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**Jack Gilbert Graham** (<https://www.justice.gov/ond/page/7285662/download>) for more information.



The wreckage of the plane was carefully laid out in a Denver warehouse, helping investigators solve the case.

At 6:52 p.m. on November 1, 1955 United Air Lines Flight 629, a DC-6B with 44 persons aboard, took off from Stapleton Airport in Denver, Colorado bound for Portland, Oregon. Eleven minutes later, the 39 passengers, including an infant and five crew members, were dead—killed instantly when the luxurious airliner crashed on a sugar beet farm near Longmont, Colorado.

Upon learning of the disaster, an official of the FBI immediately offered the services of the Bureau's Identification Division in identifying the victims of the tragedy. Fingerprint experts were dispatched from Washington, D.C., by plane, arriving at the scene of the crash on November 2.

As the bodies were recovered, they were taken to Greeley, Colorado and placed in a temporary morgue set up in the National Guard Armory. Upon the arrival of the FBI fingerprint experts, they learned that nine of the bodies had been identified by relatives and friends or by personal effects and had been removed from the armory. The remaining 35 bodies were fingerprinted and 21, or 60% of those fingerprinted, were positively identified with fingerprints contained in the vast files of the FBI.

All of the 21 persons thus identified had been fingerprinted for various reasons during their lifetime and their fingerprints filed with the more than 109 million other sets in the civil section of the FBI fingerprint files. A husband and wife from Canada were identified with fingerprints taken when they had applied for U.S. naturalization in September 1954. The crew members were identified with fingerprints forwarded to the FBI by United Air Lines officials; five passengers were identified with fingerprints taken during their service in the Air Force, Army, and Navy; six had been fingerprinted by reason of employment in defense plants during World War II, two had been U.S. Government employees; and one victim had been fingerprinted in 1941 and had requested that his fingerprints be placed in the FBI files for personal identification.

Among the 14 victims printed and not identified by fingerprints, two were men and 12 were women. All of these were subsequently identified by relatives or personal effects.



The tail of the plane was discovered on a Colorado farm.

While the bodies of the crash victims were thus being identified on November 2 and 3, agents of the Denver Field Office of the FBI were maintaining close liaison with personnel of United Air Lines and the Civil Aeronautics Board who were investigating the tragedy. The Civil Aeronautics Board was advised that the full facilities of the FBI Laboratory were available if the investigators desired to use them in the initial stages of their probe. At the request of the Civil Aeronautics Board, a laboratory expert was sent to the scene on November 2, and in conjunction with Civil Aeronautics Board investigators he conducted a visual examination and collected pieces of wreckage between November 2 and 7. In this manner it was learned that the tail section of the plane had been cleanly severed from the rest of the plane as though cut with a knife and had fallen with only minor damage at a point approximately one and one-half miles from the place where the engines and nose section of the plane had also hit the ground in an almost whole condition. Wreckage from the middle section of the plane was widely scattered over and behind the intervening area between the tail and forward

sections. During the period between November 2 and November 7, a minute and detailed examination of all parts of the wreckage was also made by engineers of United Air Lines, the Douglas Aircraft Corporation and other private manufacturing concerns, but no possible cause of an explosion due to malfunction of any part of the plane was located by the examiners.

On November 7, 1955, the chief of investigations of the Civil Aeronautics Board officially stated that there were indications of sabotage. At the same time, he asked the FBI to institute an appropriate criminal investigation of the crime which had taken 44 lives. An active investigation was undertaken by the FBI on November 8, the necessary agents being assigned to the case on a full-time basis. Specific assignments were made for these agents to correlate information from eye witnesses to the crash and employees handling the plane prior to the crash; to trace all cargo, mail, and baggage on the plane; to initiate and conduct background investigations of all passengers and crew members on the plane; and to supervise and conduct searches of the wreckage and recovered baggage or personal effects for possible evidence and investigative leads.

Between November 2 and November 5, 1955, four teams of interviewers, each consisting of Civil Aeronautics Board and United Air Lines officials or employees, had interviewed approximately 200 individual occupants of a 140-square-mile area surrounding the scene of the crash. Information furnished by 37 of these persons was considered of possible value and was reduced to signed statements. These statements were made available to the FBI upon initiation of the active investigation, and a complete review disclosed that an initial explosion had occurred while the plane was operating in an apparently routine manner. The explosion appeared to have been of tremendous force, causing fiery streamers to fall from the plane. A flare, which was normal equipment carried on the plane, had separated from the plane, ignited, and descended slowly to earth. A second explosion, probable of one or more fuel tanks, had occurred when the engines and forward compartment of the plane struck the ground.

An additional witness, a control tower operator at Stapleton Airport, later said that he had observed the flash of light and the flare at exactly 7:03 p.m. Civil Aeronautics Board officials placed the location of the explosion at approximately eight miles east of Longmont, Colorado and at a calculated altitude of 10,800 feet above sea level or 5,782 feet above the terrain.

In order to properly organize and record the recovery of the wreckage and possible evidence, a surveyor had been hired to plot and mark a "base line" through the scene of the crash and in the approximate direction of the line of flight. Perpendicular lines had then been established at intervals of 1,000 feet on the base line, extending 1,000 feet from the base line. This divided the entire area into 1,000-square-foot plats or grids. A complete and exhaustive search of the area was then conducted, and as each piece of wreckage or material was recovered and removed, it was marked for identification and the location in which it was found was measured and recorded in relation to the boundaries of the plat. All material possible connected with the plane was recovered from the platted areas; however, hunters and other persons continued to report the finding of mail and insulation from the plane, and on November 13, 1955, an additional area extending up to three miles behind the point where the tail section had fallen was minutely searched by ten FBI agents and 10 employees of United Air Lines. At the same time, the wreckage which had been previously collected by United Air Lines employees was re-examined by agents for any possible parts or remains of a bomb.

All recovered wreckage from the central portion of the plane, as well as all baggage, cargo, and personal effects, was taken to a large warehouse at Stapleton Airport and placed under guard. All mail was turned over to postal inspectors at the time of recovery, but was made available by the inspectors for further examination where desired. At the warehouse, a full-size "mock-up" of the central section of the plane was made of wood and wire netting and all parts of the plane were wired to the "mock-up" in their proper places, as in the assembly of a giant jigsaw puzzle. Upon completion of the "mock-up" assembly, the chairman of the Structure Investigating Committee of the Civil Aeronautics Board and a Douglas Aircraft Corporation engineer agreed that an explosion had occurred at station 718 in the rear cargo pit, designated as cargo pit number four. This point of explosion was further pinpointed as being almost directly across the cargo compartment from the cargo loading door. These conclusions were based on the fact that the stringers at this point had failed in outward bending and pieces of heavy fuselage skin recovered and fitted into the area had been shattered into small pieces. Pieces of material from this area of the plane embedded in shoes contained in luggage and in air freight

known to have been carried in cargo pit number four further indicated an explosion of tremendous force. Near station 718, gray and black soot-like deposits were noted on several of the skin fragments adjacent to and within the roughly circular area. The central portion of the floor beam above the cargo pit contained similar deposits on the aft side; however, none were noted on the forward side.

Copies of waybills for all air freight shipments on the plane were obtained from United Air Lines. By checking these waybills against pieces of the shipments recovered, the contents, or a portion of the contents, of all such shipments were identified. Nothing of an explosive or particularly inflammable nature was determined to have been included in the air freight shipments on the plane. It was also learned that upon arrival at Denver, all cargo and freight carried in pit four had been removed to the forward cargo pit, and at the time of the crash, cargo pit number four had contained only baggage and cargo loaded other flights as well as all cargo and baggage which had originated at Denver.

During the terrain and wreckage search, five small fragments of sheet metal were found which could not in any way be identified with parts of the plane or known contents of the cargo. The fragments appeared to be badly burned and scarred and to be coated with a gray soot-like deposit which might normally be associated with residue from an explosion. One side of one of the fragments was red in color and bore the blue letters "HO." Although it was not known at this time that these fragments were significant, an extensive effort was made to identify them in the belief that they might have come from a destructive device of some nature. The fragment bearing the letters "HO" was eventually identified as a portion of the metal side of a six-volt battery of the type later determined to have been used as the detonating device of the bomb that had brought death to the 44 persons aboard the plane.

An examination of fragments and pieces of wreckage recovered from the crash scene by the FBI Laboratory revealed them to possess foreign deposits ranging in color from white to very dark gray. These deposits were found to consist mainly of sodium carbonate, although nitrate and sulfur compounds were present. FBI Laboratory technicians advised that available dynamite consist of nitroglycerin with varying amounts of sodium nitrate, sulfur, and other materials. The only solid residue to be expected from the explosion of available dynamite is a mixture of sodium carbonate, sodium nitrate, and sulfur-bearing compounds. The initial summary of this information indicating the probable use of dynamite was first furnished to the Denver Field Office by the FBI Laboratory on November 13, 1955.

As the investigation progressed, efforts were pursued to develop complete background data on each of the 44 individual victims, as well as any possible motive that anyone might have had for commission of homicide against them. Similar investigations were initiated on all persons who had originally held reservations for the flight but had canceled them shortly before the flight or failed to report for the flight at any of the stops made earlier.

All offices conducting background investigations of the passengers were requested to obtain descriptions of the luggage they carried, as well as the probable contents of the luggage, in order that the material recovered could be identified with the individual victims. The purpose of requesting this information was so that by a process of elimination the owners of the luggage which was most severely damaged, or coated with the foreign residue, could be determined. A considerable quantity of personal effects of passenger victim Daisy E. King was recovered from the wreckage and closely examined by the agents. This material included a number of personal letters, newspaper clippings about her family, a personalized checkbook, \$1,000 in traveler's checks, an address list, and two keys and a receipt for safety deposit boxes rented by Mrs. King. These articles revealed considerable information about the background of Mrs. King. One of the newspaper clippings reflected that her son, Jack Gilbert Graham, had been charged with forgery by the Denver County District Attorney and had been placed on the local "most wanted" list by that office in 1951. From the fact that most of these personal effects of Mrs. King were found on or near her body, it was apparent that she had been carrying them in her personal handbags at the time of the crash rather than in her luggage. Despite careful searching, practically none of the contents of Mrs. King's luggage was recovered, and only small bits of the suitcases believed to belong to her were found.

Immediate effort to determine the identity of passengers on which large amounts of trip insurance had been obtained revealed that six passengers had a maximum of \$62,500 of such insurance; four had \$50,000; two had \$37,500; one had \$35,000; two had \$12,500; and two had \$6,250. Because of a holiday weekend, however, a complete check of all companies writing such insurance was not possible at once, and among policies located later were three on the life of

Daisie E. King. During a thorough search of the home of Jack Gilbert Graham on November 13, 1955, a duplicate travel insurance policy on the life of his mother, Mrs. King, in the amount of \$37,500, was found hidden in a small cedar chest in a bedroom of the Graham home. The original of this policy, with designated beneficiary as Jack G. Graham, was later located and made available by the insuring company, as well as two additional policies, each in the amount of \$6,250, on the life of Mrs. King, with designated beneficiaries being her daughter and her one living sister.

During the investigation into the background of the passengers boarding the plane at Denver, particular emphasis was placed upon the background of Mrs. Daisie E. King and her relatives. It was learned that upon the death of his mother, Jack Graham was to receive a substantial inheritance. It also became known that Mrs. King and Jack had frequently quarreled over insignificant differences. During his early life Jack had lived with relatives on several occasions, and he had actually "left home" when he was approximately 16 years old. Another person interviewed, one who had business associations with Mrs. King and her son through their operation of a drive-in restaurant in Denver, volunteered the information that Mrs. King continually had trouble with Jack over operation of the restaurant; that, in fact, they "fought like cats and dogs"; that the restaurant building had been damaged by an explosion at one time; that Jack Graham may have been taking money from the receipts of the business; that Graham had once told him that he performed demolition work in the U.S. Navy, and that Graham had recently purchased a new truck and wrecked it in a possible attempt to collect insurance.

Another individual expressed essentially the same suspicions about the past activities of Jack Graham. This person further advised that the wrecking of Graham's truck was due to its being stalled on a railroad track where it was hit by a train sometime in 1955. He also advised that a local supply concern held a \$1,000 note signed by Graham and secured by equipment of the drive-in restaurant.

The extensive records of the Denver County Probation Department relative to Jack Gilbert Graham were thoroughly reviewed on November 10, 1955. These records revealed that Graham had been employed as a payroll clerk at a manufacturing concern in Denver in March 1951, at which time he had stolen a number of blank checks and used a company check protector in filling out some 42 of them for \$100 each, after which he had forged the name of the company owner and cashed the checks at various business in Denver. He had received approximately \$4,200 in cash and immediately spent approximately \$2,000 for a late-model convertible automobile in which he left Denver. The whereabouts of Graham were unknown until his arrest on September 11, 1951 at Lubbock, Texas on a charge of "hauling whiskey in violation of Texas laws." He had served a sentence of 60 days in the county jail after conviction and had been released to the Denver County District Attorney's Office to face charges of forgery in connection with his check-passing activities. According to the records, the arrest of Graham had been effected only after he had run a roadblock manned by local officers and shots had been fired into his car by the officers. At that time it was found that he also had a gun in his car.

Graham had been convicted of the forgery charge in State District Court at Denver, Colorado, on November 3, 1951, but the sentence was suspended, and he had been placed on probation for a period of five years. The records reflected that cash restitution in the amount of \$2,500 had been made at the time of the trial and that under the terms of the probation granted, Graham was to make further restitution in the amount of \$1,805.34 at the rate of \$40 per month. Graham had regularly made these payments between January 2, 1952 and November 3, 1955, reducing the outstanding balance to \$105.34. These records revealed that Jack Graham had served in the U.S. Coast Guard from April 1948 to January 1949 and that he had received an honorable discharge on the basis of minority; however, a notation made on the records reflected that he had been AWOL for a period of 63 days during his service. He was last stationed at the Coast Guard installation at Groton, Connecticut, holding the rank of motorman third class at the time of his discharge. Graham had completed the ninth grade in public schools, but he was later granted a high school diploma upon his passing of entrance examinations at Denver University and was admitted as a student there. The probation reports reflected that Graham did not realize the seriousness of the offense at the time of his arrest on the forgery charges, that his mother had been "overprotective of her son," and that Graham had led a rather wild life and had spent most of the money which he realized from his crime on drinking parties and women. Graham had regularly reported to the Probation Department on a monthly

basis, however, and had held regular employment as a heavy-duty equipment mechanic the majority of the time between January 1953 and December 1954. Later, he had moved to Denver, where during the early part of 1955 he was employed by his mother as manager of her drive-in restaurant.

Jack Graham was initially interviewed on November 10, 1955, in the company of his half sister. During this initial interview, Graham furnished the following background information regarding himself and his family.

Graham stated he was born on January 23, 1932 in Denver, Colorado; that his father was William Graham, who died when he was approximately three years of age; and that his natural mother was Daisy E. King. He stated that Mrs. King married John Earl King in 1941 and from that time until 1948 they resided on a ranch near Toponas, Colorado. Most of the ranch was sold in 1948, his mother and stepfather maintaining residence in Yampa, Colorado, from that time until the death of John Earl King on October 16, 1954. Following the death of Earl King from a heart disease, Daisy E. King and her daughter went to Goodland, Florida, where Mrs. King owned and maintained a house on Marco Island. There Mrs. King remained until February 1955, when she returned to Denver to assist Mrs. Jack Graham, who had just given birth to her second baby.

According to Graham, following Mrs. King's return to Denver, she resided at his home, 2650 West Mississippi Avenue, except for periods which she spent in Steamboat Springs and Yampa, Colorado, supervising business interests, and occasional trips out of the state. He said that his mother had purchased the residence at 2650 West Mississippi Avenue for him in December 1954 and had considered this residence her home. Graham stated that in the Spring of 1955 his mother had purchased property, built, equipped, and opened a drive-in restaurant at 581 South Federal Boulevard, Denver, which he managed. He said that the drive-in business at Denver was not a financial success, although he indicated it was successful when he was able to actually operate the business. Graham volunteered that during May 1955, some unknown vandals had caused considerable damage to the window glass at the drive-in and, further, that in September 1955, an explosion and fire had occurred at the drive-in during the early morning hours. According to Graham, an examination of the drive-in had revealed that someone had disconnected a gas line connection, allowing the gas to flow into the room, accumulating until it reached a pilot light on a water heater, igniting the gas and causing the explosion. According to Graham, three dollars in small change was missing from the cash register and some of the furniture of the drive-in had maliciously been broken. The total damage had amounted to approximately \$1,200.

Graham volunteered that he had suffered some misfortune in connection with a new 1955 Chevrolet pickup, which had stalled on a railroad track and had been hit by a train.

At this interview Graham furnished information about the activities of his mother, Mrs. Daisy E. King, on November 1, 1955, as well as her intended plans in connection with her trip to Alaska. He furnished a description of Mrs. King's luggage, including that which she had shipped on her airline ticket and that which she had carried with her on the plane. He claimed virtually no knowledge of the contents of his mother's luggage, saying that his mother would never allow anyone to actually assist her in packing, and, further, that he had not helped his mother with any of her packing or placed anything in her luggage. He stated that Mrs. King had a considerable quantity of shotgun shells and rifle ammunition with her, intended for use in hunting caribou in Alaska.

On November 11, 1955, Mrs. Gloria A. Graham, wife of Jack Graham, advised that she had married Jack Graham in 1953 and had resided with him since that time. They had two children, approximately 20 and nine months old. Mrs. Graham advised that Daisy King had resided with them at 2650 West Mississippi Avenue periodically from December 1954 until her death. Mrs. King traveled a great deal and had spent a considerable part of the Summer of 1955 supervising her business at Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Mrs. Graham furnished information concerning the activities of Daisy E. King prior to and including November 1, 1955. She furnished a description of the luggage taken by Mrs. King on her intended trip to Alaska, but she was unable to furnish any definite information about the contents of the luggage. She explained that Mrs. King was very particular about packing her bags or suitcases and did not allow anyone to actually assist her in packing.

Mrs. Graham said that her husband had given Mrs. King a present on November 1, 1955, before Mrs. King left for the airport. Mrs. Graham believed the present consisted of a small set of tools such as drills, files, and cutting tools used for forming sea shells into art objects. According to Mrs. Graham, her husband had talked to her earlier about obtaining such a tool set as a Christmas present for his mother. Mrs. Graham had no knowledge as to the details of the purchase of this Christmas present; however, she recalled that during the day of November 1, 1955, Jack Graham had brought a package into the house and carried it to the basement where Mrs. King was packing her luggage. She recalled that this package was wrapped as a gift and was approximately 18 inches in length, 14 inches in width, and three inches in depth. She thought the package contained the tool set, but she did not know whether Jack had actually given it to his mother. She assumed that he had.

Further interviews on November 11 and 12, 1955, with relatives and associates of Daisy E. King and Jack Graham failed to develop any added information except that given on November 11, 1955, by a neighbor of one of Jack Graham's relatives. This neighbor advised that she had heard that prior to Daisy King's intended trip to Alaska, Graham was extremely interested in purchasing a tool kit which he intended to give his mother as a Christmas present. It was her understanding that Graham had searched the town of Denver and finally obtained the type of tool kit he wanted. She had heard that Graham had the gift wrapped in Christmas paper and had placed it in his mother's luggage before she boarded the plane. This neighbor had also heard that shortly after Daisy King left Denver aboard the plane, Jack Graham became very ill and his face turned very white. She said Graham and his wife, Gloria, had apparently heard someone make a statement to the effect that an airplane had crashed. This neighbor stated she had heard that Graham, upon hearing this statement, responded, "That is it."

According to this neighbor, since the crash Jack Graham had not eaten nor had he been able to sleep, and he had spent most of his time walking up and down both inside and outside his home.

Inasmuch as a description of the luggage taken by Daisy King on her trip had been obtained, several broken and torn fragments of luggage were brought to the Denver FBI Office on November 12, 1955. This luggage generally matched the description of Daisy King's luggage.

On November 12, 1955, Jack Graham and his wife, Gloria, were contacted by telephone and told of the FBI's possession of these fragments of luggage and were requested, at their convenience, to come to the FBI office in an attempt to identify any of the fragments as being portions of the luggage taken by Daisy King on her intended flight to Alaska.

Graham (pictured) and his wife voluntarily appeared at the Denver FBI Office on the next day and the fragments of luggage were exhibited to them. They identified some pieces of a dark brown suitcase as being the smaller suitcase taken on the trip by Daisy King. They believed that a piece of red and black plaid canvas bag was possibly a portion of one of the canvas bags which she had taken with her. At the conclusion of their identification of these pieces of luggage, Graham was advised that the FBI desired to interview him further concerning several aspects of the case. Mrs. Graham was told that if she desired she could return home to her small children, which she did.

Graham was questioned specifically regarding the reported ammunition and Christmas gift which his mother took with her on her trip. The information Graham furnished concerning the ammunition was substantially the same as he had previously provided. The information about the Christmas present was not in accord with the information his wife had furnished. Graham stated he had intended to purchase a tool set for his mother; however, upon learning that the type he had intended to buy was not suitable for the purpose for which it was to be used, he had never bought it. In explanation to his wife's statements, he said it was possible that his wife was under the impression that he had actually purchased the tools. Graham was then questioned in detail as to his activities upon his arrival at the Denver Municipal Airport on November 1, 1955, and he furnished substantially the same information as before. He could offer no explanation as to why he had mailed to himself a trip insurance policy taken out by his mother at the airport, making him the beneficiary, other than the fact that he had mailed two similar policies of which his sister and aunt were the beneficiaries. He said he believed that he had put these insurance policies in a trash can at the airport, inasmuch as he had not yet received the policy which he had mailed to himself. He volunteered that upon his mother's leaving on the plane, he and his wife and son had entered the airport coffee shop to have dinner. According to Graham, after they had started to eat he became ill





and went to the men's rest room for a short period. He believed his illness was due to his excitement about his mother's leaving and, further, he said, the food at the coffee shop was poor.

Inasmuch as the statements of Graham at this time were not entirely in accord with those of his wife, agents of the FBI were sent to the Graham residence to interview Mrs. Graham and to obtain a signed statement about the part of her story which was in conflict with her husband's. Inasmuch as these discrepancies were present, Graham was at this time told that he was being considered by the FBI as a suspect in the case. He was told that he did not have to make any statement and that any statement which he did make could be used against him in a court of law. He was advised of his right to consult an attorney at any time.

Graham stated that he had no objection to signing a statement indicating he would voluntarily submit to a polygraphic examination and, further, would sign any statements giving his consent to search any or all of his home, automobiles, and property. He subsequently read and signed such statements.

FBI agents were sent to make a search of Graham's home, automobiles, and

property. During the search of Graham's home, a small roll of copper wire with yellow insulation was located in a shirt pocket of some work clothing belonging to Graham. This wire appeared to be the type used in detonating primer caps. Also located was the trip insurance policy of Daisie E. King, dated November 1, 1955, on which Jack Graham was the beneficiary. The policy was found hidden in a small cedar chest in one of the bedrooms at Graham's home. Subsequently, during the interview with Graham, he was questioned primarily concerning the discrepancies in his statements and those of his wife and other persons interviewed by the FBI. Agents were immediately sent to check the validity of Graham's additional statements. Upon their return, Graham was confronted with their findings, and on several matters he was unable to explain the results of the agents' investigation. Graham was at this time informed of the findings of the FBI Laboratory and their examination of fragments and pieces of wreckage recovered from the crash scene. He then admitted causing the explosion which had occurred at the dairy drive-in which he managed in Denver, as well as leaving his 1955 Chevrolet on a railroad track and allowing it to be hit by an oncoming train. He finally admitted his guilt in the plane crash and described the device he had assembled and used to perpetrate the crime. He said that he had used a time bomb composed of 25 sticks of dynamite, two electric primer caps, a timer, and a six-volt battery. A signed statement was obtained from him concerning these admissions, and on November 14, 1955, a complaint was filed before a U.S. Commissioner at Denver by a special agent of the FBI, charging Jack Gilbert Graham with sabotage.



Graham thereafter appeared before the United States commissioner, where he was advised of the charges against him, and afforded an opportunity to make bond, recommended by the United States Attorney at \$100,000. He was committed to the custody of the United States marshal in lieu of bond. On November 17, 1955, Graham was charged with murder in the State Court at Denver, Colorado and was held without bail for future hearings. He was charged with the murder of his mother, Mrs. Daisy E. King, age 54.

Subsequent to the arrest of Graham, investigation was instituted to locate the source of the items used by him in the making of the time bomb. This investigation resulted in locating, on November 17, 1955, a supply company in Denver, Colorado, where Graham was identified as having purchased on October 26, 1955, a 60-minute "on-type" timing device, which he exchanged a few days later for a 60-minute "off-type" timing device.

On November 19, 1955, a store manager at Kremmling, Colorado, recalled selling 20 or 25 sticks of dynamite and two electric blasting caps to an individual during October 1955. This store manager believed that Graham was identical with the individual to whom he had sold the dynamite and caps. On November 21, 1955, the manager identified Graham from a line-up as being identical with the individual who had purchased the dynamite and blasting caps from him during October.

Of considerable interest in the investigation of this case was the story of Jack Graham's background as related by his half sister. She stated that she had never at any time in recent years felt at ease with Graham; he was sullen; she knew him to have "pent-up violence" and she simply did not like to be around him. She said that in the past he had related things which he thought funny but which she considered violent and warped. For example, when he was residing with her and her husband in Alaska, he had been employed as a dragline operator for the CAA and on one occasion had told them that he had experienced some difficulty in loosening a bolt from some equipment, so he obtained some dynamite and blew off the bolt. As a further example, she recalled that since the United Air Lines plane crash, Graham had stated to her and his wife, Gloria, as if it were a joke, "Can't you just see those shotgun shells going off in the plane every which way and the pilots, passengers and 'Grandma' jumping around." His sister stated she had for many years thought Graham was not mentally sound. She had expressed this opinion to both her husband and another relative of Graham's. She recalled that on at least two occasions in the past she had been the object of her brother's violent temper. On one occasion he had knocked her down and kneed her in the chest so severely that her ribs were injured. On another, he had threatened to hit her with a hammer, and she had escaped by locking herself in a room. She recalled that during the summer of 1955, Graham awoke from sleeping and found his wife gone. He located his wife playing cards with his sister and his mother and, for no apparent reason, became enraged and cuffed and backhanded his wife several times. During this occurrence Daisy King had become extremely frightened, apparently afraid he might hit her.

After two continuances, Graham was arraigned in Denver District Court on December 9, 1955. Immediately after his arrest he had transferred most of his property to his wife, Gloria, declared himself unable to pay for counsel, and accepted the services of three prominent Denver attorneys appointed by the court.

The state of Colorado charged Graham with the murder of his mother. His pleas were "innocent" and "innocent by reason of insanity, before, during and after the alleged commission of the crime." The court accepted only the pleas, "innocent" and "innocent by reason of insanity at the time of the alleged crime."

Graham was ordered to Colorado Psychopathic Hospital for examination by two defense and two court-appointed psychiatrists. During the course of an interview with one of the doctors, he made a claim concerning his confession of the crime. He said that while being interviewed by Denver FBI agents he had noticed on the wall of the FBI office a photograph picturing the apprehension of the Nazi saboteurs who had landed on the Florida coast during World War II. He said he had noticed in the picture agents digging up a cache of explosives, and this picture had given him the idea of confessing that he had used dynamite to blow up the United Air Lines airplane.

Graham was found legally sane by all four psychiatrists and returned to the Denver County Jail. He was a model prisoner; his days in jail were spent quietly reading and chatting with the guards. After dinner on the evening of February 10, 1956, about 5:30 p.m., a deputy sheriff was attracted to Graham's cell by the sound of heavy breathing. The prisoner was

slumped on the floor. His socks were twisted tightly around his neck, with a piece of rolled cardboard used to get added leverage. Quickly the guard loosened the garrote; a doctor was summoned immediately, and sedatives were administered. Graham was placed in a strait jacket to subdue him through the night. The following day he was again returned to the psychiatric ward, Colorado General Hospital, where he was strapped to a bed with four guards posted nearby.

No more chances were going to be taken with him now. Graham was under 24 hour surveillance by watchful attendants. The psychiatrists again began to talk with him. He was quite communicative and talked freely about himself.

He said his confession of the murder of the people on the plane was quite true. He said that after he had decided definitely to murder his mother he had bought a timer and some dynamite and fashioned a homemade bomb. He had assembled the bomb, and while his mother was busy with last-minute details of her trip, he had slipped it into her old battered suitcase and fastened the suitcase with some extra webbing for security. They had then left for the airport. His wife and children had gone along to see grandmother off. Graham had dropped his mother and family off at the door to the terminal before taking the car to the parking lot. Before removing the suitcase from the car, he had set the timer on the bomb. He had next taken his mother's luggage to the weighing counter for weighing before it was placed on the plane.

The doctors, curious as to his feelings about the crime, were told by him that he "realized that there were about 50 or 60 people carried on a DCB, but the number of people to be killed made no difference to me; it could have been a thousand. When their time comes, there is nothing they can do about it." Graham said it was a great relief to tell the doctor about it because he had been quite conscience stricken.

On February 24, 1956, Graham dropped the insanity plea and was returned again to Denver County Jail. The judge set April 16, 1956 for his trial.

The Colorado Supreme Court in December, 1955, had imposed a ban on any photography in Colorado State courts, in accordance with Canon 35 of the American Bar Association. Following public hearings, the Supreme Court reversed its decision. The judge now had prerogative in the matter of the news media. The judge, who later presided at the trial of Graham, ruled against live television coverage but in favor of sound-on-film, press photography, and radio broadcasts. Graham, through his attorneys, requested that television cameras be banned from his trial. The judges ruled to permit some and to ban others; however, the judge added that if any witness or the defendant objected to being photographed, he had only to say so and his wishes in the matter would be respected. Graham was the only person who actually made this request during the trial. The judge had a remote control switch on the bench which enabled him to cut off the camera when necessary.

A booth was built in the back corner of the courtroom for the camera equipment. One local newspaper installed a direct telephone line from the court to its editorial room. Representatives of the wire services installed teletype machines and telephones in specially provided city hall space near the courtroom. A limited number of photographers, including some representing national coverage, received written permission to use small cameras without flash attachments.

The trial set an all-time record for the state of Colorado in the number of jurors examined. In all, 231 were called, the two main objections to panel members being that they held fixed opinions on Graham's guilt or innocence or that they were opposed to capital punishment.

The final jury represented a cross section of American life. It included two housewives (one a former beauty queen), two typists, a movie executive, an engineer, a truck driver, a saleslady, a telephone man, a lithographer, a bookkeeper and a salesman. Ladies on the panel asked for a sewing machine for their dormitory while the men played cards and checkers in their spare time.

On the first day and almost throughout the trial, hundreds of people waited for hours in the halls outside the courtroom, hoping for a chance to get seats. They brought their lunches, afraid to leave the room for fear of losing their places. The guard at the door, however, saved a seat for one woman who arrived promptly at 9:00 a.m. each morning. She was an attractive, young-looking woman, the wife of the United Air Lines pilot of the ill-fated flight. She sat only a few feet from Graham throughout the trial.

Graham was apparently supremely calm and unconcerned during the proceedings. He had lost weight since his arrest, but he still looked healthy and was not thin. He wore a neat suit each day. He slouched in his chair, chewed gum, and occasionally conferred with his attorneys. The District Attorney in his opening statement to the jury said that the state would prove Jack Graham had planned the murder of his mother, Daisy E. King, "coldly, carefully, and deliberately."

He said that one of the items of evidence the prosecution would produce was a piece of yellow wire, the same type used on electric dynamite caps. This piece of wire was the one which had been found at Graham's home during the search conducted by agents of the FBI. Prosecution witnesses and exhibits would prove that Graham had bought about 25 sticks of dynamite, a timer, a battery, and the dynamite caps which he placed in his mother's luggage. The District Attorney said that he would also prove the explosion which occurred in cargo pit number four of the airliner had been caused by dynamite and could have been caused by nothing else.

The foundation testimony concerned the jurisdiction of the Denver District Court to hear the case, the flight schedule of the United Air Lines Mainliner, and identification of Mrs. Daisy E. King's photograph. Testimony established that Mrs. King and her luggage were on the airplane when it left Stapleton Air Field, Denver, November 1, 1955.

The ground crew personnel testified that the airplane was functioning properly when it took off from Denver.

Six state witnesses described the explosion of the DC-6B airliner at 7:03 p.m. a few miles east of Longmont, Colorado.

United Air Lines employees, Civil Aeronautics Board investigators, and a Douglas Aircraft Corporation engineer testified, introducing testimony describing the crash scene, removal of bodies, preservation and identification of pieces of airplane wreckage and removal of wreckage and debris. Three of these witnesses testified that the explosion had taken place in cargo pit number four.

On the ninth day of the trial, the spotlight shifted to federal court for a hearing on a defense motion to eliminate FBI testimony and evidence. The defense attorneys contended that the FBI testimony was illegal; that Graham had not been advised of his rights before he signed his confession, and that it had been obtained under duress. It was contended that Graham's home had been searched and evidence obtained without his consent. The federal judge dismissed the motion following testimony by FBI agents that Graham had been fully advised of his rights and had not been mistreated during his questioning before he signed the confession. The agents also produced eight waivers of search which Graham had signed. Back in State Court the trial continued.

An FBI Laboratory expert identified the gray deposits on the airplane parts from the area of the cargo pit as the residue left by the explosion of dynamite. He also identified a number of pieces of metal and carbon which had been found in the wreckage and debris of the crash as having come from a particular type of battery. The FBI agent testified that the wire found in Graham's shirt pocket during the search of his home was identical in all examinable respects with wire from an electric dynamite cap.

The owner of an electric company testified that Graham had come to him early in October 1955 and offered to work at a nominal wage to "get more experience." Graham had been hired and had worked for one week. On the final day of his employment he had asked his employer what timing devices he carried, saying that he needed a timer which could be used with a battery and which would not exceed two hours. Graham had been told to go to an appliance store where he could get a timer operated with a spring.

A salesman for a Denver electric wholesale house testified he had sold Graham a 60-minute timer during the latter part of October; that Graham had represented himself as an employee of the Colorado-Texas Pump Company in order to purchase the timer.

A credit manager from a Denver, Colorado, Chevrolet company testified that Graham had been unable to pay a \$50 deductible item on an insurance loss on his 1955 Chevrolet pickup truck which they had repaired as a result of an accident. Graham had told the manager that his bank account was held jointly with his mother and was all tied up. Graham had then commented on how easy it would be to blow up an airplane. He had estimated that it would take about two gallons of nitroglycerin. He had observed the manner in which luggage was handled at Stapleton Airport, he said, and it would be easy for someone to place a bomb on an airplane.

The prosecution rested its case on the afternoon of the 15th day of the trial. Approximately eighty different witnesses had testified and had introduced 174 exhibits during the course of the proceedings. The defense rested its case after having called eight defense witnesses. During the course of the prosecution testimony, Graham had made statements to the press saying that when he took the stand, he would refute their testimony, tell the truth, and clear himself; however, he refused to testify at all in his own behalf and none of the eight witnesses called on could offer any evidence rebutting the testimony and evidence that Graham had placed a dynamite bomb in his mother's luggage.

On May 5, 1956, after being out of the courtroom for deliberation for 69 minutes, the jury found Graham guilty of murder in the first degree and recommended the penalty of death.

Two of Graham's attorneys filed a motion for a new trial. On May 15, 1956, the judge denied the motion. At this time Graham took the stand and said that he did not wish a new trial nor did he want his case reviewed by the State Supreme Court; his attorneys had filed this motion without his permission or consent.

The judge sentenced Graham to be put to death during the week of August 26, 1956, the day, the hour, and the minute to be selected by the warden of the Colorado State Penitentiary, Canon City, Colorado.

The Colorado Supreme Court stayed the execution of Graham on August 8, 1956, after two of his attorneys filed a formal record of appeal, again against his wishes.

On October 22, 1956, the Colorado Supreme Court confirmed the lower court decision and set the execution for the week ending January 12, 1957.

Graham was executed in the gas chamber at the Colorado State Penitentiary on Friday, January 11, 1957, and was pronounced dead at 8:08 p.m.

**For more information:**

- Byte Out of History: The Case of the Mysterious Mid-Air Explosion  
([https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2005/december/midair\\_explosion120905](https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2005/december/midair_explosion120905))

**9/11 Investigation (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/911-investigation>)**

**ABSCAM (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/abscam>)**

**Alcatraz Escape (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/alcatraz-escape>)**

**Al Capone (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/al-capone>)**

**Aldrich Ames (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/aldrich-ames>)**

**Alger Hiss (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/alger-hiss>)**

**Amerithrax or Anthrax Investigation (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/amerithrax-or-anthrax-investigation>)**

**Ana Montes: Cuban Spy (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/ana-montes-cuba-spy>)**

**Atom Spy Case/Rosenbergs (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/atom-spy-caserosenbergs>)**

**Baptist Street Church Bombing (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/baptist-street-church-bombing>)**

**Barker/Karpis Gang (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/barker-karpis-gang>)**

**Beltway Snipers (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/beltway-snipers>)**

**Black Tom 1916 Bombing (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/black-tom-1916-bombing>)**

**Bonnie and Clyde (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/bonnie-and-clyde>)**

**Brian P. Regan Espionage (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/brian-p-regan-espionage>)**

**Brink's Robbery (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/brinks-robbery>)**

**Charles Ross Kidnapping (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/charles-ross-kidnapping>)**

**D.B. Cooper Hijacking (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/db-cooper-hijacking>)**

**Duquesne Spy Ring (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/duquesne-spy-ring>)**

**Durkin - Murder of an FBI Agent (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/durkin-murder-of-an-fbi-agent>)**

**East African Embassy Bombings (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/east-african-embassy-bombings>)**

**Emmett Till (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/emmett-till>)**

**Enron (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/enron>)**

**Eric Rudolph (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/eric-rudolph>)**

**Espionage in the Defense Industry (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/espionage-in-the-defense-industry>)**

**Fawaz Younis/Operation Goldenrod (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/fawaz-younis>)**

**Frank Sinatra, Jr., Kidnapping (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/frank-sinatra-jr-kidnapping>)**

**George “Machine Gun” Kelly (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/machine-gun-kelly>)**

**Gerhard Arthur Puff (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/gerhard-arthur-puff>)**

**Greenlease Kidnapping (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/greenlease-kidnapping>)**

**Hijacking of TWA Flight 847 (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/hijacking-of-twa-flight-847>)**

**Hollow Nickel/Rudolph Abel (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/hollow-nickel-rudolph-abel>)**

**Hurricane Katrina Fraud (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/hurricane-katrina-fraud>)**

**Iva Toguri d’Aquino and “Tokyo Rose” (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/iva-toguri-daquino-and-tokyo-rose>)**

**Jack Gilbert Graham (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/jack-gilbert-graham>)**

**James Edward Testerman (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/james-edward-testerman>)**

**JFK Assassination (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/jfk-assassination>)**

**Joe Pistone, Undercover Agent (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/joe-pistone-undercover-agent>)**

**John Dillinger (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/john-dillinger>)**

**John Elgin Johnson (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/john-elgin-johnson>)**

**John Gotti (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/john-gotti>)**

**Jonestown (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/jonestown>)**

**Joseph Edward Earlywine (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/joseph-edward-earlywine>)**

**Judge Vance Murder (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/judge-vance-murder>)**

**Kansas City Massacre/“Pretty Boy” Floyd (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/kansas-city-massacre-pretty-boy-floyd>)**

**KKK Series (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/kkk-series>)**

**Krupp Diamond Theft (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/krupp-diamond-theft>)**

**Lester Gillis (“Baby Face” Nelson) (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/lester-gillis-baby-face-nelson>)**

**Lindbergh Kidnapping (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/lindbergh-kidnapping>)**

**Ludwig Spy Ring (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/ludwig-spy-ring>)**

**Maksim Martynov (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/maksim-martynov>)**

**Medgar Evers (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/medgar-evers>)**

**Millennium Plot/Ahmed Ressam (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/millennium-plot-ahmed-ressam>)**

**Mississippi Burning (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/mississippi-burning>)**

**Murder and Mayhem in the Osage Hills (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/murder-and-mayhem-in-the-osage-hills>)**

**Nazi Saboteurs and George Dasch (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/nazi-saboteurs-and-george-dasch>)**

**ND-98: Case of the Long Island Double Agent (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/nd-98-case-of-the-long-island-double-agent>)**

**Nussbaum and Wilcoxson (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/nussbaum-and-wilcoxson>)**

**Oklahoma City Bombing (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/oklahoma-city-bombing>)**

**Operation Greylord (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/operation-greylord>)**

**Operation Illwind (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/operation-illwind>)**

**Operation Innocent Images (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/operation-innocent-images>)**

**Operation Lemon Aid Spy Case (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/operation-lemon-aid-spy-case>)**

**Operation Senior Sentinel (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/operation-senior-sentinel>)**



**Operation Stolen Dreams** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/operation-stolen-dreams>)

**Palmer Raids** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/palmer-raids>)

**Pan Am 103 Bombing** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/pan-am-103-bombing>)

**Patty Hearst** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/patty-hearst>)

**Pearl Harbor Spy** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/pearl-harbor-spy>)

**RESMURS Case (Reservation Murders)** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/resmurs-case-reservation-murders>)

**Richard Floyd McCoy, Jr.** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/richard-floyd-mccoy-jr>)

**Robert Hanssen** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/robert-hanssen>)

**Roger “The Terrible” Touhy** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/roger-the-terrible-touhy>)

**Rumrich Nazi Spy Case** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/rumrich-nazi-spy-case>)

**Tennessee Waltz** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/tennessee-waltz>)

**The Black Dahlia** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/the-black-dahlia>)

**The Brady Gang** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/the-brady-gang>)

**The Fur Dressers Case** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/the-fur-dressers-case>)

**Thwarted Sabotage in Zambia** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/thwarted-sabotage-in-zambia>)

**Unabomber** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/unabomber>)

**USS Cole Bombing** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/uss-cole-bombing>)

**Vasilli Zubilin** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/vasilli-zubilin>)

**Velvalee Dickinson, the “Doll Woman”** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/velvalee-dickinson-the-doll-woman>)

**Vonsiatsky Espionage** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/vonsiatsky-espionage>)

**Wall Street Bombing 1920** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/wall-street-bombing-1920>)

**Watergate** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/watergate>)

**Weather Underground Bombings** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/weather-underground-bombings>)

**Weinberger Kidnapping** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/weinberger-kidnapping>)

**Weyerhaeuser Kidnapping** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/weyerhaeuser-kidnapping>)

**William Jefferson** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/william-jefferson>)

**World Trade Center Bombing 1993** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/world-trade-center-bombing-1993>)

**Year of the Spy (1985)** (<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/year-of-the-spy-1985>)

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**International Cyber Ring That Infected Millions of Computers Dismantled**  
(<https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/international-cyber-ring-that-infected-millions-of-computers-dismantled>)

**Botnet Operation Disabled** (<https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/botnet-operation-disabled>)