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EDITOR'S NOTE: Two remarkable Metro employees with an unusual number of years of service celebrate their birthdays this month. Jessica Tyerman profiles [Metro Operator Bill Underhill](#) and Rich Morallo writes about [TOS Ivan McCargo](#).

PHOTO: JESSICA TYERMAN



Div. 9 Assistant Manager Phil Moores, left, Bill Underhill, center, and Metro San Gabriel GM Jack Gabig, right, congratulate Metro Operator Bill Underhill on his 71st birthday.

Fourth Most Senior Operator, Bill Underhill, Celebrates His 71st Birthday

By JESSICA TYERMAN

(July 2, 2004) It's Friday, July 2. Metro Operator Bill Underhill wakes up predawn to don his freshly dry-cleaned shirt. The sleeves' edges are creased around his three-digit badge, Number 463.

His day of driving begins at 3:15 a.m. with a commute from Anaheim to San Gabriel Valley Division 9. He starts his route, Line 259 to East Los Angeles and Alhambra, at 4:34 a.m.

Underhill actually chooses to work this early morning shift. As the fourth most senior operator in the entire agency – he joined Metro in April 1965 – and the most senior at Division 9, he has the power to choose.

"I like getting up in the morning," he says.

On the bus, Underhill knows most of his passengers by name. Some of them just graduated high school. He remembers when they began riding the bus as eight- or nine-year-olds.

His 71st birthday

On Friday, July 2, Bill Underhill signs off at 12:30 p.m. Later in the evening he goes to dinner with his wife, Olga, for it also happens to be his 71st birthday.

Underhill has worked at MTA for 39 years and is not planning on

retirement anytime soon. "If you retire you're most likely gonna sit around."

When he does decide to retire, he plans to remain in Orange County, where he and Olga are 25-year residents.

"I enjoy the job; I enjoy working," he says. "You stay healthy by working." Underhill says he maintains his health by taking vitamins.

About the other senior Metro operators, Underhill says, "I know Jack Bailey's number two." Sterling Hampton succeeds Bailey in third place while Donald Dube remains in first place with 45½ years at the agency.

An exceptional record

Not only has Underhill been with MTA for an exceptional period of time, he also has an exceptional record.

"He is nothing short of remarkable!" says Assistant Manager Phil Moores.

Since he was hired in 1965, Underhill has had no chargeable accidents and no "missouts," meaning he has never been tardy. Furthermore, in the last six months he has had no absences.

"His record of attendance is stellar and serves as a great role model to all employees at MTA," says General Manager Jack Gabig.

Underhill is quite a modest man, content with his work schedule and lifestyle.

"I have a lot of friends here," he says.