

# The Cover Story

## So, How Did Lindbergh Get Home from Paris in 1927?

by Phil Fettig

We all know how Charles Lindbergh was the first to make a solo flight across the Atlantic [Figure, to the right, Scott #1310.] when he accomplished this feat on May 20-21, 1927. How did he get back is a good question I never gave much thought to? Before I try to answer that, first we need to take a short look at how he came to make the flight in the Spirit of St. Louis.



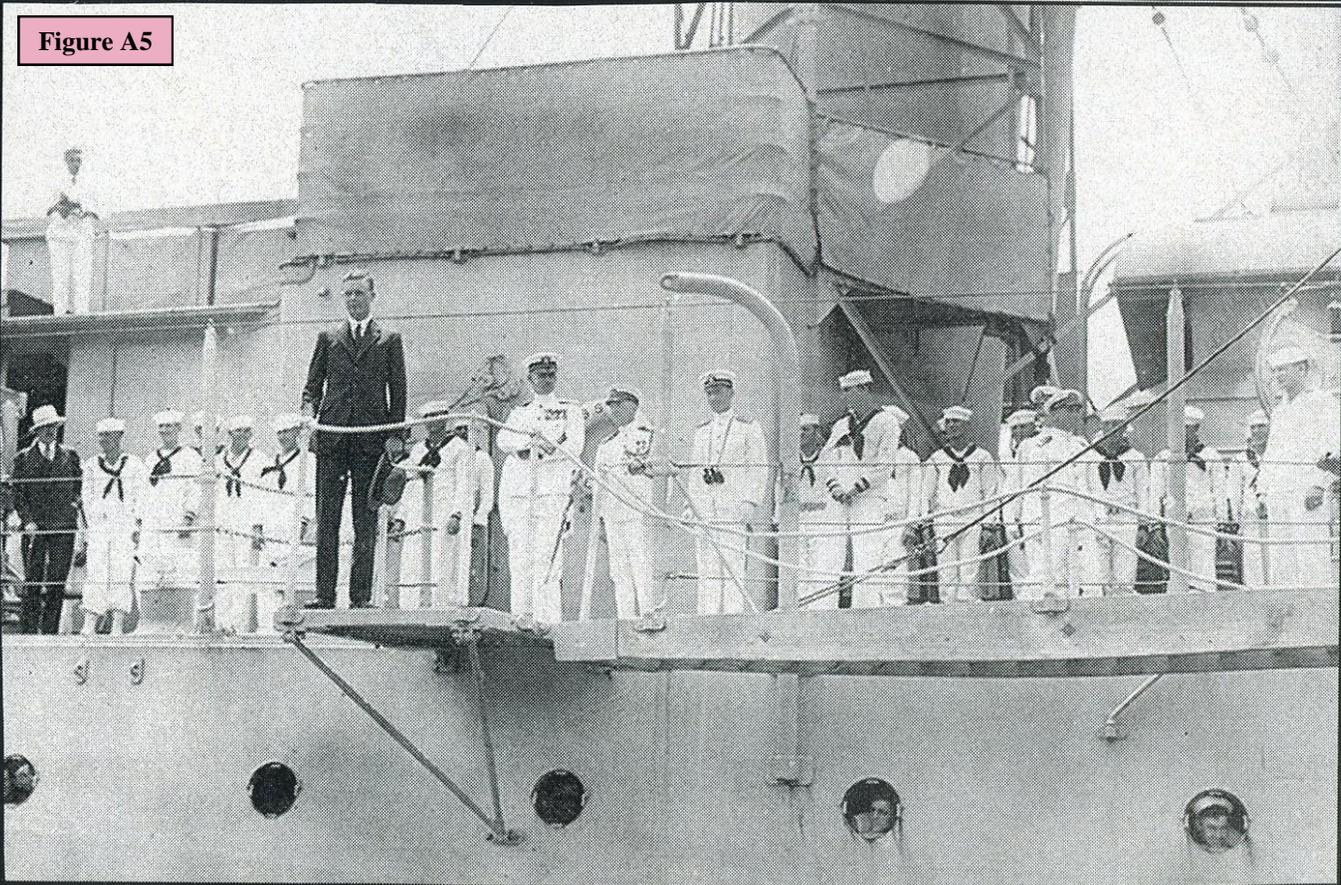
From an early age it was clear that Lindbergh had interest and ability in things mechanical. When he started college, engineering was his field of study. Sometime during his 2<sup>nd</sup> year, his growing

interest in the new field of aviation caused him to drop out of school to take flight training. In 1922 he was earning his way working at stunt shows. In 1924 he entered military training in the Army Air Corps Reserve and, at the end of a year was commissioned a Second Lieutenant. Lindbergh returned to stunt flying until in 1925 he started flying mail planes. In 1927 Lindbergh resigned from that endeavor -- to start on a new plan and the building of the *Spirit of St. Louis*. [Figure A1, on the front cover, shows the *Spirit of St. Louis* on U.S. C10a.]

So, now we can look at how Lindbergh and the plane got home. According to information found in the American Air Mail Catalogue, he considered two options. The first was to reverse the flight and try the more difficult flight against the prevailing wind in an east to west trip. The second was to continue eastward on across Europe and Asia and make the trip round the world. The U.S. government officials, including President Coolidge, urged him to make a quick return to the United States. At this point the U.S. Navy Light Cruiser USS MEMPHIS (CL-13) [Figure A2, on front cover] the Flagship of the U.S Naval Forces in Europe was dispatched to pick up Lindberg and the Spirit of St. Louis for the start of a triumphant return home.



Figure A5



Different sources disagree on Lindbergh and the plane being loaded onto MEMPHIS at Southampton, England or Cherbourg, France. Some references clearly describe the mass of overjoyed people that greeted Lindbergh upon his arrival in Paris causing damage to the *Spirit of St. Louis*. It appears that during the period of May 22-28, while he was being honored and feted in France, repairs must have been made. Lindbergh flew the *Spirit* to Brussels on May 28<sup>th</sup> for a visit and then on to London on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Since there is no mention of a flight to Southampton to leave the plane I believe the following sequence of events: On June 3, 1927 the MEMPHIS departed her station in Southampton and within a short time crossed the English Channel to Cherbourg. Lindbergh and the crated plane were loaded onboard and departed the next day for home. **Figure A3, on front cover**, shows the crate for the plane onboard the ship. (The crate played a 2<sup>nd</sup> role which will be discussed in part 2.) The return by ship took 8 days and arrived in Washington, DC on June 11<sup>th</sup>. **Figure A4** shows 3 covers cancelled onboard the MEMPHIS. The first is departure from Southampton on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, the second one is at sea on June 8<sup>th</sup> and the third upon arrival in Washington, D.C. on June 11<sup>th</sup>. I have no idea what the June 8<sup>th</sup> cancel was about as there was no mail pick up in the middle of the Atlantic! **Figure A5** shows Lindbergh standing on the MEMPHIS upon arrival in Washington and the start of nearly a year of celebrations and honors. Prior to the flight Lindbergh had advanced to the rank of Captain in the Army Air Corps Reserve and one of the main reasons he agreed to the return by ship was he felt President Coolidge's desire that he return quickly was an order he needed to obey. The other outcome of his reserve status was Congress was able to vote to award him the Congressional Medal of Honor for the flight.

[Part 2 which will be published in the August 2020 edition, will continue with a look at the multiple methods that philately is involved in collecting Lindberghiana.]