“Spirit”

The story of the Spirit of St Louis.

MUSIC UP TO ESTABLISH THEN under

This production “Spirit: the story of the Spirit of St Louis” is dedicated to someone with the most spirit I’ve ever known—Lorene Jackson.

With this play, we pay tribute to the courage of a 25-year-old airmail pilot who believed he could change the world—and did. (MUSIC FADE INTO:

RSFX: MUSEUM BACKGROUND UP AND THEN UNDER:

DOCENT Welcome to Smithsonian’s Air and Space Museum. I’ll be your guide today.

SARAH Gee, Dad, that plane up there looks like the one we have back in Seattle, at the Museum of Flight. That little one, near the ceiling. See?

DAD Sarah, our plane was built by the same company as this one.

SARAH It was?

DAD It sure was. But this one flew across the Atlantic ocean.

SARAH All by itself? But it’s so small!

DAD Well, it did have a pilot. But he was all alone.

SARAH Wow. Just him and the plane flying above the water...

DOCENT Would you like to hear her story?

SARAH Yeah, mister. I really would.

DOCENT I like to call her “Spirit”. Her name is “the Spirit of St Louis” and her story begins back in 1919...

SFX: FADE MUSEUM SOUNDS
RADIO SIGNAL/RSFX: 8c97A up to establish then under

News1  1919 New York. Raymond Orteig, the well-to-do owner of the plush Brevoort and Lafayette Hotels in New York, has offered a prize of $25,000 to be awarded to the first aviator who shall cross the Atlantic in a land or water aircraft (heavier-than-air) from New York to Paris or the shores of France or vice versa without a stop. The flight must take place within the next five years. The contestants are required to file a 60-day notice of intention prior to take-off.

News2  1924 New York. Raymond Orteig has renewed his challenge to the aviation world. $25,000 to go to the first plane to cross the Atlantic non-stop, New York to Paris. MUSIC OUT

NEWS1  Sept. 25, 1926. 6 am. New York. Rene Fonck, famed French aviator, attempted a take-off from Roosevelt Field in his Sikorsky tri-engined biplane “New-York-to-Paris”. At over 28,000 pounds, the plane labored toward a take-off when part of the landing gear failed, and the plane collapsed. Orange flames and black smoke shot 70 feet into the still dark sky. Two of the four crew survived

SFX: RAILROAD STATION UP/ESTABLISH FOR 4 SECONDS

(PHONE CALL FROM A RAILROAD STATION)
KEN (shouting into phone)

Hello? Robertson Aircraft? You fly the airmail, right? I gotta talk to the boss, Bill Robertson. (pause) Mr. Robertson?... Ken Boedecker, from the Wright Company. I'm calling for Charlie Lindbergh.... Well, no, I'm not in Chicago and neither is he. I'm at the Peoria train station... Slim just got on a train with the mail. His plane ran out of gas in the storm and he had to jump... Yeah, jump... //That's what I'm tryin' to tell you. ...He’s fine. He wanted me to call. You know that gas tank you had repaired? ...Yeah, the 110 gallon one. You better get your money back. I had a look at this one and it can't hold more'n 85 gallons. (pause) Oh, nobody told you? Well, nobody told Slim either. He coulda used that extra 25 gallons. SFX:

RAILROAD STATION OUT

MUSIC BRIDGE (5C38) UP AND THEN UNDER

(ROBERTSON AIRCRAFT OFFICE, LAMBERT FIELD)

NARR September 1926 St Louis, Lambert Field: Home of the Robertson Aircraft Company, the company that flies the air mail between St Louis and Chicago, using war-surplus airplanes. The company has three pilots, including a tall slender young man, Charles A Lindbergh, better known as Slim.

SFX: DOOR OPEN/CLOSE; PLANES PERIODICALLY UNDER

SECTRY Oh, Slim! We heard all about the crash. Are you okay?

SLIM Fine, I’m fine. Say, is the boss in?

SECTRY He is, and he told me to send you in right away.

SLIM I hope Bill’s not too sore about me wrecking another plane.
SECTRY Oh, you know how he gets. (SFX: CLICK OF INTERCOM BUTTON) Mr. Robertson—Charles Lindbergh to see you. (SFX: CLICK) Go right in, Slim.

SLIM Thanks, Sue. Into the lion’s den.

SFX: DOOR OPEN/CLOSE, FOOTSTEPS

RBTSN Slim! I hoped you’d be by soon. How are ya?

SLIM I’m sorry about the crack-up, Bill. I just got a little lost in the storm, and it just ran out of gas.

RBTSN Thank God you’re all right. You got the mail through?

SLIM Oh, yeah, it’s on its way. (uneasy pause) (RBTSN: good good) Say, Bill, I got something else I want to talk over with you.

RBTSN What is it, Slim?

SLIM I’ve been thinking a lot about the Ortieg Challenge, and I want to give it a shot.

RBTSN What are you planning to do about a plane? None of ours can do that sort of trip.

SLIM The Wright Company has built a plane using Bellanca’s designs. I’m positive it would go the distance.

RBTSN Wonder how much something like that would cost?

SLIM Maybe...$10,000.

RBTSN Wheuuuuuu! That’s a lot of money. Where are you going to get that kind of dough?

SLIM I been working on that. I’ve got $2,000 socked away in my savings account. I’ve talked to Earl Thompson; he’s interested.

RBTSN (qk) Good, good.

SLIM Major Lambert says he’ll put in a $1,000.

RBTSN Lambert did? A thousand dollars? (musing) Now, that’s something to think about.
SLIM He said he would if I could get enough of the right kind of men together.

RBTSN (hesitantly) (pause) We’ll help as much as we can, Slim, but you know we aren’t in a position to put up much cash. We’re losing money every day right now.

SLIM I know. Bill, you can help in a couple of other ways. I want to be able to say that the Robertson Aircraft is the group that’s behind me; and there’s the mail schedule to consider.

RBTSN You can say we’re behind you if that will help any, Slim, but I don’t know about the schedule. You know the Post Office won’t take excuses. The mail’s just got to go through.

SLIM I think we can keep the route running all right, Bill.

RBTSN Well, be dang careful, Slim. You know how critical it is to keep the Post Office happy.

SLIM You know me—I’m always careful.

RBTSN Maybe Harry Knight can give you a hand. He’s the president of the St Louis Flying Club. He’s been real helpful to me. He’s got connections.

SLIM Before I talk to him, I want to talk to the Wright Aeroplane Company, in New York. I want to know just what the Bellanca can do, and how often Whirlwind engines fail. If I have accurate data, I can put up a better argument. I have to make a trip back east.

RBTSN Okay with me. Just make sure the schedule is covered. Keep me posted. And I’ll talk to Harry.

SLIM Sure...sure, boss. And...thanks.

RADIO SIGNAL

NEWS2 Oct. 28, 1926 Associated Press,—Bridgeport, Conn. The conqueror of the North Pole, Commander Richard
Byrd, to fly Atlantic; predicts ocean crossing next year.

RADIO SIGNAL

NEWS1 Nov. 3 St Louis Post-Dispatch. Lindbergh makes 4th emergency parachute jump! He had several anxious moments when the parachute kept being inflated by gusts of wind. The mail, much of it oil-soaked, was recovered from the wrecked airplane and delivered.

MUSIC BRIDGE 5c38 5 SEC.

(Harry has country/western accent/mannerisms)

RBTSN Harry, this is my head pilot, Charles Lindbergh.

SLIM Thanks for seeing me, Mr. Knight. Just call me Slim.

HARRY Harry, call me Harry. (beat) Bill tells me you’re stuck on this idea of flyin’ the Atlantic.

SLIM (selling) I think a modern plane can make that flight, and I’d like to try. It would show people what airplanes can do. It would advance aviation. It could even advertise St Louis.

HARRY Whoa, boy, whoa. Pretty high-flyin’ ideals for a simple plane flight.

SLIM Yes, sir. AND there’s a plane that would be perfect—the Wright Bellanca.

HARRY The Wright-Bellanca? But…that’s a land plane. And if I remember correctly, doesn’t it have only one engine? Now, You…aren’t…thinkin’ of flying over the ocean in a single-engined plane, are you?

SLIM I know it sounds crazy. Everybody keeps telling me that 3 engines is the only way to go. But, sir—I know they’re wrong. Just think about how much more fuel you’d have to carry to feed them—and how much it would weigh. And the chances of failure increase exponentially with each engine.
HARRY (chuckle)  I’ll admit that you got the confidence of a coyote.

SLIM  But I’m not confident about the money that I have to have to buy the plane. *If* they’ll sell it to me.

HARRY  Have you gone to New York to talk to them? Sometimes you gotta hog-tie ‘em face to face.

RBTSN (disgusted)  He’s been there several times.

SLIM  Bellanca really wants to sell me the plane, but there’s always someone who says no.

RBTSN  If Bellanca comes through, we’ll need money to fix the deal.

SLIM (depressed)  The men I’ve talked to who are interested don’t have enough money. Those who have enough money consider the risk too great—if not for their bank accounts, then for their reputations.

HARRY  If you’re goin’ to make it, Slim, you’ve gotta put all your attention on that flight. You shouldn’t be runnin’ around havin’ to worry about raisin’ money.

RBTSN  Slim’s been talking about trying to raise money by popular subscription. But that will take a lot of time and effort.

SLIM  It’s not that many weeks to spring. The clock’s ticking. Any day now someone’s going to go for it.

HARRY  Hmm, Let me talk to a friend of mine in the bank, Harold Bixby. Maybe we can take care of the financial end for you. How much money is it goin’ to take?

SLIM  If we can get the plane and engine manufacturers to stand part of the expense, I think $10,000 to maybe $15,000 would be enough.

RBTSN  You’re still talkin’ about a single-engined plane. Wouldn’t a tri-motor be better for that kind of flight?
SLIM (sigh) For one thing, they cost a lot more: $29,000 to get a tri-motored plane from Bellanca. The Fokker Company wants $90,000. Multi-engined planes are more complicated,

HARRY But..but don’t you want something that’s... sturdy?

SLIM They’re also heavy, and hard to handle in thick conditions; there are more things likely to go wrong with them. Besides, the greatest danger isn’t engine failure.

HARRY It’s not? Then what is?

SLIM It’s the weather, and the take-off with that full load of gas.

HARRY(sigh) You’ve only got a life to lose, Slim. But I’ve got my... reputation to consider. Bill, your reputation will be on the line too.

RBTSN Harry, this boy is the luckiest flier I know. He’ll get it done.

SLIM I can’t believe that a flight to Paris would be any more dangerous than a winter on the mail line.

SFX: TELEGRAPH KEY

WU DEC13, 1926 WESTERN UNION—PETERSON WRIGHT AERO COMPANY TO C.A. LINDBERGH. ANGLUM, MISSOURI REGRET THAT WE DO NOT DESIRE AT THIS TIME TO HAVE WRIGHT BELLANCA USED FOR TRANSATLANTIC FLIGHT. STOP. SUGGEST FOKKER OR HUFF DALAND 3 ENGINE PLANES.

(TELEGRAPH KEY OUT)

MUSIC BRIDGE 5c38—5 seconds

HARRY Slim, you’ve sold us on this proposition of yours. Now, it’s a tough job you’re takin’ on, but we’ve talked it over and we’re with you.
SLIM    That’s swell. I can pay you back when I get the Orteig Prize money.

HARRY    Now, now…From now on, you’d better leave the financial end to us. If you can keep costs down to the figures you gave us, I believe I can swing this deal. You concentrate on the plane and getting ready for the flight.

SLIM    I’ve got a couple of possibilities for a plane. Travel Air Company in Wichita is producing a monoplane along the general lines of the Wright Bellanca—and the National Air Transport pilots have been talking about it all winter.

SFX: TELEGRAPH KEY

WU    JAN 13, 1927 WESTERN UNION TRAVEL AIR COMPANY — TO C. A. LINDBERGH. ANGLUM, MISSOURI

   NOT INTERESTED IN ACCEPTING YOUR ORDER. (TELEGRAPH KEY OUT)

SLIM    Then again, I’ve read of a high-wing monoplane built by a company called Ryan in San Diego—Pacific Air Transport is using it on their mail route up and down the coast. If they don’t work out, I’ll try some smaller companies, like Douglas or maybe even…Boeing.

SFX: TELEGRAPH KEY

WU    FEB. 4 WESTERN UNION -- RYAN AIRLINES TO ROBERTSON AIRCRAFT. –ANGLUM, MISSOURI

   CAN BUILD PLANE SIMILAR M ONE BUT LARGER WINGS CAPABLE OF MAKING FLIGHT. STOP. COST ABOUT 6000 WITHOUT MOTOR AND INSTRUMENTS. STOP. DELIVERY ABOUT 3 MONTHS. (TELEGRAPH KEY OUT)
SLIM  Three months! February, March, April—I’m running
out of time!

RBTSN  And I’m running out of mail. I need this flight of
yours to get more people to send letters by airmail.
The sooner you order it the better. Besides, we can
always use it to fly the mail afterwards.

SFX: TELEGRAPH KEY

WU  FEB 5 WESTERN UNION—RYAN AIRLINES TO
ROBERTSON AIRCRAFT. ANGLUM, MISSOURI
GAS CAPACITY 380 GALLONS CRUISING SPEED 100
MILES PER HOUR. STOP. CAN COMPLETE IN 2
MONTHS FROM DATE OF ORDER IF NECESSARY.
STOP. WILL REQUIRE .50 PERCENT DEPOSIT.
(TELEGRAPH KEY OUT)

MUSIC BRIDGE (IN A HURRY MUSIC 2C245A (5 SECONDS)

HARRY  Do you think they can build a plane with enough
performance, Slim?

SLIM  All I know is that Ryan mail planes have a pretty good
reputation.

HARRY  Well, I certainly wouldn’t turn them down because we
haven’t heard of them. After all they probably haven’t
heard of us a’toll.

RBTSN  At least they’re anxious to build us a plane. That puts
them ahead of the other companies we’ve tried.

HARRY  Slim, what say you go out to California and talk to
them. See what they’re like.

SLIM  Well, I can’t very well size them up from here.

HARRY  Let’s get on it then. How soon can you start?

SLIM  Within a week. I don’t know how long I’ll be away, of
course. If we decide to buy a plane, I’ll stay in
California while it’s being built—I’ll take care of my
own expenses on this trip.
HARRY No, no, no, you won’t. We’re in this with you. We’ll split up on all those things. Bill, it might be a good idea to get another pilot for your airmail.

RBTSN ( ) I think I’d better.

HARRY We’ll take care of you, Slim.

SECTRY2 Sorry to interrupt, sir, but Mr Lindbergh, a telegram just came for you.

SFX: RIPPING OPEN ENVELOPE

SLIM SAY, LISTEN TO THIS. IT’S FROM BELLANCA-

SORRY DELAYED AS HAVE BEEN OUT OF TOWN.

STOP. WILLING TO MAKE ATTRACTIVE

PROPOSITION ON THE BELLANCA AIRPLANE FOR PARIS FLIGHT. STOP. SUGGEST YOU COME NEW YORK SOON AS POSSIBLE SO WE CAN GET TOGETHER IN QUICKEST MANNER. STOP. $15,000. STOP. WIRE ME CARE COLUMBIA AIRCRAFT CORPORATION.

SLIM How about that! He must have gotten a new factory. I should go right away.

RBTSN What about Ryan?

HARRY Well, (chuckle) A bird in the hand is worth two out in California.

(SFX: SCRATCHING ON A CHECK)

HARRY Slim, here’s a check to take with you to New York. Sometimes cash in hand is the decider.

SLIM (stunned) Pay to the order of ...Charles A Lindbergh! Fifteen thousand dollars!

HARRY (satisfied chuckle) What would you think of naming it “Spirit of St Louis”?
SLIM (absently) Sure--sure, Spirit of St Louis. (awed) I didn’t know you were going to make this out to me personally.

RBTSN (chuckle) Well, Slim, Harry and I decided that if we couldn’t trust you with a check, we ought not to take part in this project at all.

HARRY Now, When are you goin’ to New York, son?

SLIM I’ll take the train this afternoon.

RBTSN We’ll start setting up a Spirit of St Louis organization while you’re away. Let us know as soon as you can when you’ll be here with the plane.

SLIM I’ll try to land the Bellanca on Lambert Field within a week.

HARRY We’ll be out there with bells on, to meet you—and...Good luck!

MUSIC BRIDGE-- brooding/semi-ominous/edgy? 1c50

(LEVINE’S OFFICE, NY)

NARR Lindbergh has taken a train to New York, on his third attempt to buy the Bellanca, this time from Charles Levine, of the Columbia Aircraft Corporation. But it’s not going very well.

LEVINE I’m afraid Mr Bellanca sent you a misleading telegram, Mr Lindbergh.

SLIM Mr Levine, you’re telling me that the plane isn’t for sale?

LEVINE No, no, the Columbia Aircraft Corporation will sell our plane,

SLIM (qk) Good, good.. because I’ve got the check right here.

LEVINE but of course we reserve the right to select the crew that flies it. (pause?)

SLIM (stunned) What? But ...Bellanca and I had a hand-shake...
LEVINE (cuts in) You understand we cannot let just anybody pilot our airplane across the ocean.

SLIM I’m afraid there’s been a misunderstanding. I thought I had made it clear that I would be the pilot.

LEVINE The Columbia Aircraft Corporation cannot afford to take such a chance with our airplane.

SLIM (getting angry) We wouldn’t be interested in such an arrangement.

LEVINE Come, come. We would select a good crew.

SLIM This is a St Louis project. We’d naturally want to work with you very closely in running tests and planning for the flight...

LEVINE Your organization in St Louis would have all the credit for the flight, all the publicity.

SLIM But if we buy a plane, we’re going to control it, and we’ll pick our own crew. AND it’s going to be ME.

LEVINE We know better than anybody else how to fly the Bellanca, how to take care of it.

SLIM As far as I can see, we’d be paying $15,000 for the privilege of painting the name of St Louis on the fuselage.

LEVINE Isn’t that what this is all about? Publicity for St Louis. Just leave the flying to us.

SLIM Is the Bellanca for sale or isn’t it? If it is, we can close the deal. If it’s not, I want to look for another plane.

LEVINE Yes, yes, it’s for sale, but why won’t you let us select the crew?

SLIM Because I’m going to be the pilot. If you’d stated these terms before, it would have saved me a 2000 mile train trip.

LEVINE You should think it over. You’re just a boy. I’m telling you, it’s better to leave it in our hands.
SLIM There’s no use thinking it over.

LEVINE (off mic, calling) You’re making a big mistake. The Bellanca is the only airplane built that is capable of flying between New York and Paris.

SLIM If you won’t sell it without strings, then there’s no use wasting any more time here in New York. (disgust) Thanks for all your help.

MUSIC BRIDGE— (California Here I Come) 1 line, fade into:

NARR February 1927. San Diego. The Ryan Airlines factory is in an old, dilapidated building near the waterfront. There’s no flying field, no hangar, no sound of engines warming up; and the unmistakable smell of dead fish from a near-by cannery mixes with the banana odor of dope from drying wings. Lindbergh arrives in a taxi, feeling conspicuous.

(RYAN FACTORY)

NARR (RYAN FACTORY) KNOCKING, DOOR OPEN / DOOR CLOSE (BAY SOUNDS OUT)

SFX: music out

AJ (off) Mahoney, someone’s at the door!

SLIM (calls) Hello? I’m looking for Ryan Airlines?

SFX FOOTSTEPS (2 people)

AJ (coming on) Mahoney, I told you someone was here.

MAHONEY (coming on) Yeah, yeah, yeah...Oh, hello. You found us—We’re Ryan Airlines.

SLIM Charles Lindbergh. You know, from Robertson Aircraft?

MAHONEY (enthused)
Oh, yes! Welcome. I’m glad to meet you. I’m Mahoney… BF Mahoney…just call me Mahoney—oh, and this is AJ Edwards, (AJ: HOWDY) our sales manager. Let’s take a walk around the factory. How was the trip from St Louis?

SFX:, THEN FOOTSTEPS OF 2-3 PEOPLE UNDER

SLIM Oh, fine, but I’d be happier flying.

AJ Well, we hope to take care of that. Just put your bag by the wall there. (SFX: THUMP OF BAG) Now, through here...

SFX: DOOR OPEN; FACTORY NOISES (M is salesman, L doubtful-can you really do this?) Periodic sawing and rasping of tools.

MAHONEY In this section we weld the metal tubing into the frame. It gets covered with fabric upstairs.

SLIM For a factory, you don’t seem to have much being built.

MAHONEY (selling) Oh, we’ve got plenty of action. Look at it this way--It frees us up to get your plane out of here in the two months you specified. A sure bet.

SLIM Where do you test your planes? Not around here, that’s for sure.

AJ Our flying field is out at Dutch Flats. Just on the edge of the city. We put the wing on a truck and tow the fuselage behind.

MAHONEY We’ll take you out there later on. You’ll want to meet our pilots Harrigan and Kelly.

SLIM I’m planning on making the tests myself.

MAHONEY Oh yeah, Sure, absolutely. Let’s go into my office, where we can talk.

SFX DOOR OPEN/CLOSE. FACTORY NOISE OUT.

FOOTSTEPS OUT. CHAIRS SCRAPE
MAHONEY There, that’s better. Well, we’d like to build your plane. What do you think of our proposition?

SLIM Your telegram quoted a price of 6,000, without engine. How much for an engine?

MAHONEY We quoted it that way because we didn’t know what you’d want in the way of engine and equipment.

AJ (selling) The price includes standard instruments and oversize fuel tanks. If you want one of the Wright Company’s J-4 engines, the total would run... just under 10,000.

SLIM I’d much rather fly a J-5. They develop a little more power, and their rocker-arms are enclosed. I want a metal propeller, and I’ve got to have a turn and bank indicator. I’ll need good instruments—the best we can get.

MAHONEY (selling) I’ll tell you what we’ll do. We’ll give you the engine and all the extra equipment we buy for just what it costs us. Straight across the board. We won’t take any commission on the extras.

SLIM Fair enough. How about performance? Are you sure you can build a plane that will take off with enough fuel for the flight?

AJ We can do it. Let’s talk to Don Hall about that. He’s our designer—he makes the calculations.

SLIM (convinced) How soon could you start building the plane?

MAHONEY We’d put some of our workmen on it as soon as you place the order.

SLIM Can we depend on delivery in ...2 months?

MAHONEY We can build it in even less, but I don’t want to bank on it.
SLIM Well, I think the next step is for me to talk to your engineer about some of the details.

MAHONEY Don’s got his drafting room upstairs next to the wing loft—it’ll be quieter up there.

(HALL’S LOFT) SFX: DOOR OPEN SFX: FACTORY NOISE

SFX FOOTSTEPS ON STAIRS DOOR OPEN

MAHONEY (calls) Hey, Don...

DON (off mic) Yeah?

MAHONEY This is Charles Lindbergh. He’s the one looking for a plane to cross the Atlantic. Don Hall, our engineer.

HALL Glad to meet you. Come on in.

SFX FOOTSTEPS DOOR CLOSE. SFX: FACTORY OUT

HALL Now---What would you like to know?

SLIM Well, Convince me that you can build me a plane for my trip.

SFX MOVING ROLLS OF PAPER (HE’S CONSTANTLY DRAWING ON SOMETHING)

HALL I’ll be modifying my standard design for the M1 according to your specifications—see, I’ll add a little to the wing, lengthen the fuselage...

SLIM Anything to increase the range.

HALL Yes, I need to add to the wing to get enough lift to get you off the ground with the load of fuel. And that means the engine will have to be moved forward.

(Slim: Right) When it comes right down to it, I’ve really got to design a completely new fuselage structure to meet your requirements.

SLIM Something like the Bellanca?
HALL Kind of. Here’s the type of landing gear I favor for your airplane—

SFX SCRATCHING AS HE SKETCHES UNDER

SLIM Don’t bother with the brakes—I’ll go without.

HALL Okay. The loads are efficiently carried to the fuselage, and the wheels are outside of the slipstream—that will cut down on the drag. The gas tanks...

SLIM I’ll need plenty of those.

HALL I’ve got to put the main tank in the fuselage, at the plane’s center of gravity, and smaller ones in the wing. Now, where are we going to put the cockpits for you and the navigator?

SLIM I only want one cockpit. I’ll do the navigating myself.

HALL (startled) You don’t plan on making that flight alone, do you? I---I thought you’d need somebody to navigate and be relief pilot. I---I thought it would be much too long for one pilot.

SLIM I’d rather have extra gasoline than an extra man.

HALL (instantly enthused) Well, of course that would be a big help from the standpoint of weight and performance---particularly range. That would keep the length of the fuselage down to a more reasonable figure. It would probably save oh, about 350 pounds. That’s at least 50 gallons more fuel, including tank weight.

SLIM Will that give me a good reserve?

HALL I think so. I was worried about that---but are you sure one pilot, alone, can make a flight like that? It’s going to be something like 40 hours in the air, you know.

SLIM I don’t think that’s a problem.

HALL Say, exactly how far is it between New York and Paris by the route you’re going to follow?
SLIM: It’s about 3500 miles. We could get a pretty close check by scaling it off a globe with a piece of string.

HALL: The public library down the street has one. It only takes a few minutes to drive there. I’ve got to know exactly what the distance is before I can make any accurate calculations. Let’s go.

SLIM: Better bring along some string, to use on the globe.

HALL: Oh, that’s right. I should have some in here...

(SFX: DRAWER OPEN, RUMMAGE, DRAWER CLOSE)

HALL: Ah-ha, here it is. My automobile’s right outside. We’d better snag Mahoney on the way out. He’ll want to come with us. He always does.

MUSIC BRIDGE (LIBRARY) 2c35

LIBRARIAN: Our globe is over there, Gentlemen, on the table in that corner.

SLIM: Thank you, ma’am.

(SFX: FOOTSTEPS as they walk & (Slim is laying string on a globe)

SLIM (figuring) Let’s see, from here...to about there...

It’s...3600 statute miles.

HALL: I assumed that the airplane ought to carry fuel for 4000 miles in still air. Maybe that isn’t enough. You’ll want to follow the ship lanes...

(SFX FOOTSTEPS (of Librarian)

SLIM: Nope, I’m going to fly straight across. What’s the use flying extra hours over water just to follow the ship lanes?

LIBRARIAN: Gentlemen, you’ll have to be quiet or you need to leave the library.

SLIM: Oh, sorry...Yes, ma’am.

(SFX: writing on back of an envelope)
HALL (WHISPER) Maybe we’d better put in 400 gallons of gasoline instead of 380...

MAHONEY (WHISPER) Don, can you make all those changes and still get it built in 60 days?

HALL (WHISPER) It will be a real job; but I think we can if---if the men will put in a lot of overtime.

MAHONEY(WHISPER) All right, let’s get under way as fast as we can. (FORGETTING TO WHISPER, excited) You give us the order, Slim, and we’ll start. That will make $10,500, —** (whispering) with a J-5 engine special equipment extra, at cost.

LIBRARIAN **Gentlemen!

MUSIC BRIDGE—California sunshine music?BRIGHT 2c35

SFX: BEACH SOUNDS up and under SFX: twig in sand?

NARR Taking a break from the factory, in the warm California sunshine, Lindbergh and designer Don Hall sit on the beach. Don continues to draw, using a twig in the sand, trying to finalize the design.

HALL Charlie, there’s some more things we’ve got to decide on before I can go ahead with the design. (Slim: Like what?) Where are we going to put the cockpit?

SLIM Don, I want it behind the gas tank—just about where it is in the M-2.

HALL But...then you couldn’t see straight ahead. The gas tank would be directly in front of you. I thought you’d want to sit behind the engine for the best possible vision.

SLIM Not on your life. I don’t like the idea of being sandwiched between the engine and a gas tank. If you crack up, you haven’t got a chance.

HALL But...But not to be able to see ...forward...
SLIM (qk) A compass won’t work up there either, so close to the engine. And I’ve got to have that on this flight.

HALL How will you take off, if you can’t see forward?

SLIM The nose of the fuselage and the engine blocks out the field straight ahead, see, so pilots always look out at an angle when we take off. Some of the mail pilots even paint their windshields black to cut down reflection at night. They can’t see forward either.

HALL Okay, so that’s not a problem for you—(Slim: nope) it would be for me. But what about once you’re in the air?

SLIM There’s not much need to see ahead in normal flight. There won’t be anyone to run into. And no buildings.

HALL Well, yeah...

SLIM And when I’m near a flying field, I can watch the sky ahead by making shallow banks.

HALL Well, I don’t know...

SLIM Look, why don’t we leave the cockpit in the rear and just fair it in? All I need is a window on each side to see through.

HALL (enthused, drawing in sand) Hey, a cockpit like that wouldn’t add any resistance at all. It ought to increase the cruising speed 2 or 3 miles an hour. We might pick up an extra 100 miles of range that way.

SLIM You could even make the center panel of the wing out of glass, so I could see up..

HALL Yeah, that’d work. ‘Course, you’ll be so far back in the fuselage, there might not be enough room for your head.

SLIM I’ll crouch.
HALL For 40 hours? Maybe I can notch the inside of the cockpit, to give you a little more head-room. You’re pretty tall, even sitting down.

SLIM We need to give first consideration to efficiency in flight; second, to protection in a crack up; third to pilot comfort. I don’t see why a cockpit in the rear doesn’t cover all three.

HALL Charlie, what are you going to use the airplane for later on? The passenger arrangement won’t be as good with the pilot behind.

SLIM If we’re going to break the world’s record for distance, we’ve got to put range above everything else.

HALL I suppose you could rip out the gas tank and carry mail. That’s what I designed it for.

SLIM I’m not going to think about “after” until I land in Paris.

HALL Okay. Now, what night-flying equipment do you want in the plane?

SLIM I’ll use a flashlight.

HALL Oh, yeah? Well, okay, if that’s how you want it. (beat) You know, I’m just not satisfied with the size of the M-2 tail surfaces.

SLIM Would be dangerous to use them?

HALL Not for an experienced pilot. But it won’t be very stable.

SLIM (amused) I’m probably the most experienced pilot from the airmail, who’s still alive. Besides, having the plane unstable will force me to stay awake. If I nod off, the plane will nudge me awake.

HALL Not something I want my reputation to hinge on. (pause) Okay, Charlie, I’ll freeze the design.

SFX (beach sounds out)
MUSIC BRIDGE (night?) 5c38 5 seconds

SFX: DOOR KNOB RATTLES. LOUD BANGS ON THE DOOR.

SFX: DOOR OPENS

MAHONEY Don’t you guys ever quit work? And another thing--where do you keep the key to this door? I might want to get in here some night.

HALL For what, your weekly poker game? There isn’t any key, at least not since I’ve been working here. We use a hacksaw blade to get in—just slip it through the crack there, and push.

MAHONEY (laughs) Next time we’ll leave you a chip or two.

HALL Just leave the money on the table.

MAHONEY I’ve brought up the paper. There’s an article you may want to see. Good night—and sweet dreams.

SFX: RADIO SIGNAL

NEWS1 FLASH March 2, 1927 New York: Wannamaker behind New York-Paris flight! Will finance Commander Byrd venture with $100,000! May race with Fonck! A huge three-engined Fokker monoplane, now under construction, is to be used for the trip.

NEWS2 This spring may see a race between American and French pilots for the honor of being first to fly between New York and Paris. The Sikorsky Company announced recently that a big plane was being built. It is reported that the pilot will be Capt. Rene Fonck, the French ace who crashed on Roosevelt Field on an attempted take-off for Paris last September.

NEWS1 A number of American pilots, including Commander Noel Davis, are known to be planning on competing for the Orteig prize. Charles A. Lindbergh, a St Louis mail pilot, has filed the latest entry, according to the National Aeronautic Association. He will pilot a single-engined Ryan monoplane, and plans to make the flight alone.
NEWS2  On the European side of the ocean, it is understood that trans-Atlantic planes are being constructed in France, England and Italy.

SFX: FOLDING PAPER UP

SLIM  We’d better go get some supper.

HALL  I gotta get these drawings done, Charlie. They’re holding everything up.

SLIM  But not tonight, Don. Don’t you think you ought to set a regular pace at this work?

HALL  You’re the one to talk.

SLIM  A fellow can’t think as clearly without sleep.

SFX: PUTTING COATS ON, FOOTSTEPS UNDER

HALL  I’ll get some rest as soon as I get ahead of the shop. (pause) Say, we ought to have some kind of ventilation in the cockpit if you’re going to fly with the windows closed.

SLIM  How about having the windows removable, to give me the option of open or closed? Maybe a rack to slip them into when they’re not in use.

HALL  Okay. (pause) Do you want gauges on your gas tanks, Charlie?

SLIM  No. That would mean extra pounds and they never seem to work. I’ll measure fuel consumption with my watch.

HALL  How about dump valves for the tanks?

SLIM (qk)  Now who’s being obsessive. Come on, I’ll buy you dinner.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS, DOOR OPEN AND CLOSE
**SFX: RADIO SIGNAL**

NEWS1 March 14. NEW YORK. American Legion backs Davis New York-Paris flight! Plane to have 4,600 miles range! Lt. Commander Noel Davis plans to take off from Mitchell Field, Long Island, in June for a non-stop flight to Paris. The big Keystone biplane will be powered with three Wright Whirlwind engines.

**FACTORY NOISES UP AND UNDER**

NARR The construction of the Spirit of St Louis moves along as fast as Hall can produce drawings from his board. Hawley Bowlus, the factory manager, starts work on less important items without waiting for drawings. And others get involved in the project...

RANDOLPH Hey, Mr. Lindbergh, I’ve been thinking about your lack of forward visibility.

SLIM Randolph, I told Don that it would be okay—I can get by with only seeing out the side windows.

RANDOLPH I was with the submarines in the War. I got to thinking about periscopes and I had an idea. What about using one of those to give you a look?

SLIM What, above the wing?

RANDOLPH No. Here, I done a mock-up. (SFX SLIDING OF A BOX) Just a sliding box, with two mirrors. If we put it on the wall of the tank, you could slide it out to the left, and see in front of the engine. SFX: SLIDING BOX A COUPLE OF TIMES See that? (SFX: 2 MORE BOX SLIDES)

SLIM I couldn’t leave it like that. It’d cause turbulence and affect my speed.

RANDOLPH You’d only use it if you needed to. I could make it out of lightweight wood.

SLIM Okay, but talk to Don before you install it.

RANDOLPH Sure. I don’t want to get fired for adding my ideas without permission.
NARR Everyone is taking a personal interest in the flight; hours of overtime have become normal and voluntary. Hall often goes to the factory at 5 o’clock in the morning to inspect the previous day’s progress before the men arrive. Work on the other planes has almost stopped. It’s less than 3 weeks since Lindbergh arrived in San Diego, yet skeletons of the fuselage and wing have already taken form. **SFX: FACTORY OUT**

RADIO SIGNAL

NEW2 March 26, Paris. Nungesser to fly Atlantic! Captain Charles Nungesser, one of the top aces of the War said today he would pilot a French-built plane across the Atlantic this summer. He will be accompanied by Lt. Coli, the famous one-eyed airman as co-pilot and navigator.

MUSIC: BRIDGE  5C38 (5 seconds)(LINDBERGH’S APARTMENT)

SFX: WATER RUNNING IN SINK, WRINGING OUT WASHCLOTH (SHAVING BRUSH & MUG, BEING BEATEN?)

AJ Slim, I know you’re real busy, but can I bother you while you shave? I need to know what you plan to carry, so I can buy it? **Before** you leave?

SLIM Sure, sure, AJ. I’ll try not to cut my throat while I’m answering.

AJ Don tells me you aren’t going to carry a parachute. Whyever not?

SLIM If I'm over water, what use is parachuting--just to land in the water? I'm dead.

AJ Well, you got a point.

SLIM I'd need the gear on the plane to survive. So if something happens, I have to bring the plane down.

AJ If you’re over land, you’ll drop the plane onto a field?

SLIM Yep, just like we always do when flying the mail. I’d rather have extra gas.

AJ And no navigation lights, Don said.
SLIM I got permission to do without those.
AJ Radio?
SLIM Too heavy, and they don't work when you need them.
AJ Sextent?
SLIM How am I going to hold onto one to take a sight and
steer the plane at the same time?
AJ How in SAM Hill are you going to find your way there?
SLIM AJ, I'm studying navigation while Spirit is being built.
AJ You have?
SLIM Yep. That gives me 2 months. The fellows over at the
Naval Station have been real helpful. I'm going to use
deck reckoning combined with a mapped out course
using compass headings.
AJ But how...
SLIM (qk) So many degrees for so many miles. Oh, and fly down
to 50 feet to check the wind. I'm going to need all the
maps along the route--you'll get those for me?
AJ Sure, Slim, sure. Though how you're going to manage
the charts I don't know. I always need 3 hands to deal
with them.
SLIM Well, if I cut away everything but the section that uses
my compass headings, they'll be easier. And it'll save
weight.
AJ You and your weight. I wouldn't put it past you to
slice out the extra pages from your log book.
SLIM Now that's a good idea. (pause) There is another thing.
I know that Ryan usually puts in leather chairs for
their pilots.
AJ Yeah, we make 'em real comfortable.
SLIM I need you to buy me a wicker chair to replace it. It'll
be half the weight.
AJ (protesting) But, Slim! It'll be hard to sit in, particularly
after hours and hours.
SLIM: AJ, if the chair's too soft, I'll fall asleep. But if it'll make you happy, you can buy me an air cushion to go on top of it.

AJ: Okay, a wicker chair. What about clothes for Paris? You going to bring a suit, of course.

SLIM: You think they plan to wine and dine me--a nobody from Missouri? I doubt it. No, I need to mind every ounce and half-ounce. No suit.

AJ: Shirt, tie?

SLIM: I can wash mine out.

AJ: Socks, underwear?

SLIM: Ditto.

AJ: Toothbrush?

SLIM: Too heavy.

AJ (laughing): I give up.

SFX: RADIO SIGNAL

NEWS1: April 9, Bristol, Penn. Paris Plane tested! American Legion shows high speed in surprise flight! Lt. Commander Noel Davis took his Keystone biplane on its maiden flight. Construction is progressing rapidly on the tri-motored Fokker for Commander Richard Byrd.

MUSIC—working, working. Under? 1c34 SFX: FACTORY NOISE

NARR: On the Ryan factory floors the workman are out to set a record in construction time—they're reading the papers too. They know how desperately Lindbergh wants to be in New York by the end of April. They've been watching the reports about Nungesser's final preparations in France; about Byrd's trans-Atlantic Fokker; about Chamberlin and the Bellanca; about Davis and Wooster. Every expedition is ahead of them.
SFX: FACTORY NOISE OUT; MUSIC OUT
SFX: RADIO SIGNAL

NEWS2 April 14, New York. Bellanca plane smashes world’s record! Chamberlin and Acosta lands after 51 hours 11 minutes 25 seconds.

MUSIC: 1C34 UNDER SFX: FACTORY NOISE UNDER

NARR A single day’s delay might make the difference between success and failure, and everyone in the shop is determined that the responsibility for such a disappointment won’t lie with them. Each is striving to do a quicker and better job on the Spirit than he’s ever done before. No pains are too great, no hours too long. (MUSIC OUT/SOUND OUT)

SFX: RADIO SIGNAL

NEWS1 April 16, New York. Byrd’s aircraft AMERICA crashes on test flight! Byrd, Bennett and Noville injured, Fokker piloting craft at the time! The big tri-motored Fokker crashed at Teterboro airport at 6 pm.

MUSIC under; SFX: FACTORY NOISE

NARR Lights sometimes burn in the factory all through the night. Don Hall worked for one stretch of 36 hours without sleep. Drawings are sent down to the factory floor calling for accuracy of one thirty-second of an inch—never before required.

(MUSIC/NOISE OUT)

SFX: RADIO SIGNAL

NEWS1 April 22. Paris. Nungesser plane completes tests!

NEWS2 Bellanca made ready for take-off!

NEWS1 Drouhin enters contest! The French aviator has been running secret tests with a Farman biplane.

NEWS2 Fonck sails for America! Competition in the New York to Paris flight contest intensifies.

MAHONEY (calls) Slim! There’s more telegrams for you.

You’ve got Western Union really earning their dough.
SFX FOOTSTEPS AS SLIM COMES DOWN STAIRS

SLIM Thanks, Mahoney. (SFX OPENING ENVELOPE)
Hmm...this is the number for the plane. NX dash
211. Mahoney, what's an N-X?

MAHONEY N stands for planes from the United States. X is
for experimental. 'Course you can't carry passengers
with an X license, but I guess you aren't going to do
that anyway.

SLIM They won't exactly fit in the gas tank, will they?

MAHONEY It'd be a tight squeeze. I'll make sure Bert gets
the numbers painted on top and bottom of the wing,
and on the tail.

SFX: RADIO SIGNAL

NEWS1 April 24, New York. Bellanca in crack-up! The
Bellanca trans-Atlantic monoplane narrowly escaped
disaster, following its christening ceremonies today,
when part of the landing gear tore loose on take-off.
Chamberlin landed using one wheel and one wing...

MUSIC: BRIDGE, 5 SECONDS

HALL Slim, this morning we're going to take the ship out of
the factory. We got the fuselage out just fine, by
taking off the landing gear on one side. But I
miscalculated on the wing.

SLIM You miscalculated?

HALL When I added 10 feet to the wingspan, I forgot how
that might affect getting the wing out of the loft.

HAWLY We can take the loft doors off. That'll give us a little
extra.

HALL Hawley, you sure we won't have to tear out a
section of wall?

HAWLY I measured it, and I think it'll clear if we tilt it.

HALL I hope you're right.
HAWLY  Jon, you gather the guys and push that boxcar next
door over to the factory. It’ll give us the first step
downward. Oh, and Jon, move the truck next to the
boxcar.

JON  Jah, Hawley. (calls) Hey Fred! Get some guys and
come with me.

SFX  FOOTSTEPS

JON  (out of breath)calls)   Okay, Hawley, we’re ready.

HAWLY  Don, help me hook the derrick onto the wing. There.
Now, everybody gently push the wing out the door—
gently! Gently. Slim—watch your fingers there. [SFX
scraping sounds] Good---that’s got it! Now, let’s lay it
down on the top of the boxcar. Jon—keep that line
taut! Pull your way, Bert! Pull!

MAHONEY  AJ—Look back at the shop.

AJ  How about that. Every workman from the factory is
watching from the open doors and windows as if some
child of theirs were going away to war.

MAHONEY  Well, their work is done. Now it’s all riding on
Lindbergh.

AJ  I hope he doesn’t let them down.

HAWLY  Pull! [SFX pulley sounds—STRUGGLE OF MEN]. Now,
swinging it over to the truck. Let it down slowly—slowly.
There. [SFX pulley sounds—STRUGGLE OF MEN]

SFX: MEN STRUGGLING--OUT

MUSIC—OMINOUS/DIRGE bridge 5L88

SFX: RADIO SIGNAL

NEWS1  April 26. Hampton, Va. Davis and Wooster killed!
American Legion crashes on take-off for final test
flight! Lt. The tragedy occurred when the machine was
carrying almost the equivalent of its full load for the
trip. (SIGNAL OUT)
SLIM Oh, no! Davis and Wooster killed! Every one of the big multi-engine planes built for the Paris run has crashed—Fonck’s Sikorsky, Byrd’s Fokker and now Davis’ Keystone. All of them.

AJ That’s terrible! Two more men—that makes four killed.

SLIM Their plane didn’t even burn.

AJ Slim, just make sure you’re not next in line, okay?

MUSIC BRIDGE (DUTCH FLATS AIRFIELD) 5C38—5 SECONDS (reporter 1 is on filter mic)

REPTR1(f) Ladies and gentlemen, it’s April 28, around 8 o’clock. We’re here at Dutch Flats to watch Charles Lindbergh take his new airplane aloft on her maiden flight. The company is well represented here—in fact they must have given the workers the day off, since there are more than 35 of them, from secretaries to the shop foreman.

Lindbergh has gotten into the cockpit of the 27-foot plane, which is hidden beneath the large 46-foot wing. Now the moment of truth—will the “60-day Wonder” fly?

SLIM (calls, off mic) Off! Throttle closed.

REPTR1(F) Jon van der Linde, Ryan’s chief mechanic, turns the propeller over several times by hand. The 223-horsepowered engine has 9 cylinders in a circle, behind the propeller.

RSFX ENGINE BEING TURNED (Jon & Slim off mic, under Rptr1)

JON (calls) Contact!

SLIM (calls) Contact!

REPTR1(F) Van der Linde swings his body away from the blade as he pulls it through. The engine catches, and picks up quickly (RSFX: ENGINE STARTING; THEN
The Spirit starts to quiver, the fuselage trembling with power. Corrigan ducks under the wing for just a minute, to pull the chocks away from the wheels. It’s taxiing on the baked mud surface of the field—50 feet, 100 feet, 150 feet—it’s in the air!

BIZ CROWD CHEERING UP AND THEN UNDER

RPRTR1(F) The crowd is going crazy, clapping and cheering, as Lindbergh circles overhead.

MUSIC Bridge ? TRIUMPH! – 3C98B7

FRANK We will return to Spirit: the story of Spirit of St Louis in just a minute.

INTERMISSION

MUSIC under --tired, sunset-kind of music 2C48A, UNDER

FRANK We return to Spirit: the story of the Spirit of St Louis, Act II.

NARR The next day, at Camp Kearney, Lindbergh has been taking off and landing all day, doing tests on how long it takes Spirit to get off the ground with different amounts of gas. It’s now close to sunset. (MUSIC OUT)

SFX ENGINE NOISE TO ESTABLISH (3SEC) THEN CUTS OFF

SLIM (tired) How was it that time? I figured it was about 20 seconds.

HALL Just over a thousand feet.

JON That was the 300 gallon test. You want 50 gallons more?

SLIM It’s too late for another flight today. The sun’s almost touching the horizon.
MAHONEY   I don’t think you ought to take a heavier load
across those stones anyway. The tires and the landing
gear are taking a beating.

SLIM    Don, do we need any more check points?

HALL   I---I’d like to get one for 350. (hesitantly) But Charlie,
if you think the surface is too rough, we can probably
get by with what we’ve got. The wheel bearings were
smoking a little, you know.

MAHONEY   It’s landing with all that gasoline that worries
me. I’m for calling it enough. We don’t want to lose the
whole shooting match.

SLIM    I’ll have to take off with 125 gallons more in New York,
but the field will certainly be smoother, and at sea
level. I think you’re right, Mahoney. I’ll probably never
land anywhere with more than 300 gallons.

HALL   Hey, Charlie, you want a ride back to town with me?
Mahoney’s going off to his favorite place in Tijuana:
the Agua Caliente Casino.

SLIM    Sure, Don, that’d be fine.

MAHONEY   I just need a little fun.

HALL    Uh-huh. Just make sure you bring back the payroll.

MAHONEY   I always do. We need to get this gasoline out of this
plane, and then stake it down for the night. We’ll tow
it back to the shop tomorrow. Jon, will you and Fred
take care of that?

JON    Jah sure, boss.

MUSIC TO UNLOAD GAS BY 5C38 5 SECONDS BRIDGE

FRED    (impatiently)    Come on, come on. Aren’t you guys done
yet?

JON    Just about done...

SFX: CLUNK AS THE HOSE SINKS TO BOTTOM OF TANK
[Fred is supervisor. Pick up the pace, no pauses]

FRED (suspicious) What was that?

JON (horror) Gott, no! The siphon hose fell into the gas tank.

(struggle) I can’t get it out!

FRED (aghast) You can’t let that hose stay in the gas tank.

JON (sell) Don’t worry, Fred, maybe it’ll dissolve.

FRED We’re going to have to cut a hole in the tank and take it out. What if it blocked Charlie’s fuel flow?

JON (sell) I’m sure it’ll dissolve.

FRED It’ll dissolve—HA! I built this gas tank—I can rebuild it if I have to. Before Mr Lindbergh finds out. And then I may operate on your paycheck as well.

JON (placating) Now, Fred. No need for drastic measures. I'll give you a hand to fix it tomorrow morning.

FRED I'll pick you up, just to make sure. You better be ready early.

JON Jah sure, Fred, sure. Just don’t tell Mahoney.

**MUSIC BRIDGE 5 SECONDS 2c48A**

**SFX: RADIO SIGNAL**

**NEWS1** May 8-- Paris: Nungesser over Atlantic! Captains Charles Nungesser and Francois Coli took off at sunrise from Le Bourget, Paris with their overloaded Levasseur biplane. If all goes well, they are expected to land in New York tomorrow.

AJ (softly) I almost hope they don’t make it.

SLIM (angry, but guiltily) Don’t say that.

AJ Aw, Slim, we know how you feel.

SLIM I’ve started thinking about the idea of flying over the Pacific.

AJ Slim, let’s wait to see whether they make it or not.

Okay?
MUSIC—OMINOUS, LOW IN STARTING, GROWING, UNDER

SFX: RADIO SIGNAL

NEWS1 Nungesser sighted off Cape Race!
NEWS2 Nungesser’s White Bird reported by Destroyer!
NEWS1 French Airmen reach Nova Scotia!
NEWS2 Ocean plane seen off Portland, Maine!
NEWS1 Crowd at Battery waits anxiously! Where are they?
NEWS2 Nungesser, Coli lost!
NEWS1 Paris Fears Worst!
NEWS2 Navy ready for search! (MUSIC FADING/OUT)

MUSIC UNDER

NARR May 10 San Diego. All the details have been attended to: all the bills paid, Lindbergh's bank account closed. No word on Nungesser and Coli, but the worst is feared. Lindbergh has waited for 2 days for the weather to clear, and it finally has. MUSIC OUT

RSFX: ENGINE UNDER

MAHONEY The Pioneer Instrument Company telegraphed to say they’ll have that new earth-inductor compass ready for you when you arrive in New York.

SLIM Good. I stopped for a few minutes to say good-bye to the men in the factory, and to tell them again what a grand job I think they’ve done on my plane.

MAHONEY They’re as pleased as you are about the performance of the Spirit of St Louis. As if they all had a royal flush.

SLIM We’ll be fine. So long.

MAHONEY So long. SFX PLANE TAKING OFF
**SFX: RADIO SIGNAL**


NEWS2 Experts doubt Nungesser, Coli or their plane could survive long.

NEWS1 French Air circles grieved by crash.

**MUSIC UP AND UNDER + ENGINE?**

NARR After an overnight stop at St Louis, Curtiss Field, Long Island, lies just ahead. [MUSIC OUT]

RSFX: AIRPLANE ENGINE FOR 3 SECONDS, THEN AIRPLANE COMING TO A STOP, ENGINE IDLING

BIZ/SFX CROWD NOISES, ENGINE IDLING UNDER (CURTISS FIELD)

CASEY (shouting, off mic) Keep clear of the propeller! It can cut you in two! Look out! Get out of the way, you darned fools! ...Hey, pal, Taxi her over to this hangar!

SLIM (shouting) I’d be glad to.

**SFX ENGINE OFF (CURTISS FIELD HANGER)**

CASEY Welcome to Curtiss Field. What a circus. I’m Casey Jones...

SLIM (awed) Casey Jones, the Curtiss test pilot? Casey Jones, War ace?

CASEY And Airport manager, and everything else.

SLIM It’s certainly a pleasure to meet you. Charles Lindbergh. (shake hands?) Most folks call me Slim.

CASEY I’ve got one of the hangars ready for you, Slim. You must have made a fast flight.

SLIM Yep, just over 7 hours from St Louis.

CASEY That makes a total of...let’s see...21 hours 20 minutes from San Diego. That’s something to crow about. You
clipped 5 hours 30 minutes from the record! Great job!

SFX FOOTSTEPS (note: Slim doesn’t like being interrupted by Blythe. Wright’s name is still mud, and he’s talking to one of his heroes, Casey Jones)

BLYTHE (fast) Mr. Lindbergh, I’m Dick Blythe. I represent the Wright Aeronautical Corporation. They’ve instructed me to offer you all the help they can give.

SLIM (tired) Thanks. (turns back to Casey) Casey, I won’t need a whole hanger, just room enough for my plane.

CASEY I thought you’d want to have one with lights. This is it.

SLIM I’d like to have an expert mechanic check over the engine.

CASEY (qk) You bet.

SLIM It hasn’t had much time in the air, but I want to be sure that---

BLYTHE (cutting in) We’ve got the best Whirlwind men in the country right here waiting. I think you know Ken Boedecker.

Ken Hi, Slim!

SLIM (smiling) Glad to see you, Boadie.

BLYTHE (fast) He’s one of the corporation’s field service representatives. And this is Ed Mulligan—

ED Hello, Mr. Lindbergh.

SLIM Nice to meet you.

BLYTHE (continuing/fast) ...They’re assigned exclusively to your plane, as long as you need ‘em. I haven’t told you about myself. I handle Wright’s public relations.

SLIM Fine, fine. Casey, I want to phone about my compass in the morning.
BLYTHE (qk) You don’t need to bother about that. Brice Goldsborough, from Pioneer Instruments, is just over here...

SLIM (amazed) Casey, you mean all the organizations I planned on contacting have their representatives right here on Curtiss Field? Ready to go? For gosh sakes.

CASEY They’ve been pestering me for days. Umlauf, from Vacuum Oil Company, has been the worst. Always wanting to know when he can deliver your California gas and oil.

SLIM Casey, I’ve got a question for you—why hasn’t the Bellanca taken off yet?

CASEY Personnel trouble. They can’t decide who’s going to fly, and they’ve taken it to court. There’s been a lot of squabbling. Acosta withdrew—he’s going to fly with Byrd.

BLYTHE (fast) Wright Aeronautical is in the difficult position of having its Whirlwind engines in all the New York-to-Paris planes.

KEN Don’t I know it. I’m just living at the airfield these days.

CASEY And not paying us any rent, either.

BLYTHE (fast) You’ve certainly got the rival camps stirred up. The press boys say it looks as though mechanics are going to work all night on both the Fokker and the Bellanca.

SFX: RADIO SIGNAL

NEWS1 May 13, New York Times. Lindbergh set to go! What promises to be the most spectacular race ever held--3600 miles over the open sea to Paris--may start tomorrow morning. Three trans-Atlantic planes are on Curtiss and Roosevelt Fields, within a short distance of each other, ready to take the air.
Observers at the field look to Lindbergh as a dark horse in the race.


NEWS1 Weather at sea still bad. Ships continue to hunt Nungesser.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS, (SPINNER BEING CARRIED) (CURTISS FIELD HANGER)

ED (worried)(effort) I hope this is gonna be okay with Slim. Man, this propeller is heavy.

KEN (effort) Yeah, he might have a heart attack when he gets back to find his plane missing her prop.

ED (defending) But those guys from the Curtiss Company wouldn’t take no for an answer.

KEN (effort) I know. It wasn’t their plane, but they weren’t going to let Lindbergh fly with a cracked spinner.

ED (effort) Well, at least it ain’t gonna cost him anything.

KEN (effort) All I can say is--it’d better be back before he decides to fly!

MUSIC UP AND UNDER

NARR Everywhere Lindbergh turns it’s the same way. Bellanca and Chamberlin stop by to wish him well. Commander Byrd comes to his hangar to extend a welcome, and to offer Lindbergh the use of Byrd’s own upgraded runway, Roosevelt Field, for his take-off. Byrd even offers the use of his weather information.

SFX: RADIO SIGNAL

NEWS2 May 15. Flyin’ Fool may hop today! Adopts mystery air, indicating quick take-off.
NEWS2  May 16: Atlantic weather: stormy with fog
SFX: INSTALLING THE COMPASS=TURING SCREWS?
BRICE  Charlie, that’s the best place I can find for the earth-inductor compass. It’ll give you a more accurate indication up there than any other place we can find. It’ll swing less in rough air.
SLIM   The most important thing is to have it accurate and steady.
BRICE  You sure don’t haven’t any extra room in here, to put it anywheres else. But you’ll have to read it through a mirror.
SLIM   I don’t mind reading it backwards.
BRICE  Okay. There she stays then. Who’s got a mirror around here? (Pat: “Mister!”)
BIZ: several guys: "Not me." "Sorry." "Left it in the other suit."
SFX: SNAP OF PURSE CLASP, RUMMAGING IN BAG
CASEY  There’s one on the wall in the office. (Pat: Mister!)
BRICE  No, that’s too big. It ought to be about 2 inches square.
PAT    Mister, will my compact mirror do?
BRICE  Sure, lady, that’d do it.
PAT    Here you go.
SLIM   Thank you, ma’am. Brice, I can supply some chewing gum so you can stick it on. (smack of lips) Here you go.
BRICE  There…that’s perfect.
SLIM   As long as it gets me there.
RSFX: STORMS/RAIN
SFX: RADIO SIGNAL

NEWS2 May 17: Heavy rain throughout most of the East Coast. Maine covered in dense fog, extending up into Canada.

NEWS1 May 18: fog and gale force winds continue to lash the Eastern seaboard. Small craft warnings are in effect.

NEWS2 May 19: sky is overcast; light rain falling. Dense fog shrouds the coasts of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, and a storm area is developing to the west of France.

SFX RAIN IN BACKGROUND MUSIC CUE

NARR Having endured day after day of bad weather, with more in the forecast, Lindbergh accepted Dick Blythe’s invitation to see the hot Broadway show “Rio Rita” from backstage. But on the way to the theatre, they stopped at Doc Kimball’s for another weather check.

SFX SQUISHY FOOTSTEPS, DOOR OPEN/CLOSE.

BLYTHE (fast) Doc says the weather over the ocean is clearing, although you couldn't prove it by me. He says it’s a sudden change. The low-pressure area over Newfoundland is receding. Of course, conditions aren’t good all along your route.

SLIM Let’s go to the field. It sounds better than anything we’ve had so far. If we get ready to fly tonight, I can do it. The haze is too thick and the ceiling too low to fly her over to Roosevelt Field right now. But early tomorrow morning...

MUSIC BRIDGE 2C35

SFX: (CLOCK DINGS 3 )DOOR OPEN/CLOSE /FOOTSTEPS

SLIM (yawning) G’Morning, Boadie.

KEN Slim! Didn’t you get my message?

SLIM What message?
KEN    Eddie found a back way over to Roosevelt Field. We’ll be able to tow Spirit over there. I thought you could use the sleep.

SLIM (muttering/yawning)

That’s good. It was impossible to get any sleep. I kept going over and over the navigation points. “Twenty miles past the Massachusetts coast, change course to 71 degrees. Proceed for 100 miles. Then change course to 74. Allow for wind…”

ED (coming on)    Say, those Curtiss boys have been a real help; they’ve been working with us all night.

SLIM    And I kept worrying about something else.

KEN    What was that, Slim?

SLIM    I might not win the Orteig prize, even if I get to Paris.

ED    Why not? If you get there, you’d’ve earned it

SLIM    Well, I didn’t get my registration to them in time. My partners in St Louis told me to go ahead, but if I don’t get the prize, I won’t be able to pay them back… You know, a fella couldn’t have asked for better partners. They’re always behind me whenever I need help.

SFX DOOR OPEN/CLOSE, FOOTSTEPS

CASEY    I thought I’d find you here, Slim. You look a little shell-shocked.

SLIM    It’s just too early. Casey, is anybody else getting ready to start?

CASEY    Nobody’s showing. Byrd is going to run some more tests. There have been lights in the Bellanca hangar but not enough activity to indicate a takeoff.

SLIM    What are the last reports on weather?

CASEY    I hear rumors of it improving. Did you get any sleep last night?
SLIM Oh, a little. It'll have to do. Come on, let’s get her out of here.

MUSIC BRIDGE

RADIO SIGNAL (Reporter 2 is on filter mic) background:
crowd noise

RPTR2(F) Ladies and Gentlemen of the radio audience. I'm here at Roosevelt Field, in the wet, to watch the Flying Fool get ready to fly off on his dream. It’s close to 7:30 in the morning on May 19. The rain has let up, leaving the ground soggy and muddy. Lindbergh puts his flightsuit on, and sliding himself into the tiny cockpit. He buckles himself into the plane with a seatbelt. (SFX ENGINE STARTS) The engine reluctantly starts. Dick Blythe hands him a sack that contains five sandwiches, I’m told, and a bottle of water.

RSFX ENGINE REVVING (CROWD NOISE IN BACKGROUND)

SLIM As we say in the airmail: No flight, no pay. I might as well go. So long.

CASEY & ED So long, Charlie. Good luck.

RSFX: ENGINE REVS, AS PLANE STARTS DOWN FIELD UNDER

REPRTR2(F) The plane waddles down the runway, lurching from side to side to compensate for the unevenness of the ground and the heavy amount of fuel onboard. That fuel weighs more than the plane's total weight.

Now he’s past his mark of no return, a white flag on a stick. He pulls her up...and then she's down. Not quite ready to fly. He pulls her up...up..he's off the ground! Just barely. Come on, come on...

He's cleared the tractor by ten feet. And he's over the gully. Can he clear the telephone lines at the end of the field? Friends of his are down there with fire extinguishers--just in case.

CASEY Come on, Charlie! (BIZ: CROWD CHEERING HIM ON)
REPTR2 (F) He’s at the telephone lines, still climbing. He’s…he’s over! Cleared them by a scant 20 feet.

BIZ: WILD CHEERS

REPTR2 (F) He’s on his way! The Lone Eagle is off to Paris for the Orteig prize.

SFX: WALL OF NOISE FROM THE CROWD UP FOR 7 SECONDS

(HISTORY) BACK TO THE FUTURE SFX: MUSEUM BACKGROUND

SARAH Did he make it? Did he get to Paris?

DOCENT He sure did. After worrying about not knowing anyone over there, about not speaking French, and not having a visa, he found the airfield covered with people running for his plane.

SARAH Gee, Dad, how many people were there?

DAD Oh, a couple of hundred...thousand. First traffic jam Paris ever had.

FRANK I heard that Lindbergh was dragged out of the cockpit after he landed, and they carried around on their shoulders for hours.

DOCENT It was probably not more than a half-hour, but I’m sure it seemed like eternity. He really wanted to get back to Spirit, to make sure she was okay, but he couldn’t do it. [One of the French pilots grabbed Lindbergh’s helmet, crammed it down on the head of a tall American reporter and told the crowd “Here’s Lindbergh”. Off the reporter was carried, protesting all the way.]

SARAH Was his plane okay?
DOCENT  The police finally got it into a hanger, but not before  
people had ripped pieces of it off as souvenirs. And  
someone stole his log book. That always bothered him.  

SARAH  How awful! What happened to Charlie?  

DOCENT  Three French pilots bundled him into a small car and  
took him to Paris on the back roads. They didn’t speak  
English, and he couldn’t speak French. They insisted  
on stopping at the Arc d’Triomphe as his first stop in  
Paris. They felt it was only fitting.  

SARAH  Then where’d he go? To a hotel?  

DAD  No, Sarah, they wouldn’t take him to a hotel. They  
delivered him to the American Embassy. ‘Course, the  
Ambassador was stuck in the airport traffic, and  
didn’t get back home until 3 am.  

DOCENT  Ambassador Herrick took him under his wing, and  
had him stay at the Embassy. After being awake for  
63 hours, Lindbergh finally got to go to sleep. The  
Ambassador’s valet even found a suit for the American  
to wear, while a rush order of clothes was being made.  

FRANK  What about the other racers? What happened to  
them?  

DOCENT  The Bellanca plane, with Chamberlin as pilot, and  
Charles Levine on board, took off from New York on  
June 4. They got lost and ran out of gas, after 43  
hours, and crashed in Germany.  

SARAH  How many hours did Charlie and Spirit take?  

DAD  Thirty-three and a half.  

SARAH  And his plane has been here ever since.
DOCENT Not exactly. Oh, we sent him a telegram, which got to the Embassy before he did, asking him to donate Spirit of St Louis to the Smithsonian.

PAT Did he get to see any of Europe?

DOCENT Oh, yes, He flew Spirit to Brussels and to London, but when President Coolidge sent the USS Memphis to get him, he figured he had to come back home. Lindbergh flew Spirit around for another year, going to 82 cities within the 48 states.

DAD Sarah, he even landed in Seattle, at Sand Point, on Sept. 13, 1927, before going on to his next stop in Portland. [Along the way, he dropped greetings on every town and city he passed over.]

DOCENT And then he flew on a tour of Central and South American cities, demonstrating how safe and punctual flying could be, and the need for airports. Spirit of St Louis made her last flight on April 30, 1928. She flew a total of 789 hours, 28 minutes—Lindbergh was her only pilot.

PAT Didn’t he write a book about it?

DOCENT Oh, he wrote several books about it. The first one was called “WE”, in 1927, and then he wrote “The Spirit of St Louis” in 1954. That one won the Pulitzer Prize.

PAT Didn’t they make a movie of it?

DOCENT Yes, ma’am, in 1957, with Jimmy Stewart.

SARAH But what did he get, if you got his plane?

DOCENT Well, Spirit got a home...

ED (qk) I heard he got the Medal of Honor.
DOCENT Yes, yes, he did, and the Distinguished Flying Cross—the first one ever awarded. Every nation and city gave him awards—most of them are at the St Louis Museum. Spirit of St Louis made us famous for aviation. 30,000 people came that first day she was here.

SARAH But, mister, what did he get?

DAD Sarah...

DOCENT He got his own air-mail stamp, and the Air Mail was carrying an extra 50,000 pounds of mail by August of ‘27—with his stamp on each one.

PAT He did win the Orteig Prize, didn’t he?

DOCENT Oh, yes, yes. It was personally awarded to him in New York. When Lindbergh tried to pay his partners back the $13,000 Spirit had cost, they refused to accept it.

SARAH But, mister, what did he get from the Smithsonian?

DAD Now, Sarah...

DOCENT I know it may not seem like much, but the Smithsonian gave him a life-time membership. (pause) I met him, you know. Lots of times he’d wander into the old museum, his hat pulled down low over his face, stand away from the crowd and he’d stare up there—at his Spirit—the Spirit of St Louis. (fading SFX ALSO FADES) Now, if we can move down this way, there’s lots of other planes to see...

MUSIC UP AND THEN UNDER
“Spirit” was written and directed by Joy Jackson. In our cast you heard: