

IMMEDIATE

David J. Buchko  
BMW Product Communications Manager  
201-307-3789 / [dave.buchko@bmwna.com](mailto:dave.buchko@bmwna.com)

Gordon B. Keil  
BMW Product Communications Specialist  
201-307-3790 / [gordon.keil@bmwna.com](mailto:gordon.keil@bmwna.com)

## **ALBRECHT GRAF GOERTZ TO CELEBRATE HIS 90TH BIRTHDAY**

**Munich – January 12, 2004 ...** The creator of a BMW legend celebrates his birthday today. Albrecht Graf von Goertz, who designed the BMW 507 sports car in 1955, was born on January 12, 1914, the second son to an aristocratic family in Germany. His parents were Else and Rudolf Graf von Schlitz gen. von Goertz und Freiherr von Wriesberg. Albrecht and his two siblings grew up on their parents' estate near Brunkensen (Lower Saxony), about 40 kilometers south of Hanover. At the age of five, he discovered a passion for cars that would last all his life. Goertz began designing cars from his youth—he still has some of these early sketches.

After attending school, the young Count started an apprenticeship with the Deutsche Bank in Hamburg in 1933. Within one year, he switched jobs and went to the London-based private bank Helbert Wagg & Co. Unfortunately, his prospects in Europe were not very promising. In 1935, Goertz applied to the American embassy at Grosvenor Square for an entry visa to the USA. In the autumn of 1936, he left Europe for New York City.

A distant relative in New York helped him when he first arrived, but soon the young Count relocated to Los Angeles. To earn a living, Goertz worked at a car wash, in a factory for aircraft engines, and at a flight service. The car aficionado watched with great interest the emerging Hot Rod era and grasped the opportunity in 1938. Goertz rented a garage and showroom located on Rodeo Drive and began to modify Ford Model A and B models. On a Mercury chassis, he built his first car, the curvy "Paragon" which was a two-door coupe with rear wheel trims and unconventional rear side windows. Goertz convinced many to exhibit this car at the World Exhibition in San Francisco in 1939.

In 1940, Goertz stepped aside from his fascination and served in the army for five years. When he returned to Los Angeles, he took the Paragon out of the garage, made all the necessary travel arrangements and headed for New York once again. This would bring about a fateful turn of events that would soon change everything for the young Count. In the parking lot of the world-famous Waldorf-Astoria hotel, Goertz recalls, in his own words, what had transpired: "There was a strange car in front of me, so I got out of my car to have a look at the other car and the man sitting in it got out to have a look at mine. This man was Raymond Loewy, a renowned designer". Loewy invited Goertz to his office, sent him to a design college and gave him a job in the Studebaker studio in Indiana shortly thereafter.

The Count, who had worked for three famous designers by 1953, soon set up his own design business. Through his contact network, he got to know Max Hoffmann, BMW's general importer in America. Hoffmann knew of BMW's plans to build a big sports car and encouraged Goertz to contact BMW in Munich. Goertz sketched an awesome vehicle and quickly won the bid. In less than 18 months, he designed the BMW 507, the car that celebrated its world premiere in the New York Waldorf-Astoria hotel in 1955. At the same time, Goertz designed an elegant coupe that was also available as a convertible: the BMW 503. This four-seater debuted with the BMW 507 at the 1955 Frankfurt Motor Show, where both automobiles caused a sensation. Even today, the BMW 503 and the BMW 507 are considered absolute dream cars. Sporty, elegant and also cultivated, they represent the core attributes of a BMW car.

These designs had a leverage effect on Albrecht Graf Goertz's career: above all, Japanese car manufacturers were frequent visitors to his New York design studio. Sports cars, which enjoy world-wide success, as well as items of everyday life (such as jewelry and furniture) bear his mark. The Count still has a penchant for car design and has retained his restless spirit to this very day: "I have always been curious and on the lookout for countries that offer opportunities, countries where I have no cause for complaint".

Albrecht Graf Goertz still has some ties to the BMW Group- he regularly visits the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este, Europe's most important Design event. This classic car meeting that also incorporates contemporary design prototypes is taking place under the Patronage of BMW Group. His birthday party also will take place at BMW:

Albrecht Graf Goertz will celebrate his 90th birthday with friends and family at the BMW Group Mobile Tradition Building in Munich.

### **BMW Group In America**

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