

Quentin Abraham Tells of His Trip to Berchtesgaden

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Describes Hitler's Mountain Retreat at Berchtesgaden in the Bavarian Alps Which He Visited

Quentin W. Abraham of Yale, who is with the Ninety-fourth division, now in Winterberg, Czechoslovakia, writes his wife telling of his trip to Hitler's mountain retreat at Berchtesgaden.

"It's about time I got around to telling you more about my trip. A couple of officers were going to see Hitler's home and wanted to know if I would like to drive them in a command car. Naturally, I said, 'Sure enough.'

"We started about 7:30 in the morning. It is approximately 160 miles from where we are to Berchtesgaden. It is very hilly and rolling country here but as we went farther southwest it begin to get more so. The road is very full of curves and is made of black top pavement.

"After driving for an hour and a half we came to the town of Passau, which has a very large castle overlooking it. This for the time being is an Officers' club. It is situated on the banks of a river and is very majestic looking, for it sits on a high bluff overlooking the city. I'd guess the castle to be about a half mile long and it is four stories high.

Look Castle Over

"That's not including the high steeples, either. We went in and looked over a very small portion of it. I could easily have spent a week there. It is built of stone, grey in color, with huge wooden beams, which on the interior are very highly polished. The walls of many rooms were a mass of hanging design tapestries and also hand painted murals. All dealt with medieval times—hunting, love, torture, religion, kings, queens, tournaments, so that you could imagine it was from the history books.

"This wasn't the first castle I had been in but it was by far the most interesting. It is impossible for me to describe the furniture. From the windows you could look down upon the river and town, also see the moat, surrounding it and the proverbial high wall with the loopholes for defending the place. Anyone would have a tough time taking that place with bows and arrows. Of course, the place has many modern pieces of furniture in it now; also electricity. We listened to the radio phonograph play several modern swing tunes while we had a couple of glasses of wine.

Reluctant to Leave

“We traveled on but I must say I was reluctant to leave. We reached Salzburg, which is in Austria, and after eating our lunch there we went on out to Berchtesgaden. Before getting to Salzburg we could see the mountains and snow in the distance but from Salzburg on they looked as if they are only a mile or so away.

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Berchtesgaden is about fifteen miles from Salzburg. Many streams of beautiful, cold, pale green water cross and run along the highway and the air has a very cool tang to it. It's a wonderful fifteen miles of scenery.

"Berchtesgaden is a small, neat town. From there you can see Hitler's eagle's nest perched on the highest mountain peak. It looks to be a small white building. We drove a couple of miles out of town to the Konigsee, which is a lake that runs back in a crevice between two mountains and is as clear as crystal. There is a big resort there — hotels, boat houses, yachts, etc. That was as far as we got that day.

"The next day we finally got started again about 10:00 a. m. and went back out to the lake for a while. This was the resort for Hitler's elite SS troops, who were in that area. Then we went up to Adolf's house. That's about 4,000 feet up the mountain with a nice road running up, but steep, so we ground along in low gear and finally reached the place.

Blasted by Bombs

"The whole area is blasted by bombs. Germans are cutting up the fallen trees and making neat piles of wood, and fixing the road under the kind assistance of the GI's. All the barracks and everything are rubble. I went through Hitler's house. There's nothing in the line of souvenirs left. You could see he's had the heating system built in the floors by the steam pipes. I looked through the bath rooms and all and stood for a while in the famous bay window where he used to gaze out into space and get his inspirations.

"So many guys had written their names and home addresses on the walls, I must admit I did too. It's nice to know that Yale, Illinois, is represented in Hitler's former home. After marveling at what a splendid job of bombing our Air Forces had done (not one bomb had hit the town of Berchtesgaden, which lies below) we went in the car on up the mountain. A convoy of vehicles go at the same time to keep from meeting others on this narrow road, which is cut in many places on a ledge running along the mountain side. There are

also three tunnels cut out of the rock.

On Top of Peak

"After quite a drive up we finally reached a level spot with considerable parking space. You look straight up practically and there sets the eagle's nest on the peak. For field grade officers (majors, and on up) there is an elevator to make the rest of the trip. The shaft is cut out of solid rock and has huge bronze doors at the entrance. Well I, knowing that walking was my means of motivation, started up. There's a path about five feet wide for that purpose that goes around and around a long ways to go so short a distance.

"The house is octagonal shaped, has thick granite walls, barred windows, and heavy iron doors. Much of its furnishings are intact. Each room now has an M. P. in it to prevent taking souvenirs. The dining room has a long table with a heavy white cloth and twelve chairs on each side. The living room has a beautiful, oriental rug on the floor. It's large and would cost a small fortune. This room is filled with large easy chairs, divans, tables, etc. Also it has a large fireplace (I pictured a very jovial and entertaining host sitting before the crackling fire not so long ago).

"I was fairly well winded from the

climb up so I sat in the most restful manner possible in this room for ten minutes or more, then looked over the kitchen, which is an all electric set up. The place has several bathrooms.

“The view up there is terrific. You can look down upon the other place and also down upon the town. It's a very good air photo. You can see five countries from there. I went back down and ate some snow and threw some snowballs out in to space and started back; reached Winterberg at 7:30 that night, after a very enjoyable trip.”