

News release

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For immediate release

On 31 January 1950 President Truman gave the order to create the hydrogen bomb. To mark the anniversary of this event, listen to physicist Edward Teller sharing, in his own words, the fascinating story of his part in its creation, which changed the world forever.

Edward Teller, the late Hungarian-American physicist, is famous for having helped to develop the atomic bomb and providing the theoretical framework for the hydrogen bomb. His long and, at times, controversial career spanned decades, leaving behind him a legacy, including contributions to nuclear and molecular physics, spectroscopy and surface physics, that remains relevant today. He was a staunch advocate of nuclear power and also of a strong defence policy, calling for the development of advanced thermonuclear weapons.

In 1939, Teller was an integral part of the group of scientists that invented the atomic bomb as part of the Manhattan Project. He was also the co-founder of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory where, following President Harry Truman's order in 1950, he developed the hydrogen bomb, along with fellow scientists including Ernest Lawrence and Luis Alvarez.

In order to tell his story in his own words, Teller recorded, just seven years before his death, a compelling narrative on a vast array of personal and professional subjects from unhappy school memories, his first taste of success as a scientist, attending a lecture by Einstein and emigrating to America. He goes on to offer captivating insights into the indecision regarding how the hydrogen bomb could be created, his theories on the use of nuclear weapons and eye-opening details of the J. Robert Oppenheimer hearing. The result is a range of captivating short stories ranging in length between a few seconds and several minutes, all with a fully searchable transcript.

One of the stories captures his reflections on President Truman's decision to create the hydrogen bomb and the reaction of fellow scientists: *'[Senator] McBain told me, "Here is the recent report of the advisors to the Atomic Energy Commission... It makes me sick. Can the hydrogen bomb be made?" I did not have to convince him. He was convinced, but he did not know what the subject was. I told him, I told him in detail and within a few weeks President Truman's decision was made public early in 1950: go ahead with all forms of nuclear explosives, including the so-called super-bomb.'*

He also muses on his decision to turn his back on other scientists, all of whom were fierce critics of the hydrogen bomb: *'I did break the unanimity of the scientists and, had I not done so, it may well have happened that our work would never have started... It well may have developed in such a way that the Soviet Union would have gotten far ahead of us in developing nuclear explosives... I have been attacked for the very point of advocating strongly the hydrogen bomb. Even recently I have been asked, aren't you sorry that you did so? And to that question I have a simple answer: I am not sorry...I had to work on it and I am glad I did.'*

During his lifetime, Teller published more than a dozen books on subjects ranging from energy policy to defence issues. Among the honours he received were the Albert Einstein Award, the National Medal of Science, The Enrico Fermi Award and, shortly before his death in 2003, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civil honour in America, during a special ceremony conducted by President George W. Bush at the White House. He even had an asteroid named after him, 5006 Teller.

All the videos of Edward Teller are easy to share with friends and colleagues, and are free for embedding into personal blogs and websites.

<http://www.webofstories.com/people/edward.teller/102>

Notes for Editors

About Web of Stories

Everyone has a story to tell. Over time many stories become forgotten, but now Web of Stories offers members of the public the chance to tell their stories for future generations to enjoy.

Web of Stories began as an archive of life stories told by some of the great scientists of our time. As the number of stories grew, it became obvious that some were on related topics and a web was slowly being created of connected stories. After a while we also invited famous people outside the field of science to tell their life stories. Web of Stories is also open to the public to record their stories for the world to view and share. The project is built on the belief that we all have wonderful stories to share, and have family and friends whose tales we would like to hear. The great thing about Web of Stories is that anyone can come and talk about virtually anything they like. Just like our famous speakers, it is an account of their experiences as they remember them.

We hope to provide lasting, first-hand accounts of people's experiences. Imagine that in a hundred years' time your grandchildren or great grandchildren will be able to watch you telling stories about your life today!

Contact:

For more information on Web of Stories or any other video interview with Web of Stories please contact the Press Desk on +44(0)20 7323 0323 or email press@webofstories.com

Science Navigation Group, Web of Stories, Middlesex House, 34-42 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4LB

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