

A Story of Two Flights; And Changes in 35-Year Span

(Editor's note: The Lone Eagle, Flying Fool, Lucky Lindbergh... these were nicknames which stirred the imagination of a nation 35 years ago. They belonged to a slim, quiet young man who had just made the first non-stop flight across the Atlantic. UPI reporter Robert J. Serling recently flew the Atlantic in a modern jet transport. Following is his story of the two flights.)

By ROBERT J. SERLING
UPI Aviation Editor

New York (UPI)—The day was May 20, 1927. The hour 7:52 a.m. EST. A plane waddled down a wet, muddy clay runway at an airport called Roosevelt field and finally lifted into the gray overcast.

Charles A. Lindbergh was on his way to Paris, 3,640 miles away.

The other day, another plane took off for Paris. It carried three pilots, a flight engineer, a navigator, a purser, five hostesses and 72 passengers. It used a concrete runway 10,892 feet long at a New York airport called Idlewild.

This is the story of the two flights—and the 35 years of aviation progress that occurred between them.

It was about an hour before the 10 a.m. departure time when Capt. John A. Michelson, a baldish, burly, cigar-smoking veteran of more than 17 years with Trans World Airlines, walked briskly into the crew briefing room.

He had just gone over his flight plan. He had checked the voluminous weather reports flowing in from a half dozen weather stations, two weather ships, about 25 other airlines that had been or were just over the north Atlantic, and the Paris weather bureau itself.

Fuel Consumption
Working with a TWA dispatcher, he had judged how the winds, assigned cruising altitude, weather, and the weight of passengers, baggage, cargo and mail would affect fuel consumption.

He asked for 19,262 gallons, then added another 2,000 because Paris was predicting rain and overcast which might mean a landing delay. As usual, the dispatcher tacked on an unofficial 100 gallons which airline pilots for years



'LONE EAGLE'—Thirty-five years have passed since Charles A. Lindbergh, the "Lone Eagle" (shown at left in 1927 file picture), made his historic solo crossing of the Atlantic. And trans-Atlantic flying has under-



gone some startling changes since the days of the "Spirit of St. Louis." Lindbergh is shown at right in a more recent file photo, made in 1958. (UPI)

have referred to as "insurance for my wife and kids."

(Lindbergh merely jammed 450 gallons into the fuel tanks of his Spirit of St. Louis, as much as they would hold. His decision to take off was based on a single weather report which turned out to be so inaccurate that he later said he never would have taken off if he had known what lay ahead.)

Michelson nodded pleasantly to his 10 crew members and introduced the flight deck personnel to the cabin attendants "in case you don't know one another."

"We estimate Paris in six hours and 45 minutes," Michelson announced. "Cruising altitude will be 33,000. The weather at Paris will be rain and overcast but we don't anticipate any problems. They are not forecasting any en route turbulence either, so you hostesses shouldn't have any trouble with meal service. Now, for those of you who haven't flown with me before, I want to know immediately if any problems arise in the cabin. Have you been over your emergency procedures?"

The five hostesses nodded.

Purser William Ledger arose.

Who Works Where

"I want you girls to decide before we get on the plane who works first class and who works tourist," he said. "Then

I'm coming around to each of you and ask exactly what's your station in the event of an emergency. We'll serve a continental breakfast after we reach cruising altitude, then we'll show a movie, followed by cocktails and dinner. Any questions?"

"I hope we all have a pleasant trip," Michelson said.

(These 11 persons man a \$6.5 million Boeing 707 jetliner. The little Ryan monoplane that Lindbergh flew cost less than \$13,000—just about the cost of the nose section of a Boeing 707.)

The TWA crew filed out of the briefing room to board a yellow crew bus. Behind them, in a wall cabinet, was displayed the identical emergency equipment their own jetliner would be carrying.

A radar reflector that unfolded like an umbrella. Six life rafts capable of carrying 152 persons. Life jackets. Police whistle. Gloves. Sea water desalter. First aid kits. Signal flares. Mirror signal. Fishing kit. Sunburn lotion. Yellow dye. Candy, chewing gum and vitamins. Flashlights. Pliers, repair kit. Storage water. Radio transmitter. Inflation pumps. Oars. Life raft canopies. Protestant, Catholic and Jewish Bibles.

(Lindbergh took along one air raft with a pump and repair kit, a four-quart canteen

six European cities en route to Paris.

(Lindbergh had no radio. His only voice contact during his trip came near the coast of Ireland when he swooped down near a fishing boat and yelled: "Which way is Ireland?" They just waved.)

In the first class cabin, the purser and two hostesses began preparing liquor and meal service while passengers watched a movie on a screen that dropped conveniently from the ceiling just ahead of the seats. The sound came from tiny earphones at each seat. Capt. Michelson asked the purser which movie was showing.

"It's something with Elvis Presley," Ledger said.

"Lindbergh didn't have it that rough," Michelson chuckled.

After the movie, the first class passengers settled back for cocktails and dinner. They had a choice of seven entrees ranging from broiled Maine lobster to sirloin steak cooked to order, plus wine, champagne, appetizers, turtle soup, coffee and French pastry. The tourist section didn't have that much of a choice but they ate better than Lindbergh.

(He took along, besides the water, two chocolate bars and five ham sandwiches. He ate only two of the latter.)

Flight 802 touched down in Paris at 10:40 p.m. Paris time. It had taken just six hours and



SERVICE IMPROVED—Like the size and speed of aircraft, in-flight food service has improved in the 35 years since Charles A. Lindbergh first flew the Atlantic. At left are water, sandwiches and chocolate bars such as the "Lone Eagle" carried for his 33-hour journey. At right is the extensive Royal Am-

bassador meal service—steak cooked to order, fresh vegetables, imported wines and champagne, and dessert—that travelers enjoy on Trans World Airlines flights between New York and Paris. TWA's jets make the trip in less than seven hours. (UPI)

40 minutes, five minutes less than the original estimate. For Capt. Michelson, it was the end of a trip he had made more than 1,300 times. And flight 802 was trans-Atlantic trip number 52,662 for TWA alone since 1946.

40 minutes, Lindbergh was only 600 miles out of New York. Ahead of him still lay more than 3,000 miles and 27 hours of peril and prayer. (At approximately this moment, John Michelson was a chubby-cheeked boy doing an arithmetic lesson in grammar school. He did not know it then, but what transpired on that day 35 years ago was to put a little bit of the Lone Eagle into him and every airman to come. And a little bit of the Spirit of St. Louis in the giant jets that would follow.)

Perl Funeral Home Named To Order

Perl Funeral home, Medford, has been appointed a member of the Order of the Golden Rule in Medford.

The order is an international affiliation of funeral directors having certain high ideals of service and rigid ethical standards, order officials noted.

The membership is not permanent and may be revoked at any time by the order. Each year, affiliation with the order automatically expires, and the record of each member for the preceding year is considered before being readmitted to membership.

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707 Moves Up
Michelson hauled back on the yoke. At 166 knots, the nose came up. Behind the ground-gulping giant was more than 8,000 feet of runway. The 707 clawed upward. "Gear up!" sang out Michelson.

Exactly 293,303 pounds of metal, glass, fabric, food, fuel and human beings were airborne.

(The Spirit of St. Louis, called the "M-2" by its builders, grossed 5,130 pounds fully loaded—1,000 pounds less than a single engine on a 707. It carried 450 gallons of fuel. Flight 802 burned more than that in the first three minutes after takeoff. Lindbergh used only 2,500 feet of runway and almost didn't make it.)

Thirty minutes later, flight 802 was over Cape Cod and heading across the Atlantic at 33,000. The crew had settled down to a routine marked by an incongruous combination of relaxation and alertness. Michelson's eyes roved incessantly over his 211 instruments. The airspeed was 512 knots—more than 550 miles an hour. Flight engineer Fred Moser at regular intervals computed precious fuel consumption.

(Lindbergh passed over Cape more than two hours after takeoff. He had only 11 flight instruments. His top airspeed for the entire trip was less than 120 miles an hour. His altitude ranged from 50 to 10,000 feet.)

Navigator John Larsen was using seven different means of determining and keeping position, including the new Doppler system, which projects four invisible beams to earth. When they bounce back, their pattern appears on an instrument that records the plane's position relative to a pre-set course and the distance to destination.

(Lindbergh's sole navigation instrument was a relatively new earth inductor compass. He hit the coast of Ireland only 25 miles off his intended course, but admitted later it was mostly luck.)

Second Officer John Motel was handling communications. Four separate radios. Twenty air traffic control position reports to be made on the flight. About a dozen contacts with TWA radio. Five fresh weather reports from no less than

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