Commercial Aviation, Women, and Celebrity:
Exploring the Significance of the Lindberghs’ Good-Will Tour to Japan to the Emerging World of Commercial Aviation in the 1930s.

On May 21, 1927, Charles Lindbergh landed his plane the Spirit of St. Louis in Paris, France, successfully completing the world’s first solo nonstop flight across the Atlantic Ocean. Previously an unknown airmail pilot, Lindbergh was now thrust into the spotlight as both a national and worldwide hero. Soon after the flight Lindbergh began to utilize his fame to advance the cause of commercial aviation, promoting both airmail and passenger flight in the United States. The Guggenheim Fund sponsored a promotional tour that brought Lindbergh to each state, and catered to the nation’s obsession over the aviator. As a result, America saw an increase in infrastructure and interest related to commercial aviation. Lindbergh’s early contributions to the development of commercial aviation also included working as a consultant for both Transcontinental Air Transport and Pan American Airways, where he would plan air routes, test planes, and provide other advice, while lending his name to the companies’ advertising.

Lindbergh would not fly solo for long, or stay within national boundaries. On a trip to Mexico to meet with US Ambassador and aviation enthusiast Dwight Morrow, Lindbergh met the Ambassador’s daughter Anne whom he would later marry in 1929. Anne and Charles Lindbergh began flying together soon after being married, with Anne learning how to be both a pilot and crew. In 1931, aviator Amelia Earhart commented on the Lindberghs in her book *The Fun of It*. “It seems to me one of the most significant

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2 Ibid., 164-165.
3 Ibid., 191.
4 Ibid., 173, 201, 204.
characteristics of the Lindberghs is their habit of doing everything together. Even on the first flight of the new orange-and-black airplane, Mrs. Lindbergh went aloft. She is a willing and capable crew on long flights. I have often heard the Colonel speak of the days when he flew alone and found difficulty in doing certain things. Now he increasingly counts on her active cooperation. With Anne as his co-pilot, Lindbergh continued to expand the scope of his work, as the couple surveyed air routes and simply escaped from the press that followed their every move.

The Lindberghs’ accomplishments in the early years of their marriage included setting transcontinental speed records and planning routes to Central and South America. However, in 1931, shortly after the birth of their first son, Charles and Anne planned a vacation that would take them across the Pacific, flying over the Arctic Circle to reach Japan and China. A seemingly unusual “vacation,” biographer A. Scott Berg explained Lindbergh’s motivations as a longing for adventure. “Falling for the first time into a commonplace routine of commuting between home and job made Lindbergh itch for another great expedition of his own. Before he became tied down to his new work and before Anne became too attached to their new baby, Charles plotted a journey that would take him and his wife to Japan by way of the northernmost reaches of the Pacific” 

Lindbergh’s desire to travel is described by both Berg and the Colonel himself as a desire to get away and experience new things, and as usual Anne accompanied him as co-pilot and radio operator. In her account of the flight published in the years after they returned home, Anne described the allure of the trip as lying in her own fascination with discovering new things, the “color, glamour, curiosity, magic, or mystery” of the region,

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6 Berg, 209.
7 Ibid., 226.
and also the importance of future air-routes between America and Japan, China, and
Siberia. Although still focused on a vacation and adventure mindset, the mention of
future air-routes begins to implicate the greater significance of this flight to the
development of commercial aviation at home and abroad.

The trip was heavily covered in the press in its planning, execution and arrivals at
their many destinations. The public remained fascinated with the Lindberghs and their
journey. However, the documentation was not left solely up to the newspapers. The
couple’s Asia trip stands out from their many other journeys not only because of its
unusual timing and label of “vacation,” but also because of the couple’s own written
account of the trip. In a letter to her mother-in-law, Anne described that, “Charles has
been (both of us, in fact) urged to write about the trip and he wants me to do it, so I am
trying to, though no one knows it and we’ve promised nothing to anyone.” The public
interest in the couple and the trip was great enough for a book to be proposed, setting it
apart from previous journeys. In her letters, Anne describes working on the book soon
after returning to the United States, however with the kidnapping of her son in 1932, she
did not finish her manuscript until 1935. Titled North to the Orient, the book became a
best seller the year it was published. Anne’s narrative details the couple’s experiences
flying over the Arctic, as well as their interactions with the peoples in small Inuit
communities, Russia, Japan, and China as they made their way across the Pacific. The
amount of attention the trip received from the American public both during the flight and
in its retelling make it a noteworthy event, holding deeper implications than just a

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11. Ibid., 223, 266, 270.
vacation for the couple, whether intentionally or not. By studying the Lindberghs 1931 trip across the Arctic Circle to Asia, the corresponding press coverage and its retelling in North to the Orient, one can gain insight into the emerging world of aviation during the 1930’s. Although described as merely a vacation, the flight and its documentation were significant to advancements in commercial aviation, and help to illustrate the unique role of Anne Morrow Lindbergh as a woman within the aviation community, as well as the ways that the Lindbergh’s celebrity was key to these accomplishments and the couple’s global impact.

Although both Charles and Anne Lindbergh described their trip across the Pacific as purely for vacation, the journey’s greater significance to the advancement of commercial aviation is evident in the writings of the couple, the planning of the flight, and the newspaper reports of the entire journey. In describing their work in the 1930s, the Lindberghs both describe the purpose of much of their flying to be for the betterment of commercial aviation both at home and abroad. In his 1948 book Of Flight and Life, Charles writes that “…I became convinced that man had a great destiny in the air- that planes would some day cross continents and oceans with their cargoes of people, mail, and freight. I believed that America should lead the world in the development of flight. I devoted my life to planes and engines, to surveying airlines, to preaching, wherever man would listen, the limitless future of the sky.”13 This attitude can be seen in the work he did on the promotional tours, as well as in his advising work for two different airlines. Similarly, after marrying the famous aviator, Anne Morrow Lindbergh adopted the same focus. In the introduction to a published collection of her letters and diary entries, Anne

13 Charles Lindbergh, Of Flight and Life (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1948), V.
writes that she had followed her husband’s example of adopting the cause of advancing commercial aviation.\textsuperscript{14} Anne’s work and role as a woman in the aviation field gave her unique responsibilities that she embraced fully, accompanying her husband on many flights. It is difficult to assume that with this strong connection to the world of commercial aviation, the Lindberghs would be able to take a trip, such as their vacation to Asia, without any ties to its development. Similarly, the public’s fascination with the couple and the public perception of the Lindberghs tied to their work, connected the transpacific flight to the growth of commercial aviation internationally, regardless of any original intentions.

In the year leading up to the Lindberghs departure for Japan, Charles continued his work as a consultant and advocate for aviation worldwide, with his new interest in international aviation expanding the scope of his work, and showing an initial connection to Japan. In the summer of 1930, Lindbergh spoke at a conference at the Institute of Policies about the need to establish uniform regulations for international flight while it was still new and developing. The New York Times reporter Louis Stark quotes Lindbergh in his article as saying, “As experience has been developed…and as our craft have been improved we find that this country’s interest is not alone in communication between the various States by air, but that one of our most important interests is better communication with other countries.”\textsuperscript{15} Although he later specifies that he feels the most important links at that time would be to Central and South America, this speech and quote highlight Lindbergh’s interest in connecting with other nations using the rapidly developing aviation technologies, as well as the important role Lindbergh held as an expert within the aviation community. According to the article, Lindbergh’s proposal won acceptance

\textsuperscript{14} Anne Morrow Lindbergh, \textit{Hour of Gold, Hour of Lead}, 10.
from the representatives from Great Britain, France, Germany, and Japan. The presence of an advocate from Japan signals that, like Lindbergh, the Japanese were interested in international flights, and were supportive of his opinions on the matter. These interests would combine the next summer when Charles and Anne would vacation to Japan together, suggesting that the significance of the trip would not be limited to the couple’s own leisure time, as it held mutual interest of connection across the Pacific.

The significance of Lindbergh’s visit was not lost on Japan as they received word of his intentions to fly there, and several reports emerged foreshadowing the positive effects of his flight. Hugh Byas wrote in *The New York Times* that Japan was excited for Lindbergh’s arrival, and expected increased relations with the United States as a result of the trip, despite the “holiday” label. The article goes on to quote Japanese newspapers, revealing that officials were actively working on building Japanese-American relations at the time, and expected the flight to positively impact their efforts. More specific to the development of Japanese aviation, the newspaper reported that aviator Seiji Yoshiwara, was now planning on retracing the Lindberghs’ path in the opposite direction. These initial responses to Charles Lindbergh’s journey show the influence and weight that he carried as an international celebrity, having political implications attached to the couple’s flight across the Arctic Circle with no direct intentions from neither Charles nor Anne. In the same article, Byas wrote that the Chinese officials shared a similar excitement to the Japanese, quoting them to have said, “All agreed that the tour was destined to bring desirable and far-reaching developments in Chinese-American relations, including political and commercial aspects.” Many nations were excited by the prospect of Lindbergh visiting their country, and were hopeful that his presence would have a

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17 Byas, “Japan is Delighted by Lindbergh Plan.”
positive impact, connecting the journey across the Pacific to the development of aviation before the couple ever left the ground.

In researching the planning of the Lindberghs’ trip to Asia in the summer of 1931, other connections to commercial aviation become clear, with Charles’ relationship with Juan Trippe and Pan American Airlines making it seem like less of a vacation and more akin to a light business trip. Lindbergh first met Juan Trippe, founder and chairman of Pan American, as an airmail pilot. Upon his return to the United States after his famous flight across the Atlantic, Lindbergh trusted Trippe as both a pilot and businessman, and chose to align himself with Pan Am as an advisor.\(^{18}\) In the same year Lindbergh planned his vacation to Japan, Trippe was reportedly looking across the Pacific as well, in order to give Pan American a competitive edge over other American airlines. Following Lindbergh’s flight across the Arctic, T.A. Heppenheimer described in his book on the history of commercial aviation, *Turbulent Skies*, that Trippe determined the route to be too harsh of a climate to be feasible, and that it would have been too difficult to establish diplomatically.\(^{19}\) He then focused his efforts on finding a route west across the Pacific, utilizing stops in Hawaii and the Pacific Islands. The first flight took off in the *China Clipper* in 1935 and the first passenger flights were established in 1936, around the same time *North to the Orient* was at the height of its popularity with the American public.\(^{20}\) Lindbergh was not alone in his interest in looking across the Pacific, with his friend businessman Juan Trippe looking to capitalize on that route as well. Although the Lindberghs’ northern route would not be used commercially until after the second World


\(^{19}\) Ibid., 68.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 68, 70-71.
War, the early interest in its development made the couple’s summer vacation significant to the prospect of international aviation.

Pan American may have had some direct involvement in the Lindberghs’ trip as well. Scott Berg wrote that, “Lindbergh ‘conceived, organized, and financed’ the flight personally; but as a consultant to Pan American, he intended to share all information and conclusions with them.”21 Although he did not intend to work on creating air-maps or the like while flying with his wife, Lindbergh would have logically shared any information he gathered about the northern route with the airline he worked for. Other information linking Pan American to the North to the Orient flight is found in Anne’s book itself, where she describes the couple’s plane being fitted with new radio equipment by Pan American.22 Radio use, which was new for the Lindberghs and a responsibility Anne was given for the 1931 flight, would allow Pan Am to fit new technologies, and represents the inescapable link between Lindbergh’s personal interests and his professional advocate for commercial aviation.

After completing their journey and landing safely in Japan, the importance of Charles and Anne’s flight to the development of commercial aviation became increasingly clear, looking at the responses of both the nations visited and of Lindbergh himself. Before the couple took off, The New York Times reported that commercial aviation experts viewed the vacation as a step towards the establishment of transpacific commercial air routes.23 In an exclusive interview with the newspaper after landing in Japan, Lindbergh seemed to share these sentiments. He is quoted in the article, saying, “I am confident that in the near future a regular air service will be established between Japan and America. I look forward to the day when Japanese planes will leave for

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21 Berg, 226.
22 Anne Morrow Lindbergh, North to the Orient, 31.
23 Byas, “Japan is Delighted by Lindbergh Plan.”
America and American planes for Japan on regular schedules. The air route, I think, will be nearly the same as the one we took along the northern coasts. Although it was not my aim to discover a new route…” After the successful completion of his and Anne’s trip across the Pacific, Lindbergh allows himself to think of the impact of the flight on the future of aviation, although the article also reports of his continued emphasis on the flight being for pleasure, not business. Regardless of intent, the impact of the flight on commercial aviation can be seen tangibly in the increased infrastructure and interest in aviation in the countries the couple visited. For example, the city of Manila, having only a small commercial airline business rushed to complete two landing fields in the hopes that the Lindberghs would stop there during their visit to Asia.

Hopes for increased relations between the United States and Japan were met as well, with both Japanese and American citizens applauding the Lindberghs for their role as good-will ambassadors and role models upon their arrival in Tokyo. The Japanese Ambassador wrote to Charles regarding the trip, praising, “Your coming at that time and the way that you and Mrs. Lindbergh comported yourselves as simple unassuming Americans left the happiest impression and made both of you, in the finest sense, ambassadors of good will.” In this case, the vacation aspect of the journey across the Pacific was appreciated, with the connection between people being most important. The American public responded in much the same way to the Lindberghs representation of the Nation abroad. Articles from the New York Times Magazine and The Los Angeles Times similarly praised the couple following their trip to Japan:

He attaches no diplomatic importance to his air trip to the Orient; yet despite his wishes, it may not be possible for him to avoid being, as before, an unofficial ambassador of good-will, the bearer of that vague but

25 Byas, “Japan is Delighted by Lindbergh Plan.”
26 Berg, 232.
none the less real portfolio that he assumes automatically whenever he crosses an international boundary.  

The tumultuous and hearty welcome given Col. Lindbergh and his spunky wife in Japan illustrates once more the value of this unofficial ambassador, who has seldom failed to make friends for his country wherever he goes…The United States has had some good official diplomats, but this unofficial one beats them all. 

One of the greatest impacts of the *North to the Orient* flight was the connection it created between the people on either side of the Pacific Ocean, highlighting the possibility for the communication and exchange through commercial aviation. 

Anne’s focus on the way aviation can be used to connect people can be seen throughout her record of the flight in *North to the Orient*. She devotes some time to talking about how she is more interested in the people of a place than the place itself. Specifically, she mentions that her memory of her time in Russia, about which she frequently asked, was predominated by her memories of people, and not “ideas, plans, and organizations.” This interest in human relationships and the exchange of ideas gets extended further in the book, as she links commercial aviation to facilitating this process. One example occurs when the couple was visiting an isolated Eskimo community. Anne wrote, “It was strange to realize that radio and aviation, which typify the latest advance in civilization, had vitally affected this outpost, while railroad, telephone, and telegraph had not touched it” The importance of commercial aviation as a means to connect and communicate is highlighted, as the airlines were able to transport people and goods to remote locations that were previously unable to experience this accessibility. Another example of aviations benefits praised in *North to the Orient* is in the section about the 

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29 Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *North to the Orient*, 47.  
30 Ibid.,104.
flooding in China. To aid the flood victims, the Lindberghs decided to use their plane to deliver medicine and a doctor to the flooded valley, a task that would be difficult otherwise. While the effort proved somewhat unsuccessful, the couple was still able to contribute to the relief by flying over and mapping the disaster area.\textsuperscript{31} With their 1931 journey across the Pacific and its documentation in \textit{North to the Orient}, the Lindberghs fascinated and inspired people across the globe, promoting international connections through commercial aviation, despite their intentions to execute the flight for purely recreational purposes.

As a female, Anne Morrow Lindbergh played a unique role in the emerging field of commercial aviation by working to assure the public about the safety of air travel and becoming an inspiration for other American women through her various flights, including her trip across the Pacific, and her writing in \textit{North to the Orient}. An interesting point of comparison to Anne is fellow female aviator Amelia Earhart, who held a specific interest in the role of women in aviation, and wrote about the subject in her book \textit{The Fun of It}. The two women were not close friends, but held a mutual respect for each other and worked towards the same goals of promoting commercial aviation and passenger flight. Anne described Amelia in a letter to her sister, saying, “She is the most amazing person-just as tremendous as [Charles], I think…She has the clarity of mind, impersonal eye, coolness of temperament, balance of a scientist. Aside from that, I like her.”\textsuperscript{32} Earhart was often compared to Charles Lindbergh in the press, given her boyish looks, her occupation, and eventually her own solo flight across the Atlantic in 1932. Perhaps more enlightening is Earhart’s description of Anne Lindbergh in her book, devoting several

\textsuperscript{31} Anne Morrow Lindbergh, \textit{North to the Orient}, 214.
\textsuperscript{32} Anne Morrow Lindbergh to Constance Cutter Morrow, Jan 13-14, in \textit{Hour of Gold, Hour of Lead}, 121.
pages to her in the section where she describes notable female aviators of the time.

“Perhaps no woman flyer is more interesting than Anne Lindbergh. That is because of her own personality, the fame of her husband, and the way in which she has tackled flying…[She] is undoubtedly today America’s best-known woman-flier and flyee combined.”

Although modern memory holds Earhart as the top female aviator, at the time Anne Lindbergh was more talked about due to the massive amount of press her husband and their activities together received. Both Earhart and Anne recognized the importance of their public image to their work promoting commercial aviation in the United States, working specifically on increasing public confidence in passenger flight and assuring women in particular.

In the early years of commercial aviation, the passenger experience was limited and often unpleasant. Airlines focused mainly on attracting airmail contracts, which were more profitable and reliable than passenger flights. As the industry progressed, however, it became increasingly important to attract passengers to aviation as a new and desirable mode of transportation. Earhart described this trend as, “With the very rapid development of aviation, a new attitude on the part of the traveling public entered the picture. Airlines began to be accepted as a necessity, like railroads and bus lines. Increasingly it became apparent that there was a need for frequency of service and lowered fares.”

Airlines had to overcome many hurdles to meet the public interest and make consistent commercial passenger flights a reality, including improving the passenger experience. Air travel in the early 1930s was often difficult for the people on board, with noise, exhaust, lack of pressurization, limited heating, and frequent

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33 Earhart, 170-172.
34 Heppenheimer, 25.
35 Earhart, 106-107.
airsickness making the flights an unpleasant experience compared to trains or busses.\textsuperscript{36} Other complaints included high fares, the temperatures on board and baggage limits to reduce the planes’ weights.\textsuperscript{37} Airlines worked to make planes more appealing and familiar\textsuperscript{38}, however it wasn’t until later that increased speeds and decreased ticket prices as the Depression eased that the number of passenger flights saw a dramatic upturn by the end of the decade.\textsuperscript{39}

Beyond improving the planes themselves, easing public fears about the new technology was essential to the promotion of aviation in the 1930s, with both Amelia Earhart and Anne Lindbergh taking active roles in this task as female aviators. Like Lindbergh, Earhart worked for TAT but had a different importance to the company due to her gender. She wrote about this position in \textit{The Fun of It}. “My job was to sell flying to women, both by talking about it and by watching details of handling passengers, which were calculated to appeal to feminine travelers. Justly or unjustly, air ticket sellers accused women of being the greatest sales resistance encountered. They wouldn’t go up themselves, said these men, and they wouldn’t let their families do so.”\textsuperscript{40} Earhart was put in charge of easing the fears of other women to improve passenger ticket sales for the airline, being uniquely qualified for this position because of her gender. She answered questions for male passengers as well, however, the acknowledged strategy of appealing to women sheds light on the assumed roles of females during the decade, which Earhart also acknowledges to be potentially incorrect. When reflecting on the reasons for women to be leery of air travel, she concluded that, “…women’s hesitancy in accepting air travel is simply because they are uninformed about it. What people don’t understand, they

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\item \textsuperscript{36} Heppenheimer, 25.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Earhart, 105-106.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 105-106.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Heppenheimer, 72.
\item \textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 106.
\end{itemize}
usually fear.”\textsuperscript{41} Earhart worked to inform the public about air travel in the column she wrote for \textit{Cosmopolitan}, a magazine directed towards women. She described that besides questions about Colonel Lindbergh, many readers asked about the sensations of flying and what it is like.\textsuperscript{42} By working to explain flying and the experience of being in a plane to the public, and specifically to women, Earhart was able to promote the development of commercial aviation through eased fears and increased ticket sales on passenger flights.

Like Earhart, Anne Morrow Lindbergh was able to use her gender and fame to assure Americans about the safety of air travel, using letters to her family, her writing in \textit{North to the Orient}, and her role as copilot during flights with her husband. In the introduction to \textit{Hour of Gold, Hour of Lead}, Anne acknowledges that her letters contained direct attempts to ease fears concerning flying and air travel. “The letters I wrote home about these adventures were not strictly accurate. The accounts were tempered to allay the anxiety of my mother or my mother-in-law, who, I realized, worried constantly and understandably over her son’s exploits.”\textsuperscript{43} With often exaggerated newspaper reports and the sometimes dangerous nature of the couple’s adventure, Anne served an active role in assuring American women as Earhart did, beginning with her own family. One example was a 1929 letter to her mother, in which Anne wrote about flying back from California while pregnant, “…the trip back does not frighten me. It will probably mean only a long day and no staying up all night. I will be comfortable and warm all the time, be able to take good food along, and sleep. And it won’t be nerve-racking because we will fly only in good weather.”\textsuperscript{44} Despite that she ended up uncomfortable and sick for most of the flight, Anne wrote about the event with a positive

\textsuperscript{41} Earhart.,\textsuperscript{153}.  
\textsuperscript{42} Earhart., \textsuperscript{100}. \textsuperscript{43} Anne Morrow Lindbergh, \textit{Hour of Gold, Hour of Lead}, \textsuperscript{10}.  
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., \textsuperscript{129}. 
spin and asserted that not only was she unafraid, but that there was nothing to worry about in the first place. In another letter, Anne writes to Charles’ mother regarding a plane crash that Charles had helped to investigate. Crashes were common in aviations early years, and their accounts were often exaggerated in newspapers, further fueling public fears surrounding passenger flights. In the letter, Anne recounts the reasons behind the crash according to the experts who investigated the incident, and reaffirms her husband’s skills in judging weather and flying in emergency situations.\(^45\) Beginning with those closest to her, Anne Lindbergh worked to advance aviation by reaffirming the safety of travel by airplane.

Looking at the Lindberghs’ 1931 trip to Japan specifically, one can see Anne make the same attempt to reassure readers of the safety of the flight in *North to the Orient*, as she downplays her own fears in her writing. The best example of this can be seen regarding an incident in China where they were forced to jump out of the float plane as it was being swept away in the Yangtze river. Anne described jumping into the river lightheartedly, joking about swallowing the muddy water and writing that, “…not only did I have no fear, I had no sensation at all- no realization of going under water or of getting wet or of my clothes being heavy to swim in, or even that the life preserver had not worked.”\(^46\) This recollection of the incident is in sharp contrast to the newspaper reports at the time, however one review of the book shows that she may have been successful in convincing the public of the lack of danger during the journey. John Chamberlain wrote in his summarization of *North to the Orient* that, “Twice she felt fear…Most of the time, however, there wasn’t very much to scare one. The dangers had

\(^{45}\) Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Hour of Gold, Hour of Lead*, 122.

\(^{46}\) Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *North to the Orient*, 231.
been accurately foreseen and discounted by careful preparation."\(^{47}\) Anne’s careful construction of her retelling gave the impression that so long as one is adequately prepared, there is nothing to fear about traveling in an airplane, even during forced landings or over uncharted terrain. In comparison to Anne’s flight over the Arctic, a passenger flight within the United States would have seemed even less of a cause for concern to the American public, making the journey’s retelling in *North to the Orient* significant to the advancement of aviation and passenger flight.

Because of the publicity surrounding the Lindberghs’ every move, Anne’s actions would often do as much to ease the public’s fears about passenger flight as her writing did. When reflecting on setting the speed record for a flight across the United States with her husband, Anne talks about refusing to leave the plane upon landing because she felt ill. “I could not interrupt and spoil the record flight and I did not want my fears or discomforts to get to the newspapers and make a story that would have a damaging effect on aviation…”\(^{48}\) Conscious of the press, Anne Lindbergh was careful to maintain a good face after flying in order to keep a positive public opinion surrounding commercial aviation and passenger flight. Another example of Anne working to reassure any fears of flying, is the TAT flight she and Charles boarded as passengers in 1929. She assumed the role of “unofficial hostess,” and helped the other passengers to relax while in the air. Acting both through the press and directly with the passengers, Anne was able to help maintain the nation’s trust in passenger flight.\(^ {49}\) Anne also worked to restore the public’s confidence in airplane travel after damage had been done. Paul Garber, the first curator of the Smithsonian’s National Air Museum described, “It took Lindy’s big smile to get

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\(^{49}\) Berg, 207.
those first passengers into planes, especially after those crashes. He made it all look so easy… and safe enough to take his pretty, young wife along with him.”  

With the public’s faith resting on Lindbergh, he played an important role in maintaining interest in commercial aviation, and the presence of Anne helped to reassure the American public as well. Through her actions and recognition of her public image, Anne was able to promote the advancement of commercial aviation by making air travel appear safe and helped to reverse damage done when accidents occurred.

Looking at the flight across the Arctic to Japan specifically, as well as its account in North to the Orient, Anne’s gender can be viewed as essential to the promotion of the flight and the safety of air travel. The idea behind this argument is that once a woman is able to travel somewhere, the public will feel confident that the rest of the population can as well. University of Montana professor Susan Kollin described this concept in her article “The First White Women in the Last Frontier,” where she took a feminist and imperialist lens to the journeys to Alaska by Elizabeth Beaman with her husband in 1879, and the Lindberghs’ flight during the summer of 1931, specifically focusing on the narratives the women wrote about their trips. For part of her article, Kollin explores the idea of the women as the first to arrive in a place, writing that, “The first white women’s arrival was meaningful because it often pointed to the fact that more white women were sure to follow.” Although Kollin is more focused on the role of women in American imperialism than on public response to the travel narratives, the concept of Anne Lindbergh as a trailblazer in the conquest of unknown places fits with the idea that her gender alone was enough to ease public fears. In the case of North to the Orient, Anne

50 Berg, 207.
51 Ibid., 205.
would be leading the public not only onto passenger flights, but also across the ocean to Asia, making the trip and narrative significant to the promotion of commercial aviation worldwide. The Kollin quote also calls to mind Earhart’s task of making passenger flights appealing to women: When women go, others will follow. Kollin concludes that “Recognizing the power white women desired as agents of history reveals that European American women were not always marginal figures in acts of expansion and conquest, but often crucial factors in its success.”

Through her flying and writing, Anne took an active role in the expansion of American aviation, and should not be viewed as just a passenger tagging along on her husband’s adventures.

The influence of aviators Amelia Earhart and Anne Lindbergh on American women can be seen beyond just getting them on to passenger flights, as an increasing number of women began to pilot planes themselves. Earhart reported that there were twelve women in the United States who held pilots licenses in 1929. By the time her book was published in 1932, this number had increased to 472. The advances of these women, however, were still not equal to that of men, as the press hindered the roles they could take in early aviation roles. Earhart describes the phenomenon in her book, giving the example of a man who would not hire female pilots:

I had one manufacturer tell me that he couldn’t risk hiring women pilots because of the way accidents, even minor ones, were played up in the newspapers. “A man can damage a plane and hardly a word be said,” he explained, “but that doesn’t apply when sister stubs her toe. I don’t want my products advertised by a nose-over or a forced landing but don’t misunderstand me,” he hastened to add. “I don’t mean women have more accidents than men.”

Despite advances in the roles women could play in the new world of aviation, they were still not equal to men in the availability of positions. The importance of leaders Earhart

54 Earhart, 146.
55 Ibid., 137.
and Anne Lindbergh, however, should not be discounted as the dramatic increase in the number of women taking to the skies alone proves that the lack of piloting jobs was perhaps only a minimal deterrent. Female aviators most commonly found employment similar to Earhart’s, utilizing their gender to assure the safety and ease of piloting in order to sell airplanes on the private market. Other opportunities included racing and going on promotional flights for airline manufacturers.56

Anne Morrow Lindbergh’s impact on female pilots is exemplified by the increased popularity piloting glider planes. In 1930, just before the trip to Japan, Anne became the first licensed female gilder pilot and inspired other women and girls to follow in her footsteps.57 An article in the magazine Popular Mechanics from the same year describes the formation of the Anne Lindbergh Glider Club in San Diego, a group of women headed by Peaches Wallace who were interested in glider planes58. The Gliders named Anne Lindbergh their Honorary President. The article also states that glider planes are a good introduction to flying powered planes, and some women in the article’s photographs were listed as holding both types of licenses. Through her own piloting, Anne was able to inspire women not only to fly glider planes, but later move on to flying engine-powered airplanes as well, as she herself did during the 1931 trip.

Anne Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart were acknowledged for their contributions and leadership among American women by pioneer suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt. Each year, Catt would create a list of ten “first women,” with both Anne and Earhart appearing on it in 1935, and Eleanor Roosevelt taking the top position for the third year in a row. A New York Times article describing this list provides an insight into the way the two

57 Berg, 208.
women were perceived in their accomplishments. The first notable detail is the inclusion of Anne Lindbergh in the article’s headline, whereas Earhart does not receive mention until later. However, while Lindbergh’s name was used to draw in readership, she was the only woman on the list without her own title or occupation described. Whereas other women were described by titles such as “United States Minister to Denmark” and “writer on foreign affairs for The New York Times,” and Amelia Earhart labeled as “aviator,” Anne Morrow Lindbergh’s name is simply followed by “wife of colonel Charles A. Lindbergh.” While her position in the headline could indicate Anne’s greater celebrity status, another possibility is that people were more shocked to see her on it, viewing her as simply the wife of a celebrity. The article goes on to explain the position of Anne Lindbergh on the list, stating that, “Mrs. Lindbergh was selected principally as the author of a successful book, ‘North to the Orient,’ which describes her trip to China with Colonel Lindbergh by airplane. Mrs. Catt added, however, that she had ‘done a great many brave things…. Her dignity in the most trying circumstances has been a credit to American womanhood.’” Here the “trying circumstances” encompass both her experiences in the air and the kidnapping and death of her first son in 1932. Despite her connection to Charles and his accomplishments, Anne Morrow Lindbergh was recognized for her own contributions as an American woman, with her bravery and writing of North to the Orient noted in particular, exemplifying the importance of her dedication, and the significance of the transpacific trip beyond being merely a vacation.

The Lindberghs’ accomplishments in the world of aviation found significance through the couple’s fame, with their position as celebrities allowing them to influence

the population during the first half of the decade. In addition to the role of the press already discussed, the Lindberghs’ fame was underlying their global impact in other, specific ways. After his transatlantic flight, Charles Lindbergh found himself in the spotlight, with the entire world interested in not only what he had done, but also who he was as a person.60 Author Charles L. Ponce de Leon described Lindbergh’s sudden rise to fame, detailing that, “Within a week of his flight he had become the most highly publicized person in the world, the subject of an unprecedented outpouring of news and human-interest journalism.”61 This emerging celebrity obsession gave public figures a new significance in the United States, as the increasingly nationalized culture and advancing communication technologies allowed for the fascinated public to be informed to these people’s every moves.62 Although Lindbergh did his best to keep his private life out of the public eye, speaking with only specific reporters about aviation issues, he none-the-less became one of the most popular celebrities of the decade.63 Anne Morrow Lindbergh fell into this world of publicity after their marriage. Although she had some celebrity in her own right, being the daughter of an Ambassador and Senator, it was nothing compared to the public fascination surrounding the Lindberghs as a couple. Berg explained their popularity in his biography, writing that, “The nation found them more glamorous than movie stars because their romantic adventures together were real.”64 Although the Lindberghs did their best to avoid publicity, their fame in the emerging celebrity culture of 1930s America can be interpreted as the driving force behind the

61 Ponce de Leon, 1.
62 Ibid., 12.
63 Ibid., 2.
64 Berg, 207.
couple’s ability to influence the public and promote commercial aviation both at home and abroad.

While the Lindberghs were not the only couple who flew together during the 1930s, their fame and presence in the newspapers set them apart from other aviators, and allowed their flights and promotions to reach a wide audience. One out of every five female aviators in 1932 had a pilot for a husband. In her book, Earhart noted her encounter with another couple that flew together for a living, commenting on the fun of the adventures they must have together, and on their passion for aviation. The Lindberghs are not dissimilar from this pair, being passionate about flying and enjoying taking to the skies together as a profession, however, the media surrounding Charles and Anne sets them very much apart in the impact of their journeys and in their day-to-day lives. In a letter to her mother, Anne described some of her interactions with the press shortly before her first son was born, writing, “We have been bothered again by newspapers with reports of all kinds: that [Charles] had ordered a room in a maternity hospital for April; that the baby is coming any moment and that’s why we are waiting around Los Angeles, etc. etc. I hope the glider publicity knock that story on the head.”

This quote illustrates the constant presence of reporters, and that while stories on the Lindberghs’ private life were unwanted, they embraced publicity that would place the focus back on aviation. Using the example of Anne’s glider piloting, one can assume that the publicity surrounding her flight helped to promote aviation by inspiring the women who took up piloting following the event, as seen with the Anne Lindbergh Gliders. Similarly, the Lindberghs’ other flights, like their trip across the Pacific, would have

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65 Corn, 564.
66 Earhart, 151.
67 Anne Morrow Lindbergh to Elizabeth Cutter Morrow, March 4, 1930, in *Hour of Gold, Hour of Lead*, 128.
found significance perhaps solely because of the attention they received from the press within the United States and abroad. Although the Lindberghs were not entirely unique as a couple who flew together, their fame set them apart and allowed for greater influence on the American public in the promotion of commercial aviation.

The effects of the publicity and fame the Lindberghs received were not all positive, in an era where the public’s growing interest in celebrity culture fueled the mass media to publish an increasing amount of human-interest stories. In his book *Self Exposure*, Ponce de Leon describes how during the first half of the decade, celebrity journalism in newspapers, magazine profiles, and biographies was focused around exploring the private life of the person in question, as a means to expose his or her “real self.” 68 News stories about the Lindberghs’ private life were not always useful to the promotion of aviation, as it understated the accomplishments of the flights. In *North to the Orient*, Anne described female reporters running up to her before takeoff and asking about her clothes, housekeeping on the plane, and where she keeps lunchboxes. “I felt depressed, as I generally do when women reporters ask me conventionally feminine questions,” she wrote. “I feel as they must feel when they are given those questions to ask. I feel slightly insulted.” 69 The human-interest stories the reporters sought to publish undermined the importance of the flight and Anne’s role as a woman in the male-dominated world of aviation. Similarly, Anne also noted that the questions were insulting to the female reporters, undermining their jobs as journalists. While the celebrity of the Lindberghs and the news stories about them were often key to their promotion of commercial aviation, human-interest stories focusing on their private life were not only detrimental to the couple, but also to their profession.

68 Ponce de Leon, 40.
One of the most important ways the Lindberghs’ celebrity enabled their promotion of commercial aviation was through increased investment in aviation and the job opportunities it gave Charles, which in turn lead to the financing of trips like the one to Japan. Powerful entrepreneurs, like Juan Trippe, shared Lindbergh’s investment in the new commercial aviation business, and supported him in his efforts to shield his private life from the media. Ponce de Leon describes these men’s view of Lindbergh after his 1927 flight, as, “…the ideal spokesman for a controversial new industry in which they had a large financial stake. Instead of encouraging him to develop better relations with the press, they supported his efforts to draw a line around his personal life, believing that this would make him- and the industry that he embodied- appear more serious and ‘scientific.’” Becoming close with these entrepreneurs, the normally reclusive Lindbergh was willing to use his celebrity as a means to advance commercial aviation both nationally and worldwide, creating new economic opportunities and capital for those involved. The American public responded to his flight as well, investing in aviation stocks, despite any hesitations to fly themselves. Just before the market crash, aviation stocks had reached close to a billion dollars, but with limited earnings coming in at only around nine million, they were grossly over-valued. Despite any losses on his investments, with Lindbergh’s earnings stemming from consulting positions for two airlines, he was able to continue to make money despite the crash and Great Depression, and finance journeys that promoted commercial aviation, such as the one across the Arctic to Japan. Looking at the Lindberghs’ celebrity from a financial lens, Charles’ fame following his transatlantic flight not only opened job opportunities, it was manipulated by

70 Ponce de Leon, 2.
71 Earhart, 98.
72 Heppenheimer, 22.
aviation businessmen for profit and expansion, and inspired Americans to invest in aviation.

Anne Lindbergh’s activities were influenced by her husband’s fame as well, with her role as the wife of a celebrity leading to her own promotion of commercial aviation. In Ponce de Leon’s *Self Exposure* he explains that in the 1920s and 1930s, the wives of prominent celebrities were important to their husbands success, and not only assumed the duties of taking care of the house and watching children, they also were expected to support their spouses and embrace their eccentricities. He goes on, however, to detail that just as many wives adopted more active roles in their husbands’ lives, putting their own talents and ambitions into their husband’s careers while also fulfilling their domestic responsibilities. Ponce de Leon describes that wives of politicians were especially likely to fill this role, as they “personified the new opportunities available to women in the early twentieth century. Directing their ambitions and interest toward work that supported or was compatible with their husbands’ careers as politicians, they expanded the ideal of ‘partnership’ beyond the home.” The latter is a fitting description of Anne Morrow Lindbergh, who, after marrying Charles, became his partner and took it upon herself to learn to fly planes, use radio equipment, and actively promote his cause of commercial aviation as well as his career. Similarly, she was able to put her own talents into this promotion, using her English degree and passion for writing to tell the story of their flight across the Pacific in *North to the Orient*, and in later books. Despite her activity, Anne remained in a supportive position as Lindbergh’s wife, deferring technical and

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73 Ponce de Leon, 122-123.  
74 Ibid., 124-125.
mechanical questions to him as the expert, and not taking on an independent role as an aviator like other female pilots such as Earhart.75

Anne perhaps learned this role from her mother, Elizabeth Morrow, who was the wife of a politician and became actively involved in her husband’s career. After Dwight Morrow died in 1931, Elizabeth was given the option to complete her husband’s term in the senate. Although she declined this offer, she continued to be involved in many ways. Berg described her activity as, “With renewed vigor- often saying ‘It’s what Dwight would want’ - Mrs. Morrow would emerge as a national figure, one of the prime exemplars of twentieth-century women who devoted their lives to public service through volunteerism.”76 Both Anne Morrow Lindbergh and her mother exemplify Ponce de Leon’s description of the way wives of celebrities became uniquely involved in their husband’s work as both support systems and active partners. Charles Lindbergh’s celebrity impacted not only the tone of his own work promoting commercial aviation, but changed the life of his wife as well, introducing Anne to the world of aviation and allowing her to be a key tool in its promotion.

Looking at the impact of North to the Orient specifically, Anne’s celebrity was speculated as one of the main reasons for the book’s climb to the top of the best seller’s list, allowing her to reach and influence a wide audience. North to the Orient fit with many of the common themes found in literature during the 1930s, especially with its overarching theme of escapism, popular during the Great Depression. A book describing American popular culture in the 1930’s details that, “Self-help, biographies, memoirs, travels books, and cookbooks seemed to rule the day, suggesting that Americans were

75 Corn, 565.
76 Berg, 232.
more concerned about personal improvement, exotic places, and eating well.” North to the Orient fills a few of these themes, covering the lives of a famous couple as a memoir, and covering a journey, or escape to an exotic place.

Despite its seemingly natural fit into the literature of the time, some critics felt that Anne’s celebrity was the main factor behind the book’s success. In the fall of 1935, Elsie Madison wrote a critical, yet humorous piece in the Los Angeles Times taking jabs at the best seller lists being open only to famous names and already established authors. “It is Mrs. Lindbergh’s first novel but, while it is well written, it has undoubtedly gained this particular popularity because of the magic of the Lindbergh name…There are quantities of famous aviators and all of their wives cant possibly write and probably a lot of them would like to have a book published under their names. Such a book will sell, genius or not!” While Madison acknowledges the skill of Anne’s writing, she is quick to point out that Anne is known as Lindbergh’s wife, and that this is the reason behind the book’s sales. Perhaps readers were interested in the human-interest aspect of North to the Orient, as a look into the journey and the couple’s relationship from the eyes of the aviator herself. Based on this review, Anne Morrow Lindbergh’s celebrity was critical to her ability to reach a wide audience and communicate to the public about commercial aviation through her own writing. As two of the most popular celebrity figures of the first half of the century, the Lindberghs’ efforts to promote aviation were facilitated by their fame and the interested American public.

With their 1931 trip across the Arctic to Japan, Charles and Anne Lindbergh claimed to want nothing but an adventure together in the skies, vacationing in an airplane

the same way other couples took cars or trains. However, with the couple’s close ties to the emerging world of commercial aviation, and news reporters closely following their every move the trip became significant to the world as a whole beyond their recreational intent. The Lindberghs’ became ambassadors of goodwill, linking together distant nations through aviation, unofficial pioneers of new North Pacific air routes, airplane and radio technologies, and avid promoters of commercial aviation both before and after the flight in newspapers and Anne’s own account of the journey in *North to the Orient*. In the 1930s, Anne held a unique role as a female aviator by inspiring American women to fly both as passengers and as pilots throughout the decade. As a celebrity wife, she took on her husband’s profession and passion for commercial aviation, using her talents as a writer to promote the cause and received recognition for her work from the American public. Despite his resistance to the press, Charles Lindbergh’s celebrity was critical to promotion of aviation, with his successes evident in increased interest, investment, and infrastructure not only in the United States, but around the world.

Perhaps the Lindberghs’ trip across the Pacific best represents a balance between work and leisure. It is clear that the Lindberghs could not have a simple vacation, even if they wanted to, as the global community followed and drew significance from the couple’s every move. By the time they flew to Japan, “escape” was not possible, as their fame alone was enough to make this and other journeys important to the advancement of air travel around the world. However, without the pressures of any specific goals or promotions in mind, the couple may have been able to simply enjoy their trip across the Pacific as time together. The romance of the 1931 journey was not lost on Anne or on the American public, especially following the publication of Anne’s corresponding book. An advertisement for a guide to “light and easy table talk” intended to give the reader’s
audience an illusion of higher social status highlighted a few suggestions for appropriate conversation. One example of such a topic was, “Helen’s been reading ‘North to the Orient’ and I don’t think she’ll ever consider anyone but an aviator for a husband now!”

Becoming fully immersed into American popular culture, *North to the Orient* was considered a romantic adventure in the sky that any woman would want to be a part of. Although the Lindberghs were not able to escape their celebrity or work while flying, they were able to find time alone with each other. In the introduction to her collections of letters and diary entries, Anne described her love of flying during this time in her life, writing, “It was freedom and beauty and escape from crowds. It was privacy as well. There was too much noise in those early open planes to talk, but we could exchange notes. Flying also provided time alone, peace to sink down into oneself, to think, to learn poetry.”

While the Lindberghs’ transpacific trip and accompanying narrative were of special interest to a world-wide audience of leaders and average citizens alike, helping to advance commercial aviation into the global transportation industry it is today, the journey was significant to the couple as time alone, an adventure together, and a temporary escape from the world below.

Looking forward, the importance of female pilots during aviation’s early years and the continued impact of the Lindberghs’ flight across the Pacific in 1931 become more apparent. By the end of the 1930s, women had lost many of their jobs as sales pilots with aviation gaining the public’s acceptance and confidence. These female pilots would re-emerge after 1941 to play a significant role during WWII. The United States Army Air Forces trained women to be civilian Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs)

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79 “No Need to Be a Table Fixture- Improve Your Conversation With Home Institute Book Aids,” *The Los Angeles Times*, March 5, 1936, http://www.proquest.com
81 Corn, 570.
and fly non-combat missions during the war. Many WASPs emerged from the surge of female pilots inspired by Amelia Earhart in the Anne Morrow Lindbergh 1920s and 1930s, as all female trainees were required to hold pilots licenses and have at least seventy-five hours of logged flight time, although this requirement was later reduced to thirty-five hours.\footnote{Molly Merryman, \textit{Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) of World War II}, (New York: New York University Books, 1998), http://www.books.google.com, 28-29.} Despite their service, the WASPs were disbanded after the war.

Women would not be officially accepted into the Air Force as military pilots until 1976.\footnote{“Women to Train as Pilots,” \textit{New York Times}, January 14, 1976, http://www.proquest.com.} The significance of the pioneering work accomplished by leading female aviators such as Anne Morrow Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart can be seen beyond their success in creating public confidence in air travel. The contributions of the WASPs during WWII illustrate the impact that the work of these leaders in encouraging and organizing women pilots had, and helped to open the doors for females in the military. After the conclusion of the war, women found increased opportunities in commercial aviation as stewardesses on passenger routes, resuming the task of assuring safety and “hostessing” the flights as Anne did for TAT in 1929.\footnote{Corn, 571} Even while women were not finding roles as pilots, they continued to be actively involved in promoting public confidence, following the example of early female aviators, but at a cost of perpetuating a domestic stereotype.

The legacy of the Lindbergh’s journey across the Arctic Circle to Japan is tied into World War II as well. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Americans speculated about potential attacks on the continental United States by the Japanese. A 1942 article in the \textit{Los Angeles Times} described that, “America’s military leaders are giving increasing indications that the eventual offensive against Japan will come from more than one direction…the Lindberghs probably were less interested in the military aspects of the
northern airways than any who have traveled them, yet, ironically, it was their flight that quickened Japanese awareness of the possibilities of the north.” 85 After the Army took control of commercial airlines, Northwest Airlines was assigned to establish and maintain a supply route to Alaska and the Aleutian island chain in an effort to defend the United States from a possible northern attack.86 In 1945, Northwest was granted authorization for commercial flights from Seattle to Asia, using the larger planes developed during the war and its established infrastructure in Alaska to make the Lindberghs’ “Great Circle Route” the most efficient path across the Pacific.87 Once a vacation for Charles and Anne, their pioneering flight across the Arctic eventually became the preferred route for all commercial air travel to Asia. The significance of the Lindberghs’ transpacific journey, and their other promotional work during the 1930s expands beyond immediate effects during the first half of the twentieth century, and into a continued legacy of modern commercial aviation and air travel.

87 Ibid., 30.
Works Cited

Primary


Secondary


