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## **AVIATORS SAY GREMLINS KEPT THEM COMPANY**

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Charles Lindbergh was nearing the halfway mark on his historic flight across the Atlantic Ocean in 1927 when he suddenly became conscious of "tiny, transparent-like creatures" floating inside the plane.

"I saw them plain as day - transparent forms that moved freely about," the aviator wrote in *The Spirit of St. Louis*, published in 1953. "They looked grim and menacing, but I never once felt frightened."

Lindbergh called the creatures "spirits." He said they spoke in friendly voices, discussed navigation and reassured him of his safety. They also imparted information of a mystical nature that the aviator chose not to reveal for fear of ridicule.

Since Lindbergh's frightening experience more than 70 years ago, hundreds of other pilots have cited similar incidents. In 1978, the crew of a Lufthansa jumbo jetliner said scratchy, garbled voices came to them out of nowhere, offering instructions that helped them avoid a midair crash. Two years later, a British Airways pilot said a "strange voice" alerted him to a mechanical problem that would have proved disastrous had it been left unattended.

Most skeptics dismiss these reports as the product of hallucinations, probably brought on by illness, stress or fatigue after long hours of flying. Lindbergh, for example, was already nine hours into his flight when he had his experience.

Many wonder how it is that so many pilots from different parts of the world have reported seeing and hearing basically the same phenomenon.

**Gremlins** became a household word after World War I when British Royal Air Force pilots sent out on dangerous missions reported seeing these small, pesky spirits riding next to them in the cockpit or on the wings of their aircraft.

**Gremlins** seem to be generally friendly in nature, though they tend to play pranks on the crew.

"They are ascribed great knowledge of technology, meteorology, engineering and aerodynamics," said researcher Rosemary Ellen Guiley. "They have been said to drink fuel, bore holes in the aircraft, bite through cables, sever fuel lines, slash wings with invisible scissors and punch and pinch gunners and bombardiers as they line targets up in their sights."

They also have been credited with helping pilots to fly badly damaged aircraft to safety, Ms. Guiley said.

**Gremlins** have been described in various ways. During World War II, some were said to be 6 inches tall with horns and black leather suction boots, while others looked like a cross between a jack rabbit and a bull terrier.

Others were humanoid and about 1 foot tall, wearing ruffled red jackets and green breeches. Some have webbed feet with fins on the heels.

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A number of pilots have described them as transparent and ghost-like, as Lindbergh did.

**Gremlins** have also been reported to appear in factories and other places of work.

"They perhaps may be modern, high-tech versions of brownies, kobolds, domoviks, blue-caps and other such spirits who, according to lore, like to live among humans and keep them alert," said Ms. Guiley.

Syndicated writer Randall Floyd lives in Augusta.

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