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MTA BUS OPERATOR TO BE HONORED

**PASSENGER'S FAITH RESTORED WHEN BUS OPERATOR RETURNS
LOST PURSE FULL OF CASH**

It was a routine inspection like any other...

At the end of his route MTA bus operator Men K. Tham surveyed the interior of his vehicle, checking the seats and floors for any articles left behind by the people who rode the streets of Los Angeles with him that day.

During past inspections he'd found a pair of sun glasses, old newspapers, a school book, even a baby's shoe, but what he found on June 15, 1997 was a surprise.

Abandoned on a lone seat was a black backpack. Tham inspected the contents for identification. There was a green card, bus tokens, loose change and a small waist pouch. As he unzipped the pouch, a fist of neatly folded 50 and 100 dollar bills stared back at him. A later inspection by Tham's supervisor and Transit Police revealed a total sum of \$1,629.30.

"It was Father's Day," said Mrs. Esperanza Tomaso, the owner of the purse. "My husband had died in January. I was taking this money he had left me to the bank. I was very distracted and got off the bus without my purse."

When Tomaso discovered her loss, she didn't report it.

"I didn't believe anyone would be honest enough to return so much money," she said. "Operator Tham's honesty has renewed my faith in mankind."

MORE...

Men K. Tham, Page 2

MTA Operations senior staff will honor Tham Monday, September 29. He will receive a framed commendation and enjoy some cake with colleagues and peers. Mrs. Tomaso also will be present to meet and personally thank Tham for his integrity. The celebration will be held at from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. at MTA Division 18, 450 W. Griffith St. and Figueroa in Gardena.

Men K. Tham, 44, is originally from Bombay. He has been driving for the MTA since 1992. He lives in Artesia with his family.

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MTA-202