

20 YEARS AGO

KRHS FOUNDER FRED LYON

By RAY GEORGE

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It was twenty years ago, on February 14, 1990, that Fred Lyon died unexpectedly, and much too soon, at the age of 60. On Friday April 23, 2010 the KRHS' annual convention tour will stop at the University of Missouri - Columbia to visit the Fred Lyon Collection in the Western Manuscripts holdings at the University. We will see a specially prepared exhibit and learn how to access and use Fred Lyon's Collection in our research of the M-K-T and other railroads. Our host and guide during our visit will be Associate Director David Moore of the Western Manuscripts Collection.

Fred was instrumental in writing the first constitution of the Katy Railroad Historical Society and for arranging the first meeting at Parsons, Kansas, on the weekend of October 1, 1977. At that meeting Fred was elected the first president of the KRHS. Two of the original officers that were elected at the first meeting are still members of the KRHS; these are Mr. Robert F. Read of Cushing, Oklahoma, and Mr. Johnnie J. Myers of Forney, Texas. Because many current KRHS members never had the chance to know Fred Lyon, a brief biography is altogether appropriate.

Fred Lyon was a "natural" at leading, organizing and motivating people. He was regarded as one of Missouri's top high school track and cross-country coaches. Fred was born October 8, 1929 in Parsons but spent most of his childhood in Sedalia, Missouri, living with his uncle J. B. "Jack" Lyon, a veteran M-K-T Northern District engineer. He was a graduate of Sedalia's Smith-Cotton High School and received his bachelors and masters degrees from Central Missouri State University at Warrensburg. Fred and his older brother Charles both spent time during summer high school and college vacations working for the Katy as temporary yard clerks, or "Mud Hops."

Fred began his coaching career in 1955 at Sweet Springs High School in Sweet Springs, Missouri. Other assignments included Shawnee Mission, Kansas; Kirkwood High School in Kirkwood, Missouri; and Western Illinois University where he was an assistant coach. He started the track and cross-country programs at Parkway North High School in Creve Coeur, Missouri, when the school opened in 1971. He coached Kirkwood to three state cross-country titles and other finishes of second and third. Parkway North's track

team finished second twice under him and compiled a 129-68 record in dual meets. Overall, he coached 36 state champions and was named national *Cross-Country Coach Of The Year* in 1976. In 1982 Parkway North christened its major track meet each season as *The Fred Lyon Invitational*, that is still held annually.

Fred and his wife Maxine's home was by design always ready to receive visitors. Their basement family room was outfitted with items from Fred's M-K-T collection such as a depot train board, lanterns, station furnishings, several enameled locomotive shields, and a rare set of *Katy Employes' Magazines*, 1913-1957, that were given to him by the M-K-T's Vice-President-Public Relations Richie

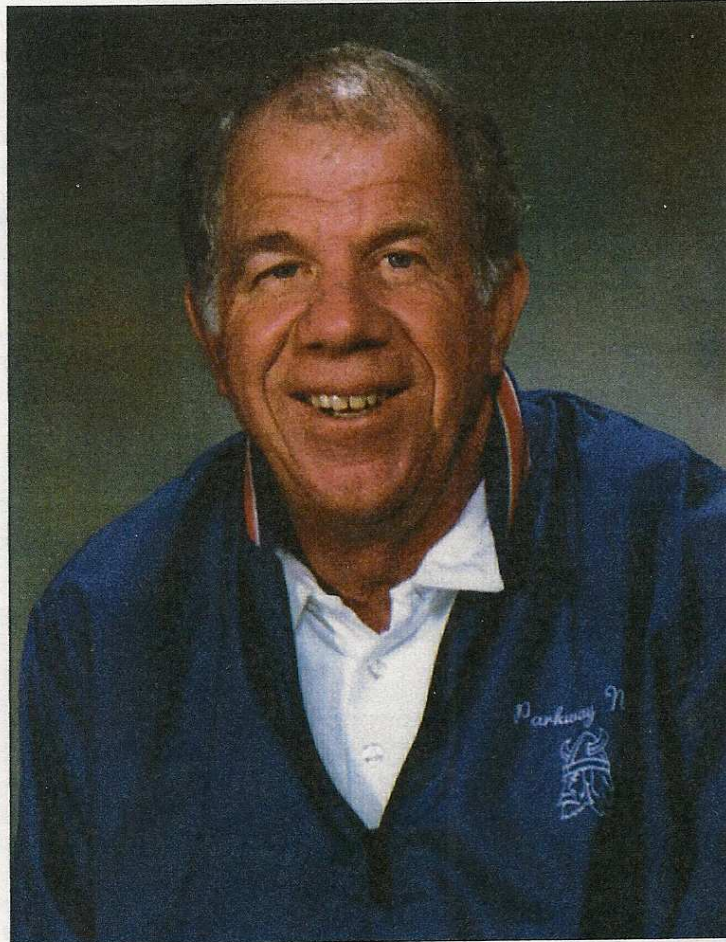
Cring. A large unfinished all-Katy HO-scale layout occupied approximately 1/4 of the basement that Fred operated in his spare moments. Fred also made time to be a five-time President of the St. Louis Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. In addition, he worked part-time as a sales clerk at The Hobby Station in Kirkwood and at Mark Twain Hobbies in St. Charles, Missouri. On weekends when not coaching or working at the hobby shops, he volunteered to be the engineer of the diesel switch engine for monthly passenger excursions at the St. Louis Chain Of Rocks Railroad. Offering cab rides for children was Fred's specialty.

Fred is buried at Crown Hill Cemetery in Sedalia, Missouri, only a short distance north of the Union Pacific's main line, almost in sight of the Katy depot where some of the activities of our 2010 KRHS annual convention will be held. Fred was survived by his wife, now Honorary KRHS Member Maxine Henty; son John, of St. Louis; two daughters, Lisa Brooks and Lizabeth

Travis; and three grandchildren. In addition, Fred's favorite nephew, Chark Lyon of Overland Park, Kansas, is an active KRHS member. Fred Lyon's legacy to the KRHS continues to run smoothly and is "OS," or on schedule.

Reference Sources Include:

1. *The Katy Flyer*, Vol. 12 No. 1, March 1990, pages 2-3.
2. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Fred Lyon obituary, by Suburban Sports Editor Mike Eisenbath, February 15, 1990.



KRHS President and Founder Fred Lyon, 1929 - 1990. - Author's collection.