My business career began in NYC as part owner and President of one of the largest Gold and Diamond jewelry manufacturing companies in the US. In 1983 after years of commuting on the railroad, I caught the last train into Springfield and arrived at my destination in Hampden, where to this day there are no traffic lights, state highway or railroad crossings.

Partnering with Ed Brennan in the college and bookstore business we successfully owned and operated 56 stores from Florida to Maine with 7 stores in the Pioneer Valley. When we sold the business, I was able to switch tracks and take the fast train of donating my time and money to work with many local nonprofits. My largest gift to Springfield was for the future riders to experience the many “firsts” from the past that are at the Wood Museum of Springfield History. From the horseless carriage powered by steam to the Indian Motocycles to the Zeta plane, Springfield was a destination stop for travelers near and far. I continued full speed ahead and had many stops along the way. Serving on the Board of Springfield College for 16 years and departing as Chairman of the Board. I kept hearing “all aboard” as I chugged ahead to support Springfield’s future with the YMCA, Community Music School, Basketball Hall of Fame, Baystate Health System, Citystage, Square One, Baypath University, Western New England University, United Way, International Language Institute, and other organizations that are important to the future of Springfield, including MOSSO (Musicians of the Springfield Symphony Orchestra) this past year.

One of the Memorable and fun rides was becoming part owner of the AHL team known as the “Falcons.” It was an important ticket I purchased to secure that the team’s future remained in Springfield when the Indians were sold in 1994 and moved to Worcester.

As we now see the “High Speed” Train gathering traction to connect the corridor from Springfield to Boston, I have hopefully helped lay some of the tracks with many other fellow philanthropists and leaders such as our lead engine Representative Richie Neal, our work engineer, Mayor Domenic Sarno and our next Lt Governor, Senator Eric Lesser, our ~~little~~ train that said “I KNOW WE CAN.” I encourage everyone to get on board and ride the Springfield Express to build the future together. CHOOCHOO

*R. Lyman Wood*