

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Zeppelin Group showcases an automobile in a class of its own: the one-off 1957 Gaylord Gladiator**

**The company will unveil the perfectly preserved sports car as part of the “Innovations! Destination: Future” exhibition at the Zeppelin Museum in Friedrichshafen.**

**Garching near Munich, May 17, 2018. This automobile is a unique specimen from the age of Germany’s “economic miracle” and a piece of Friedrichshafen’s industrial history. At the request of two wealthy American brothers, the Zeppelin Group built a unique car in 1957, known as the Gaylord Gladiator. The only automobile of its type in the world had lain under the radar for more than 60 years. Pure chance led to the Zeppelin Group reclaiming this unique specimen, a real piece of company history.**

#### **The story of the Gaylord Gladiator**

The FIF vehicle repair facility at Friedrichshafen, which would go on to become part of the Zeppelin Group, was commissioned to build a particularly spectacular vehicle in the mid-1950s: Two wealthy American brothers, Jim and Ed Gaylord, were looking to get a truly exceptional sports car built for them. Staff at Friedrichshafen worked for over a year on an extremely elaborate and expensive sports car: the Gaylord Gladiator. Only three chassis were produced in all, with the bodywork only being completed on one of them. Once the vehicle was completed in 1958, it and one rolling chassis passed into the ownership of the Gaylord family. Up until now, it was always believed that the third chassis had been lost. After restoration work that brought the vehicle and rolling chassis virtually back to their original condition, the perfectly preserved Gaylord Gladiator, together with its chassis, numerous spare parts, design drawings, and other historical documents, was sold to an elderly automobile collector from Arizona.

In early 2017, the Zeppelin Group received an invitation via the Zeppelin Museum in Friedrichshafen to buy the classic car – a stroke of luck for the Group, as the vehicle had lain under the radar for many years and was believed to be lost. “You can’t put into words just how historically significant the Gaylord Gladiator is for us as a company,” says Peter Gerstmann, Chairman of the Management Board of Zeppelin GmbH. “With its outstanding workmanship and its unswerving focus on its customers in terms of how it was made, even today the Gaylord continues to embody values that make the Zeppelin Group one of the leading solution providers in its areas of activity.” The Zeppelin Group has its roots in the metal industry and now employs more than 8,300 people at 190 sites in 35 countries. Adopting the slogan “We Create Solutions,” the company provides solutions for the construction industry and plant engineering.

As far as the city of Friedrichshafen is concerned, this extraordinary vehicle is not only a major attraction but also historical evidence of the city's great innovative strength. "Through aviation in particular, Friedrichshafen has played a special role in the area of mobility since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution," says a proud Andreas Brand, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Zeppelin GmbH and Lord Mayor of the City of Friedrichshafen. "The Gaylord Gladiator is yet further proof of the city's visionary strength and unique character."

### **Ahead of its time: technical sophistication meets German workmanship**

The word "spectacular" not only describes the design of the Gaylord Gladiator, the work of US automobile design legend Brooks Stevens – it also applies to the sports car's technology, given that it was built back in 1957. As well as convenient features such as electrically adjustable seats, electric windows, power steering, brake servos, and air conditioning, the Gaylord Gladiator also came with a convertible roof that could be folded down completely into the trunk at the touch of a button. At the time, there was nothing remotely like these features anywhere else on the international car market.

Despite the sophisticated overall concept, the wealth of innovation involved, and the high quality specifications, a plan to produce a small batch of 25 vehicles for sale at a price of USD 10,000 each never saw the light of day. Only one of the 25 cars was ever built. It soon became apparent that the sales price calculated was unrealistic, while further price adjustments resulting from additional innovations such as installing air conditioning made the vehicle prohibitively expensive. To remain economically viable, the price was first raised to USD 15,000 before being revised upward again to USD 17,500. By way of comparison, a Mercedes 300 SL cost around 32,000 Deutschmarks at that time. Assuming DM 4.20 to the dollar, the Gaylord Gladiator thus cost more than twice as much, or the equivalent of around DM 73,500 in the mid-1950s. Being the only automobile of its type in the world, not only is the Gaylord Gladiator a unique specimen in the classic car industry and a priceless find for the Zeppelin Group, it is also a true gem of Friedrichshafen's industrial heritage.

### **The Gaylord Gladiator at the Zeppelin Museum in Friedrichshafen**

This perfectly preserved vehicle, working chassis, and fascinating history of its creation and life story will all be presented to the German public at the opening of the "Innovations! Destination: Future" exhibition at 7:30 p.m. on May 17. From May 18 to November 4, the Gaylord Gladiator will be on show as part of this exhibition at the Zeppelin Museum in Friedrichshafen, before being made available to the Zeppelin Museum on permanent loan from the Zeppelin Group.

*Please find press photos for download at [zeppelin.com](http://zeppelin.com) in the press section. Copyright of all pictures is with Zeppelin GmbH. In case of use, please quote the source.*

## About Zeppelin Group

Zeppelin Group operates 190 sites around the world. In the 2017 fiscal year, its more than 8.000 employees generated sales of 2.75 billion euros. Group-wide collaboration in Zeppelin Group revolves around a management holding company and six strategic business units: Construction Equipment EU (sales and servicing of construction machines), Construction Equipment CIS (sales and servicing of construction and agricultural machines), Rental (rental and project solutions for the construction and industry sectors), Power Systems (drive, propulsion, traction, and energy systems), Plant Engineering (engineering and plant engineering) and Z Lab (new digital business models). Zeppelin GmbH is the Group holding company. It is legally domiciled in Friedrichshafen and has its head office in Garching near Munich. For more information, visit [zeppelin.com](http://zeppelin.com).

### **Zeppelin GmbH**

Unternehmenskommunikation  
Graf-Zeppelin-Platz 1  
85748 Garching bei München

### Group spokesperson:

Sandra Scherzer  
Tel.: +89 3 20 00 - 440  
Fax. +89 3 20 00 - 7440  
E-Mail: [sandra.scherzer@zeppelin.com](mailto:sandra.scherzer@zeppelin.com)  
[www.zeppelin.com](http://www.zeppelin.com)