

# NEW MEXICO STEAM LOCOMOTIVE

AND  
RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 27270, Albuquerque, NM 87125-7270—Tel (505)246-2926

## LOCAL 412 TO THE RESCUE

**Plumber's & Pipefitters Union Members Provide Skills For 2926 Boiler Rebuild**

In our effort to bring AT&SF 2926 back to life, the NMSLRHS has been very fortunate in receiving assistance and support from a wide variety of organizations and individuals. Heavy lifting, sandblasting, painting, and asbestos removal are just a few of the special skills that come to mind. Now, we need a number of highly skilled certified welders and pipe fitters, and once again, a local organization has stepped forward to help.

This time, it is the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters Local Union 412 that has volunteered assistance to the 2926 project. Local 412 has a long history of supporting such ventures. Following this article is a review of that history—a history almost as long as rail activity in New Mexico.

In addition to all the tubes, pipes and fittings that are visible on the outside of 2926, there are many more inside. Located inside the boiler, between the firebox and the smoke box are 274 flue tubes, each more than 20 feet long. Inside 220 of the tubes are super heater pipes. All the tubes and pipes must be replaced. To say the least, there is a lot of welding—highly skilled welding—required.

In March of this year, CMO Rick Kirby, realizing the challenge he was facing, sent a letter to Tom Montano, Business Manager of Local 412. He asked to explore the possibility of using some of the Local 412 welders and pipe fitters to assist in restoring the locomotive.

A meeting and tour was set up to familiarize him with our project. Local 412 member, Danny Rivera, took the lead and has been the point man in this endeavor. After a short slide show and tour Mr. Montano agreed it would be a good community service for Local 412 to help with the 2926 restoration.



Danny Rivera, Local 412 member at work on site.

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## CLASSIC RAIL CAR OWNERS VISIT

**AAPRCO Members Drop By For Barbecue, New Mexican Food And A Visit With 2926 En Route To Their Annual Meeting In Pueblo Colorado**

The American Association Of Private Railroad Car Owners (AAPRCO) annual meeting for 2010 was held in Pueblo Colorado. A number of their beautiful classic rail cars were gathered in Albuquerque for a New Mexico, Colorado and Texas excursion. Our NMSLRHS crew couldn't let them get by without taking a look at our progress on the 2926, especially since some of them are out-of-state members of our group. We invited them down to the restoration site for an evening of good food and good train talk.



Pulled by four Amtrak units, the AAPRCO 2010 Private Varnish Excursion was caught rolling not far from Abo Canyon on the return to Albuquerque—photo by Dave Traudt.



Guests and Society members enjoy a relaxed meal in the shadow of the restored 2926 tender. The dinner served as a informal kickoff event for a Private Varnish Excursion to the AAPRCO Convention 2010 in Pueblo Colorado. Early the next morning 21 classic rail cars left for Raton Pass and points north behind 4 Amtrak units.

About 75 AAPRCO members accepted the invitation. Society members provided a shuttle service from their rail cars parked on a siding at Albuquerque's Alvarado Center. The weather was near perfect. The food was great, and everyone enjoyed an informal setting for conversation in the shadow of 2926—a rail icon that, once restored to operating condition, will be the world's Largest Operating Steam Passenger Locomotive. No offense, Amtrak, but several of the visitors commented that they could envision their classic cars once again behind big steam.

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President \_\_\_\_\_ Michael F. Hartshorne  
 Vice President \_\_\_\_\_ Dave Traudt  
 Secretary \_\_\_\_\_ Gail Kirby  
 Chief Mechanical Officer \_\_\_\_\_ Rick Kirby  
 Chief Safety Officer \_\_\_\_\_ Jon Spargo  
 Newsletter Editor \_\_\_\_\_ Doyle L. Caton  
 WebMaster \_\_\_\_\_ Marlin Allison

MAIL ADDRESS: NMSL&RHS  
 P.O. BOX 27270  
 Albuquerque, NM 87125-7270  
 Tel: (505)246-2926 web: www.nmslrhs.org

## OPEN HOUSE 2010

### October 2 Open House One of Best Yet

The weather was great, the hot dogs were good, music was fine, and everyone had a good time at the 2010 Open House. Most agreed that it was one of our best. The following pictures summarize a great event at 2926.



An interesting train project, good weather, plenty of shade, good music: It doesn't get much better for 2926 Open House rail fans.



While the big boys study the full size 2926, these guys have found one just their size in Jon Spargo's operating model of 2926—and it is pulling a train.



After hot dogs and soft drinks, Open House visitors settle in to listen as the Territorial Band prepares to add music to an already good day at 2926.

## BANGING ON A 2900

Jonathan C. Spargo - by Mike Hartshorne

Friday, December 19th, 1941, was a red letter day for the Spargo family of Morristown, New Jersey. That was the date Jonathan Charles Spargo, a New Jersey war baby, was born at Morristown's All Souls Hospital. The Spargo family had just gained a son. Ultimately, New Mexico gained another resident, and NMSLRHS gained a Safety Officer. In the following, NMSLRHS President Mike Hartshorne provides more details.

Jon Spargo grew up on a dairy farm in Mount Fern, New Jersey, 45 miles west of New York City. The farm was owned by his uncle and run by his dad.

Jon's dad was a scientific farmer. He was educated in animal husbandry and agronomy at Rutgers State University. That background led to his becoming involved in the first artificial breeder's cooperative in the US.

Jon's birthday was celebrated each year when his dad got a man to milk the cows and took a Saturday off. They would ride the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad (Delay, Linger, and Wait) electric from Dover to Hoboken NJ and thence through Hudson Tube to New York for a day-long outing.

Those annual visits to the 'Big Apple' included the American Museum of Natural History and Hayden Planetarium, the Rockefeller Center to see the Christmas lights, The A.C. Gilbert Hall of Science (of American Flyer, Erector and Science toy fame) and the Lionel Showroom.

For young Jon, there was also a world of rail activity much closer to the farm than New York City. That was the existence of the New Jersey Central RR yards at Raritan, near Somerville where Jon's parents often went to shop.

In addition to all of the rail and museum activity, one Christmas Jon got a 3" reflecting telescope. With such exposure to science and railroads, it is no wonder that Astronomy and Trains took over his brain at a young age.

The Raritan rail yards saw Jon and his dad repeatedly during the last days of steam. He was in and out of cabs of operating locomotives and sheepishly admits to getting a ride through the yards one day on a locomotive's pilot.



Future Safety Officer contemplates a ride on the pilot of one of New Jersey Centrals steam locomotives. "H-m-m-m, if no one is watching, I could hop a ride on this one."

Jon's first job in safety was assisting a grade crossing guard in Somerville. When his mom took him on shopping trips he was pressed into service with his own sawed off STOP sign keeping motorists at bay when trains approached.



Assistant crossing guard Spargo at work.

By the time his 8<sup>th</sup> grade education was finished suburbia was making inroads into the Garden State. The family moved to upstate New York where they had a 300 acre dairy farm. With 60 milking cows, 17,000 bales of alfalfa each summer and a busy breeding program Jon's dad never stopped working. Jon doesn't say it but my guess is that Jon had a pile of his own chores.

Jon graduated with a high school class of 19 kids from the Springfield Central School. The school had a total of 115 students, including junior high.

Seeking his own way in the world Jon spent some college time in New Jersey at Rutgers. Then he attended a liberal arts school, Salem College, in West Virginia.

From Salem, Jon joined the United States Air Force (USAF) in May of 1963. He was then off to Lackland Air Force Base (AFB) for basic training. Following basic training he went to Chanute AFB in Illinois for training as an electronics technician.

He was then assigned to Kincheloe AFB, Michigan. Originally named Kinross AFB, Kincheloe was a cold war era USAF Strategic Air Command (SAC) base. Built in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan during 1943, the base was in service until 1977.

Jon's job in the cold war was to have a Mach 3.5 BOMARC B surface to air missile with a 10kt warhead ready to shoot down a whole formation of Soviet bombers on their way over the pole to the US and Canada. Jon worked with some pretty sophisticated electronics.

During his USAF tour of duty, Jon's dad sent him an inspiring copy of Intelligent Life in the Universe by another Hayden Planetarium visitor, Carl Sagan, and I. S. Shklovskii. He also sent him a copy of a New York Times business section advertising for engineers to design antennas for the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO).

The NRAO electronics looked to Jon like civilian versions of the ones he was using for the Air Force. He applied for a job and was offered the telescope operator's position he would take upon leaving the Air Force in May of 1967. That would put him to work for eight years in Green Bank, West Virginia.

So was Jon a quiet USAF techno-geek all that time?

Turns out probably not. He doesn't say much about airmen carousing in Canada or Sault Ste. Marie. What is really important is that a young girl from Nicaragua, Dora, had been in the States since 1962 living with a Niagara Falls family. Jon's boss, a Sergeant was friends with that family.

With the legendary efficiency of military matchmaking Jon never had a chance. He thought the whole thing was his idea when he invited himself to the Sergeant's home for dinner to meet Dora. They corresponded for a year. He made phone calls and got "stinky" perfumed letters his military buddies chided him about. With a good civilian job in hand Jon proposed on schedule 8 months after they met.

In 1975, NRAO moved Jon and his family to New Mexico where the NRAO's Very Large Array (VLA) was going up. Testing and assembling new



USAF Bomarc launch:

telescopes gradually gave way to observing with the 27 telescope facility when it was commissioned in 1980.

Jon found himself establishing a computerized maintenance management system, working on weather systems to correct the aim of the telescopes and finally writing Operations Procedures manuals. That latter job looked a lot like safety rules to his boss and before long Jon was the Safety Officer for the VLA. He was thus firmly imbedded in an environment of cutting edge astronomical research.

It was an environment that included an element of Jon's other childhood interest—railroads. The enormous antennas of the VLA were moved about the site on railroad tracks. Astronomy and trains still occupied his brain.

One Christmas, one of Jon's sons surprised him with a Lionel model train. He had been listening to Jon's lament about his cheap childhood MARX model trains. (Lionel of course would have been better but MARX was what his parents could afford at the time.)

That rekindled his toy train hobby which compounded itself as any good hobby will over the years. Jon now has a pretty well developed case of it and is a member in good standing in the Toy Train Operating Society (TTOS). See the lead article in Vol. 45, No.3 May/June 2010 The TTOS Bulletin. Or you might sweet talk Jon for a private tour of his layout.

As good as the TTOS and the VLA Safety Officer's job could be that was not enough for Jon. Through the Harvey House in Belen Jon found out about the NMSL&RHS during its formative days. He liked the idea of a "12 inches to the foot" 4-8-4 running in New Mexico. He put two and two together and decided he would offer his services as (what else) the Safety Officer. His offer was accepted. He developed a very professional safety program, and began the regular trip to Albuquerque for Saturday work sessions.

Finally, Jon retired after 38 years with NRAO. He is now free to spend a bit more time with his train hobbies. In fact, he can be seen down at the 2926 restoration site on most Wednesday work sessions as well as Saturday.

Dora is in the game, too. She sewed the society's flag and keeps Jon freed up from honey-dos on most Wednesdays and Saturdays so he can be at work sessions. They make a great team. The Society and 2926 benefit from that teamwork.

His retirement from NRAO did not mean that Jon was giving up one of his hobbies. He still gives a great tour of the VLA. He is also involved in astronomical activities at New Mexico Tech. As the designer of Tech's Campus Observatory, he is knee deep in Tech's Star Parties at the observatory—and still serves as a tough Safety Officer at the 2926 site.



Jon Spargo, Safety Officer, Astronomer, And Lifelong Rail Fan: Yep, the line at the bottom of the antenna in the left image is a rail line—actually double tracks that are used to move the giant antennas. Jon still combines both childhood hobbies.

## ASME AND ALEGRIA VISIT 2926

### Two Groups Receive Tour Of Site And Briefing On NMSLRHS Goals

Members of the NMSLRHS have connections with virtually every organization and interest group around. That was never demonstrated more clearly than a recent Saturday when a local chapter of the American Society Of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), and a group from Del Alegria, a Bernalillo retirement community dropped by for a visit.

John Anderson invited members of the ASME. About 40, including a few family members showed up. The visitors from Del Alegria were invited by Randy McEntyre.



*Visiting rail fans are briefed before a tour of the 2926 restoration site. A local chapter of the ASME, and a group from Del Alegria retirement community in Bernalillo came by for a look at the 2926 project.*

Since both groups came by on a work day, there was some concern that such a large crowd on a work day might present a logistical problem. Anderson, John Taylor, and Steve Bradford handled the situation very well with little disruption of a busy work session in progress.

The entire crowd of visitors was divided into two equal size groups. One group was assigned to Steve Bradford for a walking tour of the restoration site.



*Steve Bradford briefs visitors on 2926 and the restoration. His backdrop is the firebox and boiler showing dozens of rusty soon-to-replaced stay bolts.*

While Steve's tour was in progress, John gathered the other group for a briefing on our future plans and goals. The process was then reversed. Both groups were pleased with tour, and impressed with the way it was conducted on a busy work day without missing a beat.

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A number of Local 412 members responded immediately. As of this writing eighteen 412 members have joined the effort, taken our site safety class, and now show up for regular work sessions. Their involvement will greatly accelerate the restoration of 2926.

To learn more about our newest helpers from Local 412, check the following historical overview. It reveals a long record of hard work and community interest, and a commitment to continue that activity into the Local's next hundred years. Their work on 2926 just the first of many 21st century Local 412 projects that will benefit Albuquerque and the State of New Mexico.

### About Our Newest Supporting Organization

This year, Local 412 celebrated the 100th anniversary of its creation. The following historical excerpts were extracted from materials produced as a part of that centennial celebration.

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### Local 412 Recap

#### A Bit of History

Looking back at the last 100 years of the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters, Local Union No. 412's history, we can understand and appreciate that Local Union 412 has made enormous progress throughout the years.

The Local's history started a century ago in the Territory of New Mexico. Statehood was still in the future. The New Mexico Constitution was being drafted in preparation for statehood. At the time, ten plumbers and steamfitters had the foresight to realize the importance of brotherhood in uniting workers.

They submitted a charter that was approved and signed March 19, 1910.

That was two years before the territory of New Mexico was admitted as the 47<sup>th</sup> state in the Union on January 6, 1912. After statehood, Local 412 continued to grow as the State of New Mexico's population grew—and the demand for services provided by members of Local 412 increased.

World War II brought a rapid increase in demand for conventional, as well as new, complicated and esoteric applications related to the field of plumbing and pipefitting. Much of that work occurred at New Mexico's high tech laboratories in Los Alamos and Albuquerque. Those facilities (Los Alamos Labs and Sandia Labs) along with White Sands Missile Range were established to meet the nuclear research needs of the Manhattan Project and subsequent defense weapons development.

Having continued to grow during the war effort, Local 412 moved into a new location in 1947. The new quarters were located at 415 West McKinley Avenue in Albuquerque. In a Western Union telegram Local 412 was awarded jurisdiction over the entire state of New Mexico at the rate of pay of \$4.85 per hour plus \$0.13 welfare plus \$0.02 for the apprentice program.

Soon afterward, on November 8, 1949, Los Alamos jurisdiction was granted to Local 412. Sandia National Laboratories, located on Kirtland Air Force Base, in Albuquerque, was awarded jurisdiction to Local 412 in 1959.

With increased jurisdiction, came increased work resulting in increased revenue. In 1959, Local 412 was able to build a new union hall at the present address located at 510 San Pedro Drive Southeast in Albuquerque.

With the onset of the information age and the turn of the century, computers, computerized machinery, fiber optics, communication satellites and internet became a significant part of the economy. Microcomputers were developed and many businesses and industries experienced great change. That was especially true in New Mexico and for Local 412.

Intel Corporation opened a plant in Rio Rancho, New Mexico. In 2002, Intel's Fab 11x, the largest and most advanced semiconductor plant in the world, was built. Local 412 was and still is a key player in the construction of Intel's leading edge facilities.

In 2005, Local 231 of El Paso, Texas merged with . Local 412's jurisdiction increased by eleven counties in Texas, resulting in Local 412's membership to expand all the more.

As New Mexico grew in population Local 412 continued to grow. The members of Local 412 have been responsible many significant work projects including hospitals, high rise buildings, casino's, refineries, mines, national laboratories, schools and universities, movie studios, government facilities and power plants just to name a few."

Over the years, Local 412 has added satellite offices to include Farmington, Las Cruces, Hobbs, New Mexico and El Paso, Texas.

The apprenticeship program has grown immensely since inception. It now has a multi-million dollar training facility available to the members. The Local has grown from ten founding fathers to the present total of 1950 members. When you turn on your lights or fire up your furnace this winter, remember these men and women who worked to make it possible these last 100 years.

**Celebrating the Present**

Now that we have celebrated our illustrious history, it is time to celebrate the present and look to the future. A part of that future is to help remember some of the State's history that Local 412 has experienced.

A part of that experience may well have involved the pipes and tubing that we will be replacing or repairing. What better way to assist in preserving some of that history than helping the 2926 group restore this magnificent machine.

\* \* \* \* \*



*Gail Kirby (L), and Ken Dusenberry (R) are no strangers to pipe fabrication, but they are about to begin a class in Advanced Fabrication 101 taught by two experts.*

**CMO Comment**

We are about to begin re-fabricating the super heater pipe bundles and the re-installation of the boiler side sheet. Local 412's volunteer craftsmen will be invaluable with these projects and various other tasks in the future.

As the pictures here show, the 412 volunteers wasted no time getting started. Some of our long time members have pipefitting experience, but we are not loaded with the expertise needed to continue the job with alacrity. There is a large amount of pipe to restore or fabricate. For our existing crew, it would be a very long and tedious process.



*Hold it steady guys. The bend has to be right here.*

With a lot of highly qualified professionals on board, the work speeds up and there is much we can learn from them.

Thanks to Local Union 412 and its members for assisting us with our restoration of an important piece of New Mexico's rich railroad history.



*Some of the larger piping on 2926 does not need replacing, but must be repaired. Here Local 412 member Randy "Big Dawg" Aderhold begins work on a very crooked pipe.*

**A VISIT BY ROYALTY  
Hatch Chili Queen Visits 2926**

Only the uninitiated, uninformed, just plain ignorant, or those from another planet, question the importance of Hatch Chili to New Mexicans. The only question allowed is: "Red or Green"?

It is no wonder then, that Dr. Mike and the crew gave a hearty welcome to Priscilla Bañeulas, the 2010 Hatch Chile Queen.



*Priscilla Bañeulas, 2010 Hatch Chili Queen with Dr. Mike, NMSLRHS President*

A Hatch-NMSLRHS relationship holds promise of future excitement. Hatch has a rail line, and nice historic rail depot that would be great place to park an excursion train for some of the world's best chili.

**Ex fumo ut tractus**

Hatch will also serve as the southern entry point to Spaceport America. That facility, currently under construction will carry paying passengers on suborbital space rides in a couple of years—just over half a century since steam plied the rails through Hatch.

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Among several special guests were two individuals whose official duties involve historical items and the tourism that historical objects engender. Albuquerque City Historian Ed Boles has city wide oversight responsibility for sites, buildings and objects that are registered as having historic significance. AT&SF 2926 is listed on both City of Albuquerque and State of New Mexico historic registers. To the best of our knowledge, 2926 is the only historic item under Ed's oversight that has wheels. Unlike the buildings under Ed's authority, 2926 can become mobile when restored.

Richard Eeds, Director of Marketing and Promotion at the New Mexico Department of Tourism was also in attendance. As a part of his duty to promote tourism, he is well aware of the tourism potential of a combination of big steam, classic rail cars, and New Mexico's enchanting scenery.

Both Ed and Richard are long time friends of the 2926 restoration project. Occasional excursions using big steam and classic rail cars would certainly benefit both historical preservation and tourism in New Mexico. We are all looking forward to the day when 2926 can be seen pulling some of those classic cars on first class rail excursions around New Mexico and beyond.

What an experience!!! What a ride!!! What a photo op!!!



AAPRCO members clean the windows of one of the classic coaches prior to assembling the 21 car consist for their Private Varnish Excursion. The car on track at left is Dean McCormick's Scottish Thistle. The excursion departed Albuquerque early September 17 for Las Vegas (NM), Raton, Trinidad, Alamosa, and Pueblo (for their meeting). After the meeting, they were on to Amarillo, Clovis, Belen, and back to Albuquerque.

For those who want to compare today's air travel with the relaxed, scenic travel of yesteryear, check out the pictures below. Then, go to the AAPRCO web site at <http://www.aaprc.com> for more pictures and full details on some enchanting travel by rail.



The 'Silver Solarium', Vista Dome observation sleeping car built by Budd in 1948 for the famous "California Zephyr."



Silver Solarium' lower lounge showing center stairs to Vista Dome observation area.



'Silver Solarium' lower rear.



Virginia City", 1928 Pullman-built business car restored to 1955 elegance.



'Virginia City' lounge with fireplace



'Scottish Thistle' interior