



*Mid Mo Old Car Club
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STORIES

Contributed by new MMOCC member Craig Haugen:

Mercedes-Benz model 770

Solum Drives Quisling Car – (Public Opinion-Decorah Iowa-April 1950)

At the left is Torgay Solum of Skotselv, Norway as he looks over the papers that enabled him to come to the United States for a six months visit. Solum is visiting the Carol O. Haga family who live about a mile west of Decorah.



VISITS AT HAGAS

Solum wrote to Carl Haga for certification to enter the United States for his visit. The two men are old friends as Solum was a resident of

Madison township from 1929 to 1936 and worked on the Haga farm and with the Madison telephone company at that time. He is also visiting his brother Hans Solum who lives near the Hagas.

Drives Quisling's Car

In the top picture is the special German Mercedes car used by Vidkun Quisling when he was in power in Norway during the German occupation. Solum had an opportunity to drive the car and examine it through a friend who is the head of the government highway and automotive department in Norway. Solum was interested in the car in connection with his business which is designing and selling industrial machinery.



Mrs. Howard Holtan, wife of a friend of Solum's is about to get into the car. The picture was taken two weeks ago.

Bullet Proof

The car body with the exception of the fenders is built of one half inch bullet proof steel plate, the windows are one and one half inches thick and are made in four layers. The car weighs about four tons and is powered with a 200 horsepower "compression injection" engine.

Solum stated that he would be interested in buying the engine of the car for industrial use but the Norwegian highway department which owns it would like to sell it intact to a purchaser in the U. S. He said the cost of the car would be about \$8,000.

Automatic Greasing

The car has five gears forward, the first gear being free wheeling, and the second, third, fourth and fifth gears are silent. It is 17 feet long, seven feet wide and six feet high. It is equipped with an automatic greasing system that greases the entire car with one stroke of a lever. Top speed of the car is about 120 miles an hour.

Solum said about twenty of these special cars were built and given out as gifts by Hitler. The German commander in Norway had a car identical to it, which is now also owned by the Norwegian government. Quisling never drove out without a four car escort, a car in front and rear and one on each side, said Solum.



Returned In 1936

Solum went back to his native Norway after contracting dust fever here in 1936 and has not been able to return since then because of the war. He said he has noted many changes in the city of Decorah in the 14 years of his absence, he said the stores seem to be much larger and the number of automobiles seems to be doubled. He said he spent several hours in a large grocery market in Decorah looking around and said he would like to own a similar store in his town in Norway.

The trip from Norway to the U.S. Solum made by plane and he said the weather was poor most of the way so that the effect was startling. He left Oslo at 9 p.m. April 25 and saw nothing but clouds and fog for about 18 hours and then the clouds broke and he was looking down at Detroit in the sunlight with the immense factories and parking lots with thousands of cars. The trip by air took just 22 hours and Solum said with the new jet airliners now in production in Britain the time may be cut in half.

Salvage German Ship

Salvage work on the German pocket battleship Tirpitz has been Solum's work for the past three years. A friend of Solum's in the industrial machinery business purchased the ship which is resting upside down in shallow water in a Norwegian fjord.

Near the end of the war the British bombers were constantly hunting for the big German battleships stationed on the Norwegian coast and the ships would change positions continually to try to remain hidden. The German pocket type battleship could rise and lower itself in the water, lowering in time of battle and raising when speed was necessary.

Capsizes

The Tirpitz was changing positions when the British spotted it and had floated itself as high as possible because of the shallow water. A large bomb landed next to the ship pushing the water away and the ship capsized, said Solum. The ship was not damaged by the bombs because it was well armored with a foot thick steel plate.

Solum has worked in the ship under the water in a diving suit and said occasionally they still find dead German sailors as they open more room. He said 1100 bodies have been taken from the ship.

Member of Underground

As a member of the Norwegian underground during the war it was Solum's duty to report military positions. He was employed by the Nazis to design machinery and could travel through the country, noting what he saw and reporting to the underground.

He said the underground usually got their instructions through the B.B.C. broadcasts from England. "Death was the penalty for owing a radio but everybody had them," said Solum. They were built into chairs and hidden in all parts of the houses. He said one friend of his had a radio built into a coffee pot that sat on the stove. The pot held an inch or two of coffee in the top and a button inside the spout turned on the radio. Another friend had a radio hidden in a bird cage and the cage was fastened to the outside of the house so it could be swung in through a window. When the friend took his 'bird' in they listened to the news and when the news was over the bird went back outside the house.

Trap Nazis

"The Nazis discovered that the British were dropping supplies and ammunition to the underground in the mountain forests and came after us," said Solum. We were ready for them hiding in the woods at the rim of a valley and as they came up the valley we opened fire and killed them all. "We were very lucky that the war ended four days later because it was the German practice to burn all the houses in any district where the underground rose against the troops," he said.

Solum is not married but has one brother and one sister in Norway, and a sister at Devil's Lake, North Dakota besides his brother, Hans near Decorah.

He stated that the only things which are still hard to get in Norway are coffee and sugar and clothes. The taxes in Norway are high, but the country was very lovely and the government has been able to provide food so the people are gradually getting on their feet. He said the five war years of sabotage has had its effect on the people's working habits and they have not been able to change back to full production quickly. He said he saw the first boatload of oranges and bananas since the war arriving in Norway as he was getting ready to leave.



Note: Vidkun Quisling last rode in the car the day following Germany's effective surrender date of 8 May 1945. At 0622 on 9 May, his vehicle escort arrived at police headquarters, Gimle Neighborhood, Kristiansand, Norway where he surrendered. He was later tried in court and executed by firing squad. "Quisling" is slang for traitor in a few languages.

There were no buyers for the vehicle, so it was salvaged and only reported remains are the bullet proof glass. The convertible model issued to Norway was reported to have undergone extensive renovations in Czechoslovakia and is in a museum in Prague.

Additional information on the Mercedes-Benz 770 can be found on Wikipedia.

Torgny Solum performed farm work with my great-grandfather Carl Haga. He worked with my grandfather's brother with the Madison Township Telephone Company. His brother Hans Solum started ski jumping at age 46 when his farm was established and his kids were older, winning his first contest against 39 others for a jump of 134 feet, dressed in farm overalls. He went on to win many more and established a ski jump area in Decorah, Iowa.

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