

July 27, 2007

Ron Laycock
Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 3434
Great Falls, MT 59403

Bob Saindon
316 Benton Street
Wolf Point, MT 59201

Dear Ron,

I hope there is something in the attached pages that has some value for your project. I do not have the time right now to dig into the records to help trigger my mind on these matters. So what you get is pretty much what I can recall at this time. Maybe I will give it more effort at a later date.

I will not be participating in the conference call. I don't believe that I have much to contribute. I have been too long away from the Foundation activities.

I hope all is well with you, and I wish you good luck on your project to collect the Foundation's history.

Sincerely,



Bob Saindon

attachments: five pages

It was in 1975 that I joined the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation.

I was president of the Foundation from 1979-1980.

I founded the first chapter of the Foundation, The Valley County [Montana] Lewis and Clark Society, in 1976 and edited the Society's newsletter *A Squawl of Wind*.

I started and chaired the Youth Activity Committee

I started and chaired the New Chapters Committee

I was the first Executive Secretary of the Foundation, or as Frenchy Chuinard coined it "Executary."

I served on the executive board.

In addition to the above mentioned, I served on committees, such as awards, membership, annual meeting, publications,

I wrote numerous articles for *We Proceeded On*

I was editor of *We Proceeded On* from 1987 to 1990.

Although I have not been considered an "active past president" for the past 15 years, I have, during that time, written articles for *WPO*, lectured at Foundation annual meetings, and during those years, at the request of the Foundation, I updated, edited, formatted, designed, typeset, and indexed the 1768-page, three volume *Explorations into the World of Lewis and Clark*, which is an annotation of the feature articles of the first twenty-five years of *We Proceeded On*.

Perhaps my legacy to the Foundation is mediocre at best. I have not followed the accomplishments of the active past presidents nor do I wish to be compared to them.

I enjoyed my years with the Foundation and the work that I was able to do ~~to~~ in helping to get it established. It took a great deal of interest, dedication, and sacrifice for the early founders to get the Foundation on firm ground. I was happy to be able in some small way to help them. Men like Bob Lange, Frenchy Chuinard, Wilbur Werner, Boo MacGilvra, Clarence Decker, Strode Hinds, and a few others, were the true pillars of the LCTHF. It was their dedicated volunteerism and deep interest in the Lewis and Clark Saga that laid the foundation for the organization that we know today. I'm proud to say that they were all my very good, trustworthy friends.

1. What do you consider the highlights of your term as president?

Trying to think back to my term is a problem because I was always very active in the Foundation, and I cannot distinguish well between what I did as president and what I did as a committee chairman, or committee member or simply as a Foundation member trying to contribute something

It was when I was president that I wrote to the Postmaster General and asked that a 175th anniversary L&C stamp be issued. The request was honored, but the Postmaster General wrote back and said that they would issue a Lewis and Clark 175th anniversary postcard rather than a stamp. I believe that the

process took some time and that it extended over into Irving Anderson's term as president. I recall that he had a dream or some kind of a vision that they had made a mistake on the artwork. He called Washington, DC, identified himself as president and was calling to make sure that they hadn't put a birch bark canoe in the artwork. Sure enough there was a birch bark canoe, and the artist had to change the artwork. After the stamp was redesigned they sent me a transparency with a request not to show the design until after it was officially unveiled. I felt the design was good, and the postcard was issued. The problem was that postage rates went up right after the postcard was issued and the use of the postcard was very limited.

2. Are there any anecdotes or unusual events that happened during your term?

There are many anecdotes, far too many to mention, and some that shouldn't be mentioned. There were always a great deal of behind-the-scenes happenings in which I was in some way involved before, during, and after I was president. One that I will only briefly mention which happened during my presidency was an attempt to overthrow the "Portland Mafia." Things had been happening that were not quite kosher. For example, there was a policy passed at an annual meeting that didn't sit well with the "Portland Mafia," and having control of publications, they took it upon themselves to change the approved policy. When the published report came out, I confronted them about it, but all I got was their reason for not liking the policy—nothing about their authority to change it. Because of this, and for several other reasons, I instigated a plan to overthrow the "Portland Mafia." The story is rather long and involved, and was a workable plan. Suffice to say that my partner in crime became ill, and had to drop out of the Foundation. That was a blow to the overall plan because his position was crucial to carrying it out. The "Portland Mafia" prevailed and ruled for several more years.

3. How would you describe the Annual Meetings during your term and in the past?

The first annual meeting I attended was in 1976 in Great Falls. I gave a talk/slide presentation on the "White Pirogue" at that meeting. I took an active part in every annual meeting thereafter until 1988. The last meeting at which I gave an address was in Great Falls in 2000. My two favorite meetings were the one I chaired in 1979 and the one I chaired in 1981. I enjoyed the people as much as much as the activities. I knew almost everyone, and almost everyone knew me.

People attended because of an enthusiasm for the Lewis and Clark story and an interest in the Trail. As time passed, the annual meetings began drawing tourists who had probably read a book about Lewis and Clark and looked upon the Foundation's annual meeting as an interesting and inexpensive summer vacation. I recall tourists at motels who saw our program and joined the Foundation just so they could participate in the meeting program. In other words, there began to be more and more people without the heart and enthusiasm of the old clan. Personally I was never interested in tourist traps. Granted, you had to have a certain number in attendance to pay for all that was on the program, and nearly every cent was used to pay for the program. There began to be a problem when annual meetings became competitive especially with regard to the number of attendees. It was also a problem, in my mind, when the annual meetings began to be a fund raisers.

Even in the 1980s it was being said of the Foundation that this is a "rich man's" club. The costs made it prohibitive for people with a modest income to attend annual meetings. A financial barricade wasn't in the objectives of the original mission of the Foundation. I can recall Bob Lange, Frenchy Chuinard and others commenting to me when I was on the membership committee that it was not the mission of the Foundation to become big in numbers. The purpose of the membership committee was to let the public

know about the Foundation, its objectives and goals. It was expected that those joining would be active members interested in the mission of the Foundation. Those of us who were in executive positions in the 70s and early 80s tried hard to involve members, to get them to become active and participate on committees, etc. An "active" member today seems to simply mean that the person has paid his dues—a different concept than I ever had.

4. Who arranged the programs, selected the speakers and determined the location?

The Annual Meeting planning committee arranged the program.

It was generally the role of the Annual Meeting Chairman and the Planning Committee to select the speakers. A selection could be overruled by the executive board (though I can't remember that ever happening). The banquet speaker was usually selected by (at least invited by the president).

An invitation for the location of an annual meeting was extended at least two years in advance and approved by the executive board. I recall in the 1970s Marcus Ware of Lewiston, Idaho, extended an invitation and it was accepted. About a year from the date it was to happen Marcus had to withdraw the invitation. He and his wife were up in years, and he was still practicing law. They were wonderful and capable people, but the work of planning and executing an annual meeting, as annual meetings had become, would have been more than they could have endured. Each year, as Marcus looked at the ever-growing complexity of annual meetings, he would say to me: "Withdrawing the invitation was one of the best decisions I have ever made." Several years later when Idaho had a chapter they again extended an invitation to host the Annual Meeting. I was invited over to share some ideas from my experiences, and Marcus was there ready and willing to do his part.

Once chapters began to develop within the Foundation, annual meeting planning and execution became easier—at least there was a greater number of interested people willing to help.

Over time we even developed an Annual Meeting planning guide, which helped assist those wishing to face the challenge.

The year I became president the annual meeting was held in my hometown of Glasgow, Montana. We had organized the first chapter of the Foundation—the Valley County Lewis and Clark Trail Society. On behalf of the Society, I extended the invitation to hold the meeting in Glasgow, and served as program planning chairman. The highlight of that meeting was the interaction with the Assiniboine Indians, introduction to their culture, and a visit to Fort Union, the site of the old American Fur Company trading post in traditional Assiniboine country at the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers

The following year, the year I was president, the meeting was held in Omaha, NE. Strode and Bev Hinds and Mildred Goosman extended the invitation and did the program planning and execution. The highlight of that meeting was a visit to Joslyn Art Museum, (Mildred was in charge of the Karl Bodmer collection at the museum). Access to the Bodmer Collection was in turn access to sights and sites along the Missouri River as they were observed by the men of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. We also visited the Sgt. Floyd monument, the site of Sgt. Charles Floyd's grave

Annual meetings were scheduled two years in advance. The invitation for the 1981 meeting was extended by Boo MacGilvra of Butte, Montana. It was to be a traveling meeting headquartered in Helena, Montana. At the point of invitation there were no more details than a rough plan to travel from Helena

to Three Forks, over Lemhi Pass into Idaho, back into Montana to Missoula, and back to Helena. The invitation had been accepted by the executive board, but in March of 1980 Boo died. At the Annual Meeting in Omaha I, then president of the Foundation, was summoned to a late-night powwow the night before the official invitation to a traveling meeting in Montana was to be announced and approved at the awards banquet. I of course knew of the dilemma. When I reached the powwow, I was met by a concerned party of Montanans wondering how they were going to pull this off. Their plan, or at least their hope, was already in place. I had moved to Helena only a couple of months earlier, so my summons to the powwow was not an invitation to help brainstorm, but rather to be given the proposition of chairing, planning, and executing the traveling meeting. Wilbur Werner lived too far away. They explained their dilemma and then asked if it would be possible for me to take over the traveling meeting. I explained that the Glasgow meeting had nearly taken everything out of me and my marriage, and that the past year as president had taken just about everything else out of me and my marriage. To take on a project as involved as a 475-mile traveling meeting and all that would be involved in the rubrics and logistics, would either be suicidal or some form of masochism. In spite of the facts, the challenge was enticing, and I finally caved in and agreed to take on the project. Edrie Vinson was a great help to me, and I believe we had a great meeting. The original traveling meeting route was followed, with a number of places and details added. Bob Singer from Fort Benton drove his vehicle behind the buses in case there was an emergency where somebody had to be taken from the bus and transported to a town. There is a great deal of background that could be told about this meeting because of its complexities, but it probably went as smoothly as one would expect.

I was asked to chair the annual meeting in 1984, which I agreed to do. I made several trips to Great Falls during the planning stages, but the people of Great Falls (the Portage Route Chapter) did the planning and the execution of the meeting. I can take very little credit for any of that annual meeting.

5. How would you describe the profile of Foundation members during your reign?

See #3 above

6. What did you find to be the biggest challenge as president?

When I was president I was also a school teacher. I spent an enormous amount of time on both. I enjoyed doing them, so the greatest challenge was the finding the time I needed to meet the obligations of both jobs.

7. What, if any, regrets do you have?

I am very pleased and proud of my term as president. I cannot think of any regrets. I did my best.

8. What would you have done differently?

The amount of work was almost overwhelming. I doubt that there was anything that I would have had time to do differently. The inflow of work pretty much dictated what I had to do. I believe I carried things out pretty well.

9. What changes or new policies did you initiate?

I'm sure there were many changes and policies that I initiated. The Foundation was young and growing.

There were always new ideas coming forth, policies being set. Without looking back into the minutes or *WPO*s or straining my memory, I'll tell of one that worked out well and helped to run an rather smooth Annual Meeting:

We had had a problem in the past with committee reports not coming in until the time of the Annual Meeting. I was first to demand that committee reports be in my hands (I believe it was a week) before the annual meeting, or they would not be heard or considered. I did this for a number of reasons. First of all I am not good at synthesizing information on the spot; committee members had complained for years that they could not enjoy the annual meeting programs because they were constantly in committee meetings—often to prepare or finalize committee reports—and some were on several committees. I recall that Frenchy Chuinard and I locked horns on that issue, but being the gentleman he was, he graciously agreed to get his reports in in advance of the meeting. Some people chaired more than one committee, so if they had put off their work until the last minute they had a real challenge getting all their reports prepared in time to be heard at the annual meeting. It worked.

10. Were there any “hot button” issues such as dues increases, membership, or WPO that you had to deal with?

The financing of *WPO* was always a challenge for us. Frenchy had a connection with a Higgins Foundation that was providing seed money for *WPO*, however, the days were numbered on that source of funding. Membership dues were used but costs were rising, and their was the sunset of the Higgins fund before us. Wilbur Werner, Boo MacGilvra and the Montana artist Bob Scriver got their heads together and came up with the idea for endowing *WPO*. Scriver would do a Lewis and Clark bronze piece for a certain price and all the profits on the sale of bronzes would be used as an endowment for *WPO*, i.e., the interest from the endowment would be used for the production and publishing of *WPO*. Wilbur and Boo put up the initial money for the project. The idea was presented at the Annual Meeting in Great Falls in 1976 and was approved. We had at that time a very creative and talented treasurer by the name of Clarence Decker, who carefully and wisely invested the income of the bronze sales.

So, for several years the big challenge was working on funding for *WPO*. That was essential because *WPO* was glue that held the Foundation together. It was then under the editorship of Robert E. Lange, who had been at the helm of Foundation publications from the beginning. He was capable, scholarly, and frugal—the right man for the job at the time.

11. How would you compare today's Foundation with the one during your reign?

I know very little about the Foundation activities today. I am retired on limited income and do not belong to any organizations or subscribe to any periodicals. So I have been out of the loop. I do know that during my time as president there was no way we could have hired staff, and perhaps that might not have been our desire even if we had had the means to do so. I am concerned that the Foundation has become too commercial and tourist-related, but that's fine if that is its new mission.

12 What advice might you have for today's presidents, boards and staff?

I am in no position—too far removed—to give any advice to the Foundation president, board, or staff. From what I understand, the Foundation is doing very well according to its objectives, and that in itself is a reflection on the good work of the president, board, and staff.