

We (1st flight across the Atlantic) by Charles Lindbergh (1927)

He was born 4Feb1902 in Detroit, MI & died 26Aug74 in HI.

16th century Leonardo De Vinci experimented with parachutes. 1784 the first rigid parachute was built. 1903 Wright brothers 1st flight in Kitty Hawk, NC 1912 Captain Berry was the first to parachute from a plane. 1918 Germans were using parachutes in WWI.

Charles Lindbergh studied mechanical engineering at University of Wisconsin & then went to flight school in 1922, but didn't have enough money for the bond to take a solo flight. He barn-stormed in the Midwest with other pilots to get experience. Barn-storming was what they called flying from town to town to find people to pay \$5 for a short flight.

In April 1923 he bought his first plane (WWI military surplus) for \$500 (cost \$10,000 new). He still hadn't taken his first solo flight, so someone got him up to speed & a week later he took off cross-country. Finding a safe landing field was always a challenge and caused minor damage often.

15Mar24 he enlisted as a flying cadet in the Army Air Corps (18 out of 104 got their wings). The planes then only flew about 60 mph. 1925 he made two emergency landings using a parachute. Oct 1925, he entered the International Air Races (CA-NY), but abandoned due to mechanical troubles. Nov 1925, he enlisted in the National Guard to fly on Sundays.

15Apr26 air mail service began & he would fly St Louis to Chicago. At that time coast to coast flights took 36 hrs compared to 4 days when they sent mail on the train. Fog & sleet delayed the air mail & they sent it by train. He had to parachute out when he couldn't find the airport in the fog. This was before runway lights & modern equipment.

1919 Ray Orteig offered \$25,000 to the **1st to fly non-stop NY-Paris**. Charles found financial backing in St. Louis & 28Feb27 Ryan Airlines began construction on the plane to fly the Atlantic. They called it "**Spirit of St. Louis**" & he referred to the two of them as "we". It was 3610 miles from NY to Paris via Newfoundland & Ireland (he flew near the coast as much as he could for safety).

He took a 1-qt canteen of water & some sandwiches for the flight. He also took one gal of water, k-rations, flares & a life-raft for emergencies. 28Apr27 he took it for a test flight. 10May he left San Diego for St. Louis with 250 gallons of gas onboard (he opted for larger fuel tanks in lieu of a navigator). 12May he landed in NY.

20May27 he left NY with 450 gallons of fuel. This would give him 45 hrs of flying time. There is a cushion of air along the ground & he flew mostly at 10-200' above the water. He had to fly above or around storm clouds. 21May he circled the Eiffel Tower at 4000' and landed after **34 hrs in the air** (Pilgrims took 66 days). He was grateful for the average speed of 106 mph compared to the planes a few years ago.

Just months before his flight, two French fliers lost their lives trying to do the same. Prep before & after his flight caused him to go without sleep for 60 hours. There was an overwhelming welcome waiting for him in Europe. He was swarmed by crowds in Paris, Belgium & London.

President Coolidge sent the SS Memphis to Europe to bring him & his plane home where he received more parades & receptions in Washington DC, New York City & St. Louis. He arrived back in Washington on June 11th.

His flight brought America & Europe closer together (physically & politically).

Awards: Legion of honor (France); Gold medal (Belgium); Gold Aviation Cup (England); Flying Cross, Cross of Honor, medal of Valor & State Medal of Honor (USA).

Quotes:

1795 Ben Franklin was asked what good is your balloon? His reply was: "what good is a new born child?" Over 100 yrs later, Bleriot flew the English Channel & was asked the same.

"You were not all alone in the solitude of the sky & sea because every American heart from the Atlantic to the Pacific was beating for you." (NYC mayor Walker)

Additional notes (not in book):

The plane was sent to be on display in the National Air & Space Museum. He married Ann Morrow & had 6 children. But their 20-month old first born was kidnapped in 1932. It was the crime of the century. He was later found dead. The media & trial was too much for them & they exiled to England from '36-39. In '38 he received the German Cross & was impressed with their aviation advancement. He later became a consultant to the Air Force & Pan American Airlines.