

Northwest Minnesota Foundation

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NEWS RELEASE

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Edgar Hetteen Inducted into IDEA Hall of Fame

CROOKSTON, MN –IDEA Competition partners inducted Edgar Hetteen into the IDEA Hall of Fame on Tuesday, May 12 in Crookston at the *NMF Summit: Igniting Innovation*.

The IDEA Competition finished its first year and awarded cash prizes to four up and coming innovators, but IDEA partners also recognized the importance of honoring the accomplishments of Northwest Minnesota's legacy innovators – those within the region who have inspired others with their entrepreneurial vision, leadership and achievement. To honor those outstanding individuals and their accomplishments, IDEA Competition partners instituted the IDEA Hall of Fame.

“Edgar Hetteen was an easy choice for our first inductee in the IDEA Hall of Fame,” said Kari Howe, IDEA Partner and Economic Development Specialist for the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. “Edgar Hetteen is more than an inventor. He is more than an entrepreneur. His is a special blend of genius, guts and luck that legends are made of.” Entrepreneurs start businesses, but Edgar Hetteen founded an industry, and created a market for something that people never knew they needed – the snowmobile.

Due to his advanced age, Edgar was not able to travel to Crookston to accept the award, but his son, Ronn Hetteen, accepted the award on his behalf and made a few comments. “Dad was a remarkable man,” Ronn said. “When you think back over the years, it’s hard to believe all that he has done and accomplished in his lifetime...we are honored to accept the award on his behalf.”

The economic impact Edgar has had on northern Minnesota is hard to fathom. To measure that impact, you would have to add together tourism revenue, snowmobile sales, sales taxes revenues, and all the wages paid to people employed in the manufacturing of snowmobiles.

Edgar has always been a relentless "idea man," continually searching for ways to promote and to improve the performance of the vehicle he helped create. His ideas have led to many important developments, which are standards of the sport today. Some of his innovations include breakthrough ideas like slide rail suspension, the aluminum chassis, the forward-mounted engine and a multitude of other innovations which continue to define the snowmobile to this day.

His accomplishments belie his humble origins. He was the son of first generation Swedish immigrants and grew up on his family's 80-acre homestead south of Roseau, Minnesota. As a young boy he milked cows, fed the family livestock and developed a lifelong infatuation with mechanical equipment.

He never received a fancy college degree. In fact, after finishing the eighth grade, he left school and started working in his uncle's machine shop in Roseau. His bright mind and innovative spirit emerged early on. At the young age of 34, he co-founded Polaris Industries. The rest, as they say, is history – but history that forever changed the economy of Northwest Minnesota.

Here are some of the major events of his life:

- 1920 – Born in Roseau, Minnesota.
- 1944 – Opens company that eventually becomes Polaris Industries.
- 1955 – Polaris begins building snowmobiles.
- 1960 – Snowmobiles 1,200 miles across Alaska to prove snowmobiles can work. Later that year, he leaves Polaris.
- 1961 – Founds Arctic Enterprises in Thief River Falls.
- 1962 – Designs Arctic Cat 100.
- 1965 – Sells Arctic Enterprises.
- 1967 – Returns to Arctic Enterprises as Vice President.
- 1983 – Founds ASV, Inc., in Marcell, Minnesota.
- 1998 – Forbes names ASV 14th-best small company in America.

The IDEA Competition is a project of Ingenuity Frontier, a collaboration of partners joined by a common purpose — to grow the economy of Northwest Minnesota by outfitting the next generation of homegrown innovators for success in the global marketplace. IDEA sponsors are Bremer Banks of Crookston and Warren, First National Bank, Mahnomon, the Northwest Minnesota Foundation, University of Minnesota, Crookston, 360° Center for Manufacturing and Applied Engineering Center of Excellence and the Northwest Regional Small Business Development Center. IDEA was made possible through a generous grant from the Blandin Foundation. For more information, visit the IDEA website: www.ideacompetition.org.

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