

The Carlson Chronicles

I am Neil Edwin Carlson, son of Edwin Otto Carlson and Beda Linea Carlson (nee Rosenquist). I was brought up on Spruce Street in the west end. Both my parents immigrated from Sweden in 1928, my father Ed at the age of 18 years from Dalarna and my mother Beda at the age of 19 from Varmland. From Spruce Street we moved to 207 Carpathia Street in River Heights and then to 421 Laidlaw Blvd. in Tuxedo. Being an only child never bothered me when I would witness my friends fight with their siblings. I was brought up with the family business being the center of everything. Every dinner hour, business would be discussed. I always felt I was being groomed for the family business and started as an apprentice to learn the trade. I achieved my journeyman certificate and joined the estimating team at Carlson's. I remained estimating until father retired in 1977. That same year we purchased Fort Rouge Painting & Sandblasting, located at 1035 Mission Street, St. Boniface across from the Shell Refinery which we maintained as a very large customer. Father was a good confidant, and we grew the business.



- 1970 - Introduced Industrial Sandblasting & Coatings
- 1977 - Moved operations to 1035 Mission Street
- 1980- Introduced Composite Manufacturing
- 1985 - Moved the Composites to 692 Mission Street expanding into 122,000 sq.ft. of manufacturing space. The majority of the composites were for the New Flyer buses, MacDon Industries, Invader Boats, CP Rail and Case International
- 1995 - Opened a 65,000 sq.ft. manufacturing plant in St. Cloud, Minnesota to service New Flyer and Buy America policy
- 2012 - Opened a 65,000 sq ft manufacturing plant in Anniston, Alabama to service New Flyer Industries and Buy America policy
- 2017 - May 31st New Flyer Industries purchased our composite company, *Carlson Engineered Composites* in Winnipeg, St. Cloud, Minnesota and Anniston, Alabama
- 2017 - The family business continues to service Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Western Ontario in commercial and residential painting, abrasive blasting, concrete restoration, steel studs and drywall, industrial composites and septic tanks
- 2017- Inducted into the Canadian Manufactures & Exporters (CME) Hall of Fame
- 2019 - Celebrating 80 years in business (1939-2019)

Some of the major projects Carlson has been involved in during original construction:

- Richardson Building - 1969
- Winnipeg Inn - 1970
- Bank of Canada - 1973
- Polo Park – 1st and 2nd stages
- Atomic Energy of Canada buildings 1-2-3
- Edmonton Convention Center - 1983
- Kildonan Place Mall - 1980
- Bank of Montreal Hargrave & Portage - 1972
- Manitoba Hydro Jenpeg Generating Station - 1979
- Manitoba Hydro Limestone Generating Station - 1990
- Manitoba Hydro Wuskwatin Generating Station - 2012
- Manitoba Hydro By Pole III, painting & epoxy floors - 2012
- Manitoba Hydro By Pole III Drywall - 2018
- Forks Bridge at the Forks
- Lockport Bridge & Dam
- Selkirk Bridge

I was very fortunate in meeting a lovely lady, Marilyn (*Lynn*) in 1972 while our firm was painting the Bank of Montreal at Portage and Hargrave, and we married in January 1980. Lynn had 2 beautiful girls, Marni and Terri that I adopted shortly thereafter. I also have a son, Neil Albert from a previous marriage. All of my children were born in Canada.

My involvement in the Swedish Community started at an early age with my parents taking me along to purchase herring and Swedish food from Algott Westberg at the Hallonquist Grocery Store, 406 Logan Avenue, and Swedish Canadian Sales (Hardware), 208 Logan. As a family we were always involved in the Scandinavian Cultural gatherings.

We seldom missed the "Islendingadagurinn" in Gimli, Manitoba for 59 years. Father sang in the Swedish Male Voice Choir (as it was known then), now the Scandinavian Choir.



**Lynn and Neil Carlson at the 2017
CME Awards Banquet**

I have been involved with:

- The Sylvia Recreational Company, (Vasa Lund) for 49 years, being off and on the Board for 40 of those years
- Scandinavian Cultural Centre on Erin Street for 40 years, being on the Board twice over the 40 years
- The Swedish Cultural Association Board for 18 years.
- Joined Lodge Strindberg #259 in 1980 and have held the Chair for 4 terms. Vasa Lund Estate – a life lease residence on the Sylvia sight (known as Vasa Lund Catering Hall) in Charleswood for 20+ years.

I was very proud when Lynn became Chairperson of Lodge Strindberg #259 during the Centennial year; she did a bang-up job. The lodge was very active and a different member would bring a Swedish dish to each meeting. My father started that tradition to attract new members. Dad hired the cook at Vasa Lund and taught him how to make Swedish pancakes and salt pork when it was his turn. Every fall the Lodge had a waffle breakfast to raise funds and a couple of us would make a few hundred waffles. And let's not forget the Lodge's Midsummer Festival with the dressing of the Maypole, with a must have Gravlax (salmon), new potatoes with dill, sour cream and chives, and of course Sill (pickled herring). Lynn and I, as Consul, liked to celebrate Flag Day at our residence, 2020 Henderson Hwy.

I was invited to join as a Director on the Swedish Council of America Board in 2009, an American Umbrella Group that looked after Swedish Affiliate Associates all through America. The Swedish Council of America promotes knowledge and appreciation of Swedish heritage and culture in North America life, fostering cooperative relationships with like-minded groups. I joined the Board in 2009 until the Swedish Council of America changed directions in 2019 and invested their reserves with the Minneapolis Foundation. I was the only Canadian on the board. They changed their by-laws to include Canada and introduced the Canadian flag and national anthem which made me proud.

I was very humbled when Per Anger, Ambassador of Sweden to Canada, asked me if I would except the position of Honorary Swedish Consul for Manitoba. With my father just retiring from the position, I declined thinking there were other Swedes in Winnipeg who were better positioned to fill the post. The Embassy came to Winnipeg and interviewed. Six months passed and I received a second call from the Embassy asking if I would reconsider and I accepted the post in January 1980 and retired from the post in 2018. During my term I have had the privilege to meet 9 great Ambassadors posted in Ottawa over my 39 years as Honorary Consul to Manitoba.

As Consul I have met many interesting people both local and internationally and have taken part in many Swedish cultural activities. The highlight for Lynn and I though, was hosting a reception for Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia at Vasa Lund when they visited Winnipeg on March 17, 1988.

We have traveled to Stockholm on 3 Consular conferences and always visit relatives. Our last Consular conference in Spring May 2019, during an audience with their Majesties', the king said to me "I understand you're retiring as Consul; you should never, never retire."

I was deeply honoured to receive the following orders from the Swedish Government:

- Knight of The Royal Order of the Polar Star Class I in 1997 and later the
- Commander of The Royal Order of The Polar Star
- Queen of Canada's Jubilee Order 1952-2002

A highlight close to my heart was the Consular Conference trip to Sweden where Lynn and my father accompanied me. We stayed an extra week and visited relatives and went to the home where father was born. I know Father was thrilled and I was so happy to see the glow on his face. We have since made the same trip to Sweden and visited relatives.



Boating was always a family affair, and I built my first boat in Dad's garage at 15 and drove my mother crazy at Falcon Lake where I spent my summers. I cannot ever remember not spending the summers on open waters, either at Falcon Lake, Red River or Lake Winnipeg. My most rewarding project was building the Seven C's - a steel hull and composite superstructure from the keel up (a seven-year project from 1982 to 1989); this 60-foot vessel, later stretched to 72 feet. Lynn had this great idea to name our first vessel Seven Cs after the Seven Carlson's in the family.

**Carlson Commercial
Fiberglass Reinforcement Services**

We enjoyed boating on the Seven Cs for 11 years. The Seven Cs was sold in 2000, decommissioned and shipped to Thunder Bay for reassembly. From Thunder Bay, the Seven Cs sailed to Toronto through the Great Lakes and the intercoastal to Florida. That ended my boat building years and since then, we have purchased 2 different Hatteras boats; in 2000 the Seven C's II that we also enjoyed for 11 years. Our present boat the Seven C's III was purchased in 2011 in Hampton Virginia and is presently moored in Northern Harbor Kenora, Ontario.



Neil Carlson

At 77 years young, my thoughts are starting to suggest retirement should be just around the corner. Although I think working a 9-hour day keeps you young and your mind sharp. At least I hope so, and life goes on.

Neil Edwin Carlson