

Columbus and Lindbergh: A Journey Across the Atlantic

As dawn rose over the continuous vastness of ocean, spreading a bright, pink hue into the early morning horizon, Charles Lindbergh gripped the control stick of the plane and rubbed the layers of bags under his eyes. His stomach growled. Not faltering from his intense gaze out the front of the plane, he dipped down towards the ocean, the propeller spraying streams of water towards the back of the plane. His eyes scanned the horizon searching for a sliver of color that would signify the coast of Europe. Often, he spotted such land, but after approaching what he thought to be the shore, it disappeared into the ocean mist from which the mirage had appeared. Lindbergh shook his head in disappointment. Of course, the land was a figment of his imagination; he would not yet reach the coast of Ireland for many more hours. Stifling a yawn, the aviator set his mind on the crowds waiting for him in Paris and the significance of his journey across the Atlantic Ocean.

Not quite 435 years before Charles's plane skimmed across the Atlantic sea eastward, did a man by the name of Christopher Columbus set sail in the opposite direction towards America, equipped not with a plane but a sailing vessel. However, as Columbus stood on the helm of the Santa Maria,

he dreamed of what Lindbergh would also desire: fame, fortune, along with the promise of adventure.

Centuries before Christopher Columbus was born in 1451 in Italy, Europe's knowledge of the world had been expanding due to religious Crusades and trading voyages to Africa and Asia. These expeditions, specifically the ones to the Far East resulted in the increase of trade with Asia and the acquisition of great wealth for European countries. However, the journey to these wealthy lands was long and perilous, and explorers sought a more efficient path to Asia.

After several failed attempts to persuade the Portuguese royalty to fund a voyage, Columbus convinced King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain to sponsor an expedition to Asia using a westward route that he predicted would lead him to the continent. With financial support from the Spanish royalty, Columbus gathered a crew and prepared for his voyage, hoping to increase Spain's wealth and influence along with his own. He set off into the unknown in 1492 hoping to return a revered hero.

Charles Lindbergh, born February 4, 1902, was also inspired to complete his legendary crossing of the Atlantic by both the promise of fortune and the drive for adventure. A graduate of the intensive Army Air Service School with a history of "barnstorming", touring the U.S. doing daredevil jumps and tricks on an airplane, Charles set out to earn the Orteig Prize, \$25,000 for the first person to fly from New York to Paris without stopping. He received funds and support from businessmen in St. Louis, convincing them that this flight would make known to the world the wonders of aviation and that it would gain publicity for their city.

Eager to fulfill his daredevil dreams and win the Orteig prize, Charles Lindbergh began his flight at 7:52 a.m. on May 20, 1927 in his plane christened The Spirit of St. Louis. Though separated by centuries and heading in opposite directions, both Lindbergh and Columbus began their journeys hoping for personal glory as well as acclaim for the ideas, whether country or industry, for which they represented.

The centuries that separated the courageous journeys of both Charles Lindbergh and Christopher Columbus hold an incredible amount of technological advancements and societal differences, but both men faced similar challenges on their Atlantic voyages. As they progressed farther across the ocean, hoping to find a sign of land ahead, both pioneers

experienced delusions where they would surely spot land on the horizon, but upon closer examination it would reveal itself to be a mirage. Dense fogs along with these hallucinations tortured the men as they combed the ocean for signs of land. Charles and Christopher also faced challenges specific to their times and methods of travel.

The first to journey to the "New World", Columbus lacked knowledge about the Atlantic and expected to land in Japan instead of the Caribbean. He hid his confusion as to why the ocean stretched on more than predicted. The members of the crew turned mutinous and demanded to return to Spain once the perilous situation became clear. Despite this hostility, Columbus dealt with the crew by promising to return home if land did not reveal itself soon. Navigating the uncharted waters by a process called dead reckoning, Christopher used tools such as a compass, an hourglass, and his own eyesight to determine the direction, time, speed, and then the location of his fleet of three ships. He faithfully recorded these measurements in his diary of the voyage.

The aviator, Lindbergh, was aware of his position during his journey but suffered other ailments during his thirty-three and a half hour flight. Nervous about his adventure the next day, Charles spent the night before his historic journey lying awake, and when arriving in Paris, he had not slept for fifty-five hours. He struggled to stay awake in the cockpit, resorting to sticking his head out the side window in order to remain alert. Parachute-less in order to reduce the plane's weight, Lindbergh might have perished if the plane malfunctioned, but he used his years of daredevil piloting experience to successfully make it to the city of Paris, completing his journey. Both men, the aviator and the captain, despite their varied challenges, managed to complete their odyssey across the Atlantic, ensuring a legacy for generations to come.

At Columbus's death in 1506, he still maintained the belief that he had found a route to Asia, but his legacy in the modern world is much greater than that of a man who discovered a new trading path, but as the man who brought the eastern and western hemispheres together. This brought forth the Columbian Exchange, a mass of plants, animals, people, and ideas traded between continents - a clash of the old world and the new world eventually resulting in the foundation of the United States of America.

Four hundred years, the foundation of a free country, and a wealth of technological advancements later, Lindbergh attempted to update Columbus's

expedition by using the airplane, a product of American invention, to travel to Europe. Accomplishing a feat thought to be impossible, just like Columbus, Lindbergh returned to the old world equipped with the pinnacle of American spirit and innovation and demonstrated to the crowds waiting in Paris all that America had accomplished in the 400 years since Columbus brought two worlds together. Lindbergh, smiling through a yawn, glanced down at the throngs of people waiting below. Preparing for a landing, he began his descent from the star-filled sky into the fields of Paris, satisfied with his achievement for America and the people of the world.

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