

News Release

For Immediate Release

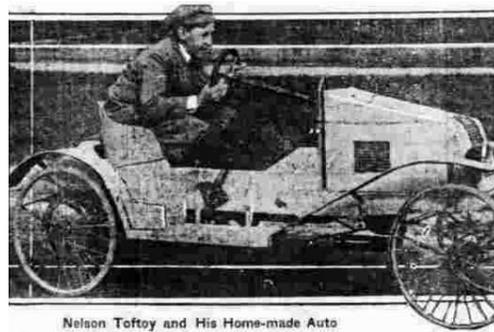
For More Information, Contact:
Dave Johnson
Norsk Museum Board President
415 Lewis St.
Marseilles, IL 61341
(815) 343-5070
david7dog@yahoo.com

August 16, 2015

The Norsk Museum in Norway, Illinois unveils new exhibit in honor of Major General Holger Nelson Toftoy. During World War II, Norwegians had the proud honor of squashing the Nazi attempts to develop nuclear weapons, with Hitler's heavy water sabotage in February of 1944, thanks to the heroes of Telemark. What follows chronicles the story of another hero of World War II—you might not be familiar with his name because the operation was classified "secret" until many years after the war. A Norwegian son, born here in LaSalle County also distinguished himself during World War II. His name is Holger Nelson Toftoy. Born on Oct 31, 1902 in Miller Township, north of Marseilles, to Nils and Thea [Thorson-Anderson] Toftoy, he became better known as "Mr. Missile". Toftoy was a pioneer, visionary, leader, and soldier. His foresight, persuasiveness and persistence lead our country to win the space race. Without Holger Toftoy, our world would be very different; we probably wouldn't have computers, cell phones, and the internet. The United States of America may not be the world leader it is today, under different historic events.



When Holger was quite young, his parents separated. He was shipped up to Madison Wisconsin, to live with his aunt and uncle. At age 12, he already demonstrated his genius by building his own gasoline driven car, which went 25-miles per hour upon first attempt. He attended the University of Wisconsin in 1920 as a ROTC cadet. During his second year, he was appointed to the U.S. Military Academy, graduating in 1926. Cadet Toftoy acquired the nickname Ludy, because of his Norwegian heritage and his love for lutefisk. Actually, since the age of 12, Toftoy knew he wanted to be a pilot, and that's what he signed up for; commissioned in the Army Air Corps after graduation, Ludy prepared for Primary Flying School by attending classes in New York. He soon discovered in flight training that piloting wasn't his forte. One good thing came out of New York though; this is where he met his



Nelson Toftoy and His Home-made Auto

future bride, Hazel Schweikert. So, Ludy, and his young bride, transferred to Coast Artillery where Toftoy served three years in Hawaii as a battery commander before returning to West Point as an instructor for five years. In the 1930's he commanded the mine defenses of the Pacific approach to the Panama Canal, transferring to the Submarine Mine Depot at Fort Monroe; serving for six years. Here he directed the design and development of a new type of controlled submarine mine system widely used in World War II.

After the invasion of Normandy came new assignments. Cherbourg Harbor had to be cleared of mines as quickly as possible to permit use by Allied forces, and the Army's foremost mine expert was given the job. Complications arose immediately. The harbor was strewn with an unknown type of controlled mine. Before it could be cleared, this new mine had to be defused and thoroughly examined. Toftoy sent everyone to a safe distance and took it apart himself. Then he arranged for perhaps the biggest and noisiest Independence Day display of all time—his irrepressible sense of humor leading him to set the date for destroying the minefield as the Fourth of July!

A group of German scientists, working under the direction of youthful Wernher von Braun and General Alfred Dornberger at Peenemunde, had developed a couple of Adolf Hitler's most effective "secret weapons," i.e., the V-1 and V-2 rockets. U.S. technical intelligence teams operating in the European Theater's combat zone soon found themselves with a new chief, Colonel H. N. Toftoy. His orders were five-fold: 1] the discovery and technical evaluation of captured new or unknown enemy ordnance weapons or equipment. 2] direction of five teams of specialists operating in the combat zone in Europe. 3] preparation and distribution of technical reports on captured material. 4] selection and shipment of specimens for further test in the United States or United Kingdom 5] informing Army commanders on the capabilities and use of new enemy ordnance weapons.



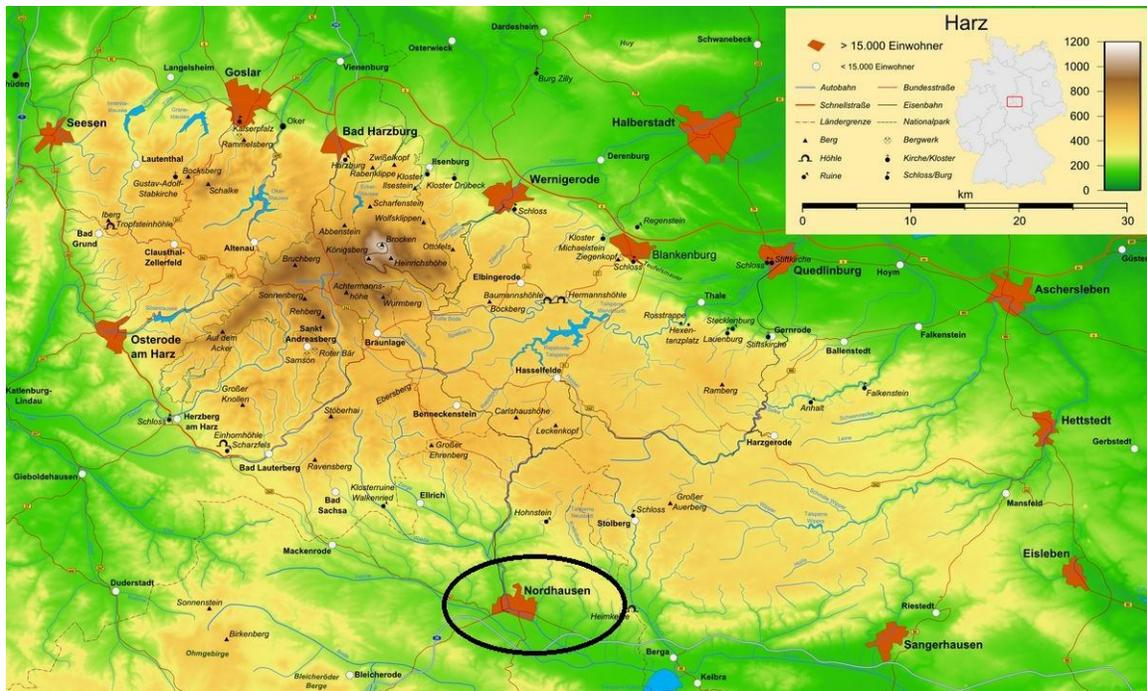
Colonel Toftoy, now assigned to the Army Ordnance Corps, received a cable, requesting a few V-2's for firing in the United States. At the time there were no operational V-2's

available; the Germans had fired them as fast as they were built or V-2's intercepted en route to firing sites had been destroyed by the Germans before they were abandoned.

In an old salt mine used as an underground factory, a large number of V-2 parts had been discovered and Toftoy suggested that they be shipped to the United States for assembly and firing. The War Department agreed and asked for enough parts to assemble 100 missiles! The factory was mid-way between Frankfurt and Berlin, within days of being part of the Russian occupation zone.

Toftoy's key assistant, Major James P. Hamill was given the assignment and 16 Liberty shiploads [300 European box cars loads] of V-2 parts were finally deposited on the open desert of the new White Sands, NM, Proving Ground. The Dornberger-von Braun 3000-man organization at Peenemunde, was working on even more advanced missiles, having a rough time, pinched between Allied bombings and advancing Russian forces. When it became senseless to remain any longer at the Baltic Coast installation, they packed their drawings and choice equipment and headed for the Harz Mountains*, hoping to set up shop there, only to run into the U.S. Third Army, under General Patton.

* The most important V-2 production sites were the central plants, called Mittelwerk, in the southern Harz Mountains near Nordhausen, where an abandoned gypsum mine provided an underground cavern large enough to house extensive facilities in secrecy. Slave labor from Dora carved out an underground factory in the abandoned mine, which extended a mile into the hillside.



When the technical intelligence experts contacted the Germans they were convinced that the Germans wished to cooperate with the Americans and they were the bona fide developers of the V-2.

The U.S. Army, at the time, was planning to add guided missiles to its wartime program. Col. Toftoy knew that time and money could be saved if the U.S. started where the Germans had stopped. So he cabled General Eisenhower at the Pentagon, recommending that the best of the V-2 experts [300 of them] be sent to the U.S. for interrogation by American scientists and for possible employment. During negotiations, Toftoy asked whether the scientists would rather work for us or one of our Allies. Without hesitation they answered they were only interested in the United States because throughout history the Germans had never been quite able to understand the British; they felt the French had insufficient resources for missile development; and the Russians they did not trust!

After a trip to Washington to plead his case in person and an agonizing period of red tape, the State, War and Commerce Departments finally agreed to the proposal, then limited the group to 100, and Toftoy was directed to return to Germany, select them and arrange for their passage to the U.S.

Toftoy had a serious problem to face, reducing the number from 300 to 100, and finally compromised at 127. His purpose was to have a fully integrated team of top people in all fields necessary for the development of a complex guided missile system. Only bona fide experts were wanted; creative scientists and technicians could be provided in the states. This organization became the world's first and only experienced supersonic ballistic missile team, the beginning of "Operation Paper Clip."

The Germans did not care about money, just for the safety and necessities of life for their families. Toftoy flew back to Europe. The team located a former German cavalry installation at Landshut which would serve nicely for a dependent camp. Toftoy negotiated with General Bull, the Chief of Staff of our forces in Europe to approve the camp and provide medical, food and fuel supply. It would be another ten years of red tape before all the families would reunite in the United States. The German Scientists never complained. Originally they were paid \$6 a day per diem, the remainder of their salaries being paid to their families in Germany from war reparations.

The first group of scientists, including Dr. von Braun, arrived in September 1945. They began sorting and translating about 40 tons of captured documents collected by technical intelligence teams. Toftoy was transferred back to the states and assigned the responsibility, under Chief of Ordnance, for developing Army guided missiles. By April 1947, most of the German scientists were now stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas, where the Research and Development sub-office had been established by Col. Hamill. En route to lunch one day near Fort Bliss, Toftoy and Hamill passed by the Willam Beamont General Hospital annex. In observation, Hamill said, "This would be a fine set-up. Look, it has a security fence, plenty of buildings, a fire department, swimming pool—everything we need. We could utilize this nicely." It didn't take long before Toftoy got all the key players involved to the make takeover a reality. He even flew to Washington to discuss the matter with the Surgeon General's office.



By the end of 1950, Toftoy outgrew the facility at Fort Bliss and transferred everything to Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama. Within 6 years, he had 1800 civilian employees, the German V-2 scientists, and 120 military personnel.

Over the years, Redstone Arsenal, under General Toftoy's command, was responsible for the research and development, procurement and production, storage, maintenance and issue of the entire family of Army missiles and rockets. These included the Jupiter, Redstone, Pershing, Sergeant, Corporal, LaCrosse, Honest John, Little John, Nike-Ajax, Nike-Hercules, Nike Zeus, Hawk, Plato, Jupiter-C, Explorer I, and the Pioneer.

On October 4, 1957 the Russians launched Sputnik into space, creating a scare in America and starting our own race to space. Toftoy requested permission to launch a satellite back in 1954, but the answer was "No Military Requirement." Explorer I was launched January 31, 1958.



No one man, of course, can be credited with the Army's weapon system changes. It was a team accomplishment. But the farm kid from LaSalle County, Illinois, the University of Wisconsin ROTC cadet who spent a summer at Aberdeen Proving Ground and never served in the Ordnance Corps until the closing days of World War II has earned the name bestowed on him by the people of Huntsville, AL near Redstone Arsenal. They call him "Mr. Missile." When General Toftoy left they erected a monument to him, a road named for him, and Toftoy Hall was built, the U.S. Army Missile and Munitions Center and School, at Redstone Arsenal.

Major General H. N. Toftoy retired in 1960 and made his home in Treasure Island, FL. He died on April 19, 1969 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. and was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery. He has received many awards over his career including Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Army Commendation Ribbon with Metal Pendant, French Croix de Guerre with Palm and Distinguished Service Medal.



Dr. Wernher von Braun and other German scientists reflected over the previous 15 years, after Toftoy's death. When Col. Toftoy first met with von Braun and the Peenemuende folks, tired and hungry, and emaciated from six years of relentless war, he ordered milk for the children! Then he started long discussions with von Braun about rockets and guided missiles, about test ranges and proving grounds, and also about human voyages to the Moon, and rocket-driven spacecraft to the planets. Colonel Toftoy was first a soldier, a West Pointer, but he was also a very broad-minded citizen of the world, and above all, he was a warmhearted, caring human being.

In September, 1945 the first shipment of Peenemuende specialists arrived by plane in the United States. During the next nine months, shipments followed with the V-2 parts. The scientists settled in their new home at Fort Bliss in Texas. This influx of German nationals was not accepted with the same calmness by all American citizens, fearing the spread of Nazi ideas. It was Col. Toftoy who missed no opportunity to state that he had the fullest confidence in each of the Peenemuende team.

A former member of the Peenemuende team wrote to the Toftoy family after the General's death. "In the memory of us Peenemuende Germans, General Toftoy lives as perfect father figure. In turn, he often called us "my children." To bring us over from war-torn Germany to the United States was, primarily, an experiment. It was unusual and courageous, but it was logical. In retrospect, we former Germans believe that it was a full success; we feel fortunate and privileged to have been involved, and we will always keep General Toftoy in our thankful and loving memory."

At the dedication of Toftoy Hall, at the Redstone Arsenal in Alabama in 1967, Dr. Wernher von Braun had many kind words about General Toftoy. His distinguished career, high character, and remarkable influence initiated this country's ballistic missile program. His outstanding perception for scientific advancement and his visionary recognition of the advantages of applications of rockets were vitally needed to assure this country's continued progress and safety. His perception and perseverance also paved the way for a great deal of our nation's scientific space program.

Dr. von Braun stated, "Had it not been for General Toftoy and the initiation of the ballistic missile program in the early fifties, we would have stayed behind much longer in opening space to probing instruments, orbiting satellites, and manned space vehicles."

This brings us back to the question, what if Ludy Toftoy, a farm boy from LaSalle County, Illinois wasn't born? Can you imagine what this world would be like?

The new "Toftoy" exhibit wouldn't be possible without the generous contributions by General HN Toftoy's daughter and son, Mrs. Doris Williams of Huntsville, Alabama and Dr. Charles Toftoy of Arlington, Virginia. Charles followed in his father's foot steps by graduating from West Point, distinguishing himself in the Army, earning numerous medals, and serving two tours in Vietnam. After his military service, he joined the corporate world; Charles is Professor Emeritus of Management at George Washington University. Since 1994, he has published three books which started with the thriller, *It's in the Eyes* and the sequel *Eyes of Cold Case Killers*. His books have featured the GWU campus, and even the women's basketball team. He just finished a new book with the same characters that is more inspirational in tone; it is called '*Amazing Fireside Talks, Intriguing Thoughts to Awaken You*'.



“Mr. Missile”

Please contact Dave Johnson, President of the **Norsk Museum** Board, if you would like to schedule a group tour. Dave may be contacted at (815) 343-5070. For more information about the museum, check out Facebook/**Norsk Museum**.

Saturday, September 5th is “General Toftoy Day” at the Norsk Museum in Norway, Illinois. Come out and join us from 1 to 5!

Normal museum hours are from 1-5 p.m. Saturday & Sunday from June through September. The museum is also available during off-hours to groups upon request. There is no admission fee. We are a non-profit 501(c)(3), non-tax supported museum and our support is procured through fund raising events and donations. The museum is staffed entirely by volunteers. The Norsk Museum was started by members of the Cleng Peerson Lodge in 1978, located in Norway, Illinois, home of the first permanent Norwegian settlement in America. This settlement was made possible by Cleng Peerson, early Norwegian explorer and the Sloopers of 1825. The museum building, former Hauge Church, built in 1846 by Elling Eielsen, the first Norwegian Lutheran pastor in America. The Norsk Museum volunteers represent the Sons of Norway lodges, Cleng Peerson and Polar Star. The **Norsk Museum** is always looking for items to display as well as more people interested in preserving our Norwegian heritage.