

Here Comes the Sun(room) – It's Alright!

Glastar Quality Sunroom Systems are designed for Winnipeggers and Winnipeg weather.

BY JANICE SAWKA · PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRONIC CREATIVE



DARRELL SAT DOWN IN HIS NEW SUNROOM AND mused aloud at the fabulous change in his family's recreational situation.

"I remember sitting out on my deck last November in my parka, trying to read a book and drink my coffee and thinking, 'wouldn't it be nice to be WARMER?'" he laughed. "So when my wife Susan and I prioritized what we wanted to accomplish in the coming year, a sunroom became our Number One project."

Darrell launched into a discriminating process of due diligence. He assembled a list of sunroom builders. He checked with the Better Business Bureau and the Small Claims division of Manitoba Justice, researching for disputes and outcomes. When the vendors visited the couple's St. Vital home, he talked specs and options, and viewed samples. Compared prices. Requested references. And finally, one sunroom provider outshone the rest: Glastar Sunroom Systems by Sunshade Products Ltd.

"It came down to quality. Their stuff was solidly built. These doors have weight," Darrell asserted, sliding a panel of his sunroom to demonstrate. "Glastar also arranged a personal interview with a previous customer, and gave us a list of some of their other installs to view. Some of those sunrooms were ten years old! You saw that their product lasted. It was a little more expensive, but worth the price."

The clincher, however, came down to weather. "When I asked one of the other vendors about an insulated floor, he asked why I wanted one. All I could think of was sitting out at the Blue Bombers games and feeling so cold because my feet were cold! When I raised the question with Glastar, the response was 'why wouldn't you want one?' They said exactly what I was thinking!"

Steven Sarens was in on the "dawn" of sunrooms, so to speak, via the family business. Back in the late 70s, Glastar (Steven, his father, mother and two brothers) were in the home improvement trade, installing aluminum awnings.

"We had an option to purchase a machine to make our own awnings and we did, so we didn't have to worry about supplier delays", Sarens recalled. "Then we started building aluminum patio roofs. People asked if we could add screens to keep out mosquitoes. So we procured equipment to make screen panels in aluminum frames. Then people wanted their screened areas to be useable longer into the year! It just progressed..."





As manufacturing options and structural integrity improved, Sarens and his brothers developed their own prototype "flotation system": the sunroom would rest on concrete pads and teleposts rather than piles or groundscrews, and the windows, frames and screens would be a system of panels in a tracking system. This allowed wiring to be fed through the frame and provided some flex in the walls. Otherwise, the infamous Manitoba gumbo and temperature changes would result in shifting foundations and frames, and possibly broken windows.

"Just living here, we knew," Sarens explained. "And when we first brought our design to the city for building permits, they didn't know how to classify it, because it hadn't been done before! We had to submit our design to independent engineers for load testing and a stamp of approval, so the city knew we had met their building codes."

Today, Glastar concentrates more on customer relationships than red tape.


"I think some companies try to fit the customer into their product line. We design specifically for each customer's home. Our designers train for three months so they fully understand our product, even those with a homebuilding background. Our installers do nothing but construct sunrooms. We don't subcontract on installation. It is that specific.

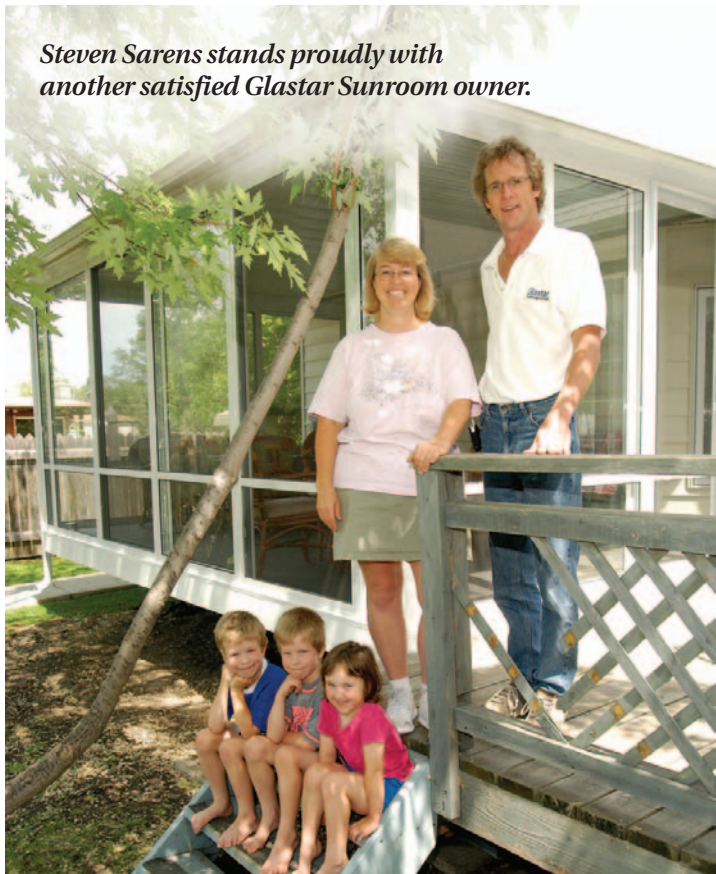
"We point out all pros and cons. You want a skylight? Great! Have you considered how much heat it will add, and how you'll clean it? Where's your sunroom located? With full sun exposure, our sunrooms can remain comfortable to minus 10 Celsius... This is a great business to be in. We're literally helping people make lifestyle changes and alter how and where they spend their leisure time. The novelty of a sunroom doesn't 'wear off' –it increases!"

Darrell and Susan's sunroom was constructed over three days, thanks to Glastar's system of doing most cutting and sizing offsite, leaving just the assembly for the customer's home.

"As one segment was finished, the parts for the next segment arrived," said Darrell. "In and out with minimal disruption for the family. The crew was also extremely tidy, and very professional about cleanup. They didn't even leave a single cigarette butt! My kids even noticed that! We were totally impressed."

So much so, that Darrell and Susan would now let future customers view their sunroom, joining a long line of Glastar Sunroom "ambassadors". It's an attitude that brings an even wider smile to Sarens's face.

"All our jobs are display models", he declares proudly. "Manitoba is our showroom!" 



Steven Sarens stands proudly with another satisfied Glastar Sunroom owner.

