



Tales from the Gold Rush

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Almost every employee who volunteered during the Metro Gold Line's grand opening has a heartwarming, inspirational or funny story to tell. With "Tales from the Gold Rush," *metro.net* hopes to mine as many of these nuggets as possible. Here's the first of what we hope will be a pokeful of stories recalling our Gold Rush experience. [Click here](#) for information about how to submit your own entry for "Tales from the Gold Rush."

Here's my story:

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Dan Miller, Sr. Administrative Analyst, Quality Assurance:

Metro Gold Line volunteer Sam Sampat of Systems Engineering, recently received a note of appreciation from a patron who attended the grand opening. The e-mail thanked Sampat who had given up his own lunch to help the diabetic patron, who was in distress. "Standing out in my memorable experiences will be the help you gave me while I was in a declining blood sugar situation at the Highland Park station on Saturday," the patron wrote. "For that, I wish to repeat my thanks to you." Sampat says, "I was happy to see him feel better after he ate. I have family member with diabetic conditions and know the challenges faced. I hope this will bring a positive and humane face to the MTA organization." (8/22/03)

Patricia Clark, Word Processor Operator, ITS:

I worked at Union Station Saturday and Sunday as the "Karaoke

Mistress of Ceremonies" with the Events Group. It was exciting to get people up on stage to sing along with me, by themselves or as a group. They even sighed when I had to close down for the day. Guess what? Some of the karaoke singers came back on Sunday. There were some great Oldies-But-Goodies singers and people were asking them for more. The musical group Tropical Punch and a talent scout were interested in a lady who sang "I Believe I Can Fly." (She did sing like a "star.") Almost everyone danced in the middle of Union Station – the senior citizens were getting down. I heard fantastic compliments from people about the MTA for a change.

Lucille Coleman, Manager, EEO Programs:

One of my highlights during the Metro Gold Line opening was to personally lead a blind customer to another employee for boarding to Los Angeles from the Pasadena Memorial Park station. He was obviously treated well and taken care of by the MTA employee volunteers because he came back on Sunday with more of his friends. I said, "Hello, Mr. Calhoun, how is everything?" He replied, "Great! Having a good time!" Just a note to say that we do care about individuals with disabilities, too. There was a spirit of joy and self-reward that I can not describe. That was a great assignment.

Carol Holben, Administrator, HR Medical Standards & Compliance:

As a new MTA employee, I was excited about participating in the Metro Gold Line opening and making LA transportation history. I accessorized my gold T-shirt with an original Pacific Electric Red Car operator badge. On Saturday at Filmore Station, I chatted with rail buffs, who reminisced about their last train ride to Pasadena, and with parents of toddlers, who were taking their very first train ride ever. But my highlight came at the end of Sunday at Del Mar station. Everyone was tired after two long days. When the Smokey Robinson concert ended at 6:30 p.m., crowds poured into the station. But Rail Operations was ready, and an *empty* train rolled into the station to load up passengers! Everyone was thrilled and very impressed.

Gerald Martin, Senior Inspector, Office of the Inspector General:

At Heritage Square Station, I was especially impressed with a teammate, Keith Compton, who truly placed safety first throughout the opening weekend. On Sunday afternoon, while we were at the crossing gate, a large crowd was about to cross, intending to go to the Pasadena side of the tracks. As a northbound train approached, the crossing gate started down. Sensing that the gate would hit the pedestrian, Keith quickly crossed the right-of-way and, seconds before the pedestrian railroad gate came down, guided an elderly woman under the barrier, thereby avoiding a possible injury. Believe me, but for Keith's quick thinking, we might have had our first incident. Keith should get a "Safety At-a-Boy" medal.

Cynthia Chin-Pak, Sr. Programmer Analyst, ITS:

I worked at the Sierra Madre Villa station at the MTA information table both Saturday and Sunday. There was a family – a mother and four children ranging in age from 4 to 10 years old – in the line. The youngest one stood in front of me holding an MTA bag open. I asked him, "Are you going to read all these brochures?" He nodded. I dropped a colored coupon book in his bag and he was happy. He was only 4, but he wanted to be a part of the crowd.

Michael Walton, TOS, Arthur Winston Division 5:

I worked at the Allen Station on Saturday and Sunday. On Sunday afternoon, I was on the platform standing next to a senior citizen when I felt her grab my waist. At first I didn't know what to think, but after looking at the lady, I realized that she was not feeling well. I notified a Sheriff's deputy and he came over to assist. The deputy called for paramedics and Pasadena Paramedics responded quickly and treated the lady. She did not require hospitalization, but went home with her family: her daughter, grandson and two great granddaughters! I really appreciated the fast response and the assistance from the deputy and I was quite happy to see that the lady was going to be okay.

Chip Hazen, ADA Compliance Administrator:

It was a long, wearing day but special thanks should be given to all MTA volunteers and the Deputy Sheriffs who put in as much as 16 hour days and never showed a negative emotion. I was overwhelmed at the way everyone worked to provide that extra service to persons with disabilities simply because the riders needed a little extra assistance. Riders with disabilities were asked to stay on board the train so they would not have to wait in the long return line. MTA volunteers shuttled riders with disabilities to the front of the return line. Overall, we should be proud of the way that we, collectively as the MTA staff, handled each crisis and problem. Everyone deserves a giant thank you.

Ruel Tan, Claims Assistant, Workers' Compensation:

Assigned to the Chinatown station, I tried greeting the Chinese passengers with "Jo Sun!" which is "Good Morning! " in Chinese-Cantonese. They were quite surprised since I looked too Filipino to be speaking to them in Chinese. It became more obvious with my accent.

I recall hailing one Chinese passenger, "Jo-Sun! Jo-Sun!" Misunderstanding my greeting, he replied "My son? Yeah, My son! He is my son!" He pointed to the boy by his side. We were both laughing when he later understood what I really meant.

Fe Alcid-Little, Secretary, Procurement Department:

My daughter got so excited when I told her she would be a volunteer on Saturday. She hurriedly put on the MTA shirt and hat that were issued to us. We proceeded to Union Station, got on the Metro Gold Line to the Del Mar station. Once again, I was reunited with the Station Manager I had at the NoHo opening. We were even more excited when we learned Smokey Robinson would be performing nearby. We weren't able to see him perform, but we could hear and dance to the music. That put a smile on our faces and washed away all the tiredness we had felt the last two days. Now, I can't wait for the opening of the next rail line.

Andy Cortes, Intern, Procurement Department:

Saturday and Sunday were unforgettable days. I had lots of fun in the Highland Park Station, a neighborhood that I've known for almost 11 years. I got to see friends and teachers from Franklin High School. My partner, Mike Flores from Division 7, and I made a perfect team, keeping the customers safe and informed. They were super happy!! On Sunday, I got to see "Quetzal" perform, an outstanding band. I even had the chance to take pictures with them. I had lots of fun. Oh, I want to thank Dan Miller for all his help.

Carlos Villaverde, Mail & Duplicating Clerk:

I volunteered to work at the Sierra Madre station. I was excited, but six weeks ago I had knee surgery and didn't know if I would be able to finish the day. An Asian lady told me her 85-year-old husband was diabetic and could not wait in line for two hours to get back to Union Station. I asked her to go back to him while I found help. I got my box lunch and a Coke, and when she saw me coming her face lit up. She put her hands together and bowed and wanted to pay me, but her smile was more than money could buy. After that moment, I forgot about my knee and continued helping people with a smile.

Lt. Jacob Lopez, MTA Transit Security:

The anticipation for the opening was unbelievable. MTA Transit Security Officers assigned to protect our stations during the early morning hours before the opening, were confronted by hundreds of patrons at the stations with questions about the system. While on a routine patrol at Southwest Museum – it must have been around 2 am – I noticed several people just staring at the station. I pulled over to ask if they needed any assistance, they only had questions about the opening and wanted to convey how excited they were about the opening and the operation of the Metro Gold Line. You could just see the excitement and anticipation in their eyes. It was truly a great feeling being part of this historical event.

Monica Davis, Intern, Westside Area Planning Team:

On Saturday, I shared a Metro Gold Line train with two unusual passengers. Betty and Buster are certified Search and Rescue dogs who help the Sheriff's Department locate missing persons. By being familiar with the buses and trains, Betty and Buster are better able to hop from station to station to pick up a trail after the individual they are tracking has gotten on a Metro vehicle.

Buster was a bit sulky that afternoon because his tail had been stepped on, while Betty was weary but still fascinated by all the different smells from all the people on the train. Their owners, Mr. and Mrs. Wells, are volunteers who have gone through thousands of hours of training with their dogs to get certified.

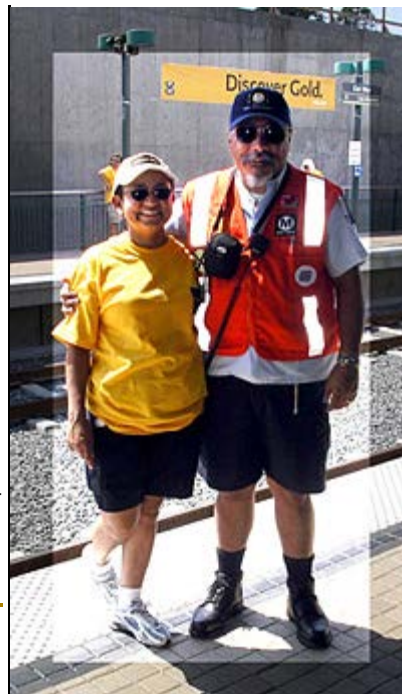
Eric Wiggins, Intern, Programming and Policy Analysis

I was working at Union Station over the weekend, and on Sunday, the very talented musical group, Tropical Punch, was playing outside the entrance to the Metro Red Line. Despite the long lines and crowded atmosphere, people were really getting into the music. After a while, a group of close to 20 people were all standing up and dancing, having a wonderful time at the opening of the Metro Gold Line. Seeing this, all I could think about was, "Wow, these people are having a dance party in the middle of Union Station. This is definitely a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

Ana Ramirez, Metro Bus Operator, Division 1:

I had a great experience at Del Mar station both Saturday and Sunday. There were several other bus operators from Division 1 working at Del Mar. I enjoyed assisting the patrons and providing information to them. It was

fun and we were doing an important job for MTA. I will never forget that weekend. I attached a photo of my husband, Ruben Ramirez and me, when he took a break and stopped by Del Mar station to see me. Ruben was the Metro Gold Line operator who broke the banner at Union Station during Friday's event for dignitaries and the media.



Ana Ramirez: 'Here's a photo of my husband, Ruben Ramirez (banner-breaking inaugural train operator) and me, when he took a break and stopped by Del Mar station to see me.'

Emanuel Higgins, Intern, Central Area Team:

It all started at 6:00 a.m. on a gloomy Saturday morning. I jumped out of my bed with expectancy, trying to dress myself as soon as possible to catch the earliest bus to Union Station.

It was 7:00 a.m. when I left home and boarded the bus at the Harbor/105 freeway transit station. An hour later, I found myself standing on the platform of the newly constructed rail line at Union Station, traveling to Pasadena.

Excitement began to bubble inside me as I made my first step (well, my second step since safety training) onto the "Golden train." As the electronic voice of the train said "Welcome Aboard," I sat down joyously and enjoyed my ride on the great golden line from beginning to end.

Karen Gorman, Chief Ethics Officer:

While working at Union Station on Saturday, I was handed a purse that had been found on the ground. I had the paramedic at the first-aid station keep the purse while I looked for the owner.

Within a few minutes a lady came to me crying and hysterical. I had to calm her down just to ask her what was wrong. She said she lost her purse and described it. I told her we had her purse and pointed to the paramedic who was holding it in the air.

She kissed my cheek, hugged me, and said "God bless you." It was great see a happy ending. I thank my co-worker (he didn't tell me his name) for turning it in to me.

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