



# MOTOR BUS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2007

## Message From the President

### MBS Members:

It looks more and more like we are turning the corner on *Motor Coach Age*. The Passaic issue has been mailed and others are soon to follow. As have you, I have been impatient for the next issues. The officers and I have worked diligently to correct publication problems and to find ways to improve the magazine.

As we noted in the Spring 2007 *MBS Newsletter*, we are considering starting a news publication which could include more photos, current events, and convention information. Any ideas you have for this new publication as well as *MCA* are welcome.

What about future issues? Our supply of historic material is finite and will need to be replenished in the future. We will need contributions from you, the members. In connection with this, a guide to writing articles is in the works, thanks to the MBS Secretary. Some of the features are included in an article herein; the full document should be available soon. With the guide, your research and composition will be easier. MBS officers stand ready to assist you any way we can.

Being President has been a challenge in many ways, but I am enjoying my term, and continue to be grateful for the honor you have bestowed upon me. Lots of work remains to be done, but we will all work hard to make the Motor Bus Society a well-functioning organization. One step we have taken is to give the Regional Vice Presidents meaningful activities to assist the Society and you, its members.

Thank you for your support. It has meant so much to me.

Bill Vallow

## Conventions

**Columbus-Dayton:** The Fall 2007 meeting will cover central Ohio area during the Columbus Day holiday weekend of October 6-8 (Saturday-Monday). More details and registration forms have been posted on the web MBS site are included with this *Newsletter*.

**Future Conventions:** The dates and location of conventions for the remainder of the 2006-2010 schedule are listed below. Also included are the likely dates of an optional third day. At a recent convention, members voted to have the optional third day for Fall meetings be on the Columbus Day Monday holiday. However, when a Fall Convention occurs in Canada, the third day (if there is

one) will be on the preceding Friday, since the second Monday in October is the date of the Canadian Thanksgiving holiday.

Year	Season	Location	Weekend	Probable Third Day
2008	Spring	Denver, CO	April 26-27	Friday, April 25
	Fall	Southwest Ontario	October 11-12	Friday, October 10
2009	Spring	Kansas City, MO	April 25-26	Friday, April 24
	Fall	Eastern Virginia	October 10-11	Monday, October 12
2010	Spring	Vancouver, BC	April 24-25	Friday, April 23
	Fall	East-Central PA	October 9-10	Monday, October 11

## Publications

By this time, members should have received their copies of the Oct-Dec 2005 issue of *Motor Coach Age*. The issue was mailed on or about July 20<sup>th</sup> from Trenton, NJ and was sent by bulk mail. Bulk mailings have low priority for delivery by the Postal Service, and some West Coast members have reported delays of as much as six weeks. Unless we go to the expense of a first class mailing, which would necessitate a dues increase, nothing can be done about this problem.

We are happy to report that the first of the 2006 issues has been sent to the printer for set up and preparation of a draft for the Editor to inspect for errors. Considering our recent experience in this matter, it appears that this issue will not actually be printed and ready for mailing until the first of September, at the earliest. We are hopeful that this issue will be received by most members before the Fall Convention. We remain hopeful that we will be able to publish at least two more issues before the end of the year.

## Job Openings

Besides the openings for the three jobs that were listed in the *Spring 2007 Newsletter* (Board of Trustees member, Membership Secretary and Editor and Reporters for the proposed news publication) we are also in need of people who live near the Trenton NJ area archives to assist with filing and sorting.

Members who are interested in serving in any of these positions should contact the Society at either the mailing or the website address. As is true with all Society positions, work will be done on a volunteer basis.

## Some Basics of Article Preparation

As noted in the Presidents message, we will soon be in need of more historic articles to publish in *Motor Coach Age*. Over the years, we have found that we have basically three types of members. The first

and largest group simply wants the publication to read and have as a reference; some of these members occasionally attend conventions, but most do not. The second group enjoys reading *MCA*, occasionally attends conventions and would like to contribute an article to *MCA* from material that they already have on hand. The third and much smaller group occasionally attends the conventions, enjoys the magazine and is motivated to do a story, and is willing and patient enough to do the detailed research that is needed.

**Group 1:** If you are in the first group, we thank you for your patronage—we could not afford to publish the magazines without your dues payments. You need read this article no further.

**Group 2:** If you are in the second group, you are encouraged to submit the material that you have. But be aware that unless the data is a comprehensive collection that was gathered over a considerable length of time, or is on a small operator about which there is not much to be said, what you have probably will not be enough for an *MCA* article by itself. You may wonder then, why you should submit your material if no use of it will be made? The answer is that many members have bits and pieces like the one you may have, and if all of them were sent to MBS, the accumulation might add-up to a decent story. Your material may also be of use in the future when some dedicated researcher wants to do an article on your operator. An example of how this could work follows: this writer spent a couple of weeks in Phoenix in 1970 doing a consulting job for the City. In the process of doing this job, he collected all of the pertinent information on the transit operation then, and much of it was used in a final report. Recently, there was some interest in doing a Phoenix transit history, and the 1970 data was contributed to that effort. Unfortunately, the 1970 data was not sufficient enough to produce a comprehensive story because there were still too many unknowns. The Phoenix story is still under development awaiting further input. If you are in this group, please consider contributing what you have (or at least copies of it) now so that it can be filed in the archives for future use. Delaying action could easily result in the material being lost or forgotten about. Members in this group need read this article no further.

**Group 3:** If you are in the third group, you may be in one of two sub groups: (1) interested in assisting in the research on a certain project for the lead researcher-writer, or (2) willing, able and dedicated to completing the entire project and acting as lead for the project and capable of directing and motivating others if needed. Some examples of how story development is presented below.

A generalized history of the bus industry includes the following benchmarks:

**City Transit Operators:**

- Began as a horse car, cable car or streetcar/trolley operation between 1880 and 1920
  - Bus service began as expansion of rail service (usually as feeders or cross town routes) because further rail construction was too expensive
  - Original infrastructure and equipment wore out and operator could not afford to replace them and converted from rail to bus service
- Smaller towns or cities were not large enough for public

transportation systems before the mid-twenties. These locations began as bus operations

- Universal paving of city streets, although it provided for efficient bus operations, also made automobile use more attractive.
- As automobile ownership became common because of improved reliability and higher average income. Use of public transportation declined.
- Bus system ridership hit bottom in the 1950's or 60's, and weaker systems went out of business; others obtained public subsidies and eventually public ownership.
- In the 1970's, there was a resurgence of public transportation because of fuel shortages and increased population, including minorities who could not or afford to drive.
- In the 1980's, federal subsidies declined, as subsidy became a local matter. Lack of a universal tax revenue commitment, service expands and declines on an irregular basis.

**Inter-City Bus Operations**

- Began as replacements for railroad service on branch lines.
- Began as roads between population centers were paved
- Service expansion continued as the inter-city highway system was improved.
- Companies were consolidated through merger and acquisition
- Completion of the U.S. Highway system and production of more reliable models made automobile usage more practical. Building of the Interstate Highway System was the beginning of the end of intercity bus profitability.
- Deregulation, divestiture of routes.

Not every bus operators history goes through all of these steps, while other companies stories will be even more complex. Documenting these differences is the reason for doing these histories

Probably the most important factor in doing research is close proximity to the subject. It is almost always necessary to visit data sources in the subject location. In some cases, however, the project lead may be fortunate enough to find one or more assistants in the subject location, and if they are dedicated, this could work out.

This writer's experience in completing the Fresno history is a good example of a complex story in a small-medium size city that took 40 years from the time of the first visit to publication. The analysis of the completion of this project, although possibly instructive for potential new researchers, is too lengthy to discuss here, but it did include dozens of visits to the city to accumulate photos, maps, schedules and roster information. Visits to the local newspaper's archive proved quite fruitful, as did visits to the state regulatory agency. Contributions from the MBS archives, though not large, were significant. Photos from the author's collection were supplemented by those from the MBS archives as well as several other contributors. In the paper, *Guidelines for MCA Article Preparation*, now in development, we will include a number of case studies of how some of our most complex stories were done. Prospective researchers may request a copy of this document from the MBS Secretary

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