



**Marilyn Carlson Nelson**

*Chairman and Chief Executive Officer*  
Carlson Companies

Marilyn Carlson Nelson is chairman and chief executive officer of one of the largest privately held companies in the United States. Carlson Companies is the parent corporation of a global group of integrated companies specializing in business and leisure travel, hotel, restaurant, cruise, and marketing services. With headquarters in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Carlson-owned and franchised operations employ about 190,000 people around the world.

Among the names in the Carlson family of brands and services are: Carlson Marketing Group<sup>®</sup>, Peppers and Rogers Group<sup>®</sup>, Carlson Wagonlit Travel, CW Government Travel, Regent International Hotels<sup>®</sup>, Radisson Hotels & Resorts<sup>®</sup>, Park Plaza Hotels & Resorts, Country Inns & Suites By Carlson, Park Inn<sup>®</sup> hotels, Results Travel, Cruise Holidays, All Aboard Travel, Cruise Specialists, Fly4less.com, CruiseDeals.com, SeaMaster Cruises<sup>®</sup>, SinglesCruise.com, Radisson Seven Seas Cruises<sup>®</sup>, Gold Points Reward Network<sup>®</sup>, and T.G.I. Friday's<sup>®</sup> and Pick Up Stix<sup>®</sup> restaurants.

**NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

In 2004 and 2005, *Forbes* magazine selected Marilyn as one of “The World’s 100 Most Powerful Women.” She is a regular on *Fortune* magazine’s list of the Most Powerful Women in Business and has been selected by *BusinessWeek* as one of the Top 25 Executives in Business. In addition, she has been ranked by *Travel Agent* magazine as “The Most Powerful Woman in Travel” annually since 1997.

Marilyn is a member of the International Business Council of the World Economic Forum and in 2004 co-chaired the Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland. In 1996, she served as a delegate to the White House Conference on Tourism, and as a board member of the USA’s National Tourism Organization from 1996-1998. In 2005, she was selected to serve as vice chair on the U.S. Travel and Tourism Board.

She was appointed by President George W. Bush to chair the National Women's Business Council in 2002. Her term expired in May 2005. The council serves as an independent source of advice and counsel to the President and Congress on public-policy issues that support women business owners. She also is a member of the Business Roundtable.

Outside of her industry, Marilyn serves on the boards of Exxon Mobil Corporation, the Mayo Clinic Foundation and the Committee to Encourage Corporate Philanthropy.

Marilyn holds the Woodrow Wilson Award for Corporate Citizenship from the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars. At the University of Minnesota she serves on the Board of Overseers of the Curtis L. Carlson School of Management.

The king and queen of Sweden bestowed the Swedish-American of the Year Award upon Marilyn in 2003. In 1982, she was awarded the Royal Order of the North Star by His Majesty King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden, and in 1983, the Order of the White Rose from Finland President Martti Ahtisaari.

From 2001-2004, Carlson Companies was named to the 100 Best Companies for Working Mothers list by *Working Mother* magazine, and in 2002, the company was named one of the 100 best companies to work for by *Fortune*.

Her international education, global business experience and dedication to civic affairs have taught Marilyn much about global issues and service to people – which she considers vital to Carlson Companies' position as the premier provider of services in hospitality, travel and marketing. She has as her goal to create a "new model" of a modern corporation, one known as much for its "caring heart" as for its financial success.

### **EDUCATION AND EARLY BUSINESS**

A graduate from Smith College with a degree in international economics, Marilyn attended the Sorbonne in Paris and the Institute des Hautes Etudes Economiques et Politiques in Geneva, Switzerland, to study political science and international economics.

Early in her career, Marilyn, eldest daughter of Carlson Companies founder Curtis L. Carlson (July 9, 1914-February 19, 1999) and wife Arleen (March 10, 1912-August 4, 2005) undertook numerous business, educational and community projects that provided

her with a grassroots understanding of the needs and wants of people. This volunteer period also honed skills which have served Marilyn well in the new collaborative, post command-and-control era workplace: she has the innate ability to capture the hearts and minds of people to accomplish a task.

After graduation, Marilyn was a securities analyst for two years at Paine Webber in Minneapolis. In these early years for women entering the workplace, she was requested to use the abbreviation "M.C. Nelson" on all correspondence to disguise her gender until clients realized her natural abilities and benefited from her successful advice and customer-oriented style.

### **COMMUNITY COMMITMENT AND THE SUPER BOWL**

While her business career flourished, Marilyn also devoted herself to community programs in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area and beyond. Her interest and passion for community causes resulted in her serving as president of the United Way of Minneapolis and a board member of United Way of America. In addition, she accepted the daunting challenge of staging a successful bid to bring the Super Bowl to Minnesota. Governor Rudy Perpich appointed Marilyn as chair of the state's Super Bowl Task Force in 1984 and charged her with the difficult mission of bringing the world's most celebrated sporting event to Minnesota's Twin Cities in the middle of the state's legendary winter.

As she usually does, Marilyn applied irresistible energy and creativity to the task at hand. She extolled the Twin Cities' virtues in creative ways: the night before the final site selection vote by owners, she orchestrated the delivery of toy bathtub ducks to each NFL owner's room. Attached to each duck was a message proclaiming: "For a great game and wildlife, play indoors in Minnesota!" (referring to the Hubert Humphrey Metrodome in Minneapolis).

In 1989, Marilyn accomplished her mission when Minnesota was selected by the National Football League to host the 1992 Super Bowl, generating more than \$100 million into the state's economy. She led an effort to recruit almost the entire community to serve as "community hosts" to welcome game attendees. She personally recruited legendary Disney theme park showman Robert Jani to stage an elaborate half-time show saluting the United Way.

## **CARLSON CAREER**

In 1965, Marilyn began her Carlson career by joining the Gold Bond Stamp Company, the progenitor of today's Carlson Companies. Among her first assignments was a role which combined her business acumen with her people skills: she served as a regional representative for the stamp company's "Group Projects" program, which helped civic organizations save large amounts of trading stamps to purchase much-needed equipment for their organizations.

In 1968, Marilyn became the company's director of Community Relations; in 1989 she became Senior Vice President of the corporate holding company, ascending to Vice Chair in 1991.

In 1998, at a gala 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary event in Las Vegas with 5,000 invited guests and former President George Bush looking on, Marilyn succeeded her father, Curtis L. Carlson, who founded the company in 1938 and retired after announcing the leadership succession.

To celebrate her ascendance and illustrate what would be a focus on speed, agility and teamwork in business during her tenure, Marilyn "back-seated" in a U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds F-16 fighter plane. During the flight, she took the stick and executed a roll. Then, in her style of "pushing limits," she eagerly rode through a 9G maneuver – withstanding nine times the force of gravity – joining an exclusive club of civilians who have successfully achieved the accomplishment and withstood its tremendous physical stress.

## **GLOBAL FOCUS**

A true "citizen of the world," Marilyn expanded the realm of Carlson Companies to move from a trans-national organization to a true global entity. She has personally orchestrated and overseen:

- The merger of business travel and operations with ACCOR of France, creating the \$11 billion Carlson Wagonlit Travel, operating in 140 countries.

- The merger (and sale) of Carlson Wagonlit Travel's U.K. leisure travel operations with Thomas Cook, partnering with Preussag of Germany in the process.
- An expanding partnership with Scandinavian Air Services (SAS) to bring the Radisson name to hotels outside of the U.S.
- A partnership with V-ships of Monaco, which has resulted in construction of new luxury cruise ships.

### **SWEDISH ANCESTRY AND HONORS**

A second-generation American of primarily Swedish ancestry, Marilyn has taken an active interest in promoting her Scandinavian heritage. In 1982-1983 at the request of the U.S. National Endowments for the Humanities and Arts, she chaired the nine-month long "Scandinavia Today" celebration in Minnesota – an event which paid homage to the heritage and culture of Scandinavian countries. It culminated with a spectacular tribute featuring a 10,000-voice choir, a personal appearance by the President of Iceland, royalty from Norway, Sweden and Denmark, and then-Vice President George Bush.

It was during their visit to this event that the King of Sweden and president of Finland presented her with the highest honors their two nations can bestow upon an individual.

### **PERSONAL**

Born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Marilyn is married to Dr. Glen Nelson, and they now live west of Minneapolis. They have three living children, Diana, Wendy and Curtis. Their daughter Juliet died in an automobile accident while in college. Curtis is president and chief operating officer of Carlson Companies.

Marilyn enjoys downhill skiing and is an avid inline skater. She once put her skating skills to use in a corporate meeting of Carlson's travel agency management, skating into the session waving a Carlson banner.

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