

THE WONDER OF JENA



Elbie Gimble's **FIRST** Pre-Cosmic Adventure
by Todd von Dölven

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PART ONE: Learning the *Muttersprache*

Elbie Gimble was a boy who loved words. Not just regular words, but words that sounded different, words from other places. He liked how some words felt like a soft whisper, and others like a loud clap. Elbie lived with his grandfather Lazlo in a cozy cottage, seemingly in the middle of nowhere near the center of the United States. Their home was filled with tall bookshelves, strange machines that whirred and hummed, and the warm, comforting smell of old paper and Lazlo's special tea.

One afternoon, Elbie was lying in his bed to escape the summer heat, reading a comic book about a brave space explorer. He heard a low, rumbling sound from the attic above him, the room they called the *Observatorium*. It was much more than just an attic, though; it was their main workspace where they tinkered, invented, and created new things. It was also their personal stargazing sanctuary where they viewed the stars through a large telescope positioned in the window. The noise Elbie heard was his grandfather's voice, talking. But there was another sound too, a quiet, muffled warbling, like a sleepy bird. Elbie's ears twitched. Who was Grandpa talking to? They were home alone.

His curiosity was like a little tug on his shirt. He put his comic book down and poked his head out into the hallway. The sounds were a little louder now, but he still couldn't quite make anything out. Very quietly, Elbie tiptoed up the stairs, one careful step at a time. As he got closer to the Observatory door, Grandpa Lazlo's voice became clearer.

"We almost lost him," Lazlo said, his voice a little soft. "He's still shaken up and doesn't want to talk about it. But yes, I agree. I think it's time he learned."

There was a short, muffled reply, like the sleepy bird again. Then Lazlo spoke once more. "Yes, that's a good idea. And if he starts learning now, he'll be all the more ready when the time comes."

Elbie felt a funny feeling in his stomach. Was Grandpa talking about *him*? What was he supposed to learn? He felt a little bit guilty for listening in on a private conversation. Lazlo let out a loud sigh. "Yes, you're right. I'll get him started right away."

The flutter in Elbie's stomach grew too big. He couldn't listen anymore. "Grandpa?" he called out softly.

There was a quick rustle inside the room, and the *clump* of something being shut, like a cupboard. Then the door swung open wide, and there was

Grandfather Lazlo, looking surprised. But then his face lit up with a happy smile. “Elbie, my boy!” he exclaimed. “I thought you were playing outside!”

“It got too hot, and I felt like reading,” Elbie replied, still a little shy. “Who were you talking to?”

Lazlo let out a big, booming laugh that made his beard jiggle. “Oh, my boy, I was simply in a deep conversation with myself! Many things have been on my mind since the accident, and I was planning our next adventure!”

Elbie’s eyes grew wide. “Our next adventure?” Only two months had passed since the accident, and he didn’t like to think about it. It was a scary memory and still gave him bad dreams sometimes. No, he wasn’t going to think about that. A new adventure sounded much better!

“Come in and I’ll tell you!” Lazlo walked Elbie deeper into the Observatory and helped him settle into a big, comfy armchair. Then he hurried over to one of the tall bookcases. After looking for only a moment, he pulled a book off the shelf.

“Grandpa! The suspense is too much!” Elbie couldn’t sit still. “Where are we going?”

Lazlo handed Elbie the book. Its cover had a simple picture and a title: “*An Easy German Reader*,” by **Alfred Bull Nichols**. Elbie looked at the front, then the back, then quickly flipped through the pages. “**Germany?**” he asked, his voice a little squeaky with surprise.

“Germany!” Lazlo replied, his eyes twinkling. “This coming October, in fact, the *Deutsches Museum* in **Munich** will be hosting the very first public demonstration of what’s called, ‘The Wonder of Jena.’”

“What is that?” Elbie asked.

“It’s a marvel of technology and astronomy!” Lazlo explained, leaning forward. “It’s called a **Zeiss planetarium projector**. Imagine a wonderful machine, full of clever gears, bright lights, and shiny lenses, that can show the whole moving cosmos right onto a big, domed ceiling inside a round room! It’s useful for ... well, it lets us stargaze in the comfort of indoors, no matter if it’s cloudy and raining or the middle of the day!”

Elbie looked back down at the book in his hands. “Is that why you want me to learn German?”

Lazlo’s smile faded just a tiny bit, and he looked at Elbie for a long, quiet moment. Then he spoke, his voice gentle. “Yes, my boy. It’s important. I think it’s important that you acquire a broader knowledge of the languages

of Earth—er, *the world!* I mean, we don't want to be left with no clue what they're saying, do we? It's still a couple of months away, so you should be able to learn quite a bit before our adventure starts. As you know, my boy, I speak several languages, including German! I will help you along the way. This book is for beginners, but as you progress, we'll look for more advanced material."

Elbie was completely fascinated. A trip to Germany! A strange, wonderful machine that showed the stars indoors! And learning a whole new language! He immediately started looking at the words in the book, his mind buzzing with excitement.

For the next two months, Elbie spent hours reading and re-reading the German book. He even went to the town library to find more books about the German language, though there weren't very many. He picked it up so quickly! Before he knew it, he could understand many basic words and phrases. He knew how to say "*Danke schön*," which meant "thank you." He learned how to say "*Bitte!*" for "Please!" and "*Bitte schön*" for "You're welcome." He even learned longer, more grown-up phrases like, "*Können Sie mir helfen? Ich habe Bauchschmerzen und muss ins Krankenhaus*," which meant, "Can you help me? I have a stomach ache and need to go to

the hospital.” He learned that you talked to friends differently than you talked to strangers. He learned there were many, many ways to say “The.” He learned that nouns—people, places, and things—always began with capital letters. And he learned it was VERY important to talk to police officers the proper way, or you might get a ticket!

Elbie really enjoyed learning this new way of talking. Lazlo, who could speak almost any language, made it even easier for him to learn fast. Before long, they were mostly speaking *Deutsch*, or “German,” around the house. Sometimes, they even spoke it in public, just for fun, pretending they were speaking in a secret code. It was good fun. Still, even after many hours of learning, Elbie couldn’t forget his own language, and always came back to it at the end of the day.

“*Opa* (which meant Grandpa)?” Elbie asked one cool autumn evening, as he and Lazlo sat on the porch swing, gently swaying back and forth. “How long will it take us to get to *München* (Munich)?”

Lazlo leaned back, making the porch swing creak softly. “Well, let me see,” he said, thinking hard. “Departing out of New York, we’ll leave there by ship and cross the Atlantic Ocean. That voyage will take six days. On the seventh morning, we’ll wake up on the **Elbe River** in **Hamburg**, Germany. From there, we’ll take a short car ride to ... ” He paused, and his eyes

narrowed in a special way. “Well, from there I’ve made special arrangements for our final leg to Munich.”

“Special arrangements?” Elbie asked, his curiosity tingling.

Lazlo just smiled. “You’ll see when we get there.”

“*Klingt toll!*” (Sounds super!) Elbie replied with a big, happy smile.
(Sounds super!)

PART TWO: The Sky-Whale

The big ocean liner sailed smoothly across the Atlantic Ocean. Elbie spent his days learning what he could about the vessel. He explored the decks, watched the waves, and practiced his German words with his grandfather. Six days later, just as Lazlo had promised, they woke up on the ship as it slowly moved along a wide, calm river called the Elbe. Both Lazlo and Elbie found it funny how similar the name Elbe was to Elbie, almost like it was *Elbie's River*! Just ahead, they saw a big city with tall buildings and bustling docks. They had arrived in Hamburg, Germany!

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A man dressed in a driver's uniform was waiting for them near the end of the gangway. He held up a sign that said "*Willkommen* Gimbles," which meant "Welcome Gimbles." He had a narrow, friendly face and a big, toothy smile. "*Guten Tag!*" (Good day!), he said. "I am *Jürgen*." His voice had a thick, rumbling German accent.

Elbie felt a little flutter in his stomach. This was it! His first time speaking German in Germany! He took a deep breath. "*Danke schön, Jürgen! Freut mich, Sie kennenzulernen!*" (Thank you, Jürgen! Nice to meet you!) he said clearly, remembering his manners.

Jürgen's eyes widened, and his smile grew even bigger. "Oh! You speak our language, young man! *Wunderbar!*" (Wonderful!)

Lazlo put a proud hand on Elbie's shoulder. "He's been working very hard," he told Jürgen.

Jürgen loaded their big bags into the back of a bright, shiny car with a convertible top. He introduced the vehicle as a **1921 Mercedes Targo Florio**, a fine German car. Elbie climbed in between his grandfather and Jürgen, ready to see the sights. Jürgen pulled away from the docks and was soon driving them through the bustling streets of downtown Hamburg. Elbie felt the wind in his burnt-toast-colored hair, watching all the new sights: clattering trams, busy people, and colorful shop windows. Jürgen pointed out tall buildings and lively shops along the way. As they drove north, Elbie saw signs that read: "*Flughafen Fuhlsbüttel*." He knew "*Flughafen*" meant airport, but the second word was new, a funny-sounding puzzle in his mind.

Soon, Jürgen turned the car into a very large grassy field with huge buildings called hangars. They looked like giant metal boxes with big barn doors. As they drove around one of the hangars, Elbie gasped. There, sitting on the grass, was something Elbie thought he'd never ever see! It was a massive, silver ***Zeppelin***, long and sleek like a giant sky-whale. Workers

scurried around it, getting it ready for a trip. Grandpa Lazlo's words popped into Elbie's head: "*special arrangements ...* "

"*OPA!*" Elbie nearly screamed, his voice full of wonder. "Are we ... ?" He couldn't even finish the question, he was so excited.

Lazlo looked down at him, a huge, happy grin on his face. "That's right, my boy! We're flying the rest of the way on that!" He pointed at the magnificent airship.

The Zeppelin was truly amazing. It looked like a long, silver cigar, was longer than three football fields, and taller than many buildings! It had a smooth, silver skin that shimmered in the sunlight, and big, quiet engines with propellers on its sides. At its tail end were four short wings or fins. Underneath near the front, a long structure- like a train's passenger car full of windows, was fastened to the silver balloon above. It was the gondola where the crew and passengers rode.

Eight-foot-tall letters on the nearest hanger read: ***Luftschiffbau Zeppelin***. Lazlo said it was the name of the company that made these sky-giants.

Jürgen pulled the car to a stop near a small office building next to the hangar. Elbie and Lazlo hopped out, and Jürgen started to unload their bags. Just then, a man walked out of the office. He had a round, kind face and a

smart blue suit with a red tie. This was Lazlo's friend, **Hugo Eckener**, the manager of the Zeppelin airline.

"Lazlo, my friend! Great to see you! And this must be young Elbie!" *Herr* (Mr.) Eckener said, shaking Lazlo's hand warmly, then gently patting Elbie's head. "*Willkommen in Hamburg!*" (Welcome to Hamburg!)

Herr Eckener explained that this Zeppelin, the *LuftKönig* (Air King) was going on a very special voyage to test for a possible passenger route from Hamburg to Munich. Most of the important people on the airline's board thought it was a bad idea because it was too expensive. They didn't think many people would want to fly on a Zeppelin when a train ride was much less expensive. But *Herr* Eckener had convinced them to try just one test flight. He and Lazlo had written many letters back and forth over the past year, and it just so happened that this test flight was planned for the same time as the planetarium demonstration in Munich! So, they had made it into a fun adventure for Elbie and Lazlo. *Herr* Eckener himself even expressed a great interest in seeing the demonstration. After the show, the Zeppelin would fly back to Hamburg, and they would go home the same way they came.

Elbie couldn't wait! He loved ships, and trains, and even airplanes, but he knew the least about Zeppelins. He was so excited to learn everything he

could! *Herr* Eckener smiled. “Don’t you worry, young Elbie,” he said. “You’ll have a chance to learn everything about this magnificent machine.”

Their flight was a little rushed, planned to leave at exactly nine o’clock in the morning, so there wasn’t much time to spare. Lazlo and Elbie waved and called “*Auf Wiedersehen!*” (Goodbye!) to Jürgen, and then they climbed some boarding stairs into the giant airship.

Inside the gondola, it really was like a fancy train car, but for riding in the sky! Elbie and Lazlo took seats right behind the door to the bridge, where they could look out the big windows and watch everything. *Herr* Eckener explained there were about twenty other people, the flight crew, on board with them. Among them was the Commanding Officer, who was in charge of the whole airship, and the Navigator, who knew exactly where they were going, and other important crew members.

The Zeppelin’s propellers began to hum. Slowly, gently, it lifted off the ground. Big ropes that held it down were let go, and the ground below them started to shrink. The engines whirred softly, and the giant airship floated up, up, up into the sky.

And they were off!

PART THREE: The Ocean in the Sky.

Elbie pressed his face against the window. Below them, Germany stretched out like a giant, green blanket. He could see tiny towns that looked like toy villages, and winding rivers that sparkled like silver ribbons. Forests were dark green patches, and fields were neat squares of yellow and brown. It was so beautiful, like looking at a huge map come to life!

The weather was perfect, with no clouds in the sky, and the sun shone brightly, making everything below look even more amazing. The ride was as smooth as it could be. Soon, *Herr* Eckener, the kind manager of the airline, invited Elbie and Lazlo up to the bridge. This was at the very front of the gondola, where all the pilots and navigators sat. They could see the zeppelin's giant air bag stretching ahead of them up above. The bridge was filled with shiny dials, blinking lights, and long levers. *Herr* Eckener pointed out different things, explaining how the Zeppelin worked.

Then, the Commanding Officer, a serious but friendly man with a neat uniform, turned to Elbie. "Young man," he said, his voice deep. "Would you like to steer the ship for a while?"

Elbie's eyes went wide, so wide he thought they might pop out! He was so stunned, he couldn't even speak. He just nodded, his mouth hanging

open a little.

Elbie came forward, but could barely see out of the forward window. To fix this, the Commanding Officer ordered a box or step-stool be brought for the young man. Once Elbie was able to see clearly, the Commanding Officer showed him how to hold the big steering wheel, which was called a “rudder wheel.” He explained what the different dials meant and what Elbie should watch to keep the Zeppelin flying straight and steady. Elbie’s hands trembled a little as he gripped the rudder wheel tightly. He could feel tiny rumbles and vibrations as the ship coursed through the rolling wind currents in the sky. He was actually flying a Zeppelin! It was the most exciting thing he had ever done. He felt like a true explorer, guiding his sky-whale through the vast blue ocean of the air.

After a while, the Commanding Officer took back the wheel, and Elbie and Grandpa Lazlo were given a special tour of the entire Zeppelin. They saw the sleeping cabins, the small galley, or kitchen, where the delicious smells of the coming lunch wafted out. They even got to see inside of the main framework that held the big bags of gas that kept the Zeppelin floating.

“These big bags are filled with a special gas called **hydrogen**,” *Herr* Eckener explained, gently tapping one of the enormous, milky-white

balloons. “It is much lighter than the air around us which helps lift us into the sky.”

Elbie’s nose wrinkled. He remembered the information from his science books about hydrogen being very light, but also very ... “Isn't that dangerous?” he asked, a tiny worry creeping into his voice. “Doesn't it ... catch fire easily?”

Herr Eckener chuckled kindly. “That’s a very smart question, young Elbie! Yes, hydrogen can be tricky if not handled carefully. But here on our Zeppelin, we have many clever ways to keep it safe. We have these special bags for the gas here, made of strong materials, and we have very careful rules. We check everything many, many times before we fly, to make sure there are no leaks and everything is perfectly sealed. It’s like having a very strong, invisible balloon that helps us float, and we make sure it’s always well-behaved!”

Elbie learned how the engines pushed them forward and how the rudders at the back helped them turn. Like an airplane, it used **lift** to help it climb higher into the air when they needed to go up. When it was time to come down, gas was released from the bags, making the whole aircraft heavier. Every part of the giant airship was a wonder, and Elbie soaked up every

new piece of information like a sponge. He felt like he was living inside a real-life technical manual on Zeppelins!

The hours seemed to melt away like ice cream on a hot day. The five or six hours they had been flying felt like only a few minutes. Elbie was so lost in the magic of the Zeppelin, he almost didn't notice when the big airship began to slowly, gently float downwards. Then, he felt a funny little *pop* in his ears. He looked out the window, and there it was: the city of Munich, spreading out below them like a miniature town, like a diorama with its little houses and streets. Just beyond it, he could see a small patch of green that was their airfield, waiting for them. The giant sky-whale was about to land.

PART FOUR: Something's Amiss

The Zeppelin landed smoothly at the *Oberwiesenfeld* airfield in Munich. It was a big, sunny day, and the air felt exciting! *Herr* Eckener helped Elbie and Lazlo off the airship, then called for their ride into town. They were all looking forward to an exciting day in the city of Munich, especially because it was *Oktoberfest*!

Oktoberfest was a giant party! Elbie, Lazlo, and *Herr* Eckener walked through streets filled with happy people. There were colorful tents, lively music, and the delicious smell of roasting *Bratwurst*—plump, delicious German sausages. Elbie drank a sweet, crisp *Apfelschorle* (sparkling apple juice), while Lazlo and *Herr* Eckener had *Bier* (beer). Men wore special leather shorts called *Lederhosen*, and women wore pretty dresses called *Dirndls*. Elbie tasted a warm, soft pretzel and a sweet apple *Strudel*. The whole celebration was a feast for his eyes and his stomach!

They spent the day exploring the city. *Herr* Eckener pointed out grand buildings and the busy, colorful markets. Lazlo bought Elbie a cute little sculpture of an *Eule* (owl) for his bookshelf, and a unique ceramic plate used for grating nuts or hard cheeses for himself. They saw old churches with tall spires and fountains splashing in sunny squares. Everywhere Elbie

looked, there was something new and wonderful. He loved seeing all the sights of Munich. As exciting as it all was, the planetarium demonstration was planned for the very next day, and Elbie could hardly wait!

That evening, they had a tasty dinner at a cozy restaurant. It was a warm, brightly lit place with wooden tables and chairs and lively music playing over an old radio. Elbie ate a crispy *Schnitzel*, which was a thin, breaded piece of meat, and a warm bowl of creamy *Kartoffelsuppe*, a delicious potato soup. Grandpa Lazlo and Hugo Eckener sipped on glasses of dark red *Rotwein*, a German red wine, as they talked and laughed.

As they walked back to their hotel, they passed by the Deutsches Museum. It was a huge, impressive building with a tall tower, almost like a castle. Elbie looked up at it, trying to imagine the amazing star show he would see tomorrow. Just then, he noticed something odd. A man in a maintenance worker's uniform was climbing out of a ground-floor window of the museum! It was getting dark, but Elbie could see him clearly. The man carried what looked like a bundle of rags and didn't seem to notice anyone watching. He quickly dug around under some bushes near the window for a moment, then stood up. The bundle he'd been carrying was gone. He then slung a work bag over his shoulder, and disappeared around the corner of the building.

Elbie didn't think too much of it at first, but one thing about the man was very peculiar. He had a very long, fancy mustache that curled up at the ends, and a nose that was a little bit hooked. It was a very distinct face.

They soon arrived at their hotel, the *Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten*. It was a grand place, and their bags had already been delivered to their room. Elbie was so excited about the next day, he thought he would never be able to sleep. But as soon as his head hit the pillow, he conked out almost immediately, dreaming of stars and Zeppelins.

The next morning, Elbie and Lazlo woke up, got ready, and met *Herr* Eckener for a breakfast of dark bread, meats, and cheeses. Then, they headed straight for the Deutsches Museum. There was a big crowd outside, lots of people excited to see the "Wonder of Jena." Elbie and Lazlo, along with Hugo Eckener, were lucky to be near the front of the line.

Finally, the doors opened, and they were allowed inside! They were shown the way to the planetarium, a huge, round room with a giant domed ceiling. In the very center of the room, a massive object sat covered by a big, dark tarp, hiding it from prying eyes. The planetarium quickly filled up with people, all murmuring with excitement.

Then, the show was ready to begin. A man stepped forward, the main presenter from the Carl Zeiss Foundation, the clever people who built the

machine in the town of *Jena* nearly 200 miles away. He looked very important and proud and introduced himself as *Herr Walther Bauersfeld, Ingenieur* (Engineer).

With a flourish, the tarp was pulled away! There it was – the Zeiss planetarium projector! It was a fantastical, amazing machine, like something out of a science fiction story. It had a big, round end, like a giant eyeball covered with lots of smaller lenses. There were gears, and shiny metal parts everywhere in between. *Herr* Bauersfeld began to tell everyone amazing facts about how it was built and why it was called "The Wonder of Jena." He explained how it could show every star you could see in the sky, and even how they moved, all from inside this comfortable room. He explained how the very room with the domed ceiling they all sat in was built earlier that year just for the projector.

The moment everyone was waiting for finally arrived. The lights in the planetarium slowly dimmed. And with a loud, echoing *CLUNK* ...

... NOTHING.

The room stayed dark for a moment, then the bright lights came back on. A ripple of confusion spread through the audience. Lazlo leaned down and muttered in Elbie's ear, "Something's amiss." Elbie only nodded.

Herr Bauersfeld looked puzzled. He called for one of his helpers to join him in figuring out the problem. After a quick look, the two men whispered to each other. *Herr* Bauersfeld stood up and made it known that the main light bulb, the most important one, was missing! Everyone gasped. There was no backup bulb, because they were very expensive, and no one had thought they would need one after the projector had worked perfectly in the test the day before.

Even though the show hadn't started well, Elbie was still fascinated by everything around him. He scanned the big, round dome above him. Then he scanned the faces of all the people in the audience. There were fancy ladies, and distinguished gentlemen. There were many who looked like they could be school teachers, university professors, or scientists. It was such a diverse crowd! Then he saw *him*. Elbie noticed a man who looked very rich, wearing a fancy, dark suit and a tall top hat. He had a shiny monocle in one eye, but it was the mustache and the nose that made Elbie's stomach do a flip. It was the same worker he had seen last night! But this morning, he didn't look like a worker at all. And then Elbie saw it – a sinister, faint smirk on the man's face. The wheels started turning in Elbie's head, faster and faster, and suddenly, he understood!

He quickly found an excuse to leave his seat and hurried out of the planetarium toward the museum exit. Outside the building, he rushed to the bushes under the ground-floor window where he had seen the man climb out. He dug around in the leaves and dirt and quickly found a large, heavy object wrapped in greasy, grimy burlap. Inside, sure enough, was a heavy lightbulb sparkling in the morning light. He grabbed it tightly and hurried back into the museum.

When he re-entered the planetarium, the museum director and *Herr Bauersfeld* were arguing loudly, their voices sharp with worry. Each man blamed the other! Elbie smiled at his grandfather as he walked by their row, then he marched right to the center of the room where the two men were bickering.

“Entschuldigung Sie,” (Excuse me) Elbie said clearly, in German. *“Ich kann Ihnen helfen!”* (I can help you!).

The two men stopped arguing and looked down at the small boy. The director shook his head and said in English, “Please, young man, we have a serious problem here. Please take your seat.”

Elbie held out the ratty bundle of burlap. “But I have your bulb right here!”

Herr Bauersfeld hesitantly took the bundle, unwrapped it, and to everyone's shock, there was the missing bulb! A wave of gasps swept through the audience. Elbie didn't dare look at the mustachioed man, because he didn't want to let on that he knew who the thief was.

"*Meine Güte!*" (My goodness!) said the presenter, his eyes wide. "Where did you find this?"

"I found it in *die Büsche* (the bushes) outside!" Elbie replied.

The audience gasped again. The two men looked at each other in confusion. "How did it get there?" the director asked, scratching his head.

"I was afraid something like this might happen!" said *Herr* Bauersfeld, his voice full of anger. "Our presentation has been sabotaged!"

"By who?" the director shrugged, looking around. Both men looked at Elbie after he cleared his throat loudly.

"What is it, *Junge?* (boy)" one of them asked.

"I think you should ask the gentleman with the crazy mustache seated behind me," Elbie said, pointing subtly with his chin.

All eyes in the room turned to the mustachioed man. Elbie turned too, and saw the man's eyes go wide, his monocle falling out and hanging by its

chain. Elbie went on to explain. “I saw that same man last night, in workers’ clothing, climbing out of a ground-floor window. He was carrying this very bundle of rags. It looked like he buried it under the bushes, then left.”

The mustachioed man stood up very straight, looking very angry and raising a fist. “Preposterous!” he shouted.

“I don’t often forget a face, *mein Herr* (Sir),” Elbie replied, then turned back to the director. “I’ll bet the police will find his fingerprints all over that machine!” The mustachioed man’s eyes widened even further, and a trickle of sweat dripped down his forehead as he clearly realized the boy was probably right.

“Nonsense! I am leaving this disastrous display of incompetence!” he cried, trying to push past the people seated in his row. Just then, two museum security guards appeared at the exit, and moved in to stop him. As they escorted him out of the planetarium, the audience cheered loudly.

Herr Bauersfeld and his helper quickly cleaned the bulb and put it back in the projector. The director said a few words of apology for the disruption. Elbie quietly rejoined his grandfather at their seats. Lazlo put a proud hand on Elbie’s shoulder and gave him a big, warm smile.

“NOW,” the presenter said, his voice ringing with excitement. “Thanks to our young *Amerikaner freund* (American friend), we can now proceed! So, on with the show!” More applause filled the room, directed more at Elbie than anything else.

The lights dimmed again, this time for real, mimicking the twilight setting of the sun. And the presentation began. A soft whirring sound filled the air, and then, slowly, the domed ceiling above them began to glow. With *Herr Bauersfeld’s* guiding voice in the background, tiny, sparkling points of light appeared, then more and more, until the whole ceiling was filled with glittering stars. Planets, looking like tiny, colorful marbles, drifted slowly across the cosmic canvas. It was like looking out into space itself! Lazlo and Elbie reclined in their seats, completely amazed, watching the cosmos unfurl before their very eyes. It was one of the most beautiful sights Elbie had ever seen.

PART FIVE: Guilty as Charged

The next morning, Elbie and Lazlo met *Herr* Eckener for breakfast once again. The hotel dining room was bright and smelled of fresh bread and coffee. Elbie was still excited from the day before, remembering the exciting star show.

“Good morning, young Elbie!” Hugo Eckener said, a warm smile on his face. “I have some news about our friend with the mustache.”

Elbie leaned forward, his eyes wide. “Gee Whiz! What happened?”

“Well,” *Herr* Eckener explained, “*die Polizei*—that’s the police—arrested him last night. It turns out he broke into the museum and stole the bulb.”

“But why?” Elbie asked, frowning.

“He works for a different company,” *Herr* Eckener said, his voice a little serious. “A company that also wants to show off their own machine for projecting the stars. But their machine is not nearly as good as the Zeiss projector. He was trying to make our demonstration fail so his company would look better.”

“Oh,” Elbie said, understanding now.

Herr Eckener nodded. “The police found his fingerprints all over the machine, especially on the little door where the bulb goes. So, he couldn’t say it wasn’t him!”

Elbie felt a little shiver of excitement. He had been right!

Herr Eckener then pulled out a newspaper. “Look at this!” he said, pointing to a big headline and translating it. The article beneath it talked all about how a “young American boy” had solved the mystery and saved the amazing demonstration. But it didn’t say Elbie’s name.

“How come no reporters wanted to talk to me?” Elbie asked, a little disappointed. He thought it would have been fun to see his name in a Munich newspaper!

Lazlo just shrugged, giving a little cough. “Oh, well, you know how reporters are, my boy. Always in a hurry. They probably just got the story from the museum director and rushed off. Besides, we have more adventures to get to!” He quickly changed the subject, and Elbie didn’t think about it anymore.

After a delicious breakfast, they went back to their rooms and finished packing their bags. A taxi was waiting outside an hour later to take them back to the airfield.

The giant Zeppelin was ready for them when they arrived, its silver skin gleaming in the morning sun. Minutes later, the Gimbles and *Herr* Eckener were safely aboard the magnificent airship and ready for departure.

With a gentle hum and a soft lift, the Zeppelin rose into the sky, leaving the magical Zeiss projector, the "Wonder of Jena," behind them. Elbie looked out the window, thinking about the stars and how much more there was to learn. He wondered what the future held for such wonderful projection machines. He wondered what other amazing contraptions people would invent to study the cosmos, maybe even travel there, in the future.

Lazlo, after reading his grandson's face, gave a sly smile. "Maybe someday, my boy," he whispered, his eyes twinkling in understanding, "we'll travel the stars together ourselves!"

ELBIE GIMBLE WILL RETURN

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Todd von Dölven lives in Oklahoma, USA, a state known for its place in Tornado Alley. He's a passionate admirer of science and history, with a lifelong love for science fiction.

The adventures of Elbie Gimble were born from a flash of inspiration during a sleepless night, when the name "ELBIE" sprang into his thoughts. From that moment, Todd began crafting a character he hopes will captivate readers and whisk them away on journeys beyond imagination

He looks forward to continuing Elbie's stories and taking you to places truly out of this world!

FIELD NOTES

NAME: ELBIE GIMBLE

SUBJECT: WONDER OF JENA

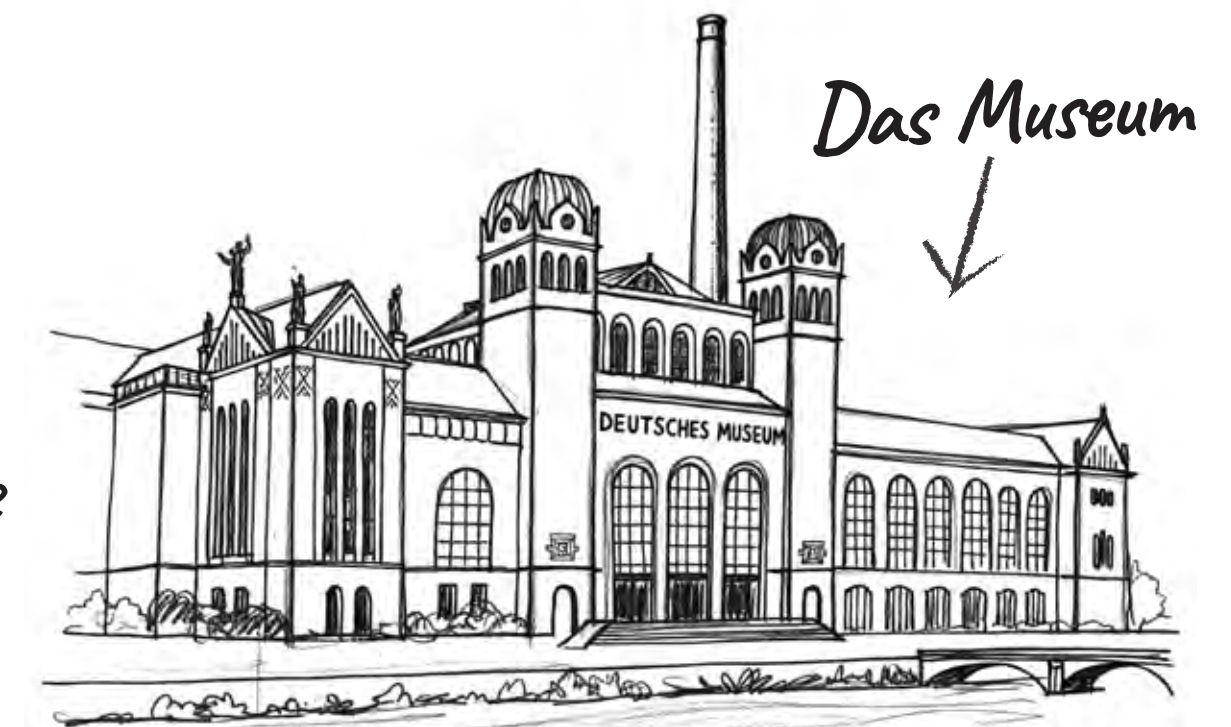
GERMANY: THE WONDER OF JENA

(Entries in alphabetical order)

PAGE 1

Alfred Bull Nichols: (1852-1913) An American writer who was born in Lebanon, Connecticut. He helped people learn German by writing textbooks like "Modern German Prose" and "An Easy German Reader". He died in Concord, Massachusetts, when he was 61 years old. His grave is in Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It's important to remember that this Alfred Bull Nichols is not the same person as Alfred E. Bull, who was a famous football player, coach, and dentist from a different time.

Deutsches Museum: Located in Munich, Germany, it is one of the oldest and largest museums of science and technology in the world. Founded in 1903, it holds a huge collection of old items from different areas of science and technology, like airplanes, energy, and ways of communicating. It's known for its fun exhibits that let visitors try things out and truly understand scientific ideas. The museum wants to show how science and technology have helped people make progress throughout history.



Elbe River: (SEE Page 8) A very important waterway in the middle of Europe. It starts in the Czech Republic (present day) and flows through Germany, and eventually reaches the North Sea near Hamburg. For hundreds of years, the Elbe has been crucial for trade and transportation, helping connect places far from the coast to the sea. Many important cities and factories grew up along its banks, using the river for power and to reach markets for their goods.

Flughafen Fuhlsbüttel: The official name for Hamburg Airport, which is one of the oldest airports in Germany. It opened in 1911 in the

Fuhlsbüttel area of Hamburg. Over many years, it has become a large international airport that plays an important role in connecting northern Germany to the rest of the world for both people traveling and goods being shipped.

Germany: (SEE Page 8) A large country in Central Europe with a very interesting past. It has played a big part in European culture, science, and making things. Early in the 1900s, Germany was a leader in new technologies, especially in areas like building things (engineering), cars, and airplanes. Today, it's known for having a strong economy, many different types of beautiful land, and important contributions to art and ways of thinking. In the German language, the country is called Deutschland, which means "The People's Land".

Hamburg: (SEE Page 8) A big port city in northern Germany. It's located on the Elbe River and has been a very important place for trading, shipping, and businesses for hundreds of years. It's actually one of the biggest ports in Europe. Hamburg is also a lively city with lots of culture, known for its old warehouses, canals, and new buildings.

Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten: A famous fancy hotel in Hamburg, Germany. It opened in 1897 and is known for its beautiful style, excellent service, and great spot right next to Lake Alster. For a long time, it has been a special place for travelers to stay and a popular meeting spot in the city. The name "Vier Jahreszeiten" means "Four Seasons" in German. The hotel was called this because it was the first hotel in Munich to be open all year round, through all four seasons. The hotel also uses the seasons in its decorations, like in the lobby's dome where each part shows a different season. They even have special foods that change with the seasons. It's important to know that this

Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten is not connected to the present-day Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts chain.

Hugo Eckener: (1868-1954) A very important person in making German airships (Zeppelins) in the early 1900s. After Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin died, Eckener took charge of the company that built Zeppelins, called Luftschiffbau Zeppelin. He was a great pilot and strongly believed that these large, rigid airships would be good for carrying people on trips. He helped design and operate famous Zeppelins like the Graf Zeppelin and the Hindenburg. Eckener thought that airships were the future for safe and comfortable long-distance travel.

Hydrogen: The lightest and most common chemical element in the whole universe. Here on Earth, it's usually a gas that you can't see or smell. Because it's so light, people used to fill early airships and Zeppelins with hydrogen to make them float. However, hydrogen catches fire very easily. This led to accidents, like the Hindenburg disaster, where a Zeppelin exploded in 1937. Because of these safety worries, hydrogen was eventually replaced with safer gases like helium, when they were available.

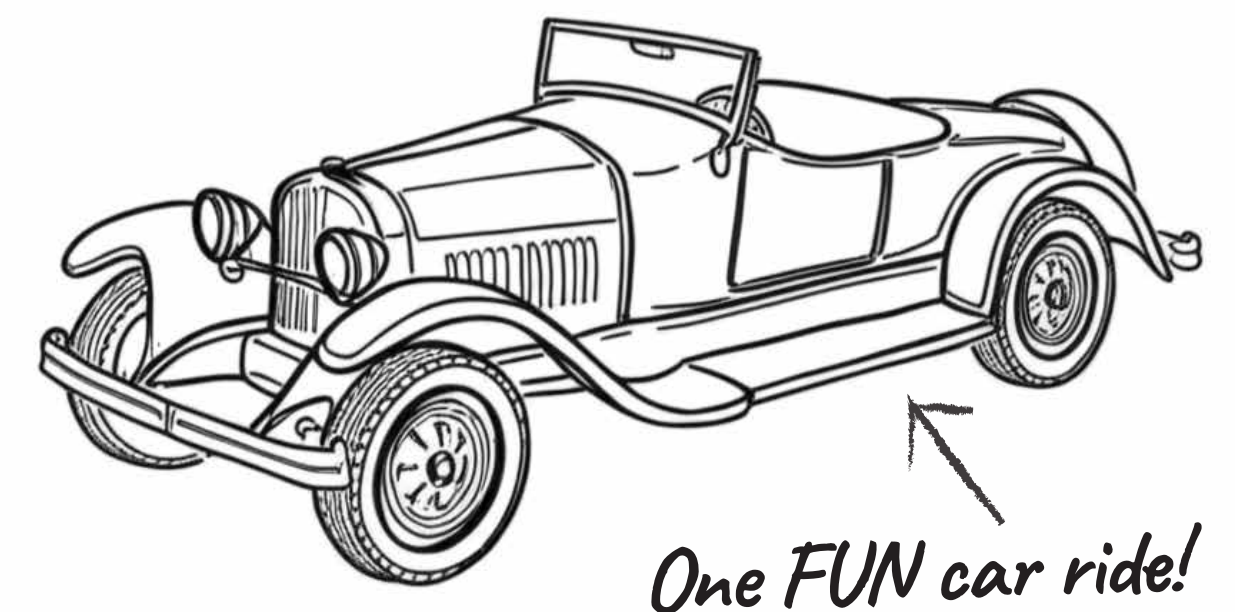
Jena: (SEE Page 8) A lively city in the German state of Thuringia, located in the beautiful Saale river valley. It's well-known for its schools and research centers, including the Friedrich Schiller University, which started in 1558, and the Ernst-Abbe-Hochschule Jena. Jena has a strong economy, especially in high-tech areas like optics and photonics (which is about light and how it's used). It's even called a research capital. The city is also home to the Carl Zeiss AG company, a worldwide leader in making optical tools like microscopes and camera lenses. Beyond its focus on education and technology, Jena has a rich history and culture, which you can see in places like

its 14th-century town hall and old fort walls. The city is surrounded by lovely nature, offering many outdoor activities and a surprising variety of wild orchids. Jena also has a lively arts scene with theaters, orchestras, and many events throughout the year.

Lift (Principle in Physics): The force that pushes an aircraft or airship up into the air, working against gravity. For airships like Zeppelins, lift happens because they are filled with a gas like hydrogen or helium, which is lighter than the air around them. This makes the entire airship lighter than the same amount of air, causing it to float up. For planes and similar flying machines, lift is created by the shape of their wings. As air moves over the wing, it has to travel a longer distance above the wing than below it. This creates lower pressure above the wing, which pulls the plane upward, providing lift.

Luftschiffbau Zeppelin: A German company that built flying machines called Zeppelins. It was started in 1908 by Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin, who invented them. This company became famous all over the world for making huge, rigid airships, which are what Zeppelins are. In the early 1900s, these airships were very advanced in technology. They were first used by the military, and later became well-known for elegant trips carrying people across oceans.

Mercedes 28/95 PS Sport (1921): A really fast and fancy car for the time. Even though it was built with racing in mind, regular people could buy it as a powerful luxury car. It had a big 7.2-liter, six-cylinder engine that started with 90 horsepower. What made it extra special for its



time was that it was one of the first Mercedes cars to come with brakes on all four wheels, a safety feature that came from racing. You could even get different looks for the car from special body builders. Its success in races, like winning a class and having the fastest lap time at the 1921 Targa Florio race, helped make Mercedes known for making powerful and desirable cars.

Munich (München): (SEE Page 8) Meaning, "Home of the Monks," it is the capital city of Bavaria, a state in Germany. It's Germany's third-largest city, located along the Isar River, just north of the Alps mountains. It started as a small settlement of monks in 1158 and grew into a big European center for art, buildings, culture, and science under the rule of a royal family called the House of Wittelsbach. Many people around the world know Munich for its yearly Oktoberfest celebration and its fun beer gardens. But it also has amazing museums, like the Alte Pinakothek and the Deutsches Museum, and beautiful parks like the Englischer Garten. You can see its long and interesting history, including how it grew and recovered from two World Wars, in its old buildings and historic places.

Oberwiesenfeld: An area in Munich, Germany, that used to be a large open space. In the early 1900s, it was an important airfield where airplanes landed and took off, helping aviation develop. It was also a key spot for airships like Zeppelins to land. Later, this area was completely changed and became the Olympic Park for the 1972 Summer Olympics.

Oktoberfest: The biggest beer festival and fun fair in the world. It happens every year in Munich, Germany, usually starting in mid-September and going into October. Millions of people from all over the world come to enjoy traditional Bavarian food, beer, and

carnival rides. It's a huge party that celebrates Bavarian culture and brings many visitors to the city.

Planetarium: A special theater designed to teach and entertain you about stars and the night sky. It has a big, round ceiling that works like a screen. A special machine projects images of stars, planets, and other things in space onto this dome, and you can even see them move. The very first modern planetarium, which used a projection system instead of moving models, was created by a man named Walther Bauersfeld for the Zeiss company in Germany in the early 1920s. Around the world, there are many other famous planetariums that are still open today, like the Hayden Planetarium in New York City, the Adler Planetarium in Chicago, the Nagoya City Science Museum Planetarium in Japan, and the Shanghai Planetarium in China.

Walther Bauersfeld: (1879-1959) A German engineer and physicist who worked for the Carl Zeiss optical company. He is best known for inventing the modern planetarium projector, the Zeiss Mk I Projector, in the early 1920s. This invention revolutionized how people learned about astronomy, enabling accurate projections of the night sky onto a dome, making the cosmos accessible to the public.

Zeiss Mk I Projector: (SEE Page 9) The first modern planetarium projector. It was invented by Walther Bauersfeld and built by the Carl Zeiss company in Jena, Germany in the early 1920s. This device could project images of stars, planets, and constellations onto a domed ceiling. This created an immersive experience of the night sky. This led to the creation of planetariums worldwide, which made astronomical education more accessible.

Zeppelin: (SEE Page 10) Zeppelins were big, rigid airships named after their inventor, Ferdinand von Zeppelin. They were very popular for air travel in the early 1900s. These huge flying machines had a strong metal frame covered with fabric, and inside were many pockets filled with a light gas called hydrogen, which made them float. Unlike blimps, Zeppelins kept their shape because of this inside frame. They completely changed long-distance travel, especially flights across the Atlantic Ocean. People could enjoy a fancy trip with dining rooms, lounges, and walkways. However, the time of the Zeppelins suddenly ended because of a terrible accident in 1937 called the Hindenburg disaster. A Zeppelin filled with hydrogen caught fire and exploded when it was landing. This tragedy, along with new and better airplanes being invented, stopped people from using Zeppelins for passenger travel. Even though those huge, old Zeppelins are not used anymore, there are modern ones called Zeppelin NTs that use safer helium gas and newer technology. They are still used for fun scenic rides and special jobs today.





Feb. 8, 1927.
W. BAUERSFELD
DEVICE FOR PROJECTING STARS
Filed Oct. 13, 1923

1,616,736

4 Sheets-Sheet 1

ORIGINAL PATENT
FOR THE
ZEISS MARK I PROJECTOR

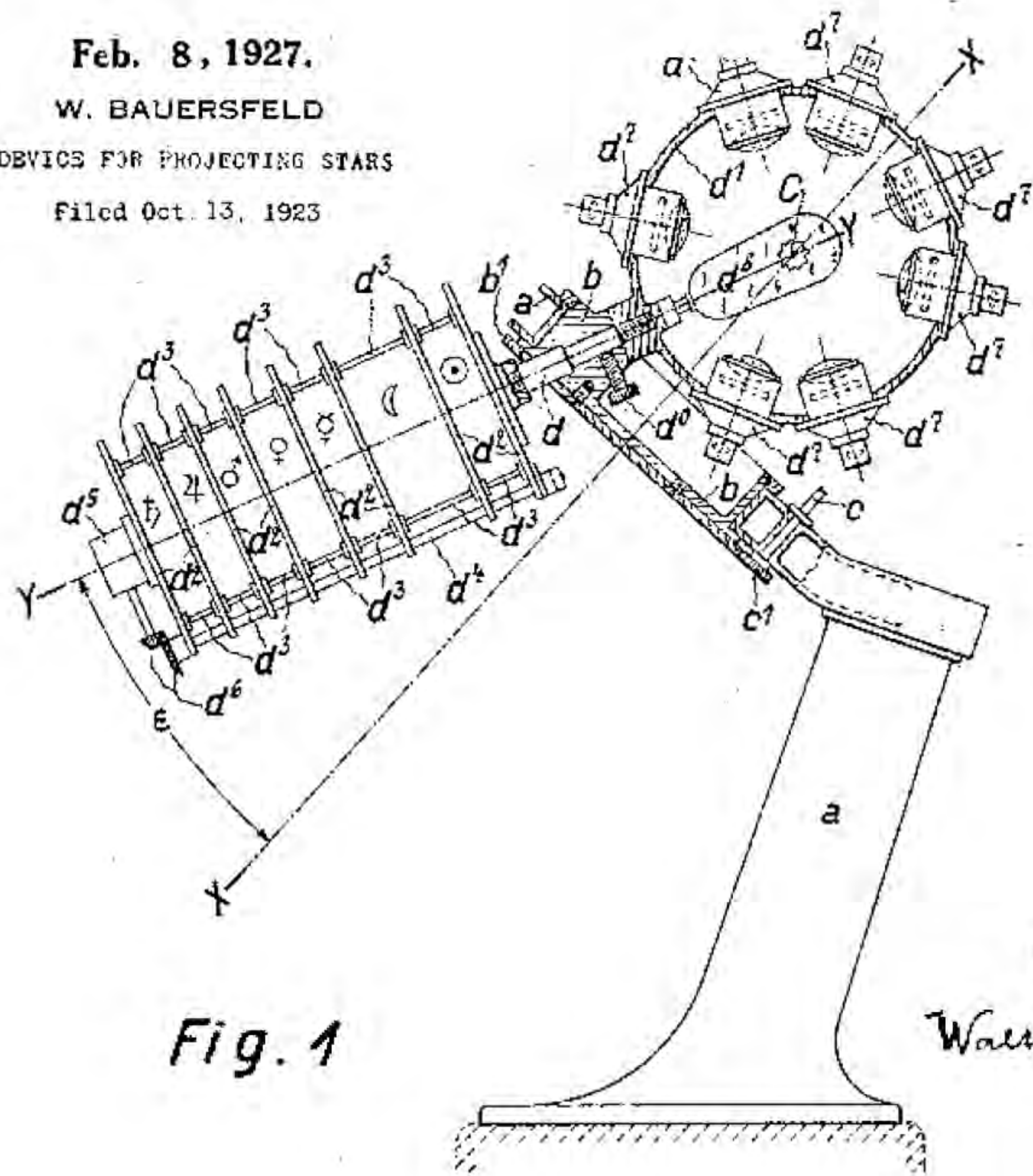
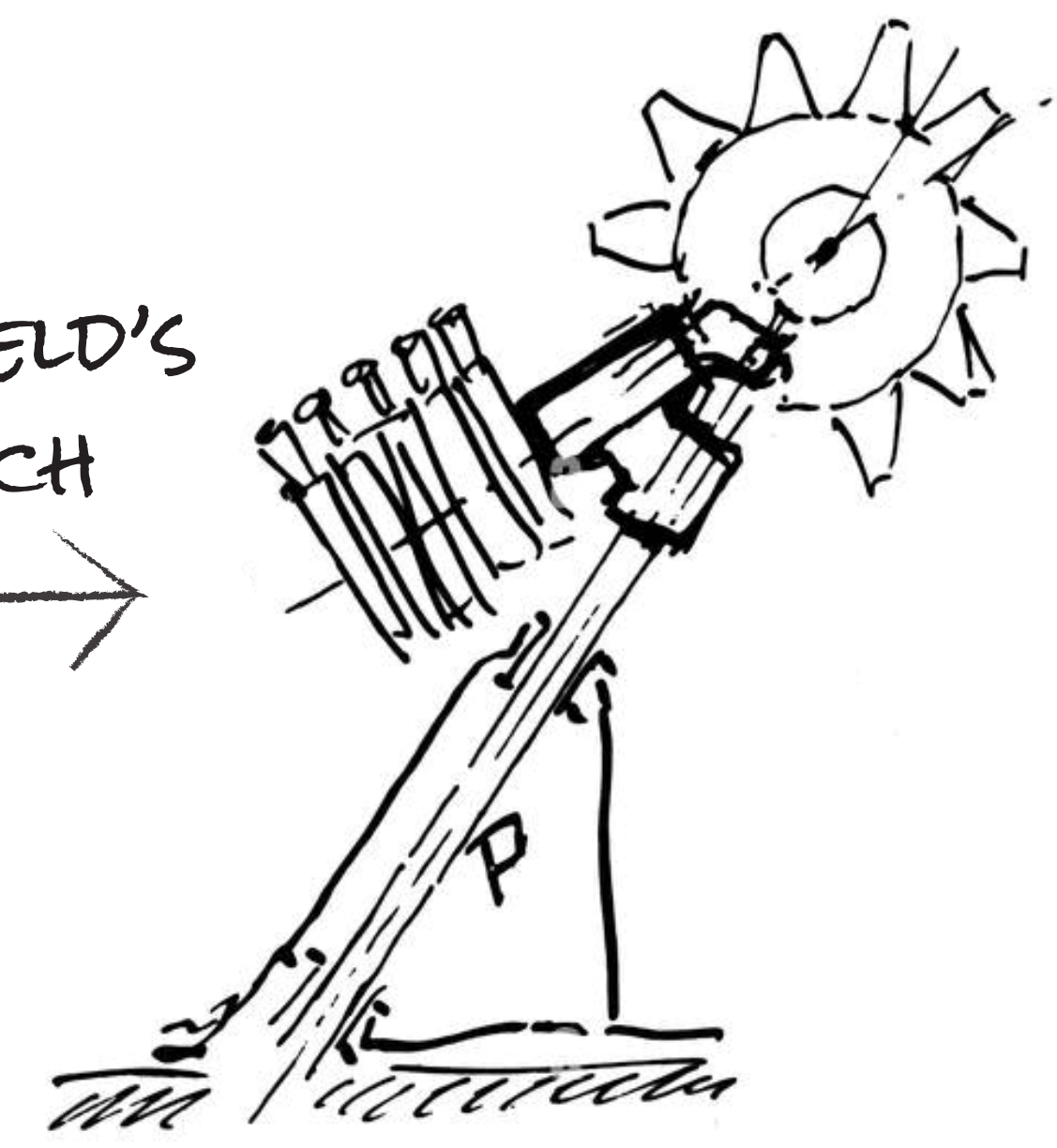


Fig. 1

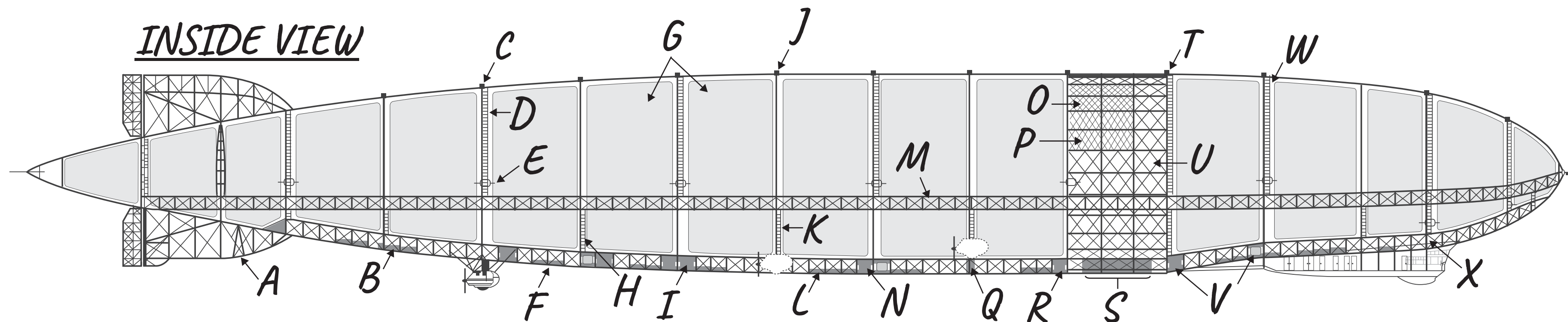
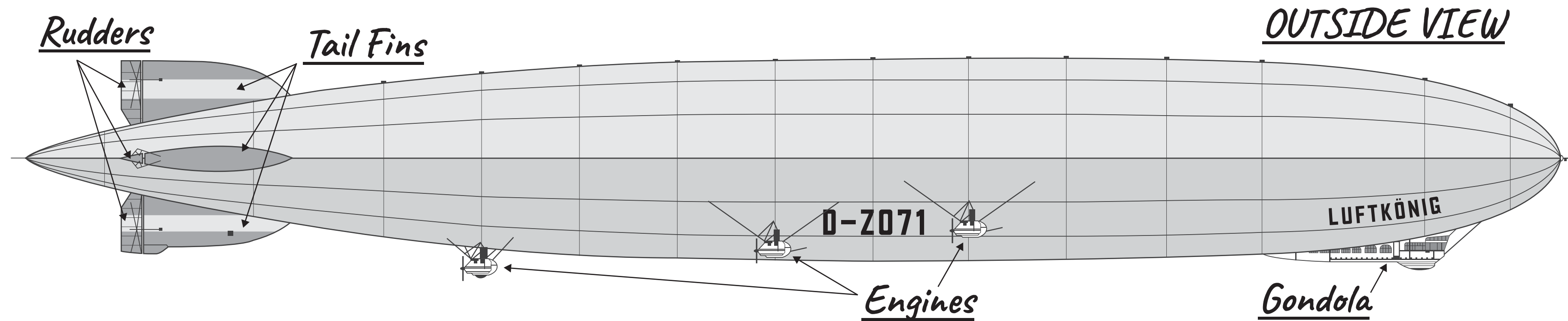
Inventor:
Walther Bauersfeld.

HERR BAUERSFELD'S
ORIGINAL SKETCH



LUFTSCHIFFBAU ZEPPELIN - D-Z071 „LUFTKÖNIG“

PAGE 10



- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| A: Auxiliary Controls | F: Berths | K: Ventillation Shaft | P: Wire Netting | U: Sheer Wires |
| B: Crew's Toilet | G: Gas Bags | L: Cargo Space | Q: Fuel Pump | V: Water Tanks |
| C: Gas Shaft Hood | H: Climbing Shaft | M: Axial Corridor | R: Oil Tanks | W: Maneuvering Valve |
| D: Gas Exhaust Shaft | I: Oil Tanks | N: Fuel Tanks | S: Crew's Quarters | X: Ballast Sacks |
| E: Pressure Relief Valve | J: Air Vent Hood | O: Cord Netting | T: Observation Post | |

HOW TO SPEAK GERMAN!

The secret code for German sounds!

PAGE 11

Vowels (A, E, I, O, U)

A: Like "ah" in "father."

E: Like "eh" in "bed" or "ay" in "hey."

I: Like "ee" in "ski."

O: Like "oh" in "go."

U: Like "oo" in "flute."

Umlauts (Vowels with Two Dots!)

These change the sound!

Ä: Like "air" or "a" in "cat."

Ö: Tricky! Round lips for "oh" but say "eh." (Like the "u" in "fur")

Ü: Tricky! Round lips for "oo" but say "ee." (Like the "ew" in "few")

Tricky Consonants & Combinations

CH:

After A, O, U: Like clearing your throat (like "loch").

After I, E: Soft, whispered "h" (like "ickh").

EI: Sounds like "eye."

IE: Sounds like a long "ee."

EU / ÄU: Sounds like "oy."

SCH: Sounds like "sh" (like "shoe").

SP (at start): Sounds like "shp."

ST (at start): Sounds like "sht."

S (at start): Sounds like "z" (like "zebra").

V: Sounds like "f."

W: Sounds like "v."

Z: Always sounds like "ts" (like the end of "cats").



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The information included in this work has been researched and verified to the best of my abilities and may possibly contain errors. It is purley my intent to interest young people and others in the subject matter, historical events, and scientific breakthroughs that these stories contain. Traditional internet searches as well as help from various AI sources have been used in my attempt to maintain accuracy. If any of this information is erroneous or incorrect, I sincerely apologize. If you see any corrections that should be made, please email me at vonDolven@proton.me.