

Hijacker demands surprise pilot of Frontier airliner

By JAMES CRAWFORD, Rocky Mountain News Writer

The captain of a Frontier Airlines flight hijacked Thursday from Albuquerque to Los Angeles said he was "very surprised" when he first realized that the armed man sitting in the cockpit wanted neither ransom money nor political asylum in another country.

"Shortly after we started toward Los Angeles, he made clear that all he wanted was two hours of radio time," said Pilot Wilbur R. Hurt.

"He said 'If my demands are met, then I will turn my gun over to the captain,'" Hurt told reporters Thursday night in Denver, home base for himself, two crew members and three stewardesses on the flight.

The hijacker, a Mexican national identified as Ricardo Chavez Ortiz, surrendered the unloaded pistol and several clips of ammunition to the pilot after telling his story to Spanish-speaking radio and TV reporters who boarded the plane after it landed at Los Angeles International Airport Thursday afternoon.

Hurt said Ortiz also returned the pilot's hat, which he had taken from a hook in the cockpit and worn throughout the hijacking and his televised plea for redress of Chicano grievances.

TAKEN INTO CUSTODY

Ortiz was taken into custody and arraigned on air piracy charges before a U.S. magistrate who set bail at \$500,000 pending a hearing Friday.

Los Angeles public defender Nicholas Allis, in arguing for a bail reduction, described Ortiz as a "solid citizen" who had lived in the Los Angeles area 14 years and who had been steadily employed "until the last three or four days."

The hijacking - the first in Frontier's history - occurred as Flight 91 left Albuquerque for Phoenix and Tucson with 27 passengers aboard, including 11 who boarded in Denver. Ortiz apparently boarded in Albuquerque.

Stewardess Mrs. Jacquelyn Louise Jones said the hijacker approached her in the front of the plane, drew a pistol from a paper sack and ordered her to take him to the cockpit.

As he entered the cockpit, Hurt said, the man grabbed Flight Engineer William R. Gilliam with his left arm, thrust the pistol into his side and announced he wanted to go to Los Angeles.

He then sat down next to Gilliam and kept the gun in his ribs for the duration of the flight, Hurt said.

"As long as we kept talking, he was okay, but whenever we shut up, he got very nervous," said the pilot.

Two and a half hours after the Boeing 737 landed in Los Angeles, Ortiz released 29 of the passengers and crew, when airport officials met his demands and rounded up several Spanish-speaking radio and TV reporters to record his remarks aboard the plane.

After the interview Ortiz didn't surrender until he had tuned in a Los Angeles Spanish-language station and verified that his remarks were being broadcast, Hurt said.

INSISTED ON PICTURES

The hijacker insisted that the TV cameramen shoot a film-sequence showing him surrendering the gun and ammunition clips to Hurt, the pilot added.

Also held during the interview was copilot Olin Head. Released with the passengers, besides Mrs. Jones, were the two other stewardesses, Mrs. Shirley Jeanne Rankin and Mrs. Darel Lynn Ladd.

Ortiz was apparently detained briefly for questioning before boarding the plane in Albuquerque because he matched the Federal Aviation Administration's profile for hijackers, but apparently Frontier officials were "satisfied" with his responses and didn't check for a possible concealed weapon, according to a Frontier spokesman.

Hurt said the crew knew nothing about the screening of Ortiz, and had no reason to suspect anything amiss before the incident happened.

The passengers were rerouted to Phoenix and Tucson by another airline after the incident. Los Angeles is not on Frontier's regularly scheduled routes.

The passengers who boarded the flight in Denver at 7:45 am. Thursday were listed as: Mrs. E. Davis, A. Hoover, J. Ison, Rufus Klein, D. Ohanesian, W. Sartain, R. Schmitz, Joseph T. Tellez, C. Brown and two passengers listed only as Messinger and Vandemerwve.



UPI TELEPHOTO

Passengers released by hijacker are shown leaving Frontier airliner from Denver in Los Angeles.

Hijacker of Denver plane gives up after press parley

LOS ANGELES (UPI) — A Mexican national, who lived for years in the United States, hijacked an airliner from Denver Thursday over Arizona, forced it to California and then held a tearful televised press conference aboard protesting the fate of Chicanos.

Ricardo Chavez Ortiz released 29 of the persons aboard a Frontier Airline Boeing 737 on the runway of Los Angeles International Airport and then surrendered himself after telling his story to Spanish-speaking reporters.

Ortiz demanded no ransom nor anything for himself except to force the FBI, police and airport security to permit the TV and radio reporters to come aboard while he talked for two hours and 45 minutes about "injustices to my people."

It was the fourth hijacking incident in the United States in a week.

The plane was Flight 91 originating in Denver. It had made a landing in Albuquerque, N.M., and was proceeding to stops at Tucson, and Phoenix, Ariz.,

when it was commandeered and changed course to Los Angeles.

The captain of the plane Thursday is a veteran pilot, Capt. Wilbur R. Hurt who joined Frontier in 1946. Other members of the Denver-based flight crew are First Officer Olin Head, the co-pilot

**More pictures on Pages 8 and 60;
another story on Page 60.**

with Frontier since 1959, and Second Officer William R. Gilliam, the flight engineer who joined Frontier in 1967.

The three stewardesses were Darel Lynn Ladd, Shirley Jeanne Rankin and Jacquelyn Louise Jones.

The hijacker ordered the pilot to fly to Los Angeles where he held the passengers and crew hostage on the ground until arrangements were made for his press conference.

While four male crew members were still held, Ortiz started chattering non-stop in Spanish, complaining about poor treatment for Chicano children and protesting that Los Angeles once was part

of Mexico. He said that Mexican Americans have no future and should stand up for their rights.

FBI agents, Los Angeles police armed with high powered rifles and other law enforcement officials kept their distance. Their caution paid off as the hijacker finally handed over his pistol to the pilot of the plane.

Ortiz described himself to police as "a Chicano and a man of honor who means business but doesn't want to do anything that would hurt anyone."



Flight crew of Flight 91 at a press conference in Denver tell of their day-long ordeal. Left to right: Darel Lynn Ladd; Second Officer William R. Gilliam; First Officer Olin Head; Captain Wilbur R. Hurt; Jacquelyn Louise Jones and Shirley Jeanne Rankin.

60—Rocky Mountain News Fri., April 14, 1972, Denver, Colo.



ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS PHOTO BY MEL SCHIELTZ

Frontier Airlines Pilot Wilbur R. Hurt and Stewardess Mrs. Jacquelyn Louise Jones describe hijacking Thursday which diverted 27 passengers and a crew of six to Los Angeles.

Frontier experienced its first skyjacking on April 13 when Flight 91 en route from Albuquerque to Phoenix was forced to fly to Los Angeles. The incident ended some five hours later when the hijacker, after a lengthy radio and television tirade, calmly handed his gun over to the Flight 91 Captain Willy Hurt.

The flight crew returned to Denver that night to receive high praise from Al Feldman and other Frontier executives for their handling of the unfortunate affair.

Others in the crew were First Officer Olin Head, Second Officer William R. Gilliam and Stewardesses Darel Lynn Ladd, Shirley Jeanne Rankin and Jacquelyn Louise Jones.

Frontier followed FAA security procedures at Albuquerque, and alert Station Agent Okey Williams halted the hijacker. Additional procedures were then followed, and the hijacker was then permitted to board the flight.

After the airplane landed at Los Angeles International Airport, Captain Hurt and his crew kept the hijacker as calm as possible under the circumstances while he demanded radio and television

facilities for him to make an emotional speech. Jacquelyn Jones, who was forced by the hijacker to take him to the flight deck, said the passengers remained calm in their seats for almost 2½ hours.

"There was very little drinking," Jacquelyn said, "and every time the flight deck door opened, tension mounted. Everyone remained seated with one or two chancing a visit to the lavatory." Late in the afternoon, the hijacker permitted the passengers and stewardesses to deplane.

Captain Hurt and his crew established a satisfactory relationship with the hijacker and pursued a policy of agreeing with everything he requested. "I am proud of my crew. Under very trying circumstances, they behaved admirably," Captain Hurt said.

Frontier's Vice President Hank Lund flew to Los Angeles to assist in making arrangements for the Flight 91 passengers. The people were taken from the airplane and transported in busses to the Continental Airlines facility at the airport. "No one could have done more or been more cooperative," Mr. Lund said. "Continental really proved to be a fine interline friend."