

TOWN OF THE PASSION PLAY



Judas in Private Life Paints Pictures.

Oberammergau Gives to the World  
Drama of Christianity Every Decade

Prepared by National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.—WNU Service.

**A** CHANGE which emphasizes unchanging tradition has taken place in Oberammergau, Germany, the small Bavarian town where every decade a performance of the Passion Play attracts thousands of visitors. The change came through the death of Anton Lang, for thirty years the former Christus of the Passion Play. Death, however, changes the players but does not stop the presentation of the Passion Play, which for centuries has been performed to fulfill a vow of the villagers in the Seventeenth century.

Until about 150 years ago the sight of the towering mountains filled the people of Oberammergau with awe; in fact, fear; and they were looked upon more as drawbacks than as objects of beauty and inspiration.

The custom of offsetting the depressing effect of the looming rocky background by vivid color still prevails, and besides old but ever fresh fresco paintings depicting scenes from the Bible on the walls of the houses, new ones are beginning to decorate several homes. These show a more modern trend, and generally are done by young Bavarian artists. They lend vivid color to a street scene already bright with houses painted yellow, pink, green, and blue.

Hardly a house lacks a balcony, and this, like all the windowsills, is lined with a profusion of flowers.

Green shutters and painted frames around the windows put a special stress on the "eyes" of most homes. Usually near the door, in large letters, is exhibited the name and occupation of the owner, who might well appear to be the proprietor of the entire valley as he complacently walks through the streets and fields, hills and mountains. Born here, he feels himself part of all this.

**In the Home and Fields.**

The inside of his birthplace breathes the same spirit. The center is not the kitchen whence the healthful, frugal meals come, but the living room with a carved wooden crucifix solemnly hanging in one corner. There is the cradle of family life. There the men and women and children assemble when they come home from field or shop. The fields yield just enough grass for the cattle and potatoes for the people, though most of the villagers have their own little gardens.

Farmhouse and stable are usually in one building. This saves the peasant many a step in bad weather and keeps him always near his beloved cows, which in turn help supply warmth in the long, cold winter.

The arrival of the White King is hailed by everybody, for the thick blanket he always spreads over the mountains and the valley does not mean being buried for four or five months.

Oberammergau lies in about the same latitude as Montreal, and masses of snow cover the mountains, at times to a depth of 30 feet. Many visitors come to try their luck on skis, and skiing becomes an easy accomplishment for the local youngsters.

**St. Peter Distributes Milk.**

Singing and whistling, Hubert Mayr, the St. Peter of the Passion Play, drives his little pony cart through the town every day, distributing milk among the people. How happy and pleased he is that at last his life's dream has come true and he has become "St. Peter"!

The meek manners of Hugo Rutz, the village blacksmith, would never lead one to guess that on the stage he was the fiery high priest, Caiaphas, inciting the mob against Jesus.

Anton Lechner, teacher of drawing at the local woodcarving school, is just as much of a surprise.

Ludwig Lang, fierce-looking Barabbas on the stage, is a peaceful cowherd who may be seen walking along the street at 6 o'clock almost any morning, driving a herd of

cows into the fields and hills, and not returning until 6 at night.

That is the rush hour for the cows, and traffic has to comply with their whims as they slowly trot homeward, never minding the honking of automobiles that might get into their path.

**The Play Is Their Life Mission.**

Just as the ability to act seems to be in the blood of the majority, the people of Oberammergau hold a deeply inbred feeling of personal responsibility toward their important task, their sacred tradition. They live and die for their play. They do not play to live, but live to play—which may at times appear incomprehensible to the hurried traveler, rushing in and out again without ever penetrating more deeply into the meaning of the villagers' work, habits, and customs.

All amusements, such as dancing, are prohibited during the solid year of preparation for, and concentration upon, the Passion Play. Yet the village, during its six months of rehearsing under Georg Lang's most able direction (there are more than 30 families of the name of Lang in Oberammergau), dons festive attire. Houses look more attractive. Gardens, streets, walks, and parks hum with activity.

The year 1940 will display about the same course of things, but there will be more buses and automobiles from May until September. Once again, for a period of five months, the village will be handed over, willy-nilly, to the countless visitors, their prejudices and criticisms, their whims, their admiration and praise of what is but natural to those laboring in the homes and playing on the stage of the mammoth theater before 6,200 spectators, occasionally as often as five times a week.

**How the Play Is Presented.**

From 8:15 a. m. to 5:25 p. m., with two hours' recess for lunch, the thousands watch the performance with tense interest from beginning to end, never turning their eyes, which are often dimmed with tears, from the recently built and modernized central stage.

In front of it, flanked by the house of Pilate and the palace of Annas, opens the proscenium, 140 feet wide, on which—rain or sunshine—the mass scenes take place and the 47 members of the chorus—all local talent—appear, led in and out by the majestic figure of the Speaker of the Prologue, whose task is to introduce each act of a tableau. He has more lines than any other member of the cast.

There are 24 of these artistically set and lavishly mounted pictures, irregularly scattered among the 16 acts and representing scenes from the Old Testament, running parallel with the New.

The very beginning of the performance, announced by the boom of a cannon discharged on a distant hill, plunges the audience into deep silence, and absorption. Orchestra, choir, prologue, and tableaux heighten this mood; then the curtains part.

**Impressive Climax of the Drama.**

Now Christ triumphantly enters Jerusalem. The jealous priests begin their work against Him, while Christ bids farewell to His Mother and friends at Bethany before returning to the city of His doom.

There the last Supper unites Him and His twelve disciples once more. Judas hastens away to betray His Master in the Mount of Olives. Christ is seized.

The afternoon sees Him before the high council, slandered, mocked, and jeered, and eventually sent to Pontius Pilate, who passes Him on to King Herod. Peter repents his sin of denial, whereas Judas finds no way out but the rope.

Christ is scourged and crowned with thorns, and presented to a raging mob in a scene of highest dramatic values. Pilate finally hands Him over to His enemies, and, with the Cross on His bleeding shoulders, Christ staggers up to Golgotha to be fastened to the Cross, to die, pierced by a spear in realistic manner.

We see Him rise again from the tomb, and, in the finest of all tableaux, ascend to Heaven.

SEEN and HEARD  
around the  
NATIONAL CAPITAL  
By Carter Field  
FAMOUS WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT



WASHINGTON.—Rep. David J. Lewis, New Deal candidate in the Maryland primary against Sen. Millard E. Tydings, is sure of just one thing—he does not want Harry L. Hopkins, or Harold L. Ickes, or any other New Dealer to endorse him.

Actually he is running on a 100 per cent pro-Roosevelt platform. He is running against a man, Tydings, who has voted against the New Deal as consistently as any other of the so-called "purge" group. Not only did Tydings vote against the President on the Supreme court packing bill, but he has stood with Carter Glass, Harry F. Byrd, Josiah W. Bailey and Alva B. Adams on the spending issue. He has worried about the balanced budget, about politics in relief, about federal intrusion on state powers, in fact about everything that any opponent of the President has worried about.

On the contrary Lewis has voted and spoken, when he had the opportunity, for everything the New Deal has stood for. Lewis has always been a little in front of the liberal procession. Back in 1916, when he ran for the senate before, that time against Dr. Joseph I. France, many Marylanders voted against Lewis and for France because they thought Lewis was a Socialist. Reason? Because Lewis was called the father of the parcel post. He and Jonathan Bourne, then a Progressive Republican senator from Oregon, pushed the bill through congress which took the express business away from the railroads. It seems funny, now, but that brand of radicalism was what kept Lewis out of the senate 22 years ago, on an election day when Maryland was going strongly Democratic for the rest of the ticket.

This time Lewis is making a fight for the senate again on the liberal side. His not wanting any Hopkins, or Ickes, or Jimmy Roosevelt endorsements is not pussyfooting, though naturally some of the New Deal element so regards it. It is a clear-visioned view of his own state, an appraisal of Maryland independence, an estimate of an electorate which likes to decide its own problems without outside interference.

**Endorses New Deal**

Lewis is not saying that the intervention of Jimmy Roosevelt and Harry Hopkins in Iowa was a blunder, and that their endorsements of Otha D. Wearin actually helped Sen. Guy M. Gillette. But he knows the same sort of thing, done in his interest, would be fatal in Maryland, would help renominate Senator Tydings. He has been having a lot of trouble making the New Deal see this, and has been to the White House several times to make sure that no unauthorized endorsement is issued for him.

Lewis is not pussyfooting about Roosevelt himself. His first public statement of his candidacy not only praised the President to the skies, but endorsed the New Deal in toto. But that opening statement, rather curiously worded, also stated that his fight was being made exclusively by Marylanders. Lewis knows his state fairly well, and knows that any outside interference would not be welcomed.

Incidentally, Gov. Harry W. Nice, the third Republican governor since the Civil war, is being impounded by friends to make the race this year for the senate, instead of running, as he has planned, for reelection as governor. His friends are pointing out that Lewis may win the primary, due not so much to New Deal popularity as to the fact that so many Marylanders would be sore on Senator Tydings.

**New York Situation**

New Dealers and Republicans alike view the situation in New York precipitated by the death of Sen. Royal S. Copeland with mixed emotions. It is generally conceded by those in the know that Gov. Herbert H. Lehman can have the nomination for Copeland's seat if he wishes it. Several other prominent Democrats would like it, but few if any of them would want to take on Lehman for a battle, especially as the contest will be by a rather hard-boiled party convention, looking with cold calculating eyes at the election, rather than in a primary, where the individual voter marks his ballot for whomever he pleases without a care as to what the effect may be on carefully laid strategy plans of his party leaders.

But then whom to nominate for governor? It is a curious fact that the bigwigs of the Democratic party in New York were no little concerned about this two years ago, and again this time. They were almost in a panic two years ago, until well into the summer, when they thought Lehman was going to retire. At that time it was by no means clear to them that a big Democratic victory was ahead. They were genuinely afraid that if Lehman did not run they would not only lose the state house, but lose the 47 electoral votes of New York for Roosevelt.

Actually of course Lehman had a tremendous majority, but ran way behind Roosevelt. But the worry is

present this year, perhaps based on sounder grounds, perhaps not. There is no way of telling until November, and that might be too late.

**Put on Pressure**

At any rate, they put the pressure on Sen. Robert F. Wagner, two years ago, to run for governor, and did not relax it until Lehman consented to run again. This year they have been putting the pressure on the senator again. He never did want to run for governor. It is no stepping stone to the presidency for him, for he is ineligible for the higher office, having been born in Germany.

But the mere fact that they have been begging Wagner to run for governor shows the mental state of the Democratic leaders.

Now the problem is complicated. They are letting Wagner alone now, willing for him to run for re-election. But they have to find somebody they think they can elect governor, if Lehman goes for the senate, or for senator, if Lehman decides to run again for governor. And, terrible thought, maybe somebody for both senator and governor if Lehman decides to retire!

All of which is all the stranger to outsiders, especially in view of the size of New York state, when actually the Republican leaders are in the same quandary. They were worried to death, before Copeland passed from the scene, about whom to put up for governor and senator. Now they have to find a candidate for the governorship, and in addition two senatorial candidates.

Looking at the Republican problem, and incidentally at most of the candidates mentioned for the three places, one wonders why the Democratic leaders are worried.

**Presidential Booms**

The battle of the various anti-Roosevelt groups—conservative, radical and personal—is transferred by the adjournment of congress to the states. The picture is cluttered up by presidential booms. Garner for President movements are more serious than even the vice president thinks. In fact he does not think very much about it, having had to be coaxed at length to make a fight for the nomination in 1932. Then there is the Jim Farley for President boom, sprouting in Boston and elsewhere. Last, and not politically very important for the time being, is the Joe Kennedy boom, which flowered in London just before the ambassador sailed for home.

The importance of these premature presidential booms is way out of proportion to the chances of those mentioned actually landing the nomination. If Garner were just a few years younger he would fit the picture perfectly of the type of compromise candidate the anti-Roosevelt people want. Jim Farley and Joe Kennedy are both Catholics, and the idea still persists in many quarters that it would be uphill sledding to elect a Catholic, despite the fact that the Ku Klux Klan no longer flourishes.

But these booms, and others which may be expected—there is a lot of talk about Cordell Hull—start people thinking about "somebody else." They tend to commit politicians who will name delegates, and tend to "tie them away" from Roosevelt, or even somebody Roosevelt might approve. Their effect is very clear to New Dealers, who are more than a little disturbed about the possible consequences.

All of which turns back on the importance of the primaries yet to come, and to what may happen to New Dealers in the election to follow.

**Docile Congress**

It is generally agreed that the congress just adjourned—the third of the Roosevelt regime—was remarkably docile for the fifth and sixth years of an administration. Especially because of its extremely top-heavy Democratic majority, which in the nature of things would encourage division into factions. The President was bumped on a few things, but astonishingly few, and he made some surprising comebacks, especially after the rejection of the wage-hour bill.

On these coming primaries and election will depend the temper of his fourth congress. If Roosevelt should win in most of the "purge" states, particularly Maryland, Georgia, South Carolina, and Nevada; if his senate leader, Alben W. Barkley—as seems likely—wins his contest for renomination, and if the Democratic loss of senate and house seats is held to a reasonable figure, the next congress will probably be the most docile any President has ever had in his seventh and eighth years.

Iowa and Pennsylvania could go Republican strongly in November without affecting this situation. Of course if either or both should go Democratic that would make the President all the stronger. But both are regarded as "enemy country."

After all, Iowa even stood against the Woodrow Wilson sweep of the West in 1916, while Pennsylvania went for Hoover in 1932.

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Floyd Gibbons' ADVENTURERS' CLUB



HEADLINES FROM THE LIVES OF PEOPLE LIKE YOURSELF!

"Vanishing Corpses"

By FLOYD GIBBONS  
Famous Headline Hunter

HELLO EVERYBODY:

You know, boys and girls, I've often noticed, in these adventure stories, how in a good many cases, one mishap leads to another. That's probably because the first thing that goes wrong so upsets the fellow it happens to, that—well—he just loses his head and plunges right smack into another danger.

It's bad business when a man loses his head in the face of danger. But at the same time it has produced a lot of red-hot double-barreled and triple-barreled adventures, and the story I'm going to tell you today is a mighty good example.

Paul Moore of Chicago is today's distinguished adventurer. The events this yarn deals with happened to him and two other lads, in September, 1923.

At that time Paul was just a kid of twelve, living in Grand Rapids, Mich. Paul had just been given a .22 caliber rifle for selling perfume, and one Saturday he and his two friends, Art Kohles and Archie Eastman, started out on a hunting trip.

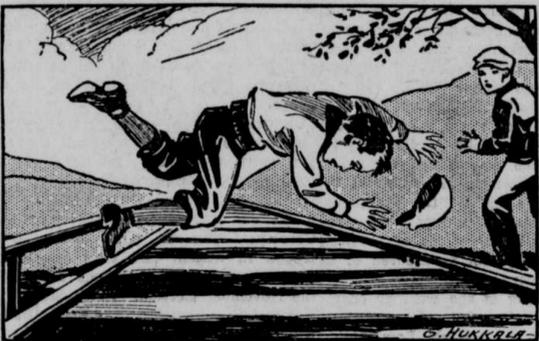
Art and Archie had air rifles. Paul had no cartridges for his .22, but Art said he knew where he could get some. They started out early, taking their lunches with them, and after walking a couple hours, came to a patch of woods four miles from the outskirts of town.

Art Pounded the Cartridge.

There didn't seem to be any game in sight, so they sat down on the bank of a small creek to eat their lunches. Paul had put down his gun and was just starting to untie the package that contained his grub when Art spoke up, saying there was a wild canary on the other side of the creek.

"Let's have your gun," whispered Art. "I can't get it with mine." Paul passed over his rifle. Art had the cartridges in his own pocket. He took one out and tried to put it in the chamber. It wouldn't fit.

Young Art didn't know that the cartridges he had brought from home were the wrong caliber. He thought this one wouldn't go into the



Archie Pitched Forward on His Face.

chamber because the gun was new. He tried to force it in with his fingers and then, in his haste to get a shot at the bird before it flew away, he picked up a stone that happened to be lying at his feet.

Art hit the bullet two or three times with that stone. And then, suddenly, there was a loud crack. The bullet exploded. Art dropped the gun, crying, "I'm shot!" Then he fell to the ground and lay still.

The other two kids stood speechless. Art had killed himself! Paul had an uncle who lived about a mile away on the other side of the woods, and the first thought that popped into his mind was to run there and get help.

He told Archie to stay behind with Art, but Archie insisted on going along with him. They started off on a short cut through the woods, running as fast as their legs would carry them.

On the other side of the woods they came to the tracks of the interurban line that runs out of Grand Rapids. There was a third rail along the right of way, set up a foot or so above the ground.

Paul knew about it. He was well up ahead of Archie, and he went over it with a flying leap. But he didn't think to warn Archie about that electrified rail. His mind was too full of the thought of Art lying back there by the creek bank.

Archie Stepped on Third Rail.

The next thing Paul knew, Archie was stepping on that rail. He just lit on it for an instant. Then he pitched forward on his face. And he, too, lay still!

Archie's body was lying between the two tracks. "I took one look at him," says Paul, "and decided he was dead. Then I turned and ran as if the devil was after me."

It was a long way to his uncle's house, and by that time Paul was all but out of breath. But he didn't dare stop running. He stumbled on. At last he reached the house and burst in, panting, "Uncle Abe! Quick! Art's killed himself with my gun and Archie's been electrocuted!"

Everyone in the house, including two old ladies who were visiting Paul's aunt, dropped whatever they were doing and started for the tracks. They hurried through brush and corn fields to the spot where Archie had fallen—and when they arrived, there was no sign of Archie.

Uncle Abe turned on Paul. "Young man," he said sternly, "are you sure this isn't a joke of some kind?" But it was no joke to Paul. He thought maybe a passing interurban had stopped to pick Archie up. He crossed the track and started through the woods toward the stream where they had left Art.

Both Bodies Had Disappeared.

The women turned back, but Uncle Abe followed along after him. They ran through the woods in breathless haste—took up to the spot where Art had shot himself—and then Paul stopped dead in his tracks. Art was gone, too!

It was too much for Paul. His uncle was looking at him suspiciously, and he hardly knew what to say.

How could Paul ask him to believe that two dead boys had both disappeared, one right after the other? He stood there silent a minute, and then he heard sounds of splashing water, and of voices coming from some point down the stream. Together they walked toward those voices and there they found—Art and Archie.

It was all explained easily enough. Archie had been knocked out by the shock from the third rail. He had a big bump on his head, but that was all the damage that had been done to him.

When he came to, he went back to where Art had fallen and found him bathing his leg, which had been grazed on the calf by a bit of the exploding shell. Together they had moved down stream a ways, and that's where Paul found them.

And that's all there is to this story, except that a short time after that, Art and Archie and Paul took that .22 rifle and pitched it in the Grand river.

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Elephant Runs Rampant

Angry because his keeper forgot to bring his meal punctually, a bull elephant at Etah, United Provinces, became enraged and demanded service, then helped himself to it. He threw the keeper over a fence to jolt the man's memory, next broke his chain and uprooted a tree to which he had been tied. After pulling down every telegraph wire in the vicinity, the beast stalked in moody silence into the jungle and escaped.

Palestine Dogs Sleuth

Palestine police dogs are becoming almost human in their help to prevent crime as well as in the tracking of criminals, according to police officials in Jerusalem. It is possible the plan of having a dog with every policeman, will be adopted to prevent attacks on officers by criminals. In one year in Palestine the Dohermann pinschers, the dogs used by the police, were employed successfully in 17 of 37 murder cases.

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Here's good advice for a woman during her change (usually from 35 to 40), who fears she'll lose her appeal to men, who worries about hot flashes, loss of pep, dizzy spells, upset nerves and moody spells. Get more fresh air, 8 hrs. sleep and if you need a good general system tonic take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, made especially for women. It helps Nature build up physical resistance, thus helps more vivacity to enjoy life and assist calming jittery nerves and disturbing symptoms that often accompany change of life. WELL WORTH TRYING!

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