

Charles Augustus Lindbergh

1.

Born

February 4, 1902

Detroit, Michigan

Entered Service

1924

United States Army

Air Service Reserve Pilot

Little Falls, Morrison County, Minnesota

Died

August 26, 1974

Kipahulu, Maui, Hawaii



Early Years

Charles Augustus Lindbergh was born on February 4, 1902 to Charles Augustus Lindbergh Sr. and Evangeline (Lodge Land) Lindbergh in Detroit, Michigan. The family moved to Little Falls, Minnesota area where Charles grew up on a farm.

In childhood, Lindbergh showed exceptional mechanical ability. At the age of 18 years, he entered the University of Wisconsin to study engineering. However, Lindbergh was more interested in the exciting, young field of aviation than he was in school. After two years, he left school to become a barnstormer, a pilot who performed daredevil stunts at fairs.³

In 1924, Lindbergh enlisted in the United States Army so that he could be trained as an Army Air Service Reserve pilot. In 1925, he graduated from the Army's flight-training school at Brooks and Kelly fields, near San Antonio, as the best pilot in his class. After Lindbergh completed his Army training, the Robertson Aircraft Corporation of St. Louis hired him to fly the mail between St. Louis and Chicago. He gained a reputation as a cautious and capable pilot.³

In 1919, a New York City hotel owner named Raymond Orteig offered \$25,000 to the first aviator to fly nonstop from New York to Paris. Several pilots were killed or injured while competing for the Orteig prize. By 1927, it had still not been won. Lindbergh believed he could win it if he had the right airplane. He persuaded nine St. Louis businessmen to help him finance the cost of a plane. Lindbergh chose Ryan Aeronautical Company of San Diego to manufacture a special plane, which he helped design. He named the plane the "Spirit of St. Louis". On May 10-11, 1927, Lindbergh tested the plane by flying from San Diego to New York City, with an overnight stop in St. Louis. The flight took 20 hours 21 minutes, a transcontinental record.³

The War Years

On December 12, 1927, Captain Charles A. Lindbergh was awarded by President Calvin Coolidge the Medal of Honor and Distinguished Flying Cross. He was awarded for displaying heroic courage and skill as a navigator, at the

risk of his life, by his nonstop flight in his airplane, the Spirit of St. Louis, from New York City to Paris, France, 20-21 May 1927, by which Capt. Lindbergh not only achieved the greatest individual triumph of any American citizen but demonstrated that travel across the ocean by aircraft was possible.^{1,3} Lindbergh is the only non-combat Medal of Honor recipient.



The Post War Years

Lindbergh's transatlantic flight thrust him into the spotlight. He met Anne Spencer Morrow while on a good will mission to Mexico. They married May 27, 1929. Charles and Anne had six children. On March 1, 1932 their son Charles Augustus Lindbergh, Jr. was kidnapped and murdered by Bruno Hauptmann. This event led to the family moving to Europe in search of privacy and safety.³

While in Europe, Lindbergh invented an artificial heart, and toured the aircraft industries of France and Germany. In 1938 Lindbergh accepted the German Medal of Honor. This caused an outcry in the United States among critics of Nazism. The Lindbergh family returned to the United States in 1939. He joined the America First Committee becoming their lead spokesman, which opposed voluntary entry into WWII. After the attack on Pearl Harbor he stopped his noninvolvement activity and tried to reenlist but was refused. He served as a test pilot for the Ford Motor Company and United Aircraft Corporation.³

In April 1944, Lindbergh went to the Pacific war area as an adviser to the U.S. Navy where he flew about 50 combat missions as a civilian. He developed cruise control techniques that increased the capabilities of American pilots.³

After the War, he withdrew from public attention. Charles continued to work as a consultant in the aviation field. His aptitude for mechanics, and passion for aeronautics and conservation left an indelible mark in history.

Charles A. Lindbergh died of cancer on August 26, 1974 in his home and is buried in Palapalo Ho'omau Church Cemetery on Maui, Hawaii

In 2002, on the 75th Anniversary, Erik Lindbergh recreated his grandfather's transatlantic flight. ⁶

**Compiled by Susan Duff-Erkel
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SOURCES

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