

Stanley Marsland



It all began as a teenager's hobby; a young man's fascination with electronics at the dawn of the Great Depression. By the time Stanley Marsland retired, his "hobby" had turned into the largest privately-owned electronics business in Canada.

Marsland, who taught himself engineering and business, had become the largest industrial employer in Waterloo by the 1960s. Today, the thirteen-storey Marsland Centre on the corner of Erb and Albert Streets stands as a monument to his technical and business acumen.

"Marsland wasn't one to blow his own horn, nor was he a joiner of clubs. He dedicated his time to the running of efficient businesses and job creation," one newspaper columnist wrote. "He was a doer and his efforts paid off. He left a bigger mark on this community than most people realize . . ."

In addition to Marsland Engineering Ltd., he also founded Canada Alloy Castings Ltd. He opened the Marsland Centre shortly before retiring in 1974. His businesses sold sophisticated electronic equipment, navigational aids and military equipment to NATO countries in Europe. His own laboratories also developed products for the growing audio-visual market, making electronic components for radios and televisions.

During his career, Marsland took time out to serve four federal governments in various capacities as everything from director of the machine tool branch of the defence department to special advisor to the deputy minister. Like many successful businessmen of the time, Marsland was a "Dollar a Year Man," advising the government during the Second World War.

His war service didn't stop him from criticizing the government, however, when he felt its policies hampered the development of science and technology. During the mid-1960s, Marsland soundly denounced an 11-percent sales tax on production tooling and equipment. "Tooling is the creative base from where you start in secondary manufacturing," he explained at the time.

"I'm predicting that in secondary manufacturing, if we don't do something and become competitive, the Japanese will take over the lead as world exporters of secondary manufactures – as they have done in heavy engineering equipment."

Marsland's career as an entrepreneur took him around the world fourteen times. When he was forty-five, he got his pilot's licence and used his own plane to drum up business for the Waterloo economy.

Despite his international profile, Marsland was always committed to local job creation. When the prestigious Marsland Centre opened in 1971, Marsland told a newspaper

reporter that he was proud of the integrity of the Waterloo business community. He pointed to the strong relationship between himself and Lavern Asmussen, the contractor who built the \$3 million centre, as evidence of the fact.

“Mr. Asmussen has been constructing all of the Marsland buildings for 15 years,” he said. “. . . and to prove there is still good faith in this world, there has never been any contract between us – only a handshake.”

Marsland received the Confederation Medal for his outstanding contribution to Canadian industry in 1967 and two years later he was appointed the director of the Royal Canadian Mint. After retiring in 1974, he moved to Bermuda. Marsland died in 1988 after a ten-year battle with Alzheimer’s disease.

Once when applauding Marsland’s contributions to the region, a local newspaper columnist wrote: “Canada could use a few more Stan Marslands.”

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