

Letter #5

Berchtesgaden, Germany
Saturday, June 26, 1954

Dear Family:

Our second week has been so packed full of interesting and exciting experiences that we have been on the go from early morning until late at night, with no time to sandwich in a mid-week "supplement".

Starting with the beginning of the week, last Sunday we drove from Garmisch to Oberammergau, where we took the guided tour through the Playhouse. The guide had quite a story to tell us as we were shown one room after another where the costumes are stored from one ten-year period to another.

Then we drove to Linderhof, a second castle of the Mad King Ludwig II. It was dark and threatening and just before the fountain and cascades were turned on, a veritable cloudburst made everyone run for shelter. Rees and I had left Anne to go to a vantage point for shooting the big fountain in front of the castle. Fortunately for us a shelter was nearby. We were huddled under it with a big crowd for over a half hour while the rain kept pouring down and finally we saw Anne trudging through the rain on the long walk from the castle to our shelter. She had been unable to get to a shelter and had become so wet that she figured she could not get any wetter, so sallied forth to join us. When the rain slowed down to a drizzle we headed for the castle and took the tour. Having been thrilled beyond words at Ludwig's Neuschwanstein castle, we were surprised to find that his Linderhof castle was even more fabulous. Ludwigg II may have been half crazy, but the "Mad King" certainly knew how to build castles and how to locate them in magnificent settings.

Monday we drove to Mittenwald, the town famous for its violins. In the violin museum a guide showed us all the steps that enter into the making of a violin and then we had a very interesting experience in the workshop of a master violin builder who has been making violins for over 60 years. He devotes over 300 hours of careful and painstaking work to make each of his violins. As he explained things to us, and then played on several of his instruments, we were aware of how he loved his work. He was more like an artist than a workman.

Tuesday and Wednesday in Munich were so crowded, we could not begin to do justice to this outstanding city. We covered only about half of the famous Deutsches Museum in one afternoon, and would have been glad to spend the entire next day there. Of course we were on hand in the main square at eleven o'clock each morning to see the show put on by the moving figures in the clock tower of the Rathaus.

Thursday we spent about 4 hours at the mammoth castle of Nymphenburg, with its several hundred acres of parks, its lagoons and vistas and fountains. Had a very interesting guided tour through the porcelain factory there.

Friday was a "red letter day" here at Berchtesgaden. When we awoke shortly before 6:00 the sun was shining brightly in a cloudless sky so we dressed in a hurry, drove up the mountain to the parking place below Hitler's Eagle's Nest, had breakfast there about 7:00, then caught the first bus to the top. The road from the parking place to the Eagle's Nest is a narrow, one-way road, carved into the mountainside, with numerous short tunnels. After a half hour of grinding along in first speed most of the way up very steep grades, we arrived at another parking place at the entrance of Hitler's foot tunnel. You walk into the mountain for about 400 feet and then take a big elevator that shoots up at high speed to the Eagle's Nest some 500 feet above. What a panorama! Hitler had Ludwig II beat on picking a dramatic pinnacle for his "castle". Now a restaurant and tea house crowns the summit.

In the afternoon we took the boat ride on beautiful Königsee. It is a very deep lake with the mountains rising almost vertically to snow-capped peaks -- much more dramatic and majestic than the Italian lakes.

That brings us down to Saturday. Anne will write you about the coming weekend.

Enthusiastically,

The Seiberling-Davis Travellers