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OSCAR L. (OZZIE) OLSON

Oscar L. Olson, prominent Detroit industrialist and sportsman, is the son of an enterprising and inventive Swedish sailor who left his ship in San Francisco at the age of 19 to explore the mysteries of the American dream.

As president of Swedish Crucible Steel Co., one of the country's largest privately owned industrial corporations, he finds little time for looking back. But he recalls with a son's pride that his father, the late Nels L. Olson, lost no time in establishing a strong foothold in the fiercely competitive business world of his new found homeland.

After bidding farewell to his shipmates in San Francisco, Nels Olson ignored Horace Greeley's advice to young men to "Go West..." and headed East instead. Stopping off first in Butte, Mont., even then a thriving mining town, he soon acquired enough capital to open a farm implement business there.

Within a few years, he was the largest implement dealer in the state and had opened a hotel and other business enterprises that occupied an entire business block, known as "Olson's Block", in the center of Butte.

It was in Butte that the elder Olson invented a new plow shoe made of steel (until then they had been made of cast iron). This led him on a long search for an industrial area where he could open a foundry to manufacture his new invention. Finally, he chose Detroit because it was such a ready source of raw materials and labor, and Swedish Crucible Steel Co. was founded in the Motor City in 1910.

Soon Nels Olson's desire to share in the booming automotive industry led him to begin manufacturing steel castings for automobiles and trucks, a move which proved so successful that it provided a financial base for his entry into other

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business enterprises, including substantial banking interests.

Oscar L. Olson, known to his friends as "Ozzie", started working in his father's plant at the age of 12, and by the time he was ready for college it was apparent he had inherited his father's business acumen.

After majoring in business administration at the University of Miami, he joined the company in a sales post. Some of his own research indicated that plastics provided much greater flexibility for styling and manufacturing toilet seats and other products, so he persuaded his father to switch production of seats from hard rubber to solid plastic.

The new product was called "Olsonite solid plastic toilet seats", and that was the beginning of the use of the "Olsonite" trade name which now appears on all plastic products made by the company.

Shortly after his father's death in 1950, Oscar Olson became president of Swedish Crucible Steel Co.

Under his direction, the company has expanded into diversified manufacturing fields and continued its rapid growth.

One of his first moves as head of the family company was to develop a quality, high-styled line of solid plastic steering wheels for cars and trucks, and later for the booming boat industry.

Now his Olsonite Division is a leading producer of steering wheels for both the automotive and marine industries in the U.S. and Canada.

The same division is the world's largest maker of toilet seats, and a principal manufacturer of custom plastic moldings, and packaging and insulation materials.

The original Foundry Division is still prospering as a supplier of steel castings for cars and trucks, and armor castings for defense products.

The company maintains its executive offices in metropolitan Detroit, but

has expanded its manufacturing facilities geographically to keep pace with its sales growth. Five U.S. plants are now located in Hamtramck, Mich., Walled Lake, Mich., Lynwood, Calif., Algoma, Wis., and Newnan, Ga., and two Canadian plants are located in Windsor, Ont., and Tilbury, Ont.

Olson's tremendous success in the Canadian market, where his company dominates in the sale of both automobile steering wheels and toilet seats, has encouraged him to expand into other foreign markets. His Olsonite Division plant in Mexico now makes about 90 per cent of the automobile steering wheels in that country, and he recently opened a new facility in Germany to make Olo-Lite, a patented process for packaging and insulating materials.

He is now sole owner of Swedish Crucible Steel and its various divisions, having bought out the interests of other members of the family about 10 years ago.

Olson also has maintained his father's interest in banking. He is president and principal owner of Peoples State Bank, a suburban Detroit bank with more than $52 million in resources.

An active athlete in his prep school and college days, he retains a serious interest in all types of sports.

Auto racing was a natural attraction to him since he has long been a car enthusiast as well as a racing fan.

Before the Detroit Lions were sold to present owner William Clay Ford, he was one of the owners and a director of the National Football League team.

He was a highly successful amateur boxer in college and those who have water-skied behind his high-powered, eight-place speedboat in the waters around the exclusive Old Club, 45 minutes by cruiser from suburban Grosse Pointe, claim he could easily qualify as a driver in the unlimited class power boat racing.

Olson also is probably Detroit's most active supporter of spectator sports. Even though he no longer has an interest in the ownership of the Detroit Lions,

he remains an avid fan. When the Lions travel to such cities as Chicago, New York or Los Angeles, he often gathers 100 or more of his compan's customers in that area and hauls them to the game by chartered bus following an expansive brunch.

He is equally as enthusiastic about the Detroit Tigers, and was a member of a group of wealthy businessmen who attempted to purchase the American League franchise following the death of the late Walter O. Briggs.

A devout follower of the Detroit Red Wings on the National Hockey League circuit, Olson maintains a red carpeted box each season at Olympia Stadium, where friends claim he provides his friend, Bruce Norris, the Red Wings owner, with some of the advice that has kept the team out of the Stanley Cup playoffs in recent years.

Married and the father of four sons, Olson lives with his wife, Jean, and their two youngest sons in Grosse Pointe Shores, a Detroit suburb.

His youngest son, Chris, 20 is a student at the University of Michigan, and the second youngest, Lance, 23, is enrolled at Eastern Michigan University. An older son, Nels, 25, joined VISTA, a group of concerned young people working with inner city groups, at its Cincinnati office following graduation from Trinity College in 1969. His eldest son, Ron, is a foreman at the Olsonite plant in Algoma, Wis.

Olson is a supporter of the arts and numerous cultural events in the Detroit area, and also is active in civic and charitable affairs. He is a trustee of Northwood Institute, Midland, Michigan.

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