

**NEWS RELEASE #3 – Feature Story**  
**Revised 6-01-11**

*For Release at your Discretion*

**FM:** Lionel® Collectors Club of America  
**RE:** LCCA Convention in Dallas/Grapevine, TX  
**Venue:** Hyatt Regency DFW at the Airport  
**Dates of the Event:** July 25-30, 2011  
**Club Website:** [www.lionelcollectors.org](http://www.lionelcollectors.org) (refer to the “News Media Center”)

**NOTE TO EDITORS AND REPORTERS**

Refer to the LCCA website for downloads of news releases and hi-res color photos (300 dpi) at the NEWS & INFO icon and refer to the NEWS MEDIA CENTER pages. **Convention events highlighted below in yellow are open to the public.** Visitors may join the club at the host hotel, register for the convention, and participate immediately in all club-sponsored activities.

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## **Train Hobbyists Blend Nostalgia and New Technology**

(Dallas, TX) Grown men involved in what they consider the world’s greatest hobby are not ashamed to admit that they still play with toy trains. A spirit of boyish adventure energizes collectors and operators of toy trains – many of whom are 45+ years old. For them, the romance of the rails associated with trains never died, and they keep it alive albeit in miniature proportions.

Men who spend time restoring antique automobiles or flying vintage model airplanes love playing with the past, and model train hobbyists share that same type of enthusiasm. The Golden Age of the toy train hobby peaked in the 1950s when the toy of choice for most boys was an electric train set. For many of them, a Lionel train set was a dream-come-true Christmas present, and many still have their first train set as a prized keepsake of their boyhood.

Members of the Lionel Collectors Club of America (LCCA) keep that spirit alive and grow it for the enjoyment of families of this generation. Club members gather at a selected city – Dallas in 2011 – for an annual convention filled with trains, train-related excursion trips and local tours, and the latest news and trends about the train hobby. Also, to have fun. The club will

celebrate its 41<sup>st</sup> year during this convention, and several charter members who joined the club when it was formed in 1970 plan to attend.

### **Trains Galore for the Public**

Conventioneers, train hobbyists, and the public will attend the Train Show on Saturday [July 30] at the host hotel. The show will be filled with tables loaded with trains, parts, and accessories for sale, including hard-to-find items. Children under age 18 will be admitted free to the train show if accompanied by an adult paying a \$5 admission.

A “Gee Whiz!” O-gauge train layouts will be in operation on Wednesday (July 27) through Saturday, (July 30) as a major attraction for the public with no admission fee. This train layout is as big as a four-stall garage and contains 32 trains operating simultaneously. Sponsored by Lionel LLC, the layout was designed and built in Dallas by T W Design.

“The train layout draws lots of attention from families with young children,” said LCCA President Al Kolis of Howell, MI. Persons interested in joining the LCCA may become at the club’s website, [www.lionelcollectors.org](http://www.lionelcollectors.org), or at the convention site.

### **Real Trains and Toy Trains**

Club members enjoy the excitement, elegance, and power of real trains as well as the equally fascinating but smaller-in-scale O-gauge electric train models made by Lionel LLC and other manufacturers. Modern technology built into today’s toy trains enables a highly interactive model railroading experience on a home layout. Model trains spew synthetic smoke from their stacks, emit realistic onboard digital sound effects derived from audio recordings of actual train whistles, bells, and action sounds, and mimic the crew talk between a train engineer and a dispatcher. Call-outs of station stops by a conductor are included on passenger trains equipped with this feature. When an operator slows a model train to a stop, the system emits the sound of squealing brakes.

“Kids love the sound effects, and we’ll coach them how to activate the sounds with a wireless controller,” said Bob Carter, Convention Co-manager, of Plano, TX. The club will provide a play area within the host hotel where families can enjoy hands-on play with Lionel trains on the carpeted floor.

### **Nostalgia of Yesteryear Mixed with Contemporary Realism**

Club members approach the hobby through different pathways. Some specialize in collecting and operating trains known as “fallen flags,” railroads that once served a region but were closed, went bankrupt, or merged with a dominant railroad. Member Mike Mottler of Conway, AR, is an exemplar of that approach. He collects and operates trains of the long-gone Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad.

Others seek to re-acquire trains they once owned as a boy but were subsequently discarded. At train shows, auctions, and online sites, they seek trains to replace the ones they owned decades ago. “The thrill is in the chase” is how one club member described it. He spent nearly five years re-gathering all the pieces of his boyhood Lionel train set.

Others purchase the trains they like because of their unique history, colorful paint scheme, or interesting locale. Perhaps the dramatic décor of the Santa Fe diesel trains is the most memorable example of this aspect of the hobby. The “warbonnet” design painted on the Super

Chief streamliner passenger trains presented a dramatic splash of Southwestern colors – red, silver, and yellow – with American Indian motifs. Herb Koch of Palos Park, IL, a focused Santa Fe collector, believes, “With the possible exception of the Coke wave or the Nike swoosh, there’s not a more distinctive corporate identity program than the classic warbonnet design of this major American railroad.”

The contemporary major railroads in America command the attention of many hobbyists, yet a lingering love of steam locomotive behemoths remains strong among model train enthusiasts. Lionel LLC manufactures models of entry-level steam locomotives as starter sets intended for youngsters as well as highly detailed leviathans from the peak of the steam era. “Even in miniature, the flashy action of the side rods and billows of smoke from the stacks show the power of steam locomotives such as the Challenger, the Big Boy, and the Yellowstone series,” says Johnny Ourso of Tucson, AZ, a big-steam collector.

### **Not Necessarily for Men Only**

The hobby isn’t necessarily a “guy thing” any more. Wives of club members are often engaged in aspects of the hobby that appeal to them; for example, scene decorating, making and painting structures from kits or from scratch, or shopping for trains and supplies.

Krysti Dewey (now 18), of Wichita, Kansas, will attend the upcoming event with her extended family. She has become a regular participant in LCCA conventions over the years, and is considered a young “club mascot.” Krysti’s favorite railroad is the C&O [Chesapeake and Ohio], and she has her own trains of that railroad. She is a skilled train operator and often helps out at LCCA conventions by sharing her affinity for the hobby with visiting youngsters.

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### **LCCA Standard Descriptor**

The Lionel Collectors Club of America (LCCA) was founded in the Midwest in 1970 by a group of hobbyists to promote awareness and enjoyment of toy trains. Today, the LCCA is a not-for-profit, international hobby-based organization with about 7,500 members who are toy train collectors and operators. Members favor Lionel trains, and the club collaborates with Lionel LLC to produce limited-edition collectible cars, train sets, and special products exclusively for members.