

DELONG: Well, let's start right at the beginning. We were playing bridge at my house -- my wife and I, and <sup>two friends</sup> ~~the William~~ Byrds, who still live here. We lived down by ~~the~~ Lake Carnegie, just about where the crew races end, toward Kingston. We stayed up a little later than usual, probably around midnight. This was the night of March 1, 1932.

Q: You were still commuting for the Sun at this time.

DELONG: Yes. 6 days a week, by the way. We finished our bridge game. <sup>Our friends</sup> ~~The Byrds~~ left, and we were tired. The telephone was downstairs in the hall and my older daughter, who was then a little thing, came into <sup>our</sup> ~~the~~ bedroom, and said that the phone had been "ringing and ringing and ringing." Well, any telephone call <sup>at</sup> ~~in the middle of the~~ night frightens you, so we ~~dash~~ dashed down. It was <sup>some</sup> ~~John~~ Doane, the night city editor of the Sun, who said, "We have a report from police headquarters and it's on the teletype, that the Lindbergh baby has been kidnapped." I said, "What?" He said, "Yes. We don't have anything to go on beyond that, but can you get out there?" I said, "Of course I can."

I was quite calm, and I went back up and told my wife she'd better go back to bed, and she said, "Where are you going at this time of night?" I said, "The Lindbergh baby's been kidnapped and I'm going to go out to the house." She said, "If

you think you're going alone, you're crazy." It was pretty cold, and I was dressing and she was getting out leather petticoats and what not, and mothballs were rolling all over the floor. We finally got ourselves organized, and I said, "This is liable to be a pretty long night. We might stop at the Baltimore Lunch [an all-night restaurant in Princeton] and get a cup of coffee and a sandwich, because I don't know when this thing's going to end. You're sure you want to go?" And she said, "I certainly do."

So we were in there, and Bill <sup>Coan</sup> ~~Coons~~, who used to be the <sup>proctor at Princeton University</sup> ~~night-bouncer~~ -- you probably remember him -- was at the Balt. I said hello to him and asked him a couple of questions, and he said, "There's a chauffeur here ~~that's~~ getting 5 gallons of coffee to take out to the Lindbergh house. It's Henry Breckenridge's chauffeur." Henry Breckenridge was Lindbergh's attorney. He'd been notified, and they'd dropped him off at the house and sent the chauffeur over to Princeton to get in a few supplies. I guess they figured there'd be state troopers and constables and newspapermen, and everybody else, which they were.

When I got talking to <sup>that</sup> ~~Coan~~ <sup>Coan</sup>, I said, "This is liable to be pretty rugged country out there, and it might be good to know something about the surrounding territory." "Well," he said, "I know a fellow that's done a lot of hunting out there. Last year he got a 300-pound deer." "Well," I said, "maybe I ought to pick him up so we can get out in the woods

together." So we went down to the hotel where he lived, down ~~down~~ the canal beyond Alexander Street, and we couldn't arouse anybody, so we started out there. And I'm very glad that Mrs. DeLong was accompanying me because I couldn't have found the place to save my life. I have no sense of location. She had been out to call on Anne Lindbergh and she knew the road, and that's a pretty tough place to find. You go up this mountain road and right into the ~~Sawtooth~~ mountains. It's the only house out there, if you've seen pictures of it from the air.

Well, we got up there. KKK

Q: I would have thought you would have been in quite a hurry and not bothered to stop by at the Balt.

DELONG: I would have been had I been on a morning newspaper, but I knew that I had until 10 o'clock to finish my story if I had to.

When we got ~~out~~ there, Lindbergh had gone out into the woods.

Q: Were there many cars around?

DELONG: No. Very few. Breckenridge was in the house and there was one constable there, and <sup>possibly</sup> one or two State troopers. Some of them had accompanied Lindbergh into the woods. He'd  
XXXXXXXXXXXX  
taken his

taken his shotgun. There were some bootleggers living out there in cabins, who used to go there on week-ends, that kind of thing and they felt that maybe that's where the baby was.

Q: Was Mrs. Lindbergh in the house?

DeLong: She was in the house, but I did not see her. But I walked all around the outside of the house, and saw where the ladder had been placed against the house below the baby's window. Terribly muddy, my heavens!

Q: What time was the kidnapping discovered? As I remember, there was a governess or nurse there.

DeLong: A governess, Betty Gow, a butler, Oliver Whateley and his wife, Elsie. Mrs. Lindbergh last saw her child about 7:30 and Betty Gow about 8:00 P.M. Lindbergh had been in New York, but returned at 8:30, and sat reading in the library.

Q: This would be around 10:30 or 11?

DeLong: No. About 10:00 o'clock, so the kidnapping took place between 8 and 10 when Betty Gow, checking for the night, found the baby was missing. The window was open, and they looked out and saw the ladder. They didn't know what to do. So they notified the Hopewell police chief, Harry Wolfe, and he, in turn, notified the State police, and then they called Mr. Breckinridge. This was right at the

very first stages. They'd only known about <sup>to help for</sup> ~~this~~ an hour or so.

Q: Where was Breckenridge?

DELONG: Breckenridge was in New York and he drove down.

Q: Were you the first reporter there?

DELONG: <sup>Station</sup> Yes, I was. I had about a 50-mile start on them, you see. Everybody else was tearing out from New York, Newark, Trenton. We got there in pretty good time, except for the time we took to get a sandwich and a cup of coffee, and talk to Coon<sup>a</sup> for 10 minutes and take a little jaunt down the road to see if we could find this fellow for a guide. I guess we arrived at the Lindbergh home between one and two o'clock, ~~but~~ probably nearer one.

Q: You say you walked in the door?

DELONG: I drove through the gate, which was about half a mile or so from the house. I didn't go in the house. I just walked around outside. I saw the ladder, <sup>inspected it</sup> ~~skinned~~ climbed it, pulled it apart. I've often <sup>wondered whether some</sup> ~~thought most of the fingerprints on it were~~ <sup>not</sup> mine. The ladder was broken, by the way.

Q: What kind of ladder was it?

DeLong: A crude wooden ladder, like I would make, I guess. It didn't look to me as if it had been made by a skilled carpenter, but I didn't pay much attention at the time. It was in three sections, with two uprights and cross rungs, just nailed boards.

Q: And this went up to the second story?

DeLong: Yes.

Q: What about the governess?

DeLong: I think she was further back in the house. The Lindberghs would have been nearer to the nursery at the time of the kidnapping. So the nurse was probably some little distance off. She had been downstairs sewing, and talking with the Whateleys. She hadn't gone to bed. She had looked in on the baby earlier, about 8 o'clock, and he was sleeping. He seemed to be all right, although he had a little cold.

Q: So the kidnapping took place between eight and ten?

DeLong: As far as I know. It was before ten o'clock, because the nurse looked in around then.

Then we left. I thought we'd better get back to Princeton and get something going. There was no place to telephone.

There were farmhouses ~~around there~~, but obviously you didn't want to bang around on doors and wake people up. They had one little hotel but that was folded up for the night. So I thought I'd do better if I went back to Princeton.

Q: Did you try to find Colonel Lindbergh in the woods?

DELONG: No. I planned to come back. I was going to take Bea home and notify the office that I'd been out there and tell <sup>him</sup> ~~him~~ what I had, and then arrange to get a telegrapher down at the Western Union office so that when I came back about 7 in the morning I could start <sup>writing</sup> ~~filling~~ and have somebody there to file it for me. The telegrapher was living in the old Nassau Tavern, a woman, by the way.

So I called the office and gave them a description of the terrain, and the woods, and that kind of thing, which I picked up from Bill <sup>2</sup>Coon, who'd been out there, and did a kind of story on the wildness of this place. There were no other houses anywhere near it, except these shacks out in the woods, and I hadn't seen <sup>them</sup> ~~those~~.

Q: Did the Lindberghs move out to the Sour Lands deliberately, to get away from everyone?

DELONG: Yes. They used to live in Princeton for a while, for some years outside of Princeton, and then they built this

house. For a spell they were bothered by the public. He was still a hero, the man that had flown the Atlantic first, and so forth. He'd send his shirts to the laundry and they'd steal them as souvenirs, and that type of thing, and he was the kind of man who liked to be a little remote and I think she like it, too. They weren't so far away they couldn't get into Princeton or drive to New York. It's only 9 miles from Princeton ~~to~~

*Roswell*, and they were about 2 or 3 miles beyond that.

Coming back that night, as we left they were beginning to arrive on this country road, ~~that was~~ just a dirt road as you can imagine. The first car I encountered was one of the newsreels, a crew of four, and they asked us if we would stop. They said they'd like to have a picture of somebody on the road coming the opposite direction. So we stopped, and they said, "Now, you've come to a halt and you've had a State trooper stop you, see?" They had one in tow somewhere, so he held up his hand and stopped us and they said, "Do you mind doing that over again for the newsreel?" So we backed up and charged forward in our little Ford, and the trooper would hold up his hand and we'd ~~jam~~ jam on the brakes, and they'd say, "Fine. Now just once more." We did it about 3 times, and then we went on. I remember a pheasant flew out and hit the car. ~~XXXXXX~~ It didn't do any damage to the car, and I don't know that it did to the pheasant, but it gives you an idea that this was open country.



And so we came back and I put in my call to the Sun. It was getting on toward the dawn then. You could just see the first faint rays. Of course, this was a Winter night. I tried to rouse the Western Union operator who ran the office, and I didn't have much luck, so I told <sup>Jean</sup> ~~Jean~~ Doane to call the Western Union office from New York and put in a call for a gal and get her down there and get things organized, and I wanted a direct wire to the Sun because I had enough to file, just color material -- meeting Breckenridge's chauffeur and things that I told you about. So I wrote x 1000 words or so.

Q: Did you have any sense of participating in history? Apparently Bea did; she went with you.

DELONG: Well, it was more an adventure for her. She likes that sort of thing. She lived out in the West at one time. And she was awfully helpful, of course. It would have been a hard place to find.

Then I had breakfast and, actually, I shaved. I thought this was going to be a long <sup>day</sup> ~~hit~~. I honestly felt that they'd find the baby out in the woods right away, but anyway, it was quite a story in any language.

Q: Why did you think they would find the baby?

DELONG: It just seemed incredible to me. I ~~just~~ couldn't

believe it. I don't know why.

Q: Of course, that's the way it turned out. They didn't find him, but he was close by.

DELONG: Well, by the time I got out there for the second time, I was set to go through the day. Everybody was out there. Reporters from all over the place, photographers. Finally they came out and told us what they knew, which was nothing.

Q: Who were they?

DELONG: Breckenridge, Norman Schwartzkopf who was head of the State police. We didn't talk to Colonel Lindbergh or to Mrs. Lindbergh. But they simply gave us the details of what they knew up to that time -- the Lindberghs <sup>and</sup> ~~came back~~, Betty Gow, ~~the nurse, had seen~~ <sup>last to see</sup> the baby. That's about all they could tell us. Betty Gow was a Scotch nurse.

Q: When did you return?

DELONG: About 8 or 9 o'clock in the morning. I had filed everything I had up to that time, and then I found it was easier to pick up what I had and go back to Princeton and file there than it was to try to get a phone in Flemington. There you'd

have to borrow a phone from someone living in the town, just barge in and say, "Can I borrow your phone?" A lot of them did that; it was the only thing they could do. They only had one telegrapher in <sup>well</sup> ~~Hopeful (?)~~. He was down at the railroad station, a railroad telegrapher. They didn't have a Postal Telegraph or Western Union office, so everybody was jammed up on that.

Q: So the scene was quite different on your second arrival.

DELONG: Yes. About 200 reporters, plus all the other people. Well, after that, as you probably know, they sort of threw a cordon around the place and wouldn't let the reporters come on the estate. So there wasn't much use hanging around. They set up a press headquarters in the State House at Trenton, which was right across the street. First we used to go over to State Police headquarters, which were on State Street in Trenton, two or three times a day and meet with Colonel Schwartzkopf or --

Q: What about the FBI?

DELONG: They didn't get into it at that time because it didn't cross a State line.

Q: Was the Lindbergh case the reason for changing the law?

DELONG: Yes. At that time, the penalty for kidnapping was a maximum of 16 years. As a result of this case they enacted the Lindbergh law, which made it a mandatory --

Q: So the federal government was not involved in this. It was all New Jersey State troops.

DELONG: That's correct, at the outset. Later on, when they began to look for the ransom bills and things of that sort, the federal people came in. One point on that. When they came to the trial, they certainly wanted to give more than 16 years. They wanted to give the maximum sentence. At that time in New Jersey, there was a statute that if death occurs as a result of a major crime such as burglary, rape, ~~xxxxxx~~ the jury could bring in the maximum verdict -- death. And that's what began to work out when ~~thuxx~~ they were preparing the indictment against Hauptmann. Hauptmann was never convicted of kidnapping; he was convicted of breaking and entering and ~~stealing~~ <sup>stealing</sup> a baby's sleeping garments. Death occurred as a result, therefore they could charge ~~him with murder, or rather, give him the full~~ <sup>as for a death</sup> penalty.

Q: So this was a legal technicality they had to rely on to bring this about.

DELONG: Yes. The Lindbergh statute ~~obviously~~ was enacted

after the Lindbergh kidnapping.

Q: I'd like to go back a minute to your first arrival, and the ladder which you might have been the first person to handle.

DELONG: I'm sure others had seen it, probably local officials. Probably Lindbergh himself. I certainly was the first reporter ~~there~~.

Q: Could you make any conclusions about the ladder at the time?

DELONG: It seemed to me that that was the means of entry. I don't know why you'd lug a ladder all the way up there if you were going to break in the back door. It's always been a mystery to me how he got that ladder up there without being detected, unless he'd built it, been up there previously and stashed it away in the woods somewhere.

Q: Well, the next morning you went back and found crowds of ~~3~~ reporters.

DELONG: Reporters, photographers, newsreel, everything. There was no television in those days and very little radio, as a matter of fact.

Q: Anyway, whoever it was, Breckenridge or someone, came out and gave a bulletin.

DELONG: That's right. They told us what they knew up to that point, which was nothing, other than the fact that the baby was missing.

Q: Well, would you like to resume your own chronological account?

DELONG: Yes, I think that would be best.

Q: Did Bea come with you on that second trip?

DELONG: She just went <sup>out</sup> the first trip. Then I was assigned to the case and there wasn't much information. Well, they said there was going to be no information given out at the house. They certainly deserved some privacy, without everybody mulling around. So they set up a press room in the State Capitol in Trenton. They had a lieutenant of the Statepolice there, and we could ask any questions we wanted three times a day. We would give our questions to the lieutenant, really as often as we wanted.

In the meantime, we were all running around on our own investigations. People had ideas. One thing that I

particularly resented was that the radio reporters -- I say, they were pretty new and they weren't very experienced newspapermen -- found the baby every 15 minutes. You'd call up the office and they'd say, "The radio reported the baby's been found in -- --", " So you'd chase over there and find that this was no good.

Then we made our own investigations. I talked to a man in the State ~~institutions~~ institutions and agencies who said there were some houses near there, and one rather queer character who might possibly be a suspect. Actually, it wasn't so far from where the baby was <sup>essentially</sup> found. It was back in the woods, a fellow that used to come down week-ends. He wasn't there, so we just went through his house and looked around, and found a shotgun under his mattress, which sort of intrigued us. We reported that and got out before he came in.

Q: Who was "we?"

DELONG: George Daves, of the World-Telegram, accompanied me. We worked on that quite a little while.

Then we were interviewing people in that vicinity, to see whether anybody had seen a car with a ~~ladder~~ ladder -- the usual type of investigation. And the State police had a big

route. They kept talking about the "purple gang" in Detroit. This was sort of a foil. I don't think the "purple gang" in Detroit knew anymore about it than I did, but it was something to play with and something to report on, at least. They were investigating. And the State Police were all over the place.

Actually, the students of Princeton University formed a sort of hand-in-hand deal and combed that vicinity back and forth, to see if by any chance the baby might have been buried out there. All around the Hopeful <sup>will</sup> area. They came pretty close to ~~be~~ where they eventually found the baby.

Q: Most of the student body here went down there to do this?

DELONG: Volunteered, just as a sort of a -- they just held hands and went through a field this way.

Q: When did you first see Colonel or Mrs. Lindbergh?

DELONG: I <sup>n</sup>ever saw them. I don't think anybody else did.

Q: Did you see them at the trial?

DELONG: Oh, of course. Every day. They protected them, as I say, by throwing a cordon around the place so that they ~~xx~~ could



walk around the place and come in and out without being interviewed or stopped. I don't think anyone did interview them. Lindbergh gave one or two statements, as you know, and the police gave certain statements about his movements.

The baby was found in September, 1934. From March 1, 1932 to ~~May~~ September, 1934 was quite an interval. The thing finally died out a little bit, although there were constant rumors and reports, and all kinds of crackpots were showing up and giving tips and calling up the newspaper offices and the State police. The Lindberghs had somebody right at their house to take these crackpot calls. A tragic thing. Terrible.

One day at the Sun -- by this time, some of the ransom bills had begun to show up --

Q: Did you pursue the ideas of your friend at the Balt? Did you yourself comb the hills and these week-end cottages?

DELONG: Oh, we went out there, but the State Police had covered that so thoroughly that it was pretty well established that there was nothing out there. Of course, they questioned everybody that lived there. As I say, there were not so many people out there at that time of year, March. I think in the Spring they go out there to do a little hunting, that kind of thing, picnics.

As I started to say, ~~when~~ the federal people, when the bills began to show up here and there --