Our 'Stockholders' Write

This week I was on the 51A-Alameda bus and during the ride up University Avenue some rather loud students got on the bus. They were smoking and swearing rather loudly. The bus driver (Peter Lemos) immediately stopped the bus, got out of his seat, walked to the back of the bus and very firmly told the offending student to remove himself from the bus. The student, needless to say, gave him quite a bit of verbal abuse in return. The driver maintained his dignity and again told him to remove himself or he would call a policeman immediately. The student then left the bus. The trip proceeded on up University without any further problems, and the driver was pleasant to all that got on his bus.

When I see someone take the time out to take care of an offensive situation and still maintain his pleasantness to all others in the bus, I feel that it deserves the time and effort to let you know.

Irena A. Cimmaron Berkeley

The holidays provide a harvest of lost-item incidents. One such, complete with a happy ending that leaves a particularly pleasant post-holiday glow, involves a lost calculator with both sentimental and very practical value. Its return prompted a commenda­tory letter and gift to Driver A. S. Norris, saying, in part, “thank you for returning my son’s calculator... it was his high school graduation present, plus he really needs it for his classes.”

I want to call your attention to the subject — A. D. Morrow — as an outstanding representative of AC Transit.

As I walked across Coolidge Avenue, I saw the bus coming and knew I couldn’t make it, because, at 80, speed is impossible and there were no passengers at the bus stop. But, lo and behold, the bus stopped and waited. So I tried to speed up, but, at 80, speeding up means staggering a little faster and possibly breaking one’s neck by falling. But Mr. Morrow patiently waited for me.

Thank you to a man I respect very much.

Thomas H. Pritchard
Oakland

I have never felt compelled to write to you before. That is, until one bus driver known to many as “Papa Joe” retired (Joe N. Alder).

During the number of years that I’ve known him on Line 65, he was polite, courteous and friendly. In my opinion and the opinion of the other regular riders, he followed all the AC Transit rules set forth for the driver, without ever being rude. I am sure that you receive a number of complaints about bus drivers, but the pre-training that he received really paid off in making him a terrific driver. I and the other regular riders do miss him, and we hope for the best for him in his retirement.

William Ellington
Berkeley

Board members elect 1983 officers

Michael H. Fajans, an urban planning consultant who lives in Berkeley, is the new President of AC Transit’s Board of Directors. He was elected by fellow board members at the first meeting of the year on January 12.

Fajans became a Ward I Director in 1979 and served as Vice-President of the District’s policy-making body in 1982. He succeeds Jean A. Holmes, a Fremont businesswoman, who chose not to seek re-election in the November balloting which determined four seats on the Board. His credentials include a Master’s Degree in City Planning from the University of California, Berkeley.

Sworn-in as Vice-President for 1983 was Director-At-Large Ray Rinehart. An Oakland CPA, Rinehart has been a member of the Board since 1963 and has twice served as its President.

As Board officers, Fajans and Rinehart will serve one-year terms.

Taking her seat on the Board was Linda Shepard, Fremont, elected in November to the Ward V seat previously held by Jean Holmes. She and re-electees John McDonnell, Ward III; William J. Bettencourt, Ward IV; and Roy Nakadegawa, Director-At-Large, were sworn-in by Oakland-Piedmont-Emeryville Municipal Court Judge James S. White. Balloting for Board officers followed the swearing-in ceremonies.

1983 BOARD — New Director Linda Shepard and re-electees Roy Nakadegawa, William Bettencourt and John McDonnell are sworn-in by Judge James S. White. Other Directors present for the ceremony were (far left) William Berk, Michael Fajans, and Ray Rinehart. In other business during the year’s first meeting, Fajans became Board President; Rinehart, Vice-President.
Schedule evaluation

Committee's aim is service with economy

A simple, one-line notation included in a suggestion submitted by Road Supervisors Loretta Brown and Andrew Lemons late last year said a great deal to AC Transit:

"A Line 7 trip is not needed."

The two supervisors suggested switching one bus from a Line 7 tripper to run a Line 69A trip instead. And in evaluating the suggested change, it quickly became apparent that two significant results could be achieved: a service improvement on Line 69 and a reduction in operating costs.

Last December, that suggestion came through channels to the Schedule Evaluation and Coordination Committee (SECC), the weekly session where District departments regularly review and evaluate all proposals for service adjustments. By early January, the proposal had been evaluated and found to be practical and productive — and it was implemented.

"It may not sound like much of a change," says SECC Chairman Robert J. Shamoon, "but it reduced our peak-hour equipment requirement by one bus — and that means we reduced our operating costs."

Trimming of operating expenses has been a top-priority activity at AC Transit for several years. In the best of times, prudent business management requires economizing; and since passage of Proposition 13 — California's Property Tax Initiative — cost-cutting has become a matter of survival for the District.

The SECC will continue striving to bring schedules and service in line with a limited operating budget, Shamoon notes. But, he added, the SECC and, indeed, the District needs the assistance of all employees to achieve maximum positive results.

"The people who are real experts in the details of our operation are out there on the streets and working in the divisions," Shamoon says. "They know the places where productivity improvements can be made — they know the things that can be changed, the methods that can be improved to enable the District to do a better job at a lesser cost."

New governor's proposed budget foreshadows funding cuts

Gov. George Deukmejian's proposed State budget could mean a loss as much as $1 million in financial aid to AC Transit.

General Manager Robert E. Nisbet and Assistant General Manager for Finance Nat Gage outlined anticipated results of reduced funding from Sacramento at the year's first meeting of the Board of Directors on January 12.

Cuts from Sacramento, combined with other reduced funding, could result in a cumulative loss of "between four and five million dollars," Gage told the District's policy makers.

Gage said the System already faces reduced monies because of federal cuts, less revenue from sales and property tax, and reduced ridership — the latter attributed to uneasy economic conditions. He pointed out that loss of local funding has a compounding effect because it represents money needed to secure federal assistance.

"It is too early to assess the impact as it applies to possible fare increases or service reductions," Gage said of the funding cuts.

Nisbet told the Board that Deukmejian's plan called for "a cut of $28 million from the State Transit Assistance fund of $103 million, a reduction of 27 percent."

He noted that AC Transit, like other public transit systems throughout the state, could expect to receive proportionately less than previously expected.

Safety milestone

SAFE DRIVER — Louis Jones accepts 25-Year-Safe-Driver Award from General Manager Robert E. Nisbet. A driver at Seminary Division, Jones says his success behind the wheel can be attributed to "leaving your personal problems at home and having some luck," as well as being sure you "aren't out there with a chip on your shoulder." Jones is the 43rd AC Transit driver to achieve the two-and-a-half decades of safe driving. It is estimated he has carried some two million passengers. He first qualified for operator on April 16, 1953.

Toy collection rings bell

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Retirement round-up

- Robert H. Barnhill, Driver, Richmond Division, 20 years.
- Avonne Bradshaw, Personnel Analyst, General Office, 28 years.
- Wilber S. Campbell, Driver, Richmond Division, 20 years.
- Alonza Dickerson, Driver, Seminary Division, 22 years.
- Celso Dominguez, Driver, Seminary Division, 26 years.
- Virgil Y. Greathouse, Driver, Seminary Division, 18 years.
- James Hilliard, Driver, Richmond Division, 12 years.
- Donald B. Linde, Driver, Newark Division, 19 years.
- William J. Santos, Bodyman AA, Seminary Division, 41 years.
- Maxine H. Staats, Finance, General Office, 36 years.
- Walter Teuber, Driver, Seminary Division, 15 years.
- Roy A. Wall, Driver, Emeryville Division, 20 years.

Retired Key System motorman dies

Bert L. Wheable, 82, a retired driver, died November 26 in Lodi. He is survived by a son, Bert.

Wheable served on Key System trains, streetcars, and buses, retiring in 1965 after 21 years of service.
Today's seemingly prosaic memo or record may become fodder for tomorrow's seeker of sidelights into the yesterdays of East Bay transportation. That's one lesson being learned in a current project of the Personnel Department involving the clutter of stored records in the basement of AC Transit headquarters in Oakland's Latham Square Building.

Since October, Don Morell, a 10-year veteran of the District, has been combing the old files, many of which were inherited from AC Transit's pre-1960 predecessors — organizations dating back to the early years of this century. It's a project with a pragmatic aim — extracting any data still relevant to today's personnel needs — but the process also has turned up an interesting trove of materials, offering glimpses of by-gone days in transportation.

Today's drivers, for instance, routinely battle heavy traffic, but their early-day counterparts often found themselves facing close encounters of the four-legged kind! The ink-faded old accident record cards are replete with matter-of-fact notations pointing up the hazards of operating rail-stock on streets still shared with horses and cows. The following are typical confrontations between public vehicles and beasts as reported in the 1910-1911 period: "man riding horse ran into car"... "stray cow ran directly head-on into car"... "2 men in rig, both drunk, pulled horse directly in front of car"... "car 216 struck horse at 16th Street between Brush and West".

Patron relations, in those days just as in these, routinely required alertness and diplomacy, both of which appear to have been exhibited by the employee who wrote this 1936 incident report: "1:30 a.m. — drunken woman walking between the tracks. To get her out of danger, pulled her forwards and pointed the way to 34th St. to her.

In spite of hazards — animal, human, mechanical, health — instances of impressive service longevity show up in these records. In 1942, a Frank Alfred Brown, then aged 68, retired as Foreman of the Electric Department, Emeryville Shops, after 51 years and 3 months of service!

Others, of course, proved less faithful. Firings and resignations often followed a history of such infractions as "chewing tobacco", "talking too much", "shaking dice", "going in saloon" or "patronising Lombardi's pool room".

When the ink was fresh on these old documents, it was recognized that people were the prime factor in operating effective service. That's one thing that hasn't changed.

THE COVER — There's dust, gloom, clutter, and eye-straining notations to decipher on sometimes yellowed and flimsy old records, but there's a project going on in the basement of AC Transit headquarters in the Latham Square Building, and Don Morell prefers to focus on the more positive aspect: getting a rare glimpse of day-to-day transit operations in the early part of this waning century. While attending to the very practical task of weeding relevant records from the mass, Morell keeps an eye out for the stray scrap of memo or file notation or incident report that provides an amusing/poignant/human sidelight to East Bay transit operations in the period, for instance, of the bottom photo (Oakland's 12th and Broadway some six decades ago). Earliest records unearthed so far date from the first decade of this century.

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K. F. Hensel, former GM, dies

Kenneth F. Hensel, AC Transit's General Manager from 1962 until retirement in 1967, died last month in Arizona. Hensel, who is survived by wife Dorothy, served 37 years in transportation, joining AC Transit in 1960 and becoming chief administrative officer after the death of John R. Worthington, the District's first general manager.
Actions of the Board

At a regular meeting December 8, the Board of Directors:

- Adopted resolution honoring Driver William R. Benedict for exemplary behavior in responding to an onboard medical emergency, on motion of Director Fajans.

- Adopted resolution declaring results of November 2, 1982, election to select Directors for Wards III, IV, and V and a Director-At-Large, on motion of Director Bettencourt.

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At an adjourned regular meeting December 22, the Board of Directors:

- Adopted resolutions authorizing filing of capital improvement grant application for retrofitting brake retarders on coaches and filing of two grant amendments; scheduled public hearing on these applications for January 26, on motion of Director Fajans.

- Established formulae for contributions to union/non-union pension plans and approved revamped procedures for sale of District buses and vehicles declared surplus, on motion of Director Rinehart.

- Adopted resolution authorizing purchase of Downtown Oakland building site for new General Offices, on motion of Director Fajans.

- Authorized General Manager to advertise and seek proposals for signage and information projects planned for Transbay Terminal, on motion of Director Nakadegawa.