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Retired Burbank cop and Metro Bus Operator Robert Lucas finds driving a bus "a whole lot of fun." He was injured in a bus accident earlier this year and is using a cane these days while on light duty.



Photo by Jennie Harris

Ex-Marine, Ex-Cop, Robert Lucas Is Happy to Drive a Bus

- 'I greet all my customers with a smile,' he says.

By JENNIE HARRIS

(Aug. 31, 2007) Robert Lucas served in the Marine Corps during the Vietnam War, patrolled Burbank on his police motorcycle, and engineered video game software. At 57 years of age, he now enjoys operating buses out of West Valley Division 8 in Chatsworth.

"I just find it a whole lot of fun," said Lucas, a Seattle native.

Lucas spent most of his career with the Burbank Police Department. He was a lieutenant during the last six of his 26 years.

"When you're working in law enforcement, you always see the ugly side of humanity," he says. "You get jaded after a while."

As a police officer he was trained to approach everyone suspiciously, and he felt that the public scorned him. Working for Metro, he feels appreciated by the public, and his outlook on people has changed.

He shows off his two pins, one for participating in "National Night Out

Against Crime” with the Sheriff’s Department, and the other for outstanding customer service.

Greeting ‘with a smile’

“I greet all of my customers with a smile, and when you’re friendly and you greet somebody that way, it automatically diffuses a possible situation,” says Lucas.

On July 28th, two days after Operator Gregory Bradley died when a red light runner hit his bus, a 75-year-old woman ran a red light and hit Lucas’s bus in the same place as Bradley’s, the left-side driver’s compartment.

The woman was driving so fast that when she hit the 60-foot Metro Liner, it moved sideways 12 feet. She died, and Lucas and three Metro passengers suffered injuries. He is still on light duty and goes to physical therapy for his back and knee.

“I’m sick of being on light duty, but I have to do what the doctor says,” Lucas grumbles. “I miss driving the bus, I miss being out there.”

Lucas had many “close calls” as a motorcycle cop, and before the July 28 accident, he recalls thinking, “All I need is someone to slam into the side of my bus.” He had a premonition that something was going to happen. “I’m not going to think that anymore.”

Lucas has been with the agency since April, and already plans to work his way up Metro’s ladder. He is looking into a bachelor’s degree in public administration to go along with his bachelor’s and master’s in music and bachelor’s in computer science.

Lucas has been married 35 years to his wife, Viviam, and has four adult sons.

Are there any similarities between driving a bus and being a police officer? Since both work with the public, he says, “You meet some really strange characters.”