

**Excerpt from *Against Wind & Tide: Letters and Journals, 1947-1986*  
Anne Morrow Lindbergh**

**From the *Introduction* by Reeve Lindbergh**

Anne Morrow Lindbergh was born in the year 1906 and died almost ninety-five years later in 2001. Not only did she live through most of the twentieth century, but her adventures, her personal history, and her written reflections made a significant mark upon her era. A pioneer aviator and an author, she was an explorer of the world outside herself as well as the world within. Her gift in both worlds was for communication, and her writings touch readers deeply to this day.

Represented here are four decades of her previously unpublished diaries and letters, written between 1947 and 1986. During her lifetime she published five earlier books of diaries and letters, covering the years 1922 through 1944. These focus upon her meeting, marriage, and early life with my father, Charles Lindbergh. They begin with her school years and go on to the Christmas she spent in Mexico when her father was the ambassador there and the famous young aviator visited on a goodwill tour following his nonstop solo flight from New York to Paris in 1927. The account continues with the Lindberghs' courtship, wedding, and youthful flying days together, when my mother became a pilot, too, and they explored possible air routes for the fledgling aviation industry, all over the world. The story extends through the tragedy of the death of their first son, Charles, and then into the years before and during the Second World War.

My parents' flying trips together ended before the war, and my mother stopped flying entirely. With the pioneering days of aviation in the past, she turned to her writing and to raising her family.

During my lifetime, my parents did not even own an airplane, though my father continued to fly, serving as a consultant with the airline industry and the Air Force and traveling throughout the world for the rest of his life. My mother's path was very different. Outward explorations were replaced by an inward journey, one she described later in her life as a "journey toward insight."

The material collected in the following pages was written between my mother's fortieth birthday and her eightieth, and follows a period of substantial growth in her life and thought, as well as some marked changes in her relationship with her husband and in her sense of who she was as a woman and an artist. The book begins early in 1947, at a time when she was assessing her own physical and emotional turmoil at the end of her childbearing years, as well as the damage and devastation she witnessed on a trip to postwar France and Germany. It ends in the mid-1980s with a letter to me, her youngest daughter, a year after the death of my infant son. In between these selections is a treasury of vivid, poignant, perceptive, and often delightful pieces of communication, each in its own way directed toward a greater understanding of what it means to be a human being, a writer, and a woman.

To collect, read through, and edit anyone's diaries and letters is an unusual kind of journey. To work with material written by a parent is to travel inside one's own personal history as seen from a very different, yet very intimate perspective. For me there is a quality of double vision and some self-centered, unanswerable questions: Where was I when she was writing all this? Where is she now, as I read it?

Surely, I feel, she is not far away. The familiarity and directness of my mother's voice brings her close to me again, though she has been dead for more than ten years as I write this. And yet, going over these pages with my brother Land, our niece Kristina, and our close friend and colleague Carol Hyman, I begin to realize that the same thing is true for each of us: we feel, unavoidably, close to the writer. This is the effect she has always had upon her readers. She speaks to every one of us directly, personally, offering the whole of herself at every stage of her life.

In this book we see her first at the age of forty-one, unexpectedly pregnant for the seventh time and seriously considering abortion. The practice was not only dangerous and illegal, but also violated some of her strongest principles. We see her a few years later on Captiva Island in Florida, in the 1950s, writing home from a rented beach cottage where she was working on a book she referred to in her letters as "The Shells," later to become *Gift from the Sea*. We see her again at the end of 1963, writing to my sister, Anne, about Anne's upcoming wedding plans in France, while reeling from the recent shock of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. We see her writing four years later to President and Mrs. Johnson to decline an invitation to the White House because she does not know, literally, where in the world her husband is, or when he will return. We see her exploring the first years of widowhood in the mid-1970s, after my father's death from lymphoma, with grief, exhaustion, and openness, and we see her reflecting a decade later upon her recent and long-ago losses, and the discoveries she is making as she enters old age.

As a writer she was honest, eloquent, and deeply reflective, always seeking to understand life as it unfolded before her, always wanting to share her understanding with others: her husband, her children, her family and friends, and ultimately her readers. It is her openness to life that has made her writing so popular with readers for more than half a century. She struggled with issues women and men have to face in every era: what to make of a complex, difficult marriage to a person one loves; how to reconcile the impulse toward creativity—and the need to work—with the practical demands of home and family; how to respond to the larger events and issues of the day; how to give and receive friendship and love throughout a lifetime; how to meet old age and the certainty of death: first the death of those we love and cannot bear to lose, family and friends, young and old, and then one's own old age and inevitable death, the end of life.

This was her journey, not mine, but the geographical context of these writings is familiar to me. I know the territory: the big house in Connecticut on the shore of Long Island Sound where she raised her five children from 1945 until 1963, when the children had grown and the house was sold to a younger family; the smaller house my parents built on a section of the same property and lived in for much of the rest of their lives. They also built a small chalet in Switzerland in 1963, in a field overlooking Lac Lemman, and spent summers there, enjoying visits from my sister, Anne, also known as "Ansy," who then lived in France with her family, and from their other children, family members, and guests. Finally, I came to know the bare, windswept A-frame they later constructed on a tiny piece of property on the island of Maui, a place my father had visited toward the end of his life and immediately loved for its isolation and wild beauty.

They would visit Maui in the spring. This was the house where there were mongooses and bougainvillea, and the floods my mother described in her letters. Although he loved Maui, my father was often absent from this house, too, as he was from the other homes they shared. Even now, when I think of her all alone in the torrential Hawaiian rains and the accompanying mud, trying to bail the floodwater out of her kitchen with an omelet pan, I can only shake my head in amazement.

How did she do it? How could she possibly live in such conditions, again and again, without her husband? Another question comes to mind almost simultaneously. How could she possibly live in such conditions, or in any conditions, *with* him? Neither was easy.

Thinking back to the 1950s, I realize that the quality I associate with my father in that era is iron. Those were the iron years. The color of his hair was like iron, and the discipline he administered was like iron: unbending, with stern lectures and occasional spankings. To be fair, there were also moments of joy, when he'd break into an enormous grin at something one of us said, or at some antic of the German shepherd puppy we had then. There was laughter, too, perhaps during a conversation with our mother or during a bout of roughhousing with the boys. There were quiet times with him, sitting on the wide tiled porch overlooking Long Island Sound or walking with him in the woods, not talking at all. I remember how much I loved him, always, no matter how scary he sometimes seemed. I remember that I missed him intensely all the time he was gone, that our

family felt only half complete without him. I also remember, though, the relief and relaxation that settled like a kind of warmth over the household when he went away and our mother was once again in gentle command.

All these many years later, missing him and puzzling about him, wondering how my mother could have stayed married to such a husband, I have concluded that it must be the very absences we minded so much, the absences she lamented in her letters to him, that made the marriage and our family life possible. I even wonder whether his absences were what she had in mind when she wrote, in *Gift from the Sea*, about the importance of “intermittency” in relationships.

He traveled so much, in fact, that the later letters in this book make it clear she had difficulty adjusting when he finally stopped traveling, in the last year or two of his life. She wrote to her sister Con, “The trips away (to the Philippines, Africa, etc.) that gave him so much freedom and stimulus and adventure, and which are so creative for him, will not be possible in the near future—if ever—I don’t know, of course). This virtually isolates me from the people I used to see when he went off.”

I am convinced that no woman could have lived with my father full time, twenty-four hours a day, over a long period. And he lived his life in a way that meant no woman ever really did, except for my mother, and then only during their early years together. I was certainly amazed to learn, a few years after my mother’s death, that my father had had several relationships with other women during his travels in the 1950s and 1960s, and that there were children from these relationships. However, it did not surprise me at all to learn from these children, when I met them, that the paternal pattern was the same for them: our lives were all marked by our father’s perpetual comings and goings, by a brief intensity of presence followed by long absences, over and over again.

Despite my father’s frequent disappearances, I have an unmistakable sense of the strong and interdependent partnership my parents shared, however strained their connection at certain periods and however deeply my father’s absences impacted their union. They knew each other well and they helped each other immeasurably during the almost forty-five years they spent as husband and wife: first flying together, then writing together while raising their family.

In these letters I understand once again how much she relied upon him, as he relied upon her. I saw them working together, sitting side by side, pencils in hand and a manuscript before them, discussing, marking, editing, and proofreading, talking back and forth for hours on end. It might be his manuscript, it might be hers, it made no difference; the depth of concentration was the same. They depended upon each other to make a book complete, right down to the acknowledgments and the final galleys. In this work they were equals, professionals, as they had been a team when they were pilots charting early air routes: Charles and Anne Lindbergh, together.

I felt surprised, therefore, and almost queasy when I first read the letter in this collection that my mother wrote to my father on December 18, 1947. She wrote, to my astonishment, “I would rather have you think me ‘a good girl’ than be right myself, or to have anyone else think me a good girl. And I am afraid you will not. All the time I feel like a bad girl—that I am not living up to your idea of a good girl.”

I was shocked. The writer of this letter sounded so weak, so clinging and self-deprecating, so cloyingly pathetic, not at all like the woman I knew. “Good girl”? “Bad girl”? What was this? And yet as I kept reading, letter after letter and diary entry upon diary entry through the following years, I found my mother again, the perceptive, quiet, resilient person so familiar to me. I also began to see how the relationship between my parents altered as my mother grew older. There was a time when she thought that he was usually right and that she, especially in opposing him, was usually wrong.

But this changed. Oh, how it changed! As I read into the 1950s and 1960s and beyond, I recognized the person who had learned to stand up to a man whose good opinion she had once craved above all else. I knew the wise, quiet woman who trusted her own feelings and convictions, and who taught her children to trust theirs.

Her growing freedom became ours as well. Our mother encouraged our development as individuals, and loved us unconditionally. Even when our views or actions became troubling to our formidable father, she defended us: Anne was entitled to consult a psychiatrist at a time of emotional trouble even if our father distrusted psychiatry; Scott had the right to follow his own beliefs about the war in Vietnam, even though our father believed one must fight for one's country in wartime despite what one believed. (He had flown in the Pacific during the Second World War, even though he'd opposed America's entry into that conflict.) She herself was perfectly justified in refusing the invitation of President and Mrs. Marcos to visit the Philippines in 1971 because Anne was expecting a baby. The upcoming birth of a grandchild, my mother explained to my father in a letter, took precedence over all other events and invitations.

Her refusal to budge on this issue delighted me. No more "good girl"! This was a woman who lived her own life and stated her case with spirit, unafraid to confront her husband on his own terms. "You don't tell me ahead of time what your plans are: where you are going and how long you'll be away, when you'll be back, etc. I don't mind, actually. I know that's the way you live, and must live. But I can't, on the other hand, sit around and wait for you, and make no plans."

She did make plans: to work, to see her family and her friends, to enjoy the outdoors, to nourish her inner self. From the earliest diary entries here, it is clear that her interior existence was as rich as her outward, active life. While not willing to withdraw from the world or from her family for too long—she had five children to raise and, even with the household help available to her, she was most often the person in charge—she sought to establish a measure of solitude within her daily routine. She would see friends in the afternoon and evening, but she tried to spend mornings alone at her desk, whether in the house itself, in the trailer that Henry Ford had given my parents after my father worked for Ford during the war, or eventually in the Little House, a cabin adapted from a prefabricated toolshed and set a hundred yards away from the main house on the property in Darien.

This one-room retreat contained a desk, a chair, a cot against a wall for resting, and a chemical toilet in a corner behind a curtain. There was also a sparse collection of books, and stones and feathers and seashells, too, lining the unfinished beams.

The Little House was built in the 1950s. Before it there was the Point House, another small structure my mother used as a writing retreat, on a rocky outcropping overlooking Scott's Cove. I barely remember the Point House, but I do recall that wherever she lived, there was always a separate, tiny writing house away from the main house. In Switzerland the little house was called the Cuckoo Clock, which was exactly what it looked like, perched up against a cliff above the meadow. In Maui there was a little house, too, though I don't think my mother used it for writing, perhaps because she was usually alone, with the entire main house at her disposal.

Toward the end of their lives together my parents decided to name their houses after seashells: the Darien house was called Tellina (after the bivalve mollusk my mother referred to as "Double Sunrise" in *Gift from the Sea*), the Swiss house Planorbe (French for snail), and the Maui house Argonauta (named for the Paper Nautilus, the last shell described in her book). In the 1960s they moved from one house to another over the course of each year, traveling from Connecticut to Maui in late winter, then back to Connecticut in spring, then to Switzerland for the summer, and back to Connecticut again in the fall.

I have never been able to decide whether my mother was just going along with my father's lifelong restlessness (certainly she did in the early years of their marriage, when they were flying together) or whether, in her own way, she shared it. My parents moved many times in their early married years, and even later, in my own time, there were all those houses: a house in one part

of the world, then a house in another part to “get away” from the first one, and finally, with Maui, another house in a third location altogether. In addition to each house, moreover, there was a “little house.” (To get away from the getaway house?)

Wherever she was, my mother would write to friends and family members about the difficulties of being there: how rushed and pressured life was in the environment surrounding New York City, how isolated she felt on Maui, how constrained and proper the Swiss were—they made her want to “go out and get drunk.” I remember her telling me that she could never recall which house was stocked with what kitchen supplies, and that no matter where she was, she couldn’t find any tarragon.

I loved all of the houses, and visited her whenever I could. Switzerland was my favorite of her places, and reading these letters I see how casually I settled into her Swiss life in my teenage summers, happily taking it for granted that she would welcome me and my friends, not thinking much about the extra work our presence demanded of her. I think I remember doing at least some of the laundry and the dishes and the shopping. I wish I could go back and do it all.

However flawed I may have been, she loved me thoroughly, as she did all of her children. She would respond to our lives and our needs at any given moment, whatever else she may have had on her mind, with long, thoughtful letters: to Jon in the Navy, to Land in college, to Anne in France, to Scott as he struggled with issues of military service and citizenship, and to me, when my first child was born and I thought I would never write again. She addressed our joys and our sorrows with the gifts of her openness and wisdom, her willingness always to listen, never to judge, never to insist upon one course of action or another. To be treated with this kind of loving respect is priceless. None of us will ever forget it.

In letters to other family members and to friends, there is that same openness and understanding, whether she is writing to her sister Con (Constance Morrow Morgan), her brother Dwight (Dwight W. Morrow Jr.), her former sister-in-law and lifelong friend Margot Wilkie, or her beloved doctor and dear friend Dana Atchley. There are so many people here whose presence in her life, and in ours, I remember with affection: Helen Wolff, Alan and Lucia Valentine, Mina Curtiss, Dana Atchley, and others. Yet it touches me to see that she also wrote with an unchecked outpouring of compassion to Ruth Goodkind, a woman she had never met, whose son was killed by lightning at a summer camp he and my brother Land both attended in 1948.

I am a little sorry that she felt compelled to respond at all to what must have been a very angry letter from another Ruth, my mother’s sensitive and complicated friend Ruth Thomas Oliff (did she really tell my mother to “drop dead”?). It gives me a startled kind of satisfaction, though, to notice the tartness of tone in my mother’s response. I am reminded here that my mother was brought up to be a lady, not a saint.

I believe that there are love affairs, among my mother’s other experiences, revealed in some of her correspondence here, though “revealed” may not be the right word to use. She was remarkably discreet, so much so that one could argue (and some have) that these were not physical but emotional relationships, affairs more of words than of caresses.

Perhaps, but I can recall a conversation with her after my father’s death, a discussion of marriage in general and of her own marriage in particular, in which she talked about the most difficult time in her life with my father. It was not, as I expected it to be, the period following the death of her first child, but instead the years following the Second World War. (Maybe my “iron years” were also hers.) She told me that she had promised herself, during that very difficult time in her marriage, that “if things did not get better” by the time I had reached my tenth birthday (in October 1955), she would leave her husband.

“What happened?” I asked. I knew she had not left my father, but that was all I knew.

"Things got better," she told me, enigmatically. She went through psychoanalysis with Dr. John Rosen in the early 1950s. She destroyed most of the written material related to that process, but she often said that the analysis made a tremendous difference in her life. I think, though, that certain intimate relationships also sustained her during those years. There are indications in the letters to both Dana Atchley and Alan Valentine that a loving friendship existed between my mother and each of these two men, something private, intimate, and exhilarating, yet able to fit into the context of the friendships among the married couples: Dana and Mary Atchley, Lucia and Alan Valentine, Anne and Charles Lindbergh.

Interestingly, most of my mother's letters to Dana Atchley and to Alan Valentine were not destroyed or hidden away. In fact, the Alan Valentine letters were saved all together in one folder, not as handwritten originals, but typed in the manner of a manuscript. For whose eyes, ultimately, were these letters intended? Did my mother think she might someday incorporate this material into a book? Perhaps a book about the complexities of love? I don't know. Some of the letters are here in this collection, for readers to wonder about. What I chiefly wonder myself, having read them, is whether there were others.

Did my mother really keep copies of absolutely everything she wrote? Or did she, as it seems likely my father did, destroy some of her most intimate correspondence entirely, while at the same time sending hundreds of carefully carbon-copied letters to the archives of Sterling Memorial Library at Yale?

My feeling, having known her for fifty-five years, is that my mother was more likely to employ subtlety than to engage in active concealment. I suspect that she started making carbon copies of her diaries and letters in deference to my father's lifelong impulse to save all written materials "for the record," in order to avoid being misrepresented (or, one might speculate, in order to control his own archive). After a while, it must have been second nature to make carbon copies, just another aspect of the experience of writing.

As I remember, my parents had what seemed an endless supply of light blue "air mail" pads of stationery, each pad with several accompanying sheets of carbon paper cut to size. Before writing a letter, my mother would tuck a piece or two of the carbon paper (shiny side down) between the top two or three sheets of paper on the pad. When she had finished the first page of her letter she would tear it off along with the two copies, and place the carbon paper neatly between the next two or three sheets. In that way, for every letter she sent she had a copy to keep and another to send to the archives at Yale.

I thought all this record keeping was odd, but no odder than any of the other things my parents did. As an adult I have been both grateful for the personal material my parents kept so carefully—how many people can see such meticulous and articulate evidence of the lives of their forebears?—and, at times, bewildered.

In one folder at Yale, along with the carbon copies (duplicates and triplicates) of letters to friends and relatives, Land and I found several charming postcards, one written to each of her children: Jon, Land, Anne, Scott, and Reeve. These were real postcards, decorated with Beatrix Potter-like scenes of little animals, with affectionate messages in my mother's handwriting for each child at summer camp. But they were so clean! Had they never been sent? Or had she retrieved them from us somehow at the end of the summer, none of them the least bit grubby, each one pristine enough for the Yale archives? How could that have happened? And why?

"They're copies," Land said suddenly. I stopped, thought about it, and agreed with him. We looked at each other, trying to imagine our mother first writing five postcards, one to each child, then copying each message, word by word, on five other postcards. (Were they identical, the postcards? Did they have the same Beatrix Potter scenes?) Postcards

Yet it is because of this remarkable and, yes, perhaps excessive saving of letters and diaries and

postcards and telegrams, this extraordinary preservation of her own written output, that we can experience something of the life of a twentieth century woman with an acknowledged public presence and a remarkable interior life.

When she traveled to Europe after the war and observed devastation in Germany, she wrote; when she felt a deep conflict between her life as an artist and her life as a wife and mother, she wrote; when she spent an evening at the Kennedy White House, she wrote; when she learned of the death of a child or the death of a president, she wrote. She often wrote three or four long letters in one day, and yet in many of them she apologized for not writing soon enough, or often enough, or well enough. In her diaries, too, she often despaired of her inability to get "enough writing done." One of the paradoxes of my mother's life was that she wrote constantly, always chastising herself, in writing, for "not writing."

She left us a bountiful record of conscious and compassionate thought, brought to life in words: not only in her published books of autobiographical fiction, her essays, and her poetry, but, equally importantly, in her diaries and letters. Her reflections upon her individual journey have brought meaning and inspiration to the lives of readers since she first put pen to paper. Her best-known book, *Gift from the Sea*, was first published in 1955; it has never been out of print.

These letters and diaries shed light upon some of the conditions that caused her to write that book, and follow the path of her life before and after its publication, from midlife through the beginning of old age. Her journey, though very personal, became a universal one. In speaking for herself, she spoke for us all.

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