



## HOLDREGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION

*Giving Back to Education*

### **HHS Alumni Recognition Feature!**



*Dear HHS Alumni and HPS Foundation Supporters,*

Holdrege High School is fortunate to have many very successful graduates. We are excited to continue sharing the stories of some of those HHS Alums thanks to the journalistic talents of Kristine (Long) Jacobson, Class of 1990.

**Thank you for your participation in the Give2Grow event! Visit the [HPS Foundation Give2Grow](#) page to see the results! We are still actively seeking donations toward the Duster Pavilion project, feel free to contact the HPS Central Office at 308-995-8663 if you wish to make a contribution.**

We also welcome your suggestions and comments and encourage you to join the Duster Alumni Association (*see form below*).

Sincerely,  
*Matt Allmand, Chairman  
 HPS Foundation Committee*

### **Dean Carlson - Class of 1954**

#### **HHS grad looks at highways with a different perspective**

By Kristine Jacobson

Dean Carlson, HHS class of 1954, has traveled on many highways across the United States. He and his wife, Carolyn, class of 1956, have moved 24 times in 58 years, living in places such as Washington, DC; Ames, Iowa; St. Paul, Minnesota; Sacramento, California; Montgomery, Alabama; and Austin, Texas.

While they have enjoyed the scenic by-ways and adventures along these highways, Dean looks at the highways with a little different perspective, checking

the details like the safety of the guard rails, the condition of the pavement, and the quality of construction.

Highways and transportation were always on the top of his mind in his 45-year career that included a stint as Executive Director of the Federal Highway Administration from 1988-1994 and then as the Secretary of Transportation for the Kansas Department of Transportation from 1995-2003.

In his federal position, he worked under Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, oversaw 4,000 federal employees around the United States, travelled across the globe, and found himself testifying before Congress on several occasions, which he described as "scary at times."

One of the major decisions he made was regarding the safety of guard rails. The parents of a girl killed after a car careened into a Kansas guard rail fought for changes to make them safer. Dean listened. While it was a highly political and expensive decision, he knew changing the guard rails was the right thing to do.

So, on the last day of his work for the federal government, he signed a memorandum requiring that stand-up guard rails on highways must all be replaced in the next year. "I signed it about four o'clock in the afternoon," he said. "And, then I left at 5."

Dean then accepted a job in Kansas, where he oversaw the implementation of safer guard rails in that state.

"I don't know how many people are walking around the country now that would be dead if it weren't for the changes we made in the guard rails," he said. "We spent \$37 million in Kansas replacing guard rails. But it was the right thing to do."

Carlson's highway career started in Lincoln. After graduating from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a degree in civil engineering in 1958, he took a job with the Bureau of Public Roads in its three-year training program for highway engineers.

The first time he was in charge of a state transportation office was in 1974 in Minnesota, where his department provided technical assistance, supervisory oversight, and money to the state for highways.

"I was lucky in that the interstate system started in 1956," he said. "During my entire career, we had big interstate programs as a focus. I worked on it in various roles all over the country. It was a good career, and it was a lot of fun."



Dean Carlson

An uncle who was an engineer for Tri-County and his love of math, spurred Dean's interest in engineering.

He also adored Jim Speece, his trigonometry teacher and principal at Holdrege High School. "He was the best teacher I ever had," he said of Jim. "There were a lot of good teachers in those days."

He also adored his football coach, Jeff Keifer, who led the HHS football team to an undefeated season and the State Championship when Dean was a senior. Dean still vividly remembers their final victory over McCook. "It snowed a foot that Friday night, so the townspeople went out and scooped the field from end zone to end zone," he said. They ended up postponing the game to the following Monday, and Holdrege won "decidedly," he said. "That was one of the highlights of my high school career," he said.

He also remembers his high-school sweetheart and now wife of 58 years, Carolyn, waiting for him in the cold weather after the football game. Dean and Carolyn married while Dean was attending UNL. He said he appreciates Carolyn and her willingness to pick up and move with him around the country. "It takes a special kind of wife to be in this kind of career," he said. "If I hadn't had the support I had for all these years, we could not have lived the lifestyle we lived."

After Dean finished his three-year training program, the couple tried to settle in a smaller town. When it came time to pick his first job location, he and Carolyn preferred the highway offices around the country with the smallest towns.

"Low and behold, they sent us to Ames, Iowa," Dean said. It has a population of just 20,000. But then, they were moved to Austin, Texas, with a population of 200,000, and cities just kept getting bigger. "We never got to a small town again," he said. "We found out you can survive in the big city."

They and their three children enjoyed living in the various parts of the country and sought out the adventures that awaited them in each region, such as state parks, museums and educational and recreational opportunities. And, they said, despite all the moving, their three children all turned out "extremely normal." One son is a retired Air Force officer, one works for NetJet and still travels all over the country, and their daughter has a psychology practice in Denver. They also now have three grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Dean and Carolyn were recently in Holdrege to celebrate the Class of 1954 60-year class reunion. They also visited Dean's mother, Dorothy Carlson, who is 102 years old and lives at Holdrege Memorial Homes. After that, they were headed down another highway as they were once again packing up their bags and moving from Topeka, Kansas, to Highlands Ranch, Colorado, to be near family there.

## About Us

*The mission of the HPS Foundation is to support and enhance the educational efforts of students and teachers of Holdrege Public Schools by providing funding for innovative and challenging programs, learning experiences, and activities.*

### **Holdrege Public Schools Foundation**

505 14th Ave, PO Box 2002  
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[holdregedusters.org](http://holdregedusters.org)

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