



Lindbergh

A. Scott Berg

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This is a most compelling story of a most significant life; the most private of public figures finally revealed with a sweep and detail never before possible. In the skilled hands of A. Scott Berg, this is at once Lindbergh the hero--and Lindbergh the man.

Awarded the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for Biography.

From one of America's most acclaimed biographers comes the definitive account of the life of one of the nation's most legendary, controversial, and enigmatic figures: aviator Charles A. Lindbergh.

Lindbergh Details

Date : Published September 1st 1999 by Berkley (first published 1998)

ISBN : 9780425170410

Author : A. Scott Berg

Format : Paperback 640 pages

Genre : Biography, History, Nonfiction, Aviation, Biography Memoir

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From Reader Review Lindbergh for online ebook

Christopher says

There is no airman as famous as Charles Lindbergh and yet, aside from his flight across the Atlantic from New York to Paris, very little is actually known or understood about his life. Mr. Berg does much to rectify this in this wonderful biography bringing a warmth and compassion to his subject that he never enjoyed from the press at the height of his popularity.

Mr. Berg starts this biography by tracing Lindbergh's family roots back to Sweden and by the end of the first part Lindbergh has crossed the Atlantic. The second part deals with his fame, his marriage to Anne Morrow, the kidnapping of their first child, the trial for the accused kidnapper and murderer, and the resulting media bonanza afterwards. The third part deals with Lindbergh's self-imposed exile in Europe, his work with the America First committee to keep America out of World War II, and his war record test flying planes and fighting the Japanese in the South Pacific. The final part deals with Lindbergh's later blooming interest in writing, his interest in wildlife and aboriginal populations in Africa and the Philippines, and, finally, his death from cancer in Hawaii. All the while Mr. Berg brings a genuine warmth and understanding of his principal subject as well as those close to him. In these pages, Mr. Lindbergh is not just the brave pilot who made the first non-stop trip across the Atlantic, but also the Renaissance man who pioneered artificial organs, rockets that would propel man towards the stars, and the technical expert whose imprint on the design of airports and commercial airlines would bring passenger airlines to the country and the world not long after his famous flight. Indeed, Lindbergh's fingerprints are on nearly every great invention in medicine and air travel from the first half of the Twentieth century.

At the same time, Mr. Berg also gives readers an intimate view of Lindbergh's wife, Anne, who would love him to his dying days, but whose mildly autocratic and cold-hearted ways would not make it easy for her to love him. Mr. Berg notes that she had at least one extramarital affair and possibly a second one during their long marriage. Lindbergh may even have had one of his own later in life, although Mr. Berg does not seem to think so. He gives critical appraisal Anne's writings remarking that she was one of the great published diarists of the century. In a quiet way, Anne was just as accomplished and Charles.

Yet this book does have a few flaws. For one, Mr. Berg seems to pull back from fully criticizing Lindbergh's America First speeches as anti-Semitic. Perhaps Lindbergh's were a form of diet anti-Semitism, but that doesn't make them any less excusable. And for all the attention Mr. Berg pours into Anne as character in this biography, I find it curious that he did not even write an afterword about the rest of her life even though she died five years before the publication of this biography. Also, despite the fact that Charles and Anne had six kids together, aside from their births, you would never really know they were even there. Much of the writings about Lindbergh's relationship with his children is relegated to the fourth part of this book instead of being a critical component to the narrative, as if they were an afterthought to the author.

Overall though, this is an excellent biography and I recommend it to anyone who is interested in the most famous pilot's life and legacy.

Glynn says

This is a long book but well worth the effort reading it. It is very detailed about the life of the man Lindbergh

who became this country's first superstar, hounded by paparazzi. I knew a little about Lindbergh (his flight across the Atlantic, the kidnapping of his baby and subsequent trial) but not all the amazing things that the author meticulously details. A. Scott Berg really does a great job in revealing a man who tried his best to keep a lot of his life private. An eye opening account of a very colorful character during a fast changing time in the history of America.

Matt says

Celebrity in America is a fixation. What do you need to do to be a celebrity? Well, it'll help if your parents or husband is rich. Fertility drugs plus multiple births almost assures you of a television show. If that doesn't work, you can always willingly place yourself on a "deserted" island and engage in various frivolous challenges.

How did you become a celebrity in the old days? Try getting into a monoplane, take off from New York, fly across the Atlantic, and land in Paris, doing something no one else had ever done and which several had died trying. In the old days, you had to be a hero first.

What did you do when you were 25?

Charles Augustus Lindbergh is known and defined for two things: his famous 1927 solo flight in *The Spirit of St. Louis*; and his role with America First, an organization dedicated to keeping the United States out of World War II. When I was very young, I read about Lindbergh the hero - and adored him; when I was still kind of young, I read about Lindbergh the anti-Semite - and hated him. Now that I'm not really that young, I decided I should read about his whole life, not just the high and low.

A. Scott Berg's book is the only place to go. It is a comprehensive, sweeping, informative one-volume life of the Lone Eagle. It is mostly shorn of analysis and attempts to stand without judgment, though it is impossible for any biographer not to take sides with his subject, at least a little. If there is any theme to this Pulitzer Prize winning book, it is that of celebrity: how it instantly changed 25-year-old Lindbergh's life, taking him from relative-unknown to the most famous man in the world - feted, adored, honored, and paid handsomely. Berg goes to great pains to show both the doors this opened, and the price he paid. For as Berg astutely notes, as long as Lindbergh was a blank slate, everyone loved him without hesitation. But this is America, and we like to build you up, tear you down, let you wallow, and if you're still alive, give you a second act. As soon as Lindbergh started to take positions - on his work, his privacy, his politics - he made enemies, a lot of them.

Until reading this book, I never knew how much I hated TMZ or *Us Weekly*. For as much as Lindbergh gained, and he gained a lot - millions of dollars, the ability to travel the whole world, the freedom to do whatever he wanted - he lost almost as much.

Berg begins Lindbergh's story with his Swedish forebears, his birth in Michigan, and his troubled early life in Little Falls, Minnesota, with a politician father and bipolar mother. What is striking of Lindbergh's early life is how unremarkable he is. He wasn't successful in school, he had a tumultuous family life, he didn't know what he wanted for himself, and he had a serious case of self-imposed sexual repression (I suppose Garrison Keillor would blame the Swedish blood in his veins).

After leaving school, Lindbergh started flight school, when the school promptly closed. He took up

barnstorming, learned to fly, and survived four emergency parachute drops. He flew a mail route stationed out of Lambert Field, in St. Louis. Then came the Contest - the first non-stop flight across the Atlantic.

Lindbergh did it, of course, but what is amazing is how small a part of his life that was. It was the turning point of a fascinating epic. In Berg's telling, the famous flight takes up less than half a chapter, and is probably one of the least interesting parts of the book. Indeed, Lindbergh is a child of fortune. He was the first to do this task, but just barely. Others accomplished the feat soon after. It just so happened he was a little quicker. And it just so happened that he was impossibly handsome, with that dimpled chin and that curly hair.

Fame followed. And marriage. He wed a diplomat's daughter - the talented Anne Morrow. Then comes tragedy, and it's so Shakespearean you think it's fiction. There are two chapters dedicated to Bruno Richard Hauptman and the Crime of the Century, a chilling tale that starts with an empty baby's crib and ends in the electric chair.

From there, Lindbergh leaves America for Europe to recapture his privacy. He becomes a civilian shuttle diplomat, and unfortunately begins to fawn over Nazi Germany (there is a darkly comic scene where Goering is showing Lindbergh his tiger, and the tiger urinates on Goering's white pants).

Berg spends a good deal of time on Lindbergh's America First speeches. This was the only time in the book I felt like Berg was taking sides. He bends over backwards to rehabilitate Lindbergh's reputation during this period. Really, though, the rehabilitation is necessary. I think it's a little simplistic to tar Lindy as an anti-Semite just because he wanted to keep America out of war. Of course, there was good evidence, even in the 30's, that Germany was persecuting the Jews. But before you get on your high horse and judge Lindbergh, I got to ask: what did you do during Bosnia, Rwanda, and Darfur? Exactly. We have 21st century, 24-hour a day communications, and we've ignored three genocides in 20 years. It's forgivable that Lindbergh wouldn't have known the full extent of the Nazis' misdeeds, or might've been unable to believe it. (I guess when it comes to the Holocaust, all rational discussion goes out the window). When Pearl Harbor was bombed, Lindbergh tried to serve his country, but FDR blacklisted him from military service and almost all civilian contractors. Eventually, Lindy went to the South Pacific as a civilian consultant, illegally flew over 50 bombing missions, and shot down a Japanese plane.

Lindbergh did many other amazing things. He was instrumental in helping Dr. Robert Goddard start the American Rocket program. He was fascinated with medical science and helped develop an artificial heart. He won the Medal of Honor (Berg annoyingly refers to it as the "Congressional" Medal of Honor, which is incorrect) and the Pulitzer Prize. In his later life he became a devoted conservationist. He was an iconoclast: demanding of his children; meticulous in his personal life; untethered and always on the move. There are many admirable traits, along with many unflattering ones. He was stubborn, refused to back down, and refused to rethink long-held positions. He could be hard and unfeeling towards his wife, show flashes of great temper, and lacked the ability to understand that while he was "great" - thrust up from the masses by luck, skill, and the alignment of the stars - others were just "normal".

Oddly, the most thrilling part of this book is the story of Lindbergh and Anne's marriage. In the front part of the book, I was starting to wonder if Berg was simply going to ignore this dark facet to Lindy's life; however, by the last third, it took center-stage. Anne was a supremely talented and bestselling author. However, she was also fragile, pensive, and shy, and her belligerent, demanding, oft-immature husband came close to destroying her. As Berg notes, Lindbergh set the tone of the marriage. When he wanted to leave for parts uncharted, he left, while Anne stayed behind with the children. When Lindbergh wanted to be home, Anne had to wait on him hand-and-foot (he even threatened to shoot the phone when she attempted to answer it). I

became so sickened with his behavior that I actually cheered when Anne finally had an affair (you will too; for all his bravery, foresight, and achievements, Lindbergh was a grade-A jerk). In the end, though, Anne chose to stick with him.

Lindbergh died of cancer in his 70s. Knowing the end was coming, he planned it down to the last detail, even plotting out a way that he could be buried without embalming (under Hawaii law, he had to be in the ground within 8 hours of death). Whatever else you think of the guy, and I have strongly conflicting thoughts about him, he faced the end like...well, like someone who'd been taunting death his whole life.

"Lindbergh praised the doctors for having done 'a magnificent job,' but he realized they were fighting a losing battle. he did not want to chance 'another 36 hours,' which might bring enough deterioration to prevent his going [to Hawaii:] at all. The doctor accused the patient of turning his back on medical science. Lindbergh replied that science had done all it could, that the problem was no longer medical but philosophical."

Berg is a great synthesizer of information. He uses a lot of primary sources (and both Lindbergh and Anne were prolific writers) so the story often comes in their own words, with great insight into their minds. Of Lindbergh and Anne, I felt I knew Anne better. Lindbergh always remains at an arm's length. This isn't Berg's fault. Lindbergh was a stoic and never partook of a deep internal dialogue (or if he did, he never wrote about it). Anne, on the other hand, was all feeling, so the best way to understand Lindbergh is to understand Anne, and Lindbergh's impact on her.

Berg steps back and does a good job of letting his story tell itself. He's gathered the various parts and put them in their proper place; he does not inject himself with flowery prose or analysis.

Fittingly, it is Anne, when writing about that moment when her future husband landed his plane in Paris, who delivers the great epitaph to Charles Lindbergh's life:

"There is something in the directness - simplicity - innocence of that boy arriving after that terrific flight - completely unaware of the world interest - the wild crowds below. The rush of the crowds to the plane is symbolic of life rushing at him - a new life - new responsibilities - he was completely unaware of & unprepared for. I feel for him - mingled excitement & apprehension - a little what one feels when a child is born & you look at his fresh untouched...little face & know that he will meet joy - but sorrow too - struggle - pain - frustration."

Jeannie says

After reading the fiction novel: Aviator's wife, written from Anne Morrows point of view, I got interested in the whole story behind Charles Lindbergh. Scott Berg wrote a fabulous biography, Pulitzer price worthy. Starting with the grandparents, background information on different places in the United States, all the inventions and science projects that Charles Lindbergh was involved with, the aviation parts, the kidnapping,

trial of the century, the rise and fall from stardom, anti-Semitism and ending with Lindbergh's later years and his involvement with protection of nature. Scott Berg had access to Ann's diaries as well, which made it an even more compelling read. The author wrote without making judgments and leaves it to the reader to form an opinion about Charles Lindbergh. My opinion: Charles Lindbergh was a hero of his time, who kept being modest. He probably had a borderline personality (Asperger's syndrome) with emotional detachment and a compulsive approach to even day to day activities, because that was the way he had control and was successful in his legendary flight crossing the ocean. I had problems with Charles and Ann's decisions to leave their two first born sons behind for long time periods to explore the world by plane. The biography was written before the knowledge of Charles' 7 illegitimate children by 3 different women in Europe. This explains his long absences from his marriage since the late 1950's.

Helga Cohen says

This was a fascinating book about a compelling figure, aviator Charles Lindbergh, written by a very deserved Pulitzer Prize writer. He writes with clarity a very definitive biography of a legendary, controversial and mesmerizing man and his wife. I learned much about his life from his early childhood, his early heroic aviation successes, the kidnapping of his son, his anti-war non-intervention stance, and how the press treated him. It was also fascinating to learn about his interests in science and medicine and how he was involved in the early design of the artificial heart and medical research. He spent his later years on advocacy of the environment and traveled the world in support of it. He was a very complex figure. We also learn a lot about his wife, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, her life and her trials and her husband's neglect. It was well worth reading. I highly recommend this book.

Will Byrnes says

The book is well-deserving of its Pulitzer. Lindbergh was one of the most interesting people of the 20th century and this book gives us a fly-on-the-wall look at many critical parts of his life, the heroics of his early aviation triumphs, the horror of the kidnapping of his child, his elevation and victimization by the press. I learned much that I did not know about Lindbergh, for instance that he helped design an early artificial heart, that he applied his aviation expertise to revolutionize archaeology and that he operated as a spy for the USA while on visits to Germany and to the USSR. There is much more in this large volume. And there is much time allocated to his wife Ann, a fascinating person in her own right. A great read, not only full of information, but engaging and enjoyable.

Kristi Fleming says

"Lindbergh" by Scott Berg is the first biography I've ever read. That being said I didn't know what to expect but felt propelled to read it after reading "The Aviator's Wife". There were substantial portions that I found very interesting but also sections that plainly said were downright boring. I was disappointed that the book lacked emotion and at times felt like just words drafted on a page rather than exposing the deep soul of a man.

There is so much more to this man than that of his transatlantic flight. He achieved so much more in his

lifetime and yet for most of us we only knew him as the man and "The Spirit of St. Louis".

It is apparent that Lindbergh suffered from OCD, which contributed to his genius as well as his inability for personal intimacy for those that he loved. Lindbergh served this world well but at the expense of his family, so sad for the people who loved him.

After Charles' death the Times editorial said it best; "Charles Lindbergh was both the beneficiary and the victim of celebrity experienced by no other American in this century". The majority of his life was spent at the cruel hand of the press and changed the course of his life forever. It really made me think about the constant hounding celebrities have to endure each and every day and the truth or lies that are printed about them. Why is it that we feel the need to be notified of the most intimate details of their lives? Hmm. Something to ponder.

Upon further research, Lindbergh had a relationship with three women, friends, in Germany and sired a total of seven children. It was disappointing to note that the relationships with these women and his other children were not discussed in his biography and how a man that professed the good character of a man could live a double life.

Chrissie says

This book, the whole 31 hours of the audio version, was fascinating from the very start to the very end. I was not once bored. The spread of topics covered is amazing. Surely you already know about Lindbergh's solo non-stop transatlantic flight of 33 and 1/2 hours in 1927 and the deluge of media coverage that never abated for the rest of his life and of the kidnapping of his 20-month old son in 1932. Most probably you have heard mention of his possibly anti-Semitic views. All of this is covered and much, much, much more. There is a thorough discussion of his anti-Semitic statements. There is his troubled relationship with his wife, author Anne Morrow Lindbergh. Her extramarital relationships and his inability to EVER be at home. Their respective writing careers, both his own and his wife's. Not one of these issues is cut and dry. To understand you need the details and you are given these details in a thorough but also captivating manner. Humorous anecdotes too - Göring had a pet lion that peed on his trousers. Lindbergh's daughter, who later became an author in her own right, even as a child threw out priceless lines. These are quoted. You will laugh and laugh. Lindbergh was a savant. He wrote. He philosophized. He traveled and saw the world, the whole world. Yes, he fought in the Second World War even after he had renounced his military title as colonel. He shot down a Japanese pilot, advised MacArthur – all without military rank or pay. He wanted to do his part once America had joined the war. His disputes with Roosevelt are detailed, starting from their disagreement on air mail contracts. When he lived in France Lindbergh worked with the French Nobel Prize-winning surgeon Dr. Alexis Carrel. He invented a glass perfusion pump making future heart surgeries possible. He was a conservationist and an environmentalist. So you think he was only the aviator who crossed the Atlantic in his little *Spirit of St. Louis* winning the Orteig. No! That is simply the beginning of the story.

All these topics are interestingly presented, and it is this that makes the book fun to read. The little details are sometimes amazing, sometimes, heartrending, sometimes amusing. At the end you know his personal traits, his strengths and weaknesses, not only of him but his wife and children too. The book moves chronologically forward. It covers his parents' lives, his birth in 1902 Detroit and his death in 1974 Maui, Hawaii, of lymphoma. He planned every detail of his funeral and burial! Weird, to say the least! This is all part of who he was. He was despotic, could never sit still and had to control everyone and everything. You get the good and the bad. The family endorsed the writing of this biography and provided full documentation – letters and

diaries and interviews. The book was written with their consent. I wondered at times if perhaps the author's views were a bit too lenient, but let me state clearly, I do not find the book favorably biased. I wished at times that some of the quotes were discussed and evaluated more thoroughly. OK, that is what was said and there is documented proof, but how does the author interpret the facts. I feel the author should have more clearly spoken of the rampant anti-Semitism in the US (and the world) at this time and that most Americans were against intervention, i.e. until Pearl Harbor. This is why I found the book very, very good rather than simply amazing. Tell me, how often do you read a book that never ever drags?! .

A word about the audiobook narration, by Lloyd James: in one word - superb! He reads the lines slowly and steadily, pausing when appropriate, and giving you time to think. THIS is how I like books to be read. No theatrical stunts; that is not necessary if the author's lines are fascinating. Occasionally he swallows the last word of a sentence so you don't hear it properly.

WOW, this book is fascinating. It is NEVER EVER boring! I have read a little more than half, I think.

OK, Lindbergh buys the island Ile Iliec in Brittany on the Pink Granite Coast. He says, "I have never seen a place I want to live as much!" Do I agree? Yes. I loved the book even before he said this.

Arminius says

Lindbergh by A. Scott Berg begins with Charles A. Lindbergh's very interesting parents. His father was a very respectful and successful lawyer in Minnesota who became a congressman and eventually a nomad. His mother was an educated school teacher from Detroit whose father was a controversial dentist at the time. He had a shop where he would invent numerous machines to work on teeth. Young Charles would visit and his grandfather would teach him to work with his various tools. This sparked an interest in Charles in mechanics.

Charles was a very shy boy growing up. He had a doting mother and often absent father.

He was known to have few friends and enjoyed rafting and his pets. He attended college for a year before he flunked out but became interested in air planes. He drove his motorcycle to Nebraska where there was a place where one could learn to fly planes. He flew for a while then joined the Army Air Corps where he honed his skills. He joined a Flying Circus Act where he performed stunts. When the Post Office decided to use planes to transport mail, businesses to support it popped up soon afterwards. Robinson Aircraft, one of those businesses, offered Lindbergh a job as its chief pilot for its Chicago to St. Louis run. For Robinson he surveyed routes and planned landing and emergency fields.

At the time a lucrative \$25,000 prize named the Orteig Prize would be awarded to the first pilot that flew nonstop between New York and Paris. Lindbergh knew he was the man to do it. So he went around the St. Louis area business men and gathered funding for an airplane to be built for his attempted trip.

Lindbergh raised the necessary funding and had a plane built to support one person. He was smart enough to figure out how much weight the plane must hold in order to make the cross Atlantic trip. He calculated how much fuel the plane could carry as well as the amount of food and water he must have. He strived to use the least amount of weight possible. He needed enough fuel to get across the ocean. It would be dangerous if he

did not have enough fuel to make it but almost as dangerous if he had too much fuel because that could weigh the plane down. A second danger was if he lost his direction he would surely run out of fuel. Pilots in the 1920's used to follow railroad tracks to keep them in the correct direction. Lindbergh had a superb ability to know where he was going using ocean landmarks like icebergs.

All things went as planned. He arrived in Paris to world wide applause. He became the most famous person in the world for accomplishing this incredible feat. He was welcomed with honors and parades in France. He was invited to England and Germany where he received a medal from Adolph Hitler for his gallant accomplishment. He was asked by most European countries to inspect their beginning air forces.

He came home to America to a hero's welcome. He was asked to oversee developing Airlines such as PAN AM. He sat on boards for most Air Transportation companies. These companies gave him generous compensation for doing so. He was feted by a lot of politicians and wealthy individuals. He was asked to give speeches for numerous organizations. One such invitation took him to the house of America's Mexican ambassador Dwight Morrow. Morrow was an extremely wealthy individual coming from the JP Morgan banking dynasty to the prestigious job as the Ambassador to Mexico. Charles was asked to stay with the Morrows for a few days. This is where Morrow's daughter Anne met Charles and eventually became infatuated with his good looks and charismatic charm. After another visit to with the Morrows, Charles asked Anne on a date. They fell in love and married.

He took Anne on numerous flights where she learned to co-polite air planes. They traveled all over the world. These adventures would fuel some of her future books. But, in a odd twist, Charles adventurous nature would never end and cause strain in their marriage due to Charles long bouts of home-life absenteeism.

Their first child was kidnapped. He most likely died in the kidnapping. The corresponding trial would become the "Crime of the Century." The rest that I will say about it is that the kidnapping of their baby is exhaustively discussed.

After the trial things started to look up for the Lindbergh's until WWII started in Europe. Charles who had long praised the German Luftwaffe as the world's best Air Force also vehemently protested America participating in WWII. As President Roosevelt's popularity increased and after the bombing of Pearl Harbor Charles's opinions became very unpopular. The President then sent the dogs after him. He sent his aid Harold Ickes on the attack attempting to discredit Lindbergh in radio and newspaper appearances. Charles fought back with speeches. This strategy hurt him. Parts of his very good speeches would be manipulated by Roosevelt cronies. For example, in a speech, he blamed capitalists looking to make money and the Jewish-controlled media for starting the war fever. As a result, new attacks came at him from all over as being an anti-Semite as well as a traitor. Neither of which he was. Nonetheless, he became very unpopular.

In fact, once the war started he volunteered to fight even though he was already in his forties. However, President Roosevelt did not allow it. But when the President died, the new President Truman allowed Charles to help the Allies by appointing him as a civilian trainer in the Pacific. While training Army pilots, he dazzled the most experienced pilots with his piloting skills. He even went on mission with them and shot down an enemy plane.

After the war, his reputation rebounded due to his war time participation and the publishing of his Pulitzer Prize winning book "The Spirit of St. Louis." He described in detail how he crossed the Atlantic by himself with astonishing clarity.

With his resulting rebounded reputation he was offered one event and ceremony attendance after another. He routinely turned down most offers but returned interesting individually addressed refusal letters. For example, when a Girl Scout local asked him if they could use his name for the naming of their troupe he replied that organizations should not use a living person to name itself after.

At this time he also continued his worldwide travels attempting to save any endangered species or natural habitat he could find from the Green Turtle in the Indian Ocean to writing General Westmoreland in Vietnam and getting him to issue orders to prevent American servicemen from sending ivory back to the U.S. He would visit tribes in the wild jungles of Indonesia and live with them for days at a time.

The book details all these activities as well as his wife Ann's prolific writing career. But in an extremely detailed way the author described Lindbergh's last days which, at least for me, were kind of sad. However, there is so much in this book about a man with a remarkably adventurous life that I would rank this book as also a remarkably adventurous book.

Scott Foshee says

Well Written Profile of a Brilliant yet Disturbing Man, Probably Due For an Update

A. Scott Berg does a good job in Lindbergh. It is interesting, informative, and keeps you turning the pages. He was granted access to sources by the Lindbergh family, including original access to the diaries of Anne Morrow Lindbergh. This access helps the story in that it fills in much of the blanks of the life of the intensely private Charles Lindbergh, but it may also hurt in retaining the objectivity in some instances.

Lindbergh comes across as a successful but very strange man. It bothers me that Charles and Anne spend so much time away from their children, especially their second son Jon right after the Lindbergh Baby Kidnapping episode where their first son was killed. They spend months away from newborn Jon, flying to Greenland, Europe, Africa and South America before returning to him. There is also a particularly disturbing episode where he insists that their infant son be left in a cage on the roof in the cold weather to "toughen him up."

Lindbergh is portrayed as hard-driving but not having much of a personality. This might be because of his intense desire to hide his private life from the public eye. He was one of the first worldwide celebrities who had to cope with the invasion and distortions by the press. He is cold and dictatorial to his family when (rarely) home. He travels constantly, circling the world several times a year into his 70s working for various aircraft concerns and environmental causes.

Lindbergh's scientific work, especially in developing machines to keep human organs alive for transplantation, was very interesting and was something I think most do not know about him. The side of him engaged in scientific endeavors is all the more impressive considering his limited formal education. Also, I did not know about his father's political career, which enabled Charles to spend time among the halls of power in Washington D.C. as a youth.

The America First section dragged a bit, I thought. It is easy to look back on WWII and think our involvement was inevitable, but that was not necessarily the thinking of everyone at the time. Berg does a good job here dissecting Lindbergh's speeches and writings to show the line he walked between patriot and perceived Nazi sympathizer and accused anti-Semite. It also highlights how the press and popular sentiment can skew perception for decades to come, whether something is true or not. Lindbergh visited and was decorated by numerous countries because of his fame, including Nazi Germany in the 1930's. He reported on the military strength of Germany at the time, and lobbied through the America First organization to keep the U.S. out of more destructive European wars. For these efforts and others he was perceived by many at the time to be a Nazi sympathizer. In explaining Lindbergh's controversial public positions prior to WWII, I wonder if Berg may have skewed objectivity a bit in deference to the family.

It must be tough to write a "definitive biography" of a public figure, because it seems as if things often keep coming to light many years later. We know that Charles Lindbergh did a lot of fascinating things, but not necessarily why. Is this because Lindbergh tried to be such a private person? Why did he fly the Atlantic, other than the fact that he thought he could do it? The story lacks emotion. As I read it I began to wonder more and more if Lindbergh had Asperger's syndrome or some derivative of it. After I finished the book I did some research and found out that some people suspect just that. This is something not brought up at all in the book, which may be due to the fact that many symptoms of Asperger's have only been recognized in recent years. In addition, since the volume was published in 1998 and won the Pulitzer Prize, DNA evidence has been uncovered that shows he had as many as 7 illegitimate children by three different European mistresses. I think the book is probably due for an update.

Clif says

Charles A. Lindbergh, "the Lone Eagle" was highly praised by Americans because he was exactly the kind of person they wished to think of as the American ideal. White, tall, modest, fearless, never seeking the limelight, self-confident, he was as close to the embodiment of the Boy Scout motto, "be prepared" as anyone could be.

Yet upon first glance at the cover picture, I thought it could easily be a photo of a member of the Hitler Youth. All of the attributes given above could also be found in the male Aryan ideal of National Socialism. In fact, it was not the story of his transatlantic flight that made me curious to know more about him, but his tireless effort at the head of the America First movement to keep the U.S. out of WW2. He was accused of being a Nazi sympathizer and was the symbol of opposition to FDR's obvious tilt in favor of Britain against Germany.

Each of us has a makeup that may or may not be in tune with the times. Lindbergh was the man for his time. Not just fearless, he was unusually oblivious to situations that would frighten most people. His start in flying came when he saw a stunt flyer perform. He took up the job with gusto, not hesitating to risk his life repeatedly with wing walking and, my favorite, changing airplanes with another pilot in midair so that each pilot landed a different plane from the one he took off in. As was his nature, he took his transatlantic flight laconically, fighting fatigue far more than fear. Actually the only fear he had was that someone else (and there were several others) would beat him in the effort.

Was he emotionally lacking? He had no interest in women until he decided it was time he found a wife. He did in the form of the remarkable Anne Morrow and then from all the solid evidence never looked at another

woman to his dying day. Anne, several years younger than Charles, was awed by him which was not helped by something of an inferiority complex. She flew with him on adventure after adventure early in their marriage, being a navigator and radio operator for him and learning to fly herself. To the end it was always what he wanted. I can't think of an instance where he didn't do exactly what he wanted to do.

Speaking of being suited for what one does in life, Charles was the perfect pilot. He was obsessive in preparing (remember the Boy Scout motto) for a flight to the point of weighing everything to the ounce and insisting on packing it all himself. Great for a pilot where a small error can be fatal, but not so great in a father who issues lists of things to be done to his children on a regular basis and remains away from the family for long periods of time on his latest flight to everywhere you can imagine around the globe.

He didn't get demonstrably angry (low affect, again) at anyone. He never physically mistreated Anne, but left her on her own for such long periods that it's fair to say the majority of their married life she was keeping their serial homes in order by herself. Personally, I find it hard to stomach people buying a house in the cloud forest on a whim, then another on a private island, then a third in the Alps, another in Hawaii. And none of them will do for long! This seems to infect the wealthy regardless of how humble their origin. All the while billions of people have little to eat and live in shacks. But I digress.

I confess I felt far more attraction to Anne as a human being, who became a very successful writer and was wonderfully open psychologically, than to the strangely chilly Lindbergh. I cannot conceive of a more supportive or lovable wife.

There is much to admire in what he did, championing the cause of indigenous peoples and the environment. He supported worthy causes with his wealth and he was refreshingly free of vanity, always standing aside to let others take credit. He was in so many ways a nice guy. Friends could always count on him. Most remarkable, his love of aviation dimmed over time as his interest in people increased. As he so aptly said "it used to be the man flew the airplane, now the airplane flies the man." He had regrets about the technological world he had helped to move along.

His prestige and skill made him welcome at the highest levels. He toured pre-WW2 Europe inspecting national air forces and reporting back to the U.S. government on what he found. He was on the board of Pan American Airways and in the huddle discussing aircraft development right up to the 747. He was in the know with Robert Goddard on the development of rocketry. Presidents Kennedy and Nixon were eager to have him around. Eisenhower promoted him to general. He was honored by royalty. The world was his oyster yet it did not go to his head.

Was he a Nazi as some claimed? No, but his concern over the future of "the white race" and his interest in eugenics didn't do him proud. He was willing to see England be defeated by the Germans in WW2 if that would keep Germany strong against his bugbear, the Soviet Union. Once Hitler declared war on the U.S., Lindbergh did not hesitate to join the war effort wholeheartedly, but bad feelings from the FDR administration kept him in the role of advisor. This did not prevent him from flying combat missions in the Pacific against Japan with a wink and a nod from General MacArthur.

What a story, his life, and I haven't mentioned that he developed infusion devices to keep organs alive outside the body for record periods of time. His curiosity and intelligence were matched by his inventiveness.

As for the kidnapping and death of his first child, it created a media circus but in the long run both he and his wife were able to pick up, go on to have several more children and regain a zest for life that might easily

have floored others.

A. Scott Berg tells Lindbergh's life story very well and had voluminous correspondence at hand to help him.

Charles Lindbergh came up from nowhere to great fame and success. Each time I read a biography I can't help but wonder what might be if the environment and the times were suited to each individual. How many unknowns could rise to wonderful things if the mix of personality/temperament and the outside world were just right?

Teri says

A very well written, detailed account of the life of Charles A. Lindbergh from birth to death. Everything is covered from the famous first flight across the Atlantic in the Spirit of St. Louis to the Trial of the Century covering the kidnapping and murder of Charles' and Anne's first son to his political and aeronautical endeavors and eventual fight with lymphoma. The book not only covers his life from Lindbergh's own point of view, but from his wife Anne's as well. According to the end notes, Anne offered thousands of records and diary entries to the author as long as the story was about both Charles and Anne. The author lived up to the promise. The relationship was loving and strong at times, while distance and estranged at others.

I thought this was a wonderful biography without being so exhaustive and dry. Lindbergh was quite a character and that certainly comes through. There was a lot I did not know about Charles, from his time stationed in San Antonio in the Army (my home) to his time working with PanAm. Well worth the read if you are in any way interested in aeronautics or just curious about the man who made that first important flight across the Atlantic.

Gary Schroeder says

Say the name "Lindbergh" and it's likely that one of two things immediately come to mind: that Charles Lindbergh was the first man to cross the Atlantic Ocean in an airplane or that he was the famous flier who's baby was kidnapped in what was once known as the "crime of the century." Both of these facts reflect what Charles Lindbergh is best remembered for today but for most of us, time has erased the significant, and in some cases, equally important details of this extraordinary American's life.

In this fine (but necessarily incomplete--more on that later) biography by A. Scott Berg, the modern reader is transported back to the beginning of the 20th century when aviation was still in its infancy, hazardous and somewhat miraculous. Berg naturally begins with Lindy's upbringing in Minnesota where the staunchly midwestern values imparted to him as a child and young man would form the principles of modesty, humbleness, practicality and stoicism that guided him for much of his adult life. A relatively poor student with middling academic talents, Lindbergh found his calling in mechanical interests that eventually led him to aviation. Never completing a college degree, he instead pursued a career as an air mail and stunt show pilot, eventually becoming enthralled with the challenge of the Orteig Prize offered for the first successful crossing of the Atlantic by plane.

The story of the Atlantic crossing by a solitary 25 year old pilot is, of course, dramatic and interesting in itself, but of greater significance to Lindbergh was the life-altering impact that the crossing would have on

his life. Upon landing in Le Bourget, France, he was immediately subjected to a level of celebrity, stardom and public adoration that is even now, in the media-saturated 21st century, difficult to imagine. The relentless attention and hounding of the press that scrutinized his every move thereafter bred a deep resentment within in Lindbergh that would last for the rest of his life. Given the descriptions of media scum-baggery chronicled in the book, including completely fabricated stories, bogus quotations, stalking and worse, it's easy enough to understand.

While this is a biography of Charles Lindbergh, it's quite nearly a biography of his wife as well. Anne Morrow, daughter to a wealthy family whose patriarch was serving as the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico at the time of her marriage to Lindbergh features prominently throughout the book as his steadfast partner, first in glamorous flying adventures around the world and later as fellow parent to six children, one of whom would be killed during a botched kidnapping and ransom scheme. The media circus surrounding the trial of perpetrator Bruno Hauptmann would further cement Lindbergh's disgust with the American press. Following the trial and unwilling to bear the continued pressures of living in a fish bowl of publicity, he and Anne would flee to England for several years to raise their second son.

Lindbergh remained a prominent figure in American public life long after his youthful conquest of the Atlantic, often to his detriment. His first public feud was with none other than president Franklin D. Roosevelt whom he took to task for summarily ending government contracts with private firms hired to deliver air mail throughout the country. FDR thought the contracts were won through shady, possibly illegal dealings. Lindbergh, in one of his earliest stands on principle, argued that not only were the contracts won fairly but that the use of inexperienced Army pilots in the place of veteran air mail carriers was the direct cause of pilot deaths, a claim well borne out by the alarming fatality statistics among the replacement pilots. Lindbergh would become persona non grata to FDR forever after.

The far more damaging public dispute would come in the form of the "Great Debate" in which Lindbergh took a firm stand for isolationism in the period preceding World War II. While it's largely forgotten now, prior to the bombing of Pearl harbor by the Japanese, many Americans, chastened by the experience of World War I and eager to avoid further European adventures, supported the view that the war was not in the country's best interests. Given his star power, Lindbergh became the public face of what was known as the "America First" movement. Not only did it further damage his standing with the U.S. administration (especially when he resigned his officer's commission to protest what he saw as FDR's war propaganda), it also significantly tarnished his previously heroic reputation with large swaths of the public ("from Jesus to Judas" as his wife would record). During this time, Lindbergh was especially damaged by his previous trip to Germany while working for the U.S. military to gain intelligence on the Luftwaffe, one of many such trips he would make to Europe on behalf of the Army. While there, he received a medal from Hermann Goering and while the bestowment of medals in such diplomatic meetings was routine, this event would never be forgotten by the American people. Lindbergh further damaged himself by refusing to later return the medal.

Taken out of context, a few of his statements suggested to some that he supported the Nazi regime. While his true beliefs were largely misrepresented and misinterpreted in the press, he would be thought an anti-semitic racist for many years afterward. It's clear from Berg's detailed review of this period that Lindbergh, while strangely avoiding public criticism of the brutal aspects of Nazi government, was neither a supporter of fascism nor a Nazi-sympathizer. Rather, he appears to have been extremely naive about America's ability to avoid involvement in another European war...and extremely stubborn about ever backing down from that position. When the Pearl Harbor attack eventually came, he threw his full backing behind the national war effort. Because of his earlier political position, he was unacceptable as an officer but he found other ways of serving, going so far as to "secretly" fly combat missions in the Pacific while officially categorized as an "observer."

In his post-war life, his reputation was rehabilitated. Following FDR's death, and as war fever subsided, he returned to the good graces of the federal government, becoming a valued consultant to the newly-formed Strategic Air Command. In fact, he was so trusted, that he had full security clearance including access to materials considered "Top Secret."

In his later life, horrified by the prospect of nuclear war with the Soviet Union, he grew wary of mankind's relationship to technology. Once a pioneer of aviation and a staunch proponent of its advancement, he began to seriously question whether easy air travel and advanced technologies were advancing humanity's cause or simply hastening its destruction. His personal awakening in the 1960s coincided with that of many of his countrymen. He would spend his later years on exotic expeditions to some of the most remote locations of the earth, meeting with tribes that time had forgotten and speaking out on their behalf with local governments who had the power to save their way of life. His pleas often resulted in tangible legislation that helped preserve isolated peoples and endangered animal species.

Now for the problem with this biography...the 800 pound gorilla between the pages. It was written in the late 90s just prior to the stunning revelations that Lindbergh, while described as an imperfect though caring father as well as a loving but absentee husband who suffered from a perpetual wanderlust, had actually fathered an astonishing seven additional children with three different German women during those periods of "wanderlust." Berg, working only from what was publicly known about Lindbergh at the time, casts him as an imperfect but morally upstanding man with a firm commitment to high standards. While appearing to model them himself and demanding the same from those around him, we now know that Lindbergh was in fact an enormous hypocrite, shattering many of the theses of Berg's otherwise excellent book. How can these two Charles Lindberghs be reconciled? Only a future biography can help us answer that question.

Tony says

This is a highly informative and generally enjoyable biography. Berg manages to not only capture historical events, but also Lindbergh's personality and values. Upon completion, the reader feels as if he knows not only what Lindbergh did, but also the man, himself. On the negative side, Berg occasionally goes into too much detail. This is especially true when it comes to Anne Lindbergh. In fact, there is so much detail on Anne that this book could easily be called The Lindberghs. While Anne is a genuinely interesting figure, including her biography here creates a rather bloated work. Additionally, the author somewhat soft-pedals Lindbergh's WWII era antisemitism.

Jerry-Book says

America's hero, Charles Lindbergh. His solo flight from New York was a real miracle. Flying through fog with primitive instruments was a real challenge as was fighting sleep. The kidnapping and death of his first-born was a real tragedy. Fortunately, he and Anne went on to have many other children. I was fascinated by his role in the America First Party and his isolationism. I did not quite understand why he was anti-Jewish and why he bought the Nazi line that all Jews were Communist. In one pre-war speech he said: "Their greatest danger to this country lies in their [the Jews] large ownership and influence in our motion pictures, our press, our radio and our government." After all Guggenheim was one of his early backers. He was of course impressed by the German War Machine when he toured Germany in 1936 and 1938. He thought probably like many others that Germany was a bulwark against the Soviet Union. FDR could not stand him.

He retaliated against Lindbergh by denying him any role in WW II despite his considerable talents. Nonetheless, he managed to aid the American cause through his industrial contacts. As a civilian technician in the South Pacific he was able to fly over 25 missions against the Japanese (while supposedly testing Corsairs and other fighters). Even though after the War, he was able to see at least one of the Nazi concentration camps he still did not seem to comprehend the total evil of the Nazis. Many Jews never forgave him for his America First role. In his after the war mission to Germany, he investigated the Nazi experiments in jets and rockets for America. He then went on to play a major role in American civil aviation and environmental causes. His relationship with his wife Anne is fully explored. She felt abandoned at times by his long absences but Berg does not cover Lindbergh's role in fathering seven illegitimate children. This secret life of Lindbergh was unknown by Lindbergh's 15 biographers including Berg. When she died in 2001, Lindbergh's wife Anne Morrow never even suspected that her husband led a double life in Europe. The letters his three lovers sent him in the United States were addressed to post-office boxes that he changed on a regular basis. Not one single love letter written by the three women to Lindbergh has been found, whereas his entire love correspondence to Brigitte has been preserved. These mistresses may explain Lindbergh's constant absences. DNA confirmed Lindbergh's paternity in 2003. Stranger still was the fact Lindbergh believed in eugenics, another Nazi idea, but two of his mistresses were disabled. Berg thought his constant absenteeism from Anne was due to his wanderlust. The author who has written about Lindbergh's secret life theorizes it may have been a side effect of the kidnapping. Apparently, the legitimate children (6) have had a family reunion with the illegitimate (7) children. Berg's book is very readable and a deserving winner of the Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction in 1998.
