

## *The Lone Eagle: Lindbergh*

By **GEORGE BURCH, JR.**

Almost impossible to capture now is that kind of magic which Lindbergh and his legend exerted upon those of us who remember him in the greatest years of his heroism and triumph in the late 1920's.

Numerous newspapers and magazines, as well as books, including "The Spirit of St. Louis," which he authored, have been written about Lindbergh, the man, whom few men intimately knew and fewer understood. In his book, "The Spirit of St. Louis," he describes the planning and execution of the first non-stop airplane flight between the continents of America and Europe. It was fourteen years in the writing.

The phenomenon, known as "hero," bearing his name, which had loomed immensely over the American scene for thirteen years, had ceased to exist by the end of 1941. He, of course, continued to be admired by many and worshipped by a small minority of Americans, yet the man survived his heroism, continued intensely alive, and active, even today.

Lindbergh, partly as a result of his own acts and character, partly as the result of forces beyond his control, was worshipped, mobbed, photographed, vilified, as perhaps no other private citizen in the 20th Century, and perhaps in all American history.

By flying solo from New York to Paris in the "Spirit of St. Louis," in



**CHARLES A. LINDBERGH**

May, 1927, he was transferred from an everyday life of an average American into a national legendary figure. His exploits converted aviation from airplane spectacles put on by stunt daredevil flyers in country fairs into the most advanced and modern source of transportation of the 20th Century, both for passengers and freight. Men even today have difficulty in giving it proper place in the dynamic development of peoples and nations, and it remains for future history to read the effects of airplanes on civilization.

### **LINDBERGH'S YOUTH**

In 1901, his father, Charles A. Lindbergh, following the untimely death of his wife, Mary, whom he

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had married in 1887, and to whom were born two daughters, Eva and Lillian, was married to Evangeline Lodge Land, who like her husband, graduated from the University of Michigan, he in law and she from the school of education. His father was a successful attorney, who became a man of extensive affairs, building and selling houses, acquiring farms, a District Attorney, and finally, a member of Congress from Minnesota's Sixth District.

Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr., was born in Minnesota, February 4, 1902, and during his early years lived on a ranch located on one hundred and ten acres of primeval pines and hardwoods, stretching along the Mississippi.

His father and mother evidently were too much alike to make a successful marriage and while they were separated, they never were divorced. Lindbergh continued to live with his mother, but he spent a great deal of time with his father.

His early environment made an impression, as a half century later Lindbergh wrote of his early youth as having been spent in an idyllic landscape of field and wood, river and lake.

Lindbergh's father was a great believer in self-reliance, a truly rugged individual and these characteristics were impressed upon Lindbergh at an early age, who being an only son whose two half sisters were much too old for him to play with, played alone much of the time, and he found solitude in hunting and fishing. He even built a flat bottom boat on which, with his dog as his only companion, he frequently made trips along the muddy banks of the Mississippi river, which was lined with oaks, elms and rustling cottonwoods.

In his early youth, he recalled seeing two airplanes which were oblong boxes and were without solid side walls and whose tops and bottoms were held together by a forest of struts, a network of wires. He had a boyhood dream to fly, even though it was a dangerous pastime, but as flying was very expensive, he put aside his yearning to fly, although to his mother's consternation he practiced jumping from tree limbs, and on one occasion dropped the family cat from a second floor so he could check whether or not it would land on four feet (it did).

### EDUCATION

The election in 1906 of his father to the United States Congress, followed by four subsequent re-elections, was but the first of many drastic changes in Lindbergh's life.

During those years, while he was growing into adolescence, Lindbergh was so moved about the country, dividing his time between Little Falls, Minnesota, Washington, Detroit, with extended trips to the West Coast and elsewhere about the country, that he never completed a full term in any one school. His mother tried to fill the gaps with private tutoring, but deficiencies in his formal education became inevitable. Notwithstanding his lack of book learning, his experiences became more educative than that to which most youths were then exposed to.

The lessons taught him by his father, encouraged Lindbergh never to show fear, and to make his way in the world with a minimum of dependence upon other people. With the passing of years and the accumulation of hurts, he became increasingly reticent.

Lindbergh, when he was five years old, stood by his father's side while the latter was sworn in as a Congress-

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## LINDBERGH MASONIC RECORD

On April 7, 1926, Keystone Lodge, No. 243, St. Louis, Missouri, of the Masonic Grand Jurisdiction of Missouri, received a petition for the degrees from a tall, slender, diffident youth.

Brother Lindbergh first saw the light of Freemasonry on June 6, 1926. He was made a Fellowcraft in October and a Master Mason on December 15, the same year. During his progress through the degrees he displayed keen interest in the degree work and in the lectures.

All degree work was done and lectures delivered with one exception by members of the Lodge. The Entered apprentice and Master Mason "curtain lectures" (corresponds with our Master's lectures) was delivered by James M. Bradford, Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Missouri.

Shortly after receiving the degrees came his famous flight ending at Paris, France, an event which will ever remain first in the minds of his Masonic brethren, especially in the minds of the members of Keystone Lodge, No. 243.

In recognition of his achievement and the honor which he had brought to himself, his country, the Masonic Fraternity and to Keystone Lodge, he was made a life member by the lodge. In so doing, Keystone Lodge conferred upon him an honor which no other Masonic Body could give him.

In 1928 he made his trip to South America where he was accorded every Masonic recognition: Lodge Libertad 20 Santo Domingo, RD, invested him with the honor of Honorary Member of their Lodge. He is a member of St. Louis Chapter No. 33 National Sojourners.

On his history-making flight from New York to Paris he wore the square and compass on his jacket. Years later when a movie was made telling the story of the flight the producers in their inimitable way turned this into a St. Christopher medal.

man on the House of Chamber; frequently was with his father on the House floor; and he listened to his father's speeches in Congress, though for the most part, uncomprehendingly.

When World War No. I broke out, his father through speeches and writing, charged that "Money interests" were issuing "propaganda" for the purpose of involving this Country on the side of the allies.

His father during his last term in Congress in 1915 introduced legislation, which dismayed his political friends and delighted his enemies, calling for an investigation of charges brought by the Free Press Defense League, to the effect that the Roman Catholic Church opposed, and through its various organizations, sought to subvert the American System of public schools, freedom of

the press, freedom of speech and assembly, freedom of thought in matters of conscience, and the principle of separation of Church and State. Needless to say, this legislation was killed in committee.

Following his retirement from Congress, Lindbergh's father continued his attack on those whom he charged brought about the participation of our nation in World War I. Although his views were not rejected in Minnesota, whose farmers were generally distrustful of big business and which has a large German-American population, elsewhere throughout the country he brought considerable criticism upon himself.

By the time Lindbergh entered his teens, machinery had become central to the boy's life, particularly internal-combustion engines. He graduated from high school in Little Falls,

Minnesota, and his classmates, although few knew him intimately, will always remember him by his motorcycle, which he operated with what seemed to them an appalling recklessness.

Following his graduation from high school, he farmed for two years, but because of depressed markets for farm products, following the close of the war, and the lack of thrill of adventure in everyday farming, he concluded that the farm outlook was dreary if not hopeless and that he had had enough farming. In any event, he had never intended to devote his life to agriculture.

He began to consider, vaguely at first, the possibility that he might become an aviator, remembering as he did, the air heroes who became "Aces" by downing five or more planes. Since the war's end he had followed with avid interest the accounts of record-breaking long distance flights. In May of 1919, an American Naval seaplane had flown from Newfoundland to the Azores with a crew of five men. A month later, an English pilot and an American navigator had flown from Newfoundland to Ireland, where they landed in a peat bog, winning the 10,000 pound prize for the first non-stop Atlantic crossing.

In the fall of 1920, he enrolled in the University of Wisconsin, because he wanted to take mechanical engineering. By this time this young man had reached the height of 6 feet, 3 inches. From his first day in college he kept pretty much to himself, and formed few friendships. His restlessness was reflected in his inattention to class study and as a result, his grades suffered, and at the end of March, 1922, he left college, never again to attend a college class.

He then entered upon a world as distinct in some ways, from his boy-

hood as Minnesota had been from Sweden for his grandfather, that of aviation, and with it he acquired his first nickname, "Slim." He became an enrolled student in an aircraft school, which did not last very long, largely due to lack of interest in the future of aviation. Lindbergh next became a mechanic and a helper on a friend's barnstorming, airplane expedition, and he even offered to pay his own expenses, so great was his interest in aviation. The average pilot's life expectancy in the air, by this time, was nine hundred hours, or about six weeks — it grew longer every year thereafter, until it compared favorably with relatively safe occupations.

Lindbergh next took up parachute jumping, and this experience gave him a confidence which stood him in good stead when he subsequently flew solo across the Atlantic.

On his twenty-first birthday, his father continued to oppose his flying as being too dangerous, but when he realized his son's mind was made up, he signed his note so he could purchase a surplus army training plane, better known as "Jenneys," and which were being auctioned off for as little as \$50.00. He came close to injury, or death, on his first attempt to fly and land this machine, as he never had previously soloed, as in those days no license was required of a pilot.

During the months that followed, he became a proficient flyer, becoming acutely aware, as all his fellow flyers were, of the difference in outlook between aviators and earth-bound people, as aviators living more rapidly, devoting their energies to the present instant, and ignoring the past and future within which most people planned their activities.

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Lindbergh, solitary and unknown, moved from place to place by sudden impulses and sheer restlessness, barnstorming through the middle west and the south, barely making expenses some weeks, but showing on the whole a modest profit.

Lindbergh realized that commercial aviation was still several years off and that any flyer who wished to grow up with it would do well, in the meantime, to gain the prestige and technical proficiency resulting from army training. March 15, 1924, he was inducted at Brook's Field, San Antonio, Texas, as an Air Service Cadet, and for the first time he flew the most modern planes.

His father died in 1924. At his request, his son took his ashes aloft in an airplane, and circling the woods and meadows, spread them upon the wind.

Of the original class who became air corps cadets with Lindbergh, only eighteen remained to receive their wings in March of 1925. Lindbergh was graduated number One among them. The following week most of the graduates resigned from active service in order to retain their freedom as members of the Air Corps Reserve Corps, and Lindbergh with no definite plans for his future in mind, boarded a train for St. Louis.

The army had enlarged his circle of casually friendly acquaintances and had given him, evidently for the first time in his life, a sense of belonging, or being a member.

### THE AIR MAIL PILOT

In 1925 the Congress passed legislation transferring the air mail service, which the Post Office Department had inaugurated in 1918, using army planes and personnel, to private industry. Certainly the hazard of flying the mail was great enough to challenge him.

He was hired by the Robertson corporation as its Chief mail pilot, on the run between Chicago and St. Louis. The worse the weather, the better he seemed to like it.

Current news did not interest Lindbergh. There was, however, one strand of news lacing through the whole of the age in which his interest became great, indeed. It was the continuing story of the Orteig Prize and of the men competing for it. He read it with increasing fascination as it unfolded from the spring through the summer into the fall of 1926, until in November, he himself became a part of it, though at first obscurely.

The story had begun some ten years before, in the mind of a Frenchman named Raymond Orteig, who operated hotels in New York. He resolved, following the conclusion of World War I, to encourage flights between United States and France, and in such a way to bind his native land more closely to the United States. He agreed to award \$25,000.00 "to the first aviator who shall cross the Atlantic in a land or water aircraft (heavier than air) from Paris or the shores of France to New York, or from New York to Paris or the shores of France, without stop." He stipulated that the flight be made within five years after the offer was announced. But when the five years were up, the prize remained unwon and in fact there had not even been an attempt to win it, such a flight in the early 1920's seemed utterly impossible, and failure would most certainly result in death.

By 1926, Orteig renewed his prize offer for another five years (he had by this time returned to Paris to live). Airplane motors and design had sufficiently improved to make a non-stop flight of 3600 miles seem

possible but without any margin for error.

The possibility of a transatlantic flight had become an obsession with Lindbergh, and he concluded that since the limiting factor on long distance flying was the load of gasoline a plane could lift, any plane which set out to break the distance record must be stripped of every ounce of excess weight, including the cutting of the crew to one.

There seemed to him many reasons why St. Louis businessmen who knew him and respected his professional competence, would finance his proposed flight, New York to Paris, and after considerable negotiations his proposed flight was underwritten.

He selected the Ryan Aircraft Co. of San Diego to manufacture his plane, which was to be equipped with a Wright Engine, and late in February, 1927, this company, under the strict supervision of Lindbergh, built the Spirit of St. Louis. He directed every detail, even the most minute, of the plane's construction and he did not leave San Diego until he was absolutely sure that the smallest part, the weakest link in the mechanism of his ship, was strong enough to withstand strain before which other planes had succumbed.

He trained for his flight as boxers train for a ring battle, but his training was to defeat the "sandman," for he was to fly solo, and as a result of this training, he was able to remain awake and at work for as many as 40 hours, with no time out or sleep or relaxation.

Lindbergh was not the only potential entry for the race from New York to Paris, or from Paris to New York, as several well-known pilots filed formal entries for the Orteig prize, Lindbergh being the second to file a formal entry. One plane actually left Paris for New York, but the

plane after passing Ireland was never seen again. In less than nine months, the Paris-New York project had claimed the lives of six men, as well as injury to three others.

By midday of May 10, 1927, the Spirit of St. Louis, with Lindbergh at the controls, lifted at the airfield at San Diego. The non-stop flight to St. Louis had begun, and on May 11, 1927, the Spirit of St. Louis landed at Lambert Field, St. Louis. He had flown 1,550 miles in fourteen hours and twenty-five minutes; this was farther than any solo pilot had ever flown non-stop before.

The next day he took off for New York and as he landed in Roosevelt field he learned that the number of transatlantic planes poised on Long island was increased from one to three.

## THE FLIGHT

Early morning, on May 20, 1927, the Spirit of St. Louis, in a blinding rain storm, with mud soaked runways, raised gently forward toward the point of no return, Paris.

Abruptly, across America, the people focused their minds on a single lonely youth of twenty-five years, who carrying the hopes and prayers of his fellow countrymen, with only a sandwich in his pocket to sustain him.

Rain, sleet, snow and ice added to the complexities of his flight problems and in the twenty-eight hours of his flight, he for the first time saw land, Ireland. He had accomplished a masterpiece of navigation, one worthy of the genius of dead reckoning, Christopher Columbus. He was now only 600 miles from Paris.

## PARIS

France, which had not forgotten its emotion of joy, when, in 1917, it saw the first American regiments on

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the streets, was so taken by the audacity of Lindbergh's solitary attempt, that as a nation they yearned for the triumph of this "lone boy" as the Americans did. Many articles have been written about his triumph and reception in Paris on his arrival, subsequently followed by his tour of the Western capitals of Europe. Many flamboyant congratulations were released by various heads of governments throughout the world, but perhaps the nearest approach to the flight's essential meaning, as felt rather than thought by the millions, was made by Dr. Bowie of Grace Episcopal Church in a sermon entitled "The Lure of the Impossible." He said in speaking of Nungesser, Coli, they lost their lives in attempting the flight which Lindbergh made, saying: "The chances are overwhelming against success. In these men we see manifested that indomitable heroism which whether . . . in victory or defeat, has made possible the progress of the human race toward the mastery of the world."

The President of the United States placed the flagship of the Commander of the European fleet at Lindbergh's disposal for the homeward voyage. The Spirit of St. Louis, dismantled, was returned to the United States and was subsequently presented to the Smithsonian Institution Washington, D.C.

As the Memphis, all flags flying, steamed slowly up the Potomac, past Alexandria, pandemonium broke loose. Church bells, fire sirens, automobile horns, factory whistles joined in such ear-splitting din as had not been heard in Washington since November 11, 1918; while overhead, circled scores of military planes; on the water were dozens of

small boats, then came the roar of mighty cannons.

When the Memphis docked, a very touching scene took place, the Admiral of the ship descended to the gangplank first, and when he went back up the plank, as he promptly did, thousands cheered and hundreds wept; he had upon his arm the hero's mother.

His government, headed by the President of the United States, Calvin Coolidge, paid homage to its distinguished citizen, who by this time had been elevated to the rank of Colonel in the Officers Reserve Corps.

The reception given him in Washington was probably greater than any given a private citizen in all history until then. But it was promptly exceeded by that given him in New York.

His tour of the United States only added to his stature — such was his modesty and selfless idealism.

On his good will trip to Mexico, his host in Mexico was the American Ambassador, Dwight Morrow and whose daughter, Anne, later became his wife. His triumphal tour of Mexico was such as the Mexicans had not accorded another man.

Lindbergh was not happy at being a public figure, as except for what he had accomplished, he preferred to be treated as a private individual citizen, which developed into an estrangement between him and the working press. While it was unfortunate that this breach developed, it came as no great surprise to those who knew Lindbergh best, as he was a very humble man. At any rate, there was abundant evidence by the late spring of 1929, that the Lindbergh legend, whether or not the press approved or disapproved, had a strong life of its own, overcoming every effort to destroy it.

## THE LONE EAGLE AND ANNE

Anne Lindbergh in many ways reinforced Lindbergh's qualities; her basic shyness was akin to his own; she shared his desire for privacy and need for solitude, while in other ways, she was his complement, as she cared more than he for the opinion of other people.

Came June 22, 1930, Anne's twenty-fourth birthday, in the home of her parents, she gave birth to a son, Charles Augustus Lindbergh, Jr.

By February of 1932 the Lindbergh's had moved into their new secluded home; for the first time since their marriage they had established their own home.

On the evening of March 1, 1932, the Lindberghs looked in on their sick son Charles, only to find that he was not in his crib and they quickly realized that their baby was stolen.

Many of us are familiar with the nation-wide search for the kidnapers of Baby Charles, the nation-wide grief and sympathy for the suffering of the Lindberghs, discovery of the murdered baby and the subsequent capture in the fall of 1934 and the conviction and execution of Bruno Richard Hauptmann. The details of the kidnaping are indelibly written in history, and it would add nothing to this articles were we to go into any of its details.

So great was the grief of the Lindberghs on the finding of the body of their murdered child, that they moved from their New Jersey home, never to return again.

Later a second son, Jon Morrow, was born to the Lindbergh's followed by another son and a daughter.

Lindbergh then became interested, with others, in the development of a mechanical heart, and he spent a de-

cade in this endeavor. A medical break-through in medical science was scored, with the successful development of a mechanical heart, opening up unlimited medical future developments.

### EUROPEAN YEARS

Following the completion of the Hauptmann murder trial — and his work on the mechanical heart, the Lindberghs moved to a quiet village in England, where they could live completely private lives. While in Europe a third son was born to them, whom they named Land Morrow.

While thus living in Europe they saw the unfolding of future history: Mussolini, the renegade socialist, had come to power in Rome; Lenin had seized power in St. Petersburg, followed by Stalin representing blind reaction in its purest form; Hitler and Nazi Germany, with Sadism, the principal arm of the Third Reich, nourished by a ruthless egotism, which had longer been evident in German philosophy than in that of any other land. All through this period, Soviet Russia struggled with increasing disposition to shape with Britain and France a strategy of collective security, whereby the decisions of the League of Nations could be implemented with effective sanctions, economic and political. A decisive importance had become attached in London and Paris to estimates of the relative strengths of the Axis Powers, the Democracies and the Soviet Union.

This, then, is the historic context in which we must judge the general idea Lindbergh was shaping, and these are the circumstances in which we must view the political role Lindbergh chose to play in the lurid tragic scenes which impended.

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In the summer of 1936, Lindbergh spent several weeks in Nazi Germany hobnobbing with Nazi bigwigs; certainly, this did not increase his popularity, but neither was it notably decreased. Whatever "bad" publicity he received from his Nazi association was immediately offset by the favorable publicity accorded to him in Copenhagen.

Certain it is that Lindbergh was impressed to the point of awe by the air power which he witnessed in Germany. He reported his observations to Prime Minister Baldwin of England, who was entirely indifferent. However, other officials, particularly those of America's State and War Departments, continued to evince great interest in what Lindbergh had to say. Contrary to what certain politicians had to say concerning Lindbergh's sympathies, he was entirely sympathetic to the British, but he felt that our only sound policy was to avoid war now at almost any cost, due to the lack of military preparedness, as over the years following World War No. 1, the democracies had devoted their efforts to peace and had cut back their military expenditures, particularly when it concerned the Air Corps.

## WORLD WAR II

As the result of Lindbergh's report to Washington, Congress voted large sums of money for new planes, the first step toward a goal of 6000 planes for the Air Corps. He placed himself at the disposal of his government, and he was directed to inspect the nation's existing research and manufacturing facilities. In April of 1938, his family returned to the United States.

Events moved rapidly toward the tragic conclusions implicit in the Munich Pact. In March, 1939, Nazi troops had overrun helpless Czecho-

slovakia; Hitler's Nazi gangsters began at once the round-up of Jews, intellectuals, anti-Fascists. Two weeks later, Mussolini sent his troops into Albania, which became the springboard for his imminent invasion of Greece. France was prepared to fight only a defensive war, huddled behind her Maginot Line; Britain seemed unprepared for any war at all, save upon the high seas; and with this state of affairs, Russia felt that the democracies could give it little assistance against a German attack, and it turned more and more to effecting an alliance with Germany, and as we know, these two nations eventually entered into an alliance, which later broke when he invaded Russia. Then the explosion: in April 1936, Denmark was occupied, Norway invaded and conquered; followed in May by the conquering of Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg and France, thus leaving England standing alone, following the almost miraculous evacuation of 340,000 troops at Dunkirk; to millions of Americans it appeared that the course of freedom in Europe was hopeless, and to and for these millions, Lindbergh spoke; this speech given with all the sincerity which he possessed, caused many to believe that he was pro-Nazi, when all along he was merely trying to point out our unpreparedness. Lindbergh became a spokesman for the America First Committee, which only added to the charges that he was Anti-British.

In the spring of 1941, a large majority of Americans by then were convinced that Britain's war was our own, for if she went down, our freedoms, our very survival as a nation, would be gravely imperiled.

Lindbergh, because of criticisms of the President, resigned as Colonel in the United States Air Corps Reserve, dedicating himself to continue to

serve his country to the best of his ability as a private citizen.

On Sunday, December 7, 1941, Japanese bombs rained down on Pearl Harbor, and our readers know of the holocaust of World War II. With the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the story which this article set out to tell was brought to a conclusion. We have attempted to show how Lindbergh, a great popular hero, was created and was undone in Twentieth Century America.

The government afforded him no official standing, but few men served their country as valiantly and effectively as did he during World War II. He did everything he personally could to prove though he may have been a bad historical prophet, mistaken in his estimates of the power potential in the Western democracies, that he was devoted to his country.

He became a key figure at Ford's Willow Run plant in the spring of 1942, in the production of B-24's; he also engaged in high altitude ignition-breakdown tests of a Thunderbolt fighter plane; in the fall of 1943, he transferred from Ford to United Aircraft corporation, which was producing Corsair fighter planes for the Navy and Marine Corps; in the spring of 1944, he went into the Pacific as a technical representative of United States, authorized to "study" under combat conditions the planes he helped to make and test. Lindbergh's definition of "study" meant flying planes in combat. The military

could not be a party to permitting a civilian to fly in combat, but they solved the problem for him by placing an extra plane on the line when a mission was being staged, and into it Lindbergh would climb just before the take off. After a few combat missions on one island base he would move to another so as not to cause any military problems for their commanders.

Altogether, he flew fifty missions, thoroughly convincing younger pilots that he was a valuable asset to their hazardous enterprises despite his advanced years, being then 42, and 30 years was "old" for a fighter pilot.

Twice, at least, he shot down Japanese Zeroes.

He made many contributions toward the more effective use of planes in combat, not the least of which was to extend the flying range of combat planes by as much as 500 miles.

In 1953, when the Eisenhower administration took office, steps were taken to correct the political injustices that had been done to him. The President nominated him for appointment to the rank of Brigadier General in the United States Air Force Reserve, a nomination which was confirmed in 1954.

To his old buddies, Lindbergh is "Slim," to his business associates, newer friends and his wife, he is Charles; to recent acquaintances, "General"; to the public, he is merely the ghost of "The Lone Eagle." To the Masons he is Brother Lindbergh.



*If we are to be a really great people, we must strive in good faith to play a great part in the world.*

—Theodore Roosevelt