

Lynchburg Baseball Corp.



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WHO OWNS THE RANGERS?

Inquisitive Lynchburg baseball fans sometimes inquire about the ownership of the Lynchburg ball club, such as "who actually owns the Lynchburg Rangers?" or "where does the money come from to keep professional baseball in Lynchburg?"

When the Chicago White Sox removed its Southern League (Class AA) team from the Hill City after the 1965 season, local financing, ownership and management had to be developed quickly to keep pro baseball in Lynchburg. Led by businessmen W. Calvin Falwell and Wallace G. McKenna, now president of the Carolina League, in 1966 a group of interested business and professional men organized the Lynchburg Baseball Corporation. A board of directors was formed and each member purchased capital stock in the new corporation to provide operating resources. They prevailed upon the White Sox to place its best Class A farm team in the Carolina League, in which the Corporation has maintained membership ever since.

Sole objective of the small group of 20 original investors was to ensure that Lynchburg, notably a "good baseball town," would continue to have competent professional baseball of a quality that knowledgeable fans would enjoy. As one stockholder described it, "Ours is a non-profit corporation, but it wasn't meant to be." On the contrary, no one ever expected to profit from the enterprise and nobody has. No dividends have been declared on the stock now held by 26 shareholders but, thanks to the patronage of faithful fans and advertisers, the Corporation managed to "break even" until 1974 when a financial loss resulted largely from inflated operating costs. Contemplating further cost increases for 1975, the directors reluctantly raised ticket prices.

The impact of inflation is felt even in balls and

bats (the Rangers will use nearly 2,000 new balls this season). Every baseball fouled into the bleachers and kept as a souvenir by a lucky fan now wipes out the income from two admission tickets. When a hitter breaks his bat, it takes three admission tickets to pay for it.

One year when there was a modest profit the Corporation invested it in making the ball park more comfortable and attractive, sharing 50-50 with the City Government in replacing splintered wooden seats with new aluminum seating and improving the lighting system.

When the White Sox departed Lynchburg in 1970, the Corporation successfully negotiated a player development contract (working agreement) with the Minnesota Twins and stayed in the Carolina League. This year the Corporation contracted with the up-and-coming Texas Rangers to provide player personnel, whose salaries are paid by the Rangers. The local Corporation, however, foots the bill for stadium rental, equipment, insurance, wages for management and service personnel, sundry other expenses (even laundry and liniment) and, most expensive of all, travel costs such as transportation, motels and meals when the team plays away from home, which is half of the season.

So how do the stockholders and directors of the Corporation keep from going broke? Only by gate receipts, advertising revenue (fence signs and printed program) and a very small profit from the refreshment stands. Minor league baseball is no bonanza for anyone except the fans who come to the ball park to enjoy the action. (Incidentally, directors and stockholders have to pay for their tickets to the games just like other fans.)—L.B.

DIRECTORS

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