

Ken Taylor was Canada's ambassador to Iran on the day the U.S. embassy in Tehran was stormed by angry students in 1979.

Decades later—while giving a talk about the event at Concordia University (in Montreal)—Taylor recalls those dangerous days and the role he played in the "Canadian Caper," involving six American hostages:

- Bob Anders
- Kathy Stafford
- Joe Stafford
- Cora Lijek
- Mark Lijek
- Lee Schatz

Taylor's wife, Pat, was equally involved in sheltering some of the hiding Americans. She was able to leave Tehran one day before her husband, taking an Air France flight to Paris.

According to *Our Man in Tehran*—a book (by Robert Wright) about the Taylors' role in keeping the six Americans safe—Pat Taylor lost a close colleague (from her work at the Pasteur Institute) when he was arrested by the Iranian government, then executed as a "counter-revolutionary."

On the 16th of June, in 1981, President Reagan awarded the Congressional Gold Medal to Ken Taylor for his role in helping the six hostages to escape from Iran during the hostage crisis. Ambassador Taylor was the first foreign citizen to receive the honor.

As the years went by, Americans often approached Taylor to thank him for risking his own life to help the hostages. During a 2012 interview with Scott Simon, from NPR, Taylor recalled those expressions of gratitude:

I enjoy that, of course, because it is [in] a sense saying to Canada: this is what you did. And Americans — U.S. citizens have long memories, particularly when they feel themselves in a dilemma where they're looking for an ally and that ally is there and is prepared to act on their behalf whatever the consequences.

The consequences, for Taylor and his wife, would have been harsh had their efforts been uncovered.

Ken Taylor lived until he was 81 years old. He died from colon cancer, in October of 2015, a humble and respected man until the end of his life.

Credits:

Former Canadian ambassador to Iran - Ken Taylor - delivered the "Henri Habib Distinguished Lecture" at Concordia University. During that talk, he discussed what he (and other Canadian diplomats) did to protect six Americans hiding in Tehran during the "Iranian Hostage Crisis."

Clip online, via Concordia University's Channel at YouTube. Provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

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ARGO - The Six Escaping Diplomats

Photo of the six "houseguests," online courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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