

Membership Spotlight - Vince Bonfiglio

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Like most kids, I grew up loving trains. I had model train sets during elementary school and was in awe of my grandfather's model train displays which took up the entire attic of his huge house in Los Angeles. Growing up, I loved all things mechanical and eventually turned my passion for cars into a 45-year career as a mechanic. I started out with Volkswagen, served as a Master Mechanic for Porsche for 19 years, and finished my career as a shop foreman for Hendrick BMW in Charlotte North Carolina. But my fascination with trains never went away. While living in Charlotte, my wife Catherine and I were frequent visitors to the Spencer Shops in Spencer North Carolina, which served as the repair center for the Southern Railroad. During our visits there, I was particularly interested in the repair side and how the volunteers were bringing the old steam engines, locomotives and rail cars back to life.

Fast-forward to 2016. After we both retired, Catherine and I relocated to Reno to be closer to family and friends spread throughout the west. Although she had lived here prior to our marriage, I was relatively new to the area and was pleasantly surprised to discover the Western Pacific Railroad Museum. We visited a couple of times, but I really wasn't aware of the volunteer program offered by the museum.

When my birthday rolled around this past April,



Vince at the controls of SP 2873 on his RAL as instructor Charlie Spikes looks on.

- photo by Catherine Bonfiglio

Catherine surprised me with a present of an hour's rental of an engine at the museum. Charlie Spikes showed me the ropes of the controls and was very helpful in explaining the operation of the 2873. During my time at the control stand, Charlie talked about the volunteer program. Upon learning that I am a retired mechanic, still interested in getting my hands dirty and with an interest in trains, he encouraged me to sign up as a volunteer, which is exactly what I did before leaving the museum that day.



Vince on his way to the WPRM Museum Store to fill out a membership application!

- photo by Catherine Bonfiglio

Starting in May, I began volunteering two days a week. I've been given many assorted tasks, which has helped me to learn about trains, their operation, maintenance, and the history of the Western Pacific Railroad. Volunteering has also enabled me to continue to use my skills as a mechanic, while learning about a different mode of transportation. I have enjoyed getting to know everyone at the museum who keeps the history of the Western Pacific alive. I would encourage anyone to learn more about the volunteer program and how you can contribute to its operation. No matter what walk of life you're from, you can be an asset to the museum.