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Mechanic's Skillful Driving Rescues Stranded Articulated Bus

- Gateway Division Mechanic "A" Leader Leona Swedenhjelm drove a mile-and-a-half backward down a winding street

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Sept. 7, 2007) Narrow and winding, Museum Drive snakes its way up a hillside in Mt. Washington, just west of the Pasadena Freeway.

So, just before midnight, Aug. 20, when Operator Remberto Molina took a wrong turn in his 60-foot-long articulated bus and drove up Museum and into a dead end on Dimmick Drive, he knew he was in trouble.

Unable to turn the behemoth coach around in the constricted street, Molina, a full-time operator assigned to Gateway Division 10, contacted Bus Operations Control for assistance.

It wasn't long before a four-member team – Equipment Maintenance Supervisor Roy Foreman and Mechanic "A" Leader Tim Wong of North Los Angeles Division 3, and Mechanic "A" Leader Leona Swedenhjelm and Mechanic "A" Rob White of Division 10 – arrived on the scene with a tow truck.

The team quickly realized, however, that the stranded bus was too heavy and awkward to be towed the mile-and-a-half back down the serpentine streets. The artic would have to be driven.



Gateway Division Mechanic "A" Leona Swedenhjelm, behind the wheel of her Corvette in this 2002 photo, can wrangle an articulated bus down a winding street - backwards.

More on Leona> See special myMetro.net report (April 3, 2002): "[Racing is all the rage for some Metro mechanics.](#)"



Gateway Division
Mechanic "A" Leader
Leona Swedenhjelm
(Badge photo)

Like backing down an alley

Settling into the driver's seat, Swedenhjelm – a 21-year Metro veteran and Division 10's graveyard shift leader – put the mammoth bus into reverse. Taking into account the artic's three axels and two sections, her task would be like backing a long truck with a trailer down a twisting alleyway.

Swedenhjelm began moving slowly, taking guidance from Foreman and Wong who walked alongside the bus. White's tow truck led the procession that, by now, included several police cars.

For the next two-and-a-half hours, Swedenhjelm steered the unwieldy

vehicle down the hill, avoiding trees, cars and a host of other obstacles, according to Foreman. Attracted by the spectacle, neighbors came out to snap pictures of the odd parade.

Finally, the bus reached Marmion Way where Swedenhjelm was able to turn and proceed back to Division 10.

“I have been in vehicle maintenance for more than 30 years,” Foreman later wrote. “I have worked in very hair-raising situations.... This was the most skillful execution of vehicle maneuvering that I have ever witnessed. I was impressed!”