

Billy Dayford

## Iran Rescue - Return to Dallas

When the plane landed in Dallas, I had the feeling that a long hard journey had finally ended. We were home, and at last, we were safe.

The plane trip itself was very enjoyable. Although I was dead tired and ~~hadn't~~ hadn't slept more than a couple of hours in the last several days, my enthusiasm was sky high and I wanted to make the most of the plane ride home from England to Dallas. We had landed in London early in the morning, gone quickly to bed at a Airport Hotel, and awakened several hours later to eat breakfast (everyone was hungry) and then get on a bus for the ride to the other London airport. Somehow, during the night, arrangements had been made to get us seats in first class on the Brauff flight to Dallas. In addition, Pat Scully had also arranged for my wife and kids to fly to Dallas from Washington, DC rather than wait for us ~~to~~ ~~to~~ to arrive on the chartered 707 as called for in the original plan. I really appreciated the efforts of Pat and the people in Dallas to take ~~care~~ care of my family while the rest of us crashed in our beds in London.

Our group drew a lot of attention at the hotel and at the London airport. We looked like a gang of dirty pirates and our actions didn't

2  
do much to change the image. At the hotel, we ~~we~~ made great friends of the bellmen who handled what little luggage or belongings we had. Ralph Bouleware or one of the others gave the bellmen dozens of bottles of booze ~~at~~ as a tip for their help. The bottles had been taken from our chartered plane's provisions or had been purchased at the airports in Turkey and Germany for the trip home. Unfortunately, the bottles were excess baggage of a sort and had to be disposed of before ~~we~~ we got on the Braniff flight.

at the London airport, we drew a lot of stares and attention from everyone ~~we~~ we passed including the passengers on the international flights and the shopkeepers in the airport stores where we stopped for presents before getting on the plane. People looked at us in amazement and ~~was~~ must have wondered who we were and what was going on that day. The Braniff officials arranged a lunch for us in one of their private lounges. Perhaps, they were trying to keep us out of sight.

When we boarded the plane, we quickly settled into the luxurious first class seats and immediately began to enjoy the flight, even before the plane took off. Everyone was in a happy gay mood. Our enthusiasm rubbed off on the other

passengers and the flight attendants and they treated us in a friendly manner despite our terrible appearance and boisterous manner. Some of our acceptance was the result of an interesting circumstance. As it turned out, one or two of the senior flight attendants knew Ross personally and had flown with him back in 1970 when he had taken presents and medical supplies to the American POW's in Vietnam. For whatever reason, we were treated like royalty and had the run of the plane in the first-class section. The food was good, the drinks were good, the atmosphere was total victory and resulting celebration.

Some of the group slept. I ~~remember~~ remember that the Colonel and Jay were asleep in their seats because I took their picture with a camera someone had given me that morning. I took other pictures too including the flight attendants from our chartered 707 who had come along for the ride home rather than being stranded in London. The gals posed with some of the rescue group members to help record the epic event of our home coming.

I tried to sleep but couldn't. I was too pumped up by the excitement of the trip to sleep, so I did what came naturally, I

enjoyed the trip. We ate great food and had whatever we wanted to drink. We talked about the escape and joked about the events. We watched the movie - until the film broke. Keane Taylor collected all the money that each of us still carried from the escape trip for a grand total final accounting. Each of us had thousands of dollars, both US and Iranian currency, stuffed in our shirts and boots for him to collect and then count.

During the collecting of the money, an opportunity presented itself ~~to~~ for me to play a joke on my great friend Keane Taylor. As he collected my share of the money, he accidentally dropped a large package of US money on the floor next to my seat. There must of been \$10-20,000 dollars in \$100 dollar bills in the package. Neither of us noticed the money when it fell to the floor. Keane went off to collect someone else's money and then went upstairs into the lounge of the 747 to count it. After a while, I got up from my seat to get another drink, or go to the bathroom, or something else and found the money lying on the floor. My first thought was to go upstairs immediately to give Keane the money so he wouldn't worry. My second thought was different and more devious. I decided

to wait a while before returning the money. I thought it would be fun to see my good friend Keane Taylor sweat a little before I took him off the hook. So, I stuck the money in my jacket ~~in~~ pocket and went upstairs to see how the grand accounting was going.

Keane was sitting on the floor counting the money. There were stacks of money all around him and it looked like a band of pirates splitting the loot from a robbery. Who knows what the other passengers in the lounge thought was going on during the counting process. At last, Keane was finished. There was so much money in Hawaiian bills and there was so much money in American bills — and there was a big problem. Although there was no way to make an exact accounting of what had been spent and what had been lost during the escape trip, it was clear that there was a big chunk of money missing. Keane did some quick recounting, but the total and the shortage didn't change.

I'd had enough fun. I probably could have held out longer and had Keane and the others going crazy trying to figure

out ~~of~~ what had happened to the missing money — (or was it really missing?) But enough is enough, especially after what we had been ~~the~~ through. I got up from my seat across the lounge and threw the money to Keane and said something like "maybe this will help" to him. Keane's face broke ~~up~~ into a big smile and he said something unprintable as a thank you for my efforts to help him. It was shortly after this that the movie film broke, so our attention shifted elsewhere and the rest of the trip was a blur until we landed in Dallas.

Once on the ground, we were taken off to the side as a group and passed through US Customs in record time. We didn't ~~have~~ have any baggage to check, but still it was obvious that arrangements had been made to give us fast and special treatment.

Paul and I were taken aside and walked to a bus there at the airport. There were several busses in a group with people standing around them. With the cool crisp air, the scene reminded me of a football weekend and people going to the game.

7

When I got on the bus, I finally realized they were being used as meeting places for our families. The Chiapparones and the Gayluis were on the bus and so was Emily and my kids. They looked great. I hugged and kissed them all. It was wonderful to be home with my family.