

1945 September 17-23

Looking Up to Big Brother

When I Get Big

By Kenneth Carlson

I want to be the pilot of a C-47 transport plane. I have never ridden in any but I certainly would like to. I have been up in a Piper Cub with my brother and I would like to go up again.

I have made a lot of airplanes. I have made a P-40, a P-51, a P-39 and a B-25. I also have made a B-24 out of wood. I like to draw airplanes very well too. Maybe someday I'll be a pilot.

Kenneth is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Alex Carlson and is in the 4th grade.

(*West Salem Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 September 20, page 1)

Young boys can have a fascination with the machinery and tools of war, and an admiration for older siblings who are involved in what they see as adventuresome undertakings. **Kenneth Carlson of West Salem**, who would have been about nine years old at the time he wrote this, demonstrates both.

When they cannot experience the real thing, young boys may turn to drawings or models to satisfy their yearning.

Creating and assembling models of anything takes skill and patience. In the 1940s, making model airplanes required that in large doses. The models that Kenneth Carlson made were undoubtedly created from light and workable [balsa wood](#).¹ Unlike the molded, pre-fitted plastic parts of modeling kits in the 1960s and 1970s, the kits of the World War II-era required precise cutting and assembly.

Curtiss P-40

In the export version of the P-40, which is known as the Tomahawk, this design is reputed to equal or better the performance of the famous English Spitfire. Our model for this design follows the very latest refinements as illustrated above. Due to the long projecting nose it makes an excellent scale flying model. No present day line-up is complete without this 24" span beauty, colored blue fuselage with yellow wing and tail surfaces, for which colors are supplied. Instructions for camouflage are also given on the well detailed CD drawing. Complete kit No. SF 71 only **\$3.00**

Invasion

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Page from a 1943 Cleveland Model & Supply Company catalog
(Collect Air)



1943 Cleveland Model & Supply Company kit for a Curtiss P-40
(Collect Air)

Unlike many airplane modelers, Kenneth Carlson had been up in an airplane with his older brother, Maynard Carlson.

Kenneth and Maynard Carlson were the sons of Arnold and Erna (Hugo) Carlson, who lived outside West Salem.²

Maynard Carlson graduated from West Salem High School at the age of 16.³ In 1942, Maynard took a machinist course at the La Crosse Vocational School. Then he worked for Ed Ender & Son and at Mrs. Harry Griswold's dairy farm. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps in July 1943. His induction was at [Camp Grant](#) in Illinois, followed by recruit training at Miami Beach, Florida. There was more training at East Lansing, Michigan, which was completed in April 1944. Then it was on to more training at Big Spring and San Antonio, Texas; Sikeston, Missouri; Chickasha, Oklahoma; and Waco, Texas. Air Cadet Maynard Carlson earned his pilot's wings at Waco Army Air Field in February 1945. He was just 19 years old.⁴

Carlson's advanced training at [Blackland Army Air Field](#) in Waco was for two-engine aircraft. The C-47 transport plane and the B-25 Mitchell medium bomber that Kenneth Carlson mentioned were two-engine aircraft in the Army Air Force inventory at the time. Second Lieutenant Carlson was home on furlough in April 1945 before heading to Harlingen, Texas, at the beginning of May 1945.⁵ The war was almost over in August 1945 when he was scheduled to be sent overseas.⁶



A/C Maynard E. Carlson

(The Nonpareil Journal, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 February 15, page 1)

Kenneth Carlson had two more older brothers in the armed forces during World War II. Floyd was a radioman in the Navy and serving in the Pacific.⁷ Clarence Carlson was also in the Navy. All three of the Carlson brothers were home on leave in August 1945, so young Kenneth Carlson had three older brothers to admire at one time.⁸

After World War II, Maynard Carlson worked at the Ford Garage in West Salem and at Dahl Ford in La Crosse. He created a business called The Tinker Shop in 1960. As a self-taught engineer, Carlson built custom machines for businesses in the United States and Canada. He built several race cars and drove one of them himself until an accident put an end to his days as a race-car driver. The elder Carlson also turned to model-making by building model railroads and steam engine trains based on the trains that used to come through this area. He was a member of the American Legion in West Salem, an elder in the Presbyterian Church, and a member and president of the West Salem school board. When he was 78 years old, Carlson, along with a co-pilot, flew a World War II-era P-51 Mustang fighter plane. He and his wife, Doris, had seven children. Maynard Carlson died in April 2015 at the age of 89.⁹



Carlson

(*La Crosse Tribune*, 2015 April 29, page B3)

And what of his younger brother, Kenneth, the airplane model maker and the aspiring pilot? Kenneth Carlson graduated from West Salem High School in 1954. Instead of the Air Force, he served in the Army for two years as part of the [Chemical Corps](#). After earning a bachelor's degree in 1958, he went on to get a doctorate in chemistry from the University of Wisconsin in 1966. For 30 years, Kenneth Carlson was a research chemist at the [National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research](#) in Peoria, Illinois, until he retired in 1997. He was also the associate editor of the Journal of the American Oil Chemists' Society and served one year as president of the [American Chemical Society](#). He and his wife, Diana, who he married in 1968, did not have any children. Kenneth Carlson died in November 1998 in Peoria, Illinois. He was just 62 years old.¹⁰



Kenneth D. Carlson

(*La Crosse Tribune*, 1998 November 25, page D-6)

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Sources & Notes:

¹ The author admits to countless hours spent as a youth building models of airplanes and ships from plastic kits, wood harvested from maple trees in the backyard, scrap wood, empty plastic bleach bottles, and anything else he could lay his hands on.

² "Maynard Eugene Carlson," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 2015 April 29, page B-3.

³ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2015 April 29.

⁴ "To Receive Wings," *The Nonpareil Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 February 15, page 1.

⁵ *The Nonpareil Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 April 19, page 1.

⁶ *The Nonpareil Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 August 9, page 1.

⁷ *The Nonpareil Journal*, 1945 February 15.

⁸ *The Nonpareil Journal*, 1945 August 9.

⁹ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2015 April 29.

¹⁰ "Kenneth D. Carlson," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1998 November 25, page D-6.