

First Years of the LCCA, 1970-75

1970 - Founding

As covered in Part I, it took courage and determination on the behalf of Jim Gates, CM #1 and Club founder, to restart a club dedicated to the backing of the Lionel name. Jim used the resources available in the trade publications of the time (most notably *Toy Train Magazine*) to solicit membership on a national basis. Between August and December of 1970, memberships were accepted from fellow Lionel enthusiasts in the states of California, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Montana, New York, Ohio and Oregon. When a member from Ontario, Canada, also joined, the LCCA was already "International" in scope when it was only a few months old!

To establish a democratically based Club, Jim sent out questionnaires to all members in order to get their opinions on key issues to include in the Constitution. Some of the early decisions that came from that first questionnaire (distributed late in 1970) included: 1. Any member not backing the Club name or Constitution would be dropped; 2. All members would have the ability to vote on the Club's rules; 3. The rules and policies would not be left up to only those at the Convention; 4. It would take a 50% approving vote from the members to pass a rule or policy change; 5. The cut-off date for Charter Membership status would be one month before the 1st Annual Convention (which was slated to occur annually on/near the Club's anniversary date of August 1 each year); 6. A Regular Member would be charged slightly more than a Charter Member to enroll in the Club (initial dues were \$5 per year with a \$2 initiation fee); 7. Officers would be elected from among those present at the Annual Conventions; and, 8. The membership at large would be voluntarily used to assist the founder and Officers in the running of the Club's business.

Also, in these first few months, the inaugural *Interchange Track* was edited and distributed by Len Chaikowsky, CM #2. Just to illustrate our Club's beginnings, that first issue of *IT* had 6 Wanted ads, 4 Sale ads, 2 Trades and 2 Sale/Trades in it. And, the highest member number listed was #20.

1971 - Initial Organization

Jim used four more questionnaires between January and June of 1971 to garner more information for the Club's initial draft of a Constitution. The preamble of that first Constitution read - "We the People of the Lionel® Collectors Club of America, in order to promote among collectors Better Relations, Better Communications, Better Standards and Promote the LIONEL NAME, do establish this Constitution of The Lionel® Collectors Club of America". Jim received permission from MPC to utilize the #700E or #5344 Hudson locomotive as the official Club emblem and through the idea of Dennis Chandler, CM #20, adopted the Lionel Lion as our mascot to keep the strictly Lionel theme high balling down the tracks. The LCCA's motto was endorsed unanimously by the membership and to this day it reads exactly the same - "A Lifetime of Happiness Collecting Lionel Trains".

Because the Club was expanding so quickly, an application form was put together to make processing of the ever growing requests

for membership easier to conduct. Jim's initial concerns were put to rest when 47 members from all over the country came to Des Moines, Iowa, to meet on July 31-August 1 at the LCCA's First Annual Convention! With some minor changes made, the Constitution was approved and the election of Officers took place at the Business Meeting. The Club's first ever Officers (who were also its Board of Directors) were: Van Stockdale - President, John Vodopich - Vice-President, Larry Keller - Treasurer, John Brady - Secretary and Don Foote - Assistant Secretary. Each was elected to a one year term with elections to take place at the Convention each succeeding year. In addition, per the Constitution, next year's Convention site was chosen by simple majority vote and Kansas City, Missouri, won.

Putting together, publishing and mailing the *Interchange Track* was now within the responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary and Don Foote, CM #39, took over from Jim Chellis, CM #10, who had put together the second issue. The Treasurer's report (dated August 15, 1971) showed income of \$600.65 offset by expenses of \$210.00 to give the LCCA a balance of \$390.65. Per the agreed upon cut-off date of June 30th, there were 83 Charter Members and their names were published in the first ever *Roster* which was compiled and put together by Jim Greytak, CM #13. By December 31, 1971, the Club had grown to a total of 146 members and a separate, specially colored listing of Regular/Family Members #84-146 was provided as an addendum to complete the inaugural *Roster*. During this year, a Club *Newsletter* was edited by Jim Hunt, CM #9, with Jim Brady, CM #38; handling the distribution along with his Secretary duties.

1972 - Further Organization

This year saw some progress and its accompanying changes take place in the Club. With a group of Officers now directing the LCCA, continued enhancements to organization along with the active recruiting of new members became top priorities. A Constitution Committee was formed to go over and clarify the rules for the Club. At the 2nd Convention in Kansas City, elections again occurred and the only change that took place was the selection of Gerald Dangelo, CM #67, as Assistant Secretary replacing Don Foote. During the latter part of the year, the first ever bound version of the Club Newsletter was issued and its new name was *Lionel Model Railroading*. Edited by Warren Bitts, CM #48, it contained stories and pictures (all in black and white) along with advertisements within its 28 pages and was sold for \$1 each. The *Interchange Track* also changed with a requirement that all "For Sale" items had to have a selling price listed with the item.

The year also marked a significant milestone in the Club's history with the offering of a Convention Car Commemorative. This car was specially decorated with rub-on decal lettering to note the LCCA along with the Convention site and date. In addition, for those members who attended the Convention, a special stamp was put on the bottom frame of the car which included their membership number. Overall, there were a total of 125 Cars decorated with decals, and a total of 265 were marked with the special Con-

vention stamp and later sold to Club members. This special stamping process on Club Convention Cars continued through 1975.

The Treasurer's report (as of July 15, 1972) listed income at \$1,586.15 less expenses of \$613.97 to result in a balance of \$972.18. By the end of the year, The LCCA ranks had grown to 238 members representing 38 states along with an international group of 4 members in Canada and 1 in France to create a total membership of 243. Because of this near doubling of people in the Club, all members were now listed both alphabetically and by state/country for the first time in the 1972 edition of the *Roster*.

1973 - Foundation Established

Some turmoil resulted in a change of leadership with Chuck Seddon becoming President. With his guidance, the "4 cornerstones" of the LCCA's foundation were established and put into place. These very significant items that form a strong foundation for the LCCA are: 1. Club's publications would be issued regularly each month by alternating the *Interchange Track* with the *Newsletter* on odd-numbered and even-numbered months respectively; 2. The LCCA's Convention Car would be special and unique from other clubs' in that it would bear prototypical markings in a roadname local to the Convention's site with a small, discrete notation about the Convention's data marked on it; 3. Any active member could purchase two cars each year; and, 4. The Club would establish an archives in order to create a historical base.

Each of these items were evolutionary in their time when compared to the other train collecting/operating clubs and quickly set the LCCA apart from the others. These positive movements resulted in a rapid growth for the Club's rolls more than doubled to over 500 members by year's end. And the largest group to date came together at the 3rd Annual Convention in Huntsville, Alabama, when 221 members attended.

Another high impact change this same year was the election of a 5 member Board of Directors to go along with the 5 Officer positions in order to create a more wide-spread panel of knowledge and expertise governing Club business. Except for Larry Keller as Treasurer, an all-new group of Officers were elected. They were: Chuck Seddon - President, John Ourso - Vice-President, Gerald Dangelo - Secretary, and David Stonecipher - Assistant Secretary. The LCCA's first ever, separately elected Board of Directors was made up of Jim Gates, Bill Yarbrough, Stewart Robinson, Curtis Fischbach and Al Otten. The Treasurer's report (dated July 31, 1973) showed income at \$5,886.59 less expenses of \$2,639.07 resulting in a balance of \$3,247.52. Another interesting item that took place during January of the year was when the Newsletter Editor, Jim Hunt, CM #9, decided it was time for change and came up with the name *The Lion Roars* for the publication. This great, new name stayed with the bi-monthly magazine and symbolizes our Club's innovative and leading spirit!

1974 - More Growth and Movement East

As detailed above, the positive changes that had taken place in the Club with its new leadership direction resulted in an ever increasing influx of new members eager to join the LCCA. It was during this year that member #1000 came on board! In just four short years the Club had grown from an idea into a far reaching

group of Lionel enthusiasts. For the first time, the Annual Convention moved out of the Midwest and journeyed to Corning, New York, where lucky Member #777 joined up and in on the festivities. Ted Dartt, CM #6 (and the LCCA's 1st Honorary Member), was Host to over 200 members. The Convention Car was a Corning Glass 4 bay covered hopper with the unique feature of a very colorful two-tone paint scheme that was a first for Lionel.

For the 1974 Club elections, several new, important changes took place. For the first time, a Nominating Committee was established and their role was to furnish a listing of persons nominated for each office to all LCCA members 60 days prior to the Convention. In turn, everyone not attending the Convention was able to cast their vote by mail for the candidates of their choice. These votes were then added to those taken during the Convention from the membership at-large to obtain a total vote. In 1974, Officer and Board elections resulted in several leaders staying in the same or changing positions as well as some new people stepping forward from the membership ranks. Seddon, Stonecipher and Keller remained as President, Assistant Secretary and Treasurer respectively while Bill Yarbrough moved to Vice-President (from Director) and Don Fraley was elected as the new Secretary. For Directors, Fischbach and Otten remained, while Dangelo and Ourso moved over from their previous Officer positions and Ray Nawrot was newly elected. The high number of repeat or incumbent leaders demonstrated the faith the membership had in them for a job well done.

1975 - Club Future Solidified

With its expansion of members and the ensuing revenues continuing, the need to incorporate came to light. This was accomplished by appointing Chuck Seddon as Registered Agent. With legal council involved, the LCCA officially become an incorporated, not-for-profit organization on January 7, 1975 in the State of Illinois. Even though it was only a half decade old, by September 1st the Club's ranks had grown to include 1,523 members in all 50 states as well as 2 foreign countries, and prior to year's end, Member #2000 came on board!

In terms of Club leadership, Seddon, Stonecipher and Keller stayed in their same Officers positions with Richard Brown becoming Vice-President and Ernest Davis elected as Secretary. And for Directors, Dangelo and Fischbach carried over with Thornton Dartt, Stanley Orr and John Kozlowski newly elected. The LCCA's treasury also grew to new heights with income of \$55,083.03 offset by expenses of \$38,822.01 creating a balance of \$16,261.02.

Epilogue 1970 - 75

In just five short years the Club's growth was phenomenal in that membership ranks doubled each and every year. (As a point of interest, the other clubs of the time took 6 or 7 years to reach member #1000. The plateau of member #2000 in 5 years made the LCCA the fastest growing toy train club in history.) As our founder Jim Gates had thought from the start, there were a large number of toy train enthusiasts out there who were primarily interested in Lionel Trains!

In Part III of this year long, six segment article, we'll see what took place in the *Second Half Of The First Decade* of the LCCA's history, the years 1976 through 1980.