

CEO Roger Snoble, left, and Deputy CEO John Catoe congratulate Equipment Maintenance Specialist John Tena, center, at "Night of Stars" awards ceremony aboard the Queen Mary. Tena is one of 256 Transit Operations staff honored for excellence in performance.



PHOTOS: CHRIS LOVDAHL

Night of Excellence for MTA's Top Performing 'Stars'

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(March 4, 2003) A moonlight cruise, a dinner cruise – it was “A Night of Stars” aboard the Queen Mary in Long Beach Harbor, last Saturday, for 256 MTA employees who were honored for their excellent performance over the past five years.

Accompanied by their spouses and guests, Metro Bus and Metro Rail operators, mechanics, equipment maintenance specialists and service attendants from all five service sectors were treated to dinner, an awards presentation and dancing.

Each honoree walked away with a bronze medallion and a 2002 Metro Gold Star Award lapel pin presented by CEO Roger Snoble and Deputy CEO John Catoe.

“You are the reason we have steady customers who feel good about coming on board our trains and buses every day,” Snoble declared in welcoming remarks. “You are the friendly faces, the

Go to: [Complete list of Five-year Honorees](#)

We are – on this great Night of Stars -
Gathered here –
'cause it's you we should cheer
It's your night – and we'll do it up right
To celebrate you! -- Ronnie Jayne, MC

MC Ronnie Jayne opens up the night with a show-stopper tribute sung to the tune of "That's Entertainment!"

steady hands. You keep the buses and trains clean; you make sure they're in top working order."

To qualify for the 2002 Metro Gold Star Award, the operators and maintenance employees could have no lost work time injuries, no disciplinary actions and no more than 30 days absent. In addition, operators could have zero preventable traffic collisions and no more than three customer complaints over the award period.

Lead by example

"Many of our employees have worked hard throughout the year to maintain a very good performance record of attendance, free of accidents and missouts," said South Bay General Manger Dana Coffey. "They are leaders and lead by example."

Among the award winners was the legendary Arthur Winston, who joined MTA in 1934 and will celebrate his 97th birthday, March 22.

"As a service attendant leader, Arthur runs circles around the younger folk," Snoble said. "He never misses a day of work – never takes a sick day. Like that rabbit, he just keeps going...and going...and going!"

"I don't feel like staying home and doing nothing," Winston told *metro.net* in an interview. "If you're used to getting up every morning for almost 70 years to go to work, like I am, you can't think about lying in bed."



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CEO Roger Snoble: "You are the reason we have steady customers who feel good about coming on board our trains and buses every day."



Roll Credits: Members of the "A Night of Stars" committee were Danielle Boutier, Larry Cosner, Fran Curbello, Carolyn Drummond, Pam Engelke, Michael Lambeth, Maria Lasco, Rita Malone, John McDonnell, Chuck Milam, Gary Shiroishi, Gary Spivack, Robert H. Torres, Rosyln Townsend and Intern Danielle Grossman.

Other honorees included Clarence Pearson, a South Bay Division 18 operator, who said he puts "a lot of emphasis on safety, control and courtesy toward the passengers. If it weren't for them we wouldn't be here."

First time qualifier Justo Rogel, an Arthur Winston Division 5 mechanic, has been with MTA for six years. "I do things the best I can. I'm not the best, but," he emphasizes, "I'm good."

Drives like a rookie

Operator Rudolfo Cortez of West Hollywood Division 7 has qualified four times for similar awards. How? "I still drive the way they taught me to drive. I try to do my best. I always drive like a rookie."

Equipment Maintenance Specialist John Tena has worked both sides of maintenance. A frequent award winner, he recently switched to Metro Rail after 15 years as a bus mechanic. He and his team members represented MTA at the APTA International Bus Roadeo in 1999.

In the 29 years of operating a bus on some tough lines, Bacilio Cortez of San Gabriel Division 9 has never had an accident. "You've got to be aware of bad drivers on the street at all times. I've been pretty lucky and I keep praying all the time."

Mechanic Leader Ike Alison takes care of the West Valley Division 8 buses as if they were his own. "We try to make the buses look good because our patrons deserve good, clean and safe buses."

Alison credits the support of his division maintenance manager and his crew's teamwork and pride. He stresses attention to detail. "When a bus comes in, we take care of everything down to the curb feeler. You can't park your bus until I come and check it."

Top three percent

Metro Rail General Manager Gerald Francis was impressed to learn that the honorees represent less than four percent of MTA's 6,452 operators and mechanics.

"We have a great group of individuals here," said Francis. "This is a validation of their commitment to themselves, to their departments and to MTA."

"It's important to focus on performance and part of that ends in a night like this," said San Fernando Valley General Manager David Armijo. "If we're going to become the nation's best transit system, we need a lot more people working at this level. It's great we have a good foundation to build on."

Closing the evening's presentation, Deputy CEO John Catoe thanked the honorees on behalf of those who rely on Metro service.

"We carry over 400 million people a year to jobs, to schools, to health care and to recreation," he said. "The only reason we can do that is because of the efforts and hard work of the people in this room."

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