

In the Shadow of the Shops

Our dear mother, Cecilia, almost every school day woke us up with the following greeting: "*Levantaten niños, se toco el pito del shops... wake up children, the Shop's whistle blew!*" The Santa Fe Railroad Shops' whistle during the 1940's, 50's, and '60's signaled at 7:15am the beginning of our day, as it did for everyone in the Albuquerque neighborhoods adjacent the *Shops*. The whistle also blew at 7:30am, 12:00pm, 12:30pm, 4:00pm, and 4:30pm. It was the signal that helped the employees of the *Shops* pace their workday, and it also helped the many residents of the adjacent neighborhoods pace their respective days.

We grew up in the Barelás neighborhood, in the shadow of the Santa Fe Railroad Shops. Our good and strong father, Frank, worked as a journeyman machinist at the Santa Fe Railroad Shops for 46 years. He was no more than sixteen years of age as he began work there in 1942. He was a laborer who helped the older and more skilled men work on steam locomotives in the *Shop's* huge Roundhouse. Less than one year later, he joined the United States Navy and served his country with honor and courage as a submariner in the South Pacific for the duration of World War II. He returned to the *Shops* after his discharge in December of 1946, and he began and completed his four-year internship as a machinist. Two years later our father, who was a Navy Reservist, was deployed to the Korean War. He again served his country for the war's duration, and again returned to the Shops after his discharge. We had a father whom we loved and respected. He was our hero because of his distinguished service to our country during World War II and the Korean War, and because he faithfully worked hard every day at the Santa Fe Shops as a distinguished journeyman machinist. Many of our neighborhood friends had fathers who shared the same legacy as our father.

The Santa Fe Railroad Shops provided good and dignified work for many Albuquerque residents, especially for the many Hispanic men who lived in Albuquerque's working class Hispanic neighborhoods. We were not wealthy, but we never lacked for life's necessities. We also were blessed to enjoy the security and nurturing that our good mother gave us because she did not have to go to work. She was always there at home for us. We were prosperous, not because of money, but rich in the security of our good parents' unconditional love and good

example. The Santa Fe Railroad helped provide the means for that to happen.

A great bonus for those who worked for the Santa Fe Railroad was a free family pass to ride on any of the passenger trains to the many destinations that the Santa Fe Railroad served. As children, we took several trips to California and visited Disneyland, the San Diego Zoo, San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf and many weekend excursions to El Paso, Texas and neighboring Ciudad Juarez. We also experienced in 1960 a minor train wreck north of El Paso; fortunately, no one was injured. The free pass provided experiences for us that we may otherwise might not have had.

Our father also had the distinction of having saved a fellow employee's life. In 1963 a Roundhouse door suddenly opened and knocked a Roundhouse worker unconscious onto the railroad track. A locomotive that was being serviced began to back out of the Roundhouse in the direction of the injured man. Fortunately, our father witnessed the accident and immediately ran to the man and pulled him off the track seconds before the locomotive passed. For this and many other reasons, our father retired with distinction from the Santa Fe Railroad Shops in August 31, 1988.

Our father lived almost all of his life in the same home in which he was raised. His father, Francisco, who also worked for a short period of time for the Santa Fe Railroad, built the house from the ground up in 1923 and that includes the *adobes* he made from the soil that the house rests on. Our dear mother died in 1984 and our dear father died in 2009. Our childhood home still stands in the Barelás neighborhood. It is a monument, of sorts, to the good life that our father and mother provided for us as children, and it is filled with the many precious memories that we all experienced growing up *in the shadow of the Shops*.

In loving memory of our good and noble parents, Frank and Cecilia Archibeque

Clyde Archibeque

Julie Archibeque

Frank Andrew Archibeque

