

Girl, 16, Surrenders In Airline Hijacking

Marion, Ill.

A teenage St. Louis girl surrendered to authorities last night, charged with the hijacking of a Kansas City-bound jetliner that was diverted here in an apparent attempt to free a convicted hijacker from prison.

The suspect's mother was killed last May when she commandeered a helicopter and tried to free the same man.

Authorities said Robin Oswald, 16, surrendered shortly before 8 p.m. after seizing control of the plane ten hours earlier as it approached Kansas City.

None of the 83 passengers and four crew members aboard the TWA DC-9 jet was injured.

The hijack suspect reportedly said she had

three sticks of dynamite strapped to her chest and threatened to detonate them unless her mother's lover, Garrett B. Trapnell, was freed and brought to the plane.

At the time of the hijacking, Trapnell was on trial in Benton, about 20 miles north of here, in connection with the May escape attempt.

The jury returned a guilty verdict at about the same time Miss Oswald surrendered.

Despite her repeated demands that he be brought to the plane immediately, she never saw him or talked to him, authorities said.

Miss Oswald was taken late yesterday to the same courthouse where the Trapnell trial was held, to be arraigned on hijacking charges under

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UPI Telephoto
ROBIN OSWALD
1978 school yearbook photo



UPI Telephoto

Robin Oswald's brother and sister talked to the FBI before the hijacker was captured

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federal procedures for juveniles.

The dynamite sticks she claimed to have had were actually railroad flares, according to Ed Hegarty, special agent in charge of the Springfield, Ill., office of the FBI.

He said the girl had wired the flares to a doorbell-type device she carried in her hand. "It was capable of making an electrical connection," he said.

The flares would have exploded, he said, but they would not have resulted in widespread death or destruction on the airplane.

Miss Oswald's mother, Barbara Oswald, was shot last May by the pilot of a helicopter she had commandeered and forced to fly to the federal maximum security prison near Marion.

The pilot, Allan Barklage, struggled with Mrs. Oswald while in the air over the prison, finally grabbing her gun and shooting her through the head.

Mrs. Oswald had ordered Barklage to pick up Trapnell and two other inmates who were waiting for the helicopter in the prison yard.

Trapnell, who has a long prison record, was convicted of hijacking a Los Angeles-to-New York airliner in 1972. Mrs. Oswald began to visit him in prison after reading a book about him and eventually fell in love with him, according to testimony presented at Trapnell's trial this week.

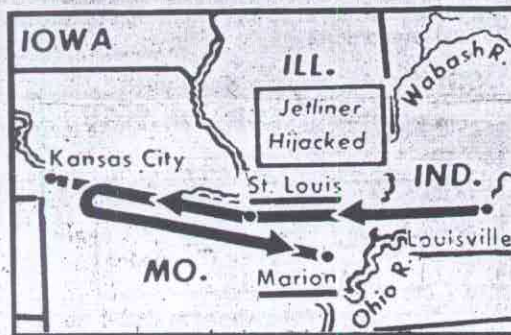
Robin, who testified at the trial Tuesday, looked upon Trapnell as a father figure, according to a friend of hers from St. Louis who asked not to be identified.

Miss Oswald boarded the plane, flight 541, in St. Louis. The flight had originated in Louisville and was bound for Kansas City.

Just before the scheduled landing in Kansas City, witnesses said, Miss Oswald began passing messages to the cockpit via the plane's two stewardesses.

She ordered the plane to Marion, about 100 miles southeast of St. Louis. Passengers said she was calm and seemed to know exactly what she was doing. While the plane was on the runway in Marion, she let two small groups of passengers, mostly elderly, leave the plane, which sat at a remote edge of the airport.

A telephone link was set up between the plane and an FBI command post, and a special agent experienced in dealing with hijackers flew from Louisville to negotiate with the hijacker.



AP Wirephoto

Route of the hijacked plane

Two of Miss Oswald's sisters and a brother were also brought to the scene, although authorities did not reveal whether they had talked to her.

The hijacker made several requests, including food and beverages for herself and the passengers. Several of the passengers said that she refused to talk to anyone on the plane other than the two stewardesses, Stella Thomas and Mona Wagoner.

They also said that although she allowed passengers to move around the plane freely, she refused to let any men use the washrooms.

One passenger, Bud Varet, an executive from Muncie, N.Y., said that Miss Oswald's calm helped keep the atmosphere cool during the incident.

"Her grammar was good," Varet said. "She never used a cuss word. She said 'please,' 'thank you,' and she said to the stewardesses, 'Aren't I the nicest hijacker?'"

Shortly before she surrendered, passengers began slipping off the plane in groups of four or five and running down the runway a half mile to waiting police vehicles.

Passengers said Miss Oswald was not aware of the escapes because she could not see the front of the plane from where she was sitting, and a small group of remaining passengers sat around her making it appear from her vantage point that the plane was still full.

Trapnell, 40, is serving a life sentence for his hijacking. He had told a television reporter last fall that he would eventually break out of the prison.

Los Angeles Times