

RETAILER PROFILE: F.M. LIGHT & SONS



was sole owner when he passed the store onto his son-in-law, Lloyd Lockhart, in 1963. Fourth-generation owners Ty and Del took over active management of the store in the '70s. Ty hired his future wife, Betty, to work in the store in 1975. Today, their son, Brandon, also works in the store as its fifth generation.

"Brandon is the best PR man in the world," said Ty. "There's not a person who walks in the store that he doesn't talk to personally." Del also has a 15-year-old daughter who is the buyer's assistant, and a son who contributes by folding and putting tags on apparel.

"He's also our trash man," Del said with a wink.

The brothers knew long before the 100-year anniversary that they would celebrate the landmark in grand style.

"We sat down and had a brainstorming session and came up with a few ideas," Del said. "It changed over time."

They knew they didn't want to do just another blowout sale.

They started by affixing the century logo to their best-selling merchandise and prominently displaying it front and center in the store throughout the year.

Then, they planned a series of vintage art shows for their front window. "We got pictures of the old winter carnivals, blew them up and mounted them," said Del. Next was a collection of old photos from the store itself. Then

came World War II photos of folks in their area. "That one brought people into the store with tears in their eyes," Del said.

They created the "F.M. Light Chronicle," a newspaper consisting mostly of reprinted articles about the store and the Steamboat area, dated 1905 to the present. They printed 31,000 copies that were distributed in the store and inserted into the local newspaper.

Two big celebrations were planned. The first happened on the Fourth of July, adding to the many festivities in Steamboat Springs during the holiday. The Lockharts piggybacked a block party onto that, which included a Western band, square dancing and a 100-foot F.M. Light cake.

"Our plan was to have grandparents and grandkids playing games together," Del said, "and it worked."

The second celebration was on an even larger scale. F.M. Light and several local sponsors presented a Great American Wild West Show for Labor Day weekend, billed on the back page of their own Chronicle as "an action-packed arena show for the whole family."

"I think the food vendors were a bit perturbed because they didn't sell as much as they expected," Ty said. "There was so much going on, nobody wanted to leave to get food because they thought they might miss something. It was a lot of work, though. Would we do it again? I think so. You learn a lot the first time around."

There's no plan to slow down any time soon. More festivities are in the works at F.M. Light through the end of the year.

Ty summed up all the planning and hard work that went into pulling off an anniversary celebration of this magnitude. "We wanted to lay down the foundation for the next 100 years," he said, "and we've done that." 📷



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