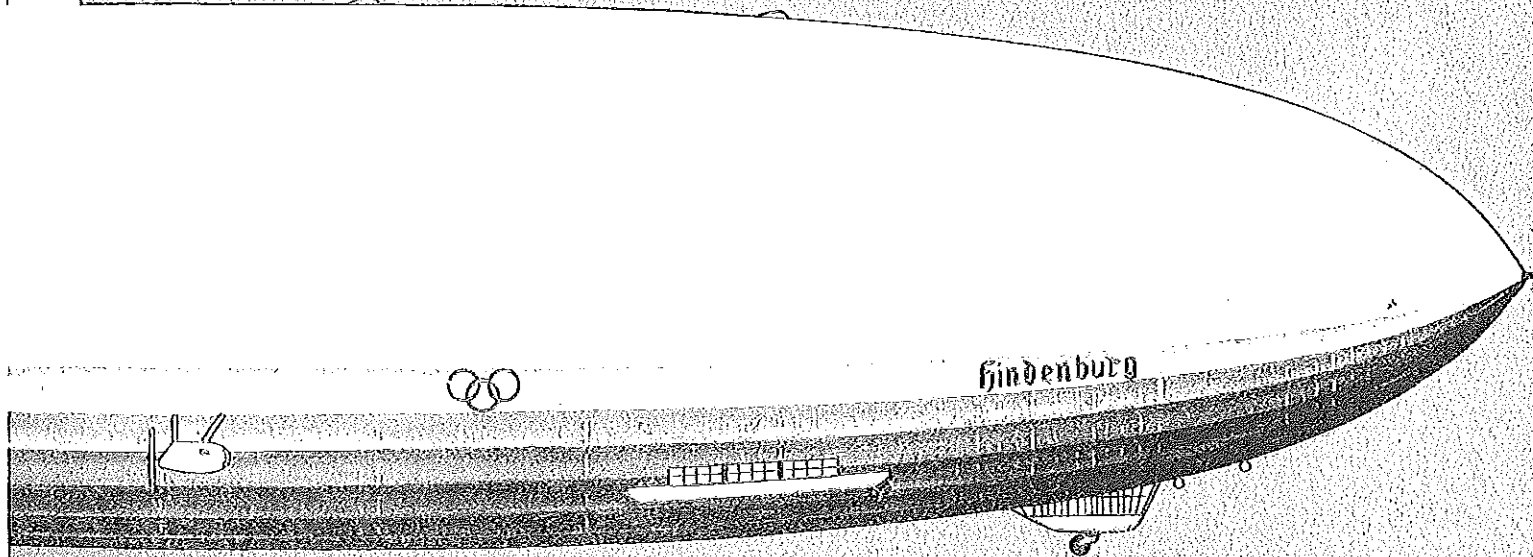


LZ 129 "Hindenburg"

by Douglas H. Robinson

with scale drawings by Richard Groh

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— FAMOUS AIRCRAFT SERIES —

Morgan - Dallas
Arco - New York
1964

\$2⁹⁵



Dining room of "Hindenburg," tables arranged for a formal dinner. Note promenade and outward-slanting windows beyond the railing.

could be made through the chief steward to send telegrams via the ship's radio station. A small library in the lounge would issue books against receipts, and the passengers were cautioned not to leave them in public rooms. A sick bay attendant was on board who would care for and provide medication without cost to passengers (for the 1937 season, the *Reederei* shipped a physician, Dr. Rüdiger, who survived the Lakehurst disaster). Passengers were requested, "to prevent damage to the machinery installations abaft the passenger spaces, not to throw objects out the windows."

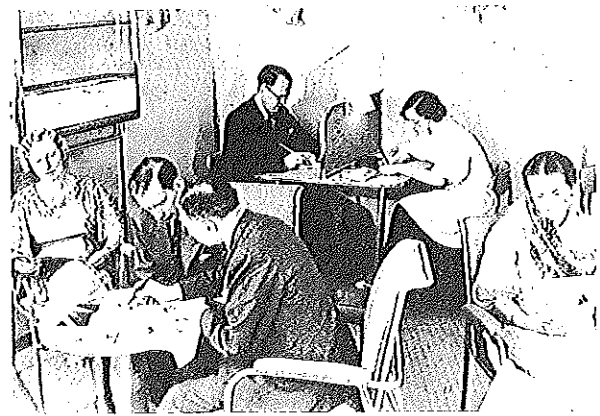
Much attention had been given to "Hindenburg's" public rooms, where Dr. Dürr and the airship's designers had expected that the passengers would spend most of the daylight hours. As an advertisement for the opulence and taste of the New Germany, the talents of the country's most famous architects and artists had been exploited. The largest rooms were on A deck outboard of the passenger cabins. To port, occupying an area measuring 15 x 50 feet, was the dining room. Here, with all the luxury and refinement of a small restaurant, were seats for 34 passengers — at four small tables for 2 persons along the inboard wall, and at six larger tables outboard. The tables — and the chairs likewise — were of a special lightweight tubular aluminum design — "as light as possible, as stable as possible" — created for the "Hindenburg" by Professor Breuhaus. In the dining room the chairs were upholstered in red. The inner walls, covered with airship cotton fabric and off-white in color, bore 21 original paintings by Professor Arpke. This gentleman



Lounge, looking along promenade towards writing room.

"did not interpret his contract to decorate the public rooms to mean that he was to create a flying picture gallery, but rather he was conscious of the fact that his pictures were not an end in themselves, but should enliven the rooms." His work therefore was to correspond with the nature of the airship and to be related to airship travel. Thus, the colorful paintings in the dining room represented "Graf Zeppelin" on a South American journey, departing Friedrichshafen, passing over the Spanish coast, the African landscape, the Cape Verde and Canary Islands, a full rigged ship on the wide wastes of the ocean, soaring gulls, sharks in the azure water, the island of Fernando Noronha, desolate St. Paul's Rocks in the middle of the South Atlantic, the palms and surf of the coast of South America, butterflies, fishing natives, and finally, Rio and the Sugar Loaf on the rim of its incomparable harbor.

Meals in these surroundings were an unforgettable experience. Passengers were assigned seats by the chief steward (obviously there must have been two sittings), and persons traveling alone might find themselves exchanging pleasantries with leaders in government and commerce of both Germany and America. Mr. Lester Gardner found himself at the captain's table together with the Governor of Bavaria, General Franz Ritter von Epp, "a very important Nazi"; Dr. Dorpmüller, head of the German Railways; Dr. Koppenburg, the president of the Junkers Aircraft



Reading and Writing room.

Works in Dessau, and Frau Koppenburg; a Fräulein Strassman, a major and a professor. With German only being spoken, the others sometimes remembered to translate for the publisher of "Aviation Magazine," but "the situation, though most courteous, is rather difficult."

The tables were laid with white linen napkins and tablecloths, fresh-cut flowers, fine silver, and the special china service created for the "Hindenburg." I am fortunate to own a demitasse cup and saucer from this set — a gift of the widow of the late *General-major* Joachim Breithaupt, former Airship Advisor in the German Air Ministry. Exquisitely confectioned of "Heinrich Ivory Porcelain," it is marked on the bottom "Property of the German Zeppelin *Reederei*," bears a chased gold and blue band around the rim, and exhibits the *Reederei* crest — a white Zeppelin, outlined in gold, superimposed on a blue globe with meridians of longitude and parallels of latitude in

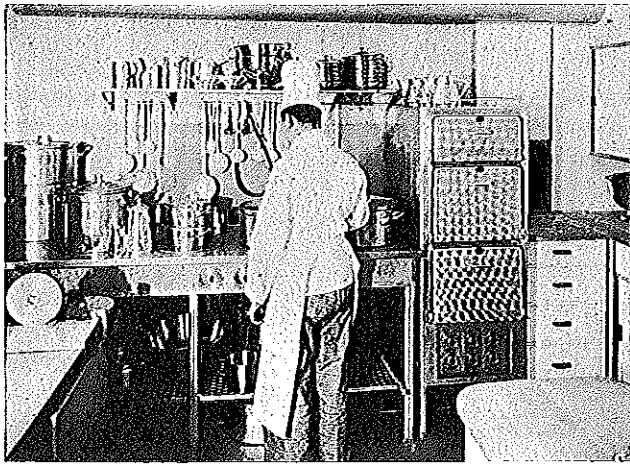


Dining room arranged for every day use.



Lounge, with the famous aluminum piano in corner.

On the following two pages, artist Richard Groh shows "Hindenburg," as seen from a starboard gondola of "Graf Zeppelin," as they cruised together over Germany on a three-day propaganda flight in March, 1936.



In "Hindenburg's" galley, the electric stove and baking and roasting ovens (right).

and finished in yellow pigskin. This, after some soul-searching, was provided as a concession to veteran airship passengers who complained that a piano was all that was lacking in the convivial parties aboard the old "Graf Zeppelin." The gray-walled writing and reading room was decorated with eleven more of Professor Arpke's paintings showing the development postal services, from the Chinese foot messenger and Eskimo dog sled to the express steamer, the mail plane, and finally the "Graf Zeppelin." Pneumatic tubes enabled letter-writers to send their missives direct to the mail room above the control car.

Outboard of the public rooms, and separated from them by a low railing, were 50-foot promenades, connected by a cross-passage between the two sides of A deck. This afforded a walking distance of nearly 200 feet for transatlantic passengers used to the daily constitutional around a steamer deck. Outboard of the promenades were six large Plexiglass windows, slanting outwards at 45 degrees, often left open as there was no draft in or outwards even at an air speed of 80 knots. Here the passengers stood or sat for hours on low cushioned seats, enthralled by the sight of foaming waves, tossing ships, forests, towns, rivers and cities, going by only a few hundred feet below. Curtains drawn at night between the promenade and public rooms enabled the travelers to enjoy the sight of moonlight on the waves, the brilliance of the stars, without the glare and reflection of the artificial lighting.

On B deck were some of the more prosaic utilities of the ship. Forward on the port side was a commodious electric kitchen, presided over by the chief cook and his five assistants. The aluminum stove possessed four electric burners, there were electric roasting and baking ovens, where fresh bread was baked daily, serving and preparing tables, a refrigerator and an ice machine. A dumb waiter conveyed prepared meals up to the dining room. The chief cook was responsible for the three store rooms along the keel and their 5500 pounds of food and provisions — enough for four days, though the journey was scheduled to last less than three. These included such items as 440 pounds of fresh meat and poultry; 220 pounds of fish; 330 pounds of sausage and cold cuts; 440 pounds of potatoes; 440 pounds of fresh vegetables and lettuce; 800

eggs; 220 pounds of butter, cheese and marmalade; 440 pounds of canned goods; and 40 gallons of milk.

Toilet and wash rooms were located on B deck, and another luxury which the airship passenger would not have anticipated — a shower bath, for which guests signed up at specified times. No direct testimony by users thereof can be found, but one authority allows that the shower's output was "miserly," and it "had the annoying habit of turning itself off, no matter how soaped-up the showerer might be."¹²

Sheer fantasy was the word for the smoking room forward on the starboard side of B deck. For a hydrogen-filled airship this was a startling feature, yet safety was assured through the 12½ x 15½ foot room being pressurized against the entrance of hydrogen, and sealed off by an air-lock door. This was under the control of the bar steward, whose duty it was to inspect each guest to make sure he was not carelessly departing with a burning cigarette, cigar or pipe. The steward also was the sole custodian of matches. "In the smoking room," noted one reporter, "is *one* electric lighter of the automobile type. This proves rather tough for cigar smokers (and Germans are partial to fairly good cigars), and impossible for pipe addicts. In the latter case the smoke room steward, with a rather reluctant mien, may be approached on his off side, and persuaded to produce and ignite one (1) lucifer (or match) to the offending pipe-bowl; but he retains hold of said match with great tenacity, from ignition to charred cinder. For the passenger to do his own lighting is *streng verboten*."¹³ More genially, the bar steward might dispense a "Martini-Cocktail" or "Manhattan-Cocktail" (1.50 RM. each); "Weinbrand," "Schwarzwälder Kirschwasser," and the specialties of the house, the "LZ 129 Frosted Cocktail" and the "Maybach 12." The former contained orange juice and "lots of gin," but whether the latter's ingredients were "Scotch Whiskey Long John" or "Jamaica-Rum" are secrets now gone forever.

The decorations of the smoking room conferred on it an enchanted, out-of-this-world atmosphere twenty-

¹²Gordon Vaeth, *Graf Zeppelin* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), p. 173.

¹³U. S. Air Services, June, 1936, p. 7.



A corner of the smoking room in "Hindenburg."