosecution in connection with the jewel theft.

Trapnell convinced psychiatrists at a Florida hospital that he had been insane at the time—and three months later, in March, 1971, he was free again.

It appears that during the later part of 1971 Trapnell lived well, in a \$40-a-day room in a Miami hotel, and

usually carried at least \$2,000 cash in his pocket. That summer he saw an ad in Yachting magazine for a 57-foot luxury yacht owned by the Argosy Marine Corporation, which was owned by Eugene Kinney, a vice president of Zenith Radio Corporation,

and managed by a man in his 50's named James Fahey.

According to Federal sources, Trapnell began negotiating to buy the yacht— for \$306,800. A date was set in July, 1971, to close the deal. The day before the scheduled signing of the papers, a notary public was called to the yacht and asked by Trapnell to witness the signing of a bill-of-sale by Mr. Fahey, who said nothing during the transaction, the notary public said later.

The next day, lawyers gathered for the closing of the sale in Miami. When Trapnell did not appear, they discovered he already was in possession of the yacht, claiming that Mr. Fahey had signed the bill of sale, after receiving \$306,800 in cash.

Mr. Fahey disappeared and has not been seen since then. An investigation into the possibility that he was murdered is under way by Federal and local officials.