



COL. CHAS. A. LINDBERGH'S OWN LIFE STORY

THE STORY SO FAR

Lindbergh completed his education at the University of Wisconsin where he became interested in aviation. Later he entered a flying school and flew with a barnstorming outfit as a wing walker and parachute jumper.

He bought a Jenny plane and flew through Texas and the South. Lindbergh became interested in government aviation and applied for enlistment as a cadet in the Brooks Air School. He took examinations in January, 1924, and entered the school in March. Before entering the school he went on a barnstorming and pleasure trip through the South with Leon Kilik.

Lindbergh was just one of 104 cadets and was awarded the adventures and trials of the other cadets who were going to Kelly Field. But he quickly took up the disciplined life to learn the finer points of flying.

Strict training methods threw fear into the hearts of most cadets, but Lindbergh passed initial tests because of his previous experience. He was chosen in the class of 104 "rot the wings."

Training at Brooks Field progressed, and Lindbergh gained additional experience in flying all types of planes from the small aerobics to the large bombers. Cadets played many pranks on each other to relieve the strain of study, and Lindbergh once placed a pole cat in the first sergeant's pillow.

Lindbergh was transferred to Kelly Field, September 1924. The training became more difficult. Shortly after the course started, he nearly was "washed out" by the first sergeant, but he proved that he was not at fault and was allowed to stay.

Another trick on the first sergeant was the money. Lindbergh had a DH-4B, flown by Lieutenant Maughin at about a 5,000 foot altitude and several hundred feet above the clouds.

"I was flying on the left of the top unit, Lieutenant McAllister on my right, and Cadet Love leading. When we nosed down on the DH, I attacked from the left and Lieutenant McAllister from the right. After Cadet Love pulled up, I continued to dive on the DH for a short time before pulling up to the left. I saw no other ship nearby.

"I passed above the DH and a moment later felt a slight jolt followed by a crash. My head was thrown forward against the cowl and my plane seemed to turn around and hang nearly motionless for an instant.

"I closed the throttle and saw an SE-5 with Lieutenant McAllister in the cockpit a few feet on my left. He was apparently unhurt and getting ready to jump.

"Our ships were locked together with the fuselages approximately parallel. My right wing was damaged and had folded back slightly, covering the forward right-hand corner of the cockpit.

"Then the ship started to mill around and the wires began whistling. The right wing commenced vibrating and striking my head at the bottom of each oscillation.

"I removed the rubber band fastening the belt, unbuckled it, climbed out past the trailing edge of the damaged wing, and with my feet on the cowl, on the right side of the cockpit, which was then in a nearly vertical position, I jumped backwards, as far as possible.

"I had no difficulty in locating the pull-ring and experienced no sensation of falling. The wreckage was falling nearly straight down and for some time I fell in line with its path and only slightly to one side. Fearing the wreckage might fall on me, I did not pull the rip cord until I dropped several hundred feet and into the clouds.

"During this time I had turned one-half revolution and was falling flat face downward. The parachute functioned perfectly; almost as soon as I pulled the rip cord the riser perked on my shoulders, the leg straps tightened, my head went down, and the chute fully opened.

"I saw Lieutenant McAllister floating above me and the wrecked ships pass about 100 yards to one side, continuing to spin to the right and leaving a trail of lighter fragments along their path. I watched them until, still locked together, they crashed in the mesquite about 2,000 feet below and burst into flames several seconds after impact.

"Next I turned my attention to locating a landing place. I was over mesquite and drifting in the general direction of a plowed field which I reached by slipping the chute.

"Shortly before striking the ground, I was drifting backwards, but was able to swing around in the harness just as I landed on the side of a ditch less than 100 feet from the edge of the mesquite.

"Although the impact of landing was too great for me to remain standing, I was not injured in any way. The parachute was still held open by the wind and did not collapse until I had pulled in one group of ground lines.

"During my descent I lost my goggles, a vest pocket camera which fitted tightly in my hip pocket, and the rip cord of the parachute.

"During the descent all the other planes broke formation and arched around us. Every ship within sight proceeded at full speed to the spot and before long the air was full of machines.

"Several of the De Havillands landed in the plowing and within half an hour two planes with extra parachutes were sent to take us back to Kelly. About an hour after the crash we had two new SE-5's and were back in the air again."

The parachute is a marvelous invention, experimented with as early as the sixteenth century by Leonardo da Vinci.

The first parachute was built by a Frenchman in 1784. This parachute was a rigid structure covered with very strong paper and fabric. It was used in a jump from a building in Paris.

About a year later, the same type of parachute was dropped from a hot air balloon in England. Soon jumps began to be made from balloons with other types of rigid parachutes.

About 1880, Captain Thomas Baldwin made a name for himself by jumping from hot-air balloons with a chute which was a forerunner of the present type.

He was the first really successful jumper, but success in those days was judged by how long a man lived in this profession.

In 1912 the first parachute jump from an airplane was made. The container was attached to the plane and the man who did the jumping pulled the parachute out as he fell.

The war really proved that the parachute is a life-saving apparatus for use with airplanes. Early in 1918 the Allied pilots reported that German pilots were using parachutes to escape from their planes whenever they were out of control or set on fire.

This was the beginning of insistent demands on the part of our

allied pilots for parachute equipment. The A. E. F. tried to produce a satisfactory parachute by combining the good features of several chutes already in existence.

All of these, however, were very bulky and heavy and hard to get on the plane.

During the summer of 1918, the United States Air Service officials appealed to Washington for good airplane parachutes.

A large number of tests were made. Finally, after combining all the good points of foreign and American chutes, a satisfactory free type of parachute was developed.

By free type I mean the kind of parachute which is entirely independent of the plane.

Stories often come out in the newspapers about parachutes that fail to open. What probably really happens is that men who make jumps from planes are killed before they are able to pull the rip cord which opens a parachute.

In the past there was always a great deal of danger in testing out a new type of chute, but now they have been developed to such a high degree of efficiency that there are practically no fatalities.

Each parachute that is used by the Government is repacked every month and tested every six months.

(To Be Continued.)

The average man has twenty-four pounds of carbon in his body. The Panama Canal is fifty miles long.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN warm weather these suits acquired an odor similar to that of a goat which has been in the barn all winter and the fur itself was far from comfortable.

On the trip back a piston froze in the engine. For two days the cadet was alternately roasting in the southern sun and freezing in the Texas nights while he guarded his ship and waited for a new engine.

After our return from Galveston while we were practicing formation attack on two seaters, I experienced one of the incidents of the military pilot's life.

I made my first emergency parachute jump. When an Army plane crashes, the pilot is required to write a detailed report of the crash. My account was as follows:

"A nine-ship SE-5 formation, commanded by Lieutenant Blackburn, was attacking a DH-4B, flown by Lieutenant Maughin at about a 5,000 foot altitude and several hundred feet above the clouds.

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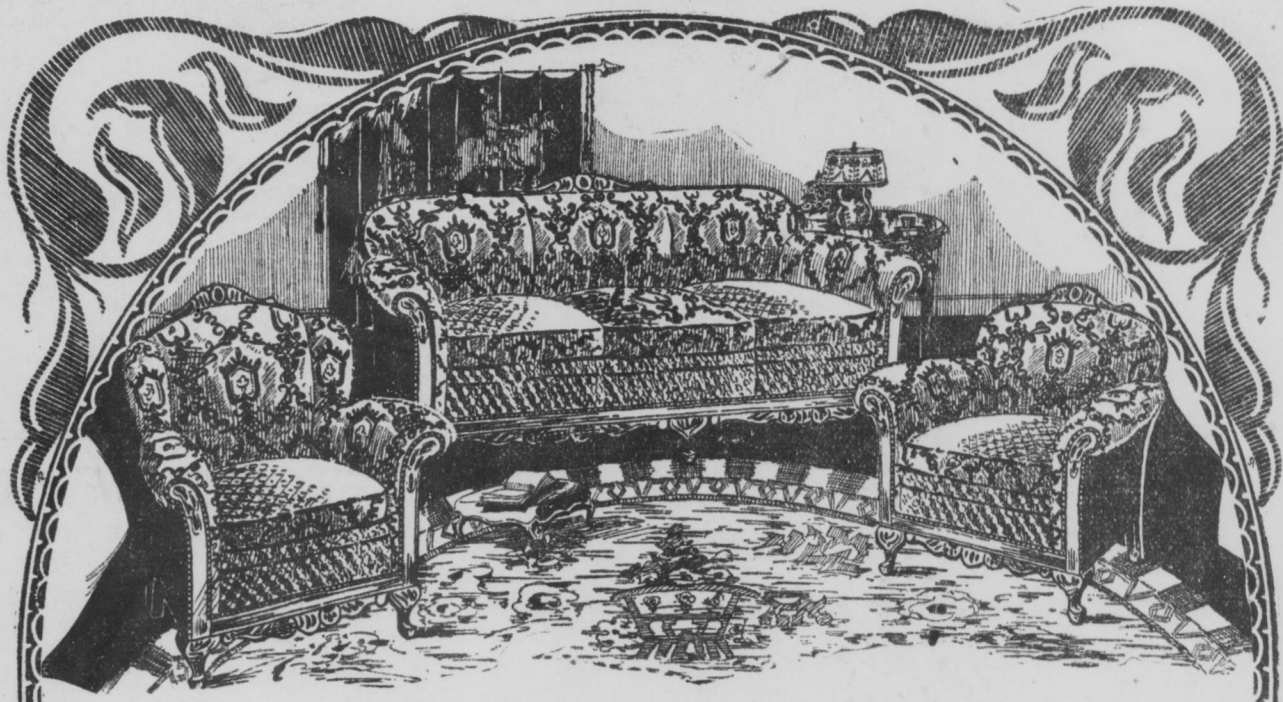
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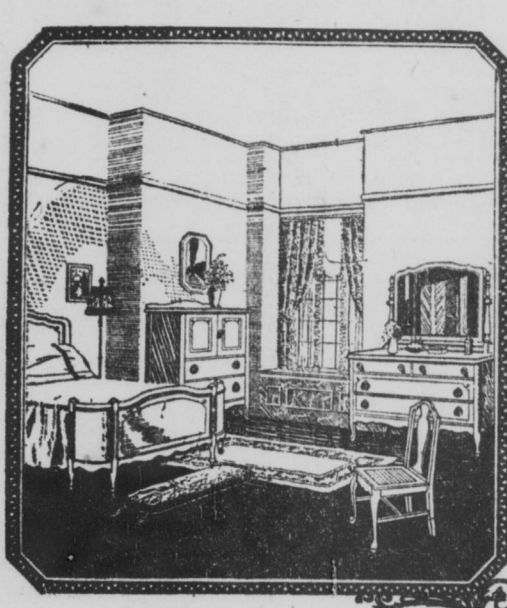
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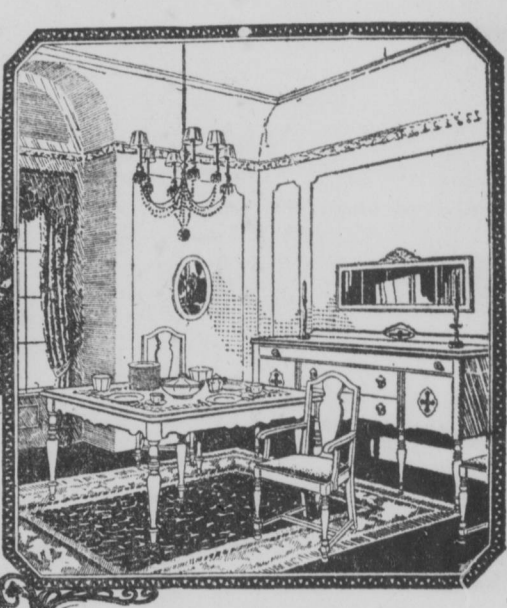
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