

## Lionel 8801 Blue Comet Set December 2016

My love of trains started before my earliest memory. It likely began with the alphabet train my paternal grandmother gifted me for Christmas at age 1. Like most kids that first alphabet train led to collecting wooden Thomas trains for the next 2 years. My mother told me that I put MANY miles on those trains. Naturally being 'all boy', my train interest grew to battery operated remote control toy trains on plastic track. I loved hearing the simulated sounds of those first toy trains. Around age 4 while at Hobby Lobby shopping for the family Christmas crafts, I spotted the first Christmas trains. I remember the boxes these trains came in were HUGE! They were unlike anything I had ever seen before. So that year on my annual letter to Santa, I asked (more liked begged), for a Christmas Train. Given Santa's generous spirit, he brought me Lionel's Holiday Tradition Special, which ignited my love for Lionel trains. Despite the Christmas theme, I ran it year-round.

As I began to study Lionel's past I fell in love with a certain train, The Blue Comet, modeled after the real New Jersey Central's Blue Comet which ran from the late 20s to the early 40s. I'm not sure if it was the beautiful 400e set or the fact that it was my favorite color, but on the Christmas after joining my local O gauge model train club, the Queen City HiRailers, I received the first piece of Lionel's MPC Era Blue Comet set. Despite getting only the engine and tender that year, I couldn't believe my eyes! Throughout the next year, whether it be my birthday, Christmas, or even Easter, I received a passenger car to add to my set. By 2014, I had acquired every car to complete the set, even the separate Giacobini diner car.

I am now 15 years old, and I have acquired more Lionel trains, mostly postwar, but my Blue Comet set still stands out with me. Our train club set up a train show last year and I remember a little boy maybe 7 years of age and his younger brother attending the show. The older boy was particularly interested in my Blue Comet, following it around the layout, keeping his eyes mere inches from it as he walked along. The HiRailers returned again this year to set up show and the same little boy returned, a year older to retrace his steps, again keeping his face inches from the train watching every movement and listening to every sound. Another Lionel inspired child at Christmas time, like me.

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