

Long way home?

New Lobos coach, on hiring a former one for his staff: "Never say never"

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'A WOMAN CAN WIN'

Warren makes a forceful case for a female president, stands by sexism accusation referring to Sanders

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RESTORING HISTORY



ADOLPHE PIERRE-LOUIS/JOURNAL

A plume of steam rises from the restored ATSF 2926 locomotive Tuesday, as volunteer Marty Sanchez stands atop the "cowcatcher" testing the air pressure.

Restoration of Santa Fe steam locomotive nearing completion

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BY RICK NATHANSON
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

A tall plume of white steam and the ear-shattering howl of a train whistle ripped through a neighborhood near Albuquerque's Sawmill District on Tuesday afternoon, signaling the near completion of an 18-year

renovation of ATSF 2926 — a steam locomotive that previously was displayed in Coronado Park.

The locomotive and tender were the longest, largest and heaviest of the Northern Class railroad engines ever built, said Rick Kirby, chief mechanical officer for the New Mexico Steam Locomotive and Railroad Historical Society, which renovated the shiny black behemoth.

Locomotive 2926 was built in 1944 by Baldwin Locomotive Works of Philadelphia, as one of the last steam passenger locomotives for the Santa Fe railway, which had begun converting to diesel engines. "The locomotive was stationed in Belen for quite a while, and the last time it was in any kind of service was in 1954,"

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Largest Northern Class engine nearly restored

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Kirby said. "Two years later, it came to Albuquerque as a donation to the city and placed in Coronado Park."

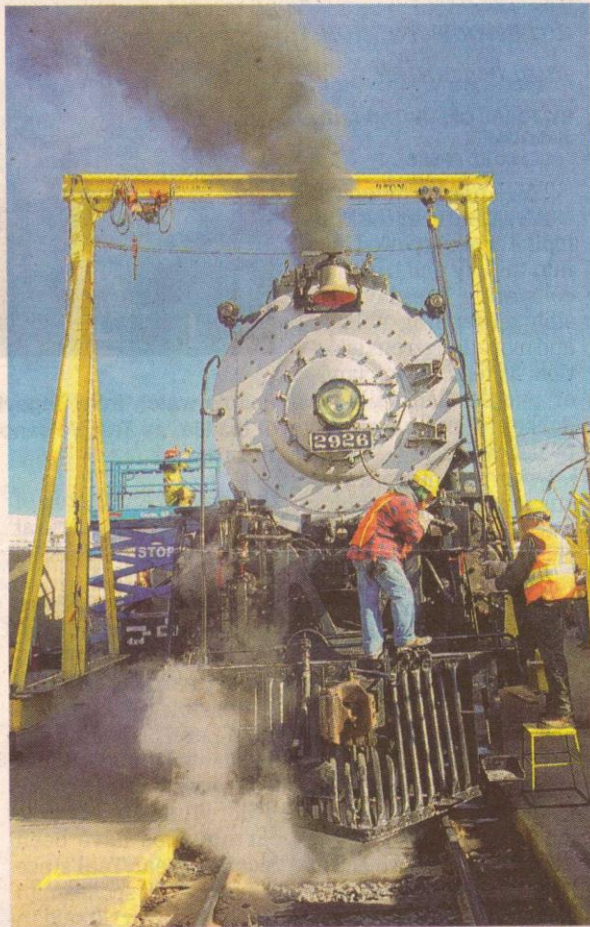
By 2000, the locomotive was in disrepair and had been vandalized, with brass and copper components stolen, Kirby said. The city turned the train over to the historical society, which moved it to a rail spur near Eighth Street and Haines NW, where renovation began in 2002.

Eighteen years and \$1.5 million later, the locomotive stands as an impressive piece of railroad history. The New Mexico Steam Locomotive and Railroad Historical Society donated the labor of its 400 volunteer members, while the money for the renovation was likewise donated. By spring, the society intends to test the locomotive in motion and eventually hopes to use it for excursions, possibly between Albuquerque and Las Vegas, New Mexico, Kirby said.

To appreciate the size of the locomotive, all one has to do is stand next to the 80-inch-diameter driving wheels, the piston-powered wheels that push the locomotive with the distinctive chug-a-chug-a-chug sound.

The locomotive and accompanying tender car, when fully loaded with water and oil, weigh about 510 tons. Generating 6,000 horsepower, the locomotive "could run 90 to 100 mph all day long," Kirby said. To do that, the firebox in the engine converted 100 gallons of water to 300 pounds of steam every mile, while burning 12 gallons of fuel oil every mile.

Diesel engines of the time weren't nearly as powerful, generating from 1,500 to 2,000 horsepower,



Volunteers test various components on the front of the restored ATSF 2926 steam locomotive.

he said.

In the later years of its operation, when locomotive 2926 was stationed in Belen, it was used to help pull diesel-powered trains up Abo Canyon, at the southern end of the Manzano Mountains.

Despite the size of the locomotive, only two people were required to operate the cab: the fireman, who managed the boiler and monitored the pressure; and the engineer, who ran the locomotive, working the throttle and brakes. Occasionally, Kirby said, when a crew was unfamiliar with the track or geography of the land, a third person assisted, serving as something of a navigator and announcing

when a tunnel was ahead, requiring the train to slow down, or a hill, requiring the train to build up fire and pick up speed.

The restoration of ATSF 2926 has itself been something of a curiosity. Just in 2019, more than 5,000 people visited the restoration site, among them visitors from around the United States and 15 foreign countries. The website for the New Mexico Steam Locomotive and Railroad Historical Society, www.nmslrhs.org, received 250,000 hits.

Since the restoration efforts began, society members have put in more than 203,000 volunteer hours.



ADOLPHE PIERRE-LOUIS/JOURNAL

Volunteer fireman Henry Roberts, left, and volunteer engineer Matt Casford check the gauges and monitor the firebox temperature and pressure on Tuesday, during a "steamup" of the restored ATSF 2926 locomotive.

AlbuquerqueJournal

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