

Captain of Jetliner Scores F.B.I. on Attempt

(Reprinted from yesterday's late editions.)

Following is an interview with Capt. Donald J. Cook Jr., commander of the hijacked T.W.A. plane, reprinted from the late editions of yesterday's New York Times:

By JOSEPH LELYVELD

The captain of Trans World Airlines' hijacked jetliner complained yesterday that agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation had jeopardized the lives of himself and his crew members when the plane landed at Kennedy International Airport Friday. "The F.B.I. plan was damned near a prescription for getting the entire crew killed and the plane destroyed," Capt. Donald J. Cook Jr. declared when he was reached by telephone by The New York Times at his hotel near the Leonardo da Vinci International Airport, outside Rome.

"We had arranged that there would be a minimum ground crew when we landed at Kennedy and taxied to the designated area on Runway 22. When we got there, there was the car with the replacement crew but there were also many other vehicles and many other men.

"Some of them were carrying weapons and wearing military-type flak jackets."

Raffaele Minichiello, the AWOL marine corporal who had hijacked the plane over California, saw the agents as they approached the plane, the captain said.

"This boy was no dope," he went on. "He was a very intelligent young man. He panicked and he started to scream. 'Get those people away from the airplane.' I said, 'Can I open the window?' and he said, 'Do you have to?' I said I did, so he said, 'O.K.' and I stuck my

head out and started screaming: 'We want everyone away from this plane. This boy is going to shoot us.'"

But, Captain Cook said, the agents ignored him and continued to move in on the plane. At one point, he said, he hollered down to a man standing under the wing in a T.W.A. maintenance outfit, who he was sure was no maintenance man.

"We've got to get out of here—get us moving," I said," he recalled. "And this clown—I wish I could get my hands on him—shouted back, 'We'll get you moving when we're ready to.'"

As the minutes dragged on Captain Cook said, the young man's panic mounted. When he realized that the fueling of the plane had not even begun, he exploded, "I'm going to kill you" and "get me out of here."

Finally he fired a shot into the ceiling of the cockpit. Captain Cook said he was sure that was meant as a warning to the agents outside the plane.

"I'm sure he already knew I was convinced he meant business," he said. The bullet bounced off an oxygen bottle and did not puncture the fuselage.

F.B.I. Refuses Comment

When Capt. Billy N. Williams and Capt. R. H. Hastings, two pilots qualified to make overseas flights, boarded the plane here, Minichiello seemed convinced they were F.B.I. men, Captain Cook said. After the first two engines had been started, he ordered them to take the controls and start the other two, Captain Cook said.

"If they had been F.B.I. agents and hadn't been able to start those engines, they would have signed their own death warrants," he said.

John F. Malone, the assistant director in charge of the F.B.I. office in New York, refused last night to comment on Capt. Cook's charges.

However, an affidavit sworn out by an F.B.I. agent as the basis for the Federal charges against the hijacker confirmed that the efforts of three agents to persuade him to surrender "were of no avail, culminating in the firing of the aforesaid rifle" by Minichiello.

Assistant United States Attorney Raymond B. Grunewald of the Eastern District of New York, who took the deposition from Special Agent Gerard W. Van Leeuwen, quoted the agent as saying that he stood outside the aircraft and talked to the hijacker through a window "as a diversion."

He quoted the agent as saying, Mr. Malone and another agent, Joseph Sullivan, "tried to crawl up through the belly of the plane either to get the drop on him or get a shot at him." All three agents were wearing bullet-proof jackets.

"When he [Minichiello] fired his shot, they had to back down," Mr. Grunewald said.

Captain Cook, the 31-year-old pilot, said that a relationship of confidence and trust had gradually developed between the crew and the hijacker during the hours the jetliner streaked across the country to New York.

"We sat with that boy for six hours," he said, "and had seen him go from practically a raving maniac to a fairly complacent and intelligent young man with a sense of humor and then these idiots from the F.B.I.—I don't know if 'idiots' is a word you want to use but it's the way I feel—and irresponsibly made up

their own minds about how to handle this boy on the basis of no information, and the good faith we had built up for almost six hours was completely destroyed."

Kept at Gunpoint

When the plane took off from New York, Minichiello kept the whole crew in the cockpit at gunpoint, the captain said. Except for Captain Hastings at the controls and the engineer, everyone else had to sit with hands on his head. Captain Williams was sitting on the floor, Captain Cook said.

After about 20 minutes, Captain Cook convinced Minichiello that the crew had not been responsible for the F.B.I.'s actions.

"I said, 'Raffaele, you ought to know that. We've been with you long enough, for three take-offs and landings, and you ought to know that our only interest is in keeping ourselves safe and our airplane in one piece.'"

"After that he treated us real well. Williams and Hastings did the flying and I did public relations. We sat in the first-class cabin and chatted back and forth, like two guys in basic training with the marines or the Army."

During much of the flight, Captain Cook said, Minichiello fussed with his M-1 carbine, loading and unloading it, and even taking it apart to clean it. Sometimes he would walk away and leave it behind him on a seat within Captain Cook's reach, as if daring him to make a grab for it.

But Captain Cook had seen a knife and pistol stock sticking out of the cartridge belt the young man was wearing. He said he did not know what kind of combat training Minichiello had received in the marines.

to Apprehend Hijacker at Kennedy Airport

Later, he said, the young man asked him why he had not gone for the weapon.

"I said, 'Raffaele, all of us have been in the service and all of us have had an opportunity to fight in wars and none of us wants to fight in wars now or kill anyone. I couldn't consider it unless it was a mandatory thing. Besides, we've gotten to like you and we really think we can bring this to a conclusion without our being killed and without your being killed.'"

Minichiello then said he would have killed himself if he had to struggle with any members of the crew and he put the rifle under his chin and moved his trigger finger to show how he would have done it.

Captain Cook recalls saying: "I don't think you have to do this and if you have to do this why don't you wait for me to get off the plane, I couldn't stand it."

Talked About Gun Battle

Sometimes the young man talked expectantly about the gun battle he would have with the police when the plane landed in Rome and sometimes he talked about how he would get away. Soon after the hijacking he had told Captain Cook that Rome was his destination, but insisted that the pilot report that it was Cairo to mislead the police.

Repeatedly he reminded Captain Cook that he was single and, therefore, free to risk his life. "No matter what happened," he said, the captain recalled, "he only had one or two days to live."

He seemed to be searching for someone else whose marital status also left him free to take risks, the captain

"Many, many times he asked me if I was married,

and I said, 'Yes,'" explained Captain Cook, a bachelor. "That seemed wiser. He asked how many kids I had and I said one. Then he asked about the other members of the crew and I said, 'Yeah, all of them are married.'" In fact, only one of the four original crew members was.

Minichiello kept himself awake by taking No-Doz tablets and offered some to Captain Cook. "I told him No-Doz not only keeps you awake but it makes you nervous and that I was already nervous enough," the captain said.

Even after Minichiello started to work out his plan to take a policeman as hostage in Rome, he remained solicitous about what would happen to the crew members there.

At one point he told them that he would see that they stayed in the best hotel if they came with them. At another time he worried aloud about whether he could afford to give them money.

Captain Cook said he told him not to worry because T.W.A. flew to Rome regularly and would be able to make reservations for them at a Hilton hotel.

"I've given you guys an awful lot of trouble," Minichiello said.

"That's all right," Captain Cook recalls saying, "We don't take it personally."

"What if the F.B.I. finds out about how you didn't take the gun away?"

"Don't worry about that,"

Captain Cook replied. "It's my duty to look after the safety of the crew and the plane."

After Minichiello's suspicions subsided, he allowed the crew members to move freely about the plane. Some slept, while others took their choice of one of the eight stereo channels available to T.W.A. passengers and listened to music. Captain Cook regretted there was no movie aboard — "It might have helped," he said.

Only Captain Williams and Captain Hastings—both middle-aged men—never struck up any kind of relationship with the young hijacker. The other crew members talked to him "like long-lost friends," Captain Cook said, and all expressed the wish that they had met him "in other circumstances."

The crew members thought Minichiello should be treated as someone who was emotionally disturbed and not a criminal, he said.

"He's a boy who went to Vietnam at the age of 17½," he said, "and I don't mean this as a statement for or against the war, but a boy that age isn't going to be stable enough for that sort of thing. This boy couldn't do it. He just blew his top."

By the time Minichiello disembarked in Rome he was on a first-name basis with the crew. "So long, Don," he said. "I'm sorry I caused you all this trouble."

"I said, 'Good luck, Raffaele,'" Captain Cook replied.

The young man took with him his new friend's card with his Kansas City address so he could write to him and tell him how he finally made out. The crew was very relieved, Captain Cook said, to discover he had been captured without being killed.

Rome Police Praised

"The Rome police put the F.B.I. to shame. The F.B.I. just thought they were playing Wyatt Earp and wanted to engage in a shoot-out with a supposed criminal and bring him to justice. They would have wound up unnecessarily killing this boy, and probably, completely destroying a \$7-million airplane and wounding or endangering the lives of four crew members.

"The fact that all this was finally prevented proved out our point of view. It cost less in gunpowder and more in gasoline."

Captain Williams and Captain Hastings returned to Kennedy Airport on a T.W.A. flight from Rome. Captain Williams described to a news conference there how Minichiello had made him lie face down in the galley to be searched after he boarded the plane Friday morning.

"We were impressed with his security consciousness," he declared. "He was no dummy."

Asked if he thought the young marine should be punished, he replied: "The boy should be helped. I don't think he was totally rational."