

Q: That ransom note must have been full of clues.

DELONG: Well, it's the best they had, I think.

Q: Well then, days followed days and nothing happened?

DELONG: What happened finally, is that a retired superintendent of schools in the Bronx, Dr. Condon, went into the Bronx Home News, which is a paper with a circulation of about 150,000 up in the Bronx --

Q: Is he still living?

DELONG: No. He was quite old then. He said, "I'll give \$1,000 of my own money to see that child restored to its parents." I'd like to read a paragraph that I wrote about Dr. Condon:

Q: D^o I understand correctly, that he just out of a clear, blue sky, volunteered this?

DELONG: That's right. What I wrote was: "To understand Dr. Condon, one must understand his background." In my opinion, he was a greatly maligned man. You know, all sorts of people thought he was in on the deal. He grew up in the Bronx when it was mostly pasture land, attained the rank of principal in the New York school system, he raised his family there, and in later years he

became a character known to many and referred to as 'the grand old man' of the Bronx. Every newspaper office has its friends, men and women who drop in to chat or to bring an item of news, and who sort of have the run of the city room. Dr. Condon was one of these. He wasn't averse to publicity. He appeared a few nights after the kidnapping at the office of the Bronx Home News, a publication dealing exclusively with news of the Bronx, and he was well-known there. One of the reporters was gathering a symposium of opinion by Bronx residents on the Lindbergh kidnapping, a typical thing. They do it quite often. He said, "I'd give \$1000 ~~back~~ of my own money to get that child back."

7 Well, this statement appeared in the Bronx Home News, and subsequently Dr. Condon received a message asking him to serve as ransom intermediary, and suggesting that he insert a small notice in the same newspaper if he accepted. Now, this led to the series of "Jaffsie" notes, the Jaffsie being J.F.C., his initials.

Q: How was the first message transmitted to him?

DELONG: He received a letter through the mails. Then, as I recall, he inserted an ad in answer. There were several of these Jaffsie notes. There was never in my mind anything mystifying about the selection of Dr. Condon as the ransom negotiator. He was well-known in the Bronx to persons of all

classes, and Hauptmann, presumably a reader of the Bronx Home News, had lived in that borough at that time for 9 years.

Condon was elderly and jocular and had a reputation for kindness. He was known to be a man of his word. He was 72 years old, and he could not run or grapple with a younger man, although he was robust and in excellent health. He was an ideal intermediary for Hauptmann's purpose. Where could Hauptmann have found a better one? If some of the Jaffsie stories seem to conflict, it must be remembered that so did the stories which Hauptmann told him.

First, Hauptmann said he was alone. Then he insisted there were 5 persons in the gang of which he was ~~an~~ the number two man. It was at Jaffsie's insistence that only \$50,000 of ransom bills was paid, instead of 70, as Hauptmann demanded subsequently. At the time the ransom was paid, Colonel Lindbergh had an additional \$20,000 in his automobile while he waited for Dr. Condon to conduct the negotiations. For months the police trailed Jaffsie, and during the period of the ransom negotiations, Colonel Breckenridge lived in the Condon home. Through all of his preliminary negotiations, Condon advised with Colonel Lindbergh and the police. He was questioned afterwards on four separate occasions, and once for 10 solid hours. His entire past life was investigated. Nothing was ever found that might reflect on his reputation. Subsequently, criticism was levelled at him for embarking on a lecture tour to talk on crime conditions and for preparing a series of 10 articles dealing

with the Lindbergh case for a magazine, but here again, one senses only a desire for the spotlight. There were reports that Colonel Lindbergh lost faith in him after the trial, but it just was not true. He told his story under oath on the witness stand, and that story stands. If there should be any change in it, Colonel ^{Norman}/Schwartzkopf, who was a West Point graduate and a man of outstanding intellect, integrity, said that he would be the first to intercede in Hauptmann's behalf. There never has been any change in that, and it's my honest belief there never will be one.

If he had not taken the stand, Hauptmann still, in my opinion, would have been convicted.

Well, these bills were beginning to show up here and there.

Q: There's a gap I would like you to fill in. The ransom note was left on the windowsill. I understand now how Condon got into the act. I don't know how the ~~actual~~ actual transaction took place, or how soon after the kidnapping, or where.

DELONG: Well, the original note had said you'll hear in 2-4 days. They had not heard anything, and it was during this period when they were still anxiously waiting and Lindbergh was giving statements to the press that he was willing to meet the ~~xxx~~ demands, and so forth, but there was no word from the kidnapper. So it was after Condon had gone to the Bronx Home News and inserted his little ad that he received the letter from

Hauptmann, as it turned out, suggesting that the ransom be brought by Dr. Condon to ^{St. Raymond's} ~~Massena~~ (f) Cemetery in the Bronx and that it be thrown over the cemetery wall, and that if Condon notified the police or Lindbergh or anyone else connected, it would jeopardize the baby's life.

Q: Were these communications from Hauptmann by letter?

DELONG: All letters, although one ^{message} was by telephone which they couldn't trace and that cast some doubt as to whether there was someone else in the act. The police contended that he telephoned from a speakeasy. It was reported that a voice said, "You're talking too much." The police said that this was a very noisy place and that somebody at the bar was talking to somebody else. He wasn't talking to Hauptmann, and it didn't mean that there were five of them standing around the phone booth, although that did cause some speculation as to whether he had confederates. I think the police discounted that.

Q: What was Lindbergh's attitude about all of this?

DELONG: Well, as I say, Breckenridge was living in Condon's house and was in very close touch with him, and was guiding him as to what to do.

Q: Were there further assurances about the baby?

DELONG: I don't have the letters or copies of them. Yes, there were assurances that the baby was in "gute hands" and safe, and would be delivered. You must remember that in the meantime there were other crackpot letters. Lindbergh took a plane and went up to ~~the~~ Cape to meet a boat where he thought there was a rendezvous and the baby would be delivered there. There were other things going on, but this was the ~~xxxx~~ best bet they had. Of course, they brought in handwriting experts and the subject of whether the Jaffsle notes were in the same handwriting as the original, so they felt they were dealing with the man who had left the note in the Lindbergh home.

Q: Did Lindbergh follow up many leads personally?

DELONG: He was in touch ~~xx~~ through Breckenridge, his attorney. He was certainly up there the night the bills were delivered. As I said, he sat in the car with extra ransom in case this man wasn't satisfied with the \$50,000. Gondon could have gone back somewhere -- I don't know ~~xxx~~ how they were going to work that one out. He was a couple of blocks away.

Q: Chronologically we've reached the point where the bills were delivered. How long was this after the kidnapping?

DELONG: A month ~~or so.~~ *almost 2 months. April 2.*

Q: Did Condon, Lindbergh, and Breckenridge all go to the rendezvous where the ransom money was delivered?

DELONG: I don't think Breckenridge was there. Condon went under his own steam, and Lindbergh was around the corner, ~~a couple of blocks~~ ^{black or more} away, not close enough to frighten this man off. Condon went to the wall, and the man came out. He was obviously a rather tall man and he wore a mask. As I say, Condon's sight was not too good, it was pitch dark -- around 10 or 11 at night, I guess.

Q: Was the cemetery close to Condon's house or to where Hauptmann was living at this time?

DELONG: Oh, I don't think it was picked for that reason. It was picked because it was rather remote. They both lived in the Bronx, but the Bronx is a pretty big borough.

Q: During these weeks, and subsequent weeks and months, did you talk to Condon?

DELONG: I talked to his son, who was a pretty well known lawyer downtown. I talked to many people that did know him quite well, particularly reporters on the Bronx Home News, who were perfectly willing to tell anything they knew.

They desired to keep Condon away from the press, you know. They didn't want a lot of fellows sitting on his doorstep every night - the police, and the Lindberghs, and the other officials involved. You see, all of this didn't come out until somewhat later. This was a negotiation that went on unknown to anyone but Breckenridge, Lindbergh, and one or two State police officials. I think one of the things that really broke this case was the fact that when they got the ransom bills from a bank, they were all gold notes. Gold notes had been recalled, you know. And they were serially numbered. They had a record of every serial number.

Q: How did Lindbergh arrange to get the \$50,000?

DELONG: I think he could have afforded that. Mr. Morrow *J.P. Morgan and Co. partner* was a ~~bank president~~ and Lindbergh had funds of his own. He'd written a book, Lindbergh Flies Alone, which was very profitable; he'd had various business transactions; and I think he was a director of Pan-American. He was in no financial straits. \$50,000 would be tough for anybody, even if he had it, but I don't think he had to borrow it.

Q: How did he happen to have Breckenridge as his attorney?

DELONG: Well, I've known Breckenridge through the years and I can't think of anybody who would have been better. He's certainly very personable. He wasn't engaged for this particular job -- he'd been Lindbergh's attorney.

Q: So Mr. Condon gets out of the car and tosses the notes over the stone wall in the cemetery to a rather tall man in a mask.

DELONG: That's right. But he also handed out a note describing where the baby could be found. This he did.

Q: Then what happened?

DELONG: Nothing happened. There was no communication. Jaffie wrote two or three notes, these personal ads in the Bronx Home News. "Why haven't I heard from you?" "When are you going to get in touch with me?" "When are you going to deliver the baby? We've carried out our side."

Q: And there were no answers to that?

DELONG: No.

Q: As I recall, the baby was dead before the ransom was delivered.

DELONG: I think ^{he} ~~it~~ was killed the first night.

Q: Was there evidence of murder?

DELONG: Well, this is a bit gruesome, but when the baby was found there wasn't much left but just a little skeleton. There had been speculation that the kidnapper fell from the ladder and that he might have hit his head on the ladder or something of that sort. As I say, he didn't fall on cement because there was nothing but mud around the base of the ladder. He could have dropped the baby in his excitement.

Q: So nobody really knows how the baby died?

DELONG: They think the baby was killed by Hauptmann.

Q: And since the body was found so much later, it's hard to tell how this act was done.

DELONG: Yes. You couldn't tell from the remains. It could have been smothered. There seemed to be no damage to the skull.

Q: Were these serial notes deliberately planned?

DELONG: Yes. So when they began to go into circulation, in the course of the next year or year and a half, they had a record of which ones were going to show up, and how many were still out.

I'd like to bring in the F.B.I. now. The F.B.I. came down to the Sun and asked to speak to the man designated by the Sun to deal with them. I was assigned. They did this with all the other newspapers, and they took us up to their headquarters. They had a chart on the wall, a great map of the 5 boroughs of New York City. They had a series of pins, some had a yellow head, some had a blue head, and some had a red head, for the different denominations of \$20, \$10, and \$5. And as the notes would show up, at a movie house or a grocery store, or wherever these ~~xx~~ places did their banking -- all the bankers were alerted, the tellers, to look for gold notes. Every now and then, one of the notes would appear, and when it did they would put the location of the store on the map with a pin. ~~EXACTLY~~ At first the pins were spread out. We were sworn to strict secrecy, and nobody would have violated that confidence, of course. Probably 40 newspapermen knew about this.

At first they'd find one turning up in Staten Island, Brooklyn, or the Bronx. Over a period of a year, perhaps, more and more of these notes seemed to have been cashed in the Yorkville section of Manhattan. That's ~~xx~~ up around 86th Street

and York Avenue, through there. Towards the end they had F.B.I. men all over that area. They had them sweeping out stores, janitors, and everybody. Finally, the thing happened that they hoped would happen.

One of these bills was cashed in a filling station in the Bronx, and the filling-station ^{manager, Walker} ~~attendant~~ was smart enough to just ~~do~~ jot down the license number on the back of it. He was out in the car to fill it. Heretofore, he'd just walked in. Incidentally, people just couldn't remember who'd cashed a \$10 or \$5 bill, but they could get some descriptions. One was cashed in a movie house in Greenwich Village. They did get an artist, and they had a composite photograph made, an artist's sketch of what this guy looked like. Actually, it wasn't so far from his actual appearance.

Finally, the day came when this note showed up and ^{one which had been written} ~~the fellow wrote~~ the license number on the back. It got to the bank, and the teller was smart, and they went right up there to the filling station and asked this ^{guy} ~~fellow~~ if he ^{had} sent the note in. He said, "Yes, he'd jotted down the number." Sorry I can't remember his name. Then they went to Hauptmann's house and they trailed him for several days.

Q: Up to this point they had not thought of a human being known as Bruno Richard Hauptmann as the man?

DeLong: No. But of course they had gone to the Motor Vehicle Bureau and found out who had this license number. That's how they got the name and the house, and they had the house under surveillance for several days. And you can bet your life that Hauptmann didn't go anywhere that they weren't following him at a distance.

They still wanted to find out if he had a confederate, you see. There were two cars, in each car an F.B.I. man, a State trooper, and an officer from New York City, trailing him as he drove south in the Bronx from his frame house on 222nd Street. When Hauptmann slowed down while driving south in the Bronx, it was too much for Detective William Wallace of New York's finest. He jumped out and made the punch, thereby killing the act, if you want to put it that way. The F.B.I. and the Jersey State troopers were furious. Wallace got the credit for the arrest and later his superior, Lieutenant Jimmy Finn, wrote articles for Liberty magazine taking the bows for New York.

Q: Hauptmann went through a red light?

DeLong: No. He just stopped near a red light.

Q: Well, what excuse did Wallace give?

DeLong: He just made up his mind. He couldn't stand it any longer, I guess. Terrible thing to do, I think.

He was not very popular with the F.B.I., or with Colonel Schwartzkopf and the State police, who had spent about three years working on it.

Q: Well, it's my impression, just reading the stories in the Sun, that it was the F.B.I. who cracked the case, just on the serial numbers.

DELONG: I think they did. An incredible amount of work went into this thing, running down all these bills. I don't know how many were cashed in toto, but quite a number. The pins began to look pretty thick on that map, after about a year.

Q: Was that secret well kept by the newspapermen?

DELONG: Absolutely. Nobody ever told.

Q: It was a rather risky thing to do. I wonder why they did it?

DELONG: I think they were afraid that some newspaperman would have some contact with somebody, and he'd grab ~~the~~ the thing and run a story that the ransom bills were turning up, and that that might frighten Hauptmann off.

Q: I'd like to ask about the role of the newspapers. The baby had not been returned, his body had not been found. Select newspapermen had apparently been briefed on the serial numbers on the notes. During these two years, had the story faded away?

DELONG: I haven't mentioned one fact. By this time they had found the baby, outside of Hopewell. That was long before Hauptmann's arrest, in the Spring. It was after the ransom had been paid.

Q: The kidnapping was the 1st of March, and the ransom was paid roughly a month later, and then the baby's body was found a month or so after that, I gather. Who found it?

DELONG: It was found by a colored man named Williams^{Allen}, who was driving a truck toward Hopewell^{well}, not far from the little town of ~~Montrose~~^{Mount Rose}, which is between Princeton and Hopewell^{well}. He'd gotten out to ~~rest~~ relieve himself, frankly, and he stepped about 20 feet into the woods. He came rushing out of the woods and said he'd found this skeleton. I know it was in the Spring because there had been a thaw and a few rivulets that had washed up what was apparently a very shallow grave. It wasn't the whole body, but enough of him to recognize something, and he was smart enough to think that maybe this could be the Lindbergh baby.

Anyway, he knew it was a baby, so he stopped and called up the State police. And they came out and found the skeleton.

Q: Had that area been searched?

DELONG: I think it might have been. They would have come awfully close to it. I don't know that they walked right over this particular place. They were doing this in winter, of course, when the ground was frozen, but apparently it had been just scooped out and the baby placed there. It still had the sleeping garment on. That was one of the means of identification.

There were two means of identification. The child had two overlapping toes. You know, sometimes the little toe overlaps the next one. This was a little unusual in that the two toes overlapped a third toe. And the sleeping garment had some thread which Betty Gow's mother had sent from Scotland, and she had done some work on the collar with it. Then, of course, they sent some samples of the hair to the laboratories and Anne Lindbergh had a lock of the baby's hair in a locket, and they compared it. Altogether, they established the identification that way.

Q: Well, now let's go back to this question of the role of the journalists in covering the case after that.

DELONG: Well, it ceased to become a front-page story every day. Now and again something would develop and everybody would chase out and try to get it, but ~~ex~~ obviously we were sworn to reveal nothing about the real search for the bills, so there wasn't a great deal to write about every day.

Q: Who were the newspapermen who were involved in this secrecy? Were they all New York correspondents?

DELONG: I think you had the Associated Press and the United Press, and probably the Newark News. The rest were newspapermen in New York. As I recall, there weren't too many of them. Each newspaper sent one representative, cleared by the managing editor of course.

Well, things had quieted down on the Lindbergh front, as it were. Governor ^{Thornton} Green, later Senator Green, came out with the story that they were having a red revolt in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. They had had a pretty rough time up there and finally the Governor called out the National Guard. Well, the members of the National Guard were mostly from the same mills and they all played on the same ball team, and it got to be great fun to say, "Now let's beat up the National Guard tonight." So they'd come down and they'd charge back and forth. One day the National Guard opened fire and they killed a couple of fellows. Then the organizers of this strike