

## Leading to the LCCA's 25th Anniversary, 1991-95

### 1991 - Club Mascot Named

As Lionel began their 91st year of operations an honor was bestowed upon one of their longtime employees in the person of Lenny Dean, RM #8104, when they named their "happy" symbol (who's also our Mascot) "Lenny the Lion". This colorful character has been with the LCCA since we started producing publications and still proudly stands atop a namesake magazine on *The Lion Roars*. It was during this year that *TLR* grew to have 32 pages (with lots of color) in some issues as the Club's membership ranks were once again also growing. At the beginning of the year there were nearly 6,000 active Members with Membership #14180 assigned by year's end.

The Convention in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, was Hosted by Barry Keener, RM #728, and drew a new record of 530 registrations. Members and their families enjoyed many tours to sights in the picturesque Amish countryside and there were 460 tables in the trade hall for eager attendees to seek out additions to their collections. One of the highlights was a setup of all 66 Lionel postwar passenger sets in the Public Display area for everyone to view. In conjunction with this Convention, a pair of Lionel produced Tractors were offered as Stocking Stuffers to go with the Trailers on the pair of Standard O Scale flatcars selected for the 1991 Convention Car set. (The Officers and Directors had decided that the Club's Third Decade Train of commemoratives would be all Standard O Scale units.)

The LCCA's Leadership Team consisted of newly elected Officers Al Otten, President; and Michael Sabatelle, Assistant Secretary; Bill Hourigan, Treasurer; and Bill Schmeelk, Immediate Past President; (with Bill Stitt, Vice-President; and Harry Overtoom, Secretary completing their second year of their two year term), along with reelected Directors Winfrey Adkins, Bill Beatty and Dienzel Dennis, and newly elected Directors Art Broshears and Chuck Seddon. On the Club's business side of matters, we moved to a calendar year basis for accounting and beginning this era with a overall funds total of \$261,003 in the bank. Based on direct feedback from the Members that a dues increase was preferred over a decrease in services, dues for Charter and Regular

Members became \$30 (versus the previous \$20) while Family Members stayed the same at \$5. These dues have remained the same even now.

### 1992 - Membership Drive

Near the end of the year, the Club went to a professionally produced direct mail brochure to solicit enrollment of new members. The highly successful campaign resulted in a near doubling of our ranks as over 4,500 train enthusiasts became LCCA Members! In order to better handle the administration of the now large number of Members, a "postcard" style of Membership Card was started and fees were collected on a quarterly basis instead of only at the end of the year from all LCCA Members. Starting in November, one-fourth of the Members got a dues statement for the full amount, while the other three-fourths of the Members got a bill for one-fourth, one-half or three-quarters of the annual amount. Then, beginning on the second, third and fourth quarter cycles in 1993, all members would be billed for their \$30 dues. This action results in a much more consistent cash flow for the Club throughout the year.

The 1992 Convention was Hosted by Bill Trappen, RM #739, and held in the fantastic tourist city of Orlando, Florida. More than 380 registrations were processed so that LCCAer's and their families could partake of the many sites and attractions in the area as well as stroll the aisles in the trade hall looking for treasures. One highlight was the '50's Sock-Hop at Saturday's festive Banquet where many Members were able to kick up their heels to some good old fashion rock-and-roll. An all-time high of more than 150 new LCCA Members signed up at the door to further increase our ranks.

Newly elected to two year terms for Officers this year were: Dienzel Dennis, Vice-President and Lawrence Nahigian, Secretary. While Al Otten, President; Michael Sabatelle, Assistant Secretary; Bill Hourigan, Treasurer and Bill Schmeelk, Immediate Past President completed their second year of their two year terms. Directors were: newly elected Harry Overtoom, Stan Roy and Bill Stitt, with Art Broshears and Chuck Seddon reelected.

Coupling the increase in Members with positive leadership and other financial successes, the Club's equity rose to \$359,173 by year's end (versus the previous figure of \$80,000 as recently as 1990). The improved financial position once again enabled the *Interchange Track* to go back to a 100 word limit for ad submissions instead of the previous 50 words. In addition, December's cover of *The Lion Roars* was graced for the first time with a beautiful, holiday scene of a painting by renowned artist Angela Trotta Thomas, RM #13961.

## **1993 - Biggest Convention Ever**

With a combination of 1,353 Charter/Regular Members, 52 Family Members, 705 spouses and 853 kids, a total of 2,963 people came to Dearborn, Michigan, to celebrate the Club's 23rd Annual Convention! Host Bill Button, RM #3835, greeted the huge group who enjoyed tours of the Lionel Factory and Visitors Center, Madison Hardware as well as Dick, RM #5586, and Linda, RM #9535, Kughn's Carail Museum. (More than 5,000 "seats" were occupied on the tour busses throughout the week!) Also, over 2,500 went to the Welcome Party and nearly 1,000 came to the Banquet to partake of the camaraderie and excellent meals. (These attendance figures are record setters and we'll be going back to Dearborn in the Year 2000 to celebrate our 30th along with Lionel's 100th Anniversary.)

Administratively, several important changes took place this year to create a better method of dealing with running the Club. First of all, the Immediate Past President took over the responsibility of handling any complaints. This left the Vice-President more time to schedule meets. Also, the terms of office for the Club's Directors was changed with this year's elections so that a total of two (2) Directors positions would be filled for a two year term and three (3) Directors would be elected to a one year term. This change allowed for some turnover of Directors while at the same time provided for continuity over a longer period (just like the terms for Officers had been changed starting back in 1989). The election results for the Directors had Bill Button and Stan Roy in two year terms with Bill Beatty, John Ourso and Harry Overtoom elected to serve a one year term. For Officers, results had newly elected Chuck Seddon, President; Art Broshears, Assistant Secretary and Barry Findley, Treasurer; with Al Otten becoming the Immediate Past President.

(Dienzel Dennis as Vice-President and Lawrence Nahigian as Secretary completed their two year terms.)

Regarding publications, included for the first time with the February issue of *TLR*, LCCA Members received a complimentary copy of Lionel's 1993 Catalog. (So, with the six issues each of *Interchange Track* and *TLR* along with the *Annual Roster*, Club Members got more than a "baker's dozen" of items each and every year.) In addition, beginning with the October issue, Don Carlson was appointed as the eighth Editor of *The Lion Roars* and given the assignment of increasing the page count to 40 with optimum use of color throughout each issue.

## **1994 - Solid Finances & Leadership**

The increase in new members along with a profitable Dearborn Convention coupled with successful sales of the Stocking Stuffers and Convention Cars had the Club start the year with more than one-half million dollars in equity. Through the year the LCCA leaders monitored expenses so that by year's end, our equity was \$589,477. Overall, we once again stood on very solid financial ground and were able to provide first-class services to our Members.

The "change-over" in the election process that began for Officers in 1989 and for Directors in 1993 was now totally complete as each year there are two Directors elected to 2 year positions and one more Director elected to a 1 year position. Coupling the Constitution's Article that no one (except the Treasurer and the 1 year Director) could repeat themselves in the same position with the Officer positions also "half" changing each year (that is, President, Assistant Secretary and Treasurer one year and the Vice-President and Secretary the next), allows for some turnover and a more consistent process of running the Club's business is in place. The 1994 elections resulted in Jerry Dangelo, Vice-President and Bill Schmeelk, Secretary, for Officers along with Dienzel Dennis and John Ourso elected to two year Directors as well as Harry Overtoom elected to a one year Director's position. Combining these leaders with those that were completing their second year of their two year term made up the LCCA's Team. Namely, they were: Chuck Seddon, President; Art Broshears, Assistant Secretary; and Al Otten, Immediate Past President along with Bill Button and Stan Roy as Directors.

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The 1994 Convention was held in Chattanooga, Tennessee, which was also the site of our 1981 Convention. Co-Hosted by Charles Sahm, RM #4366, and Bill Stitt, RM #259, there were 685 Members registered for the event with 19 new Members joining on-the-spot and 129 Registrations taken at the door! Highlights included the superb Welcome Party and Banquet meals along with the train ride that began at the station where "Track 29" was located (for many of the 420 participants, it was their first experience of going on an open-air trip through a tunnel with a steam powered locomotive). Other tours took many attendees on a riverboat ride or to scenic, historic sites of Civil War battlefields. One special door prize/souvenir was an O scale Rock City Barn made up just for this Convention. Linking on with the success of 1993's Madison Hardware Tractor and Trailer was the set of Southern Railway and Sovex Tractors/Trailers as Stocking Stuffers commemorating the 1994 Chattanooga Convention.

## **1995 - 25th Anniversary Celebration**

To celebrate our milestone 25th Anniversary, the Convention was held in the LCCA's birthplace of Des Moines, Iowa, which was also the site of our 1st and 10th Annual Conventions. Members came from near and far as more than 550 Pre-Registrations were received. Combining the Members with their families accounted for more than 1,000 people at the five days of events. Many took a 3 hour bus ride to see the Ertl Factory and play ball on the "Field of Dreams" at sites in the Dyersville, Iowa, area. A large number took in the scenic (and romantic) places where "The Bridges of Madison County" was filmed as well as the Capital area of the city. Others enjoyed an all-day ride on the very last produced in the world steam locomotive aboard the Boone and Scenic Valley Railroad. Busloads of Conventioneers visited three fantastic layouts (including LCCA founder and CM #1 Jim Gates') during one evening. Free bus service enabled crowds to fill Convention Host Doug DuBay's (RM #2266) Museum and Trainworld. And, virtually everyone came to the festive 25th Birthday Party as well as the Banquet. Overall, it was one great big party celebration all week long!

A very major change (perhaps the most evolutionary one ever!) in our history that has impacted the toy train

collectors world occurred with the March, 1995 issue of the *Interchange Track*. Based on the idea and persistence of then President Chuck Seddon, HCM #46, and thanks primarily to Bob Quigley, RM #19626, who Chuck appointed as the fifth Editor, (assisted by Don Carlson, RM#6766 and Bill Button, RM#3835 to develop the format), for the **first time** ever, the ad's items were sorted by era and manufacturer into a numerical sequence so that everything could be easily looked up. This unique method is a "break-through" pioneered by the LCCA that others now follow!

From June's election results, new Officers were Al Otten, President and Stan Roy, Assistant Secretary to go with reelected Barry Findley, Treasurer. Newly elected to two year Directors were Larry Black and Art Broshears and one year Director, Bill Button. Other LCCA leaders completing the second half of their two year terms as Officers were Bill Schmeelk, Secretary; Jerry Dangelo, Vice-President as well as Chuck Seddon, Immediate Past President, along with Dienzel Dennis and Johnny Ourso as Directors.

A significant milestone was reached in our 25th Anniversary year when Membership Number 20000 was assigned in March! And based upon the success of our first Membership Drive in 1992-93, a second campaign was launched starting in November with both a direct mail flyer as well as full-page, color advertisements in *Classic Toy Trains* magazine. (So far, in this latest "Drive", more than 2,000 new members have joined the LCCA and the ads will continue through 1996.) Due in large part to professional, successful management coupled with our growing membership ranks, the Club's equity at the end of this 5 year era remained above the one-half million dollar plateau.

## **Epilogue 1991 - 1995**

The Club rose to new heights in the first half of the 1990's in terms of equity (without an increase in dues since 1990), total member ranks (with over a 100% increase), first-class Conventions (that are always fun-filled and family oriented) and top notch publications (for both collectors and operators to enjoy).

Hope you enjoyed learning of our first 25 years in these last 6 issues of *TLR* and you'll stay with the LCCA (or better yet, recruit a friend or relative!) as we'll continue to bring innovative standards to the toy train collectors/operators world.