

# Carousel Mountain

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Holland Professional Club

December 12, 2013

By Rob Sligh

The big news around Holland Michigan in 1963 was the opening of a new ski area in the hills between Macatawa and Castle Park. I was nine years old and looked forward to learning how to ski. Dad said the person opening the new resort was a man named Norm Archer and that he'd named his resort Carousel Mountain.

Carousel Mountain operated for ten years. For many of us, Carousel played a central role in our lives as we went skiing several days a week, at night after school and on the weekends. There are no books or reports about Carousel and surprisingly only a couple dozen news articles. So much of tonight's presentation comes from oral interviews and township records.

Norm Archer was a man with lots of ideas; an entrepreneur who started many businesses that could be considered failures by any financial measure. Who among us hasn't wondered, "What impact did we or will we make after we leave our professional enterprise? Is anything enduring? What does it all mean?" Carousel's business model was probably flawed from the beginning. But the kids who grew up skiing those slopes didn't care about the business model. If not for Carousel, maybe I wouldn't have expanded my horizons by going to the University of Denver for my undergraduate degree. Holland area businesses like Reliable Sports and Main Auto were helped along by Carousel and continued to benefit long after it disappeared. Norm Archer's vision of a housing development in the dunes between Macatawa and Castle Park was ultimately realized albeit in a different form and led by different people. Well then, tonight, let's think about what it all means as I share what I learned about the man behind the mountain – Norm Archer.

Norm grew up in the Detroit area. He was a Michigan State Champion in Roller Derby Skating. During high school, Norm and two friends skated on wooden wheels all the way from Detroit to the New York World's Fair. They put on skating demonstrations in the towns along the way to help fund their trip. Farmers offered them meals and a place to sleep in their barns. In New York, they met Jimmy Dorsey and he treated them to a meal in his restaurant.

Norm was an entertaining guy. He loved music. Prior to WWII he formed Norm Archer's Orchestra, a big band that played all over the State of Michigan and cut a record in Chicago. When the US entered the war, the band broke up. Norm went off to Hollywood to find fame and fortune as a comedian. In those days Danny Kaye was a big name actor, singer, and comedian in Hollywood. Norm said, "I looked a lot like Danny Kaye and unfortunately there was only room for one Danny Kaye. So I came back to Michigan."

In 1945, Norm married Violet, a Holland native who moved to Detroit after graduating from Holland High School. Norm and Violet's only child, Cyd, was born in 1954 and was named after Norm's favorite brother Syd. Cyd learned to snow ski when she was three years old and that started a lifelong love of the sport.

In the 1950s Norm started a sporting goods business in Grosse Pointe Michigan. Originally a large Kroger store, the building was divided into two spaces. On one side was Norm's sporting goods and

on the other was a Vic Tanny gym. One night the gym caught fire and the whole building burned down.

Norm saw that national chains were squeezing out large format independent retailers like Norm's old store. So after the fire, he decided to create a smaller specialty store focusing on high-end ski clothing, ski equipment, bicycles and archery equipment. Norm and Violet travelled to Europe to buy Bogner ski wear and other luxury brands and to South America to buy high-end leather goods. Norm's store was the first in Michigan to sell the new metal skis made by Head.

Norm designed ski slope layouts for Mt. Christie, Grampian and Alpine Valley in the Southeast Michigan area. His dream was to own his own ski resort. Don Martin, a wealthy businessman from the Detroit area, agreed to be his silent partner. They purchased 50 acres from Harrington Fuel Company and 10 adjacent acres from Macatawa Park.

Norm's vision was for a \$1 million year-round resort that would include skiing in the winter and par-three golf, tennis and a swimming pool in the summer. The resort would offer fine dining and 25 home sites throughout the resort property. The resort's name came from Norm's vision of a carousel-like restaurant at the top of the chair lift hill. The idea came from a revolving restaurant on Lake Shore Drive in Chicago on top of what used to be the Holiday Inn.

It's worth noting that the idea of a ski resort in the dunes west of Holland was probably doomed from the start. Whatever the other merits of Norm's plan, it wasn't cold enough for long enough in the Macatawa dunes to support a ski area. In the decade leading up to 1963, average temperatures during December through March were below freezing only 63% of the time. We wonder, "What was Norm thinking?" As it happens though, he'd have some good luck. The ten years that followed were unusually cold. In that sense, Carousel existed for the duration of my childhood in a state of suspended grace.

But back to the beginning. In the summer of 1963, Norm's first priority was to clear the ski slopes and build the lodge. Designed by Norm himself, the Carousel Mountain lodge was made of white painted cinder blocks and wood from 12 old barns. Soaring floor-to-ceiling windows offered dramatic views of the slopes. Bright red carpeting, red and blue stained glass and red ceiling beams accented the rustic barn wood. The lodge featured a dramatic reverse canted roof. In the center of the fine dining area in the south wing was a stepped-down lounge area and two fireplaces with tall, tapering stacks. There were two similar fireplaces in the center lobby of the lodge.

Carousel Mountain featured a double chair lift, T-Bar, J-Bar and 4 rope tows with a combined capacity of 3 thousand skiers per hour. The slopes were lighted for night skiing. Artificial snow making equipment was supported by over two miles of aluminum piping. The runs varied from 1,500 to 2,700 feet long and the ski area had a vertical drop of 300 feet. By comparison, Boyne Mountains' vertical drop is 500 feet and Crystal Mountains' is 375. Just to give an additional perspective, the vertical drop at Snowmass in Aspen is over 4 thousand feet.

On December 7, 1963 Norm and his partner Don Martin along with lodge manager Jim Webster hosted a sold-out invitation-only dinner at the Carousel Mountain lodge. Jim Webster managed the Macatawa Bay Yacht Club before joining Carousel Mountain. The ski pro shop in the lodge was open and the chair lift gave guests a stunning view over the dunes out to Lake Michigan. Snow from the week before had melted. That December Saturday was sunny with temperatures in the high 40s and low 50s.

Around Christmas 1963, my brother, sister and I were very excited when mom and dad told us we were going to Reliable Ski Haus on River Avenue in Holland to get outfitted for snow skiing. I was 9 years old, my sister Barbie was 8, and Johnny was 4. The first order of business was ski boots.

Virtually all the boots back then were black, and for that matter, so were most of the skis. Mom and dad picked out leather ski boots with laces. Newly-introduced buckle boots were great for kids. Johnny's had three buckles; Barbie's and mine had five. Head was the market leader for skis, typically in elegant black metal. Reliable Ski Haus owner Ken Vos told dad that fiberglass skis were the latest innovation and less expensive. We were outfitted with a pair of fiberglass skis. As it turned out, fiberglass skis were the wave of the future.

The mountain was open for skiing, but Norm Archer's vision for fine dining was unfulfilled. Fine dining required a beer, wine and liquor license. A mile away in Park Township, Macatawa's Point West restaurant had licenses allowing them to serve hard liquor seven days a week, and beer and wine every day but Sunday. As events unfolded, that mile between Point West in Park Township and Carousel in Laketown would make all the difference.

In summer 1963 Norm paid for a special meeting of the Laketown Township board. Board members represented the conservative religious views of most people living in the Township at the time. The board informed Norm that they would not issue a license to sell intoxicating beverages and they were not in agreement with Carousel's plan to operate on Sunday. Carousel was free to operate on Sunday in spite of the board's opposition, but to serve alcoholic beverages, Carousel needed the Township's approval. Norm felt disappointed but still hopeful.

During an October 1963 Laketown Township board meeting, Norm proposed to build a motel and a cider mill and the board was amenable. Norm also asked for consideration of a pared down proposal for a beer and wine license only, but got no encouragement.

In February 1964 Carousel Mountain lawyer Rex Orton informed the Township board that a Laketown Improvement Association had formed to help the board with long range planning on schools, roads, law enforcement and securing permits for the sale of intoxicating beverages. Mr. Orton emphasized Carousel Mountain's request for a beer and wine license, stating that to be competitive, at least beer and wine must be offered.

The Reverend Don Houseman spoke emphatically against Carousel's proposal. He reminded the township board that the Carousel people had come in un-invited and were then playing on people's sympathies. Rev. Houseman said the Sunday sale of intoxicants was a moral issue and added that alcoholism was a great danger.

Several other citizens also weighed-in. From the applause that followed speakers on both sides, it appeared that public sentiment at the meeting was divided.

But skiing continued. On February 15 and 16, 1964 Carousel held its first annual Winter Carnival. It included professional slalom racing and stunt skiing. There were dog team races and the Fifth Army Sky Divers from Detroit made an appearance. For those who didn't ski, Carousel hosted an ice skating show. Holland Chamber of Commerce secretary Bill Vandewater acted as the Carousel Mountain Winter Carnival director. The weather turned mild shortly thereafter and Carousel's first season concluded.

In March two letters were read aloud by the Laketown Township clerk; one from the elders of Central Park Reformed Church and the other from the consistory of Overisel Reformed Church. The letters praised the board for their stand against the sale of alcohol in the township and urged them to maintain that position.

Decades later, Cyd Archer remembered, "Back in those days nothing in the Holland area but Point West was open on Sunday. Many people of Dutch descent interpreted the Bible to say you were not supposed to do anything on Sunday. They were not supposed to wash their car or mow their lawn on Sunday. Some of the kids from very strict Dutch families were not even allowed to go to movies or dances."

In April 1964 the Laketown board accepted a petition for an advisory election on the issue of beer and wine permits in the Township. The petition bore 275 valid signatures of qualified, registered electors. The advisory election was held that May, and the 76% voter turnout was the highest on record. Of 825 registered voters, 624 cast a ballot. Almost two-thirds said no to beer and wine in the Township. That was the end of Norm Archer's fine dining concept, and at that point, the writing was probably on the wall for the resort.

During the Spring and Summer of 1964, Norm Archer doubled-down on Carousel Mountain. He moved his family to Holland, sold his business interests in Grosse Pointe, purchased Don Martin's share and became sole owner of Carousel Mountain.

Cyd Archer remembered, "After finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in Grosse Pointe in June 1964, Mom and I joined Dad in the new house he designed and built on Park Avenue a mile from Carousel Mountain. I wasn't very excited about moving to Holland but Mom and Dad said 'Oh, we'll give you a pony.' And, what young girl doesn't like horses? The house on Park Avenue was a beautiful, architecturally significant home. It had many levels. There was a crow's nest next to a peaked area which hung over the living room that included a bar and had a view across Lake Macatawa and out the Holland Channel. The creek side of the house had two-story, floor-to-ceiling windows looking out across the creek towards the Macatawa Bay Yacht Club and Lake Macatawa. There was nothing like it in its day."

Cyd continued, "Dad was a very hard worker but he was always home for dinner. Most times he would go back to work after dinner but he was always there for me. Detroit was a beautiful, large, world class, metropolitan city in those days. Moving to Holland was a big cultural change. People who became my best friends had also moved in from somewhere else. They had a more worldly perspective. A lot of the kids in school in Holland had never even been to Grand Rapids, so their perspectives and experiences were much different than mine."

Norm Archer threw himself into the work of making Carousel successful in its second season. By widening ski runs, removing trees and tapering slopes, skiing capacity increased from 3 to 5 thousand. Norm broke ground on a 28-unit motel at the entrance to Carousel on the southwest corner of 147<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 66<sup>th</sup> Street. An oak water wheel 12 feet in diameter was installed in the creek next to a barn that was built to house a cider mill press. Carousel made and marketed cider produced from apples grown in the area. The barn included a patio dining area serving fresh apple cider and donuts.

The 1964-65 season featured weekday lift tickets for \$3.50, evening \$2.50 and weekends \$4.50. Ski rentals were \$4.50. Double occupancy motel rates were \$12-\$14 weekdays and \$30-\$35 on weekends. Ski lessons were \$2 in a group and \$7.50 individually. Carousel's certified ski instructors

taught the latest techniques including Wedeln, a German style that means tracing the fall-line with short, quick parallel turns. The ski shop moved from the lodge to the barn that also housed the cider mill.

Beginning in Carousel Mountain's first season Cliff Onthank formed a volunteer ski patrol and was the first director. It consisted of local ski patrollers, Jr National ski patrollers ages 15-17 and National ski patrollers who were at least 18 years old. A compensating benefit was free lift tickets. Requirements included Red Cross first aid and advanced first aid, on-the-hill training and refresher courses.

Ski patrollers from throughout Michigan participated annually in a refresher course. The daylong session consisted of films and lectures on fractures, shock, splinting, burns and bandaging. In the afternoon a first aid competition included the treatment of mock victims positioned on the slopes. The Carousel Mountain ski patrol teams were typically top ranked.

I joined the Jr National Ski Patrol at Carousel in 1969 and graduated to the National Ski Patrol in 1972. Part of our training included chair lift evacuation in case it stopped working. Evacuation from most of the chairs involved shooting a line over the carrying cable and coaching occupants into a seat that was lowered to the ground. But Carousel's chair lift also went over a gulch, 140 foot deep. Riding over the gulch was scary, especially at night. The trees in the gulch swayed back and forth in the wind. Looking down at night was like staring into an endless dark pit. The evacuation method was to back the chairs down across the gulch and evacuate each chair as it reached a spot closer to the ground.

By 1965 Carousel Mountain was in financial stress and couldn't make ends meet following its' third season. In September 1966 Circuit Court judge Raymond Smith ordered foreclosure of the mortgages on Carousel Mountain and a receiver was appointed to protect the property that was seized for back payment of taxes. The creditors decided that re-opening the resort was the best way to preserve the value of their loans. United Insurance Company of America took over Carousel in October 1966. Larry Phillips became the general manager and represented the interests of the insurance company.

Cyd Archer remembers, "Losing Carousel Mountain was devastating for our family. Dad lost his dream and it was a big struggle for Mom and Dad financially. They started from this big high of opening a new ski resort and then Mom and Dad had nothing. They had to start over. Dad was a very proud guy and determined to pay every penny of their personal guarantee for the Carousel Mountain loans where others might have walked away."

In January, 1967 the circuit judge determined Carousel owed \$297 thousand on a mortgage held by United Insurance and \$62,296 on a chattel mortgage for the ski lifts held by CIT Corporation. The court ordered the properties to be sold for at least \$260 thousand. Norm and Violet Archer guaranteed the loan from United Insurance up to a maximum of \$10 thousand. Mild winters and light snowfall were cited as the chief cause of Carousel Mountain's demise.

In late summer 1967 Larry Phillips appeared before the Laketown Township board. He represented the receivers who then controlled Carousel Mountain. Larry said they were thinking seriously of re-opening the resort for its' fifth ski season and wanted to get the board's opinion. Township Trustee Bill Ash said the board was still opposed to the sale of alcoholic beverages in Laketown Township. He also said the board was opposed to the operation of a business on Sunday because it constituted a misuse of the Christian Sabbath.

During a Holland community meeting in the fall of '67, Larry Phillips presented plans for re-opening Carousel Mountain. The gathering was pulled together by Bill Vandewater who was executive secretary of the Holland Chamber of Commerce. Trees were removed on the beginner hills for safety and slopes were graded for better skiing. Two rope tows were added for a total of six. New snow making equipment was installed.

Though lacking snow on December 20, 1967, Carousel Mountain general manager Larry Phillips had an open house to show off resort upgrades. Parking expanded to accommodate another 200 cars near the main lodge and the Cider Mill was converted for ski rentals, repairs, ski patrol and first aid. Don Kuipers managed the main lodge and Adelaide Brondyke managed the motel.

By 8<sup>th</sup> grade I'd become a good skier and was really looking forward to the 1967-68 season. Two years earlier I'd gotten a pair of plastic buckle boots invented by the Lange Company. They offered unparalleled rigidity, support and durability. But the linings were stiff and the Lange boots in those days were very uncomfortable, even with the padded socks, boot liners and add-on calf supports that Reliable often sold with those early Lange boots. By 1968 Lange invented Lange Flow, a new liner that molded to your foot. Happily I had outgrown my old Lange boots and the new ones were much more comfortable.

The mild weather during Christmas break that year was disappointing. But January brought lots of snow. On January 19, 1968 a snowstorm dumped a foot of snow on Holland. My friends and I went skiing almost every day and Carousel kept the slopes open until 10pm. Kids in school were proud to wear strings of stapled Carousel Mountain tickets on their winter coats.

In February 1968, Carousel reported an 18-22 inch base, 4 inches of powder and excellent skiing. In early March, Carousel launched its first annual open ski race. Rick VanTongerren won first place for the boys division.

Meanwhile, we were all following closely the 1968 winter Olympics in Grenoble France where Jean Claude Killy won gold medals in slalom, giant slalom and downhill skiing. Killy introduced a new style of fast, open stance skiing that we all tried to emulate.

That fall, Carousel was purchased by Chicago industrialist Norbert Smith. Smith was president of Lennor Engineering and Dimco, both based in Chicago. Larry Phillips became general manager and vice president of the ski resort working for Smith. According to the Holland Evening Sentinel, Smith and his family flew to Holland in their private plane to review Phillips' plans for the 1968-69 season. The slopes were reworked and a new expert hill was added. Plans included on Thursdays, a ladies afternoon of skiing and a family dinner buffet. There were also plans for cookouts on Saturday nights and Sunday brunch.

In late February 1969 the second annual Carousel Mountain open ski race included 143 participants. Rudy Vedovell came in second in the boys open. John Sligh won the boys 9 and under division. John reminisced, "I went skiing all the time. Many of us would go directly from school to Carousel. It was the place to be for kids to hang out and be outside doing their thing on the slopes. Inside the lodge was a cafeteria where you could get burgers and fries. Downstairs were pinball machines. It was the end of an era when it closed. But for a short time in Holland's history, it was a magical place for kids."

I graduated from Holland High School in 1972. Cyd Archer graduated in 1973 and her parents moved to Saugatuck. After ten seasons, 1973 was also the year that Carousel Mountain closed for good. Some said the lack of a liquor license hurt Carousel's chance of succeeding. Almost everyone admitted the weather wasn't cold for long enough in the Holland dunes to support a ski area, even with plenty of artificial snow-making equipment. Average temperatures for December through March were below freezing only 75% of the time during the decade Carousel was open, and even that was a cold decade for the Holland area dunes. That compares to 60% below freezing for the most recent decade. In other words, Carousel operated during what was probably the only time in recent history that a ski resort in Holland could have made it for as long as it did.

Cyd Archer reflected, "Dad was one of those guys who said, you take a licking and keep on ticking. He'd be down, then he'd come up with some other business idea. He was a serial entrepreneur. He sold homes for a while and developed projects in Saugatuck including the East Shore Condominiums. Dad developed a machine that would dry chicken manure so it could be used for feed. Dad said it was ready to take off but he couldn't afford to buy out his partner and had to let the business go. He started a donut shop called Carousel Donuts in Grand Haven. He was always coming up with new ideas and when he'd share them with me he'd say, 'Don't tell your Mother!' Poor Mother. She lived through a lot of ideas. Eventually Dad got into creating sculptures which he pursued for many years. He did some huge commissions including one for a petroleum company in Traverse City, one for a convention center in Appleton, Wisconsin, and one for the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel as well as hundreds of sculptures and fountains for private homes."

"Mom died in 2004 and Dad passed away in 2011. I've got some sculptures that Dad created that I'll probably repair and sell. I haven't had time over the years to pursue art but I'd like to do that now. When I was young I had a pottery studio. I've made jewelry. I like to paint. The other day I was cleaning out and found my oil paints. I thought, I've got to get back to that. Mom and dad were both very creative. I think I've got that gene."

"We were in Vail in 2011", continued Cyd, "actually the day Dad died." A friend was riding up the lift. On the lift she met Mitch Grissen from Holland. Mitch said, "I know Cyd and I know her Dad. We skied at Carousel all the time. Norm Archer is a rock star. I still have my ski bibs and trophies from the races."

"The owner of Performance Sports in Vail, learned to ski at Carousel Mountain," added Cyd. "He told me if it wasn't for Carousel Mountain, he would never have learned to ski."

"It's interesting", she mused, "I went to my 40<sup>th</sup> high school reunion and ran into Tim Harrington and his wife. Tim grew up skiing at Carousel Mountain. Now they live out in Colorado and are big skiers and mountain climbers. Their daughter is the poster child for North Face. She's an expert mountain climber and they use her in their photo shoots. I'm sure skiing at Carousel in the early years had a bit to do with it. Carousel Mountain had a huge impact on my life and on many others."

Cyd's right. For the kids in Holland of skiing age from 1963 to 1973, Carousel Mountain had a huge impact. It broadened our horizons, got us thinking about new possibilities. The development of Carousel Mountain helped spur local businesses including Reliable Sport Haus on River Avenue; Main Auto's Ski department on 8<sup>th</sup> Street. And it paved the way for the Scenic Shores housing development led by Ed Havlik and his partners.

As Ed recounted, "The Carousel Mountain property was developed beginning in 1978. After finishing roads and infrastructure, the first houses were completed in 1980. Ultimately 55 low

density single family lots were sold and houses were built. Today Scenic Shores is a community filled with people who love it, who gather on Thursdays to share time and experiences and a sunset. I am happy to have lived the experience and live in the results of that experience."

Something tells me if Norm Archer were alive today, he'd feel proud.

Thanks!

Sources:

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- The Marina News, November 8-14, 1963.
- The Commercial Record 1/5/63.
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- Cyd Archer oral interview 9/28/13.
- Ed Havlik email Oct 3 2013 and oral interview 10/28/13.
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The chart below summarizes the weather history for Holland Michigan in the decade prior to Carousel Mountain compared to the decade Carousel Mountain operated and the most recent decade 2003-2013 in rounded numbers ([www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)).

Season	December		January		February		March	
	AvTemp	Precip	AvTemp	Precip	AvTemp	Precip	AvTemp	Precip
1953/54	33	3	30	1	32	2	38	2
1954/55	34	2	26	2	27	2	35	2
1955/56	27	1	27	0	28	2	32	3
1956/57	34	1	23	2	31	2	36	2
1957/58	34	2	26	2	23	2	36	0
1958/59	23	1	21	2	25	2	34	3
1959/60	34	3	29	4	26	4	26	2
1960/61	26	1	24	1	30	1	39	3
1961/62	29	2	22	3	22	1	33	1
1962/63	27	5	18	2	19	1	35	4
Below Freezing (63%)	50%		100%		90%		10%	
Precipitation		2		2		2		2
Snow (65)		17		15		15		18
1963/64	21	5	28	1	27	1	35	3
1964/65	27	2	24	4	25	2	27	3
1965/66	35	5	20	1	34	1	37	4
1966/67	29	3	28	4	21	1	34	1
1967/68	31	5	22	2	23	1	39	1
1968/69	27	4	24	3	26	0	33	1
1969/70	27	1	19	2	24	0	30	2



1970/71	28	3	20	1	26	1	31	1
1971/72	33	4	22	1	23	1	32	2
1972/73	28	4	29	1	28	1	43	2
Below Freezing (75%)	80%		100%		90%		30%	
Precipitation		4		2		1		2
Snow (68)		29		16		7		16
2003/04	32	1	20	1	26	1	39	5
2004/05	29	2	23	3	30	2	31	1
2005/06	27	2	35	4	27	2	37	3
2006/07	37	4	30	2	21	1	41	3
2007/08	31	2	28	3	23	3	33	2
2008/09	28	4	19	0	29	3	39	3
2009/10	29	2	26	1	27	1	41	1
2010/11	29	2	23	1	27	2	34	3
2011/12	36	2	32	3	34	2	52	2
2012/13	37	3	30	3	27	2	33	1
Below Freezing (60%)	60%		80%		90%		10%	
Precipitation		2		2		2		2
Snow (70)		19		17		15		19

AvTemp = the mean Fahrenheit temperature for the month.

Precip = the liquid inches of precipitation for the month rounded to the nearest whole number (multiply by a factor in the 6 to 10 range to find the snow equivalent; say 8x).

### **Cyd Archer oral interview September 28, 2013**

My paternal Grandfather was born in England. He married a nurse from Scotland and they established a homestead in Winnipeg, Canada where my father was born in 1920, the youngest of 4 children. My Grandfather favored the oldest son. The middle son, Syd, was my Dad's favorite brother. Their Winnipeg home had dirt floors but they owned a large number of mules. One winter it got so cold that the mule's lungs froze and they all died. My Grandmother said, "If we don't move from here I am leaving you." So the family moved to the Detroit area and my Dad became a naturalized citizen. My Grandparents built a weekend cottage on a lake and Dad learned to sail at an early age. He was always very athletic and loved the outdoors. My Grandfather taught Dad how to build boats. Dad was a Michigan State Champion Roller Derby Skater. During high school, Dad and two of his friends skated from Detroit to the New York World's Fair. Keep in mind, back in those days they skated on wooden wheels. Dad wrote letters to Wrigley and Phillip Morris as well as other companies asking them to sponsor him to no avail. So in towns along the way, Dad and his friends put on skating demonstrations. Farmers along the way often offered them a meal and a place to sleep in the barn. In New York, they met Jimmy Dorsey and were invited to eat, as his guests, in his restaurant.

My maternal Grandfather was from Germany. He was in the hotel business. His first wife died and the doctors suggested he move to the country for his health. He bought a farm outside Holland, Michigan and remarried. My mother was born in Holland, Michigan in 1921, the youngest of five kids. Grandmother died in 1926, and Grandfather in 1934, so my Mother was raised by her older sisters. After graduating from Holland High School, my Mother wanted to go to the Art Institute of Chicago with her best friend, but her friend died suddenly. Mom decided she didn't want to go to

Chicago alone and she moved to the Detroit area to live with Adelaide, a strict older sister. Mom was working as an administrative assistant when she met my Father. Mom and Dad had a long engagement. My Mom finally gave my Dad an ultimatum and they married in 1945.

Dad was always an entertaining guy. He loved music. He formed Norm Archer's Orchestra prior to WWII, a big band that played all over the State of Michigan and cut a record in Chicago. When the US entered the war, they broke up as the band members joined the military. Dad went off to Hollywood to find fame and fortune as a comedian, or so he thought. In those days Danny Kaye was a big name actor, singer, and comedian in Hollywood and Dad looked very much like him. In letters to my Mother, Dad said that he was told that he was too much like Danny Kaye and there was only room for one Danny Kaye. So he came back to Michigan.

Dad always said " I'm not waiting for life to happen", and he made things happen. He had lots of great ideas but often was years ahead in his thinking. One of Dad's ventures was a turkey farm and then the government voted to have a turkey less Thanksgiving to support the war effort. So he owned all these birds and could not sell them.

I was born in 1954, an only child and was named after my uncle Syd, my Dad's favorite brother. Syd was wounded in WWII. After the war he married Louise but died of his war wounds thereafter. I never had the opportunity to meet him.

My Father got into the sporting goods business in the 50's. He had a big store in Grosse Pointe, Michigan that was originally a very large Kroger store. The building was split into two stores. On one side was my Father's sporting goods store and on the other side was a Vic Tanny's gym. It was an immense store and there was even a shooting range in the back. The Vic Tanny gym caught on fire and the whole building burned to the ground including my Dad's business.

My Father could see that big box sporting goods stores were emerging and independent sporting goods retailers would be squeezed out. He was supplying clothing to ski resorts and decided to create a smaller store format focusing on high-end ski wear and equipment, bicycles and archery equipment. He catered to the wealthy clients such as the Fords and Dodges who could afford the best. Dad even made and sold his own arrows. My parents would travel to Europe on buying trips for Bogner ski wear and other luxury brands as well as to South America to buy high end leather goods. Dad was the first one in Michigan to sell the new metal Head skis.

I learned to ski in 1957 when I was three years old. That's the perfect age to start, when you have no fear, and years to enjoy the sport. I only remember skiing with my Dad a couple of times and only remember skiing with my Mother once or twice. She was not keen on the cold. I remember when we lived in Grosse Pointe and Dad took a whole busload of kids out to Vail the first year it opened. I was 7 years old and I got to go on the trip. I was so excited. I just skied at Vail this past January and helped them celebrate their 50th anniversary!

Dad's dream was to own his own ski resort. Mom grew up in Holland so for her it was like coming home when he built the ski resort near Holland. Don Martin, who came from wealth, was a silent partner in the first year of Carousel Mountain before Dad bought him out.

There was a lot of excitement and enthusiasm among the people in Holland for the planned ski area. Dad said, "It will keep kids occupied in the outdoors. Give them something to do that is athletic and positive." When the Dutch Reformed contingent in Holland learned that Carousel would be open on Sunday's some of the local sentiment turned against him. Back in those days nothing was open on

Sunday and you were not supposed to do anything on Sunday's at least according to the Dutch. You cooked the day before, you were not supposed to wash your car, or even mow your lawn on Sunday's. The very strict Dutch were not allowed to go to movies or dances.

My Father's vision was for a year round resort that would include skiing in the winter, golf in the summer and home sites throughout the resort property. He planned the Cider Mill and a petting zoo where you could also ride horses. He was ahead of his time back then as most ski resorts were not year round places.

My Dad had an idea to have a revolving restaurant at the top of the chair lift hill that would provide views of Lake Michigan. I believe the idea came from a restaurant in Chicago at what used to be the Holiday Inn on Lake Shore Drive. It's now the W Hotel. I remember going there with my parents as a kid.

Carousel was designed to offer year round fine dining. To fit the concept Dad needed a liquor license. The leader at the time in Laketown Township didn't want him to serve liquor or have a liquor license. Dad felt that sentiment wasn't representative of the majority so he paid from a special election. But the leader said they still were not going to grant Carousel a liquor license and if Dad tried to fight them in court, they'd tie him up in court for years. His attorney's advised him not to fight it. His lack of a liquor license, was a serious detriment to his fine dining concept.

After 3rd grade in Grosse Pointe, my Mother and I joined my Dad in the new house he designed and built on Park Avenue in the summer of 1964. I wasn't too excited about moving to Holland but my Mom and Dad said "Oh, we will give you a pony". And, what young girl doesn't like horses? The house on Park St was a beautiful, architecturally significant home. It had many levels. There was a crow's nest next to a peaked area which hung over the living room that included a bar and had a view across Lake Macatawa and out the Holland Channel. The creek side of the house had two-story floor-to-ceiling windows looking out across the creek towards the Macatawa Bay Yacht Club and the Lake. There was nothing like it in its day. My Dad actually had someone knock on the door and want to tour our house. The man liked it so much that my Dad designed him a home that was very similar which was built in Indiana.

I spent my summers sailing at the Macatawa Bay Yacht Club. I loved to sail and race and became the secretary of the Jr Yacht Club where I enjoyed swimming and attending the weekend dances. In the winter I spent all my free time at Carousel Mountain. I met so many good friends sailing and skiing who remain friends today.

I remember when I was racing, I started when I was 7 or 8, Dad would follow me around the race course. After every race, even if I won, we'd sit at the dining room table and he would say, "You did a great job but at this mark you should have done this" I was thinking "Dad, can 't we just celebrate that I won." But he wanted to make me the best sailor I could be. I was very lucky to have Father that cared so much.

My Dad was a very hard worker but he was always home for dinner. Most times he would go back to work afterwards but he was always there for me.

I went to Harrington grade school which I did not care for. I also attended EE Fell Jr. High and Holland High which I did not like either. Mom and Dad moved from Park Avenue in Macatawa to Saugatuck in 1973 after I graduated from Holland High. Moving to Holland from the Detroit area, which was a beautiful, large, world class, metropolitan city in those days, was a big cultural change

for me. People who became my best friends had also moved in from somewhere else . They had a more worldly perspective on things. A lot of the kids in school with me had never even been to Grand Rapids, which is only about 30 miles away, so their perspectives and experiences were much different than mine.

I think skiing was my escape. I absolutely love skiing to this day. There is nothing better to me than a day on the slopes with all the fresh air and sunshine and fun. I think I had the first pair of buckle boots for kids in Michigan. I would go skiing after school every day while Carousel was operating. One time, I had just gotten my driver's license and my parents let me drive the car to the resort. I was so excited to get there. I locked the keys in the car and had to walk home in my ski boots to get the keys. It was about a mile there and back in my ski boots. Carousel was a huge part of my life. I had such a good time there and skied there every chance I could get. I loved night skiing and skiing on weekends. It was a huge part of my childhood that I wish other kids could experience as well.

When I chose a college, I went to Traverse City so I could ski. In fact, I was a ski instructor at Timberlee Hills, which like Carousel Mt. does not exist anymore. I would meet guys in college and start dating them and they would tell me what great skiers they were. Well once we hit the slopes together, and they found out I was a better skier than they were, those relationships did not last very long.

Carousel had one chair lift that went over a deep gulch and it was very scary. They probably wouldn't let you build that today. If you were scared of height, forget it. It was like a big dark pit at night. The resort also had a T-bar, J-bar, a bunch of rope tows and a good ski school.

Losing Carousel Mountain was very devastating for our family. My Dad lost his dream and it was a big struggle for my Mom and Dad financially. They started from this big high of starting a new ski resort and then my Mom and Dad had nothing and totally had to rebuild and start over. Dad was a very proud guy and determined to pay every penny of their personal guarantee for the Carousel Mountain loans where others might have walked away.

Dad was one of those guys who said, 'You take a licking and keep on ticking'. He'd be down, then he'd get up and come up with something other business idea. He was a serial entrepreneur. He sold homes for a while. Then he developed a machine that would dry chicken manure so it could be used for feed. It was ready to take off but Dad could not afford to buy out his partner and had to let the business go. He started a donut shop called Carousel Donuts in Grand Haven. He was always coming up with new ideas and when he'd share them with me he'd say "Don't tell your Mother!" Poor Mother. She had to live through a lot of ideas. Eventually Dad got into creating sculptures which he pursued for many years. He did some huge commissions including one for a petroleum company in Traverse City on the bay, one for a convention center in Appleton, Wisconsin, and one for the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel as well as hundreds of sculptures and fountains for private homes.

Dad built the house that we moved to in Saugatuck in 1973 and he got back into building again. He designed and built a house in Saugatuck for my mother's cousin. Dad developed several condominium projects in Saugatuck including the East Shore Condominiums. He also developed a shopping center.

I worked in media at Leo Burnett for seventeen years in Chicago and have a condo there. After Leo Burnett I went into advertising sales and managed a sales office selling international business titles along with the Financial Times and the Investor's Business Daily. Along the way Mom was diagnosed with cancer, the company was not doing well and I stepped up to take a package. I got

into real estate at that point which had the flexibility I wanted to be able to help my Mother. I stayed in real estate full time until 2012 and I still do some real estate part-time. Recently I've been working in a two-person consulting firm. We work with multi-generational families of wealth and their advisors. We look at the generational perspectives that people have and how that affects family dynamics and wealth. We work with the advisors so they can better understand the dynamics and the family's long term needs. We do trust education and beneficiary education programs.

Mom and dad moved to Florida in the 1980's for ten years but they felt there were too many old people down there. My parents were still really active. They'd go out surf fishing every day and they were going and doing things all the time.

I decided to build a second home in Pier Cove, Michigan. Mom and Dad decided they wanted to move back from Florida and live with me after retiring to Florida 10 years prior. Pier Cove is just South of Saugatuck near Fennville on the lake side. Pier Cove was originally a lumbering community in the 1800's. They used to ship fruit and lumber to Chicago from there.

I designed my dream home and Dad returned from Florida with Mom to help me build it in Pier Cove on a wooded lot. Dad suggested I buy Mother's cousin's home on the water in Saugatuck, which he had designed for them 30 years earlier, but I couldn't afford it, at the time. Then mom's cousin became ill and it was clear that I needed to sell my dream home and buy her house. I renovated the house on the water expanding it from 2 bedrooms to 4 and adding a 2-1/2 stall garage. I lived in my dream home in Pier Cove from 1998 to 2001 and then sold it and moved to the home on the water in Saugatuck with Mom and Dad. Mom died in 2004 and Dad passed away in 2011. I sold the Saugatuck house this summer (2013) as it was too much to keep up for the time I spent there.

I've got some sculptures that Dad created that I'll probably repair and sell. I haven't had time over the years to pursue art but I'd like to do that now. When I was young I had a pottery studio. I've made jewelry. I like to paint. The other day I was cleaning out and found my oil paints. I thought, "I've got to get back to that." Mom and dad were both very creative and I think I've got that gene.

I was in Vail in 2011, actually the day my Dad died. A friend of mine was riding up the lift and she always talks to everybody. She asked, "Where are you from?". "Michigan, the Holland area". "Oh really, my friend Cyd is from that area originally and she is here but she didn't ski today." "Cyd?", "What's her last name?" "Archer". "Oh, we know Cyd and we know her Dad." It turned out to be Mitch Grissen, originally from Holland. Mitch said, "We skied at her Dad's ski resort. Norm Archer is a rock star. I still have my ski bibs and trophies from the races." I am also very fortunate to know the owner of Performance Sports, a ski shop in Vail, who learned to ski at Carousel Mountain. He told me that if it was not for Carousel Mountain, he never would have learned to ski. We reminisce each winter when I hit the slopes in Vail.

It's interesting, I just had my 40<sup>th</sup> high school reunion in 2013 and I ran into Tim Harrington and his wife. Tim grew up skiing at Carousel Mountain. They live out in Colorado now and are big skiers and mountain climbers. Their daughter is the poster child for North Face. She's an expert mountain climber and they use her in all their photo shoots now. I'm sure skiing at Carousel in the early years had a bit to do with it.

Carousel Mountain had a huge impact on my life and so many others. I am just sorry that Mother Nature did not cooperate.

### **John Sligh reminisces September 30, 2013**

I remember skiing all the time at Carousel. After school (before I was a swimmer) many of us would go from school directly to Carousel to go skiing. It was the place to be for kids to hang out and be outside doing their thing on the sloops. Inside the lodge was a cafeteria style place where you could get burgers and fries. Downstairs were pinball machines. The Carousel Open was fun, although snow conditions were often mushy late in the season. It was the end of an era when it closed. It was hard to compete with Boyne and skiing out west. But for a short time in Holland's history, it was a magical place for kids.

### **Ed Havlik email October 3, 2013 and Oral Interview October 28, 2013**

The attached shows an aerial photo taken in the early 70's. In the photo, you can see that the lake is quite high and went higher! The cottage in front of the Doyle cottage ended up in the lake and a steel sea wall was built to protect the Doyle cottage. Everything was still intact at Carousel but, it operated only through the winter of 1973. I have a Carousel Ski Racing Bib, and the original brochure for the development. The approximate location of the roads that were built for Scenic Shores are indicated. If you need it to make a presentation I can lend you the poster size aerial.

Dave Froberg and I started a real estate marketing and management company in 1970. The executive in charge of problem real estate at United Insurance (who had worked with Dave at another real estate company) asked us to look at the Carousel property (55 acres with ski hill improvements) to see if it had any potential. We drove to Holland and got to the ski hill. We drove down the gravel road that continued west, past Carousel and discovered that the Chicago Beach addition to Macatawa Park (platted by Amos Alonso Stagg in 1896). It was special.

Dave did some homework and discovered that Carl Harrington (Harrington Coal Company) was the owner of all the acreage behind Carousel which included all of the beachfront at the Chicago Beach addition to Castle Park (almost 1/2 mile). Macatawa Hotel Corporation owned all the property north of the ski hill. Edwin Raphael, a local business man owned the 20 acres in front of Carousel (to the east) and created access to the balance of Harrington's property, which was geographically separated from the northern portion by a major dune. The only other access to this property would have been through Castle Park.

At this moment in our young business lives we had no capital. One of our most interesting and important clients was an architect who had developed (for its time) an environmental wonder of an apartment community in suburban Chicago, built on the remains of a gravel pit operation which featured a ski hill, Four Lakes Village. We looked at the ski hill, looked at the beach front, looked at the magnificent topography of the dunes, discovered Point West, the Jesiek Brothers Marina and said to each other...wow...what an opportunity! We were so young!

Without naming names, a Chicago Developer, his accountant, his accountant's brother, a Chicago banker, and Dave and I formed and funded the initial equity to create Carousel Recreation Properties (or some such entity). The insurance company gave us time to secure the options and/or contracts for all the other properties and we moved forward.

I know Laketown put a crush on Norm Archer. They really didn't like us much either.

The low density cluster development we initially proposed (environmentally way ahead of its time) became a first Phase of 55 single family lots, with 66 foot right of way (cut and cleared) curbs and gutters (in sand) and a full 28 foot back to back roadway.

Fortunately, Williams and Works did a great job for the township and us by creating a road system that only eliminated one major dune and by utilizing private drives (roads) preserved the topography. This all happened after 'sword fighting' with the township for six or seven years. Our lenders were getting weary. So! We got approved, subject to sewer and water getting to the site. The sewer was at Central Park (3 miles away) and the water was on the other side of Lake Macatawa! No worries!

Phase one was developed in 1978-9 and opened into the great real estate depression of 1980! But, four houses were built. including mine. Most, but, not all of the Hotel Macatawa property was sold and became Forest Beach. Lot A and B contiguous to, but, not all part if the Chicago Beach Plat, were sold individually. Phase 2 of Scenic Shores was on 66th and 147th and includes more lots that were individually sold. The remainder of the original Carousel Land was sold to an investor who created five lots and the Raphael land and home, after the easement to access the balance of the Harrington property was created, was sold to a home owner. The south Harrington piece, which included five lake front lots, was sold to individual purchasers, both as lots and in a bulk sale.

The result is Scenic Shores, a community filled with people who love it, who gather on Thursdays to share time and experiences and a sunset. I am happy to have lived the experience and live in results, of that experience.

### **Laketown Township Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes**

June 27, 1963. Special meeting of the Laketown Township Board called at the request of the Carousel Mountain Ski Resort Committee. Those present representing Carousel included Norm Archer, Don Martin and their lawyer, Mr. Lawrence along with the owner of the property, Mr. Harrington. Carousel explained their intention to establish a ski run, golf course, housing project, club house and dining hall and if possible, an area in the dining building where alcoholic beverages can be dispensed. Carousel said they planned to operate seven days a week. The township board informed Carousel that they do not intend to issue any license or permit to sell intoxicating beverages and they are not in agreement with the plan to operate the ski resort on Sunday. After further discussion, the Carousel representatives left the meeting and the board voted unanimously to deny a permit for the sale of any intoxicating beverages and that Mr. Harrington and the State Liquor Control Commission be so informed. Norm Archer paid for the meeting.

October 31, 1963. Norm Archer proposed to build motel on the southwest corner of 147<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 66<sup>th</sup> Street. The appeal board was instructed to work out the motel details and also the prospect of an old fashioned cider mill. Mr. Archer also asked the board to reconsider his request for the sale of intoxicating beverages. His proposal was modified to the sale of only beer and wine. After discussion, the board made no promise or commitment for reconsider his request.

February 21, 1963. Carousel Mountain lawyer Rex Orton informed the board that a committee called the Laketown Improvement Association was formed on February 17 during a meeting at Carousel Mountain. Mr. Orton said the purpose of the committee was to help the board with long range planning on schools, roads, law enforcement, securing permits for the sale of intoxicating beverages and other planning matters. Mr. Orton stressed Carousel Mountain's request for a beer and wine license, stating that to be competitive alcohol must be on the bill of fare since it can readily be purchased in other areas. Mr. Orton pointed out that Michigan as a State permits the sale of alcoholic beverages so the township board would only be concurring with State law if consent were given. The Reverend Don Houseman spoke emphatically against Carousel's proposal and

begged the board not to give approval to the sale of intoxicating beverages in Laketown Township. He reminded the board that the Carousel people had come in un-invited and were then playing on people's sympathies. Rev. Houseman said where the Sunday sale of intoxicants is involved, a moral issue is involved. He said that alcoholism is a great danger and that Carousel can certainly control the use of alcohol brought by patrons to their property if they want to. Other speakers expressed themselves at the meeting, including people not residing in Laketown Township. From the applause that followed each speaker, it appeared that public sentiment at the meeting was divided. Mr. Norman Den Uyl asked the board what it would do if in a legal election the people voted in favor of the sale of alcoholic beverages in Laketown Township. The board said it felt in a matter like this, a board should bow to the will of the people. Though this sentiment was expressed by several board members, it was not in the form of a motion and vote of the board. The Clerk stated it was not proper or legal for a board to make a statement committing a future board to a policy or method of procedure. Another board member said he felt the board's position was based on Christian convictions and the board's position is backed by the majority of voters in the township.

March 24, 1964. Two letters were read aloud by the clerk; one from the elders of Central Park Reformed Church and the other from the consistory of Overisel Reformed Church. The letters praised the board for their stand on the sale of alcohol in the township and urged them to maintain that position.

April 4, 1964. Norman Den Uyl presented a petition to the board requesting an advisory election to vote on the sale of beer and wine in Laketown Township.

April 9, 1964. At this special meeting the board accepted the petition for an advisory election noting that the petition bore 275 valid signatures of qualified, registered electors. It was moved by Bill Ash, supported by Don Blaauw and carried by the board that a special advisory election on the proposal to allow the sale of beer and wine in Laketown Township would be held on Tuesday May 26 1964 with the date for registrations for the election to close Saturday April 25 1964.

May 1, 1964. The proposal to allow the sale of beer and wine was defeated. 624 people voted of 825 registered. The 76% voter turnout was the highest on record. There were 4 spoiled ballots. No votes totaled 386 or 62%; yes votes totaled 234 or 38%.

February 23, 1966. Bill Ash, John Scholten, George Bouws and Don Blaauw reported on an informal meeting with Paul Mobley and his assistant. Mr. Mobley now has a financial interest in Carousel Mountain. Paul felt that because Carousel Mountain is deep in debt and many local business suppliers have money coming that the Township board might reconsider allowing the sale of alcoholic beverages. The committee said the board's opposition to the sale of alcoholic beverages is unchanged and was strengthened by the special election that backed the board's position.

April 1 1966. Treasurer Fred Alferink reported that, upon advice of counsel, attempts were underway to collect past due property taxes from Carousel Mountain.

August 31, 1967. Larry Phillips appeared before the board. He represented the receivers who controlled Carousel Mountain. Mr. Phillips said they were thinking seriously of re-opening the resort for the upcoming ski season and wanted to get the board's opinion. Township Trustee Bill Ash presented a brief history of the board's interactions with Carousel. Bill said the board continues to be opposed to the sale of alcoholic beverages in Laketown Township. He also said the board is opposed to the operation of a business such as Carousel Mountain on Sunday because it constitutes a misuse of the Christian Sabbath which is the Lord's day.