

LOCO NEWS

November - December 2004

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LOCO IDoes THOMAS

Text by Charles Parker

First things first. We at LOCO owe our thanks to the Oklahoma Railroad Museum for offering us the privilege of sharing in the work, the fun, and especially the proceeds from their recent Day Out With Thomas event! Also, a special thanks to both *Bob* and *Tom Cook* of ORM who organized the event and to the other local model train clubs and other organizations that participated to help make the event a giant success. Finally, a great big thanks to those members who found the time to come out and earn money for LOCO. They were: *Earl Bean, J.D. Donaldson, Brian Lacock, Travis York, Gene Berger, Roy Kline, Tony Wasson, and Charles Parker*. It should be noted that LOCO members *Truman Hefner* and *Jim Murray* were also there, but because of their also being ORM members, were obligated to sign in for ORM. If I omitted anyone, let me apologize now and you can kick me later.

See THOMAS page 2

Although the event opened to the public on Friday, October 1, LOCO members began putting in time the previous Wednesday helping with the setup. But no one expected the crowds that showed up on opening day. It had been expected to be mostly grandparents with their grandchildren or lone parents with their children. Apparently quite a few folks took time away from work and made a family day of it! Attendance, determined by the train ride ticket count (there was no general admission charge) for the two weekends, was 16,354. The second weekend was off some due to rain, rain, rain. But like they say, "Build it and they will come." And come they did! The grounds may have become a swampland and spirits and bodies may have become soaked, but they waded the streams and bogs to board the train and ride with Thomas!

LOCO members performed various duties such as flaggers at grade crossings and parking areas to prevent auto/train collision and working on the loading platform or as gate hosts checking tickets for the correct car. However, the most interesting but probably most tiring job was that of car host. Those volunteers were responsible for assisting riders on and off the train, counting tickets, making sure that all ORM train rules were being followed, answering all manner of railroad questions (and getting in a plug or two about LOCO), giving the adults information sheets about the OKC Train Show and the ORM Polar Express runs on December 18, and making sure every little rider got his or her own Junior Engineer certificate. Then there was being asked to take photos or occasionally being asked to be in one!

While Sunday, October 11, was the last public day for the Day Out With Thomas, LOCO folks worked through Tuesday helping get the ORM facility back to normal. In the end, LOCO members netted the club treasury a tidy sum of \$1,622.29. I, for one, certainly enjoyed participating in this event and came away knowing more about Thomas and his friends than I thought possible! But really, I hope we have the opportunity to do this again. From the financial standpoint, we sure need a lot more times like these two weeks. If anyone has any ideas for other ways to raise funds for the club, please present them at the business meetings so they may be considered by the membership.

LOCO Business

TRAIN SHOW

LOCO will again participate in the annual train show at the State Fairgrounds occupying the two spots adjacent to the large roll-up door. The plan is to again have Double Aught with a car and caboose set up for pictures. The donations collected last year were enough to pay for the spots. This year, if plans work out to have a seasonal background and a Santa Claus in order to offer a Christmas card choice, we should do MUCH better!

Prior to the show, we will be dividing responsibilities on the different projects that need to be done and making the decisions concerning the equipment to be displayed and the logistics of getting it and the display racks to the building. We will also need to identify who will supply the TV and VCR and agree on the time we will meet on Friday evening to get everything unloaded and set up. Also to be worked out are who will do what during the show itself. For the picture-taking function, we will need a minimum of three folks: A photographer/computer operator, a money taker, and someone to help the guests on and off the train display. Also needed are at least two members at ALL times to stay in the display area to meet the public and answer questions about the equipment and LOCO. Since we do not want to overwhelm the people, a similar "shift" schedule like last year will be great. Hey, with our new LOCO club shirts, we should be the hit of the show!

LOCO ELECTIONS

Brian Lacock has volunteered to handle nominating committee responsibilities for the LOCO election this year. If you have not received a call from him by the time you receive this newsletter and would like to run for a board position, please call and let him know so he can add your name to the candidate pool. When the November meeting rolls around, he will submit the names to those present at the meeting for approval. *Charles Parker*, as the recorder, will make up and send the ballots. All ballots need to be returned by the December meeting (scheduled for the 18th) when they will be counted.

This year the three positions currently occupied by *Brian Lacock*, *Ed Beaudette*, and *Charles Parker* must be filled. As always, once all six Directors have been identified, they will meet to decide who will hold the offices of president, vice president, treasurer, and recorder. The remaining two will serve as directors.

LOCO DUES

The new year is almost upon us and, along with it, LOCO membership renewal. Thanks to the hard work of LOCO members through various activities, we did not have to raise full membership dues this year. Therefore, for 2005, the full membership dues will remain \$100. Although notices will go out toward the end of December reminding you that dues are due by January 31, 2005, you can beat the rush and send them now. Please send all dues payments to:

Earl Bean
6409 Beaver Creek Rd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73162-3418

Maintain LOCO

By Truman Hefner



Maintenance is something we all know about but most of the time put off to do some other day—often AFTER something breaks or stops running! We at LOCO do not do too well at keeping our equipment and infrastructure in good condition. Listed below are several items that need attention. I'm not proposing any program to fix these items, just bringing them to your attention:

ITEMS IN NEED OF ATTENTION

SSSS Bridge—Rusty and needs paint, loose boards need to be bolted down.

Girder Bridge—Rusty and needs paint.

Dispatcher Tower—Rusty and needs paint, holes in floor need to be patched.

Water Tower—No longer works. Rusted out, structure deteriorated, parts falling off.

Restrooms—Needs leveling so doors will open and close properly, needs paint.

Location signs—Lettering gone. Metal bases have been powder coated and wait for someone to apply new lettering. This can be a home project.

Lake Jennings—Bank walls falling in. Material is available for replacement but water level must be low to accomplish this work.

Front Circle Driveway—Needs protective top dressing seal. Material available but must be applied in hot weather.

Passenger Loading Station—Bench seats need refurbishing.

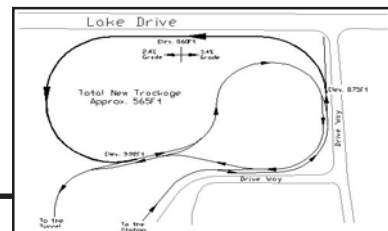
Picnic Tables—Older tables need refurbishing or replacement.

Push Mower—Doesn't run.

Two Weed Eaters—Don't run.

If one of these items really concerns you, please take it on as YOUR personal mission and rally the troops to help you get it back to top condition.

Lacock Loop



We are well on our way to acquiring all the materials needed to build the Lacock Loop extension. Currently on hand are: 3,000 feet of west coast style rail (purchased at the end of last year and set aside for the extension), 25 percent of the Trex material needed for ties (cut to length), 20,000 track screws, 1,000 rail joiner bolts, 250 rail joiners stamped and ready for use. The material needed to complete the project will include: 100 more 12-foot pieces of 2x4 Trex lumber that can be ripped to size, 2-3 truckloads of 1.5" coarse gravel for roadbed base, 1-2 truckloads of 3/8" rock chips for finish ballast, some pressure treated landscaping timbers or pressure-treated 4x4 timbers to use as short retaining walls at the southwest corner of the property near the gravel pit where the tracks will diverge.

Dave Suenram has agreed to loan us his west coast rail bending device to make our curved sections when needed. Additionally, he is attempting to repair a broken casting on the rail joiner stamping press. After punching the bolt holes out of about 250 rail joiners, the cast iron casting cracked at the base. *Dave* has been kind enough to

rework and repair the machine so we can finish stamping the rest of the rail joiners needed for the project.

Truman Hefner is in the final planning stages of deciding what type and how many switches will be needed for the extension. Then he will need to build them beginning with cutting ties. The club has also placed a request for 12 switch frogs through Cannonball.

While waiting for the purchase of the remaining required material, the club will move forward and start prepping the roadbed to receive the rock ballast. *Note: We do not intend to build the first track panel for the extension until the roadbed work is completed.* And the roadbed won't be ready for track until all of the dirt work has been completed and a base of larger rock ballast has been put down. Since the highline track will run adjacent to the Lacock Loop extension along the south and east side of the property, the majority of the dirt work and grading will be accomplished at the same time so we do not have to disturb it again. There is a bit of dirt work to do; but with the help of the back hoe, it is manageable.



Cooler weather, leaves changing, and shorter days mean a couple of things to me. Trains, trains, and more trains. The Oklahoma weather has been perfect the last month or so to run trains, and that we have done and need to continue. The Annual Train Show at the Fair Grounds is coming up in December, and I hope all LOCO members will be able to support it once again.

The year has quickly passed, and I would like to personally thank LOCO members for the great effort put forth in improving the track, operations, and facilities. Now I typically wait until January before I talk about our annual accomplishments, but I think they really need to be discussed at this time. If I forgot any, let me know, and I'll put an addendum in the next newsletter.

2004 LOCO ACCOMPLISHMENTS

THE GREAT WALL. The project took more time than expected because of the tricky weather this summer. On many weekends, rain hampered our efforts to move the ties into place and do the necessary backfilling.

Although the retaining walls on both the east and west sides of the south tunnel portal are now complete, we have a little more work to bring the backfill to the rough track grade height.

SAFETY AND THE GREAT WALL. Roy Kline did a magnificent job building and installing a steel railing on the southwest tunnel wall and over the top of the south portal. During the months it has been in place, it has been thoroughly kid and adult tested, keeping unwary folks from getting themselves into a dangerous position and falling onto the track.

PEEWEE PARK LAKE MUCKED OUT. For those that don't realize it, Lloyd Cowger was out at the track many a day with his tractor mucking the bottom of the lake out so that it could retain enough water to last the entire year. In many places, the lake is now three to four feet deeper than it was last year. A superb job that needed doing!

SWITCHES, SWITHES, SWITCHES. Truman Hefner has the magical touch when it comes to switch building, and he builds some of the best looking ones around. The new #8 switches built with the TREX lumber are nothing short of a piece of functional art! Truman has outdone himself this year. Not only did he construct

over ten new switches meant for the Lacock Loop extension, using older wooden ties, he has rebuilt over a half dozen more switches that were in need of an upgrade.

NEW ROUTE FOR THE SWITCH YARD. In the last newsletter, you saw that moving through the switch yard and gaining entrance to the mainline is now infinitely easier. Truman's vision and the work of many club members made the seemingly impossible happen. No longer will we foul the mainline and the crossing by having to back out of the yard to get on the mainline. Relocating the track meant that the walkway from the house to the gazebo area had to be altered. However, everything is in place, and all is ready again—and with no break in railroad operations!

NEW SIGNALS. First I'll talk about the ones lower to the ground. Bob Bogardus designed, built, and installed new safety signal lights for the approaches to the crossing, the passenger loading area, and for both the north and south tunnel entrances. They are high intensity LED lights that are quite visible both day and night. The signals at the tunnel were placed specifically for the avoidance of a "corn field" meet inside during bi-directional running owing to the fact that the tunnel's curvature prevents engineers from seeing oncoming traffic before they enter.

Higher up, Bob has just about completed the circuitry necessary to make the full-sized signals at the crossings operational. We will still need to run a power source to the units and install bulbs of the correct voltage, but we can soon expect to have some bright, flashing lights to warn the public of a train crossing at our track.

GAZEBO AREA COMPLETE. The ground surrounding the gazebo received a lot of attention this year. First, in order to cut down erosion along the drip line, a concrete border was installed around the gazebo. Along with that project, the water fountain and a water outlet were moved to the northeast corner of the gazebo for ease of use and new electrical outlets were installed. Because grass wouldn't grow immediately around the gazebo anyway, a two inch layer of crushed gravel was put down. This gives the areal a nice, clean appearance as well as helping to control erosion. Then to provide a definite visual separation, a tie wall was installed north of the gazebo between the gravel and grassy areas. Finally, as a way to "encourage" guests to stay on the straight and narrow (and off the tracks), a gravel sidewalk was installed from the front parking area to the gazebo.

NEW PICNIC TABLES. Five new picnic tables were donated to the club this year. The plastic and steel tables easily accommodate six adults or at least eight kids. They fold nicely, are easy to store, and can be placed anywhere on the property. We are finally able to provide seating for all our guests, even on the busiest days.

LOCO REAL MEAL DEAL. For the past six months, LOCO has been offering a lunchtime “Real Meal Deal” to members and guests at the Saturday work sessions and the First Sunday Fun Runs. For a nominal \$5 donation, folks can select two from the list of sandwiches that include hamburgers, cheeseburgers, hot dogs, chili dogs, sausage burger, cheese sausage burger, or smoked sausage links. They also get a bag of chips and a beverage/soft drink of their choice. And in the summer months, we even threw in a bowl of delicious ice cream with fixins’ for those who stayed for the afternoon. With the success of the real meal deal, the club was able to purchase a small gas grill that can be used by the membership at the track.

CLUB INSURANCE. Thanks to the persistence of *Earl Bean*, we were able to get track insurance through a local company for our 2004 run season. The insurance will come due again the first week of January. Hopefully the rates will not have increased or, worse, we find we have been canceled again. But for now, we are doing well.

CLUB HOUSE. During the year, the club house was emptied and thoroughly cleaned. What had been the living room has been set up as a meeting room with a table. In addition, the two back rooms can easily serve as meeting rooms or for inside eating when necessary. All this space was put to good use during the SWLS meet as a place to get out of the sun and into an air conditioned environment. And because both bathrooms had

been cleaned and made serviceable, several guests were able to shower off the dirt and grime after a hard day of train running.

JUNE SWLS MEET. And speaking of the SWLS meet, the weather was perfect this year, the track ran great, everyone enjoyed socializing under the trees, and there was enough excellent food to go around several times. The only people who lost out were those who did not attend! With a little luck and a lot of help by LOCO members, we should be able to complete the Lacock Loop extension for the next SWLS meet.

BOY SCOUTS AT LOCO. We are apparently doing a lot better job selling ourselves to the public. During the year, we hosted two Boy Scouts troops that had approach us about using the track as a place for their scouts to complete their Railroading Merit Badge. In one short day, we were able to involve the boys in our equipment, track operations, train safety, train operations, and track maintenance. All left with a new appreciation for trains; and who knows, maybe a few will become future LOCO members.

THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE. *Charley Parker* has given you a better idea of what transpired during the two weekends LOCO volunteers helped the Oklahoma Rail Museum with their Thomas the Tank Engine event. I will say here though that LOCO members did a superb job and, in doing so, earned some much-needed cash for LOCO.

In all, 2004 has been a very successful year for LOCO. And thanks to the Saturday work crews, we are making strides toward having a continuous run of at least one mile. But much still needs to be accomplished, and YOUR club continues to need everyone to set Saturday mornings aside to help make it all happen!

REQUEST FOR ANOTHER BIDIRECTIONAL RUN DAY

LOCO members and interested participants, I would like to propose another opportunity for a bidirectional running day at the LOCO facilities on Saturday, November 27. Why? First, it's the fun thing to do. Second, it's on a holiday weekend, and most people will be off. Third, it should be a cool, fall-weather day and both steamers and diesels alike should be able to run.

What is required, you ask? Well, it helps if

you come out with the willingness to run trains—the more the merrier! With the flip of the coin, you can decide which direction you will run. You will also need a radio to reach the dispatcher. You know, I will even throw in a FREE LOCO Real Meal Deal for lunch that day! You show up, run trains, and LOCO will feed you. Hmmm, playing trains and free food!!! Doesn't get much better. Time to get the trains running again.

Joe

THANKS, FRED SPRINGER!

A special LOCO thanks to *Fred Springer* for his generosity in donating a 5-gallon bucket of steam oil and a two foot by four foot SWLS sign showing the proper loading and riding positions of passengers. The club was just about out of the steaming oil and the sign will help our passengers enjoy a safe ride on our trains.



CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

November 7
First Sunday Fun Run
LOCO track

***December 18**
President's open meeting
LOCO track

***November 20**
President's open meeting
LOCO track

January 2
First Sunday Fun Run
LOCO track

December 3-5
Oklahoma City Train Show
Fairgrounds

***January 15**
President's open meeting
LOCO track

Every Saturday
Work session
LOCO track

NOTE: Everyone is invited to meet at Ashley's in MWC every Saturday at 8 a.m. for breakfast before heading to the track for a productive day.

*The President's open business meeting will be called to order at NOON on specified Saturdays. Please make note of the dates listed above.

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ABOUT LOCO

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LOCO NEWS editor

Earl H. Bean
6409 Beaver Creek Rd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73162
(405) 722-3675
FAX: (405) 722-0198
E-mail
bean.2248@cox.net

OFFICERS

President — Joe Fawcett
799-3681
Vice-President — Loretta Cowger
341-8429
Secretary — Charles Parker
392-4635
Treasurer — Edward Beaudette
273-0726
Director — Carl Bogardus
751-4215
Director — Brian Lacock
224-1693

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIPS

Resident — \$100
Associate — \$15 (optional
for anyone living more than
60 miles from the LOCO
facility)