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of RIGHTS**
Can workers
be muzzled?

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shares her love of
scuba diving

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**LAST of its
KIND**
Good riddance to
the old Flyers

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Acting Assistant Supervisor

*By John A. McDonald,
Editor*

So you are checking out the bulletin board in the driver's room, and you notice a job posting for an **Acting Assistant Supervisor**. It says that you get a 7.5% pay increase. But, you think, if you end up being hired full time, you stand to earn almost half again as much as you make now. Sounds good! And then there is all the free training they give you, and the invaluable experience you will gain. Skills are portable, and would look good on a resumé. And then, of course, there are all those cool gadgets you get to play with. You keep reading.

Then there is the bit about the Collective Agreement limiting the position to 24 months. Just what does our latest contract have to say about part-time supervisors?

The **Letter of Understanding, #16** (page 144 of our contract), states that employees who



become Acting Assistant Supervisors remain part of the Union. So you think to yourself, if things go sour, I could always just go back to driving.

Further, the contract specifically rules out the possibility of you having to discipline other employees. That means a lot to you, as you have no interest at all in getting into a fight with your fellow drivers. So this means that there won't be any hard feelings when you go back to driving in a couple of years.

(See Wannabe on page 3)

Defeating the Demons of Despair

*By Wayne Mastromatteo
Chief Steward - South Division*

Your day starts off like any other. You have a routine. You picked up your "Timmy" on the way to work. You've got your daily copy of the newspaper. You are into your first few trips. This day is just like a thousand before it.



Then it happens! Something that will change you forever! From out of nowhere! You hear a commotion from some of your passengers. You look outside. You see a person lying on the ground close to your bus. You wonder why the person is doing

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 by John A. McDonald.

Comments to
johnmcdonald@caw4304.ca

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 John Mac Kay:
informer@caw4304.ca
 Next Submission
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Attend your
 Union meetings:
 May 17
 8:00 pm

887 Langs Dr.
 Cambridge

Bereavements:

- Ray Arseneault
- Dana Durnnell
- Reg Gingras
- Frank Goertz
- Tom Gross
- John Heibein
- Steve Huebner
- Maarit Isolehto
- Dave Koebel
- Leo McAleney
- Austin Nash
- Ed Smythe
- Paul Vautour



Fruit Baskets:

(Some donated to charity in lieu)

- Maureen Ancio
- Warren Bell
- Deb Biemann
- Perry Breen
- Mike Dairs
- Jacky Eng
- Frank Goertz
- Gary Hass
- Cam Kemp
- Paul Lalonde
- John Lawrence
- Colleen Leslie
- Paul Longstaff
- Linda Lyon
- Eileen Mannarelli
- Robert McAully
- Monica Menner
- Sue Pozzo
- Paul Wagler
- Al Widmeyer
- Harold Ziegler

Contributors

*Local 4304 members helping
 out with this issue were:*

- Klaus Biemann
- Lazlo Bori
- Paul Eckmier
- David Driver
- Ricki Germann
- Sandy Henderson
- Paul Lalonde
- Wayne Mastromatteo
- John Mac Kay
- John A. McDonald
- Paul Wagler
- Phil Whitehead

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 the members. The views
 expressed are those of the writer
 and not necessarily those of the
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 fact. Material of a sexist, racist
 or defamatory nature will
 not be printed.

(Wannabe from page 1)

Still, you are a bit sceptical. Isn't this the position that people call a "**Wannabe**?" Those guys *want to be* a supervisor. Would there not be a conflict of interest with your fellow Union members? So you ask around.

I actually went out and did a very informal poll of our south members. It turned out that roughly 90% of our members had no problem with the role of part-time supervisors. Since the two-year limit was introduced in the latest contract, it has changed the whole dynamic. Most people now welcome them as a "safe" kind of supervisor. If you have a small problem on the job, the *Wannabe* supervisors will usually just counsel you and help you to improve. The issue stays between the two of you. Of course, officially, they could file the incident in their report, but in practice, the small goof-ups never make it to print. Drivers now see the role as someone who is only there to ensure that the system runs smoothly. And after all, isn't this exactly what our top-level managers really want – strong Union-Management relations?

This whole situation actually played out for me in January of this year. There was a job posting for January 16, 2006, for a South Wannabe. I felt I was qualified and saw it as a way to improve myself. After 17 years of driving, I was looking for a change of pace. Here was an opportunity to actually get paid for what I consider to be my half-decent interpersonal skills. And I had

always been a driver who sent in service improvement suggestions to the office. Now I could actually be part of the solution. Besides all this, I relished the opportunity for the education that this position would entail.

But before I made my decision, I consulted with the three former part-time supervisors who had all quit in protest last year. They assured me of their complete support, should I decide to apply. They explained that they had already made their point, since this would be the second hiring after their incident.

While some of our members asked me why I would want the headache, I was pleased with the level of support I received.

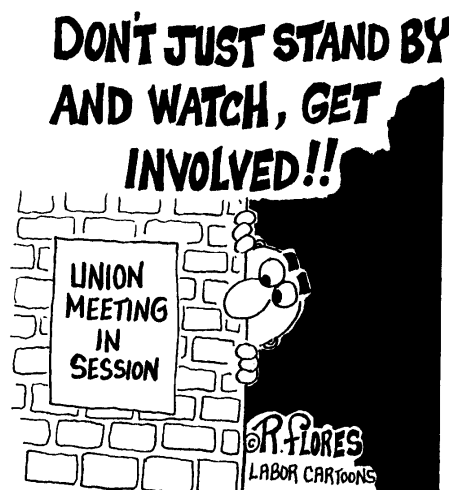
And so it was that, on January 16, 2006, I submitted my application for **Acting Assistant Supervisor in the Cambridge Service Area**. Two months later, I finally got my interview and was hired a week later, along with another operator. **As of April 17th, I began my three weeks of training**, and love it so far.

I will continue to fulfill my obligations to the Union on the Education and Newsletter Committee (including the website), the Election Committee and the Bylaws Committee, since these are not executive positions. It is my hope that my new responsibilities will give me a better perspective and enable me to keep our members better informed.

At this point, I am not convinced I will try for a full-time supervisor's job. The prospect of working night shifts again is not very appealing. I view this as simply an opportunity for personal enrichment and a worthy challenge. The human relations skills that I've already picked up have even improved my personal life (at least that is what my girlfriend says). And the 10-hour days in a four-day work week are rather nice when they come up. But, besides all this, I still complain just as much about management as I used to.

Another opportunity for our members is that of taking the "Ontario Management Development–Leadership Skills Certificate Program (OMDP)" courses. These days, it is commonly expected that all successful candidates for full-time supervisors will have completed this program. It involves taking six 10-week courses at Conestoga College. The cost is \$158, plus books, for each course. So far I have completed the "Communications" course, and

(See *Wannabe* on page 4)



(Wannabe from page 3)

am presently in the Wednesday night course, called "Human Relations," both of which are prerequisites. The four other courses are electives, and are listed on page 72 of the current Continuing Education Spring Catalogue from Conestoga College. You may also take two additional courses from the OMDP Business Management Skills program and get that certificate as well.

I have found management to be very supportive of anyone who wishes to take these courses. I recommend that you speak to

your manager to see how they can help you.

It is my hope that many more of our members will take advantage of this opportunity to broaden their horizons. I'd like to see at least 10% of our drivers trained as supervisors over the next several years. It would give us a depth of skill that could make GRT the model transit property on the continent. A recent example of this was when we had a personal injury emergency at the Ainslie Terminal. Zeke Baker, who had been a part-time supervisor the year before, jumped into the gap and started

covering overtime for the full-time supervisors who had to attend to the accident scene. This type of "all hands on deck" situation is a good example of how we can all benefit from having a more highly trained work force; a perfect Union-Management solution to strengthening our overall relationship.

So, next time you see a posting for Acting Assistant Supervisor posted on the bulletin board, give it a shot! **And remember, our Union includes more than just drivers and mechanics.**

(Despair from page 1)

this. The commotion from your passengers gets louder. Then the horror sinks in, like a jackhammer. You've hit a pedestrian with your bus! Shock starts to set in. You scream into the radio for a Supervisor. They respond but you can't comprehend what they are saying. Everything is a blur. You jump out of your seat and run to the pedestrian that was hit. A thousand things are running through your mind at once. The police, fire department and ambulance take what seems like a lifetime to arrive on the scene. The Supervisor arrives and helps you check on the injured pedestrian. Every person in the vicinity stares at you. Finally, the E.M.S. arrives and assesses the extent of the injuries. The police are on the scene and are starting their investigation. Finally, the injured person is transported to hospital.

You are taken into the inner sanctum of the Terminal. The police start interviewing you. You try to give a statement of what happened, but you don't have any answers, as you never saw the pedestrian, let alone know which direction that person came from. The Critical Incident Response representative from the Union arrives to talk to you. You are later asked to fill out an Accident Report. Things are still a blur, even though you've played back the incident a thousand times in your mind. You want to see the terminal videotape, but discover that there was no videotape put into the V.C.R. that morning. Finally, your family takes you home, after you are advised that you are being "Stood Down," until the police investigation is completed and you have medical clearance to come back to work. You are also advised that P.A.C.E. is

available to you.

During your time at home, you never get one good night of sleep. You have nightmares about the accident which keeps getting replayed over and over. For the first few days, you go over every detail of the accident, but still don't have any answers. Days turn into weeks. Still no word about the police investigation, or when you may return to work. You have too much time to dwell on things. Negative thoughts create a sense of hopelessness and feelings of despair start creeping in.....

These "Demon" thoughts of despair include self-doubt and second guessing, slowly eroding your confidence to the point where you begin to take stock of your driving skills. You've always "had the big picture", only now it is becoming

(See Despair on page 5)

(Despair from page 4)

increasingly out of focus. Your excellent sense of judgment, sharp intuition and reflexes have somehow let you down and you begin to lose faith in them. With all of your years of driving experience, you begin to wonder if maybe you were just lucky in the past. You've now been home for a month, with still no answers from the police investigation. Still no word from G.R.T. about you coming back to work. The Demons are getting stronger and stronger. By being "Stood Down", you are isolated. There is no one to talk to. The employer mentioned P.A.C.E., but you know they can't help. They have never been in this situation, so they can't possibly know what you are going through. You visit your co-workers. They are empathetic and very supportive. You enjoy their company. You greatly appreciate their support. But even as you talk to them, you know that you are different from them. You feel like there is an indelible mark on you and you

can't get it off. As you talk to your friends, you can't help but wonder what they are "really" thinking. Feelings of self-doubt re-surface. The Demons are even stronger!

Finally, you get the call from your boss. There will be a meeting. When you attend, you find out that the police report is inconclusive, although you will not be charged. You are advised that with medical clearance, you will have to have a "Road Test". You wonder if you can do it. "It has been way too long", the Demons are telling you. More time passes before you have the Road Test. Somehow you manage to make it through. The Transit Fleet Safety Advisor tells you that he wishes he could find something wrong, but he can't as you have done everything you are supposed to do when driving. It still doesn't help. Later, you are told that you will come back to work, on a limited basis. You get through that and it has been two months since the accident and Stand Down. The Demons of

Despair are at their strongest now.

You are cleared, finally, to come back for full shifts. You have a mental checklist of everything you need to do when behind the wheel. The thought of encountering the pedestrian that was struck enters your mind. Another reminder that the haunting Demons are still around. Then the letter comes. Your accident has been reviewed by the Accident Committee and it has come back "Preventable". The Demons are saying "I told you so". You appeal it and because "no new evidence" was introduced, you lose the Appeal. You are assessed 35 Demerit Points and will face a 3 day suspension without pay. The only recourse left is to go through the Grievance procedure, which you do. Each hurdle you overcome still doesn't help. You wonder, "Why bother?"

Each of these hurdles, the lengthy Stand Down, the police investigation and report, the medical clearance, the road test, the limited return to work policy, the decision ruling on Preventability, the Appeal and the Grievance have made you relive the nightmare over and over again. Management has been very supportive throughout the whole process, from beginning to end. You understand that the protocol has to be followed and Management has been with you each step of the way. You are thankful for their ongoing assistance. You

(Despair on page 6)



(Despair from page 5)

appreciate their moral support as well.

Each of these hurdles has only aided the Demons, and they have not given you the help you need. You know you have changed and you will never be the same again. Every time you are behind the wheel, you will second-guess everything you do. You will start to overcompensate by looking for invisible pedestrians that may want to run in front of you.

When you see real pedestrians, you will use your intuition (as you always have), to figure out if they may pose a danger by doing something stupid and run directly into your path. You will blame yourself that you couldn't read their minds!

I know the above account to be true, and have also had a couple of very near-misses as well. I still second-guess myself and blame myself for not having the ability to read minds. I know that I can't relate my "Demons" to drivers that haven't experienced "near misses" or accidents involving pedestrians. Perhaps, we can organize a Support Group involving drivers who have had to deal with these types of situations. It may be the only way to truly "Defeat the Demons of Despair".

On a final note, I would recommend a few things:

That the length of Stand Downs should be reviewed to assess the possible danger that inactivity and isolation may contribute to

hindering an employee's ability to recover from psychological trauma experienced as a result of these accidents.

If all facts obtained from the accident investigation by the police result in an inconclusive finding, then drivers shouldn't be further made to delay the psychological healing process with an internal ruling of Preventable hanging over them for the rest of their lives.

Management should take the initiative in a Public Education Program to:

Educate the Public about the dangers of running near buses.

Make the Public aware of our "blind spots".

Make the Public aware that buses cannot stop on a dime.

Make the Public aware that they must make "eye contact" with operators when crossing in front of buses.

Make the Public aware that they must cross only in the designated crosswalk areas of the Terminals.

Make the Public aware that crossing Terminal property in any area other than designated crosswalks, is deemed as a violation and will be enforced.

Make the Public aware that they must take some responsibility for their own safety.

This Public Education Awareness Program can be implemented by means of a brochure, which can be available in the lobby of the Terminals. Violators crossing in any area other than designated crosswalks should be given a warning and a brochure by Supervisors or Security, who will obtain their names. Further violations will be subject to penalties, including fines and/or trespass bans.

Grand River Transit must also take steps in the following: Ensure that the designated crosswalk areas are always highly visible through properly scheduled maintenance, including repainting as required. Posting designated crosswalk signs around the Terminal properties would help. Start policing the traffic of private vehicles entering Terminal property.

It is said that time heals as memories fade. For those indelibly scarred operators, it will take a lifetime. For the rest of the thousands of Transit Operators that work in Canada, your day will start off like any other. You have a routine. You picked up your "Timmy" on the way to work. You've got your daily copy of the newspaper. You are into your first few trips. This day is just like a thousand before it.....!

Free Speech Update

By Phil Whitehead

An article in The Informer of March 2006 described the disciplinary action taken against operator Klaus Biemann, and his later attempt to have the action reversed, after he was alleged to have criticized publicly the policies and elected officials of the Region.

An appeal was filed shortly after

an investigation meeting on December 14, 2005, however no formal reply has been received from management after approximately four months. Most appeals are handled within shorter periods of time.

Informal inquiries in the meantime by Biemann with

management as to the reason for the delay brought the answer that the region needed time to consult with its lawyers.

Local president Rick Lonergan stated that he intends to see the matter brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

The Canadian Charter of Rights Within the Workplace

By Klaus Biemann, Political Education

The fundamental question is this: Does the employer have the right to prevent its' employees from publicly voicing opinion on workplace issues in the news media, while being identified as employees?

Is public criticism of an employer allowed under our Charter?

The Constitution Act, 1982, Part 1 (Canadian charter of rights and freedoms) under Fundamental Freedoms, states that **everyone** has the following fundamental freedoms:

freedom of conscience

and religion;
freedom of thought,
belief, **opinion and
expression, including
freedom of the press
and other media of
communication;**
freedom of peaceful
assembly;
freedom of association.

In democratic nations such as Canada, freedom of speech is an individual right.

Under the freedom of association, one may interpret this to mean that the Charter allows an individual to be identified with and be part of, any group or movement as long as such an affiliation does not harm the security or interests of the nation. Furthermore, freedom of association may also be interpreted as an employees' right to publicly express opinions

or criticisms on workplace issues within the news media while **identified** as an employee, or affiliated with a particular workplace, so long as those opinions are non-inflammatory, not libels, and accurate. If these conditions are met, such employee should not be subject to censure or punitive action by the employer.

If indeed this is the correct interpretation of the rights that an employee has under the Charter, then the next question is this: Does an employer have the right to issue proclamations, decrees, and policy documents that would govern an employee's right to public opinion regarding workplace issues within the news media? Do such proclamations, decrees, and policy documents supersede those rights granted

(See *Freedom of Speech* on page 8)



(Freedom of Speech from page 7) within the Charter?

I believe there is absolutely nothing within the Charter that would state so. I do believe that only through a ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada, or by some similar judiciary body, can the rights enshrined within the Charter be changed or modified to suit the requirements of an employer, or any other special interest group.

Policies developed and enforced by employers in regards to public criticism are often subjective. Guidelines that govern public criticism by employees are often based on an employer's individual interpretation of what constitutes criticism. In my opinion, this is one huge gray area through which an employer could embark on disciplinary action against an employee, possibly infringing on that employee's rights and freedoms as defined under the Charter.

Deep Adventures!

By Paul Eckmier

Peering over the dive boat, bobbing lazily on a turquoise sea, she gazes in wonder at the stunning beauty of the various corals below her. Eager to plunge into this watery world, warm and clear, she makes a final check of her gear, pulls her mask down, and stride-jumps... fins first into the sun-dappled water!

The top-side sounds of other divers' tanks clanking on the boat-deck, excited chatter of her companions, nearby boats, and shouts of glee by sun-worshippers frolicking on the white sands of Cozumel... are silenced instantly as soon as she descends into the depths!



Now... she hears alternating sounds of her own breathing... bubbles...breathing... bubbles... the distinctive sounds of the scuba diver! Droning overhead is the muffled sound of a passing boat. Descending deeper, and relaxing more after the initial excitement and anxious tension she feels before every dive, her breathing slows down, a trained response she has learned, to conserve air in her tank. Close enough to touch the stag-horn coral, soft green and brilliantly backlit by sunrays streaking down thru the sea, she sees and hears Rainbow Parrotfish gnawing on the coral! Then streaming thru branches of coral, a pair of beautiful aqua blue Queen Angels are highlighted by the sun against the backdrop of the sandy ocean floor. Further

(Continued on page 9)



(Continued from page 8) along are weird grunting noises emanating thru the water from a large Nassau Grouper. Suddenly, a sleek Spotted Eagle Ray glides by in a smooth-flowing, effortless manner! What efficiency in motion, artistry in nature that stirs her with wonder and awe!

Whether touching green moray eels, swimming with reef sharks, or being surrounded by a swirling ball of small silver fish in warm Caribbean waters; or diving down to shipwrecks in the darker, cold waters of our own Great Lakes, GRT bus operator,

Sandy Henderson enjoys the adventurous challenge of scuba diving.

Sandy, our lady driver with the most seniority (25 years service), started diving about 10 years ago. Always having a passion for nature and inspired by the Jacques Cousteau documentaries, Sandy decided to “take the plunge” and learn to scuba dive. Presently, she has accumulated about \$10,000.00 worth of equipment; from wet suits, dry suit, and regulators to tanks, masks, weight belts, boots and more! So with about 50 pounds of Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus (scuba) on her back, this spunky “redhead” dives for deep adventures!

After training with Ground Hog Divers in Kitchener and getting certified, Sandy began

with cold water dives in Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, off Tobermory, the St. Lawrence River, and in the Muskokas. She distinctly remembers her first open-water dive. It was in the cold, dark, choppy waters of Lake Erie. Wearing a thick 6-mil



wet suit that is more restrictive than the thinner wet suits, she felt panic and claustrophobic, wondering “What am I doing here?!.. Shouldn’t I be home knitting or something!” But she soon conquered her fears and went on to dive down to shipwrecks, like the Wolf Islander, a paddle wheeler sunk in Lake Ontario. Her deepest dive to date is down 120 feet in Lake Erie!

Her greatest enjoyment is the warm water dives in the Caribbean. These include Cozumel, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Bonaire, the Caymans, and Roatan. Sandy says her best dives have been off Cozumel, an island off Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula. There, she has seen the best color and abundant varieties of marine life in clear waters. Often her

husband, Bill, a retired school teacher, goes with her. He snorkels, more or less on the surface, but Sandy goes deep!! We always knew Sandy was a “deep thinker”!

Scuba diving has its dangers and risks that you need to be aware of, such as poisonous sponges, corals, and dangerous fish. You need to be monitoring your depth gauge, air supply, and length of time you have been down. And you need to come up slowly to avoid the “bends” where too much nitrogen in your blood could even kill you! But Sandy is careful and attentive to all her training and experience to make her dives safe and enjoyable.

Immersing herself in her watery pursuits, Sandy explains that she feels such wonder, joy, excitement and exhilaration when she dives. She is amazed at all the beauty around her, while feeling small and insignificant. The complexity and diversity of such exotic marine life gives further witness to the creativity of the Master Designer.

We wish Sandy continued joy, safety, and success in all her future dives. May her passion continue to fuel her desire to try to “fathom” all the mysteries of the Deep!



Sandy Henderson

More dive photos online:
caw4304.ca/informer/sandy

Did You Know?

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Each month we try to highlight at least one article from our contract under the heading of Did You Know? Your contract is your most valuable resource.

WSIB and Sick Days

*By Paul Lalonde,
WSIB and Benefits Rep*

In recent years the thought of going on Workman's Compensation was a true nightmare. The realization that a worker would have to be on Compensation for approximately 4 or 5 weeks before his or her claim was accepted and benefits started arriving was frightening.



Some of the thoughts going through workers minds were: how do I pay my rent or mortgage; how do I put food on the table; how do I pay the bills that continue to come in? The response was that people would

have to go on Unemployment Insurance, and possibly Welfare.

In our current Collective Agreement, our executive managed to get included into the Agreement that an employee who was awaiting benefits from WSIB was allowed to use their sick leave credits and that once the claim was accepted by WSIB the sick leave credits would be re-instated with the time used.

Consider your sick leave to be like a line of credit. When you require monies you simply withdraw it from your line of credit and then you start making payments to bring your line of credit back to the original amount.

With WSIB your doctor authorizes an Early Return to Work of 4 hours per day for 2 weeks. Remember that WSIB has not accepted your claim yet. So under the present Collective Agreement you work 4 hours per day that the Region pays to you in salary and the Region then deducts 4 hours per day of sick leave from your sick leave bank. This at least gives you 8 hours of pay per day for the next two weeks. At the end of 2 weeks you have used up 40 hours of sick leave.

Your claim has passed all the necessary hurdles and is accepted. WSIB starts paying you benefits. The first check is a lump sum for the two weeks that you are off. You turn over this check



to the Region and the Region reimburses your sick bank with 40 hours. **“Failure to turn the cheque over as required will result in an immediate cancellation of any withdrawals whatsoever from sick leave credits and the Region will not make up the difference for the length of the claim.”**

Our fears of going on Workman's Compensation will continue to exist. Hopefully this article will help stem some of those fears. It also indicates the importance of accumulating your sick credits.

In future copies of The Informer I will address other significant issues about WSIB claims. Should you have any questions about WSIB claims please contact me by e-mail at paullalonde@rogers.com.



When Customer Service Becomes A Disservice

By John Mac Kay

There is a time and a point when we become counter productive trying to please our customers. Let me give you some examples of how we as drivers do this.

On the route # 12, from Fairview Mall to Forest Glen Plaza and on to Highland Hills Mall, both ways, there is not enough time.

Question: Do you hold a bus that is ready to leave with a full compliment of passengers or wait for a bus that is a minute late?

Now take into consideration the following conditions, and facts the driver has to weigh. If the bus is a minute late it will take another minute or two to load and

leave. You are now three minutes down, which is 10% of the travel time you been given to get to your next time point. Next, is the bus you are driving considered a slow, medium, or a fast bus, in relation to pick up speed and acceleration? Do the doors open slowly or close slower than a rate that is acceptable? What about the time of day, day of the week, time of the year (traffic wise)? What about weather and road conditions, day or night time. I sure there are more, but those are the basics. Now how about the number of stops? If you stop more than five times between terminals, at 45 seconds a stop, that's another 2:25 minutes you have lost. Oh, and we are supposed to pick up the public. This route and a lot of others need to be adjusted to the public. **The customer should not be treated in a matter that breaks downs to calling for buses to hold.**

Does scheduling know about this? Of course, but I doubt it is a priority, probably not even on the

list, as there are other irons in the fire. Does the squeaky wheel get the grease? If so, let's squeak. I am not picking on scheduling, as I can go back ten years and give you the same examples on different routes. What has to change is the direction that is being given to scheduling from



upper management; they only do what they are told.

How do you get that to happen, when the public, the drivers and even scheduling acknowledge there is a problem? Where does the buck stop? I have my dollar ready.



Website shortcuts:

Here are some easy to remember URL's for our Union website:

Public Area:

- caw4304.ca/contract
- caw4304.ca/informer
- caw4304.ca/informer/sandy
- caw4304.ca/ski
- caw4304.ca/southops

Members Only Area:

- caw4304.ca/email
- caw4304.ca/safety
- caw4304.ca/seatsurvey
- caw4304.ca/signup

Last of its kind

By Lazlo Bori

It was with great interest that I read about Flyer bus 793 in the GRT news line. It seems that all other Transit properties have had the good sense to get rid of their junk, while we kept our garbage. Yes, for those of you, who had not had the misfortune to drive such trash, let me update you.

The bus was noisy, everything rattled in it, in the summer time it was a sweat-box because the manufacturer did not put large enough vents on the bus, plus the shape of the bus pushed air away from the vents. In the winter it was an ice-box, because it only had one heater. This was for the passengers only; after all, in 20 below zero weather, people always wait for a bus in their shorts and tee shirts. In order for

the driver to get any heat, the back heater had to be turned on full blast, roasting the passengers. Nailing a wooden bucket to the floor would have given drivers a better seat than what came with the bus.

At this time we also had G.M. buses, which were far superior, and the preferred bus to drive. In the summer the vents worked so well that it would blow the dandruff out of your hair. In the winter the driver had his own heater in the front and did not have to roast the passengers. Not only that, but drivers were able to control where the hot air would blow. To the feet, to the windshield or both. Our ½ million dollar buses do not have this option. How sad. The driver's seat was far more comfortable and had more adjustments.

In the last 30 years bus manufacturers have taken a giant

step backwards with bus design. Old G.M. buses could carry more people. The seats were 3 inch thick foam covered in vinyl, giving a softer ride, and they could be wiped clean with a wet rag. The seats in the new buses are cloth covered metal, and are impossible to clean. Just take a look in the back of any of the new buses. Another disadvantage of the new seats, is if any fluids (bodily or other) are spilled on them, people will sit in it because they can't see the mess. The engines were much quieter and had less vibration giving people a much smoother ride.

Visibility was better, they were easier to steer, brake pedal pressure was less, and they did not break down as often. All gauges and switches were in front of the driver, not behind, as is the norm now, the driver activated back door brake was an added

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Photo from Vern Hett's collection - 1973 GMC 5307 - Photo by: Royden Kavelman

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safety feature, that was taken away so a runaway bus can't be stopped, they were simple in design and did not require an army of computer wizards to figure out what is wrong and how to fix the problem. They never had to be shut down if a buzzer went off, to reset the computer. But then again I could be too negative, so let's look at the positive attributes of the new buses.

Bus manufactures realized that bus drivers were becoming too complacent, too calm, too relaxed and were getting fat butts. So in their infinite wisdom they decided to make our lives healthy.

They wanted to make sure that drivers got a good work out every day.

They built in more blind spots, so drivers have to move their heads backwards and forwards to see if anything is in the way.

They made the steering harder so drivers can have a good upper body work out.

They gave us poor pedal angles and made pushing on them hard, so drivers would get a good right leg work out.

They put the signal buttons in awkward positions so drivers would have to move their left legs.

They put the sign changer high up, so drivers would have to stretch. This was so good that the radio was mounted high, so short drivers would have to get out of their seats to use the radio and change signs.

The transfer cutters were put

locations to test driver's dexterity.

They made the accessibility to the back of the driver's seat so hard that drivers must practice their mountain climbing techniques.

Some buses were made to accelerate slowly, to test driver's nerves when crossing four lane roads.

They put the front doors behind the driver, so drivers have to turn sharply to the right to see passes and transfers.

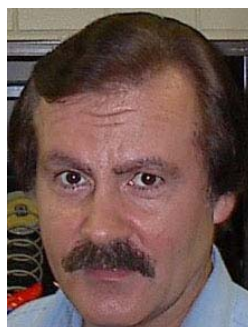
They placed all switches behind the driver on the left, so drivers have to take their eyes off the road and look to the left.

To keep night drivers awake no lights are to work on the switch panel so drivers have to try and find the right switch by co-ordinating looking for the switch while driving under a light standard.

They made bells so quiet, so drivers are always alert for that faint ding.

They put monkey bars on the front of buses, so drivers can climb on them while trying to clean the front windshield.

So as you can see, we do not have to join a gym or do any exercise because the new buses are designed to give drivers a total body work out, so when the shift is finished we feel tired, uncomfortable and upset at the stupidity of modern **technology**.



From Tanks to Thanks: The Evolution of Industrial Relations

By: David J. Driver

Frustration was at a precarious level. The depression was in its early stages; about one third of the labour force in



Canada and the United States was unemployed. For those that had jobs, the conditions in which they worked were frightful. Wages were low and hours were long. Even so, a wave of wage cutting was the norm.

Beneath this backdrop, we find 500 coal miners in Estevan, Saskatchewan who were members of the Mine Workers Union of Canada. The strike was due to a refusal of the mine owners to negotiate with the Union. The Union asked for an 8-hour day, higher wages for underground work, and Union recognition.

During the strike, 47 RCMP officers were present and they were armed with rifles, revolvers, and machine guns. As the strikers passed city hall in the fall

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of 1931, the RCMP and local police opened fire, killing three miners, wounding between 12 and 18, and 50 individuals were arrested.

Within Ontario in 1933, the Stratford Furniture Workers went on strike. The strike was led by the Mine Workers Union of Canada, but they still had to picket under heavy artillery because the authorities had sent in troops, tanks and machine guns. In the end, with support from the Trades and Labour Congress, wages increased by 10-25%, they lowered the work week to 45 hours, and shop committees were recognized.

Fast forward to the present and we see how times have changed. While studying the history of organized labour in North America, one question I was asked was the difference between how Unions are dealt with now in comparison to the 1930s. My answer was, “Well, we don’t tend to shoot them anymore.”

It is easy for us to forget the history of the labour movement that provided us with much of the legislation we have today. Indeed, it was not always this way. A major concern of modern strikers is to find enough skids to fuel their steel barrels for heat, compare that to staring down a howitzer, and life does not seem so bad.

So what can we all learn from the past? I think that the first step is to be thankful that neither

organized labour nor companies will ever have to resort to such extreme measures. It is doubtful that owners of any company would want to have the military take on their employees, and it is equally doubtful that any worker would want to be placed in such a life threatening situation.

Over the years, communication has evolved for both stakeholders in any Union-Management relationship. In a modern and global environment, Unions are recognizing that they must be realistic in their requests and management understands that the best financial route is to openly communicate with Unions and work together for the common good of the organization.

Under the right circumstances, a low-grievance rate can benefit both parties. If the relationship remains healthy, management saves funds budgeted for grievances and the Union members win if that saved money could be put towards higher wages in the future. Obviously it is a give and take scenario, but history has proven that working together is a much better approach than that of the “fixed pie” where you have a clear winner and a clear loser.

Industrial relations have changed drastically from the 1930s, yet if any lesson can be applied, it is that the most important ingredients to achieve good industrial harmony are mutual respect and trust. If management in any organization can communicate its respect for

employees, it can be expected that respect will be returned in kind. Naturally, trust comes out of mutual respect proven over time, and it is up to individuals on both sides to contribute.

History of any subject is always fascinating, but I must admit that I had absolutely no idea some of the battles – sometimes violent – that various Unions and organizations had fought against one another.

Thankfully, the world is ever evolving and so are the attitudes of managements and Unions, hopefully for the benefit of both.



David’s Angels

Supervising at the Charles Street Terminal during the evenings can be wild; even at the best of times. Fights, stabbings, drugs, and various members of the oldest profession in the world doing business, ensures that there is never a dull moment. I never have to worry though, because I’ve got my angels – pictured – these two fabulous ladies are always watching my back, and I thank them for it. Step aside Charlie, David’s Angels are far superior!

Collision Review *Reported by Lazlo Bori*

	January	February
<u>North</u>		
Incident	4	0
Preventable Incident	1	3
Non- preventable	12	15
Preventable	3	3
<u>South</u>		
Incident	0	1
Preventable incident	2	1
Non-preventable	2	4
Preventable	1	0
<u>Mobility Plus</u>		
Incident	0	0
Preventable Incident	1	1
Non-preventable	0	3
Preventable	1	0
<u>Fleet</u>		
Incident	1	0
Preventable Incident	1	0

Below you see our **presentation of a framed "Thank You" letter** from Children's Wish and a framed group picture of our ski-a-thoners. This was to thank Stock Transportation for their donation of free bus transportation for our Feb. 7th ski-a-thon.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Lynn Bone, Manager of Customer and Routes for Stock Transportation; GRT drivers of the Ski-a-thon Organizing Committee: Marlene McCracken, Paul Eckmier, & Klaus Biemann.

The Drive to Walk

By Paul Wagler

I was sitting in Tim Hortons, during my split in my GRT uniform enjoying a light lunch with my cousin when we were interrupted by a friend of his who rides the bus. After introducing me to his friend, my cousin Carey said with a gesture towards me, "I taught him how to drive." The friend's mouth gapped open. If you were there yours may have too, for there sat my cousin, who is visually impaired, with his guide dog.

You may recognize **Carey Ruby** and his black lab guide dog Shasta as they are regular riders on GRT buses in the north and occasionally in the south as well. Since moving to Kitchener in 1992 Carey has used the bus as his main transportation in getting around the city. For one who is visually impaired he amazes me with his sense of direction and where a bus is at any given point in the route when he riding it.

Carey and I are first cousins, born four weeks apart and grew up together on neighboring farms in South Easthope Township in Perth County. Unlike many who are visually impaired Carey has not been blind since birth. As a three year-old Carey was diagnosed as hydrocephalic and underwent surgery to insert a shunt to drain liquid from his

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brain. Other surgeries followed. However at the age of twenty-one the shunt stopped working and the problem was not detected and corrected until the damage was irreparable. Because of the pressure that had built up the optic nerve had been damaged. So at age 21 Carey lost most of his eyesight and his life was dramatically changed. Carey went on to college and has been aided by the CNIB (Canadian National Institute for the Blind). **Carey** has adjusted very well to his loss of vision and has grown a lot as a person as a result. I am amazed at how he gets around the city on his own and how he is freely talks to anyone he meets. At first he used a white cane to get navigate his way around. In 1997 he got his first guide dog, Winston who didn't work out very well. A year later he received Argus as his "eyes" and they had a very successful partnership for 6 years. In 2004 Argus was retired and Carey got his current dog, Shasta.

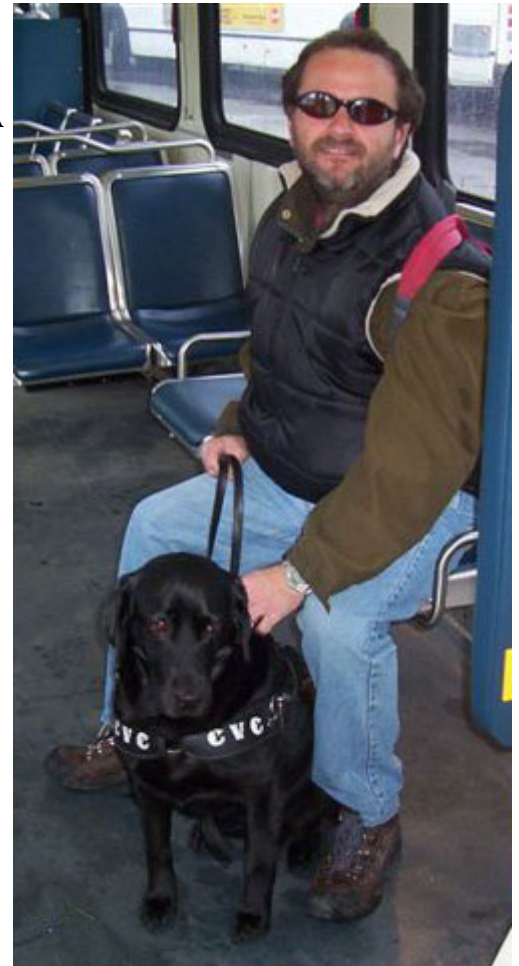
One of the passions that has grown in Carey the since he has lost his eyesight has been walking. Probably many of you have not only seen him on our buses but walking on the sidewalks all over the city. He has found walking to not only have physical benefits but also many social and educational aspects as well. The social part comes from walking with others, as many times he needs others to be his eyes as he explores parts of the city that are not as familiar to him. The educational part comes

from all the questions Carey asks while he is walking about the surroundings. One of Carey's favorite phrases that he uses when he gets talking about walking is "You help me, I'll help you. Let's work together."

This passion for walking and using it as a way to connect with others has grown in Carey the more that he has walked. A couple of years ago the goal to walk across Canada emerged for Carey. Since that time Carey has done some longer walks to test out what it is like to walk for several hours a day. The longest walk Carey has done to date was last May when he walked from London to Kitchener in 4 days. This was done with the help of several others who volunteered to walk different days with him. There is more information about the walks that Carey has done on his web-site <http://careyoncanada.intrnear.com>

So while Carey can no longer drive a vehicle, like he alluded to in our Tim Horton's conversation, he still has a lot of drive. Currently he is seeking people who enjoy walking and would be able to walk with him either regularly or occasionally. One of his desires is to walk from Fairview Mall to Conestoga Mall weekly. He also recently has done part of the rail trail between Cambridge and Paris and walked the town of Listowel. He is keen to walk wherever anyone is willing to walk with him. I have done several walks with Carey

and learned a lot from him during those times. **If any of you are interested in walking with Carey** or know someone who would, you can contact him by e-mail at carey@intrnear.com or phone at 584-2028.



Carey Ruby with his guide dog



informer@caw4304.ca