

Venice Division 6 Celebrates 100 Years of Service

- **Employees are invited to spend a day at the beach with Division 6 on Saturday, Aug. 25, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.**
- [BE THERE](#): Things to do on Saturday

By GAYLE ANDERSON

(Aug. 20, 2001) MTA Division 6, the Venice Division, is celebrating its centennial on Saturday, Aug. 25, with an open house for employees: a day at the beach with community, transportation and historic displays, family fun, and festivities that include a bus-size barbecue and live music.

For a legion of MTA bus operators and mechanics, being stationed at the Division 6 bus yard in Venice is something akin to pulling Hawaii duty right out of boot camp.



"It's supposed to hit 107 degrees in the Valley today," said Division 6 Bus Operator Richard Maldonado as he prepared to begin his run out of the Venice bus yard. "It'll be 70 degrees here all day," he said not even a bit smugly.

The cool ocean breeze and familiar marine layer keeps Venice cool but there's plenty more reasons to love working here. No weekend runs, no holiday duty, and no late shifts for operators during the week, when the last bus is due back in the yard at 10:30 p.m.

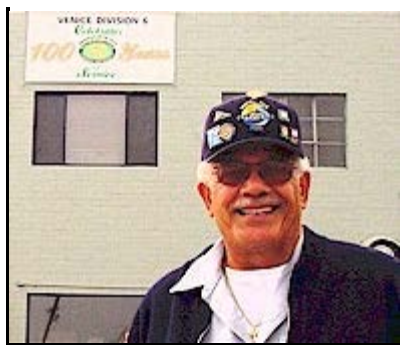
Flanked by the Pacific Ocean, the diminutive Venice Division 6 is a beachtown landmark located right on Main Street at 100 Sunset Avenue. The army green building and mechanic's pit peeks out over a bus yard that rubs elbows with Gold's Gym, the Rose Café, the Pioneer Bakery and the famous binocular entrance to the celebrated design firm of Chiat Day at the end of the trendy stretch of Main Street.

The transportation site occupied by MTA Division 6 was established in 1901 by Los Angeles Pacific, a predecessor to Pacific Electric Railway, said historian and author Jim Walker, who volunteers as an archivist in the MTA's library.

A powerhouse and car yard built that year was named Ocean Park, from where the "Venice Short Line" began rail service to downtown Los Angeles in 1902. The "Short Line" was converted to bus operation by Pacific Electric on Sept. 17, 1950. The familiar route to downtown is still traversed today by Line 33.

The original buildings were demolished in 1954 to make way for the bus yard and garage, said Walker. After a short stint as a Metropolitan Coach Line division, the Ocean Park property was designated MTA Division 6 – the Venice Division – on March 3, 1958.

Veteran Bus Operator Melvin Braxton has worked out of Division 6 during his entire 34-year career with the transportation agency. He stays his course on Line 33 but the twinkle in his eyes recall his days alongside the Pacific blue aboard Line 434 to Malibu.



Division 6 Bus Operator Melvin Braxton is a 34-year veteran of Division 6.

Mechanic Joe Medrano proudly displays the Division 6 logo he designed a few years back. A band of text rings an image that says it all: a bright Metro Bus rides into the California sunset framed by a curl of Pacific Ocean surf. Like Braxton, Medrano has spent all of his 23 years with the transportation agency at Division 6 and wouldn't have it any other way.

Today, a fleet of 68 buses serving 5 busy line operates out of Division 6. The division is home to some 100 bus operators and a small administrative staff under the supervision of Transportation Manager Jim Lukens. Maintenance Manager Ron Whitney oversees a maintenance staff of 35.

Within the past year, the Venice Division has seen something of a renewal with the resurfacing of the bus yard and installation of new garage doors, a new bus washer and new yard lighting. More improvements down the line include construction a sound wall that abuts a residential area.

BE THERE

- **Event:** Centennial Celebration: A Day at the Beach with Venice Division 6
- **Date:** Saturday, August 25
- **Time:** 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

PROGRAM:

- **10: 30 a.m.:** Remarks and cake-cutting ceremony with MTA officials and guests of honor, including: MTA board member Pam O'Connor, Orange County Transportation Agency CEO Art Leahy, former MTA Transit Chief Tom Conner and wife Carol.
- **All day:** Live music, barbecue, children's funfest of games and activities
Displays: Los Angeles Fire Department's Bandwagon Fire Truck and vintage buses from RRC.
- **Music:** Rick Hittinger and the Long Beach City College Sax Quartet, Johnny Harwick's Gospel Music, and tunes from DJ Felipe Espinoza.
- **Prizes:** Remote control car and a scooter from Harley Davidson; 3 scooters, a VCR, CD cassette recorder, a 26" girl's bike and two CD headsets from Division 6; portable CD player from Division 5; a 26" boys bike from Division 7, and gift certificates from Marie Callendar, Starbucks, Ralph's Market, Jamba Juice, Dagwoods, Barnes & Noble, Cheesecake Factory, Coca Cola, Pioneer Bakery, Omelette Parlor and Koo Koo Roo.

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