

Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky switches hats to honor MTA veteran Louis Maspero with a Special 40-year Pin and Executive Tribute to the 'Longevity King' of non-union employees.

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BILL HEARD



Risk Management's 'Legal Eagle' Marks 40th Year 'Working for the Greater Glory of the MTA'



Louis Maspero

By GAYLE ANDERSON, Associate Editor

(August 9, 2000) You can learn the history of his beloved hometown of New Orleans just by looking at the pictorial ties Louis Maspero wears to work every day. From his perfectly cocked straw hat to his spit-shined spats, Louis Maspero, a public liability and property damage Claims Analyst in Risk Management, is MTA's ace-up-the-sleeve in small claims court, a "gentleman caller" whose visits to court on behalf of MTA saves both face and public money.

Now celebrating his 40th year with the MTA, Maspero currently holds the longevity title for non-union employees in the

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transportation agency.

A one-man support system

In his current position as Claims Analyst, Maspero represents the MTA in small claims court and is a one-man support system who provides legal research and expert testimony for some 70 law firms retained as counsel, and 105 different law enforcement agencies, including District Attorneys, Public Defenders, and the State Attorney's Office.

Maspero takes his research and expertise to court at least five times a month, sometimes more, to do battle on legal grounds. Even his phone message is a call to arms: "I'm working for the greater glory of the MTA," it chimes.

A good measure of an increasingly litigious culture, Maspero has watched claims climb from three a month to currently close to 40 a day with price tags averaging \$7,500 a pop compared to payments of \$15, \$25 and \$50 when the job was new.

"I fight to win," he says, "We're obligated to protect public money, and that's exactly the target of false claims."

40 Years of Experience

Maspero backs up his expertise with 40 years of practical transportation experience. Today, his years in the ranks stack up as the kind of expertise only experience can muster. "He's familiar with the entire system, the process and the history," said Lucille van der Heyden, claims manager.

"He's our greatest resource," said Ralph Korn, interim managing director of Risk Management, "He knows the answers. That's why we call him 1-800-Louie"

Career Tracks

Rising through the ranks from an entry-level street car operator in 1960, Maspero graduated to Division 5 bus operator in 1962, then worked as a extra division clerk, today's equivalent of a Transit Operations Supervisor, before moving to a 20-year stint in Scheduling. He joined the brand new department of Risk Management in 1986.

Is retirement in the picture? "I think about it every now and then," said Maspero, "but not lately. I just bought a new car."

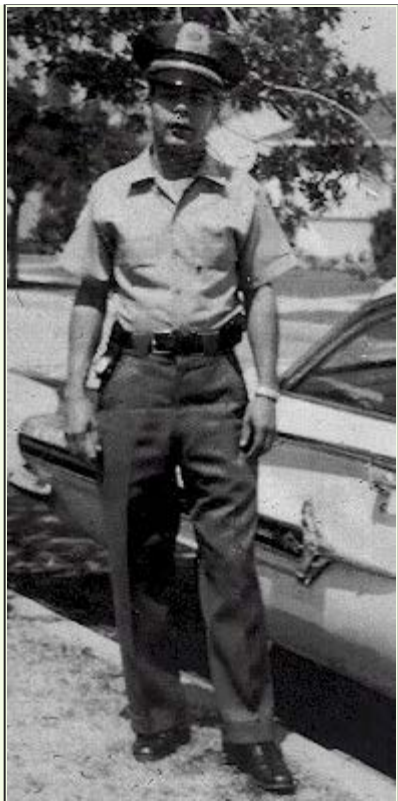
Maspero lives in Monterey Park with his wife, Margarita, and three prized Pekingnese dogs, tending to a huge garden that yields bumper crops of garlic and vegetables, and some 39 rose bushes. A favorite visitor is his five-year-old grandson, Timothy, who must earn the right to play with new toys by doing his homework and eating his vegetables.

New Orleans Reigns Supreme

Although Maspero attended college in New York, served in the Marine Corps in San Diego, Twentynine Palms and Barstow and eventually landed in Los Angeles, he has never really left New Orleans. Mardi Gras would surely be canceled if he didn't make his annual appearance to toss beads in the famous parade from an extravagant float.

Images of the city adorn not only his ties, but his office walls. Visits to his mother Edna Maspero, now 84, mean yet another pilgrimage to one of his favorite spots on earth, where, incidentally, the MTA's longevity title holder stocks up on ties, chicory and coffee, special seasonings for his culinary skills, and, of course, a new pair of spats now and then.

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Louis Maspero sports new bus operator's uniform in 1963 photo



Claims Analyst celebrates 40 years of service on August 15.

Those were the Days...

The Democratic Convention was in town when Louis Maspero came to work for the MTA in 1960. The Dodgers played in the Coliseum; Wrigley Field in Avalon was the home turf for the Angels.

The MTA was a new agency born from the merger of Los Angeles Transit Lines and Metropolitan Coach Lines. If you wanted to be an MTA Bus Operator, you had better be at least 25 years old and married. The 23-year-old Louis Maspero wasn't yet married, but he could qualify for a job as a street car operator, an apparently more carefree occupation.

He was happy to get a job as a street car operator out of Division 20, which meant turning down a callback from his second choice, the Sheriff's Department. When he became a bus operator in 1962, he worked alongside a man he recalls as Mr. Gilmore, the first African-American to be hired in Los Angeles as an operator.

The earnest young fellow, fresh out of the Marine Corps in 1960, stretched his hourly wage of \$2.34, which racked up around \$350 a month, to cover expenses at a time when gas was 19 cents a gallon, bus fare was 17 cents and an entire six-pack of beer, Mr. Maspero recalls, was only 99 cents.

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