



NEWS

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"The Magnificent 7"

**THEY DON'T RIDE HORSES BUT YUL BRYNNER WOULD BE PROUD
OF THE FAMILY WHO HITCHED UP TO THE MTA**

Home, home on the range wound up being the MTA for seven members of the same family.

Four of the family members work as bus operators, two as bus instructors and one as a service attendant.

The family affair began 15 years ago when Manuel Guzman, 40, left his sporting goods store job for a career as a bus operator. Several years later, cousin Martin Jurado followed. He became number two.

Jurado, a former part-time Los Angeles Unified School District instructor, instead of bringing flowers or baby booties to his bed-ridden and very pregnant wife Francisca Montes-Jurado during a stay in the hospital, decided instead to pass along the torch — an MTA application.

"I was experiencing labor pains but what he had in mind was labor at the MTA as a bus operator," recalls the 36-year-old Montes-Jurado. "To tell you the truth, under the circumstances I wasn't that serious about driving a bus. He said 'try it,' and I said, 'yeah, right.' I wasn't in the mood to argue. But truly, I never imagined driving a bus." Francisca Montes-Jurado would become family member number three to join the bus operator dynasty.

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Today, Montes-Jurado and her husband are bus instructors, she at Operations Central Instruction in El Monte and Martin Jurado at Bus Operations Central Instruction at MTA headquarters. Cousin Guzman and brother in-law Manuel Duarte (#4), uncle Andres Padilla (#5) and cousin Jose Ramos (#6), all drive buses. Brother-in-law Pedro Torres (#7), the youngest at 28 years of age, joined the MTA three months ago. Altogether, the family boasts nearly 60 years worth of MTA work experience.

Even a bus operators strike in 1994 didn't result in any hard feelings between the operator side of the family and the management side.

"We've always been a close knit family, but now we have even more of a common bond," says Montes-Jurado, who also gave up a part-time teacher's post.

Because their schedules vary, the bus family remains in touch via telephone, except for the holidays when reunions are a sure bet.

"We don't see each other as much as we would like, but when we do it's extra special since you're able to talk to someone who can relate to what you're going through at work," says Martin Jurado, 36. "Often people in the same family have different jobs and cannot relate...we can vent our frustrations to an attentive audience."

At such gatherings, the subject always turns to buses, a scenario that non-MTA family members have become all too accustomed to.

"Usually they'll say, 'there they go again,' but that doesn't discourage us. We talk about the job, naturally," says Montes-Jurado. "It's hard to get away from that. But usually we discuss the funny things that happen at work, the odd happenings, but we never debate or ... wear our uniforms."

Off-the-cuff remarks from co-workers such as "there's so many of you at the MTA, are there any more?" aside, Montes-Jurado says there are real benefits to having so many family members working for the same organization.

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“Since our family has four bus operators, I hear about the problems they’re encountering on a daily basis. This enables me to relate better to my students and dispels the stereotype that instructors are out of touch.”

Believe it or not, “The Magnificent 7” could soon become the “Magnificent 8.” Another member of the family has applied for a job with the MTA.

“This is a perfect example of the adage: ‘The family that plays together stays together,’ only in this case they work together,” says Ellen Levine, Executive Officer for Transit Operations. “Their happiness as a family unit also has served to bring out the best in others.”

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