

A Lifetime of Fun with Lionel
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My Lionel memories stretch back to what had to be my best Christmas ever in December of 1962. Almost seven, I could not understand why our basement was suddenly off limits to me in the weeks before Christmas. Finally, the big day arrived! I was allowed to run down the basement stairs to find the biggest Lionel train layout a boy could ever want.



As I look back, I believe it was two 8' by 4' boards with two tracks and two Lionel train sets, but in my mind, it seemed to encompass the entire basement. I recall that as I became a teenager I ran

multiple trains, all collected in the 1960s and 1970s. I expanded my layout until it did fill almost half the basement, and at that point I was told it could grow no more to ensure room for more mundane things such as the washer, dryer, and furnace.

Graduation from high school meant leaving home for college, and the trains were carefully packed into a huge collection of boxes. College was followed by a blur of changes that included full-time employment, marriage, and children. The boxes of trains were moved from my parents' home to ours. With my work assignments increasing in responsibility and a growing busy family, there seemed to be no time for trains. The trains stayed in their boxes for many years.

As my work years passed and I retired from a very time consuming job, ideas for a layout began to take shape. Subsequently I have started unpacking the train boxes. My goal is to use as much of my original Lionel collection as possible, and combining it with some of today's Lionel trains.



I have always been dazzled by gleaming streamliners pulled by Santa Fe, New York Central, Burlington, and even Amtrak engines, and a number of them will soon be again making their way around a 21st Century layout.



And I have found that vintage Lionel engines spring back to life with a proper amount of lubrication.



Of course a large number of Lionel passenger trains must be serviced by a large passenger station, so a new station can be found, constructed using three of Lionel's Grand Central Terminals.



In placing my old and new accessories together, I found that Grand Central is well complimented by Lionel's Animated Newsstand and the Operating Dispatch Board from my old layout. A significant number of Lionel station platforms handle arriving and departing passengers. Below the station, any youngsters wanting their own trains can visit the newer Lionel Madison Hardware Hobby Shop.



Above the emerging layout are a number of Lionel catalog cover reproductions from the 1950s and 1960s, placed in frames meant for record album covers.



I have had as much fun recreating this layout as I did playing with that original one from over 50 years ago.



Plus, my timing is just about perfect – our first grandchild is on her way, and I am sure she will have as much fun in the train room as I am – plus, it will give her a reason to want to come visit – an opportunity highly prized by soon to be new grandparents like us!



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