

# Charles Lindbergh

## The Lone Eagle



One might have called it a "routine milk-run," that chilly night of September 16, except for the fact that any flight in 1926 was far from routine and the cargo wasn't milk but MAIL. As chief pilot for the Robertson Aircraft Corporation, the pilot they all called *Slim* had traveled this route many evenings. It was in fact, a routine--

- Depart Lambert field in St. Louis with bags of mail at 4:25 p.m.
- Stop at Springfield, Illinois, shortly after 5 p.m. to exchange bags of mail.
- Arrive at Peoria, Illinois, an hour later, and then depart for Chicago.
- Arrive at Chicago so the mail could be routed east and west.
- Return to St. Louis to make a similar run once again.

With the onset of autumn, darkness usually set in during the last leg of the trip. On this evening the shadows that crept across the fields below were deepened by a heavy fog blowing in off the Great Lakes. The mist rose from the ground to an elevation of 600 to 900 feet, making it impossible to fly beneath it in search of the airfield at Maywood that served as Chicago's airmail port.

*Slim* took a compass reading and continued towards the general area of the airstrip. At 7:15 p.m. the top layers of fog reflected a glow indicating a city below, but there were no openings to allow the pilot to see the ground in an effort to locate the landing field. Several times he descended as low as 800 feet where the fog bank ended beneath an otherwise clear sky above. On the ground anxious crews directed searchlights heavenward and burned two barrels of gasoline, but the saving signals could not penetrate the mist.

*Slim* circled for thirty-five minutes, then headed west to avoid Lake Michigan. Fuel was low and if he was forced down, he wanted solid earth beneath him. At 8:20 the engine of the powerful Liberty engine of his DH-4 stopped and the pilot turned on his reserve. It would allow him twenty minutes to find a hole in the fog and land safely.

Circling at 1,500 feet, the fog refused to part for the faltering airmail plane. *Slim* stuck a flashlight in his belt, determined to jump when the reserve engine had expended the last of its fuel. He struggled unsuccessfully to open the compartment containing bags of mail to toss it earthward before his airplane crashed, then gave up on the effort. At the last moment, he noticed a brief flicker of light, the first he had seen in two hours. Dropping to 1,200 feet he released a flare, his heart sinking as it illuminated only the top of the heavy fog bank and then disappeared into the darkness below. With only seven minutes of fuel remaining there were no other options.

The pilot climbed to 5,000 before that engine sputtered and died completely. *Slim* stood up in the cockpit, stepped over the cowling on the right-hand side, and jumped. Seconds later he pulled the ripcord and felt the reassuring tug of his parachute. Pulling the flashlight from his belt he flashed it downward and across the top of the fog bank below when he heard an unexpected sound--the roar of his airplane's engine returning to life as it began a spiral around his slowly falling chute. On its first loop it came within 300 yards, and now *Slim* feared he might be knocked from the sky by his own airplane. Before jumping he should have cut the fuel switches--but hadn't. Now, he guessed, as the plane nosed downward a small amount of fuel in the back of the tank had rushed forward to reinvigorate the engine.

As the fog enveloped his falling body he could still hear his airplane circling, falling at about the same rate as his own body. With each circle however, the aircraft seemed to be moving further away in ever-widening loops. After five loops, the threat had passed and *Slim* prepared himself for the next danger--collision with the ground. He crossed his legs to avoid straddling a fence or other protrusion, used his hands and arms to protect his face...and waited.

He saw the ground moments before landing in a cornfield. Picking himself up he could discern no major injury, so he packed up his chute and headed out in search of a farmhouse. He found one and enlisted the aid of the farmers in locating his plane, which had crashed two miles away. Before daybreak the mail was en route by ground to the Ottawa Post Office for delivery to Chicago and *Slim* was returning to St. Louis to find another airplane. After all, the mail had to get through, and *Slim* was the main pilot on this route. Such incidents were to be expected in the early days of aviation.



Flying mail in the 1920s was a dangerous job, usually flown in aging DH-4 *Flaming Coffins* left over from the war and committed to the air in all kinds of inhospitable weather. *Slim* had been fortunate to safely jump from his own airplane, to reach earth without injury. Normally that act would have qualified him for membership in an elite fraternity...*The Caterpillar Club*... composed of pilots who had made an emergency jump from a doomed airplane.\*

*Slim* didn't need the fateful night of September 16 to grant him membership. He was already a member...TWICE. In fact, within six weeks he would have to make yet a FOURTH emergency jump, making him the all-time record holder in that fraternity. That record exists even today.

Any number of things COULD have gone wrong on that, or many other nights in the air between St. Louis and Chicago. Had the worst happened, the tragedy would have passed with little notice. The death rate among early mail pilots became so high as to eventually lead to charges of government ineptitude, and tragedy struck with such frequency that brave young pilots died in oblivion. The local paper might report the death, maybe even print the name of the pilot. Those who read the story might question what motivated these young men who laughed at danger to fly mail and wonder what futures were lost in their untimely death.

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\* The caterpillar club was so named because parachutes were made of silk, spun by the silkworm caterpillar.

Indeed, had the worst happened on the St. Louis-Chicago route, who would have missed the lanky young pilot they called *Slim*?

Because it DIDN'T that question can be answered. *Slim*'s true name would soon be written in history, for he was:

## Charles Augustus Lindbergh

*Slim* Lindbergh was born in Detroit, Michigan, on February 4, 1902, the son of Evangeline and Charles A. Lindbergh, Sr. His father was a successful attorney who lived and practiced law in Little Falls, Minnesota. He was elected to the U.S. Congress when Charles was four-years old and served therein for a decade until 1917.

For the next several years young Charles traveled with his family as they commuted from the Minnesota home to Washington, DC, as well as elsewhere. He later wrote, *"Up to the time I entered the University of Wisconsin (1920) I had never attended for one full school year, and I had received instruction from over a dozen institutions, both public and private, from Washington to California.*



*"Through these years I crossed and re-crossed the United States, made one trip to Panama, and had thoroughly developed a desire for travel, which has never been overcome."*

Lindbergh's interest in travel took a new twist at the age of ten when he attended his first air show. It inspired an interest in AIR travel that was never overcome. In 1918 he graduated from Little Falls High School in his home state and enrolled as an engineering student in the University of Wisconsin in 1920. During his freshman year he found recreation in shooting matches on the R.O.T.C. team, but aviation became more and more the focus of his dreams for the future.

Lindbergh's interest in engineering came naturally. His maternal grandfather was a dentist with an inquisitive mind and experimental nature, who pioneered the use of porcelain in dentistry and became known as the *father of porcelain dental art*. Years later young Charles would himself contribute materially to the field of health, collaborating with Dr. Alexis Carrel in development of the perfusion pump that would ultimately result in the creation of an artificial heart.

In February 1922 Lindbergh left college to pursue his three passions in life:

- ✓ Travel
- ✓ Aviation
- ✓ Engineering



These were a trichotomy that would one day make him the most famous aviator of all time. But on April 9, 1922, when Charles Lindbergh made his first flight as a passenger in the plane-for-hire of Otto Timm in the sky over Lincoln, Nebraska, he was just another unknown, young, would-be airman. In the weeks that followed he began his own flight training, compiling eight hours of instruction at the cost of \$500 by the end of May. Before Lindbergh could make his first solo flight, however, the instruction plane was sold.

Throughout that summer the young man spent a lot of time in the air, but little of it in the cockpit. Throughout Wyoming and Montana Lindbergh dazzled crowds as a wing-walker, parachutist, and performer and other aerial feats that highlighted the barnstorming era.

In the spring of 1923, the elder Lindbergh, despite his general aversion to the airplane, fronted enough money for his twenty-one-year-old son to purchase his first airplane. It was a war-surplus Curtiss JN-4 Jenny, auctioned to young Charles for a price of \$500, a fraction of what it had cost the U.S. Government during the war. On April 9 Charles Lindbergh gassed up his first airplane, taxied to the end of the airstrip at Americus, Georgia, where the plane had been sold, and lifted off to make his first solo flight. From there it was on to Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, and across the South. For \$5 Lindbergh would provide the daring and the inquisitive with a five to ten-minute flight. Recalling those early days he wrote in his 1927 account of the flight that made him famous: *"Some weeks I barely made expenses, and on others I carried passengers all week long at five dollars each. On the whole I was able to make a fair profit in addition to meeting expenses and depreciation."*

Though Lindbergh's ultimate destination upon taking possession of his first airplane was to fly in Texas, his route became a circuitous one that led home for a brief period. There he convinced his father to fly with him over Redwood Falls, winning over the first of many converts. Mother Evangeline also joined her son in the air and flew with him at every opportunity.

Before resuming his itinerary south in September, Lindbergh submitted forms to Washington, DC, requesting duty with the United States Army Air Service. The following January he reported to Chanute Field in Illinois to take his entrance examinations. A short time later he received orders to report to Brooks Field in San Antonio, Texas, to join a class of flying cadets scheduled to begin training on March 15. Excitement ran high among the 104 cadets, all of who were eager to fly the Army's newer and fastest airplanes. None were daunted by reports of a washout rate of 40 per cent in the first phase of training.

Classes were tough and demanding, both mentally and physically. Just weeks after the training began, Lindbergh's already stressful situation was compounded by the death of his father. Lindbergh hung in there, survived the dreaded "Benzine Boards" that sent more than half his classmates home prematurely, and was among the remnant of the original class that was sent to Kelly Field near San Antonio in September.

It was during this final phase of training that Lindbergh became a member of the caterpillar club, making his first emergency jump on March 5, 1925, after a mid-air collision with another airplane during *war games*. Weeks later the young man was one of eighteen cadets from the original class of 104 to receive his wings and commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Air Service Reserve Corps. Simply surviving to graduation was a considerable accomplishment alone. Second Lieutenant Charles A. Lindbergh graduated at the head of the class.



Lindbergh returned to the *flying circus* circuit during the summer of 1925, and made his second emergency jump during a test flight at Lambert Field on June 2. In July he spent two weeks instructing other pilots at Richards Field in Missouri as part of his reservist military commitment, then flew passengers for the Missouri National Guard encampment in August. In November he was promoted to First Lieutenant in the 110th Observation Squadron, 35th Division, Missouri National Guard. He also learned that his friends in the Robertson Aircraft Corporation had succeeded in their bid for the government mail contract on the St. Louis/Chicago route. He began flying that route the following spring.

Unlike air show aviation, performed before crowds of spectators on the ground, flying the mail was a dark and lonely job. The pilot usually flew alone, often at night, and in all manner of weather. It was a solitary lifestyle, isolated high above all signs of life...a man and his airplane. It was great experience, testing one's abilities against every imaginable condition both mechanical and natural. It also granted the pilot hours of solitude. Somewhere alone in the dark skies between St. Louis and Chicago during the Autumn of 1926, a lone airmail pilot everyone called *Slim* began filling those lonely hours with an incredible dream. As winter set in that dream began to take shape. It would come to life in:

## **The Great 1927 New York-to-Paris Air Derby**

The summer and fall of 1925 were both perilous and dramatic times in the history of aviation, just twenty-two years after the first heavier-than-air flight at Kitty Hawk. This was the year the Navy suffered the disastrous loss of the Shenandoah airship and the ill-fated flight from California to Hawaii. It was the year Billy Mitchell was court-martialed in Washington, DC. It was the year that Dwight Morrow convened the board that would ultimately lead to the designation of the Army's air arm as the U.S. Air Service, and the same year that a young barnstormer named Jimmy Doolittle won the Schneider Cup Race at Baltimore, MD, setting a record speed of 245.7 mph for a seaplane.

The following year became even more dramatic. In 1926 the big nine-cylinder radial air-cooled Wasp engine was introduced. Lieutenant J. A. Macready set an American altitude record of 38,704 feet; Robert H. Goddard launched the world's first liquid-fueled rocket at Auburn, Massachusetts; and the U.S. Army Air Corps was born. Navy Commander Richard Byrd led the first flight over the North Pole; and President Coolidge signed the Air Commerce Act to regulate civil aeronautics. It was also the year that a foreign aerial legend brought his own brand of excitement to the United States...and the world.

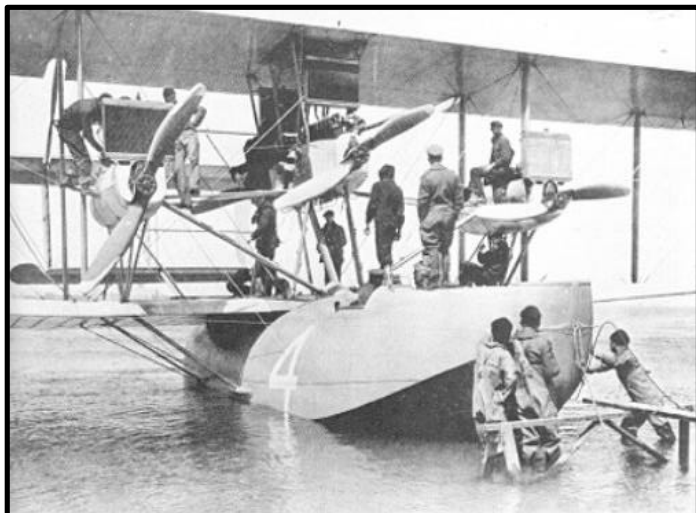
Captain René Fonck was a French war hero, a highly decorated and dashing young pilot whose name was spoken with reverence around the world. During World War I he had shot down an incredible total of 125 German aircraft (though he was only credited with 75 official victories), second only to Germany's *Red Baron*.

In 1926 the man who had already demonstrated that he was the master of the skies announced that he would do what no man had done before—fly from New York to Paris and collect the coveted Orteig prize.



Early aviation was a spectator sport, daring airmen charging admission to curious spectators to demonstrate what the airplane could accomplish. As the number of pilots increased, so too did the competition; and aviation became more of a contest than a show. In 1910 the New York World offered a \$10,000 prize to the first pilot to fly from Albany to New York City. Glenn Curtiss who would become among the best known of airplane manufacturers, claimed the prize after piloting his pusher plane at an average 52-miles per hour across the 152-mile trip with two stops for fueling.

The amazing feat was followed by rival publisher William Randolph Hearst's 1911 offer of a \$50,000 prize to the first aviator to fly coast-to-coast across the United States in thirty days or less. Cal Rodgers was first to make the transcontinental trek, but was disqualified. The trip took him a total of eighty-four days. Only eleven years later a young pilot named Jimmy Doolittle made the same trip in fewer than twenty-four hours...the first man in history to do so.



Pilots all over the world were pushing the envelope in postwar years, and the early 1920s were filled with new records for both speed and distance. In 1924 General Billy Mitchell was the man behind an around-the-world flight. Six U.S. Air Service pilots in three planes completed the world circuit in one hundred seventy-five days after departing Seattle, Washington, on April 6, 1924.

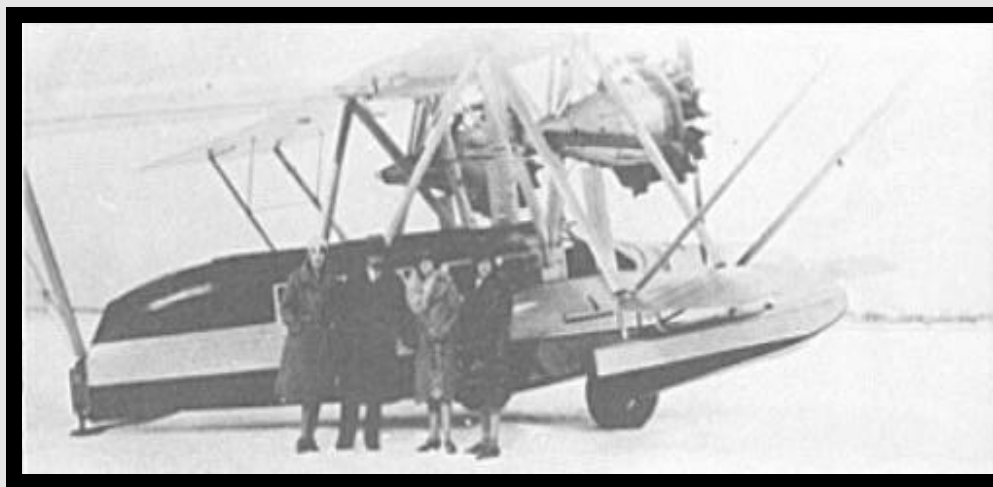
Actually, four Air Service planes began the historic 1924 world tour, each named for an American city: *Seattle*, *Chicago*, *New Orleans*, and *Boston*. The Pacific Ocean was negotiated from Alaska, which presented its own series of challenges. But the greatest hurdle in the 26,000-mile odyssey lay towards the end...crossing the Atlantic. It was accomplished in an island-hopping series of flights from the Orkney Islands north of Scotland to Iceland, then to Greenland, Labrador, and home to North America. The challenge resulted in the loss of the *Boston*, though the entire trip was accomplished without loss of life.

So formidable a barrier was the Atlantic Ocean, that in 1919 a French hotel operator named Raymond Orteig offered a prize of \$25,000 to the first pilot to fly nonstop between New York and Paris. Orteig lived in New York, but could see the world shrinking in size with the advent of aviation, and was eager to see the first successful nonstop crossing of the Atlantic. By the time of the Air Service's flight in 1924, the Atlantic had been successfully traversed three times, all in 1919; but the Orteig prize for a New York/Paris trip remained unclaimed.

The first successful crossing began on May 8, 1919, when three Navy "flying boats" took off from Newfoundland. Numbered NC-1, NC-3, and NC-4, each carried a 6-man crew for the hop from Newfoundland to the Azores. The NC-1 went down at sea. Fortunately, an American destroyer rescued the crew. When the NC-3 failed to arrive in the Azores, a sense of doom pervaded the U.S. Navy. Unbelievably, after days with no sign of the airplane, it drifted into the harbor at Ponta Delgada backwards...still afloat and the crew alive after a harrowing journey. Only the NC-4 successfully made the aerial crossing.

Two weeks later British war veteran pilots John Alcock and Arthur Whitten Brown made the 1,890-mile flight across the North Atlantic from Newfoundland to Ireland. In July the British dirigible crossed east to west from Britain to New York. It was the last crossing until the Air Service flight of 1924, none of them fulfilling the requirements of the Orteig prize. There was a large difference between the 1,890-mile crossing from New Foundland to Ireland, and the 3,610-mile distance from New York to Paris. By 1926 it had been seven years since Raymond Orteig had issued his challenge and, with the advances in airplane design, the time was ripe for some brave soul to claim it.

In 1926 Captain Fonck's arrival in New York by boat touched off a current of excitement that rippled around the world. The French were justly proud to see one of their own legends become the first to make the historic Atlantic crossing. Americans too fell in love with the dashing war hero whose fame and feats had made him a world-hero; even among the Germans he had fought during the war. The flight became even more personal for Americans when Captain Fonck announced that his navigator for the flight would be an American, Lieutenant Lawrence Curtin. The huge Sikorsky S-35 with its three large engines was equally impressive.



**This was a moment in search of new heroes, and the world watched with great anticipation.**

Early on the morning of September 21, 1926, Captain Fonck drove to Roosevelt Field on Long Island. He had chosen to make the trek from west to east to take advantage of prevailing eastbound winds, and selected this particular Tuesday morning so he could fly beneath a full moon when darkness fell. His gigantic airplane would carry a three-man crew in addition to Fonck, and 2,500 gallons of gasoline were being poured in the tanks when the war hero arrived at the field. Dressed in his crisp blue French Army uniform, replete with an array of medals, he looked very much the hero beneath the headlights of the hundreds of automobiles that lined the airstrip to illuminate the predawn darkness.

At 6 a.m. the fueling was complete and Fonck turned over the engines. With his crew aboard, the S-35 weighed fourteen tons. It would require every yard of the one-mile runway, and every rpm he could muster from the three big engines, to achieve the 80 mile-per-hour speed necessary to get the huge airplane off the ground.

Take-off was almost a circus with motorists driving parallel to the S-35 as it lumbered down the runway, slowly picking up speed. Even in the dim light of the early morning, it didn't take long for the crowd to notice the trail of dust that followed the airplane as it struggled to gain speed. As the heavy plane had bumped and bounced across the airstrip, the landing gear on one side of the plane had been damaged and began dragging across the field. The drag wouldn't allow Fonck to coax more than 65 mph out of his engines.

To cut the engines at that point would deprive the pilot of any control over his speeding airplane and would probably cause it to nose over. To veer away from the landing strip would undoubtedly send the airplane careening into the crowds along the sidelines. Despite the futility of the effort, Fonck had no choice but to continue straight ahead in hopes he could somehow get his plane airborne.

It was a valiant, sacrificial effort against long odds. This time the pilot, who had defied the odds again and again in the wartime skies over France, lost the gamble. The crowds watched in shocked horror as the S-35 reached the end of the runway and tumbled out of sight into a gully. Seconds later the morning skies were lit up by the brilliant eruption of 2,500 gallons of gasoline. As the sea breezes whipped the heavy black smoke around, the stunned spectators saw Captain Fonck climbing out of the gully, followed by Lieutenant Curtain. No one else appeared. The other two French crewmembers died in the flames.

But for the freak incident that damaged Captain Fonck's airplane on take-off, few people doubted that he would have been the first to claim the Orteig prize. The tragedy might have deterred future attempts, but the men who pioneered aviation in its infancy were a special breed: daring, adventurous, and willing to accept the risks. The advent of winter would prevent any further attempts in 1926; but during those last months of the year, word began to circulate that several teams were gearing up for an attempt the following spring. Amid the hype and anticipation, it became known as "*The Great 1927 New York-to-Paris Air Derby*."

When Raymond Orteig established his prize, it became the responsibility of the National Aeronautic Association to establish the guidelines and rules for any attempt to claim it. As 1926 faded and the new year began, applications began coming in from an impressive array of contestants, all of them determined to make 1927 the year of conquest.

Among the first to announce his intent was another war hero, Captain Charles Nungesser who had shot down 43 enemy planes during the war to become France's third-leading ace. Nungesser announced that he and his navigator, Captain Francis Coli, would attempt the flight from east to west in the early spring.



Two U.S. Naval officers, Lieutenant Commander Noel Davis and Lieutenant Stanton Wooster also submitted applications. Charles A. Levine, a civilian and the well-known and somewhat eccentric president of the Columbia Aircraft Corporation, announced he too would field a team, playing his own effort for all the publicity and hype he could muster.

On February 25 Naval aviator Commander Richard Byrd, Jr. visited the White House to receive the Medal of Honor from President Calvin Coolidge. The previous year Byrd had become a National hero for his flight over the North Pole. Now the newly decorated American aviation hero announced he would also enter the New York-to-Paris air derby, not for the prize but for the value of scientific research.

The mix of these four teams, all composed of men well known and revered for their courage and accomplishment, provided great material for the early 1927 newspaper hype for the coming spring. Almost lost among these four applications was a fifth. It had arrived with no mention of a team or even an accompanying navigator.

**It was signed simply "*C.A. Lindbergh*."**

The media covered the preparations of the four leading contenders steadily in the early months of 1927. The biggest question for all seemed not to be who would make the crossing first, but which of the four would be first to make an attempt. Commander Byrd seemed to be the American favorite with his large Fokker tri plane named *America*.



In the early spring Byrd took *America* up for a test-run over New Jersey. All went well until the Commander brought it in for a landing. The nose-heavy airplane tipped over, breaking Commander Byrd's arm in the resulting crash, and postponing the American hero's plans several weeks.



The odds now seemed to favor the wealthy Levine, whose single-engine airplane named *Columbia* was christened on April 24. Following the splash of ginger ale against its side, pilot Clarence Chamberlain taxied down the runway for the maiden flight. During take-off one wheel fell off the plane, forcing Chamberlain to use all his skills to land again on one wheel. In the process a wing scraped the ground, putting the *Columbia* back in the hangar for repairs.

Lieutenant Commander Davis and Lieutenant Wooster were even less fortunate two days later when they took their airplane named *American Legion* for a test flight over Virginia. Both men were killed when their heavily loaded airplane stalled and crashed into a swamp during takeoff.

In Paris French war-ace Captain Charles Nungesser proclaimed, "*I am attempting the flight to bring honor to French aviation.*" All of France cheered as he and Captain Coli took off from Le Bourget airfield on the morning of Sunday, May 8. Their boat-plane was last seen over Ireland as it turned into the formidable North Atlantic. So intense was the anticipation of their success, even in the west, that all eyes were on the heavens Monday morning and watchers reported seeing the plane over the North American continent. The Monday morning newspapers in Paris eagerly announced in a special headline edition that the two aviators had arrived to land on the water at the foot of the Statue of Liberty amid a fleet of flag-flying welcome ships. It was wishful thinking. The *White Bird* had disappeared into the vast Atlantic after last being seen over Ireland, and no trace of its fate would ever be found.

As the French newspapers printed their retraction, an equally false rumor was written. The two French aviators, it was reported, had been lost in a storm over the Atlantic because the Americans had withheld weather information from the pilot and his navigator. A deeply despondent French public was quick to believe the rumor, and such anti-American sentiment swept through Paris that the American ambassador cabled Washington to advise that it would be unwise for any American pilot to attempt to fly to Paris until the mood settled.

In fact, the American public was as heartbroken at the French tragedy as were the people of that nation. The air derby had become less of a challenge between competing nations, and more of a contest between man and the raging Atlantic. In little more than two weeks, the four leading contenders in the New York-to-Paris contest had all met with tragedy. Nothing had been heard from the fifth applicant, an unknown airmail pilot from St. Louis named C. A. Lindbergh.



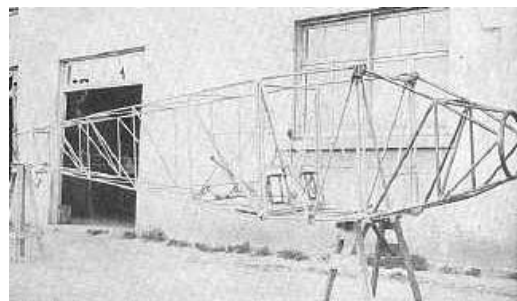
Little had been heard of the fifth applicant in the New York-to-Paris Air Derby because the young man known only as C. A. Lindbergh was busy preparing to make history. He later wrote, *"I first considered the possibility of the New York-Paris flight while flying the mail one night in the fall of 1926. Several facts soon became outstanding. The foremost was that with the modern radial air-cooled motor, high life airfoils, and lightened construction, it would not only be possible to reach Paris but, under normal conditions, to land with a large reserve of fuel and have a high factor of safety throughout the entire trip as well."*

In December 1926, *Slim* Lindbergh went to New York to obtain the necessary details for his own entry into the air derby, and then began designing the airplane he believed could help him accomplish what no other man had done before.

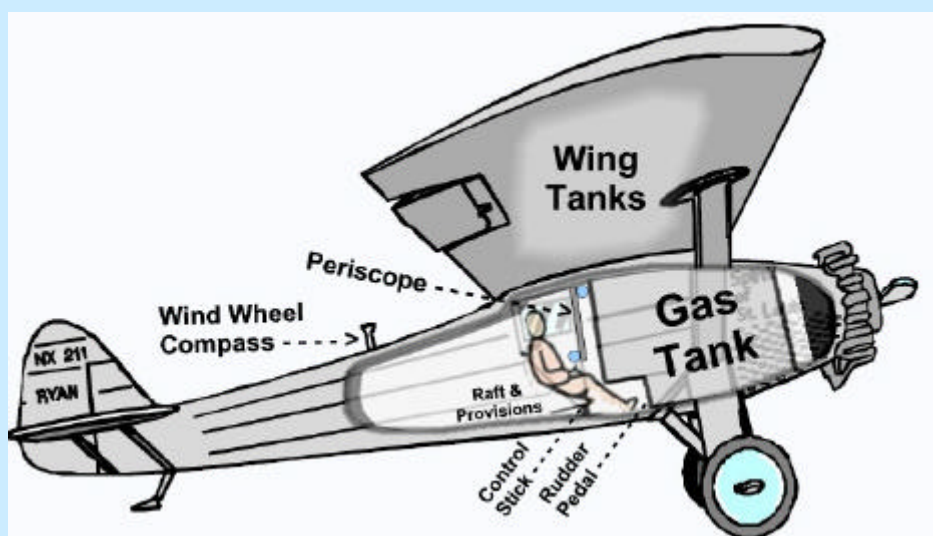
While Commander Byrd had accomplished his North Pole flight in his famous Fokker triplane, Lindbergh reasoned that a monoplane would be more efficient for the long, nonstop flight to Paris. A single wing had less resistance against the winds, making it far more fuel-efficient. As opposed to men like Captain Fonck who had planned his flight aboard an airplane equipped with three large engines, Lindbergh also opted for a single, 200-horse-power radial air-cooled engine. Multiple engines provided somewhat of a safety factor, for if one engine failed, others remained to try and get the airplane to safety. In a single-engine airplane, mechanical failure would result in the plane going down over the Atlantic--and almost certain death. Lindbergh felt confident in the newer engines to be sufficiently advanced beyond the likelihood of failure.

Lindbergh estimated that the airplane he had in mind would cost about \$10,000, five times the \$2,000 he had personally saved. He turned to air-minded businessmen in St. Louis, convinced them to finance the project, and then made two more trips to New York early in 1927 to finalize the details. On February 28 he placed an order with Ryan Airlines of San Diego to build his airplane, then went to California to both plan and supervise.

The Ryan aircraft manufacturing plant was little more than a crew of dedicated mechanics operating out of an old fish cannery on the San Diego waterfront. When the contract was signed on February 28, Lindbergh was promised his unusual airplane would be completed in two months. If all went according to plan, the stage would be set for an early spring transatlantic flight. Lindbergh spent those two months nearly living in the building where his plane was being constructed.



Slowly that special plane began to take shape--Spartan in appearance but practical in its application. The big Wright engine was housed in a cowling covered by aluminum. The remainder of the airplane was sheathed in tightly drawn fabric over a well-constructed frame. Gasoline tanks were housed in the wings and supplemented by an additional tank behind the engine in the fuselage, balanced carefully over the fixed landing gear. This large tank made it possible to store the extra fuel needed for the 3,610-mile odyssey, but the need to balance that extra weight blocked the pilot's forward view. Seated in his light, wicker seat behind the tank, Lindbergh would be required to navigate solely by looking left or right through the side windows, or by using a crude periscope constructed of tubing and two mirrors, to see what lay ahead. In honor of the businessmen in Iowa who put up the money to build the gray monoplane, Lindbergh named it:



## ***Spirit of St. Louis***

**Engine:** 9 Cylinder, 220-HP, Air-cooled Wright J-5C Whirlwind

**Wing span:** 27'

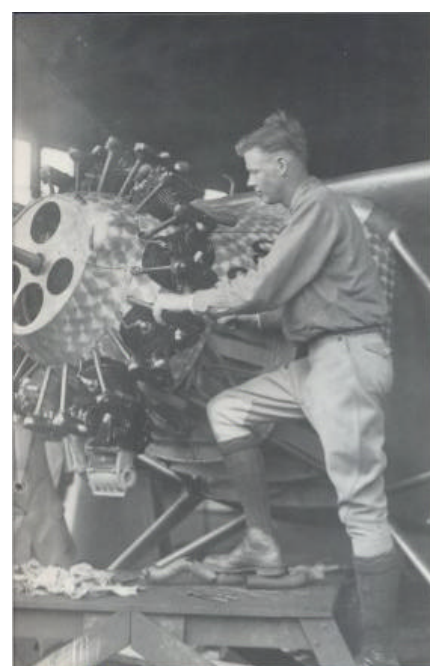
**Length:** 27'8"

**Height:** 9'8"

**Weight (empty):** 2,150 lbs.

**Tail Number:** N-X-211

An expert mechanic, Lindbergh was involved in every step in the construction of his airplane, working closely with Chief Engineer Donald Hall. The dedicated staff worked long and hard to create in the old warehouse, the airplane drafted on paper by Hall. Lindbergh walked the floors of the plant regularly, to see his dream take shape. He also spent long hours planning his trip...one he would make alone. All other competitors in the Great Air Derby planned to make the historic Atlantic crossing a team effort--at the very least consisting of a pilot and navigator. Lindbergh planned to fly alone, replacing the weight of a navigator with fuel. This meant he would serve as both pilot and navigator.





While the Spirit of St. Louis took shape in the warehouse, Lindbergh worked out his navigational plan. He would take off from New York to make the circle route to Paris: northeast over Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, then across the North Atlantic to traverse Ireland at its southern tip, across England and the channel that separated it from the European continent, and finally....if all went well....PARIS!



On a flat piece of paper it appears that Lindbergh's route was a circuitous one, going out of his way to avoid an endless expanse of ocean in a straight-line flight. In point of fact, because the planet is a globe and not a flat piece of paper, his flight plan took advantage of the Earth's curvature to give him the shortest route to Paris, a distance of 3,610 statute miles.

Lindbergh would navigate by dead reckoning, looking for landmarks to Boston, then Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, before the 1,850-mile expanse of the North Atlantic. Flying at close to 100 mph, he would take compass readings and alter his course each hour. He estimated that this crude system would suffice. Even if he reached Europe 300 miles off course, he would have enough fuel remaining to reach Paris.

Lindbergh also carefully determined the necessary supplies he would take on his flight, ever mindful of the fact that each additional item in his inventory would demand extra fuel. The final shopping list provided him sustenance for one full day, as well as emergency supplies in case something went wrong. These would be stowed behind his wicker seat in the cramped cockpit, along with a raft in case he went down over the Atlantic.

Though the undertaking the young pilot was endeavoring to achieve was fraught with danger, Lindbergh was never foolish. Every aspect of his airplane, every item it would carry, and every detail of the route and its navigation was carefully thought out and planned for.

2 Flashlights
1 Ball of String
1 Ball of cord
1 Hunting Knife
4 Red Flares
1 Box of Matches
1 Large Needle
1 Canteen - 4 quarts
1 Canteen - 1 quart
1 Armbrust Cup
1 Air Raft with pump
5 Cans Army rations
2 Air Cushions
1 Hack saw blade

*"Day and night, seven days a week, the structure grew from a few lengths of steel tubing to one of the most efficient planes that has ever taken the air," Lindbergh later wrote. "During this time it was not unusual for the men (of Ryan Aircraft Manufacturing) to work twenty-four hours without rest, and on one occasion Donald Hall, the Chief Engineer, was over his drafting table for thirty-six hours."*



On April 28 the *Spirit of St. Louis* was completed and Lindbergh took it up for its test flight in San Diego. Few outside of the close-knit family of dedicated workers at Ryan even took notice. All of America's attention was focused on the East Coast where in previous days all three top American contenders for the Orteig Prize had suffered setbacks, the two men flying the *American Legion* losing their lives. The applicant known only as "C.A. Lindbergh" had been all but forgotten.

Throughout the following week, Lindbergh continued to test-fly *Spirit of St. Louis*, and word began to get out about the unknown mail pilot who was the fifth contestant for the Orteig Prize. As details of the plan emerged...that Lindbergh would fly a single-engine monoplane ALONE across the Atlantic, media reports began to refer to him as a "flying fool." In the face of the failure of Fonck the previous year, and the setbacks suffered by the rich and famous in the race this year, it was hard to give Lindbergh serious consideration.

For Lindbergh, the final test flight of the *Spirit of St. Louis* would be the trip from San Diego to New York. The distance was nearly equal that of the New York-to-Paris flight. Now more than pleased with the performance of his airplane, Lindbergh was eager to get going when a storm moved in from the Pacific to hand him his first setback. For three days he anxiously monitored the weather report and was discouraged to still be stuck in San Diego on May 8 when Captains Nungesser and Gouli took off from Paris. He found no joy in the report the following day that both men had failed, and were presumed lost, despite the good news from the San Diego Weather Bureau that the now 4-day storm was clearing.

At 3:55 p.m. the following day, May 10, the *Spirit of St. Louis* took off from Rockwell Field. Fourteen hours and twenty-five minutes later Lindbergh was welcomed at Lambert Field in St. Louis by Harry Knight and Harold Gatty, two of the key financiers of the venture. In anticipation of the main event, the fact that Charles Lindbergh had just completed the longest nonstop solo flight in history went almost completely unnoticed.

*"How long are you staying, Slim?" they asked. "We have several dinner invitations for you."*

*"I'll stay as long as you want me to," Lindbergh replied. "But I think I ought to go right on to New York. If I don't, somebody else will beat us to the take-off."*

Indeed, Charles Levine had already announced that his *Columbia* was repaired and nearly ready for its attempt, and Richard Byrd's *America* was undergoing final preparations at Curtiss Field.

At 8:13 the following morning, Lindbergh departed Lambert Field to arrive at Curtiss Field at 5:33 p.m. New York Daylight Saving Time (5:33 CST).



*On that final leg he had set another record, the fastest transcontinental flight in United States' history.*

From the moment of his arrival in New York on May 12, 1927, until his arrival in Paris nine days later, Charles Lindbergh was a phenomenon unlike any previously witnessed in history. While his historic flight revolutionized the way we view our world, courageous and historic flights were common in the early decades of aviation. Perhaps what set Charles Lindbergh apart from other heroes of the day was not so much what he did, but who he was.

Lindbergh came to New York virtually unknown, the *long shot* in the great Air Derby. During the *Roaring 20s* with its excesses, over-indulgence, and social positioning, the young man was almost a *breath of fresh air*. He didn't smoke, didn't curse, and possessed a strong but gentle personality. He was self-confident, but certainly not cocky. In fact, if anything he seemed genuinely shy and humble. The *New York Times* reported:



*"No one ever more perfectly personified youthful adventure than this young knight of the air....There were many girls in the crowd who watched the good-looking pilot with undisguised admiration. Lindbergh seems to be girl-shy, but they 'simply adore' him."*

Following Lindbergh's arrival at Curtiss Field, media attention reached new highs. Both the *Columbia* and *America* were also at the field and Levine and Byrd had both announced the two airplanes were nearly ready to go. The crews of both competitors were cordial to each other as well as to the newly arrived airmail pilot, but the sense of competition was running at new levels. Poor weather prevailed for days, but there were general consensuses that upon the first break in the skies over the Atlantic, one if not all three airplanes, would be taking to the air.

For the first time now, Charles Lindbergh began getting heightened coverage in the daily newspapers. The *long shot* has always intrigued Americans, who enjoy pulling for the *underdog*. Lindbergh's unique approach...one engine, one wing, one man...also became the focus of great discussion. While serious doubt existed that a lone pilot could endure the rigors of a thirty-six-hour flight, the idea was inspiring. Somewhere the media coined a new nickname for *Slim* Lindbergh, referring to him as *The Lone Eagle*. It, like the subsequent *Lucky Lindy*, was a moniker the young man never liked and one that his friends avoided ever using.

For his own part, Lindbergh spoke as if his flight would be a team effort anyway. His references to the *Spirit of St. Louis* placed the airplane on par with himself. He spoke of a collective "WE," and such would be the title of his published biographical account of these events a year later.

## Thursday, May 19, 1927

Rain was falling in New York and fog shrouded the coast all the way to Newfoundland. The nearly week-old storm over the North Atlantic continued to preclude any hopes of the anxious aviators to take off for Paris. Charles Lindbergh used the continuing delay to drive to Patterson, NJ, to visit the Wright plant in the morning, and then returned to New York where he hoped to watch a performance of *Rio Rita*. By six o'clock that evening he was en route to the theater with friends, stopping only to check the weather forecast. He was surprised to learn that the front was breaking up, and conditions were clearing over the Atlantic. Returning to his friends he announced, "Let's get back to the airfield. I'm going to take off tomorrow morning."

At the airfield he arranged for final preparations, the servicing and final checks of his airplane and a partial fueling of the tanks. Shortly after midnight, with his airplane entrusted to the care of dedicated ground crews, Lindbergh returned to his hotel to try to get some sleep. His mind continued to plot every eventuality, and sleep eluded him. Shortly before 3 a.m. he was back at the airfield making final preparations.

## Friday, May 20, 1927

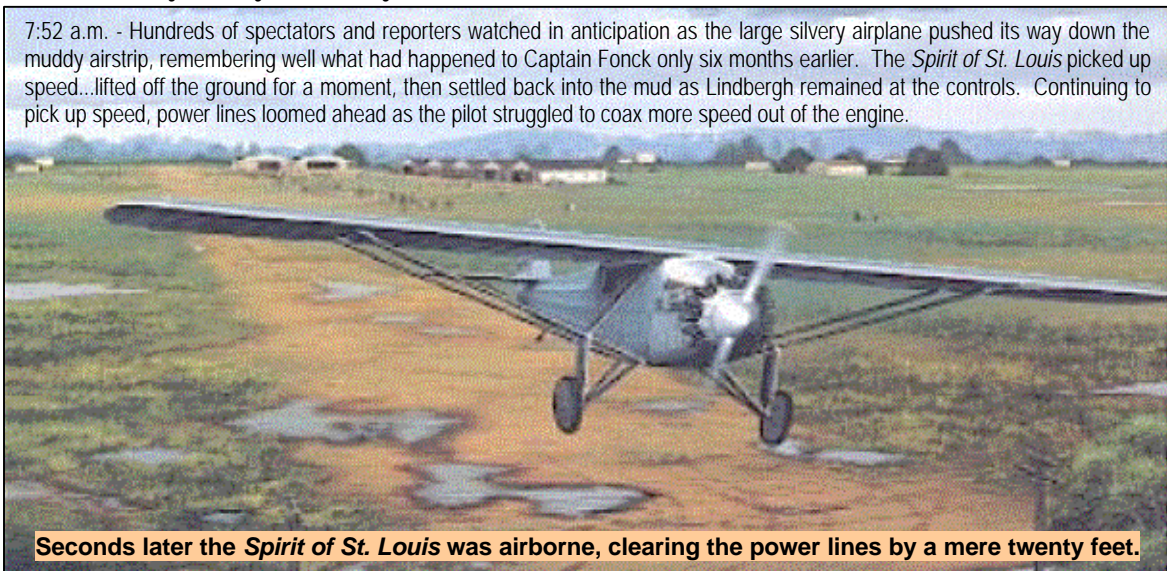
The *Spirit of St. Louis* could not take off from Curtiss Field, so in the early morning hours it had to be transported to Roosevelt Field. To accomplish this the tail was hoisted onto the bed of the truck, then the silvery airplane was slowly towed backwards across the muddy roads to the field at Long Island. Five motorcycle policemen escorted the airplane, arriving shortly before dawn.

Lindbergh quickly noticed *America* parked near the muddy airstrip, a few of its crew milling around, but apparently only preparing it for another test flight. Either Richard Byrd had not heard the weather report, or he had for some other reason determined that today was not the right day to make his own attempt. Even at that early morning hour, more than 500 spectators had gathered at the field; but on this morning they would witness the take-off of only one of the three remaining entrants in the Air Derby.

The *Spirit of St. Louis* had been partially fueled at Curtiss Field so as not to add too much weight during the trip to Roosevelt Field. Now a bucket brigade passed 451 additional gallons of gasoline in 5-gallon containers to finish the job. The rain was easing to a slow drizzle, but the dirt runway had turned to mud. Lindbergh, in an effort to reduce resistance during takeoff, greased the wheels of his airplane. He ate one of six sandwiches he had been given, stowed the other five in the cramped cockpit, and noted the presence of a slight tail wind.

At about 7:40 a.m. the big Wright engine was started and Lindbergh listened to its steady throb. Everything, except for take-off conditions, seemed right. If he could get his heavy airplane off the muddy runway, Lindbergh was certain this would be the moment he had dreamed of months earlier while flying mail from St. Louis to Chicago. Richard Byrd and Clarence Chamberlain both showed up at the airstrip, each shaking hands with the young airmail pilot and wishing him well. At 7:51 Lindbergh strapped himself in the cockpit, closed the door and leaned out the window to exclaim: "What do you say...let's try it."

7:52 a.m. - Hundreds of spectators and reporters watched in anticipation as the large silvery airplane pushed its way down the muddy airstrip, remembering well what had happened to Captain Fonck only six months earlier. The *Spirit of St. Louis* picked up speed...lifted off the ground for a moment, then settled back into the mud as Lindbergh remained at the controls. Continuing to pick up speed, power lines loomed ahead as the pilot struggled to coax more speed out of the engine.



Seconds later the *Spirit of St. Louis* was airborne, clearing the power lines by a mere twenty feet.



Once airborne, Lindbergh turned his airplane to the right to clear a small hill, and then continued to climb. A Curtiss Oriole flew alongside him as he headed out over Long Island Sound, a photographer capturing the first few miles for history. Then it turned back, leaving Charles Lindbergh and the *Spirit of St. Louis* alone in the heavens.

The weather had indeed cleared, leaving a beautiful morning sky. Lindbergh flew low, often only ten feet from the crest of the waves and passing within view of many fishing vessels in his three-hour trek to Nova Scotia. After flying over the Gulf of Maine he sighted land before noon and climbed to 200 feet. His landmarks told him that he was only two degrees (six miles) off course.

At the northern end of Nova Scotia he flew through a few storm clouds, but his route soon took him away from the approaching front and across the ice-caked oceans. By six o'clock that evening he was flying along the southern coast of Newfoundland. Taking his bearings, Lindbergh flew over St. Johns, *"so there would be no question of that fact that I had passed Newfoundland in case I was forced down in the north Atlantic."*

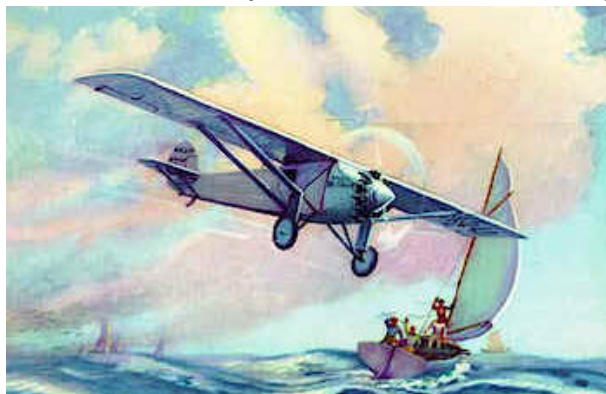
Fatigue had set in several times between Long Island and Newfoundland...it had already been more than thirty hours since the young pilot had last slept. The situation only worsened as darkness fell twelve hours after his departure. Storm clouds and heavy fog blanketed the angry Atlantic below the *Spirit of St. Louis* and Lindbergh climbed to 10,000 feet. Ice formed on the wings as he flew through a thunderhead, forcing him to turn back and make a circuitous route around the dangerous storm. Despite the chill, Lindbergh kept the window of his airplane open to help him stay awake. Boredom and fatigue were taking an increasing toll on his mind and body.

## Saturday, May 21, 1927

Lindbergh's eastward course brought dawn at what would have been close to 1 a.m. New York time. It was Saturday, May 21, in Paris. The light of the sun brought some relief to tired eyes, and as the warming air opened holes in the fog, Lindbergh dropped down to 200 feet above the oceans.

Those early morning hours of the flight were filled only with intermittent glimpses of the angry ocean below, before another bank of fog enveloped man and machine. It became among the most difficult and dangerous hours of the flight. Again and again Lindbergh found himself falling asleep, eyes open but mind shutting down. By 7:52 a.m. he had been forty-eight hours without sleep, airborne for twenty-four hours, and with nothing but a deadly ocean beneath him. Time and again he had seen shorelines in the distance *"with trees perfectly outlined against the horizon...the mirages were so natural that, had I not been in mid-Atlantic and known that no land existed along my route, I would have taken them to be actual islands."*

Fortunately, after that initial twenty-four-hour period, Lindbergh got his *second wind*, and



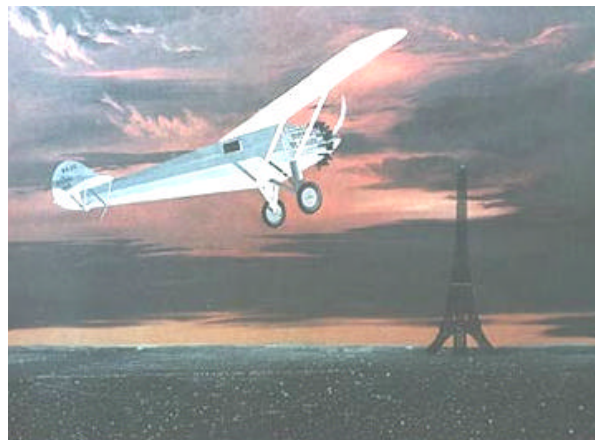
began watching the horizon in anticipation of a break in the scenery. Two hours later the first fishing boats began to appear on the waters below. Flying over the first, he saw no signs of life and moved on to the next. As he circled it a face appeared at the cabin window. Cutting back on his engine to decrease the noise, Lindbergh flew closer and yelled through the window of his airplane, *"Which way is Ireland?"* When he was unable to get a response, he straightened out and headed back on course. An hour later he knew where Ireland



was...he was directly over Dingle Bay at the southern tip of the island...less than three miles from the route he had mapped weeks earlier while in San Diego. Glancing at his watch he noted that it was 10:52 a.m. in New York (3 p.m. local time). He was two-and-a-half hours ahead of schedule.

Charles Lindbergh had safely negotiated the North Atlantic, and that realization revitalized his weary mind and body. With luck, he might reach the coast of France before darkness fell once again. He increased his airspeed to 110 mph and soon was winging his way over England, across the channel, and then Cherbourg, France. In New York it was now nearly three in the afternoon, eight in the evening in Paris, 200 miles distant. The only thing traversing Europe faster than the *Spirit of St. Louis* was the news that the daring American pilot was on his way.

It was nearly 10 p.m. local time when Lindbergh spotted the lights of Paris. He circled the Eiffel Tower at four thousand feet, and then looked around for the landing strip at Le Bourget Field. Fifteen minutes later he was flying low over the field, identified easily by a long line of hangars. He also noticed all roads into the airfield were filled with cars. At 10:22 p.m. Paris time, the *Spirit of St. Louis* taxied to a stop and an adoring crowd of thousands of Parisians was rushing towards the silver airplane in a friendly but frenzied mob. Lindbergh quickly cut the switch to his engine to halt the propeller and prevent it from killing someone.



Back in New York it was 4:22 p.m. Charles Lindbergh, the unknown airmail pilot from St. Louis had done what no man had done before. Alone, in thirty hours and thirty minutes, he had flown from New York to Paris.



*The world had suddenly become a much smaller planet, and a true WORLD hero had been born.*

## **Ambassador Without Portfolio**

Earlier concerns about French animosity after the tragic flight of Captains Nungesser and Coli proved totally unfounded. Charles Lindbergh was welcomed at Le Bourget Airfield like few heroes in history have been welcomed. For half-an-hour the adoring crowd carried him on its shoulders, and the exhausted American airman might not have slept for even more days but for the resourcefulness of some French military pilots. These managed to get their hands on Lindbergh's flight helmet, place it on the head of a nearby American correspondent, and then shouted, "Here is Lindbergh." As the crowd rushed over to hail a new world hero, the REAL Charles Lindbergh was secreted off to the American Embassy where he would be the guest of Ambassador Herrick until his departure.

The French allowed the world's newest hero a night of well-earned rest before clamoring for his attention. The morning after his historic flight he appeared with Ambassador Herrick on the balcony of the American Embassy to greet the crowds. Already he was wearing the first of several high honors to be presented to him, the French Cross of the Legion of Honor, bestowed earlier that day by the President of the Republic of France. Next the Aero Club of France presented the young man with its Gold Medal, and then the American Club feted him with lunch. The United States flag was flown over the Chamber of Deputies in honor of Charles Lindbergh, setting an historic precedent. Ambassador Herrick introduced the shy twenty-five-year-old as "America's present ambassador" and his winning smile and charismatic personality quickly made him America's Ambassador to the world. In St. Louis the *Star* reported:



*"He (Lindbergh) has done more to create good feeling and increase the prestige of the United States in Europe, recently at low ebb, than any American since George Washington."*

Before departing France on May 28, Lindbergh paid a visit to the families of Captains Nungesser and Coli, and then flew his now-famous silver airplane to Brussels where King Albert personally welcomed him. The King pinned the Knighthood of the Order of Leopold on his chest; making him the first foreigner to ever receive the highly coveted award.

From Brussels to London, Lindbergh was received and honored by all of Europe's royalty. At Buckingham Palace the King presented him with the Air Force Cross. A short time later on his return to Paris, Lindbergh was presented with a medal worn only by members of the famous World War I Lafayette Escadrille. Lindbergh took it all in stride, unspoiled by all the attention, and intent on enjoying an extended tour of Europe. At home, President Calvin Coolidge wanted America's ambassador without portfolio to return. The Sprit of St. Louis was crated up, and the two world travelers returned home aboard the American cruiser *Memphis*.

*"Gentlemen, 132 years ago Benjamin Franklin was asked: 'What good is your balloon? What will it accomplish?' He replied: 'What good is a new born child?'*

*"Less than twenty years ago when I was not far advanced from infancy M. Bleriot flew across the English Channel and was asked, 'What good is your aeroplane? What will it accomplish?' Today those same skeptics might ask me what good has been my flight from New York to Paris.*

*"My answer is that I believe it is the forerunner of a great air service from America to France, America to Europe, to bring our peoples nearer together in understanding and in friendship than they have ever been."*

*Charles Lindbergh in one of his Paris speeches*

## June 13, 1927

Charles Lindbergh returned to New York to a reception like none ever before witnessed. Already he had been feted in Washington, DC, welcomed by the President, and awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. The parade in New York City, replete with a snowstorm of ticker tape, was witnessed according to one newspaper, by as many as 4 million Americans. Later the Street Cleaning Commissioner reported that it took 110 trucks and 2,000 "white wings" to clean up the streets.

Lindbergh's reaction was typical of the atypical hero:

*"I wonder if I really deserve all this!"*



Deserved or not, the moment was Lindbergh's. The Providence Journal reported that it doubted "Any man of any age in the world's history has ever been the recipient of such adulation and such honors as have been heaped upon this youth of twenty-five in the last few weeks." Perhaps the reasons behind it were more accurately surmised in the Jersey City Journal: "Lindbergh's actions in the cockpit of the airplane were heroic, his utterances on land, when he faced adulation unequalled, were the utterances of a hero who is as well-balanced in speech as he is adroit in his manipulations of the airplane."

The bottom line was simply that Charles Lindbergh was a truly GOOD man, a man of courage and imagination, a man of both dream and determination. When unprecedented honor was heaped upon him in Europe, he did not revel in his own accomplishment, but saw the praise tendered him as a tribute to his country. When he returned to the praise of his own people, he remained the same simple, humble man he had been before his historic flight. President Coolidge perhaps spoke the most accurate summary of Charles Lindbergh when he said:

*"The absence of self-acclaim, the refusal to become commercialized, which has marked the conduct of this sincere and genuine exemplar of fine and noble virtues, has endeared him to everyone. He has returned unspoiled."*



## **The Guggenheim Tour**

In December 1925, millionaire aviation advocate Daniel Guggenheim created a \$2.5 million Fund for the Promotion of Aeronautics to speed development of civil aviation in the United States. On June 4, 1927, Guggenheim opened the Daniel Guggenheim School of Aeronautics at New York University. On July 20 under the auspices and support of the Fund for Promotion of Aeronautics, Lindbergh and the *Spirit of St. Louis* began a tour of the United States. Over the next several months, America's newest hero visited all 48 states, making 82 stops over 22,000 miles. In cities from coast to coast he gave 147 speeches and rode in parades equaling 1,290 miles. Everywhere he went, Charles Lindbergh was admired and greeted like no American in history. Humbly the young man accepted his new role, not for his own glory, but to promote aviation. His influence paved the way for many new advances. It also had a profound impact on those who saw him. The twelve-year old son of one South Dakota farmer later wrote of his own experience during this time.

### **Sioux Falls, SD - August 27, 1927**

"When we learned (Lindbergh) was going to fly into Sioux Falls, Pop and I were like beavers after fresh timber. The whole family dressed up in our finest outfits, and Pop loaded us all into the car and drove us to Renner Field, five miles north of town, to see the new American hero and his airplane. Renner Field was little more than a hay patch, but it offered much more room for the crowd and the cars than did the Sioux Falls airport.

"The crowd went wild as soon as the silvery speck appeared on the horizon. It came closer and closer, finally setting down at the far end of the field. When the plane taxied to a stop, the crowd mobbed it. A tall, thin figure climbed out and everyone roared and cheered and whistled and applauded, while a band played patriotic and military music. I tried to get as close as possible to the platform draped with red, white, and blue bunting surrounded by hundreds of American flags.

"Moments later an official party escorted Lindbergh up onto the platform, and the noise was enough to drown out the explosions in a dynamite factory. I broke through the edge of the crowd and climbed up to the platform, eager to shake hands with my hero. I was only a few feet away from Lindbergh when several men in military uniform grabbed me and threw me off the platform.

"I was too excited to be disappointed. In fact, I was so excited that I hardly heard a word Lindbergh said as he greeted the crowd and told about his historic flight. Instead of listening, I elbowed my way through the crowd to get over to Lindbergh's plane, which now stood majestically alone, totally ignored by the people crowding around the platform. That silver airship was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. I dreamed of climbing inside and flying it away.

"All the way home I chattered excitedly. 'I'm going to be bigger than Lindbergh someday,' I vowed to my father, more determined than ever to become a flier."

*Frank Foss simply looked at his 12-year-old son Joe, and smiled.*

The Guggenheim Tour at Mitchell Field, on October 23. Lindbergh spent a month at the estate of Daniel Guggenheim, writing his much anticipated autobiography...simply titled *WE*. In it the American hero wrote simply and honestly about his family, his interest in aviation, his military training, and his airmail days. His account of the transatlantic flight comprised little more than a single chapter, expressed with just the facts and no embellishment. When it became necessary, for the sake of recording history, to relate the honors and praise bestowed upon him for his accomplishment, the still humble Lindbergh opted to have his friend Fitzhugh Green relate it in a third person narrative. No success could spoil the simple humility of this truly great American.



On December 14, 1927, the United States Congress authorized a special award of the Medal of Honor to Army Captain Charles A. Lindbergh. It was presented by President Coolidge and would remain perhaps the most controversial award of our Nation's highest military Medal in its distinguished history. Despite that controversy, surfacing only in later years and for all the wrong reasons, Charles Lindbergh was indeed a hero. Only three Army Airmen to that date had earned Medals of Honor, all during World War I and all of them posthumously. (Eddie Rickenbacker's Medal of Honor was not presented until 1930.) Thus Charles Lindbergh became the first living airman to receive his Nation's highest honor.



That same month the American ambassador to Mexico requested that Lindbergh make a goodwill tour of several South American nations on behalf of the United States. Everywhere Lindbergh went, the people loved him, and for his own part the shy young man with a captivating smile did not mind being used for the greater good of his own country. It was a fortunate goodwill tour indeed, for in it Charles Lindbergh would find a new kind of love.



## Charles and Anne Lindbergh

The American Ambassador in Mexico was a well-known and highly regarded man, Dwight Whitney Morrow--the same man who two years earlier had headed up the Morrow Board that had been so instrumental in the subsequent changes in the American Air Service and its new role as the American Air Service. Morrow's twenty-one-year-old daughter Anne was a pretty, bright, but unusually shy young woman aspiring to be a writer. During Lindbergh's goodwill tour, she fell madly in love with America's *most eligible bachelor*. That was not unusual; nearly all of the single girls of the United States had fallen in love with the tall, handsome hero with an engaging smile and humble personality. What made this different was that this time, the hero also fell in love with the young woman who adored him.



Early in 1928 Lindbergh completed his Latin American tour and returned home. On April 30 he flew *Spirit of St. Louis* from Lambert Field in St. Louis to Bolling Field in Washington, DC. It was the last flight of the most famous airplane in history, retired after 789 hours, 28 minutes of flight.

That same spring Anne Morrow graduated from Smith College, and the following year she and Charles were married. Charles went to work for Transcontinental & Western Air (later Trans World Airlines), which he was instrumental in founding, and flew extensively to establish new air routes. Anne usually accompanied him as a passenger, becoming an avid aviatrix herself. In January 1922 she piloted a glider near La Jolla, California, and became the tenth person and **FIRST** woman in the United States to earn a first-class glider license. Six months later on June 22, 1930, the couple's first child was born, Charles Lindbergh, Jr.



In 1931 Anne Morrow Lindbergh earned her own pilots license and joined her husband in a historic flight through Canada, Hudson's Bay, Alaska and across the Bearing Sea to open air routes to the Orient. The couple sailed to Shanghai when their *Sirius* was damaged in October, then cut short their travels to return home to bury Anne's father.

Greater tragedy lay ahead in the following year. On March 1, 1932 the Lindbergh's son was kidnapped. Ten weeks later the nineteen-month old boy's decomposing body was discovered, and the Nation mourned along with the dream-couple, who to this point seemed to have everything going for them. The subsequent trial and execution of Bruno Hauptmann, the accused kidnapper/murderer, was called *The Trial of the Century* and became almost a media circus. For the Lindberghs, life would never be the same again.



Charles A. Lindbergh Jr., left, is shown at 19-months-old, two weeks before he was kidnapped. The badly decomposed body of a baby was found ten weeks later and identified by his father, Col. Charles Lindbergh, above. Bruno Richard Hauptmann was convicted of the crime, but many questions remain in the case.

The birth of Jon Lindbergh in 1932 though a source of joy to Charles and Anne, could never replace the sense of grief in the loss of their firstborn. The two found some relief in their 1933 flights that ranged from Europe to South America, adventures dutifully recorded by Anne in her diary for later publication. (In all Anne would write and publish 13 books, including 5 diaries.)

The five years of exploration accomplished by Charles and Anne did much to pave the way for advancements in aviation, but memories of the kidnapping and murder could not escape them, nor could they escape the incessant prying of the media into their private lives. In 1935 the Lindbergh family moved to England to seek both solitude and safety.

## **The Albatross**

Americans have always loved a success story. Ordinary people achieving extraordinary heights against insurmountable odds tend to remind us that in *The Land of Opportunity*, anything is possible. Our heroes give us hope that someday WE might achieve that of which we dream. Sadly, if Americans love anything more than a success story, it is the scandal that ultimately brings those heroes back down to our own level. Such would be the case with the man who had become perhaps the most lauded American hero in our Nation's brief history. For Charles Lindbergh, that scandal resulted from two personal character traits: a dedication to his country that demanded he answer his Nation's call to duty, and a sincere honesty to speak the truth regardless of the consequences.

In 1936 the German government invited Charles Lindbergh to inspect their air establishments. With urging from Major Truman Smith, the American attaché in Berlin to comply in order to report back on the condition of German airpower, Lindbergh went. It was the first of five trips, each of which greatly impressed him with the German efforts to build an efficient and powerful air force. During Lindbergh's visit in 1938, Hermann Goering presented Colonel Lindbergh with the Verdienstkreuz der Deutscher Adler for his "services to aviation of the world and particularly his historic 1927 solo flight across the Atlantic." In presenting its highest national honor to Lindbergh, Germany did no more than any other European nation had already done to honor the man. In the months that followed, however, Lindbergh's acceptance of the medal became a subject of great controversy to the point that Anne Lindbergh referred to the decoration as "the Albatross."

Colonel Lindbergh, still a member of the Army Air Service Reserves, was certainly impressed by the powerful German Luftwaffe. When asked to rate the air forces of the world, he spoke what he believed to be the truth: "*Germany number one. Great Britain number two.*" It was not a message Americans wanted to hear, or believe, and Lindbergh's frank honesty coupled with *the Albatross* began raising serious questions about his loyalty as an American.

In 1939 as war was brewing in Europe, the Lindberghs moved back to the United States. Lindbergh's inspection tours had impressed him with the efficiency of the German air force...but it had also frightened him...not for himself but for his country. He honestly believed that the American Air Service had been so neglected as to be greatly inferior to the forces being established in Germany. In his journal he wrote:



*"There are wars worth fighting, but if we (United States) get in this one, we will bring disaster to the country and possibly our entire civilization. If we get into this war and really fight, nothing but chaos will result...it won't be like the last, and God knows what will happen here before we finish it."*

The American hero of a decade past was not alone in this belief. At the time of his return home, nine out of ten Americans were opposed to the United States getting involved in the war brewing in Europe. Even former president Herbert Hoover spoke



in opposition. But when Charles Lindbergh began voicing his own opposition, he became an enemy of the White House. Montana Senator Burton Wheeler recruited Lindbergh in an organization called "America First." The group's philosophy was that events unfolding in Europe were Europe's problems. The United States should concentrate on policies that strengthened and protected America first, not on the rest of the world. Lindbergh sincerely believed in that credo, and became a key spokesman for the group. Because of this, Lindbergh was soon being portrayed as anti-Semitic (he was in fact, honestly critical of some practices that lent credence to this charge, though Lindbergh deplored the treatment of the Jews by Nazi Germany and said so).

On April 25, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt publicly attacked Lindbergh in a press conference, going so far as to label the man treasonous and questioning his commission in the U.S. Air Service Reserves. Reportedly, there was even talk of stripping Lindbergh of his Medal of Honor. On Sunday, April 27, Lindbergh wrote in his journal:

*"Have decided to resign. After studying carefully what the President said, I feel it is the only honorable course to take. If I did not tender my resignation, I would lose something in my own character that means more to me than my commission in the Air Corps. No one else might know it, but I would. And if I take this insult from Roosevelt, more, and worse, will probably be forthcoming."*

The following morning Colonel Charles Lindbergh performed one of his most difficult and most courageous acts. He submitted his letters of resignation to the President and to Secretary of War Henry Stimson. In the months that followed, he spoke again and again urging his country to avoid war. As a result he remained true to his own personal beliefs and became one of the most hated and misunderstood men in America.

As meteoric as had been the rise of an unknown airmail pilot from St. Louis, so too became the fall of a great hero. More than half-a-century later, Charles Lindbergh is still remembered by many as a war protestor or a pacifist.

*All too few know THE REST OF THE STORY...for everything changed on...*







*Eddie Rickenbacker*



*Charles Lindbergh*

# Older Heroes

## A Brand New War

*War erupted in Europe in 1939 while the United States tried to remain neutral. In 1941, nine out of ten Americans opposed any American intervention, among them the Army Air Service's two living Medal of Honor heroes, Eddie Rickenbacker and Charles Lindbergh. Both had left military service, Rickenbacker resigning his commission as a colonel in the reserves "in protest against the legalized murder of the young Army pilots sent out to fly the airmail." Lindbergh resigned his own colonelcy in 1941 to avoid conflicts as he continued to be a high-profile speaker for the America First Committee, which also numbered Rickenbacker among its members.*

*The two men had much in common: both were icons of American history, both had visited Germany and witnessed that nation's burgeoning air force, both called for an increased and expanded American air force, and both spoke in favor of American neutrality in the war at hand. Neither man had garnered favor with the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, but Lindbergh took the brunt of the President's wrath. Rickenbacker's loyalty, despite his opposition to the brewing war, could not be called into question. During World War I he had shot down more German aircraft than any other American. Lindbergh had never fired a round at an enemy of the United States, making his loyalty a more plausible target. In early 1941 an American hero fell from grace.*

*At nearly the same time, the other fell from the sky.*

## Rickenbacker's Atlanta Crash

February 27, 1941

It was after midnight on a rainy Thursday morning as Flight 21 from Washington, D.C. to Brownsville, Texas, began a slow circle over the fog-shrouded airport near Atlanta where it would make an intermediate stop. The weather was bad but Captain James Perry was doing his best. On this night, his passenger list included his boss, Eastern Airlines president Eddie Rickenbacker.

The big DC-3 sleeper carried 16 people including the crew as it made a 180 degree turn, the pilot unaware that he was 1,000 feet too low. Suddenly the left wing clipped the tops of the trees and Captain Perry quickly tried to adjust, the right wing dropping and then sheering off as it too hit the trees. The airplane nosed up, then hit the ground and began a series of violent somersaults before breaking in half, killing five instantly and seriously injuring nine more. Eddie Rickenbacker, the legendary hero of World War I was among the latter, laying amid the wreckage at the point where the fuselage had broken in two.



Hours later he lay in a hospital bed in Piedmont, several ribs broken, two of them protruding from the flesh in his side. His left hip socket was crushed, his pelvis broken on both sides, his knee broken, and his left elbow had been crushed. It had taken rescue workers an hour to pry his shattered body from the wreckage, two photographers capturing the grisly scene for their newspapers. Rickenbacker's left eye hung loose from the socket, connected only by nerves and tissue. The flash of their bulbs blinded the other eye. News of the tragedy was heard...and seen... across the country almost before Rick reached the hospital. At the hospital Rickenbacker was examined by an intern, who remarked, *"He's more dead than alive. Let's take care of the live ones."*

A priest offered to administer last rites, only to be rebuffed by the man who refused to die. Then Dr. Floyd McRae, head surgeon at the Piedmont hospital, arrived and took charge. It was not the first time Dr. McRae had seen Rickenbacker. More than two decades earlier he had assisted in the mastoid operation in Paris that enabled the young pursuit pilot to return to duty and achieve what no other fighter pilot of World War I could match.

By the following morning hope began to surface that Rick would survive. Dr. McRae had his patient served a milkshake laced with brandy. Rickenbacker responded, *"I want a bottle of beer and a ham-and-egg sandwich."* Rick got what he wanted, as well as a body cast that left him only one arm free, that he didn't want.

Three days later the Rickenbacker boys, David and Bill, were on their way to school when the bus was halted by a patrol car. Rick had taken a turn for the worse, and Dr. McRae had called his wife Adelaide from her hotel room to hurry back to the hospital. Her call to the Georgia State Police now had the two young boys returning to their dying father's bedside at 90 miles per hour while lights flashed and sirens screamed. The troopers couldn't avoid a stop outside Atlanta for gas, urging the attendant to hurry as they were taking Eddie Rickenbacker's boys to his bedside.

*"You don't need to hurry,"* the man who pumped their gas replied. *"The news just came over the radio--Rickenbacker died an hour ago."*

But Rick wasn't dead yet. Like too many reports in that horrible first week after the Atlanta crash, those who reported the news underestimated the will-to-live of the fifty-year-old American *Ace of Aces*. Later that evening when Walter Winchell's voice came over the radio in Rickenbacker's hospital room to announce that Rick was dying and not expected to live another hour, Rickenbacker smashed the radio with a well-aimed pitcher using his one good arm. *"Get on the phone,"* he told Adelaide. *"Call the top men at the radio networks. Tell them to make their commentators quit talking like that. They're not helping me any by telling me I'm dead. I'm not dead, and I'm not going to die."*



Six weeks later most of the cast had been whittled away and Rickenbacker was doing his best to reassure an anxious America that the will to survive can be greater than *"Slipping into that sensuous and beautiful state... into that lovely land where there is no pain."*

Four months later Rickenbacker walked slowly, and painfully, out of the hospital. With his family he moved to a small cottage on Candlewood Lake in Connecticut, where he continued to work on rehabilitation.

In December Rick and Adelaide were planning for a move to a warmer climate—a houseboat in Miami where Rick would continue trying to build up his broken body. Rick was wrapping things up in New York, working in his office in the early morning to wrap up correspondence. He frequently worked on Sundays just for this purpose, for there was no one else around to distract him. This particular Sunday would prove to be full of distraction. It was a morning that would change life forever. It was the morning of:

## December 7, 1941.

### DECEMBER 8, 1941

"Now we have been attacked, and attacked in home waters...I can see nothing to do under these circumstances except to fight. If I had been in Congress, I certainly would have voted for a declaration of war."

### DECEMBER 11, 1941

"All that I feared would happen has happened. We are at war all over the world, and we are unprepared for it from either a spiritual or a material standpoint."

### DECEMBER 12, 1941

"Now that we are at war I want to contribute as best as I can to my country's war effort. It is vital for us to carry on this war as intelligently, as constructively, and as successfully as we can, and I want to do my part."

Charles Lindbergh  
(In His Wartime Journal)

## December 8, 1941

Pearl Harbor changed everything. It had been less than a year since Colonel Charles Lindbergh had resigned his commission to pursue his efforts in America First; efforts to keep the United States from entering a war he believed would be disastrous for the entire world. Now that the war had come despite those efforts, it was difficult for him to imagine himself having any role that did not involve defending the nation he loved.





On December 12 he wrote in his journal:

*"My first inclination...was to write directly to the President, offering my services, and telling him that while I had opposed him in the past and had not changed my convictions, I was ready in time of war to submerge my personal viewpoint in the general welfare and unity of the country."*

In these personal memoirs, unpublished for a quarter-century, Lindbergh went on to explain his concerns...

*"The president has the reputation, even among his friends, of being a vindictive man. If I wrote to him at this time, he would probably make what use he could of my offer from a standpoint of politics and publicity and assign me to some position where I would be completely ineffective and out of the way."*

In the end, Lindbergh made his request for a return to military service through Air Corps chief, General Henry *Hap* Arnold. That letter was composed on December 20, less than two weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

On December 30 the press announced that Charles Lindbergh had volunteered for service in the U.S. Air Corps. General Arnold had apparently released news of the December 20 letter, and Lindbergh took this as a ray of hope that his request was under consideration. He realized that even Arnold could not take action without the acquiescence of the President and had written the letter in such a way that General Arnold could deal with his offer according the manner he felt most advisable. The two men had worked together in Air Corps business two years earlier, and Lindbergh had a sincere respect for the air chief.

Over the two following weeks Lindbergh waited anxiously for news, hoping that something would break his way. During the period he met with Colonel William *Wild Bill* Donovan who was heading up an intelligence organization in need of an aviation expert. The World War I Medal of Honor hero and father of our modern intelligence services was friendly in efforts to recruit Lindbergh, though he did note that any such move would require the approval of the President. Neither man was confident that Roosevelt could put the past animosities between himself and Lindbergh aside.

On January 12 Lindbergh went to Washington, DC for a late afternoon meeting with Secretary of War Henry Stimson. The Secretary greeted him warmly, speaking first of a 1930 situation when Charles Lindbergh had answered a call from the State Department for assistance in a potentially disastrous political situation. To Lindbergh it sounded like the Secretary was saying, *"I owe you one...for old time's sake."* Then the conversation seemed to go downhill.

Stimson advised Lindbergh that he was reluctant to put him in a command situation due to his prior antiwar views. He doubted the man's ability to pursue the current war aggressively enough. Lindbergh replied that his views on the war had not been altered but: *"Now that we were in the war my stand was behind my country, as I had always said it would be, and that I wanted to help in whatever way I could be most effective."* At last Secretary Stimson did agree to arrange a meeting between Lindbergh and General Arnold. It took place the following day.

General Arnold met with Lindbergh in the office of Assistant Secretary of War Robert Lovett. Both men assured Lindbergh that there were many ways he could serve the Air Corps, but voiced doubts that the public or the media would respond well to him taking an important position in the

command structure. After a half-an-hour Lindbergh finally stated, *"In view of the feeling which existed it seemed...it would be a mistake...to return to the Air Corps."* Instead, he would seek to make his contribution to the war effort through the commercial aviation industry such as Pan American Airways, Curtiss-Wright, or United Aircraft. *"It goes against my grain to be out of the Air Corps in time of war,"* he wrote in his journal that evening, *"but I am convinced it would be inadvisable for me to push my way back into it."*

*"Both Arnold and Lovett seemed friendly personally, but I constantly had the impression that they were thinking of orders from higher up. They were both in a difficult position...the situation was loaded with political dynamite and (they) handled themselves accordingly."*

Two days later (January 15, 1942) Lindbergh was walking out the door when he bumped into Eddie Rickenbacker. The two agreed to have dinner at Rick's apartment that evening, and did. During that dinner Lindbergh spoke of his own efforts to serve his country in time of war, and Rickenbacker echoed a similar sentiment. The great ace of a war long past advised Lindbergh that the (President's) Administration was making it *"as difficult as possible for him due to his past stand in opposition to their war policies."*

For Lindbergh, it would only get worse. The following Monday he offered his services to Pan American, his first choice among the commercial air lines now turning their efforts towards supporting the war. One week later he received his reply...*"obstacles had been put in the way."* Lindbergh knew that those obstacles were insurmountable, most certainly coming from President Roosevelt.

His suspicion was confirmed a week later in a meeting with Juan Trippe of Pan Am who told him that the War Department had been open to Lindbergh working on Pan American's war projects. But, when Trippe had approached the White House for approval of the matter however, they were very angry with him for even bringing up the subject. They advised that they did not want Lindbergh *"connected with Pan American in any capacity."*

On February 11 Lindbergh was advised not to pursue work with United, which had recently come under political attack and suspicion for its sale of aviation materials to both Japan and Germany in the pre-war years. Though Lindbergh had no involvement in these, it was deemed that the hero's own *personal baggage* would only make matters worse.

Next Lindbergh turned to the Curtiss-Wright Company. On February 25 he was advised that the situation was *loaded with dynamite* and that the company's *"officers are afraid of the vindictiveness of the White House, and they have good reason to be."*

Later that night Lindbergh wrote in his journal:

*"I am beginning to wonder whether I will be blocked in every attempt I make to take part in this war. I have always stood for what I thought would be to the best interest of this country, and now we are at war I want to take my part in fighting for it, foolish and disastrous as I think the war will prove to be. Our decision has been made, and now we must fight to preserve our national honor and our national future. I have always believed in the past that every American citizen had the right and the duty to state his opinion in peace and to fight for his country in war. But the Roosevelt Administration seems to think otherwise."*

Ultimately, only one man dared to stand up to the President, a man who had also been a member of America First. On March 24 Lindbergh met with the owner and officers of a B-24 bomber factory at Willow Run near Detroit. They advised Lindbergh that they could make good use of his knowledge and experience if he would accept a position as a civilian advisor and aeronautical engineer. Lindbergh reminded the men of his previous problems gaining employment with Pan Am, United, and Curtiss-Wright and advised them to first bring the matter up with the War Department. Henry Ford responded that it *"Annoys him to think he has to ask anyone about what he wants to do in his own factory."*

At last, Charles Lindbergh found the man that would give him the opportunity he had struggled to achieve for four months...to serve his country in time of war...if only as a civilian. Three weeks earlier Eddie Rickenbacker too had returned to the service of his country, thanks to an old friend well placed in the Army Air Service.

## **Time to Play an Ace**

*"How are you doing Eddie?"* Asked the voice of an old friend across the phone lines. *"Are you recovering from that horrible crash in Atlanta okay?"*

*"Doing well,"* replied Rick. *"After the Japs hit Pearl last December, I told Adelaide I had more reason than ever to get fit again."*

*"Eddie, I've got a very important mission for you. I can't tell you over the phone. When can you come to Washington?"*

*"I'll be there bright and early Monday morning, Hap,"* Rick replied to his old friend from World War I, now America's air chief, General Henry Hap Arnold. When the call had ended Rick thought with excitement about what had just transpired.

*"I had no idea what job he had for me, I knew that it would be an important one, one related to the mission of the Air Forces in our fight for freedom. I thanked God for sparing me to fight again for America. War is hell, but sometimes a necessary hell."*

## **Monday, March 9, 1942**

General Arnold shook hands with his old friend and sized him up to see if indeed Eddie Rickenbacker had sufficiently recovered from the airplane crash the previous year to undertake the mission the air chief had summoned him to the Capitol to lay out. Rick looked tired, walked with a cane and a noticeable limp, but there was still fire in his eyes.

*"I'm concerned about the reports I'm getting from combat groups in training, Eddie,"* he announced. *"I'm told that they are indifferent, that they haven't got the punch they need to do the job they're being prepared for. I want you to go out and talk to these boys, inspire them, put some fire in them. And while you're there, I want you to look around and see what our problems are."*

After all the roadblocks Rick had faced from the Administration due to his prewar sentiments, this was exactly what he wanted to hear. The fifty-one-year-old war hero didn't mind at all becoming the cheerleader for a new group of would-be heroes, and the mission directive also gave him opportunity to observe and offer constructive ideas to improve the Air Service. *"I'll be ready to go in ten days,"* he eagerly replied.



*"Eddie, some of these units will be on their way overseas in ten days,"* General Arnold remarked. The following day, March 10, Rickenbacker was back in Florida...this time to visit and motivate young fliers at a unit in Tampa Bay. On Wednesday he was in Savanna, GA, to do the same; on Thursday he was in South Carolina; on Friday in Tallahassee, and in New Orleans on Saturday. Rick took Sunday off to write a report for General Arnold, and then continued the hectic pace in the weeks that followed.

At each of several daily stops over the next month, Rickenbacker spoke to the war-bound airmen, often for more than an hour. It was a tiring pace, but Rick was dedicated and determined despite the toll it took on his own body, still not fully recovered from the crash. He also carefully took note of all he observed, reporting back to General Arnold frequently. In Tallahassee he spoke to a group of Black pilots, all of who still carried enlisted rank. He wrote a letter to Arnold observing: *"They are a grand bunch of kids and great pilots, but something should be done immediately to commission them, they are deserving of it."* Almost immediately the Air Service acted, and the men received the gold bars of a second lieutenant.

In Long Beach, California, Rick visited with the new pilots of his old 94th Aero Squadron. It was a thrill marred only by a ruling years earlier by the adjutant general's office that the famous hat-in-the-ring insignia could not be used by the modern-day 94th Squadron. The young pilots communicated to Rick that they wished to resurrect the historic trademark, and Rick went directly to General Arnold. In an April 12 letter General Arnold thanked Rickenbacker for his efforts over thirty-two days during which he had visited 41 groups of Army airmen. In that letter he advised: *"Uncle Sam's Hat-in-the-Ring insignia of the 94th Pursuit Squadron which you commanded with such distinction during the first world war is now being returned to that unit."*



When Rickenbacker wrapped up the tour on April 13, he organized his thoughts based upon all he had observed, wrote his report, and then went to see General Arnold. When he walked into the air chief's office, it was not as a military man but as a successful chairman of a board. Rick had been out of uniform for more than a decade and had conducted his recent tour as a civilian.

*"Cut off the telephones,"* he announced, *"I want three hours of your uninterrupted attention."*

*"That's impossible, Eddie,"* the air chief replied. *"I want to hear what you have to say, but you've got to be quicker than that."*

*"Hap, you're the head man of this outfit. If you won't listen to me, then there's no sense in my continuing my efforts to be of help to you,"* Rickenbacker stated flatly. Arnold advised Rick that all the top generals were on site, and encouraged him to go in and talk to them.

*"I've been all over the country talking to them,"* Rickenbacker retorted. *"I want YOU there, too. Unless you go in with me and listen to what I have to say, then there is no point of my carrying on. I'll walk out right now, and we'll forget the whole thing."*

For seven hours General Arnold and the top brass listened as Eddie Rickenbacker reported on all he had observed, and made his recommendations for improvement. Rickenbacker had built a successful airline in the 1930s through hard work, attention to detail, and a frankly, blatant

leadership style. Now he brought it to Washington, DC, and it was exactly what the fledgling Army Air Service needed most.

Shortly after that important day, at the direction of Secretary Stimpson, General Arnold called a meeting of all major airline executives. Arnold was speaking to the distinguished assembly when he noticed Rickenbacker's walk in and offered him the podium. Rick's style remained the forceful, no B.S. approach that had made him an American success story:

*"First thing I've got to say is that all of you guys get rid of the chisels that you've got in your pockets. I know. You brought a pocketful of them down here so that you could chisel your way out of doing things that you're going to have to do whether you like it or not. This is the time when you're going to have to think about your country first and your airline second. Because if your country doesn't win this war, you won't have any airline!"*

Rickenbacker's keen mind and frank manner got things done, and he continued to work with General Arnold throughout the summer of 1942 to bring necessary changes to the Army Air Service. His genius, his leadership, and his dedication did not go unnoticed. On September 14, 1942, he received a letter from Secretary of War Henry Stimson himself. It said, in part:

Dear Captain Rickenbacker:

This spring you did a magnificent job in evaluating the fighting spirit and training of our men in the Army Forces. I am writing you at this time to ask if you would undertake to go to England and visit the various Army Air Forces stations in the bomber and fighter commands, as a continuation of your tour of inspection in March and April.

I am, of course, fully aware of the high-spirited confidence and efficiency of the AAF air and ground crews. Nevertheless, my interest in our Army airmen overseas is so deep that I would welcome a first-hand report by a non-military observer on how they are getting along.

If you accept this assignment, as I hope you will, I am happy to authorize you to proceed to England and visit the various AAF stations. On your return to this country, you would report to me directly.

Of course Rickenbacker accepted the assignment. *"My personal reason for going on these missions, indeed the foundation of my life,"* he later wrote, *"can be summed up in one sentence:*

*"Men grow only in proportion to the service they render their fellow men and women."*

Following Rickenbacker's earlier tour of the stateside installations, he had been offered and declined a commission as a brigadier general. Now, Arnold and Stimson upped the ante, offering him the two stars of a brigadier. Again the former colonel, who had always preferred the title *Captain Eddie*, declined. Rick felt he could best serve as a civilian, unencumbered by military protocol.

*"When I return from these missions, I want to be able to pound the table, point to the facts and insist on what I believe to be the most efficient way of doing things."*



Rick went to England, therefore, as a civilian, with unprecedented authority from the Secretary of War to order field commanders to assist him in the completion of his mission. He took with him as his personal aide, Colonel Hans Adamson, a valued personal friend. Adamson had handled the media during Rick's U.S. tour months earlier. On Rickenbacker's secret mission to Europe during the fall of 1942 Adamson's job was reversed...keeping the press away from the American hero.

For his services, the War Department negotiated a modest salary with Rickenbacker who had asked for nothing at all. He was paid \$1 (one dollar) per year. Rickenbacker even paid his own expenses throughout the mission.

In England Rick paid particular attention to two key areas:

- ❖ A survey of the conduct of the air war in general
- ❖ Evaluation of American equipment and personnel in general

Amid his tours of the flying fields, he met with key American and British air strategists. He had hoped to meet the famous Air Marshall Sir Hugh Trenchard, but the legendary hero of World War II was abroad. Instead, he left Rickenbacker a copy of his own secret report to the Air Ministry.

Rick's fifty-first birthday came and went almost without notice on October 8. The man had far more important things to consume his time. Before he departed England three days later he paid a visit to Lieutenant General Dwight Eisenhower. This was during the period where the European commander of United States Forces was planning the greatest invasion in history to that point, the landing at North Africa. Three copies of the top-secret plans were to be sent to Washington to insure that at least one copy arrived. One copy traveled west by Navy cruiser, a second by special courier. When Rickenbacker departed England on October 11, he carried with him the third copy.

On Tuesday, October 13, Rickenbacker reported directly to Secretary Stimson, and received his next assignment. There would be no rest for the American hero. On Wednesday the War Department issued orders authorizing Rickenbacker to make a similar tour of the Pacific including a visit to the headquarters of General Douglas MacArthur. Secretary Stimson communicated a special, highly sensitive message to Rickenbacker to relay to the Pacific commander. Since it was so highly secret that it could not be written on paper, Rick memorized it for delivery.

On Saturday night Rickenbacker and Colonel Adamson left New York for the West Coast. Rick spent Sunday visiting his mother in Los Angeles, then departed the following day on a Pan American Sikorsky Clipper for Hawaii by way of San Francisco. At 10:30 p.m. Tuesday Rickenbacker and Adamson climbed aboard a B-17-D at Hickam Field for the flight from Hawaii to General MacArthur's headquarters at Port Moresby, New Guinea. In addition to the airplane's five-man crew there was one more passenger, Alexander Kaczmarczyk whom everyone called "Alex". Alex was recently discharged from a hospital in Hawaii and was returning to his unit in Australia.

Brigadier General William Lynd, commander of Hickam Field, personally drove Rick and Colonel Adamson to the airfield. As the pilot, Captain William Cherry, tried to take off a tire blew



sending the plane out of control. Skillfully he managed to maneuver the big B-17 back on the runway and halt it before it could plunge into the bay beyond the airstrip.

The mission had started off poorly...almost ended before it began. It was about to become even worse for the fifty-one-year-old hero of a war long past. Shortly after midnight a replacement Flying Fortress taxied off the runway, taking Eddie Rickenbacker and seven American servicemen into the dark clouds of the tropical sky. Three days later the news spread around the world.

**An American legend was:**



## Lost At Sea



Three small rafts rose with the twelve-foot swells of the South Pacific, barren but for the slowly sinking B-17 *Flying Fortress* that had become lost en route to New Guinea.

The first hint of trouble had come early that morning at about 8:30 when Captain Cherry had dropped from cruising altitude to about 1,000 feet to watch for the four-by-eight-mile island of Canton where the plane would land for refueling. When the 9:30 estimated arrival time came and went without sight of the small speck that interrupted thousands of miles of ocean, concern aboard the B-17 began to grow. At 10:15 Rickenbacker inquired how much fuel remained, as pilot and navigator struggled to find what had gone wrong. "A little over four hours," Cherry replied.

The crew made radio contact with the American outpost at Palmyra, another of the small islands that dotted the Pacific. Captain Cherry climbed to 5,000 feet while the ground crew at Palmyra began firing antiaircraft shells set to detonate at 7,000 feet to mark the island's location. From the cockpit he could see nothing. From the windows behind him in the cargo compartment the anxious crewmen who scanned the horizon for any sight of life were equally fruitless.

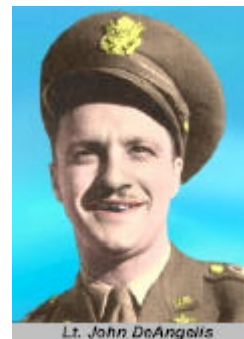


It was obvious that the airplane was lost in the endless expanse of blue sky and dark green waters. With fuel running low, shortly after noon Sergeant Reynolds sent out an SOS. By now the airplane was so far off course that the call for help wasn't heard even at Palmyra. Captain Cherry pushed forward on the controls and dropped closer and closer to the waves below in preparation for the inevitable moment when the fuel was gone and the engines died. Behind him Rickenbacker and the crew of the airplane were hastily breaking out rafts and gathering provisions for the anticipated days at sea, mentally steeling themselves for the imminent impact.

Captain Cherry handled that fateful and dangerous moment skillfully, setting his airplane down in the trough between two waves. Had he been even one or two seconds off in his calculations, the B-17's nose would have plunged into a 12-foot wave, sending it immediately to the bottom of the

ocean. Sergeant Reynolds continued to bang out his SOS in Morris Code until the moment the airplane slammed into surface, tossing provisions and human cargo from wall to wall.

Quickly the green-blue water of the ocean began to fill the B-17 as injured and dazed men struggled to release the rafts and exit the doomed airplane. Captain Cherry, Sergeant Reynolds, and co-pilot Captain John Whittaker got into one of the two larger rafts. Lieutenant John De Angelis, the crew's navigator, struggled to inflate the smaller two-man raft for himself and Alex. He maneuvered it as close as he could to the floundering B-17, struggling against the heavy swells, while Alex tried to reach it. When the nearly drowning man tried to climb in, the raft capsized in the 12-foot swells, forcing both he and DeAngelis to fight even harder for survival. Both men swallowed large amounts of the salty seawater, but found within themselves the determination to right their raft and climb back into its cramped but buoyant confines.



Rickenbacker and Sergeant John Bartek, the flight engineer took the remaining raft. They held it steady next to the slow-sinking B-17 as Colonel Adamson slid out onto the wing of the dying airplane. At age 53, Adamson was the oldest of the eight men that went down in the Pacific that day; and he was in severe pain. His back had been injured in the crash that had hurtled men and loose provisions around the airplane's compartment; and it was all he could do to slide from the wing and into the waiting arms of Eddie Rickenbacker.

Quickly the eight men took stock of their situation, glancing anxiously at each other across waves that quickly separated them. Despite the efforts to gather water, rations and emergency supplies in the minutes before the crash, when the moment of truth had come, none of the men had managed to transfer these to the rafts. It would probably have been impossible anyway, as everything had been scattered about inside the fuselage upon impact.

The big B-17 remained afloat for six minutes, causing the men to later regret the decision not to quickly return for water. Then the end came, the nose dropping and the tail raising heavenward as it plunged to the ocean floor. Rickenbacker looked at his watch...it was 2:36 p.m. Honolulu time on October 21, 1941.

The heavy seas swamped all three rafts, and the men bailed with abandon, at first unmindful of the fact that the current was pushing them further and further away from each other. Quickly Rickenbacker called them all back in, all of them paddling furiously to join their comrade. Then the three rafts were lashed together in a line. Rickenbacker later echoed his sentiment at the time, a philosophy that should be well remembered by any man in crisis:



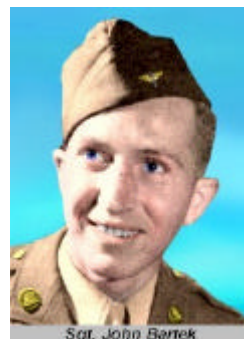
*"A strong man may last a long time alone but men together somehow manage to last longer."*

None of the eight men dared guess at how long they might have to survive at sea. Their B-17 had been lost when then fuel ran out and no one capable of mounting a rescue effort would know where to begin looking. The Pacific Ocean was a mighty big place.

To further complicate matters, there was a war on.

### Day 1

Colonel Adamson was in the worst shape, lying almost motionless in Rickenbacker's raft and struggling against intense pain. All of the men were seasick and went through an initial period of vomiting that eventually faded...except for the young Alex who had swallowed much of the briny ocean when his raft capsized. His body retched for hours into the evening and, though relatively uninjured, he seemed to be suffering nearly as badly as Adamson. The plane's impact had thrown Reynolds, still pounding out his SOS until the last minute, against the radio console cutting a deep gash in his nose. The only other major injury was to Bartek who shared the second raft with Rickenbacker and Adamson. He had ripped his fingers to the bone on a piece of metal while untangling the ropes to push the rafts out of the forward hatch when the plane crashed.



As the afternoon wore on the eight survivors took stock of their situation. The rafts held no drinking water and all the emergency rations rested on the ocean floor inside the B-17. Rickenbacker had a chocolate bar in his pocket, Alex nearly half a dozen, but these had been destroyed when his raft capsized. Captain Cherry had stuffed four oranges in his pockets moments before the crash, and these comprised the full compliment of food the men would have available in the coming days.

Rickenbacker was still fully dressed in a blue, summer-weight business suit complete with necktie and pocket-handkerchief. Colonel Adamson was still in full uniform as well, and the pilot and copilot had their flight jackets. The other men had stripped for the swim from the sinking plane to the rafts, their bodies now lying exposed to the elements.

Three men were crammed into each of the larger, five-man rafts with De Angelis and Alex sharing the smaller two-man raft. Rickenbacker wondered who had determined the raft's rated capacity. Each of the larger ones measured only 6'9" long and 2'4" wide. The three men in each were literally forced to overlap each other in the pitching seas that threw them from swell to swell.



Almost as soon as the rafts began their odyssey, the eight survivors began noticing that they were indeed not alone. From day one until the rescue twenty-four days later, large sharks followed the men, patiently waiting for a meal. As night enveloped the eight men, stillness fell across the Pacific, broken only by the agonized groans of Colonel Adamson and the sound of Alex retching in dry heaves as the smaller raft trailed the two larger ones.

### Day 2

Throughout the first long, cold night the men had kept up a system of two-hour watches, scanning the darkness for any signs of light from a passing airplane or ship in the distance. During





the night the rafts were bumped again and again by the sharks that followed, a grim reminder of the only alternative to the cramped quarters of the small rafts. Rick suffered in agony, his body still not fully recovered from the Atlanta crash. He had still been walking with a cane when the B-17 was lost at sea, undergoing regular daily treatments to his broken body. The stiffness and chill of the night now left him in great pain.

Early morning revealed a calming of the high waves, and the three rafts pulled closer together. Rickenbacker was made custodian of the four oranges that comprised the men's rations. The men determined that they would split one orange every two days, spreading them out to last a week and a day. Now Rick carefully cut the first orange in half, then quarters, and finally eighths. Each man thankfully consumed his *breakfast*, the only meal scheduled for the day.

The ocean surface became mirror-calm that second day, and the sun became unbearably hot as it rose into the morning skies. By noon the exposed bodies of the men who had stripped for the swim to the rafts began turning pink, then brilliant red. Blisters rose as skin baked in the unrelenting heat. Rickenbacker had three large handkerchiefs in his suit pocket, and passed these around. The men tied them *bandit-fashion* below their eyes to protect their faces. A battered hat Adelaide had threatened to burn for years now sheltered Rick's eyes from the blazing sun. He was thankful it had survived not only his fashion-conscious wife, but also the plane crash and its aftermath.

When darkness fell on the second night, Captain Cherry brought up the subject of the 18 flares and Very gun for firing them. These, along with two pistols carried by the pilot and copilot, were among the meager lot of survival gear that reached the raft. Despite the fact that the men were not sure whether or not their errant flight path had taken them into Japanese-controlled waters, it was decided to fire three flares each night for six days in hopes of attracting rescue.

The first flare was shot upward as soon as the darkness was complete. The shell was a dud and emitted no signal light to be seen, even if some human other than the eight men been anywhere near that part of the ocean. Rather than wait the planned interval to release the second flare, Cherry reloaded and fired again. This time the flare burst to burn dimly for a few seconds. It was better than the first, but not what the men had hoped for.

## Days 3 - 7

Captain Cherry fired the third flare of that night shortly before dawn broke. The seas remained totally calm; the rafts idle on the surface. The sun continued to broil flesh and cause multiple blisters and seeping skin ulcers. Colonel Adamson still could barely move from his pain, and Alex continued to retch and shiver. The other men seemed stronger, and for a brief time determined to survive. At that however, death seemed almost preferable to torture. The salty water of the Pacific coated the bodies of the men, then evaporated to leave a white, salty film.

Rickenbacker later described the men's first six days at sea as the worst days of his life--far more painful and miserable than the Atlanta plane crash. The fourth night, and each night thereafter until the flares were exhausted, Captain Cherry fired three signals. On the fourth day, Rickenbacker cut the second orange into eighths and the men had their second meal. Most of the men savored their morsel as long as they could, eating even the rind. Rickenbacker and Cherry saved their rinds for

bait. Two hooks and fishing lines had been among the supplies that survived the crash, but the men had no bait. In the clear, calm waters the men could see hundreds of fish around their rafts. None of the fish, sadly enough, had an appetite for orange peelings.

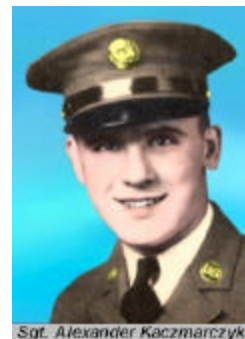
On their fifth day at sea the men decided to eat the third orange, primarily out of concern for Adamson and Alex who seemed only to become sicker and weaker. Temperaments began to fray and discouragement became as pervasive as the hot sun during the day or the chill at night. Almost to a man, bodies were blistered, raw, and oozing puss. Conditions in the small rafts were cramped as the men tried to keep from stiffening up. Any time one man moved in the raft to ease a cramp or find comfort in a new position, his body would brush up against the raw flesh of his comrades, causing pain for all of them.

Lieutenant Whittaker, the forty-one-year-old copilot of the ill-fated B-17, watched the fruitless efforts of Rickenbacker and Cherry to catch fish. When the orange peelings failed to entice a bite, Rick had even fashioned Adamson's key-chain as a makeshift spinner. The fish nosed it curiously, but refused to take the hook. Whittaker took one of the oars, tearing away the flat paddle with pliers and attempted to sharpen it to a point. The next shark that bumped against the raft felt the point of Whittaker's makeshift spear, far to dull despite the man's best efforts, to penetrate the thick skin. After several more jabs Whittaker tossed the useless spear, now equally useless as an oar, into the bottom of the raft.



Lt. James Whittaker

Adamson, as a colonel, was the ranking member of the group. He was also in great pain, sick, and often delirious. Twenty-seven-year-old Captain Cherry held up reasonably well and continued to command his crew. But it was Eddie Rickenbacker, the aging legend of a war past, who became leader, mentor, father figure...and villain for the doomed group. When the weaker men began losing hope and giving in to the seductive serenity of death; he tried to shock their senses and motivate them to continue on.



Sgt. Alexander Kaczmarczyk

At age twenty-two, poor Alex was the youngest of the eight. He was also in the worst shape, shivering uncontrollably even while the sun blistered his body. Unknown to the others, his unquenchable thirst had driven him to drink seawater. Much of the time he was delirious, chanting "*Hail Mary*", crying out for his mother, or rambling about a girl he called "Snooks". During his few lucid moments he would pull a photo of "Snooks" from his wallet, talk to it, and pray over it. He was now convinced that he would never see his young sweetheart again. It was obvious to the other men that Alex was fading fast and had given up the fight.

Rickenbacker pulled the rope that tethered his own raft to that of De Angelis and Alex in the rear of the string, drawing them closer until he was face to face with Alex. "What is wrong with you kid? Why the hell can't you take it?", Rick shouted as loud as his weakening voice would allow. It was brutal, but in Rick's mind, it was also a necessary shock treatment to motivate the young man to fight for his life. The other men looked at Rick in shock and disdain, unaware that this outburst had been a calculated effort to save the man's life. It was only as a result of the argument that followed that Rick learned that the young man was recently released from the hospital after contracting a tropical disease of the mouth that left him perpetually thirsty. He had been fragile before the crash, now he was close to death.

On the sixth day at sea, Rickenbacker split the fourth and final orange. Already it was drying out and probably wouldn't have survived another day. It vanished along with the last shreds of hope. Until the last orange was consumed, the men had something to look forward to. Now, nothing

remained for tomorrow but hot sun, shivering nights, and more doldrums on the surface of the ocean. Tempers continued to flare, bickering was constant, and even the stronger men were totally falling apart.

Rickenbacker had noticed Sergeant Bartek, who shared the middle raft with himself and Adamson, reading daily from the New Testament he carried in his jumper pocket. Rick told the others to pull their rafts closer, and instituted twice-daily services of Bible reading and prayer. Two of the men initially objected, both professing a lack of religious conviction. Rick insisted that all of them contribute, each finding and reading a passage of scripture at each of the twice-daily prayer services. In the days that followed, some of the men became bitter when they failed to see answers to their prayers, but the practice went on. Rickenbacker later wrote:

*"Under the baking sun on the limitless Pacific, I found a new meaning, a new beauty in its (The Bible) familiar words."*

### Day 8

Captain Cherry had just finished reading the Morning Prayer service and each of the eight men had prayed in turn and sung a hymn. Rick was dozing off as the ceremony gave way to small talk when a light on his head pressure awakened him. At once he guessed it must be a sea gull and a quick glance at his companions through told him he must be right.

All eyes were on Rick's hat.

Slowly Rick began moving his arms, reaching his hands alongside his ears and then upward. All the while he resisted the strong urge to grab quickly for the bird lest it escape. A deep hush fell across the group of men and all eyes remained riveted on Rick's every move.

Rick sensed his hand near the brim of his hat and continued to move in slow, even, calculated motions. He couldn't see the bird, could only guess at its position on his head. When his hands were close to where he thought the gull must be, he closed his hand, and felt the welcome texture of a leg.



In a fraction of a second he wrung its neck and stripped its feathers to reveal moist, dark meat. He divided it equally among the eight men, saving the intestines for bait. When the men had savored the sinewy but *delicious* sea gull, Cherry dropped his fishing line from his raft with a piece of the bird's intestine. Almost immediately he landed a small mackerel about 12 inches in length. This meat was cool and moist, satisfying thirst as well as hunger. Rickenbacker was equally successful when he dropped his own fishing line into the water, landing a small sea bass. It was kept for the following day's repast.

### Day 9

His spirits buoyed by the two-course meal on his ninth day at sea, Rickenbacker dozed off when darkness fell. At midnight he woke with a jar...something was happening...for the first time in a week he felt movement.



Around the raft waves were picking up and a wind was whipping through his tattered clothes, illuminated now by flashes of bright lightening. The men could smell rain, and quickly stripped off their clothing to capture the first drops. The storm teased them for two hours and then, as Rick leaned his head face up over the edge of the raft, he felt the first drops hit him in the face, followed by another, and then another.

And then the rain stopped, almost as quickly as it had started.

Lightening still lit the clouds above, and the men could see a squall in the distance. "It's over there," Rick shouted, as the men picked up oars and paddled with what little strength remained. Somehow, in desperation, they found the strength and were soon being tossed about in the middle of the squall.

In the heavy waves disaster struck before water could be collected. A rope came loose and the small raft containing De Angelis and Alex was drifting away into the darkness. The men in the remaining rafts continued to paddle furiously, searching the dark waters for their comrades and fearing they were lost. Then a white flash of a cresting wave backlit the small craft. The men paddled towards it and, before all was lost, resecured the line.

The rain revived even the quickly fading Adamson enough that he could pitch in to collect water. The men used the first raindrops to rinse out their salt-caked clothes, and then spread them out again to capture the fresh water and wring it out into containers before disaster struck again. The lead raft with Cherry, Whittaker and Reynolds capsized, throwing the men into the now-raging surf. Rick recalled, "Determined men who won't give up can do anything." Somehow, with the help of their comrades, the three men clung to the hand lines along their raft until it could be righted and they were pushed and pulled back in.

The water collected that night was meager in comparison to the need, but it brought some relief and more importantly, some new hope. During the morning the men ate the small fish Rick had caught the previous day, washing it down with each man's ration of water. As the day wore on, Alex's condition worsened and Rick increased the dying man's water ration. As evening fell, Rick transferred Bartek to the tailing raft with De Angelis and carefully moved the convulsing, nearly lifeless body of Alex to his own raft.

For two nights and two days Eddie Rickenbacker cradled the quivering body of young Alex in his own, much like a father cares for his own. It was a gentle side of his nature Rick had not yet revealed during this dangerous time, opting instead to motivate his comrades by making them angry enough to survive. Indeed, not all of Rick's outbursts had been calculated...he was human and prone to his own weak moments of irrational thought and irritable behavior. But for forty-eight hours he did his best to nurture the quickly fading young sergeant. It was not difficult for anyone to see that the gesture was futile.

On the evening of the twelfth day at sea during





one of his few lucid moments, Alex asked to be placed back in the trailing raft. In the darkness that night Rickenbacker listened to the young man's shallow breathing across the still ocean. Somewhere in the passing of time Alex gave a long sigh.

Then, all remained quiet.

## Day 13

It was obvious in the early morning darkness that Sergeant Alex Kacamarczyk had died, but it was not so easy to accept. At daybreak Bartek paddled up to Rickenbacker's raft where Eddie checked for a pulse, a heartbeat, or a shallow breath. The body was already stiff, but Rick refused to do what had to be done unless he was certain all hope had passed for Alex. Captain Cherry and Lieutenant Whittaker verified Eddie's determination. De Angelis did the best he could to offer the young man a Catholic burial service, and then the body of the young sergeant was rolled over the edge and into the sea. It didn't sink as they thought it would. Instead, the lifeless body of Alex Kacamarczyk followed the rafts for some distance, floating face down on the swells of the Pacific.

## Days 14 - 18

The death of Alex served a crushing blow to the morale of all seven survivors, reminding them that death was near and forcing them to come to grips with their own mortality. The loss of one man left the smaller raft slightly more spacious, and Bartek asked De Angelis to change places with him. De Angelis consented to give up the small raft, but preferred to float with the other officers, generating a series of changes that might have been comical but for the desperate situation of the seven men. Sergeant Reynolds joined Rickenbacker and Adamson in the middle raft, Lieutenant De Angelis joined Captain Cherry and Lieutenant Whittaker in the lead raft, and Sergeant Bartek floated alone in the trailing smaller raft.

In the early darkness before daybreak, Rickenbacker sensed something wrong. No longer could he feel the tug of a rope behind his own raft. Bartek's small raft was adrift, and Rickenbacker was sure that it hadn't been an accident. When light began streaking across the horizon, Bartek could be seen in the distance. His lone-wolf venture hadn't got him very far and at the insistent yells of the other men, he paddled back to tether his raft in its proper place. He later admitted honestly that he had untied the raft himself during the night. No one asked him why.

Despite his pain and constant delirium, Colonel Adamson had made daily notations on the side of his raft with a pencil. With the water from the storm five days earlier gone and the doldrums returning to the glassy-smooth Pacific, he wrote the last notation of the odyssey: "Fourteenth day. Rick and I still alive." It appeared to be his epitaph. His body burned to a pulp, his back and neck wracked with pain, and his mind fogged by nearly constant delirium, he was obviously close to death. For Rickenbacker it was especially disheartening. Adamson had been a long-time, close personal friend and confidant. Now he was wasted away, dying, and there was nothing Rick could do to intervene.

Sometime during the night Rick felt the raft lurch violently. His first thought was that a shark had attacked. Then he noticed there was more room in the raft. Adamson was gone.

Reaching over the side, Rick felt Adamson's shoulder. In despair, his friend had apparently decided to put an end to his misery. Rick would not let him die, holding tightly to him but too weak to pull him back into the raft. Only with help from the lead raft was the flaccid body of Colonel Adamson returned to its position at the rear of the raft.

Daylight brought some clarity to Adamson's fogged mind and, realizing what had happened, he tried to force a smile and stuck out a weak hand towards Rickenbacker. Eddie recognized the sincere apology for what it was...and then did what he claimed was one of the most difficult actions of his life.

*"I don't shake hands with your kind," he snarled at his best friend, ignoring the proffered handshake. "If you want to shake hands, you've got to prove yourself first!"*

Hans Adamson sadly withdrew his hand, mulling over his close friend's rebuke. For Rick it was an emotional moment. Chances were very good that Hans was close to death, and his last memory of Rickenbacker would certainly be a sorrowful one. Rickenbacker honestly believed it was at that moment that Adamson determined to fight...to survive...to live.

*"Rickenbacker, you are the meanest, most cantankerous (expletive) that ever lived,"* one of the other survivors shouted across the water. Within hearts that had been crushed by too much pain and suffering, anger arose. Several of the men determined in their hearts that they "would live for the sheer pleasure of burying Rickenbacker at sea," and later admitted the same to Rick.

In his own mind, Rickenbacker refused to give up, or to let anyone else give up.

*"It was clear to me," he later recalled, "that God had a purpose in keeping me alive. It was to help the others, to bring them through. I had been saved to serve. It was an awesome responsibility, but I accepted it gladly and proudly.*

*"I did not forget that I myself still had a mission to perform and a message to deliver to General MacArthur."*

Despite the anger and profane words exchanged among the seven men, the twice-daily prayer services continued until about the seventeenth day. That was the day the men finally decided to part ways in hope of rescue. Against Rick's better judgment, he had always felt the men had the best chance of rescue by remaining together, the others convinced him it was time to separate. The hope was that the three healthiest men might be able to break out of the current that drifted all three rafts southeast, and perhaps find a transport ship or airplane. With most of the remaining water and all of the remaining oars, the three Air Service officers in the lead raft set out in the early afternoon. As darkness fell, little headway had been made. When morning dawned Rickenbacker looked across the green swells only to find the three rafts still floating nearly side-by-side. It was a great source of disappointment, diverted only by an unexpected rainfall.

The run of good fortune continued into the night when a pack of sharks began feasting upon a school of mackerel all around the rafts. In the frenzy that followed, one mackerel jumped into Rickenbacker's raft, followed by another that jumped into Cherry's raft.

## Day 19

The rain that had refreshed the seven survivors intermittently became steadier with the dawn. By early afternoon the waves had become large, white-capped swells. Water collected the night before might well last for several more days. Suddenly Captain Cherry yelled



above the howl of the winds:

***"I hear a plane. Listen!"***



Peering intently into the distance, all seven men strained their eyes against the dark clouds. Then they saw it, a single-engine pontoon boat flying low through the squall about five miles away. Bartek stood up in the raft he now shared with Rickenbacker and Adamson, Rick steadying him against the crash of the ocean swells, to wave his shirt. All seven men, including Adamson, yelled at the top of their voices. Then the dark clouds obscured the small plane in the distance and it disappeared. The men had gone unseen on the dark waters.

Still, for the first time in nineteen days the doomed men saw signs of life beyond the rims of their raft. A new optimism began to grow.

## Day 20 & 21

Two similar airplanes appeared in the distant skies the following day. The men had no way of knowing if they were American or Japanese aircraft, but by this time it mattered little. Besides, neither pilot noticed the three small rafts that floated on the wide expanse of the Pacific Ocean.

Four more airplanes appeared on the distant horizon early the following day, but again the men in the rafts went unseen. During the afternoon the survivors were able to scoop up several small minnows that swarmed around the raft, a most welcome meal at a time when hopes began once again to sag. As the day wore on, no more aircraft were spotted. Rick feared that perhaps the rafts had been near an island base, then floated on past.

Tempers flared at about six o'clock that evening, and a great argument broke out between Captain Cherry in the lead raft, and De Angelis in the smaller raft that trailed in the chain. Cherry wanted his navigator to give up the small raft, so that he could then set out alone seeking help. *"I'm going to try to make land. Staying together is no good. They'll never see us this way."*

Rickenbacker sided with De Angelis and tempers flared, but Cherry remained insistent. He told Rickenbacker, *"I won't go unless you agree it is all right for me to."* Against his better judgment, Rick finally consented. In the fading twilight he watched as the B-17's captain floated alone into the distance.

De Angelis and Whittaker took up the refrain, wanting to strike out on their own as well along with the nearly dead Sergeant Reynolds, too ill to add his own preference to the argument. Tempers continued to rule until Rickenbacker was too tired to continue, realizing it was fruitless. When darkness finally fell, three separate rafts floated on the dark swells, each separated by miles of water.

## Days 22 & 23

Three men floated alone, now almost too sick to despair their situation. Rickenbacker tried to give Adamson and Bartek their rations of water, but both men were so weak they could hardly lift their heads to drink. During one brief lucid moment Bartek asked, *"Have the planes come back?"*

*"No, there haven't been any since day before yesterday,"* Rick replied weakly.

*"They won't come back,"* Bartek repeated again and again, fading back into delirium.

## Day 24

Rickenbacker was awake, but his mind had numbed after days of torment and repeated disappointment. He could see or hear nothing until he felt Bartek pull feebly on his shirt and whisper weakly through parched lips:

*"Listen, Captain--planes! They're back. They're very near."*

Rick struggled to stand but could only raise his frail body to a seated position as he waved the battered remnant of his old hat at the two passing airplanes. His heart sank as he watched them fade into the distance. He knew this had been the last chance for any of them...and now it had vanished.

*"Half an hour later we heard them again, much closer. They came directly out of the sun, straight for us. The first dived right over the raft. We yelled like maniacs. The plane was so low that I could see the pilot's expression. He was smiling and waving. Not until then did I look at the insignia. It was the U.S. Navy and gratitude and happiness filled me. I waved and waved, out of a half-crazy notion that the pilot must be made to understand we were not three dead men on a raft."*

Incredibly, the planes vanished again. Hope washed away in the fear that they would not return. Darkness was falling. And then they were back, one circling overhead as the other landed on the ocean swells and taxied up to the raft.

Colonel Adamson was so close to death, he was hoisted into the cockpit. Lieutenant W.F. Eadie advised Rick that they were in hostile waters, and had to watch for Japanese ships. An American P.T. boat was en route to ferry the men to safety, but first the Navy floatplane would have to taxi across the water. With a full cockpit, Rick was strapped in a sitting position on the airplanes left wing, Bartek on the right. For half-an-hour the wind whipped across the two men as Lieutenant Eadie taxied towards the waiting P.T. boat.





Throughout the journey Rick kept shouting:

***"This is heaven!" "Thank God!" "God bless the Navy!"***

Rickenbacker and Bartek were transferred from the flying boat to the waiting P.T. boat a short time later; and were rushed to a hospital at the nearby American base. Colonel Adamson, so near death his survival was still uncertain, was flown on to the hospital.

En route, Rick received the best news he could have hoped for. Two days earlier the raft with Whittaker, De Angelis and Reynolds had reached a small island after a dangerous brush with violent surf and preying sharks. There they camped for the night and the following day were surprised to meet a group of friendly natives. The natives rowed them from the small island to safety, where American rescue forces picked them up. They informed these to look for the remaining rafts.



That same afternoon a Navy pilot had spotted the raft carrying Captain Cherry. A short time later he too, was pulled from the waters of the Pacific. All seven survivors had been rescued and were being transported to the hospital. The following morning the men enjoyed their first real meal in twenty-four days:

## ***SOUP & ICE CREAM***



Later on that Saturday afternoon, five of the seven survivors were flown to a larger hospital at Samoa, only Reynolds and Bartek left behind, too critical to move. Hans Adamson was worse even than those two, but doctors determined that the advantages of the larger, better-equipped hospital outweighed the dangers of moving him. Despite three transfusions of plasma and intensive medical care, the fifty-two-year-old man was dying.

## The Mission:



Despite the ordeal he had just been through, Eddie Rickenbacker hadn't forgotten the reason he had come to the Pacific nearly four weeks earlier. In his first contact to Secretary Stimson he requested and received permission to continue that mission. Two weeks later on December 1, Rick checked in on his recovering comrades from the adventure at sea, then boarded a B-24 transport to fly to Australia.

Over the next four days, as he traveled, Rick continued to visit air bases along the route. He maintained his grueling schedule, despite the fact that his body was still weak and 55 pounds lighter for his ordeal.

General MacArthur refused to allow Rick to fly to Port Moresby in an unarmed plane and sent a heavily armed B-17 to transport him. Rick arrived in time to spend the weekend with the MacArthurs--and to deliver his communiqué from Secretary Stimson. Few secrets of World War II have survived the revealing light of the decades. One that has is the content of that message.

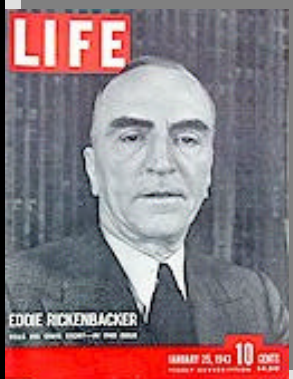
Ten days later Rick was back in Samoa after stopping to visit with American airmen at other stations along the way. His stops included a visit to Henderson Field on the small island of Guadalcanal, "A miserable little airstrip" where "it was difficult to see how men could even exist under such conditions, much less carry on the highly skilled warfare of the twentieth century."

Upon his return to Samoa he checked in on his friend Hans, who was improving but still in serious condition. "I'm going to Upola Island this weekend," Rick advised. "I'll be back here on Monday. If you are strong enough, you can fly out with me to Hawaii then." Rick's promise was just the motivation Hans needed; and at 5 p.m. on December 14, the two men were back in Hawaii.

Rick left Hawaii on December 15, leaving Hans behind in a hospital to continue his recovery. Eventually it would be complete, and the intrepid colonel who had come so close to death in the Pacific, lived a long and fruitful life. On December 19 Rick reported personally to Secretary Stimson. The following day from his home in New York, Rickenbacker gave a stirring and patriotic radio address to the Nation. He told America,

*"You can never approximate the sacrifices our men are making on the battlefield for you and me. If I can only help you understand that, then I will be able to enjoy the first Sunday afternoon I have spent at home in many, many weeks."*





Eddie Rickenbacker was quickly approached by *Life* Magazine for the story of his incredible ordeal and survival at sea. Over the next month he wrote it and it was published in three parts in three consecutive weeks beginning on January 25, 1943. In that story Rick wrote of his "21 days adrift in the Pacific". The \$25,000 fee he received for the story was contributed to the Army Air Forces Aid Society, and was presented to the wife of General *Hap* Arnold who served as that organization's vice president.

Later that year when he published the same account in a book titled ***Seven Came Through***, he again referred to his "21 days at sea." Only later did he realize that after being lost on October 21, the total time at sea was not twenty-one, but TWENTY-FOUR days.

### **The date of that rescue was Friday the Thirteenth (November, 1942).**

Ironically, only hours before Eddie and his comrades were plucked from the Pacific, hundreds of miles to the southwest the *USS Juneau* was sunk following the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal. As Rickenbacker, Adamson and Bartek were being ferried to safety on a Navy flying boat, more than 100 survivors from the 595-man crew of the *Juneau* were floating at sea, many of them in rafts like Rickenbacker's. In that sad case, only TEN came through...ten men out of 595. Among the losses were five brothers serving aboard that ship together--**The Fighting Sullivans**.



\*

## **New War – New Heroes**

While Eddie Rickenbacker was returning home from his inspection in Europe and preparing to visit the Pacific, another legendary airman was on his way home. This was no older hero from a previous war, but a twenty-seven-year-old hero of this new war. Flying out of Henderson Field on Guadalcanal after arriving on August 20, Major John Lucian Smith had led his Marine Fighting Squadron 223 in achieving an unbelievable record of aerial combat--95 confirmed victories. Smith had personally knocked down 16 enemy planes, making him the Ace of Aces of this new war. By the time the squadron was sent home on October 12, Smith had upped his tally to 19, just 7 shy of Captain Eddie's WWI record.



On December 7, 1942, even as Rickenbacker was touring Guadalcanal just two weeks after being rescued at sea, Major Smith was featured on the cover of *Life* magazine. He was the first Medal



of Honor recipient of this new war to be so honored. It was a distinction that he would share with Audie Murphy and only one other Medal of Honor hero of this new war (exclusive of Rickenbacker's appearance on the January 25, 1943, issue).

That third man was making history flying out of Henderson Field during the time Rickenbacker was lost at sea. The day before Rick started his Pacific tour, the young pilot became an ace. Three days after Rickenbacker's B-17 went down in the Pacific, that young Marine pilot shot down four Japanese airplanes in a single day. On the day Rickenbacker was dividing up the third of his four oranges in a life raft, that Marine pilot was shooting down four more *Zeros*--equaling the record of Major Smith. On that same November 7 afternoon, that young pilot himself went down in the Pacific, but was rescued and returned to his unit within forty-eight hours.

For weeks in the Fall of 1942, talk among pilots in the Pacific centered on who would be the first airman of this new war to equal the record of America's *Ace of Aces*, Eddie Rickenbacker. Three days after Rickenbacker was pulled from the sea, that same young pilot on Guadalcanal was this new war's undisputed *Ace of Aces* with 23 victories. Less than one month later, the intrepid Marine pilot shot down three planes in one day to tie the record of Captain Eddie Rickenbacker of WWI.

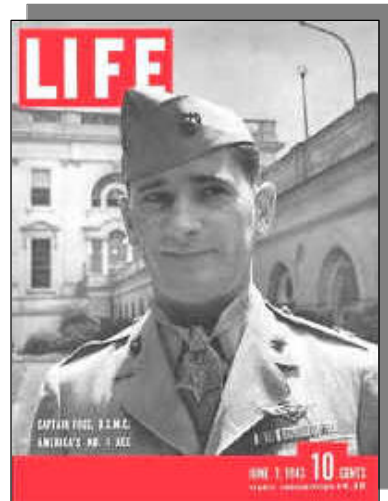
Eddie was most gracious, sending both a congratulatory letter and a case of scotch to the young man. For the kid from South Dakota, it was a thrill. Eddie Rickenbacker had been one of his two greatest heroes since his youth, second only to the one man he admired most--Charles Lindbergh.

America's newest hero was a young man who fifteen years earlier had tried unsuccessfully to work his way through a crowd to shake Lindbergh's hand, then said to his father on the ride home:

***"I'm going to be bigger than Lindbergh  
some day!"***

## **A New Ace & and Old Hero** **Summer, 1943**

Major Joseph Jacob Foss was finally back to work, away from what he later called "*The Dancing Bear Act*" that had followed his earning the title *Ace of Aces*, his appearance on the cover of *Life* magazine and the presentation of his Medal of Honor. He was assigned to the Marine base at Santa Barbara, California, where he was building the new VMF-115 and training his pilots in the new F4U Corsairs. All of his nearly 100 Marine pilots were young, green, and in need of solid leadership. Authorized to recruit his own top officers, Foss requested assignments for several of the men who had served with him on Guadalcanal.





The new Corsairs were supposed to be highly superior to the old Wildcats men like Foss had flown out of Henderson Field a year before, but Major Foss was finding them temperamental. They tended to cut out at altitudes above 21,000 feet, and several crashes had occurred during testing and training, some of them fatal. Foss brought the matter to his commanding officer, who quickly put Foss on the phone to General Bill Wallace who was in charge of Marine aviation for the entire West Coast.

*"General, I'm having a terrible time with these Corsairs," he stated bluntly.*

*"You'll have an expert tomorrow," the General promised. Foss smiled to himself; military men are quite used to such promises and their probable outcome, or lack thereof.*

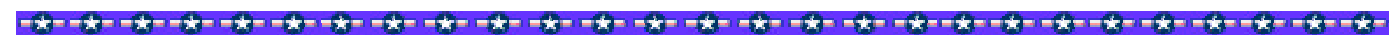
Two days later Foss was working in his cramped office when someone knocked on the door. *"Come in,"* he intoned routinely, scarcely looking up from his work as a tall, slender man in plain Khakis with no military insignia walked in.

*"Major Foss," the gentleman announced, "It's good to meet you. I'm Charles Lindbergh."*

*"The REAL Charles Lindbergh?" Foss asked incredulously as he looked more closely at the new arrival. Lindbergh simply nodded his head.*

*"Come in, come in!" Foss said, hardly able to contain his excitement. "When I was a kid I wanted to meet you in the worst way when you flew into South Dakota, but the cops threw me off the stand. And here you are. Gosh!"*

Lindbergh smiled and looked a little embarrassed. *"General Wallace sent me over to see if I can help you solve the Corsair problem."*



Lindbergh spent several weeks with Foss who not only finally got the handshake he had wanted fifteen years earlier, but gained a friend for life. (Foss later served as cochairman of the nonprofit Lindbergh Foundation.) Foss also learned quickly that the man abhorred being called *Charles* or *Lucky Lindy*. *"He wanted to be known either as Slim or Charlie."*

To Major Foss' great relief, Lindbergh was indeed the expert he needed, and quickly the problems with the Corsairs were fixed. At the end of the month the time came to say "good-by." Lindbergh asked Foss if he could address the men before his departure. Naturally, Foss quickly consented.

*"I just want to thank you for your generous support of my efforts here," Lindbergh told the young men who would soon be off to war. "I've really enjoyed working with you, and there's only one more thing I'd really like to do. I'd like to fly tail-end Charlie with this outfit."*

The applause was long and earnest before Foss announced, *"You've got a job flying with us any time you show up. But if I have anything to do with it, you won't be flying tail-end Charlie. I want you up the line."*

May 25, 1944

It was a somber day as Major Foss returned to his operations office on Emirau Island in the Pacific. He and his VMF-115 had been back at war for more than three months, and he was returning from the funeral of one of his pilots who had died the previous day in the test flight of a Corsair. As he got closer to his tent he noticed a new Corsair on the airfield indicating he had

company. A tall, slender man in khaki but devoid of military rank or insignia was walking towards him, hand outstretched.

*"Hi Joe," he greeted the squadron commander. "You remember what you said? You promised me I could fly with you."*

Major Foss returned a warm but firm handshake, smiled and said, *"Charlie, Consider yourself on duty right now!"*

Over the weeks that followed, Lindbergh fulfilled his job as an *observer*, flying missions with the men of VMF-115. Indeed he felt that if he was to understand the problems with the Corsairs, he would need to experience the same problems the young Marine pilots were experiencing. Thus when they took to the skies for bombing or strafing missions, one of the Corsairs flying formation in the hostile skies was piloted by Lindbergh himself.

*"He flew from morning till night, and he taught us some tricks. Charlie was no coward. I remember one time we were bombing Kavieng, going after an oil dump that had been spotted there...The area was heavily fortified and the hidden entrenchment of antiaircraft fire was intense. The order was to drop our loads and get the hell out of there. I looked back and saw number eight--Charlie--turn around and go back for a second round. When he was coming down the first time he'd noticed a major dump hidden off to the side, so he made a swing around for a second run by himself with all that AA fire concentrating solely on him. Apparently he hit something, because there was a big explosion and clouds of smoke billowed.*

*"When we got back to base, I jumped out of my plane and walked over to chew him out. "Charlie, you just don't do that. There's no way you're supposed to go back after a target alone. It's a sure way of dying young."*

Joe Foss

Sadly, too few Americans knew then, or are aware even today, of the combat courage of Charles Augustus Lindbergh.

Lindbergh flew every combat mission with VMF-115 from the date of his arrival until the unit was sent home on June 1. He arrived a celebrity to the young Marines on Emirau, but became an admired friend, not for what he'd done twenty years before but for his courage and dedication in this new war.

During his visit to Foss and VMF-115 a photographer snapped a photograph of Charlie and Foss, which was promptly printed in *Parade* magazine, finally advertising to the world the man's presence in the war zone.\*

Major Foss was suddenly deluged with letters, hundreds of them, from citizens on the home front who had seen that photo. Most of the letters admonished Foss for associating with *"bad company"* and advised him to avoid Charles Lindbergh.



\* The Navy, without the knowledge or assent of the President, had sanctioned Lindbergh's Pacific mission.

Foss was furious, as were the other men that flew missions with Charlie, and as a unit they undertook to answer each and every one of more than 700 such letters. Foss pulled no punches in his own replies, stating:

*"Lindbergh's out here fighting a war at his own expense while YOU'RE at home!"*

## Lindbergh's Pacific Mission

The Pacific mission had been proposed early in 1944. Lindbergh would visit the combat air units as a representative of United Aircraft Corporation, which produced the new F4U Corsair. His job was to observe the men in the field, and help them correct problems with the *"Bent-winged Flying Coffins."* He would wear a Naval uniform devoid of any rank or other insignia, for his status was strictly that of a civilian.

Though vilified by civilians at home, the Marines welcomed him warmly upon his arrival. In early May Charlie made a gunnery flight to learn his guns with John L. Smith, now a Lieutenant Colonel. On May 19 he arrived at Henderson Field at Guadalcanal, then traveled to Bougainville before arriving at Eirau in search of Joe Foss on May 25. There he flew with VMF-115 until they went home, and continued to fly with VMF-222 after Foss' departure. During the period he also accompanied a PT boat crew on a combat mission.

By the time his work with the Marines was completed, he flew more than a dozen combat air missions in the Corsairs, both bombing and strafing. Marine Corps commanders looked the other way when the civilian fired his guns on these missions...even a civilian *had a right to defend himself*.

When the Army Air Forces learned of Lindbergh's presence and his success in helping the Marine pilots solve problems with their Corsairs, they invited Charlie to visit their own airbase and observe their P-38s in action. He arrived at New Guinea on June 15, quickly checked out on the P-38 (which was one of the few aircraft he had never piloted), and soon was flying with the Army pilots. In the following two weeks he completed four combat missions with the 475th Fighter Group commanded by Colonel Charles H. MacDonald, who emerged from World War II as the third-leading American Ace in the Pacific with 27 victories. During these missions Lindbergh discovered a way to effectively conserve fuel consumption and extend the airplane's range by 400 miles. Before his concepts could be effectively put into use however, Charlie got some bad news.



On the evening of July 5, Lindbergh received word that *"a rumor was circulating to the effect that I was flying combat in New Guinea, and that, if true, there should be no more of it."* To answer these charges, Lindbergh was called to Australia, arriving at Brisbane on July 12 to meet with General George Kenney, commander of the Allied Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific.

*"Kenney told me that a situation had arisen which caused some of the officers at headquarters much concern: that somehow I had managed to get into the forward areas in New Guinea without their knowing about it; that rumors had filtered back to the effect that I was flying combat with the Army squadrons; and that, of course, flying combat as a civilian was against all the regulations there were.*

*"He went on to tell me that if I were caught by the Japs, I would have my head chopped off immediately if they found out I was flying combat as a civilian.*

*"I told him...that I didn't want to go back to New Guinea and sit on the ground while the other pilots were flying combat."*

*"Kenney spoke about Army regulations, the 'reaction back home' if I were shot down, etc. I asked him if there wasn't some way to get around the regulations. He became thoughtful and his eyes twinkled. 'Well, it might be possible to put you on observer's status, but, of course, that would not make it legal for you to do any shooting. But if you are on observer's status, no one back in the States will know whether you use your guns or not.'"*

Lindbergh didn't care what his status was; he just wanted to be able to do his job. Later in that same afternoon, Charlie echoed this once again...in a private meeting with General Douglas MacArthur himself. MacArthur was impressed with Lindbergh's ideas to nearly double the effective range of the P-38 through his fuel-conservation ideas, and was eager for Lindbergh's knowledge and experience throughout his air command. He even promised Lindbergh he *"Could have any plane and do any kind of flying"* he wanted to.

Lindbergh spent two days visiting Australia, content to move about at will since the press did not know he was there, and no one recognized him. On July 15 he flew back to New Guinea to resume his work with the three combat squadrons of the 475th Fighter Group.

Throughout the last two weeks of July Lindbergh spent his time teaching the Army Air Force pilots his techniques for extending the range of their flights: *Cruise Control*--reduce standard 2,200 rpm to 1,600, set fuel mixtures to "auto lean," and slightly increase manifold pressures. Properly applied, it stretched the range of the P-38 *Lightening* by as much as 400 miles--a nine-hour flight.

Lindbergh also continued his flights: bomber protection, reconnaissance, strafing. He flew with the best. In addition to being the command of Colonel MacDonald, the 475th Fighter Group was the home of Major Thomas McGuire, well on his way to becoming America's all time *Ace of Aces*. (Before his death on January 7, 1945, Major McGuire claimed 38 aerial victories, earning a Medal of Honor and making him the second-leading American ace of World War II.) All of them quickly gained a great respect for Lindbergh, both for the mechanical genius he brought to aviation, as well as for his courage in the air. He was accorded officer's privileges, but addressed as Mr. Lindbergh due his *civilian observer* status. He was also treated as one of the squadron, taking the same kudos for a job well done and a good-natured ribbing when he erred. On one mission Lindbergh began dropping behind the rest of the formation as quickly as it had taken off, unaware he had forgotten to retract his landing gear.





Ahead of him, one of the pilots quipped into the radio,

*"Charlie, get your wheels up! You're not flying the Spirit of St. Louis."*

## July 28, 1944

Captain Saburo Shimada and Sergeant Saneyoshi Yokogi were flying a rescue mission to locate a downed comrade in their two-seat, armed Mitsubishi 51 Sonias. Both were veterans, well trained and schooled in the crucible of aerial combat. Returning home, the two Japanese pilots had the misfortune to run into the US Army Air Force's *Captive Squadron* (9th Squadron, 49th Group).

In the distance Colonel MacDonald and Charles Lindbergh were returning with their own flights, listening to their American counterparts barking directions over their radios as the dogfight stretched into half-an-hour.

*"There he is now! Go in and get him."*

*"Can't somebody shoot him down?"*

*"Damn...I'm out of ammunition."*

*"Somebody get him who's got some ammunition."*

*"The (expletive) is making monkey's out of us."*

*"Who's got some ammunition?"*

With great skill and cunning, Captain Shimada and Sergeant Yokogi were weaving in and out of cloud cover to escape--much to the frustration of *Captive Squadron*. Only the Japanese pilots' experience and skill was preventing disaster, as they twisted and turned in an aerial ballet that would have been comical were it not so dangerous. In the distance MacDonald's pilots circled, eager to locate the enemy planes and enter the fray.

*"What's the matter, Captive, having trouble?"*

*Captive Squadron* didn't acknowledge the good-natured jibe. They didn't want MacDonald's squadron swooping in to claim the credit on this one. As the two Jap Sonias broke and ran for home, two *Captive Squadron* pilots managed to flame Yokogi's aircraft and send it into the sea.

Diving in from 3,000 feet, MacDonald found Captain Shimada's Sonia and stitched a few bursts of machinegun fire across the fuselage. It was at that point Shimada realized there was no hope in trying to outrun his pursuers, and turned to fight. Banking sharply Shimada lined up and dove on the first P-38 he saw. It belonged to the second element leader in MacDonald's formation, Charles Lindbergh, who later recalled that deadly day:

*"We are spaced 1,000 feet apart. Captain (Danforth) Miller gets in a short deflection burst with no noticeable effect. I start firing as the plane is completing its turn in my direction. I see the tracers and the 20s (20-mm cannon) find their mark, a hail of shells directly on the target. But he straightens out and flies directly toward me.*

*"I hold the trigger down and my sight on his engine as we approach head on. My tracers and my 20's splatter on his plane. We are close--too close--hurtling at each other at more than 500 miles an hour. I pull back on the controls. His plane zooms suddenly upward with extraordinary sharpness.*

*"I pull back with all the strength I have. Will we hit? His plane, before a slender toy in my sight, looms huge in size. A second passes--two--three--I can see the finning on his engine cylinders. There is a rough jolt of air as he shoots past behind me.*

*"By how much did we miss? Ten feet? Probably less than that. There is no time to consider or feel afraid. I am climbing steeply. I bank to the left. No, that will take me into the ack-ack fire above Amahai strip. I reverse to the right. It all has taken seconds.*

*"My eyes sweep the sky for aircraft. Those are only P-38s and the plane I have just shot down. He is starting down in a wing over--out of control. The nose goes down. The plane turns slightly as it picks up speed--down--down--down toward the sea. A fountain of spray--white foam on the water--waves circling outward as from a stone tossed in a pool--the waves merge into those of the sea--the foam disappears--the surface is as it was before."*

It was Charles Lindbergh's first (and only) aerial victory. It would never be officially credited to his military record however. Captain Shimada was shot down over the Pacific by a *civilian observer*, and a rather well known one at that.

Three days later the tables were reversed...and it was very nearly Charles Lindbergh who was shot down. The American icon never saw the enemy aircraft, or heard Colonel MacDonald shouting into the radio, *"Zero on your tail!"* until a stream of tracers was reaching out for his P-38. The only thing that saved Lindbergh in that first fateful moment was the Jap pilot's poor gunnery skills. Lindbergh didn't panic, but went immediately into a high-speed turn as MacDonald shouted over the radio, *"Break right! Break right!"* Lindbergh coolly stayed his course, leading the trailing enemy into the range of MacDonald, who intercepted with a series of tracers of his own. The crippled *Zero* broke and ran, and the American P-38s returned home, now low on fuel.

August 1 was the day the first man to make a solo flight across the Atlantic, was nearly lost over the ocean half-a-world away. It was also the day that ended the combat exploits of Charles Lindbergh. Word of the flight three days earlier, and Lindbergh's first aerial victory, had reached higher echelons.

Colonel MacDonald was reprimanded, and then grounded for sixty days. Lindbergh noted, *"I am fully as much to blame for the flight as he; but unfortunately he must carry the responsibility, as he commands the group."* Ultimately, Colonel MacDonald's grounding was lessened to a sixty-day leave at home, a welcomed opportunity for him to see the son that had been born in his absence. Lindbergh continued to fly for ten more days, and then visited other airfields en route to Australia.

On August 22 Charles Lindbergh and Douglas MacArthur met again--just the two of them. But for Lindbergh's detailed *War Journal*, MacArthur's reaction to the controversial flight of July 28 would never have been known:

*"How many Japanese planes have you shot down?" MacArthur asked.*  
*"One," Lindbergh replied frankly and honestly.*  
*"Where was it?"*  
*"Off the south coast of Ceram." MacArthur smiled at that.*  
*"Good! I'm glad you got one."*

On September 16 Lindbergh arrived in San Francisco. The man had spent four months in the war zone, flown fifty combat missions with the warriors of a new generation, and proved he was still the hero he had been seventeen years before.

# **E P I L O G U E**

The end of World War II found the older heroes of decades past returning to active but relatively quiet lives. Eddie Rickenbacker turned his attention back to running an airline and continuing to promote aviation. He died in Zurich, Switzerland, on July 23, 1973, at the age of 82, and was buried in his hometown of Columbus, Ohio.

In 1947 Billy Mitchell's dream of a separate United States Air Force came true, and Charles Lindbergh worked for a time as a consultant to its new chief of staff. In 1954 President Dwight Eisenhower restored Lindbergh's commission, appointing him a brigadier general in the U.S. Air Force. Until his death on August 26, 1974, he devoted much of his time to conservation, campaigning for the protection of endangered species and the world environment. He was buried on the grounds of the Palapala Ho'omau Church in Kipahulu, Hawaii.

In the shadow of the two great men, America found a new generation of heroes...men who rose to the challenge thrust upon the United States at Pearl Harbor on a calm Sunday morning in December 1942. In the four years of warfare that followed, millions of young men and women rose up to defend freedom and save our world, proving that within their breast beat the same heart of courage that had inspired their fathers to greatness. Each step of the way, these new heroes were encouraged, motivated, and inspired by heroes of the past.



# APPENDIXES

Cher Ami

Frank Luke Aerial Victories

Eddie Rickenbacker Aerial Victories

American Aces of World War I

World War I Air Service Organization/Victory Credits

## **Cher Ami**

### **Dear Friend**



The ability to communicate is essential to soldiers in the field. Without communications to their commanders or support units in the rear area, soldiers on the front line can't send messages about their progress, request needed supplies, or call for help when things reach their worst.

During World War I, messages were sometimes transmitted by wire (telegraph or field phone), but two-way radio communications had not yet become available. Sometimes a unit was ordered to attack over a broad and often difficult terrain, making it impossible to string the wire necessary for communications. In these situations, a field commander often carried with him several carrier pigeons.

Pigeons served many purposes during the war, racing through the skies with airplanes, or even being fitted with cameras to take pictures of enemy positions. But one of the most important roles they served was as messengers. An important message could be written on a piece of paper, then that paper neatly folded and secured in a small canister attached to a pigeon's leg. Once the pigeon was released, it would try to fly to its home back behind the lines, where the message would be read and transmitted to the proper military planners.



The United States Army is divided among several different specialties, the men from each specialty trained for a particular kind of work. Infantrymen are trained to fight on the ground, artillerymen are responsible for the big guns, armor refers to the men who fight in tanks, and the Air Service was the name for the group of soldiers who fought in the air during World War I. One of the oldest of these groups of soldiers was the U.S. ARMY SIGNAL CORPS. Since the birth of our Nation, it was these men that were responsible for insuring that messages between all units, (including messages to other branches of service like the Navy and Marines), got through. The Army Signal Corps identifies itself by a torch with two crossed flags. These represent SIGNAL FLAGS, a common way that messages were passed using code.

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, the Army Signal Corps was given 600 pigeons for the purpose of passing messages when a signal flag or field phone couldn't do it. The pigeons were donated by bird breeders in Great Britain, and then trained for their jobs by American soldiers.

During the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, the two-month battle that finally ended World War I, 442 pigeons were used in the area of Verdun to carry hundreds of messages. This is how the system worked:

When a commander in the field needed to send a message, he first wrote it out on paper, trying to be both brief and yet as detailed as possible. Then he called for one of his Signal Corps officers, who would bring one of the pigeons that went with the soldiers into battle. The message would be put in the capsule on the bird's leg, and then the bird would be tossed high in the air to fly home.

The carrier pigeon would fly back to his home coop behind the lines. When he landed, the wires in the coop would sound a bell or buzzer, and another soldier of the Signal Corps would know a message had arrived. He would go to the coop, remove the message from the canister, and then send it by telegraph, field phone or personal messenger, to the right persons.

Carrier pigeons did an important job. It was also very dangerous. If the enemy soldiers were nearby when a pigeon was released, they knew that the bird would be carrying important messages, and tried their best to shoot the pigeon down so the message couldn't be delivered.

Some of these pigeons became quite famous among the infantrymen they worked for. One pigeon named "The Mocker" flew 52 missions before he was wounded. Another was named "President Wilson." He was injured in the last week of the war and it seemed impossible for him to reach his destination. Though he lost his foot, the message got through to save a large group of surrounded American infantrymen.

## **Cher Ami**

Probably the most famous of all the carrier pigeons was one named Cher Ami, two French words meaning "Dear Friend." Cher Ami served several months on the front lines during the fall of 1918. He flew 12 important missions to deliver messages. Perhaps the most important was the message he carried on October 4, 1918.

Mr. Charles Whittlesey was a lawyer in New York, but when the United States called for soldiers to help France regain its freedom, Whittlesey joined the Army and went to Europe to help. He was made the commander of a battalion of soldiers in the 77th Infantry Division, known as "The Liberty Division" because most of the men came from New York and wore a bright blue patch on their shoulders that had on it the STATUE OF LIBERTY.



On October 3, 1918, Major Whittlesey and more than 500 men were trapped in a small depression on the side of the hill. Surrounded by enemy soldiers, many were killed and wounded in the first day. By the second day only a little more than 200 men were still alive or unwounded.

Major Whittlesey sent out several pigeons to tell his commanders where he was, and how bad the trap was. The next afternoon he had only one pigeon left, Cher Ami.

During the afternoon the American Artillery tried to send some protection by firing hundreds of big artillery rounds into the ravine where the Germans surrounded Major Whittlesey and his men. Unfortunately, the American commanders didn't know exactly where the American soldiers were, and started dropping the big shells right on top of them. It was a horrible situation that might have resulted in Major Whittlesey and all his men getting killed--by their own army.



Major Whittlesey called for his last pigeon, Cher Ami. He wrote a quick and simple note, telling the men who directed the artillery guns where the Americans were located and asking them to stop. The note that was put in the canister on Cher Ami's left leg simply said:

*"We are along the road parallel to 276.4.*

*"Our own artillery is dropping a barrage directly on us.*

*"For heaven's sake, stop it."*

As Cher Ami tried to fly back home, the Germans saw him rising out of the brush and opened fire. For several minutes, bullets zipped through the air all around him. For a minute it looked like the little pigeon was going to fall, that he wasn't going to make it. The doomed American infantrymen were crushed; their last hope was plummeting to earth against a very heavy attack from German bullets.

Somehow Cher Ami managed to spread his wings and start climbing again, higher and higher beyond the range of the enemy guns. The little bird flew 25 miles in only twenty-five minutes to deliver his message. The shelling stopped, and more than 200 American lives were saved...all because the little bird would never quit trying.

On his last mission, Cher Ami was badly wounded. When he finally reached his coop, he could fly no longer, and the soldier that answered the sound of the bell found the little bird lying on his back, covered in blood. He had been blinded in one eye, and a bullet had hit his breastbone, making a hole the size of a quarter. From that awful hole, hanging by just a few tendons, was the almost severed leg of the brave little bird. Attached to that leg was a silver canister, with the all-important message. Once again, Cher Ami wouldn't quit until he had finished his job.

Cher Ami became the hero of the 77th Infantry Division, and the medics worked long and hard to patch him up. When the French soldiers that the Americans were fighting to help learned their story of Cher Ami's bravery and determination, they gave him one of their own country's great honors. Cher Ami, the brave carrier pigeon was presented a medal called the French Croix de guerre with a palm leaf.



Though the dedicated medics saved Cher Ami's life, they couldn't save his leg. The men of the Division were careful to take care of the little bird that had saved 200 of their friends, and even carved a small wooden leg for him. When Cher Ami was well enough to travel, the little one-legged hero was put on a boat to the United States. The commander of all of the United States Army, the great General John J. Pershing, personally saw Cher Ami off as he departed France.

Back in the United States the story of Cher Ami was told again and again. The little bird was in the newspapers, magazines, and it seemed that everyone knew his name. He became one of the most famous heroes of World War I. Years after the war a man named Harry Webb Farrington decided to put together a book of poems and short stories about the men and heroes of World War I. When his book was published, it contained a special poem dedicated to Cher Ami.

# Cher Ami



By Harry Webb Farrington

Cher Ami, how do you do!  
Listen, let me talk to you;  
I'll not hurt you, don't you see?  
Come a little close to me.

Little scrawny blue and white  
Messenger for men who fight,  
Tell me of the deep, red scar,  
There, just where no feathers are.

What about your poor left leg?  
Tell me, Cher Ami, I beg.  
Boys and girls are at a loss,  
How you won that Silver Cross.

"The finest fun that came to me  
Was when I went with Whittlesey;  
We marched so fast, so far ahead!  
'We all are lost,' the keeper said;

'Mon Cher Ami--that's my dear friend--  
You are the one we'll have to send;  
The whole battalion now is lost,  
And you must win at any cost.'

So with the message tied on tight;  
I flew up straight with all my might,  
Before I got up high enough,  
Those watchfull guns began to puff.

Machine-gun bullets came like rain,  
You'd think I was an aeroplane;  
And when I started to the rear,  
My! the shot was coming near!

But on I flew, straight as a bee;  
The wind could not catch up with me,  
Until I dropped out of the air,  
Into our own men's camp, so there!"

But, Cher Ami, upon my word,  
You modest, modest little bird;  
Now don't you know that you forgot?  
Tell how your breast and leg were shot.

"Oh, yes, the day we crossed the Meuse,  
I flew to Rampont with the news;  
Again the bullets came like hail,  
I thought for sure that I should fail.

The bullets buzzed by like a bee,  
So close, it almost frightened me;  
One struck the feathers of this sail,  
Another went right through my tail.

But when I got back to the rear,  
I found they hit me, here and here;  
But that is nothing, never mind;  
Old Poilu, there is nearly blind.

I only care for what they said,  
For when they saw the way I bled,  
And found in front a swollen lump,  
The message hanging from this stump;

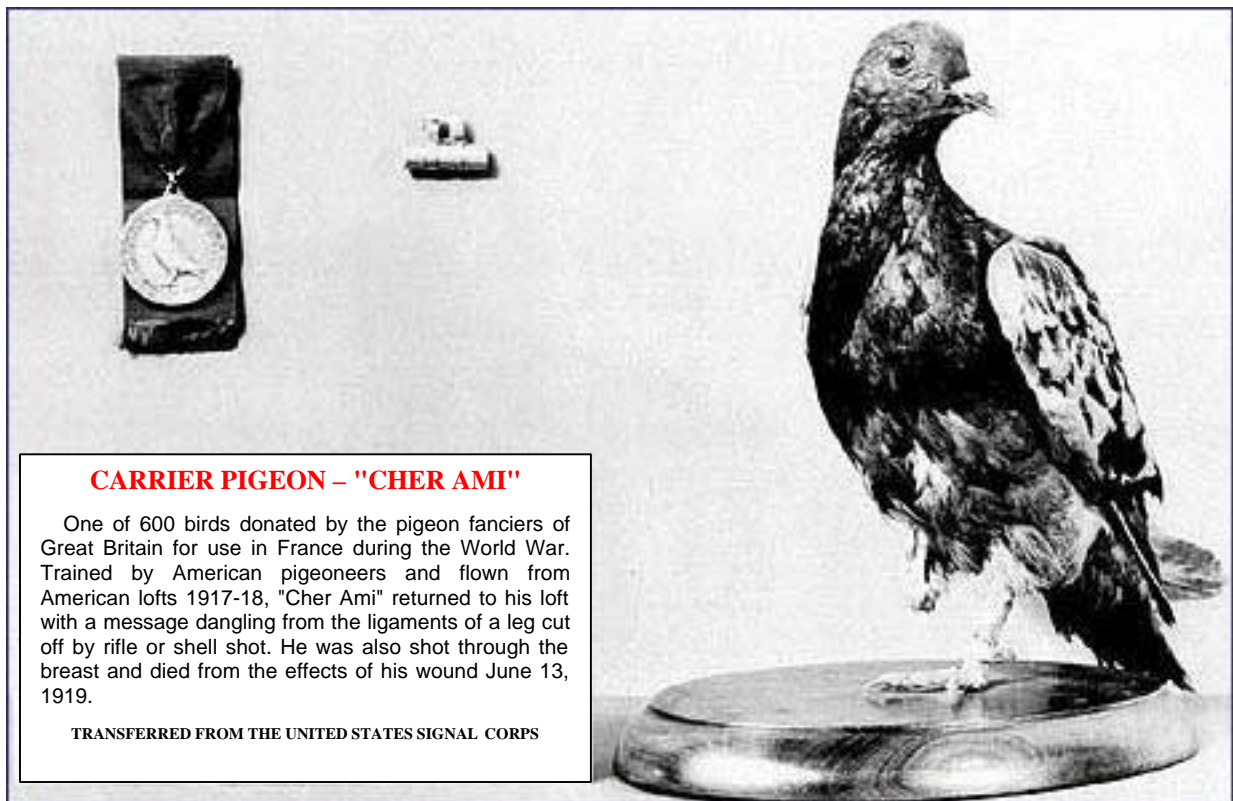
The French and Mine said, 'Tres bien,'  
Or 'Very good'--American.  
'Mon Cher Ami, you brought good news;  
Our Army's gone across the Meuse!

You surely had a lucky call!  
And so I'm glad. I guess that's all.  
I'll sit, so pardon me, I beg;  
It's hard a-standing on one leg!"

"Cher Ami" and Poems From France, Rough & Brown Press, 1920

**Cher Ami died of his multiple war wounds on June 13, 1919--less than a year after he had completed his service to the United States Army Signal Corps. Upon his death a taxidermist preserved the small pigeon for future generations, a bird with a story that became an inspiration to millions over the years.**

**Today, visitors to the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, can still see Cher Ami, preserved for history alongside the French Croix de Guerre with palm that was awarded to him by the French government. In the years following Cher Ami's death, there were rumors the bird had also been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. Though there is ample documentation that General John J. Pershing did in fact, award a "silver medal" to the brave carrier pigeon, there is NO record of the DSC being awarded.**



**Cher Ami on display at the Smithsonian Institution**



## World War I Aerial Victories

# Lieutenant Frank Luke, Jr.

Phoenix, AZ



27<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron, 1<sup>st</sup> Pursuit Group, A.E.F.



	Date	Type	Place
1	September 12, 1918	Balloon	Marieulles
2	September 14, 1918	Balloon	Buzy
3		Balloon	Boinville
4	September 15, 1918	Balloon	Boinville
5		Balloon	Boinville
6		Balloon	Chaumont
7	September 16, 1918	Balloon	Reville
8		Balloon	Romagne
9	September 18, 1918	Balloon	Mars la Tour
10		Balloon	Mars la Tour
11		Fokker D. VII	St. Hilaire
12		Fokker D.VII	St. Hilaire
13		Halberstadt C	Jonville
14	September 28, 1918	Balloon	Betheniville
15		Hanover CL	Monthainville
16	September 29, 1918	Balloon	Avocourt
17		Balloon	Avocourt
18		Balloon	Avocourt
Killed in Action September 29, 1918			

## World War I Aerial Victories

# Captain Eddie Rickenbacker

Columbus, OH



94<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron, 1<sup>st</sup> Pursuit Group, A.E.F.



September 25, 1918



DSC w/8 OLC



DSM w/9 OLC

	Date	Type	Place	Notes:
1	April 29, 1918	Pfalz	Baussant, France	DSC
2	May 07, 1918	Fokker	Prency, France	
3	May 17, 1918	Albatros	Rochecourt, France	DSC 1st OLC
4	May 22, 1918	Albatros	St. Mihiel, France	DSC 2nd OLC
5	May 28, 1918	Albatros	Boise Rate, France	DSC 3rd OLC
6	May 30, 1918	Albatros	Jaulny, France	DSC 4th OLC
7	September 14, 1918	Fokker	Villa Waiville, France	DSC 5th OLC
8	September 15, 1918	Fokker	Bois-de-Waville, France	DSC 6th OLC
9	September 25, 1918	Fokker	Billy, France	DSC 7th OLC
10		Halberstadt	Billy, France	Medal of Honor
11	September 26, 1918	Fokker	Billy, France	DSC 8th OLC
12	September 28, 1918	Balloon	Clery-le-Petit	
13	October 01, 1918	Balloon	Pieieux	
14	October 02, 1918	Rumpler	Clery-le-Grand	
15		LVG	Dannevoix	
16	October 03, 1918	Fokker	Villenes	
17		Halberstadt	Montfaucon	
18	October 09, 1918	Balloon	Marvaux, France	
19	October 10, 1918	Fokker	Doulcon	
20		Fokker	Doulcon	
21	October 22, 1918	Fokker	Clery-le-Petit	
22	October 23, 1918	Fokker	LeGrande Carre Farme	
23	October 27, 1918	Fokker	Grandpre	
24		Fokker	Boise-de	
25	October 30, 1918	Fokker	St. Juvin	
26		Balloon	Remonville	

# **American Aces of WWI**

A total of 118 Americans became Aces (5 or more victories) during World War I. Seventy-one of these American Aces achieved their victories as part of the U.S. Air Service, or as a combination of service with one of the allied nations (England, France, Italy) and the U.S. Air Service AFTER the US Air Service began operation in January 1918. These men are listed below, alphabetized in order of their number of victories. Victories indicated in red parenthesis (#) denote additional victories earned prior to January 1918 while in service to an allied air service.

	Name	Rank	Victories	Unit:
1	Rickenbacker, Eddie	Captain	26	94th Pur. Sqd.
2	Luke, Frank, Jr.	2nd Lt.	18	27th Pur. Sqd.
3	Vaughn, George A.	1st Lt.	13	17th Pur. Sqd.
4	Kindley, Field E.	1st Lt.	12	148th Pur. Sqd.
5	Springs, Elliott W.	1st Lt.	(4) 12	148th Pur. Sqd.
6	Landis, Reed G.	1st Lt.	(2) 10	British R.A.F.
7	Swaab, Jacques M.	1st Lt.	10	22nd Pur. Sqd.
8	Baer, Paul P.	1st Lt.	9	103rd Pur. Sqd.
9	Cassady, Thomas G.	1st Lt.	9	28th Pur. Sqd.
10	Hamilton, Lloyd A.	1st Lt.	(1) 9	17th Pur. Sqd.
11	Wright, Chester E.	1st Lt.	9	93rd Pur. Sqd.
12	Clay, Henry R., Jr.	1st Lt.	8	148th Pur. Sqd.
13	Coolidge, Hamilton	Captain	8	94th Pur. Sqd.
14	Donaldson, John O.	2nd Lt.	8	British R.A.F.
15	Erwin, William P.	1st Lt.	8	1st Obs. Sqd.
16	Hunter, Frank O.D.	1st Lt.	8	103rd Pur. Sqd.
17	Jones, Clinton	2nd Lt.	8	22nd Pur. Sqd.
18	Meissner, James A.	Captain	8	147th Pur. Sqd.
19	Stenseth, Martinus	1st Lt.	8	28th Pur. Sqd.
20	White, Wilbert W.	2nd Lt.	8	147th Pur. Sqd.
21	Burdick, Howard	2nd Lt.	(1) 7	17th Pur. Sqd.
22	Chambers, Reed M.	1st Lt.	7	94th Pur. Sqd.
23	Cook, Harvey W.	1st Lt.	7	94th Pur. Sqd.
24	Creech, Jesse O.	1st Lt.	7	148th Pur. Sqd.
25	Holden, Lansing, C.	1st Lt.	7	95th Pur. Sqd.
26	Robertson, Wendel A.	1st Lt.	7	139th Pur. Sqd.
27	Rummell, Leslie J.	1st Lt.	7	93rd Pur. Sqd.
28	Schoen, Karl J.	1st Lt.	7	139th Pur. Sqd.
29	Sewall, Sumner	1st Lt.	7	95th Pur. Sqd.
30	Beane, James D.	1st Lt.	6	22nd Pur. Sqd.
31	Biddle, Charles J.	Captain	(1) 6	103rd Pur. Sqd.
32	Campbell, Douglas	1st Lt.	6	94th Pur. Sqd.
33	Curtis, Edward P.	1st Lt.	6	95th Pur. Sqd.
34	Guthrie, Murray K.	1st Lt.	6	13th Pur. Sqd.
35	Hammond, Leonard C.	1st Lt.	6	91st Obs. Sqd.
36	Hays, Frank K.	2nd Lt.	6	13th Pur. Sqd.
37	Hudson, Donald	1st Lt.	6	27th Pur. Sqd.
38	Knotts, Howard C.	2nd Lt.	6	17th Pur. Sqd.
39	Lindsay, Robert O.	1st Lt.	6	139th Pur. Sqd.
40	MacArthur, John K.	2nd Lt.	6	27th Pur. Sqd.
41	Ponder, William T.	2nd Lt.	6	103rd Pur. Sqd.
42	Putnam, David E.	1st Lt.	(7) 6	139th Pur. Sqd.
43	Stovall, William H.	1st Lt.	6	13th Pur. Sqd.
44	Tobin, Edgar G.	1st Lt.	6	103rd Pur. Sqd.
45	Vasconcells, Jerry C.	1st Lt.	6	27th Pur. Sqd.
46	Wehner, Joseph F.	1st Lt.	6	27th Pur. Sqd.
47	Badham, William T.	2nd Lt.	5	91st Obs. Sqd.
48	Bair, Hilbert L.	1st Lt.	(1) 5	British R.A.F.
49	Bissell, Clayton L.	1st Lt.	5	148th Pur. Sqd.
50	Brooks, Arthur R.	2nd Lt.	5	22nd Pur. Sqd.
51	Buckley, Harold R.	1st Lt.	5	95th Pur. Sqd.
52	Cook, Everett R.	1st Lt.	5	91st Obs. Sqd.
53	D'Olive, Charles R.	1st Lt.	5	93rd Pur. Sqd.
54	Easterbrook, Arthur L.	1st Lt.	5	1st Obs. Sqd.
55	Furlow, George W.	1st Lt.	5	103rd Pur. Sqd.
56	George, Harold H.	1st Lt.	5	139th Pur. Sqd.
57	Grey, Charles G.	1st Lt.	5	213th Pur. Sqd.
58	Haight, Edward M.	1st Lt.	5	139th Pur. Sqd.
59	Healy, James A.	1st Lt.	5	147th Pur. Sqd.
60	Keating, James A.	1st Lt.	5	British R.A.F.
61	Knowles, James, Jr.	1st Lt.	5	95th Pur. Sqd.
62	Larner, G. DeFreest	1st Lt.	(2) 5	103rd Pur. Sqd.
63	Luff, Frederick E.	1st Lt.	5	British R.A.F.
64	O'Neill, Ralph A.	2nd Lt.	5	147th Pur. Sqd.
65	Owens, John S.	2nd Lt.	5	139th Pur. Sqd.
66	Porter, Kenneth L.	2nd Lt.	5	147th Pur. Sqd.
67	Ralston, Orville A.	1st Lt.	5	148th Pur. Sqd.
68	Seerley, John J.	1st Lt.	5	13th Pur. Sqd.
69	Strahm, Victor H.	Captain	5	91st Obs. Sqd.
70	Todd, Robert M.	2nd Lt.	5	17th Pur. Sqd.
71	Vernam, Remington D.	1st Lt.	5	22nd Pur. Sqd.





**The following Americans became Aces while serving in the Air Service of allied nations, earning their victories before the U.S. Air Service statistics were enumerated:**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Air Service:</b>	<b>Victories:</b>
Gillet, Freckerick W.	Britain	<b>20</b>
Beaver, Wilfred	Britain	<b>19</b>
Kullberg, Howard	Britain	<b>19</b>
Lambert, William	Britain	<b>18</b>
Iaccaci, August T.	Britain	<b>17</b>
Iaccaci, Paul T.	Britain	<b>17</b>
Coler, Eugene S.	Britain	<b>16</b>
Lufbery, G. Raoul	France	<b>16</b>
Rose, Oren J.	Britain	<b>16</b>
Libby, Frederick C.	Britain	<b>14</b>
Unger, Kenneth R.	Britain	<b>14</b>
Baylies, Frank L.	France	<b>12</b>
Bennett, Louis	Britain	<b>12</b>
Lord, Frederic I.	Britain	<b>12</b>
Warman, Clive W.	Britain	<b>12</b>
Lussier, Emile J.	Britain	<b>12</b>
Pearson, James W.	Britain	<b>12</b>
Knight, Duerson	Britain	<b>10</b>
Le Boutillier, Oliver	Britain	<b>10</b>
Larsen, Jens F.	Britain	<b>9</b>
Callender, Alvin A.	Britain	<b>8</b>
Connelly, James A.	France	<b>8</b>
Parsons, Edwin C.	France	<b>8</b>
Simon, Walter	Britain	<b>8</b>





Buchanan, Archibald	Britain	<b>7</b>
Dodds, Roy E.	Britain	<b>7</b>
Griffith, John S.	Britain	<b>7</b>
Hale, Frank L.	Britain	<b>7</b>
Hartney, Harold E.	Britain	<b>7</b>
White, Harold A.	Britain	<b>7</b>
Bissonette, Charles	Britain	<b>6</b>
Catto, Charles G.	Britain	<b>6</b>
Cooper, Norman	Britain	<b>6</b>
Ingalls, David S.	Britain (US Navy)	<b>6</b>
Pineau, Cleo F.	Britain	<b>6</b>
Rogers, Bogart	Britain	<b>6</b>
Boysen, Howard K.	Britain	<b>5</b>
Brown, Sidney M.	Britain	<b>5</b>
Callahan, Lawrence K.	Britain	<b>5</b>
Magoun, Francis P.	Britain	<b>5</b>
Orr, Osborne J.	Britain	<b>5</b>
Peterson, David M.	France	<b>5</b>
Shoemaker, Harold	Britain	<b>5</b>
Taylor, Edgar	Britain	<b>5</b>
Thaw, William	France	<b>5</b>
Tipton, William D.	Britain	<b>5</b>
Tod, Gordon	Britain	<b>5</b>



## **World War I Air Service Organization & Victory Credits**

<b>1st Pursuit Group</b>				
	27th Pursuit Squadron 	94th Pursuit Squadron 	95th Pursuit Squadron 	147th Pursuit Squadron 
Victory Credits*	86	85	71	61
Victories:**	34 Airplanes 22 Balloons	54 Airplanes 13 Balloons	35 Airplanes 12 Balloons	28 Airplanes 3 Balloons
* Victory credits are based on the French Air Service system of counting one full credit for each pilot and/or observer involved in an aerial shoot-down. **Victories represent the actual number of enemy aircraft confirmed destroyed.				

<b>2ND PURSUIT GROUP</b>			
	13th Pursuit Squadron	22nd Pursuit Squadron	49th Pursuit Squadron
Victory Credits*	60	60	35
Victories:**	29 Airplanes	44 Airplanes 2 Balloons	24 Airplanes
* Victory credits are based on the French Air Service system of counting one full credit for each pilot and/or observer involved in an aerial shoot-down. **Victories represent the actual number of enemy aircraft confirmed destroyed.			

<b>3RD PURSUIT GROUP</b>				
	28th Pursuit Squadron 	93rd Pursuit Squadron 	103rd Pursuit Squadron 	213th Pursuit Squadron 
Victory Credits*	32	44	68	27
Victories:**	15 Airplanes	31 Airplanes 1 Balloon	47 Airplanes 2 Balloons	15 Airplanes 1 Balloon
* Victory credits are based on the French Air Service system of counting one full credit for each pilot and/or observer involved in an aerial shoot-down. **Victories represents the actual number of enemy aircraft confirmed destroyed.				

<b>4TH PURSUIT GROUP</b>				
	17th Pursuit Squadron	139th Pursuit Squadron	141st Pursuit Squadron	148th Pursuit Squadron
Victory Credits*	57	74	6	71
* Victory credits are based on the French Air Service system of counting one full credit for each pilot and/or observer involved in an aerial shoot-down.				

	<b>1st Army Observation Group</b>		<b>1st Corps Observation Group</b>	
	24th Observation Squadron	91st Observation Squadron	1st Observation Squadron	12th Observation Squadron
Victory Credits*	30	62	24	10
* Victory credits are based on the French Air Service system of counting one full credit for each pilot and/or observer involved in an aerial shoot-down.				

	<b>3rd Corps Observation Group</b>		<b>5th Corps Observation Group</b>	
	88th Observation Squadron	90th Observation Squadron	99th Observation Squadron	104th Observation Squadron
Victory Credits*	20	8	6	4
* Victory credits are based on the French Air Service system of counting one full credit for each pilot and/or observer involved in an aerial shoot-down.				

	<b>8th Observation Squadron</b>	<b>50th Observation Squadron</b>	<b>135th Observation Squadron</b>	<b>168th Observation Squadron</b>
Victory Credits*	8	2	24	6
* Victory credits are based on the French Air Service system of counting one full credit for each pilot and/or observer involved in an aerial shoot-down.				

<b>U.S. Air Service Bomber Squadrons</b>				
	11th Bomber Squadron	20th Bomber Squadron	96th Bomber Squadron	166th Bomber Squadron
Victory Credits*	64	48	94	30
* Victory credits are based on the French Air Service system of counting one full credit for each pilot and/or observer involved in an aerial shoot-down.				

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<p><b>A Splendid Little War</b></p>  <p><b>A Splendid Little War</b> A Chronology of Heroism In the Spanish-American War</p>	<p><b>Shinmiyangyo</b></p>  <p><b>The Other Korean War</b></p>	<p><b>Above and Beyond</b></p>  <p><b>Bonnes Nouvelles</b> A 50-page tribute to the recipients of the Medal of Honor, all written by eight graders at a school in Louisiana.</p>
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## About The Author:

# DOUG STERNER

**"Mr. Doug Sterner, in the truest sense of the word, is a genuine "All American." As a patriot he is the best of the best. His passion for our country, our citizens and our children runs deep in his veins. He feels in his soul the great indebtedness we have to our country for the freedoms we enjoy. Doug speaks with great enthusiasm and a tremendous fervor, leaving you with your heart racing, standing taller and possibly drawing a tear from your eye, feeling proud to be an American.**

*Peter C. Lemon, Recipient  
Congressional Medal of Honor*



Doug Sterner is a popular author, speaker, Webmaster and historian who has dedicated his life to preserving the stories of some of our Nation's greatest heroes. He has single-handedly authored more than 20,000 web pages in his popular site at [www.HomeOfHeroes.com](http://www.HomeOfHeroes.com). A dedicated public servant in his hometown of Pueblo, Colorado; he initiated and organized several programs to introduce Medal of Honor recipients to the community, including a series of school assemblies that brought history and inspiration to more than 32,000 youth in one day of activities. He and his wife Pam's continuing programs resulted in the community bidding for and hosting the Medal of Honor convention in Pueblo in September 2000. Other activities have resulted in local schools promoting and passing legislation in two states authorizing distinctive Medal of Honor license plates.

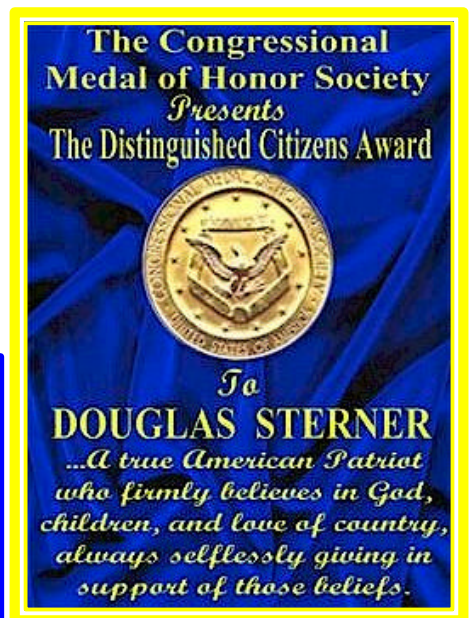
Doug is a decorated, two-tour veteran of service in Vietnam where he served as a squad leader in the US Army. Following discharge from active duty, he spent six years as a member of the Montana National Guard. In 1998 the Congressional Medal of Honor Society recognized the continuing efforts of the Sterner Family when it presented Doug with its prestigious and unique Distinguished Citizens Award. In 1999 Governor Bill Owens appointed Doug to the Colorado State Board of Veterans Affairs. In 2001 he was elected to a two-year term as Chairman of the Colorado State Board of Veterans Affairs.

**"As a patriot, speaker, writer and historian you are among the best.**

**"The fact that Doug laughed at my jokes in Da Nang (Vietnam) in 1971 has nothing to do with the praise I give him.**

**"Okay, It helped a little!"**

**Mr. Bob Hope**



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