

# 1<sup>st</sup> LEGO Train Summit Trip Report

## 3-4 Februray 2001

By Steve Barile

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We all arrived in NYC late Friday afternoon. We all eventually met up at the LEGO Direct offices in Manhattan around 5:00pm; the 9 of us and 5 folks from LEGO. After an hour or so of “mixing” & surfing AFOL sites on a projected screen we all (except Jake) headed out to dinner in Little Italy. At dinner we talked about everything, from LEGO to Monty Python skits! Since there were 13 of us, conversations swirled around the table including from 2 people to all 13 and back down again. The waiters were great and basically they served us what they thought was the “right” meal. Nothing like dinner in Little Italy!

After dinner we walked back to the hotel, it was very cold, and meet up in the lounge around 10:00pm. For the west coasters it was still quite early. We all brought our MOCs and track down from the rooms. Since we were the only ones in the lounge we pulled several tables together made a loop of track and ran trains for several hours. This was as fun as the actual meeting at LEGO. Most of us hadn't met each other in person but seemed to have a lot in common ranging from childhood stories of playing with LEGO to the various personality types in our respective clubs. As you can imagine the collection of trains on this table was quite impressive; if it wasn't for our eyelids closing out of sheer exhaustion from travel and the impending 9:00am meeting-of-a-lifetime the next morning we would have stayed up all night!

Slightly before breakfast the next day Larry and I met in the dining room and created a few extra slides about some new ideas that came up the night before. The others filtered down and we sat around a huge round table eating. If we weren't in a nice restaurant I'm sure butter flicking would have ensued ☺ It was quite amazing, the camaraderie that was formed so quickly. After breakfast we all headed out to the LEGO Direct offices (a couple blocks walk) with boxes and pull carts. I thought my fingers were going to fall off by the time we made it. It was cold for most us, but the GMLTCer's were commenting on how warm it was!

At LD we all convened in a large conference room. We had prepared a set of slides to present and that took about 2 hours (see presentation for details on what was covered). Then Brad presented some of what LEGO was doing in the near future and some visions for the future.

- The sculptures and mosaic products are doing well and there will be more coming, no specifics
- MOCs being sold thru LEGO Direct as official LEGO sets

- Reissue of some older LEGO sets (not particularly trains)
- We saw a prototype of a new customizable steam engine coming out in the next catalog (sans large driver wheels)
- Relationship between LEGO Direct and LTCs (LUGs) and how to help stop the train hobby from “graying”. Just batted around several ideas really nothing concrete; an examples is “What constitutes an LTC club”. We made it clear that we aren’t looking for handouts but rather an avenue to discuss projects and the like, including marketing for train shows... I’m sure when Brad is ready he’ll lay out some ideas that will be communicated with the US LTCs.
- We tried to cover what bulk elements and colors we want. It was all over the map and we as a team tried hard to “bound” this effort but to no avail, and how can you?

The interesting thing is that even though we spent 9 hours talking it went by rather quickly and as John Neal said very early on in this thread there was very little detail, certainly nothing stellar like DCC or having every element in every color available next month. After all, it is a large international company, but I must say that Brad is very committed to this communication channel and he and his team are very familiar with what is discussed on LUGNET.

After the meeting ended at 6:00p we went to eat at a very nice Chinese restaurant in China town. It was a quite restaurant (until we showed up). Still not tired of talking LEGO we bantered on, agreeing, disagreeing and friendly competitive poking. After a couple of hours we made it back to the hotel for another round in the lounge.

We didn’t break out the train this night but there were several photo albums that we pored over. I particularly enjoyed some 1:1 time with Conan talking about sculpted layouts and his very long history in displaying LEGO trains. After nearly falling asleep in the lounge we retired to our rooms.

The next morning we all met for breakfast and then headed to the airport.

Overall it was a great trip. And I think the big take-away was that Brad and his team is working hard to listen to the AFOLs for both directions we would like to see LEGO go and for a sounding board for the general public.