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A Metro Romance:

D-18 and Number 3 Meet, Fall in Love, Marry

By RICH MORALLO

(Feb. 27, 2004) For the past 15 years, transportation operations supervisors Deborah Vanderploeg and Larry Blair worked for MTA, helping Los Angeles residents get where they needed to go on the Metro Bus system.

And for most of that time, Larry, a 33-year veteran who was for many years assigned to Bus Operations Control, and Debbie, a 15-year employee assigned to South Bay Division 18, were strangers.

Metro is not a small agency, about 9,200 people and more than a dozen operating locations. So, it's understandable that the two had never met.

For years, Debbie had talked to Larry, first as a dispatcher for Division 18, and later from the field as "D-18," a vehicle operation supervisor.

Radio communications

Debbie would get on the car radio to contact BOC on such transit matters as coordinating a replacement for a bus operator who was sick. Larry – Number 3 – would typically handle the radio call as a BOC dispatcher.

When they both worked the night shifts, they had more radio and phone contact on Metro business.

"Then about two years ago 'D-18' called me on the radio to request that a message be passed to another dispatcher," recalls Larry. "A small voice told me I needed to call this lady."

When a few minutes later D-18 called again on more business, Larry says he heard the little voice again. "You really need to talk to her," it said.

She was worried

Debbie also remembers the incident. "That night, Number 3 from Bus Operations Control contacted me and requested a 10-18," a conversation by phone. She was worried. A BOC dispatcher was



Photo Credit: Courtesy of Larry Blair

Division 18 TOS Deborah Vanderploeg and Division 10 Vehicle Operations Supervisor Larry Blair are now united in marriage.

probably going to tell her she had done something wrong.

When Debbie called Larry later that day, her first question was, "What did I do wrong?"

Nothing, said Larry. He just wanted to get to know her, and had asked her to call on the phone, since the radio was reserved for official business.

And that's how D-18 and Number 3 set up their first date at a local restaurant. Debbie actually missed that initial date - she had to go into the hospital for a week, but that's another story.

Debbie and Larry, now a vehicle operations supervisor at Gateway Division 10, did finally meet, got to know each other, and exchanged vows this past Feb. 15.

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