Letters to Lindbergh: An Illustrated Children’s Book

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Letters to Lindbergh:

An Illustrated Children’s Book

Illustrated and Edited by

Samantha Gottwalt

26 April 2017
Abstract

*Letters to Lindbergh* is an illustrated children’s book offering a new perspective on the relationship between the aviator Charles Lindbergh and his father, while also bringing a visual component to historical documents. Illustrated by Samantha Gottwalt, the book’s art explores collage media techniques and the story is told through letters that Lindbergh exchanged with his father during his adolescence (1909-1924.) It aims to explore a facet of Lindbergh’s life that has little exposure and invited the reader to step into a vividly colored collaged world created with paint and cut paper. Through the new perspective of Lindbergh’s correspondence the story intends to inspire and offers a creative solution for historical storytelling, while introducing young readers to the boy who would become one of the most famous and influential people of the 20th Century. .
Executive Summary

When I tell people, “I’m an illustrator,” their eyes light up and they eagerly tell me about the books they read as a kid, the stories that stuck with them even when they graduated to books that contained more words than pictures. They are usually delighted to discover that I, too, want to join in the ranks and dive into the children’s book industry, and they curiously ask what I am working on and what stories interest me. From passion project to a truly daunting exercise in illustrating a 32-page children’s book, *Letters to Lindbergh* is nonfiction picture book illustrating the correspondence between the aviator Charles Lindbergh and his father during his youth and young adulthood, and it is exactly the kind of story I want to tell.

During the summer of 2014, I volunteered extensively at the Charles Lindbergh Historic Site, a Minnesota Historical Society site located in my hometown of Little Falls, Minnesota. The site’s focus is around a house on the Mississippi River where Lindbergh spent his summer and late teenage years, and it is here that he would begin his exploration as an inventor and innovator. While volunteering on the site, one of my assignments was to categorizing and chronologically order binders of Lindbergh family correspondence. At first, it was digging through dense binders full of photocopied letters, invoices, and telegrams. I became particularly interested when, beginning with correspondence beginning in 1909, the letters began to create a dialogue between Lindbergh and his father that would ultimately concluded with a telegram informing Lindbergh that his father was at the end of his life in the April of 1924. These letters captured my attention and fascinated me.

The letters created a compelling story and gave me new insight into Lindbergh and his relationship with his father, insight that created an even greater depth of understanding of the
man whose post Transatlantic flight was mired in controversy and tragedy. I became obsessed, feeling a deep connection with young Lindbergh, and this obsession was the catalyst for my first children’s book.

Part of the journey of this book’s creation was the growth of the collage technique I began when I started this project. During this project, my key influences on my work and evolution as an illustrator and storyteller were the collage illustrator Andrea D’Aquino, book illustrators Carson Ellis and Tomie dePaola, and visual development artists EliOli. The book is illustrated completely in painted cut paper and there is an emphasis in the art on texture and atmospheric emotion.

The final product is a nonfiction, 32-page illustrated children’s book consisting of a narrative told through 16 pieces of edited correspondence between Charles Lindbergh and his father. The narrative created by the letters and the accompanying illustrations aim to tell Lindbergh’s boyhood story from a different angle, giving more depth to a man mainly known by his adult successes and failures, by moving away from the well known facts and using a source material that has never been used in a project such as this. However, the book is written so that even someone with no prior knowledge of Lindbergh can enjoy the story of a dialogue between a distantly concerned father and a son with an untamed adventurous spirit, and the art invites readers to examine the pages closely and find new details every time the book is read.

*Letters to Lindbergh* was ultimately an exercise in writing and creating a book that allowed me to organically grow into new techniques and begin to figure out how I want to work as a professional children’s book illustrator. The book art was completed in eight months, keeping on pace with industry standards and giving a taste of the workload I might experience
working for a real publishing house. The final product is a book that stretched the limits of what I thought I could do as both an illustrator and a storyteller, and will serve as a major piece of my first professional portfolio.
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Introduction

Before the globe could be connected from every continent in an instant, it seems improbable that one man could be the most famous person in the world. On May 21, 1927, on the Le Bourget Field airfield just outside of Paris, Charles Lindbergh suddenly became the most unlikely center of the universe. From the moment he landed, the previously unknown daredevil airmail pilot became a household name and an international hero, completing a flight that would change the course of aviation history. Overnight, Lindbergh became a celebrity whose life after the world’s first transatlantic flight was held under a microscope, the controversies and tragedies overshadowing his work as a aviator, inventor, and innovator. But what of Lindbergh’s life before the flight, and how did his childhood and young adolescence influence his adult life?

*Letters to Lindbergh*, a nonfiction illustrated children’s book, attempts to answer that question while vibrantly bringing history to life for young readers.

I discovered the source materials for this story in the summer of 2014 while volunteering at the Charles Lindbergh Historic Site. The sources, letters exchanged between Charles Lindbergh and his father, are authentic and genuine, neither father or son aware of the extraordinary future ahead. The writings were animated, the voices distinct, the dialogue at times tense and dramatic.

Around the same time as my discovery I was beginning to observe that most children’s books about Lindbergh all stuck to the same facts and story line. The artwork was beautiful, but the stories remained shallow and unexciting. There was something about the letters that seemed to offer an inlet to a narrative that could approach Lindbergh’s boyhood from a new perspective.
While searching for the new angle on the story, I also was beginning to think about how to balance a fresh take with an experience that would be appealing to a young reader. This balance would prove difficult to find.

Throughout the process of the creation of this book I went through phases of research, writing, editing, art making, more editing, and finalization of the book. This process was a dry run at my future career, from rough dummy books to the creation of 32 pieces of art. My crash course into the world of the children’s books industry was an arduous but ultimately rewarding experience that allowed me to figure out my own professional practices and techniques as an illustrator.

Chapter 1

Research

Initial Research

During the summer of 2014, I volunteered extensively at the Charles Lindbergh Historic Site, a Minnesota Historical Society site located in my hometown of Little Falls, Minnesota. Little Falls sits in the center of the state, the small town of 8,000 residents cut in half by the Mississippi River. On the west bank of the Mississippi River, about three quarters of a mile south of town, sits the site of Lindbergh’s boyhood home. Across the road parallel to the site is the Lindbergh State Park, named for his father.

The site features a museum with three levels of interactive exhibits, a tour of the boyhood home, and a small research collection containing just a fraction of the research materials.
belonging to the massive archive of the Minnesota Historical Society. As a volunteer I interacted with guests on the museum floor and assisted with site events, organization, and research.

One particular research project I was tasked with was categorizing and chronologically ordering binders of Lindbergh family correspondence. At first, it was digging through dense binders full of photocopied letters, invoices, and telegrams. There were reports regarding the Little Falls farm, and correspondence between Lindbergh’s half sister Eva and their father, but I became particularly interested when, beginning in 1909, the letters began to create a dialogue between Lindbergh and his father that would ultimately concluded with a telegram informing Lindbergh that his father was at the end of his life in the April of 1924.

Beyond the basic facts and dates, I had previously not given any thought to the relationship between Lindbergh and his father. Lindbergh was born in 1902 to Charles August Lindbergh (known as and referred to as C.A. to avoid confusion with his nearly identically named son) and his much younger second wife, Evangeline Lodge Land Lindbergh. C.A. who had immigrated from Sweden during his early life, was a lawyer and republican member of the U.S. house of representatives for Minnesota’s Sixth District. Because of his father’s split life between Minnesota and Washington D.C., Lindbergh spent his youth in new schools and between locations, at times not seeing his father for months. Relief came during his adolescent summers spent along the Mississippi in Minnesota, exploring and discovering himself as an innovator and pioneer.

These letters gave me a new perspective on the father and son relationship. Although many letters did not have their previous or following responses, a dialogue appeared that gave a new depth to the distant relationship between Lindbergh and his father. This strained distance
became wider as Lindbergh grew older and more interested in aviation, a dangerous career that C.A. did not want his son to pursue. In his young adulthood he struggled to convince his father to support his dream of flying and the two would never see eye to eye on the risks and rewards of aviation. There is also evidence of C.A.’s loosened grip on reality as he succumbed to the brain tumor that would ultimately kill him in 1924, and the effect that it had on his view of the world and relationship with his son can be noted in his later letters. This deepened insight into Lindbergh’s pre-flight life and strained relationship with his father fascinated me.

Beyond my initial fascination and growing understanding, the letters sparked vivid visuals in my mind. My first instinct was not to create an illustrated book, but nonetheless I was struck by the ease at which I could compose and visualize pieces based on these words. For example, I was drawn into the vivid language used in a Christmas Eve letter C.A. sent to Lindbergh in 1923, just months before his death. C.A. writes:

This is Christmas Eve, and I am alone in the office. People that I would like to be here, or I with them, are far away. It is kind of lonely, but I’m used to it. So I’ve just been reading of creation and the universe. Time is so infinite. I see many accidents from the air these days. I wished you liked something else as you like the air. I would like to go up with you and have no hesitation or fear.
Although the original ideas and visuals that flooded over me when I read this letter were not what the final art work ultimately became, it was that initial language that captured my attention and would continue to tug at my mind.

It was not until the fall of 2015, however, that I returned to these letters to seriously dig into them to see if there was potential for a children’s book concept. After deciding to use the letters as my source material, I began to do additional research and to compile the manuscript.

**Other Research Materials**

In addition to the letters that served as the direct source material, I also used several other texts for my visual and historical research, as well as the resources available through the Minnesota Historical Society. The informative, photograph based memoir by Lindbergh, *Boyhood on the Upper Mississippi: A Reminiscent Letter*, became a source for visual reference and written descriptions. *The Spirit of Saint Louis*, another, but much longer, memoir by Lindbergh, and *Lindbergh*, a biography by A. Scott Berg gave depth to the history I was already familiar with. *The Spirit of Saint Louis* also gave a greater understanding of Lindbergh’s voice as which was key is figuring out who he was as a character.

**Manuscript, Context, and Editing**

When I returned to the letters in the Fall of 2015, I had selected about 25 to further study and write into a manuscript, knowing that some of the letters would not make it to the final draft. I wanted letters that varied in topic, ranging from light banter about minor plane crashes in Texas to more serious conversations about growing up and facing life. Ultimately 16 letters made the final cut.
Nearly every letter was hundreds of words long and unsuitable in their original state for a children’s book manuscript, which are typically about 1,200 words or less. I was reluctant to edit, afraid that I would lose the context, and I was not certain that the story I saw come so vividly to life would be understood without each letter’s contents in its entirety. However, it was noted in several critiques early in the creation of the artwork, most poignantly by my advisor Professor Bob Dacy, that pages with dense words are daunting and unappealing to younger readers.

Editing the letters was a process that took several passes that slowly cut down the word count until they were only a few lines or paragraphs each. In attempt to capture the essence of each particular letter I would illustrate what could not be included in texts. For example, on pages 22 & 23, the text of the letter from May 11, 1923 reads,

“Dear Ca -

The only way to learn many things is to knock and get knocked - and in that way things even up.

See you will soon be here.

Father”

What is missing is the plane crash C.A. is referencing. On this double page spread I have Lindbergh in a hay field, sleeves rolled up digging through a tool box, a highly detailed crashed plane taking up most of the left side of the spread. In this visual way I hoped to make up for what had to be cut from the manuscript.

**Controversies in Lindbergh’s life**

During my senior fall survey, a professor who was not previously familiar with my project raised concerns about the subject I had chosen because of Lindbergh’s infamous life after
the flight. Although I make no specific mention of it in the book, I recognize the concern and controversy surrounding Lindbergh, including his praise and connection to Nazi Germany and the heinous mystery of his oldest child’s kidnapping and murder. I did not illustrate this story to glorify and exempt Lindbergh from the controversial and ugly parts of his history, instead I aimed to offer another angle and explanation to a complicated man. I used a short introduction on page 4 to relay those sentiments to my readers before they begin the story. History is complicated and Lindbergh’s story is not an exception.

Chapter 2
Influences

The images created within field of illustration are wide and varied, ranging from the literal to the figurative, the media used running the gamut from traditional painting to digital techniques and experimental mixed media methods. When deciding on a stylistic approach for \textit{Letters to Lindbergh}, I had to confront two difficult questions: what kind of pictures did I want to be making, and with my skill sets what kind of pictures could I make?

The question of the making came first, because in the dawn of my senior year because in addition to this project, a 12-20 piece portfolio was expected at its conclusion. Due to wandering interests and experimenting with unsatisfactory results, I had not solidified a primary medium or had even begun to explore my own style of picture making. During my previous years in my undergrad art education at both Syracuse University and abroad in Florence, I had been exposed to and worked with a wide range of media, including two collage pieces from a class I had taken freshman year. These two pieces proved to be among the strongest and most interesting pieces
in my underclassman work, and with the encouragement of a Professor, Marty Blake, and visiting illustrator Jonathan Bartlett, I began to experiment and work with cut paper collage.

With my medium set, I now had a way to narrow down who I could turn to within the illustration world to offer influence, inspiration, and aesthetic guidance. I also look to illustrators that excite me visually and make the kinds of art that I think I would enjoy making. The following is a highlight of the illustrators whose work and practice influenced me throughout this project.

**Andrea D’Aquino and Collage**

Andrea D’Aquino is an editorial and book illustrator whose work was an early and continuing influence on the evolution of my style and my growth as a collage artist. D’Aquino uses all kinds of paper, both new and found, often painted or drawn over. Her collages are shape focused and offer many surprises to the eye. Although it would not be until later in my process that I began to get more experimental with my use of paper like D’Aquino, I immediately began following her work on a daily basis and was influenced by her use of strong and unusual shapes and of her use of textures. What was so appealing to me about her textures was that she left no doubt that what the viewer is looking at is not trapped in 2D, but is in fact, a collage. Recently, she illustrated a new edition of *Alice in Wonderland* and published a collage tutorial activity book titled *Once Upon a Paper.*

**Carson Ellis, EliOli, and Style**

Rich colors, pattern, and atmospheric lighting appeal to me aesthetically and are elements I greatly want in my art. Although they are not illustrators using collage, I became greatly influenced by the art of book illustrator Carson Ellis and the visual development team of Elena
and Olivia Ceballos, twins known collectively as EliOli. Ellis has illustrated the bestselling picture books *Home* and *Du Iz Tak?*, the latter being a Caldecott Honor book. Her work, which is highly stylized, lives in a world that is signature to her illustrations and has a charm in the highly detailed textures and whimsical themes. The use of a limited palette and unexpected colors also influenced me to create color palettes for each spread and to keep all the colors in the book in the same universe and feeling. Like D’Aquino, I was also drawn to her use of unusual shapes, particularly in architecture, plants, and human figures.

Like Ellis, the Ceballos twins have also created a distinctive world in which all of their art resides, and like D’Aquino, I see their art everyday through social media, Instagram providing a consistent flow of inspiration and influence. EliOli Art, as they are known collectively, are visual development artists for the DreamWorks television studio and are two of the youngest rising stars in the industry. Their visual development work utilizes light and atmospheric emotion, the light in their pieces almost becoming a character itself. In my pieces I also tried to capture the use of light and atmosphere, which proved challenging in my style because I was choosing to ignore shadow, highlight, and lighting completely. I countered this challenge by manipulating the gradation and blending of the paint on the paper, and throughout the book you can see EliOli Art’s influence. Their style greatly influenced how I chose to emotionally visualize the story.

**Tomie dePaola and Storytelling**

What makes this story important and why was it worth telling? There is already an existing wealth of Lindbergh materials, from classic movies to musicals, and finding a reason why this angle of his story needed to be added to that list was challenging. But the narrative
excited me, and just as Lin Manuel Miranda read a biography and knew there was a musical inside Alexander Hamilton’s story, I had read those letters and knew there was a story waiting to be extracted.

Beyond my personal interest however, I did see a wider scope and bigger reason for sharing this story and a place for it among nonfiction children’s books. His sense of adventure and tenacious spirit that are so present in his youth and pre-flight adulthood are something children should embrace. In addition, exposing young readers to just a piece of the story might encourage them to do their own research and ignite curiosity.

Tomie dePaola is probably the children’s book author and illustrator that has been in my zeitgeist the longest. When I was very young his Strega Nona series captured my attention and began my early love for Italy and Spaghetti, and when I was older his short chapter books like Nane Upstairs, Nana Downstairs became the first memoirs that I read. A storyteller who has written and illustrated over 200 books, dePaola crafts stories that are often based in some historical reality, whether it’s his own autobiographical history or myths and legends based on his heritage. His ability to make emotional connections with his readers is what kept me coming back to his books when I was stuck or frustrated during this process.

When I was working on the manuscript and the art I read many, many children’s books, but I always returned to dePaola’s stories to revel in the charming illustrations and warm language. I used his works to remind myself that I needed to make the reader care and become invested in my story through both the art and the words, I needed to make the reader fall in love with the world I had created as much as I had. If I believed this story was important, I could craft a book that made it important to the readers too. dePaola’s authenticity and gift for storytelling
has been an ever present in the influences motivating my work, and will continue to be as I grow into my storytelling style.

Chapter 3

The Process

Industry Standards and Procedures

Every picture book begins as an idea - a pitch- to a publisher. The pitch begins with the manuscript, followed by a dummy book. A dummy book is a skeleton of what the actual book will look like, and is a blueprint for the illustrator going forward to the finished artwork. Dummy books also serve as a first look at how the text will live with the art on the page, and gives illustrator and art director a snapshot of how the book will flow.

After a dummy book has been compiled and the sketches approved, an illustrator will then begin to create the finished art. Art directors (or other entities with power at the publishing house) will often ask for a finished page or spread with the dummy book or soon after, and this is an indication of the feel and final look of the book.

Although I did not have to go through getting a manuscript and idea approved by a publishing house, knowing how the industry works is crucial to my further career. The final product of this project was a standard 32 page picture book that follows standard book layouts, including end papers and a cover.

The Art

Choosing to illustrate in collage came with many decisions to make, as previously discussed. There are photograph based collages and 3D found object collages and everything in
between. I had been tentatively trying out painted and cut paper collage, but I dove right into the technique as soon as I chose it and began the art for the book.

With the painted paper collage technique there came advantages and challenges. One of my favorite elements of this technique is the textures I could achieve through brushstrokes, sponges, and drawing tools on the wet paint. Altering the paper this way gave a depth and visual interest to a piece that I could not previously achieve in other mediums. Another technique I thought was successful in the book was constructing mechanical objects such as airplanes and motorcycles with the paper, creating surreal recreations of the real objects.

When designing the pages, I was conscious of the variation of composition. All layouts in this book are laid out as double page spreads, meaning that the illustration spans both sides of an open book. The majority of the compositions are landscapes depicting Lindbergh in activities that are in context with the letter, but there are also compositions composed of still life spot illustrations or portraits set against a painted vintage pattern, or an up close perspective of Lindbergh with an airfield in the background. This variation of page composition was utilized to create a visual rhythm when reading the book and prevent stagnation.

**Critiques**

The art went through several evolutions, helped along with critiques from both my professors and from visiting industry professionals.

The most significant change to the art was the removal of the physical letter from the design of the art, instead letting the text float on its own. This change, which occurred simultaneously with the editing down of the letters, was one I did reluctantly. It was only after several professors and a visiting professional, Neil Swaab, urged me to reconsider having a large,
dominant design element on every page, breaking up and distracting from the art. They insisted the art was strong enough on its own and the inclusion of a physical letter would be like “using a crutch.” I was reluctant, as the presence of the actual letter was at the time, important to me and how I felt the overall feel of the book should be. The change was ultimately the best alteration to the book, and as it happened very early on I was able to adjust most of the spreads before I began working the final pieces of art. For example, after editing pages 8 & 9 and removing the block designated for the text, it was obvious its absence allowed the art breathe and gave it a more sophisticated design. It was a reluctant but ultimately book changing edit.

Neil Swaab, an illustrator, art director, and writer, also gave me insight on what readers in different age groups expect from a book. The age of oldest children reading picture books is about 8, and at the time that Swaab critiqued my project, the manuscript was still unedited. His voice was among many that persuaded me to edit down each letter to a couple thoughts per each instead of an entire conversation. Also the insight into what children want to read at each age group was enlightening and is something I am always aware of now.

Other critiques I took into consideration throughout the course of this project were continuing issues with contrast and the suggestions to push my collage techniques, which was met with resistance by me as I was insistent that this book had a unified look, of painted cut paper collage. Unlike the previous critiques that were met with reluctance but ultimately made, I did not change the collage technique. I stood by my choice and was ultimately pleased with the overall cohesion of the book. However, I have since taken on board this critique and have been pushing the way I use collage into new and experimental places in current projects.

**Final Layout**
Although this step would not be my responsibility in “the real world,” I did the text layout and final design of the book myself. For assistance with type I turned again to Professor Marty Blake. The type itself becomes characters, much as the use of light and atmosphere, and I used different fonts to distinguish Charles and his father. The first, a smudgy, turn of the century corporate typewriter font, is the voice of C.A., and the second, a loose but legible handwritten font, is a mimic to Lindbergh’s own handwriting. This is authentic to the letters, as C.A.’s were usually the messy product of a typewriter and Lindbergh’s were exclusively written in his, at times, difficult to read script.

Chapter 4

Conclusions and Takeaways

Finding My Voice and Style

Perhaps the most significant takeaway from this project was discovering and developing my voice as a visual storyteller. Before I began the art for this book, I had not yet settled on what technique I was going to use for my portfolio and my work as a whole was unfocused. This project gave me the workspace and focus I needed to begin the journey to find myself as an illustrator and figure out what I can bring to the children’s book industry.

My evolving visual language took big leaps during this process as well. I figured out how I wanted to handle faces and expressions, and found I enjoy using patterns in my work. I also began to lose my reliance on photo reference and started experimenting with stylization of my characters in my world.

Take Aways
As an exercise in the creation of an illustrated children's book, I am pleased with the final product and the journey to I undertook to reach it. With the art completed in less than a year, I can compete with other illustrators and confidently take on year long projects. A finished book is also marketable to art directors and publishers. However, I learned several key lessons through the process and have a more strategic plan for the next book project that I undertake.

As my first major project using a collage technique, this capstone served as a device for to practice and figure out my style within that technique. Moving forward and continuing to evolve, I am currently trying new and more experimental collage techniques. For *Letters to Lindbergh* I only used cut paper that I had painted myself, but I am now bringing in pre-patterned surfaces, photographic images, and found paper to my work to create more dynamic and visually surprising illustrations.

If I could redo any aspect of this project it would be the manuscript and overall structure of the text. My original goal with this project was to offer a new perspective on the father and son relationship through their correspondence. Instead of relying on the literal letters to do the storytelling, a narrative based on the letters would be solution that has the potential to make the intentions of my stories clearer for my readers.

**What’s Next**

If this project has achieved anything, it has sparked within me a passion for creating children’s books and visual storytelling. At this time I have several ideas for the next manuscript, including an astronomy book aimed at getting young girls interested in STEM careers and another historical non fiction book, perhaps unsurprisingly, about another favorite aviator, Amelia Earhart.
Although I enjoy fiction tales and fantasy, I feel a pull and calling to tell stories that shed light onto little seen corners of history and historical stories. As I embark on the beginning of my career I will continue to read, research, and stay curious to find more stories that speak to me as vividly as Charles Lindbergh’s did.
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letters to Lindbergh

Edited & Illustrated by Samantha Gottwalt
This book is dedicated to my mother, whose unconditional love and support gives me the strength to chase my dreams and follow my heart.
Like many infamous people in history, the aviator Charles Lindbergh is a complicated character. He became the most famous man in the world when he successfully made the first Transatlantic flight in 1927, but his post-flight life was a series of highs and lows. His legacy is a mix of controversies and innovations, but his before-flight life offers a look into the adolescence that made the man who became Lucky Lindy.

The following are a selection of correspondence between young Charles Lindbergh and his father, beginning in 1909 and continuing until his father’s death in 1924. His distant relationship with his father was complicated and at times, strained, and these letters offer an intimate insight into the boy who would become one of the most influential people of the 20th Century.
November 1, 1909

My Dear Boy,

I am very glad to get your nice letter. It is worth a whole lot to get a letter like that. This week I found a secret place where you and I can go next fall and hunt some partridges. It is very fine place for us to have fun.

Father
May 10, 1913
Dear Father
I am glad you got a man for the farm. I wanted to ask you several questions. Has he any children? What is his name? Will you stay in Minnesota until I get there? Can I have the first copy of your book? Have you heard anything about Dingo? When will I get my duck boat? Are you going to get me some pigs? Are you going to get me any chickens? Will you have my rifle ready when I get there? I expect to get there the first of June.
Charles

May 13, 1913
Dear Charles,
I can't go to Minnesota before they have sessions and currency legislation. I do not know if "he" has children. I think his name is Webber. I cannot stay. You can have the first copy of the book. I have no communication with Dingo. Not until you go to work. You cannot have pigs yet. Chickens no good between June 1st and Sept 1st. I won't be there in time. I will write you more fully about these items when I get to the office.

Father
November 5, 1915

Dear Charles,

I just got word your dog is dead. Every dog has his day and Dingo had his. He was a wonderfully good watchdog and very intelligent. But we will find another dog for you. In the meantime, be thinking what kind of dog you want.

Father
February 1919
Dear Son,

If you are near using a razor yet, I have three. One is about fifty years old. I can send one, or hand it to you later. I did not shave before I was twenty, possible you may not. Some begin at fifteen.

Best from,
Father
Fall 1921
Dear Father,

If I stop school, I expect to go to Alaska before very long. I have always wanted to go there. I guess you started me thinking about it when I was a kid.

Hoping to see you soon.

CAL
January 23, 1922
Dear Son,

I can’t see any reason why you and I should not be closer in touch with each other. You will soon be going out into the world and you will find it quite different than you expect.

I have not been writing for I did not hear from you – after writing several letters I wrote no more. I am not mad about it, but sorry, and hope things will be different.

Best,
Father
Nebraska Aircraft Corporation
Lincoln, Nebraska

Mr. C. I. Higbee,
5902 South 12th Street
Omaha, Nebraska

Jan. 9, 1932

Mr. C. I. Higbee,
5902 South 12th Street
Omaha, Nebraska

Feb. 29, 1932

I have received your letter of the 18th inst. relative to the contract which you signed with Mr. H. B. Smith and the Beal Aircraft Company, and that you have a letter of agreement with Mr. H. B. Smith and the Beal Aircraft Company, relative to the manufacture of the aircraft which you are to build.

The Beal Aircraft Company has agreed to build an aircraft of similar design for $1,000.00.

I am enclosing a check for $500.00, which will enable you to purchase the necessary material for the construction of the aircraft.

I am enclosing a letter from Mr. H. B. Smith, which states that he will not interfere in any way with the construction of the aircraft.

I am glad to hear that you are making good progress with the aircraft, and I am looking forward to seeing it in operation.

Very truly yours,

[Signature]

Mr. C. I. Higbee,
5902 South 12th Street
Omaha, Nebraska
April 1, 1923  
Dear Father,  
There is good money in barnstorming if it is done correctly. Nine times out of ten when you get a crowd they ride. If you get a plane, I won't stunt with you without permission but you will get to like some stunts, probably. The flying game is an experience which can not be described.  
CAL

April 9, 1923  
Dear Father,  
You say you are opposed to me flying and would rather I get into another business. Also you do not want to help me get a plane. Last summer I gave aviation a try in the mountain states and have decided to take it as a business. You said you were going to make some speeches next summer. Why not let me take you around in a plane?  
CAL

April 11, 1923  
Dear Charles,  
You ought to have had a letter by this time with a note which you were to sign so you would have credit on hand for buying your plane.  
There is in you, as there is in myself, a tendency to never stop the work.  

Your Father
May 11, 1923
Dear Son,
The only way to learn many things is to knock and get knocked – and in that way things even up. See you will soon be here.
Father
December 24, 1923
Dear Son,

This is Christmas Eve, and I am alone in the office. People that I would like to be here, or I with them, are far away. It is kind of lonely, but I’m used to it. So I’ve just been reading of creation and the universe. Time is so infinite. I see many accidents from the air these days. I wished you liked something else as you like the air. I would like to go up with you and have no hesitation or fear.

Merry X-mas, and the best of a New Year,

Dad
February 29, 1924
Dear Father,

I am in a little village in the sticks of Texas waiting for a new propeller. This afternoon in attempting to take off a rather narrow street I hooked a wing in a telephone pole and broke a prop, but not much damage to the plane. After I get through here maybe you and I can take a plane across the country.

CAL
April 21, 1924

Dear Father,

I haven’t heard from you for a long time and would like a letter if you feel like writing. Things are usual here. I have put about 20 hours in the air since I came here. From now on we will probably have a crash a day at least. The most dangerous time for a pilot is from the first time he solo until he has put in 100 hours.

Will have to stop for now.

CAL
WESTERN UNION
TELEGRAM

RECEIVED AT 142 WEST COMMERCE ST., SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS.
0440-11:1 EXTRA RUSH
ROCHESTER, N.Y. 23 6238
CHARLIE LINDBERG JR.
CADET BROOKS, FIELD TECH.
YOUR FATHER CHARLES LINDBERG IS VERY ILL, CAME AT ONCE.

ARRIVED 8:45 P.M. 4-6

63 MILES
90.45

by 00:45
Timeline of Events

1859 - Father, Charles A. Lindbergh, born in Sweden

1902 - Charles Augustus Linbergh born in Detroit, Michigan

1906 - Father is elected to U.S. Congress

1912 - Lindbergh attends his first air meet

1918 - Lindbergh excused from his senior year of high school to aid WWI farm efforts
  - Graduates high school in Little Falls, Minnesota

1920 - Lindbergh begins engineering college at the University of Wisconsin, Madison

1922 - Leaves college and becomes a flight student at Nebraska Standard Aircraft
  - First solo flight

1924 - Father passes away from a brain tumor
  - Lindbergh enlists as a U.S. Army Air Cadet

1926 - Becomes an airmail pilot

1927 - Lindbergh completes the world’s first non-stop Transatlantic flight from Roosevelt Field in New York to Le Borge Field, Paris, France