

# NEW MEXICO STEAM LOCOMOTIVE

AND  
RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 27270, ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87125-7270—TEL (505)332-2926

## NOTED HISTORIANS VISIT THE RESTORATION SITE

In early October, Ed Boles, Historic Preservation Planner for the City of Albuquerque received a visit from two eminent historians. A few days before the visit, he called to tell us that his visitors would like to see 2926, and to receive a briefing on our progress. A request from Ed is not unusual. He is a friend of 2926 and the volunteers restoring it.

In Ed's official capacity at the City Planning Department he has oversight responsibility for property on the State Register of Cultural Properties and National Register of Historic Places. Santa Fe 2926 is on both registers.

What was unusual and quickly got our attention was the status of Ed's visitors. They were immediate past Chairman of English Heritage, and former Chief, Historic American Engineering Record. It is not every day we have a titled visitor from England drop by—and he is accompanied by an American counterpart. Both men are professional historians—and rail fans.

They were Sir Neil Cossons, Officer of the Order of the British Empire, and his American friend, Eric DeLony. In addition to serving as Chairman of English Heritage, Mr. Cossons has been Director of the London Science Museum, the Ironbridge Museum in East Shropshire, and the Greenwich Maritime Museum.



Sir Neil Cossons, British historian and museum authority stands beside the recently completed 2926 tender during his October visit to Albuquerque.

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## 2008: The Year That Was

*NMSL&RHS had a good year. Increased work led to a major milestone. With 2008 winding down, NMSL&RHS President Mike Hartshorne employed a bit of Latin in the year end summary he submitted.*

### ADDE PARVUM PARVO

“That was the week that was” is the phrase Bob DeGroft, NMSL&RHS Chief Mechanical Officer, uses as the title of his weekly website summary of the ATSF 2926 restoration progress. It is time to put that line from lampoon master Tom Lehrer into perspective and talk about “that was the year that was”. It is easy to see only a little happening week by week. In the course of a year a whopping amount can happen.

Looking back over 2008 makes sense only when set against the background of prior years of effort to restore 2926. Our first audit, in 2004, placed our net assets at \$286,454. That year we performed 4507 man hours of labor.

Much of that time was spent; 1) refining administrative structure, 2) building worksite infrastructure, and 3) starting work on the huge 2926 tender. We had two transportainers (40 ft. steel cargo containers) for secure storage, a few hand and air tools, the WHQ field office, and after a hard rain we had Lake Robart in place of a parking lot. We had firmed up our 501(3)c status with the IRS and Attorney General and taken small steps to explore fundraising.

We patched up two donated forklifts and Lurch the car mover, and began the restoration, starting with the 2926 tender. With a lot of help from Jack Messer's rail crew and Crane Services, the tender was separated into four components. They were the fuel can, the tender body, and the two sets of 8-wheel trucks. Then, each component was attacked by NMSLRHS volunteers—with help from R&R Sandblasting, NAPA, Albuquerque Bolt, several government agencies, and a host of other local businesses and individuals.

The next two years (2005 and 2006) saw a lot of very dirty and back-breaking work by the volunteer roustabouts. The trucks were rebuilt, approximately 3000 pounds of scale was removed from inside the water tank, the oil bunker was cleaned, valves repaired, a trackside water fill system was installed, and the oil can and tender body were sandblasted, primed and painted.



Close inspection, conference, or just staying dry? Mike Hartshorne and Bob Kittel visit inside the very narrow front section of the 2926 water reservoir on a rainy day.

In 2007, equipment acquisition and infrastructure building continued. We added three more transportainers and a pup trailer for storage. An education/computer center was created in an ‘ice cooled car’ donated earlier by a local realtor. (Older than self contained refrigerator cars, it has ice bunkers in each end.) By 2007, we had also acquired two lathes, a milling machine, and a

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This newsletter is published quarterly by the New Mexico Steam Locomotive and Railroad Historical Society, a Non-Profit Corporation.

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## ON THE AGENDA

President Mike Hartshorne provided a good summary of 2008 and the early years—each with a better rate of progress than the one before. If the current agenda for early 2009 is an indicator, we will be very busy and that rate of progress will continue to accelerate. Here are some agenda items for the first quarter of the new year.

### Flue Tube Installation

Now that all flue tubes have been removed, a considerable amount of preparation is necessary before installation of new flue tubes can begin. One of the first steps in that process is cleaning up, and it is not as simple as sweeping up a bit of trash or hosing off some dirt.

The first stage of cleanup is removal of stubs left when old tubes were cut away. This is precise work. It requires a special tool, and someone like Rick Kirby to do the work.

A tool has been rented, and should arrive soon. Then, Rick will go into a daily work mode until the stubs are cut away from the flue sheets. He will need others on site to help.

### Building A Pit

Our landlord, the U.S. General Services Administration, has given us permission to build an inspection/work pit—if we agree to refill it when we are finished. It will be built between the rails to allow access to the bottom side of 2926.

Work will begin late in the first quarter or early in the second quarter. A number of NMSLRHS volunteers will be required on site to assist the contractors working on the pit. Any members who would like to work on this project, verify your current membership and safety training, and contact CMO Bob DeGroft.

### Safety Training

In light of the increased activity on the work site, Chief Safety Officer Jon Spargo has moved up the schedule for the first 2009 Annual Safety Review to January, 31 at 9:00AM.

The Annual Safety Review will be meeting room (church hall) adjacent to Source One Furniture on Menaul Blvd. between Broadway and the BNSF tracks.

Jon encourages all members to check the currency of their membership and safety training. The 2009 work load at the site will often require a daily crew on site..

# BANGING ON A 2900

## Bob DeGroft, 'Buff Boy' Then, CMO Now...

In 1938, latent steam disease struck again. A boy, Robert DeGroft, was born in Cicero on the west edge of Chicago Illinois. By the age of three his family moved to Ft. Wayne, Indiana where he lived on the farm edge of town. Fire was in his life and some dry cornfields returned their nutrients to earth rapidly in clandestine cigarette-sparked blazes.

Bob's dad was a rail fan. He would take Bob and his brother close to trackside to watch the Pennsy, Wabash, and Nickle Plate thunder by spewing cinders. His father got a thrill from the close-up view, as Bob and his brother screamed bloody murder at being so close to all the noise, smoke and cinders.

A cigar smoking neighbor, Elrie Bower, was a night train mail sorter. Bob's maternal grandfather was a passenger car mechanic who worked for the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad. Granddad's pocket watch is now in Bob's care and comes out on special occasions. With all that exposure and encouragement, it is no wonder that Bob's steam disease became chronic.

In 1949 the family moved to Detroit. At the age of 16 Bob took a job with the Bob-Lo Boat Co., a division of the Browning Steamship Co. Steam ferries crossed the lower Detroit river on weekdays. Bob-Lo island, Canada, was developed in the early 1900s as an amusement park destination to keep the steam ferries busy on weekends. ("Bois-Blanc", the French name for the birch and beech covered island, was a name not readily pronounced by many so it was corrupted to "Bob-Lo" and officially named as such in 1949.)

Bob's title at the Boat Co. was "Buff Boy". His official job was taking tickets on the dock and then working on deck as the boat made its way from



*Bob Degroft's introduction to steam power had nothing to do with railroads. The only rails he encountered were the rails on the deck of this steam craft on Lake Erie.*

the foot of Woodward Avenue to Bob-Lo Island Park at the mouth of Lake Erie. Duties included serving hot dogs and stale popcorn to the masses. The Bob-Lo Boats Crew website lists him as "concessions" from '55-'59. But Bob says he frequently worked as relief Purser managing cash registers and the ships' safes. He also toted cases of beer up to the third deck for moonlight cruises, handled mooring cables ashore, and did any job the boss thought up.

On his days off Bob would ride in the engine rooms. The steamboats Columbia and Sainte Claire were built in 1902 and 1910 with passenger capacities of 2566 and 2416 respectively. Both still exist. Fired by Bunker oil, twin Scotch boilers fed triple compound steam engines on these boats. Bob was captivated by the steel, copper, brass and satisfying noise as these boats worked up to 12 knots. That time indelibly engraved Bob's physiology with the need for steam.

Bob's steam disease was in remission during his early adult years as he became a responsible manager of an office and school products business. An employee there and his soul mate for life, Karla, helped him succeed in their own business.. The business, Source One Office Furnishings, devoured his life from 1977 to 2002 when he chose to retire while it was still a going concern.

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Bob did recreational and competitive dirt biking when he was first in Albuquerque in 1971. His organ of good sense told him to stop the daredevil routine as a responsible businessman. I know him now from the more sedate world of 4WD offroading. There, obstacles are taken at a satisfying, mature, sensible crawl under controlled power rather than adrenalin surging speed.

In the early days of the NMSL&RHS Bob found our display table at a New Mexico State Fair, made friends and joined up. Steamboats weren't common in New Mexico but this locomotive had a boiler! His quiescent steam disease was relapsed quickly. It turns out that the ATSF 2926 had been moved out of Coronado Park in 2000 and was parked on a lonely siding at 1<sup>st</sup> and Menaul about a half a block from his business. The NML&RHS was homeless at the time and the WHQ was not even a dream, so we met many times as a group sitting on no-two-alike office chairs in the display area of his store.

Now his steam disease is in its terminal phase. Karla knows it. She helps us keep the books but prefers golf as a hobby. Bob, like many of the rest of us sufferers, has begun to revolve his life around the ATSF 2926.

Upon entering the terminal phase of ferroequine mania, he began showing up at virtually all work sessions, and pitching in to help on just about anything to be done. One thing did stand out. No matter how dirty the job, Bob would come out looking like Mr. Clean.

Bob was railroaded into the job of CMO as the tender neared completion.



***How does he do that???*** After a hard day pulling superheater pipes, DeGroft has a small spot of soot on his nose. ***But look at the other guys!!***. (L to R) Pete Adair, Mike Swanson, Mike Hartshorne, Clem Harris, DeGroft and Steve "Pigpen" Bradford.

Now he is up to his elbows in planning, politics, steel, grease, soot, and the good people of the NMSL&RHS—and some unusual non-executive type duties. (See pictures below.)



CMO DeGroft at work. That is a load of soot (one of six) from the smokebox that Bob is hauling away. The job title in the second photo could well be Chief Mover of Out-houses (CMO). Bottom line: Bob DeGroft is really a go-to guy. To borrow a phrase from Larry, the Cable Guy, Bob is always ready to "Git 'er done".

Bob's immune system has failed him for the last time. That's OK. There is an old piece of medical wisdom that says: "Get a chronic illness and take good care of it and you'll live a very long time."

Mike Hartshorne, MD

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wide range of other tools and materials—much of it donated by our growing support base.

Beginning in 2007 and on into 2008, restoration was accelerated. We also reached a major milestone by completing restoration of the tender. Now it has a glistening black coat of Dupont Imron paint and crisp lettering. It sits at the site ready to roll. (See centerfold)



Working in the 2926 tender is much like spelunking. Instead of tight passages and big rocks, tender diving means scrambling through holes in the many baffles that prevent sloshing and add strength. Here, George Trevor attacks the scale.

With the tender finished, we shifted our efforts to focus on the locomotive. We pulled the sand dome and cab off the locomotive, pulled the superheater tubes out. After we removed the locomotive's sheet metal jacket, Michael Grandjean and his crew at Granco Enterprises Inc. professionally and safely removed and disposed of the asbestos.

Lots of smaller bits and pieces were "bagged and tagged". Everything and every part removed was recorded in a growing database. We began what has become a remarkably good website that is updated constantly. The 2007 audit found us with assets increased to \$491,699. There were 7096 man hours of labor in the 2007 work sessions.

When the 2008 audit is done in a few months we'll have a big jump in the value of our assets and a remarkable increase in the man hours for the year.

As 2008 closes, here are a few obvious signs of progress.

- Flues are out (except for a few stubs in the rear flue sheet).
- The ultrasound mapping and testing of the boiler is almost done.
- The restoration of the sand dome and its valves are almost finished.
- The cab repairs are well underway.
- The feedwater pump is being rebuilt.
- Throttle valves are being cleaned up.
- The air pumps are off on a special rack and look good inside, AND—
- **The tender is painted and lettered, and ready for operation.**

The completed tender is now on display next to the locomotive at the restoration site 1833 8th St. NW.

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We also got just about all the pipes and appliances off 2926. We got real three phase electric power and big air compressors working. The forklifts are still being patched up.

In efforts just as important as the mechanical work we continue to gather notoriety with our community and government. Hundreds of new friends come to our fall open house events.

Gov. Bill Richardson, Lt. Gov. Dianne Denish, and Department of Cultural Affairs Secretary Stuart Ashman visited our site in April. State senators and representatives have dropped by.



*OPEN HOUSE: This picture, taken from the top of the tender looking down through and beyond the fuel bunker recess, is representative of the crowd that comes out for our events.*

Albuquerque city council president, Isaac Benton, and city councilwoman, Debbie O'Malley as well as numerous staffers and administrators at the state and city level have been by to view our progress, and receive a briefing on the project. All were briefed on-site and expressed support for the NMSL&RHS.

We have had favorable articles about us in *Albuquerque The Magazine*, *Trains Magazine*, and *New Mexico Magazine*. We've been featured on *TV 13* and *TV 4* news broadcasts.

Our site has also been visited by many interested parties from various parts of the country and abroad. (See Page 1). Several visiting members of media organizations, covering the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta, also dropped by for a look.

In 2009 we hope to have a working pit built, finish the ultrasound testing and perform boiler repairs with welding, new metal and staybolts in a few places. We will start the process of tube installation, finish the cab rebuild, continue work on multiple appliances.

Fundraising efforts will be expanded, (Might not be the best year ever for that, but our hard work will continue). We will pursue a hundred small jobs that will provide work for lots of hands. TV 7, TV5, Government TV, and any/every other media would be welcome!

It is Ovid's wisdom "*Adde parvum parvo magnus acervus erit*" that applies to our efforts. To what does that Latin translate? "*Add little to little and there will be a big pile*". It would be cool to have that "pile" ready to run for the New Mexico Centennial in 2012.

*Mike Hartshorne, President NMSL&RHS*

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He was also appointed Fellow of the Museums Association, and Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. He was knighted for his lifelong work with museums of the world.

Mr. DeLony, who now lives in Santa Fe, is also a noted historic preservationist. He is a professional engineer, and an industrial heritage consultant. His particular concern is historic bridge preservation, hence his interest in rail. He was hosting his friend, Sir Neil Cossons in Santa Fe.

Ed told us that the visitors' principle interest is structures—specifically bridges and industrial buildings like the old Santa Fe Rail shops that now belong to the City of Albuquerque. He said they are also avid rail fans.



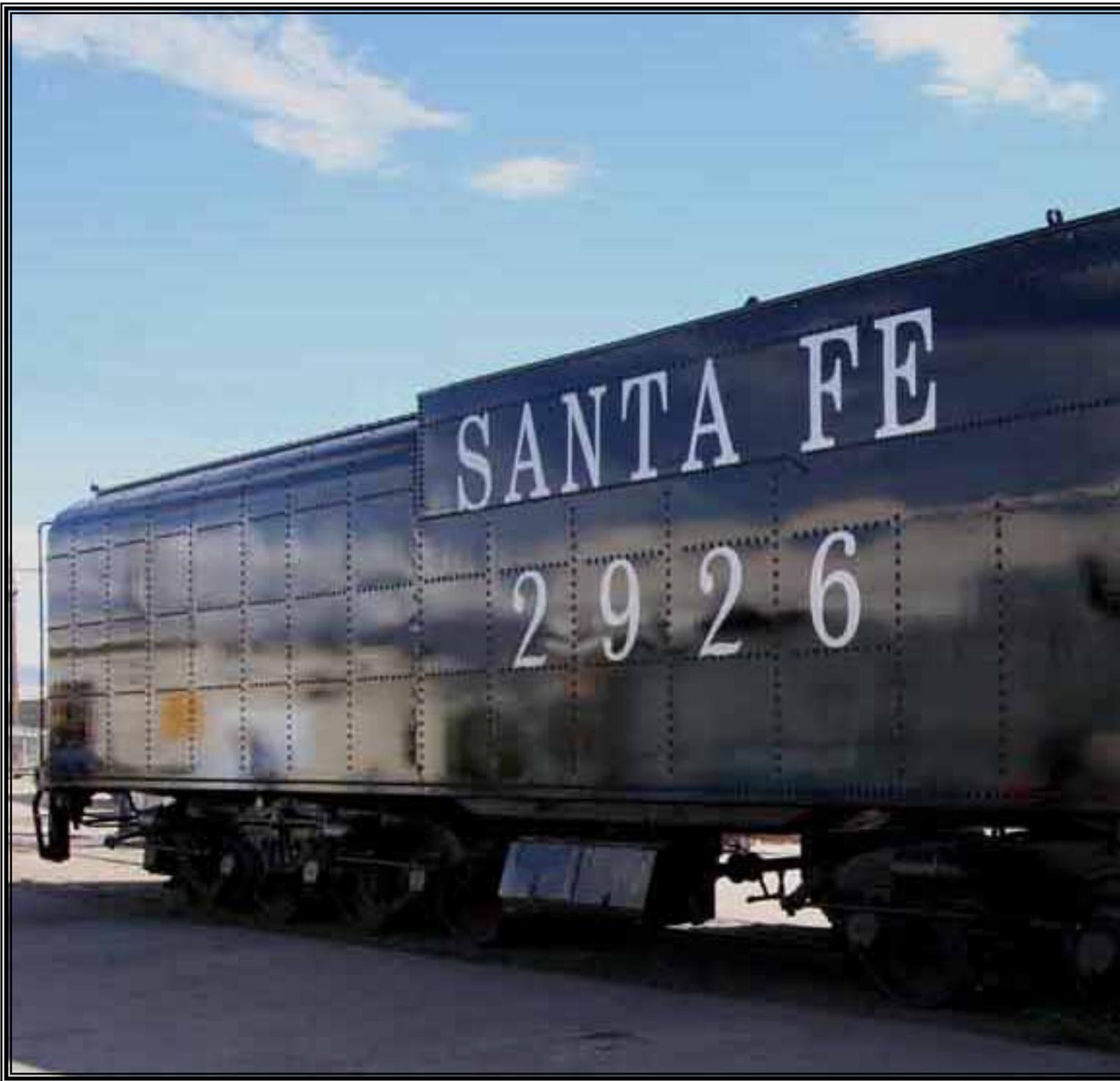
*Before starting the tour, Steve Bradford provides Sir Neil Cossons with some background on 2926 and the restoration project. Ed Strebe, Ken Dusenberry, Eric DeLony (seated), and CMO Bob DeGroft look on.*

The day set for the visit was a regular Wednesday workday in mid or late afternoon. Several members agreed to stay on site to provide the visitors and Ed with a tour and briefing on the project. We were alerted that our British visitor is a hands-on kind of fellow, and that getting a bit dirty was not a major concern. That worked well, because our lead briefer was Steve "Pigpen" Bradford who is never worried about getting a bit dirty.



*Eric DeLony and Ed Boles study the ultrasound grid on the outside of the boiler as Sir Neil Cossons and Steve Bradford inspect the much dirtier confines of the firebox. Meanwhile, NMSLRHS members stand by.*

According to Bob DeGroft, the visitors were on site for more than two hours. They asked a lot of questions. There was a lot of discussion regarding steam locomotives, their relation to the industrial revolution, and related historical subjects. All in all, it was a good day for rail fans and historians on both sides of the Atlantic.



## FULLY RESTORED AND READY TO RUN

The massive water/fuel tender of AT&SF 2926 sits quietly (**and proudly**) on its rail siding while work on the locomotive itself proceeds nearby. The 2926 tender is one of the largest to ever ride the rails. Its empty weight is almost 100 tons (197,000 pounds). Loaded weight is 461,100 pounds. At almost 60 feet long, it comprises just under half of the 121 feet 7¼ inches of the entire locomotive-tender unit. Water capacity is 24,500 gallons. A 30 foot recessed area in the front of the tender body holds the fuel can, containing 7,000 gallons of oil to fire the locomotive's huge boiler. The recessed area would have contained coal in many earlier steam locomotives, but 2926 never burned coal. It used a heavy, stinky oil called 'Bunker C'. When restored, 2926 will operate on waste oil. Depending on terrain, speed and load, a 2900 series locomotive will go between 150 and 200 miles on each tank of water, with fuel oil replenished at every 2 to 4 water stops.

Rescued from rusting away on Coronado park in 1999 by the NMSL&RHS, 2926 was disconnected from its tender, and both were moved from the park in June 2000. In May 2002, they were relocated to the current restoration site on BIA/GSA property at 1833 8th St NW. After building a restoration infrastructure on the site, NMSL&RHS members began restoration work—starting with the tender, then the locomotive. The tender was totally disassembled—main body and the fuel bunker resting cribbing. The two huge Buckeye trucks, weighing 17.5 tons each were placed on temporary track built to receive them. The temporary tracks were built by a crew from the VLA west of Socorro.



Once the tender was separated into four parts, the hard labor began. Rusty parts were cleaned. Missing or broken parts were replaced—either through a nationwide search, drawing on the machining talents of members, or hiring such work done by local businesses. Approximately 3000 pounds of rust and scale were scraped from the inside of the water tank by hand labor. Because of all the baffles inside the tank to prevent sloshing, this was much like cave exploration—definitely not a job for the claustrophobic. A number of members opted for scale scraping. Some members even seemed to enjoy donning a protective suit with an air supply and entering the messy fuel tank to clean it and check the valves. However, neither the fuel bunker or the water tender was a job for anyone prone to claustrophobia.

The hard work, with assistance from businesses like Crane Services of NM, Messer Construction of Hereford TX, R&R Sandblasting, Bond Paint Co., and others too numerous to mention, **tender restoration was finished in 2008. A restored tender is a major milestone in the effort of NMSL&RHS to bring AT&SF back to life, and place it on the high rails with its oldest sibling, AT&SF 3751 previously restored by the San Bernardino Rail Historical Society.**

● Sponsored

○ Available

# SPONSOR A FLUE TUBE

The flue tubes in the 2926 boiler will all be replaced. This is a costly process, even with the volunteer labor provided by qualified members.

All members and other supporters can help restore 2926 by sponsoring one or more flue tubes.

The total number flue tubes is 274. Each tube is 21 feet long and anchored at the front and rear flue sheets. (See graphic at right)

There are 220 3.5 inch diameter tubes, and 54 2.5 inch tubes. Each 3.5 inch tube contains an 80 foot superheater pipe that is doubled back three times to fit inside the 21 foot flue tube.

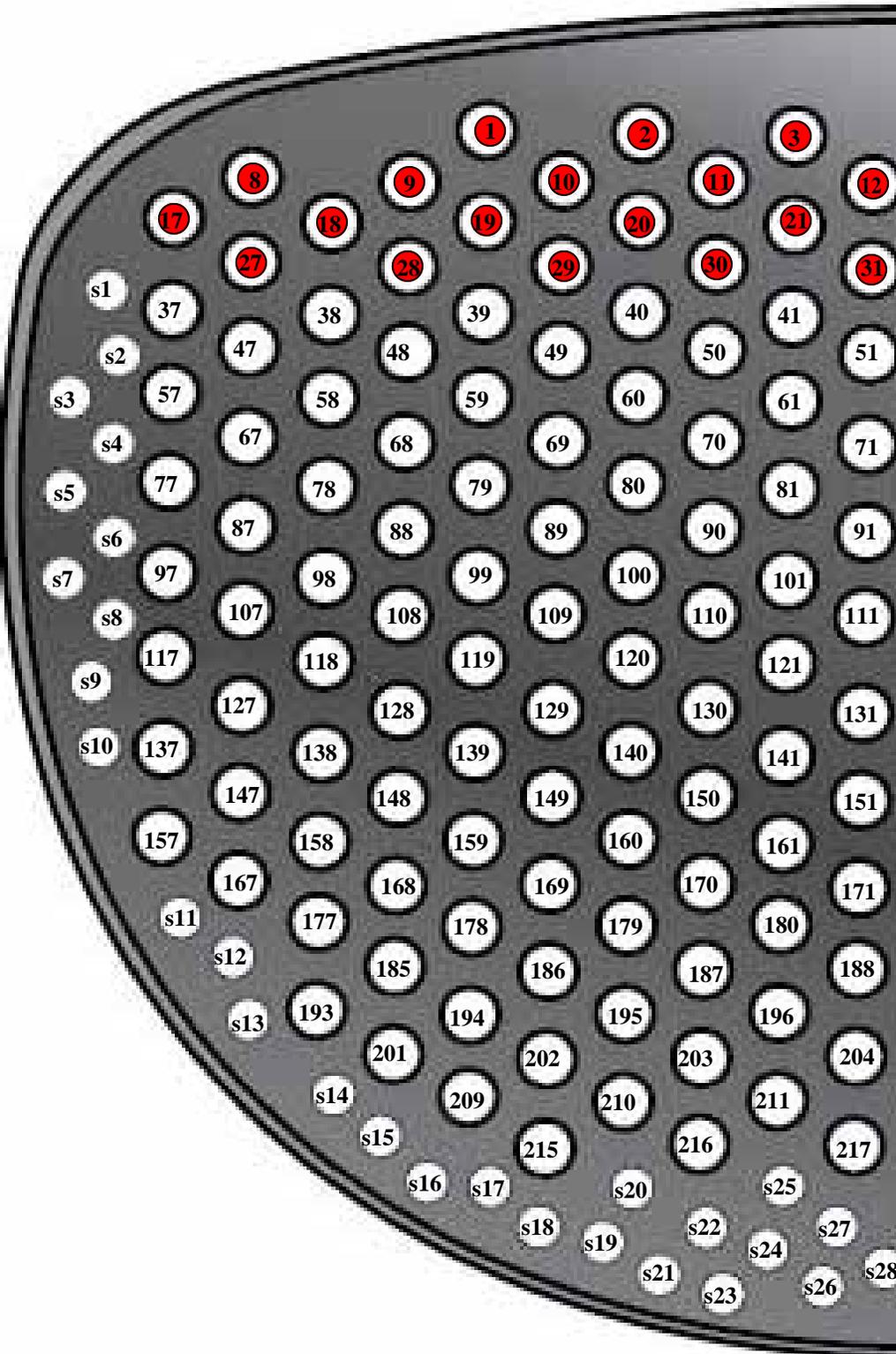
The 2.5 inch tubes do not contain superheater pipes.

Supporters of the 2926 restoration can help by sponsoring the restoration of one or more flue tubes.

Sponsorship can be in the name of the sponsor, spouse, children, grandchildren, friends, organizations, or it can be done anonymously.

The flue sheet chart at right depicts one end of the flue tube array. Each sponsorship is recorded on a large poster image of the flue sheet.

Do your part now and sponsor a flue sheet to help put 2926 back on the tracks. It is a good way to help the restoration and have a memorial in your name, family member, friend or organization.



## FLUE SPONSORSHIP

3.5" flue—\$300.00

2.5" tube—\$200.00

# TUBE RESTORATION



Cutting old flues loose at flue sheet.



Removing tube through smokebox



Stack of superheater pipes



Old 3.5" flue pipe just removed.