

The Story of a Century — Lindy's Arrival

Henry Wales Describes a Tribune Scoop

● In the following article Henry Wales continues the story of how he covered, for The Chicago Tribune, Charles A. Lindbergh's historic arrival in Paris. At that time Mr. Wales was chief Paris correspondent for The Tribune. The article, the first half of which appeared in last week's Graphic Section, is reprinted from The Atlantic Monthly. Last week's instalment described the skepticism that met the first news of the attempt to fly the Atlantic and then the wild enthusiasm that broke over Paris as Lindbergh passed Ireland. Mr. Wales has reached Le Bourget airdrome and is arranging with Jed Kiley, a Paris night club owner, and Harry Arnold, a private banker, to help him as this instalment opens.

By HENRY WALES

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WE WENT out onto the field through the gate in the chicken-wire fence. Hundreds of persons with police cards were there—politicians, social leaders, theatrical folk, the diplomatic corps, reporters, cameramen. Behind the wire were massed thousands of men, women, and children.

I had no overcoat and was chilly despite the brandy. I was nervous, as always when waiting on the edge of a big story with someone else on the inside track.

Suddenly the siren howled. Instantly the multitude was silent. The honking and tooting of the stalled automobiles abruptly ceased. Beside me an army sergeant was operating an acousticon, a contrivance like four giant phonograph horns mounted together on a swivel to pick up the sound of an airplane motor. The sergeant aimed the horns to the west, ear phones strapped to his head.

Everyone listened intently. It was astonishing how long that noisy, restless crowd remained

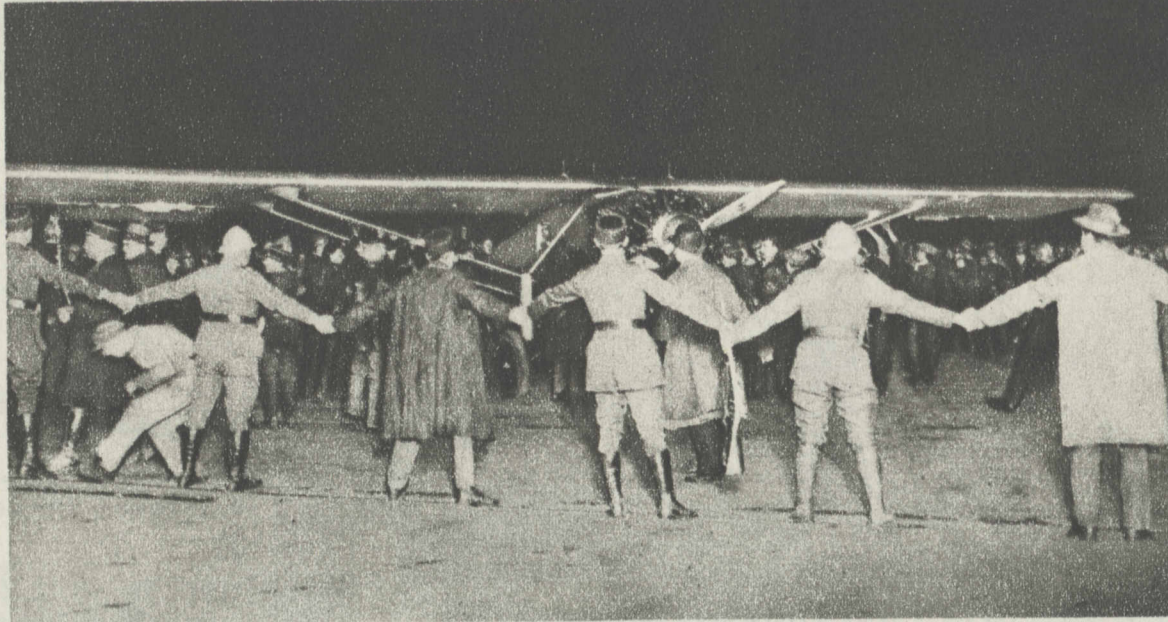
released emotion and suspense. The host surged forward; the chicken wire stretched and strained. The police joined hands in a living cordon. The wires burst! The gendarmes were engulfed. I looked back to see the mob milling forward.

I set out on a dead run ahead of the wave, straight across the field toward the spot where I had heard the machine land. Police waved their arms to motion me back. A Garde Républicain spurred his mount at me. I kept going.

Just then the floodlights were shut off. The field was in darkness.

I galloped on. To right and left I could hear the thud of footfalls and the stertorous breathing of others racing with me. With every stride my eyes were becoming more accustomed to the darkness. Soon I could see the dim outlines of the military hangars and an indistinct mass moving slowly on the field. Then I made out moving figures coming from the other side of the drome. By this time my opponents in the race had

released emotion and suspense. The host surged forward; the chicken wire stretched and strained. The police joined hands in a living cordon. The wires burst! The gendarmes were engulfed. I looked back to see the mob milling forward.



(Acme photo.)

"The field commandant grasped the situation in a flash . . . assigned his men to protect the plane. A corporal slugged a burly fellow who was slicing away at the fabric of The Spirit of St. Louis."

was bareheaded. He wore a leather jacket, breeches, puttees. He was manipulating instruments on the panel before him.

The soldiers swung the door too wide. It cracked ominously. "Careful, there, don't break it," were Lindbergh's first words.

The motor was still turning, the propeller flailing in staccato bursts. The plane moved slowly, jerkily.

"Coupez, coupez!" yelled Weiss, the commandant.

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Like a Niagara the rumble of the onrushing multitude could be heard. The advance guard was almost up with us. In another instant it would be charging into the whirling blades of the propeller.

Peering out, Lindbergh cocked his head, listened. Then he cut the motor. The prop snapped stiffly to rest.

The sergeants reached inside, seized Lindbergh, and slid him out carefully. They placed him on their shoulders; his feet never touched the ground. They babbled words of encouragement and praise—"Formidable, formidable!"

"That's all right; let me down," said Lindbergh. He wanted to stretch to start the blood circulating in those cramped limbs. Not understanding his protests, the soldiers patted him affectionately on the back.

"Let him down! He wants to walk!" I shouted to them in French. But there was no escaping the homage of that group. Lindbergh reached over and slammed the cabin door shut.

"They want to carry you!" I yelled above the din, grabbing his sleeve. It was the first word he had heard in English, the first he could understand. He looked down, and I had a clear vision of his countenance, youthful and determined, clear eyes, set lips, firm chin. I thought of the doctor waiting to give a collapsed hero a syringe of morphia.

"Say," he spoke anxiously, "this is Le Bourget all right?" He knew he had arrived at his goal. He was certain. But he wanted final confirmation.

"Sure, this is Bourget," I repeated his pronunciation of the word with the hard g. He shook his head with satisfaction. "I knew it was," he began. "There's another—"

His remark was drowned in the brisk orders of Commandant Weiss. Already the outposts of the mob were upon us. There was no time to lose. I could see them coming through the darkness. And what was that in their hands?

Knives! I could see them

gripping their short-bladed *couteaux*. The moonlight glinted on the steel blades. My heart nearly stopped beating. Did they resent this man succeeding because their own compatriots had been lost?

Weiss grasped the situation in a flash. Barking orders, he assigned his men to protect the plane. They ranged about the machine. A corporal slugged a burly fellow who was slicing away at the fabric where "Spirit of St. Louis" was stenciled. The mob wanted souvenirs, bits of the covering of the fuselage and wings, as keepsakes.

"No, no! Don't do that!" yelled Lindbergh so forcibly that even they shrank back.

"It's all right! They'll take care of it!" I called.

"They sure took care of him," said Lindbergh, pointing to the prostrate man who had been socked. Lindbergh was trying to balance himself on the sergeants' shoulders, like a novice riding a camel.

"Allons, vite! Bring him this way! Get him away from that plane before they tear it to pieces!" shouted Weiss. We staggered forward in the darkness, across the field.

I looked back. A woman lifted her child above the shoulder of a corporal guarding the plane and pressed the infant against the fuselage.

"Kiss it, my little one," she said. "It will bring you good luck."

The going was difficult as I plunged after the group bearing Lindbergh. The field was overrun with people surging about in search of the hero. Those we encountered did not recognize Lindbergh, misled probably by the French uniforms. Occasionally the blinding rays of searchlights swept over the field, illuminating long lanes of twisting, staggering humanity.

"Par ici—this way," said Weiss, pointing toward the administration building. Lindbergh gripped his carriers tightly, one by his curly black hair, another by the shoulder strap of his belt.

My foot sank into a hole; I sprawled forward. Two men fell on top of me. I lost my hat, searched for a moment, then abandoned it. I looked about for Lindbergh.

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There he was, a few yards away. I could see him above the heads of the crowd. Buckling and pushing, I fought forward to rejoin him. I plodded along for a few strides to catch my breath. Then I looked up.

Good heavens! It wasn't Lindbergh! These men were in uniform, but they weren't soldiers—they were police. They were carrying a girl. She had fallen, been trampled on, was injured. They were taking her to the first-aid station.

I almost wept. I had had Lindbergh right in my hands, and I had lost him! How should I ever find him again? I dashed back and forth. Many persons were being carried off the field.

From the direction of the administration building came a wild shout. A searchlight revealed a group of Gardes Républicains opening a lane toward the building, escorting someone in. I started in pursuit, bucking the crowd, stumbling over stones; it was like a dreadful dream wherein one races for his life through soft sand.

Then I was outside the building. Through the windows I could see the figure of a young man, bareheaded, fair, slender, being projected up the crowded staircase. The mob was cheering. I sighed with relief. I had found him again. They were taking him up for the official welcome from Ambassador Herrick and General Gouraud.

No chance to smash through that crowd! The police were too excited to recognize reporters' cards. But I must get in. He would say something to the ambassador. That would be my only opportunity to hook him before the Times sewed him up.

There was a trellis for vines outside the building. I went up the flimsy latticework hand over hand as gendarmes below belovled at me. I got through a window and stood on the sill—just in time to see the young man brought in.

Flashlights exploded and cameras snapped. The crowd screamed in enthusiasm. I stared. Somehow the youth didn't look familiar. He carried an aviator's helmet.

General Gouraud came to a magnificent salute. The handsome Mr. Herrick extended his right hand like a Roman senator. But the young man stopped them both:

"I'm not Lindbergh. I work for the Radiator company. I lost my hat on the field, and

be in early for those big Sunday editions.

Up to this minute I wasn't scooped; they didn't have Lindbergh yet. I still had a fair crack at the biggest story I'd ever tackled. I would slap what I had on the cable, then go after the rest.

Out through the gates I trotted, onto the road, and into the chaos of cars and crowds. People were still coming. They had deserted their autos, were on foot. I dodged among them, keeping to the right side of the road.

More than a mile I continued. It was like swimming against a strong tide. I passed one intersection, but kept on. The blueprint had shown that as a blind road. In a quarter mile I came to another corner. It was the lane I had spotted. I turned off to the right along the dusty, unpaved thoroughfare. There was a glut of cars at the corner; beyond it was deserted. I jogged along the empty road.

Not a person, not a vehicle did I meet. I was stranded. It would take me all night to walk to Paris by this indirect route. And I had the biggest story since the war under my belt!

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Something loomed out of the night. I drew nearer. Lights! Music! Voices! A little *auberge*. And a red taxicab outside. Its flag was covered with the black *gaine* to indicate it was not in service. I went inside. The proprietor was at his zinc bar, playing a concertina. The remains of a meal were on the single table. There were empty bottles everywhere.

"*Une mariage*," said the proprietor, pointing to the party. They were six—two elderly couples, a girl in a print dress and a bride's veil, the bridegroom, a middle-aged fellow with a walrus mustache. They were all pretty tight.

"A hundred francs to Paris," I said.

The chauffeur-bridgroom scowled indifferently.

"Nothing doing; it's my wedding."

"Two hundred francs."

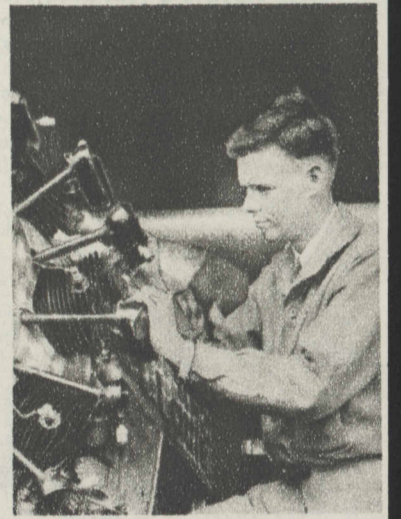
"*Non, non, et non*," he repeated stubbornly. "I'm with my *femme et la famille*."

I gave him an American cig-

revolvers; they looked me over with professional interest. I was a foreigner, obviously; hatless, muddy, dusty, in this lonely spot far from Paris. They were bicycle police. My press card established my identity. I told them of my desperate haste to get to Paris to file my story.

"*Monte là*," said the younger one. In a second I had mounted the handlebars of his straight-forked military bike and we were rolling along toward La Courneuve.

They set me down in the deserted main street of La Courneuve and proceeded to the *poste de police* to report. A car rumbled in the distance. It whizzed past as I signaled it to stop. Came the roar of another. I stepped into the center of the street, facing the blazing headlights. I thought it would run me down. There was a squeal from the brakes, sparks



(Acme photo.)

The youthful appearing Lindbergh of 1927, working on the motor of his trans-Atlantic plane.

from the locked tires. The long nose of the Mercedes-Benz came to rest within a yard of me.

A Japanese chauffeur in livery looked at me, alert, competent. A glass panel slid open. A monocol man in the rear seat asked me in strong Teutonic accents:

"*Que voulez-vous, monsieur?*"

"I am an American journalist. Will you please take me to Paris?" I said in my best German.

"*Ach, so, you are American*," said the man in English. He beckoned to the Japanese. The front door opened and I climbed in beside the chauffeur.

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We had passed the gates and the Parc Monceau before I knew it. The car pulled up before a handsome private house in the Avenue Hoche. The Japanese sounded the horn. Invisible hands opened the heavy iron gates.

"Thank you very, very much," I called as I got out.

I grabbed a passing taxi. "*Quatre rue des Italiens!*" I yelled at the driver. I had decided to use the Western Union and write my piece right in the cable office. That would save the delay of my cyclist carrying my dispatch in "takes" to be filed.

The sleepy night manager let me in. I asked for a typewriter and paper. I phoned my office. There was no word from Kiley or Arnold.

"Not a thing from Lindbergh, either," said Ragnar. "Only that he landed at 10:33. We have some bulletins about the crowd, but Lindbergh seems to have disappeared."

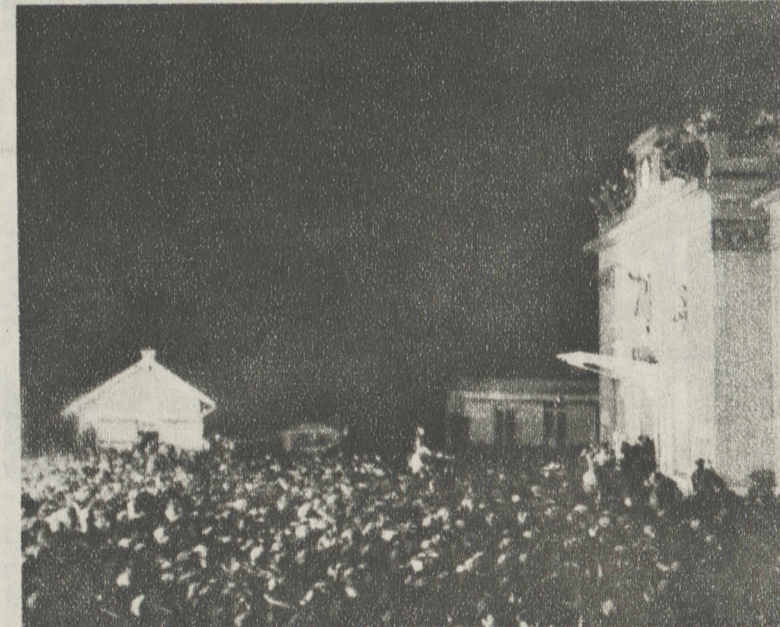
The manager brought the typewriter. "We haven't had a line about Lindbergh," he said. "The boys don't file with us now."

My plan was working fine. I slipped a carbon between two sheets, stuck them in the mill. Good thing I was used to a French keyboard.

CORANNEX NEWYORK LEADALL LINDBERGH STOP

It was after midnight when I started to write. Considering that I use the amateur's two-finger touch, I've always been pretty fast with a mill. But my speed amazed me. The rattling keys cleared page after page of copy. Sheet by sheet, in 300-word takes, they carried my running story to the sending machines, sent it on its way to New York over the submarine cable. I never went back to correct typographical errors or to edit copy. My story streamed

(Continued on page eleven.)



(Acme photo.)

Le Bourget field was overrun with people surging about in search of Lindbergh, who by this time had been escorted to the airdrome administration building at the right.

silent. Just as my ears discerned a tiny thread of sound, a great, hoarse blast emerged from the crowd:

"*Le voilà! There he is!*"

"*C'est un moteur Américain*," whispered the mechanic to the sergeant. I recalled that in air raids during the war I had learned to distinguish the alternate "hum-hum" of the fixed German motors from the steady "whirr" of the Allied engines.

The floodlights drenched the field in ghostly white. Presently in the distance my eyes made out a tiny silvery speck. It was low, about five hundred feet. Simultaneously the crowd spotted it.

"*Le voici!*"

Overhead the plane swept on. It veered off to the east, was lost a moment, then threaded its way back and glided lower over the field. Delicately, skillfully, it reconnoitered the drome, feeling out the terrain. It reminded me of a great eagle, tired, circling about warily, seeking a place to perch in a strange country. It made another turn at the far end of the field, was lost to sight a few seconds, then back it came. It entered the zone of darkness just above the ground and disappeared. The glare of the floodlights obliterated it.

Through the tense silence came a light, muffled thud; then the roar of the motor as Lindbergh gave it the gun to taxi in. The crowd's pent-up feelings burst!

There was a mighty roar of



(Associated Press photo.)

Le Bourget airdrome, where Lindbergh landed on May 21, 1927, after his solo flight across the Atlantic.