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Division 18 Operator Wayne Morris, left, thanks Equipment Records Specialist James Sharp for persisting in the search for his missing dental crown.



PHOTO BY NICOLE HALL

A 'Crowning Moment' for South Bay's Lost and Found Guy

By RICH MORALLO

(July 14, 2004) Purses. Wallets. Backpacks. Cell phones.

Equipment records specialist James Sharp has located these and many other items on Metro buses.

The lost and found department - that's one of the additional duties Sharp handles when he's not busy with vehicle documentation, records filing, vehicle tracking, arranging inspections and preparing bus assignments for operators at Carson Division 18.

It was always just a routine chore – processing missing and claimed items. Then operator Wayne Morris called.

"Somehow a crown fell out of my mouth while I was driving the bus," recalls Morris, describing how he lost a porcelain lower rear molar crown.

Too busy to look

The operator decided to wait until he finished driving his route and returned to the yard before searching for the crown. But driving along the streets of Los Angeles, and picking up and discharging passengers at dozens of bus stops can be very busy.

Morris forgot to look for the dental piece at the end of his shift. And, he knew it would be like looking for a needle in a haystack.

"The crown is only about an eighth of an inch and, by then, could have been kicked off the bus by a passenger, or swept away or vacuumed up by maintenance crews," he says.

So, Morris contacted Sharp who immediately started tracking the whereabouts of the bus that Morris had driven that day. "When I first located the bus, looked for the crown, but couldn't find it," he says.

But Sharp decided to keep on tracking the bus. "I knew the crown cost a lot of money and I wanted to give Morris a chance to look in that bus himself."

Tried to pinpoint the bus

Three times Sharp was able to pinpoint the bus in the yard, but each time Morris was either off work, or already driving a bus route in the South Bay.

Days later, with Sharp's latest notification on where the bus was in the yard, Morris finally got to look inside the vehicle.

Against all odds, laying there on the floor but wedged almost out of sight under the electrical side panel near the driver's seat, was the crown.

Purses. Wallets. Back packs. Cell phones. And crowns. Another completed lost and found assignment for James Sharp.

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