

THE ORANGE COUNTY BETA REGISTER

Buena Park's world-famous vitamin company celebrates 75 years.

By [MICHAEL MELLO](#)

2009-09-24 08:53:31



BUENA PARK It was 75 years ago this month when Carl F. Rehnborg started selling vitamin supplements made from the small lab he created in his Balboa Island garage.

His business started out slowly, but eventually grew into what is now the multi-billion dollar company Nutrilite. Based in Buena Park since 1946, the company's products—created from produce on its own organic farms—are sold world-wide.

Nutrilite held a 75th anniversary celebration earlier this month that attracted thousands of product salespeople, dignitaries, and the general public.

"I'm really proud," said Lisa Rehnborg, the founder's granddaughter and daughter of company's current chief, Sam Rehnborg. "I'm overwhelmed. I thought we might have 1,800 to 2,000 come, and I think there were a lot more than that."

Not bad for a company that started out modestly, with Carl Rehnborg selling his homemade plant-based supplements by talking with people, one by one.

"Most people thought he was nuts," Sam Rehnborg said, noting common belief at the time was that people could live just fine on their "three squares" a day—they didn't need any vitamins.

Slowly, that changed—and changed faster after Carl Rehnborg grudgingly let one of his biggest customers start selling the product. Soon, her sales topped his "because she was a satisfied customer. This product had changed her life," Sam Rehnborg said.

Company literature now boasts that Nutrilite produces 8.5 billion tablets each year. The company employs about 1,000 people, with 600 of them at its headquarters along Beach Boulevard, just north of I-5.

The products are sold exclusively through Amway, a company that itself started by mimicking Carl Rehnborg's person-to-person sales style. In the early 1970s, the two formed a partnership.

"Our value went up four-fold overnight, and it hasn't stopped since," Sam Rehnborg said, with business now done in 50 countries across the globe. China is the company's leading customer, with \$1.3 billion in sales so far this year.

Sam Rehnborg, better known as "Dr. Sam," thinks things will only get better for Nutrilite.

"I think the future is just starting. I'm very bullish," he said, for one reason: Better health and prevention is getting more and more attention from the public.

"We've got to get people into better habits," Rehnborg said, watching what they eat, and exercising more. With advances in genetics, Nutrilite researchers are studying ways to key supplements to help people who have genetic dispositions toward certain conditions, such as heart trouble.

Lisa Rehnborg said the company tries to practice what it preaches. Nutrilite has had its own health center for two decades, many years before businesses provided expanded health services to their employees.

There is also the Center For Optimal Health, where the public can see exhibits designed to educate them about nutrition and health choices.

Nutrilite tries to treat employees as family she said, adding she believes they feel the same way: "You've got to enjoy what you're doing."

To schedule a tour of the Center for Optimal Health, call 714-562-6250 or e-mail nutrilite.tours@nutrilite.com.

© Copyright 2010 Freedom Communications. All Rights Reserved.
[Privacy Policy](#) | [User Agreement](#) | [Site Map](#)