

Stewardess recalls terrifying tale

By JOHN STEWART

It was Nov. 12, 1971, and Air Canada flight 812 was three-quarters of an hour out of Calgary.

Stewardess Mary Dohey of Mississauga went into the lounge to get wine glasses and found herself staring into a 12-gauge shotgun carried by a man wearing a black mask.

During the next eight hours, Dohey and the crew would be subjected to incredible pressure by the man Dohey still remembers as Dennis, the false name he gave.

The volatile hijacker taunted the plane's crew by flicking a butane lighter within a quarter-inch of fuses on what appeared to be several sticks of dynamite. At one point, he made Dohey and the purser sit with their heads together and asked them to grip each other's hands so hard he could see the whites of their knuckles. They thought he was going to try to kill them with one shot.

The shotgun accidentally discharged once, blowing a hole in the cockpit wall.

As the terrifying flight continued, Dohey established a strange rapport with Dennis.

**what are
they
doing now?**

Convinced she was going to die anyway, the Newfoundland native prayed that the passengers and the rest of the flight crew might be saved.

When she explained to Dennis she was one of 14 children from the outport of St. Bride's, he seemed genuinely moved. Later, during a stopover, Dohey pretended she could hear children crying and asked the hijacker to let them and the rest of the passengers off the flight. To her surprise and relief, he agreed.

The hijacker then made an unusual request. He asked Dohey to leave the plane as well. She refused, convinced if she did leave, he would kill the crew.

It was for this refusal to leave she later

became Canada's only living recipient of the Cross of Valor given for "action above and beyond the call of duty." Since then, two other men have been similarly decorated.

The distressing flight finally ended where it began, in Calgary. Just after the flight landed, the airport was fogged in for two days. The hijacker gave himself up. He was later to receive four life sentences and another 14-year term.

The heroine says she rarely thinks about the famous incident anymore, although it comes to mind at times when a "suspicious" passenger boards. Dohey is still a stewardess and still works as a nurse on weekends at a Toronto hospital to "keep myself busy." She still lives in Mississauga as well.

The experience also helps whenever there are problems on a flight now, says the veteran stewardess. She knows she is prepared for trouble if it comes her way again.

One of the biggest thrills in winning the Cross of Valor was being presented to the Queen by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau four years ago.



MARY DOHEY

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DOHEY, Mary