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Employees Went 'Above and Beyond the Call of Duty' During Ford Services



San Fernando Valley General Manager Richard Hunt, center, Sector Assistant Transportation Manager George Trudeau and Division 15 Transportation Manager Gary Spivack, at right, congratulate the bus operators and mechanics who helped transport the public at memorial services for U.S. President Gerald R. Ford in Palm Desert. Below, Trudeau, at right, and Hunt join with Division 8 Transportation Manager Maria Reynolds and Division 8 personnel. Photos by Ned Racine.



Valley Sector Honors Employees at Division 8, Division 15

- See Jan. 5 report: [Metro Heeded Call to Duty at Ford Memorial in Palm Desert](#)

By JORI STERN

(Feb. 8, 2007) San Fernando Valley Divisions 8 and 15 recently honored 21 employees who went "above and beyond the call of duty" during a national period of mourning.

The Feb. 1 ceremonies honored 30 metro employees with certificates of appreciation presented by sector General Manager Richard Hunt.

On Dec. 29, while the nation mourned former President Gerald R. Ford, 18 buses, 30 operators and two tow trucks left Division 15 for Palm Desert, where he lay in repose. They had been assigned to help provide shuttle services for the hundreds of mourners expected to pay their respects to Ford.

In remarks at the Valley divisions, Hunt pointed out that many of the employees transporting mourners at the Ford funeral also volunteered during the 1984 Olympics and the 1994 Northridge earthquake. In those cases, he said, the public hailed employees as going "above and beyond the call of duty."

President Ford's funeral was no exception. "It truly required a special effort and it worked out with no blemishes," Hunt said.

George Trudeau, assistant transportation

Participants in Gerald R. Ford Memorial Services

- West Valley Division 8:** *
- Anthony Bryant * Jeffery Cummins
 - * Joseph DeMelo * Kamran Firouzi
 - * Robert Higbee * Frank Marino *
 - Phillip McCown * Humberto Munguia *
 - Victor Pages * Luis Santos *
 - Harjot Singh * Matthew Smiley *
 - Lawrence Thomas * Eduardo Uvals *
 - Saeid Vahedi * Jojie Velasquez *
- East Valley Division 15:** *
- Vachik Ebrahimian * Fernando Garcia *
 - Nicole Jiho * Alvaro Jimenez *
 - Crystal Leonard * Daniel Magana *
 - Librada Martinez *
 - Rafael Melgar * James Nichols *
 - Dagaberto Rodriguez * Tino Rodriguez *
 - Juan Rosas * Juan Salazar *
 - Timothy Swayne * Michael Turner *
 - Renee Williams * Derald Wright *
- Transportation Operations Supervisors:** *
- Luis Alcantar * Karla Aleman *
 - John Dover * Charles Jenkins *
 - Ovidiu Mateescu * Russ Modell *
 - Harvey Thomas * Xavier Varela *
- Fleet Management and Support Services personnel:** *
- Sean Dunning * Pete Gamino *
 - Keith Nielsen * Paul Rankin

manager, added to that sentiment: "In my 33 years with this company, I have never been more proud to work with the gentlemen and the ladies that were out there. You guys were absolutely shining."

How do Metro employees feel about participating in such a huge event?

An honor to be asked

While many believed it was an honor just to be asked, others thought it was their duty. Still others liked the feeling of participating in a history-making event.

Operator Jeff Cummins said simply, "He was a special President and it was an honor to do it. I would most definitely be there again."

Operator Joseph De Melo liked being part of history. "It was just a mammoth time."

"Very somber," said Operator Jojie Velasquez. Echoing Cummins, Velasquez said, "I did it for Reagan, I did it for Ford, and I would gladly participate in any event that they asked me to again."

"We don't just operate the equipment, we're service providers to the community," said Operator Robert Higbee. "It was fun too, to be caught up in a national media event, with the cameras and the American flags, and the Secret Service guys. You think you're no big deal, but then you get to participate in something unique that a lot of people aren't a part of. There's a little ego boost there."

Maria Reynolds, Division 8 transpiration manager, summed up how she felt at the end of the ceremony. "I am very proud of our operators, and for the work that they did. We have the best in the system."