



LIT's original home was on Woodward Avenue in Highland Park. The college took over the building in 1935 and stayed there until 1955.



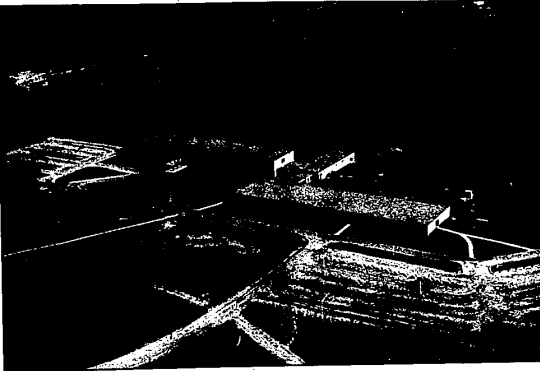
Women were heavily recruited during World War II to take drafting and other technical courses to replace men involved in the war effort.

Russell Lawrence's dream turns 50

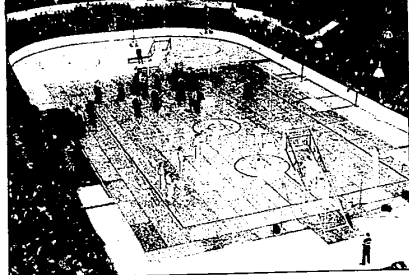
"Technical skill can achieve almost any kind of miracle — whether it be new forms of entertainment or better working conditions. Soon the technically trained person will take the reins of industry and government."
 — Russell E. Lawrence (1889-1934), founder of Lawrence Institute of Technology

By Carol Azizian
 staff writer

WITH A "firm belief in the future," Russell E. Lawrence founded one of the first "working man's colleges" in the nation during the economic chaos of the Great Depression.
 That college — Lawrence Institute of Technology — grew from rented classroom space in Highland Park to an 85-acre campus with six buildings in Southfield.
 "Through the foresight of Russell E. Lawrence and his brother, E. George Lawrence, the 'dream of preparing students for leadership in the new technical era' has been realized."
 LIT has fostered the student careers of many persons noted in technical fields, including that of auto executive John Z. DeLorean.



The first building on the Southfield campus housed the School of Engineering, the library, cafeteria and offices.

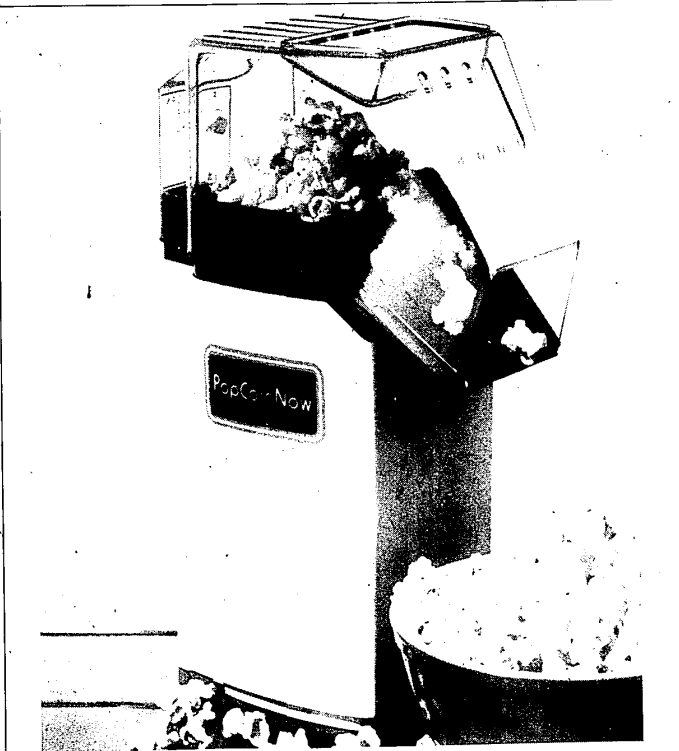


Olympia Stadium was the site of many LIT basketball games where top national teams took on the "Blue Devils". After the games, hundreds flocked onto the floor to dance to the music of big name bands.

THIS YEAR, the school will celebrate its 50th anniversary.
 A host of activities are planned for the jubilee, including the Thomas Alva Edison Science and Engineering Youth Day on Feb. 11; an alumni reunion April 28; an open house featuring student exhibits April 28-29; the dedication of the new management building and a regional spelling bee in May; and student and alumni birthday celebrations in late August or early September.
 "It's all designed to honor the school's founders," said Richard E. Marburger, chairman of the board and chief executive officer of the college since October.
 "I hope the 50th anniversary will encompass the recollection and recognition of my three great predecessors — Russell E. and E. George Lawrence and Wayne H. Buell," said Marburger. (Buell was chairman of the board and chief executive officer of the college from 1977 until his death last October).
 "LIT today lives up to what they intended it to become — a college which provides an excellent education at an affordable cost."
 "The legacy they left has been and will be perpetuated," added Marburger.
 As part of the 50th anniversary celebration, that legacy will be documented in a book prepared by Bruce J. Annett, director of public and alumni relations.
 Annett, who has spent nearly two years gathering information for the book, said he relied on college catalogs, official documents, and oral histories from students, staff members and wives of the late founders.

George Lawrence told the faculty he would take care of the administrative end if they handled the academics.
 The college was in debt, but the younger Lawrence slowly began to bring it out of the red. He recruited more students in the 1930s and beefed up the athletic program to bring more attention to the college.
 Throughout the 1940s and early 1950s, LIT had nationally ranked sports teams, renting out facilities such as Olympia Stadium and the State Fair Coliseum. After the events, the college had dances with such noted performers as Tommy Dorsey to raise money for the teams.
 Helping the younger Lawrence promote small college athletics was the late Don Ridler, the school's athletic director. Ridler was named (posthumously) to the Michigan Sports Hall of Fame last year.
 With the return of the veterans, LIT's enrollment jumped back up to its pre-war level.
 One of the veterans who interrupted studies to join the armed forces was auto executive John Z. DeLorean.
 By the late 1940s, the college became overcrowded.
 So the younger Lawrence used what "little funds he could scrape together" to find a new site to build a university. He studied population growth and determined that Southfield was a prime area.
 According to one account, he was driving around one Sunday evening, stopped at a farm on Eight Mile and Northwestern Highway and bought the farm from two widows who owned it.
 He envisioned a shopping center and classroom building on the site, figuring that the center would bring in needed funds for the college.

HE LATER SOLD the property to J.L. Hudson Co. and used the profit from the sale to buy a 160-acre plot two miles away at 10 Mile and Northwestern.
 A prudent businessman, he sold the northeast half of that property, netting enough money to construct the first building on what is now LIT's campus.
 Lawrence's management skills enabled the college to get out of the red in the early 1950s. It has continued to operate in the black ever since.
 Lawrence, who was suffering from multiple sclerosis and had been confined to a wheelchair for the last 10 years of his presidency, retired in 1964.
 That's when Wayne H. Buell took over as president.
 During Buell's tenure, the college constructed a science building and a student residence hall, established a School of Arts and Science and received accreditation from the North Central Association for Colleges and Schools.
 Through a \$12.5-million fundraising effort, which began during Buell's term, a new management building will be dedicated this year to mark the anniversary.



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THE CHRONICLE of LIT's 50-year history begins with the dream of its founder, Russell Ellsworth Lawrence.
 Lawrence, dean of the University of Detroit's School of Engineering, founded a program in 1930 at U of D for about 550 "factory foremen who couldn't afford to go to college."
 But when the university sharply curtailed Lawrence's program as part of cutbacks forced by the Depression, he decided to open his own college.
 "The present depression has made it impossible for many youths of school and college age to obtain employment," Lawrence said in a 1930 newspaper article. "This condition, coupled with the natural urge of youth to seek action, has led many thousands of young men to leave their homes and join the estimated army of between one and two million jobless young men who are now tramping the country."
 With what little capital he could round up, Lawrence rented the old Ford Motor Co. Trade School on Woodward Avenue in Highland Park. The school opened with a few hundred students in September 1932, staffed by laid-off faculty from U of D.
 One of LIT's first students was Wayne H. Buell, later chairman of the board and chief executive officer. Buell, as many enrolled in the one-building college, worked during his student career to pay for his education.
MOST OF THE STUDENTS were enrolled on credit. Meanwhile, the college's placement director found them part-time jobs in business and industry to help them pay off the debts.
 The so-called "co-operative plan" was a relatively new concept when Lawrence opened the college. It became a hallmark of LIT.
 Lawrence died in 1934, but the tradition of a "working man's college" was carried on by his brother, E. George Lawrence, then a 26-year-old engineer with Pontiac Motors.