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Behind the wheel of a 1958 LAMTA bus, 50-year veteran Bus Operator Donald Dube looks back on his career. *Photos by Gary Leonard*

Metro's Most Senior Bus Operator Begins Year 51 on Line 715

By GAYLE ANDERSON

(Jan. 8, 2009) When Donald Dube began his career as a Bus Operator in 1958, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority (LAMTA) was just beginning to phase in buses with power brakes.

And, to make it more interesting, almost no buses in the LAMTA fleet were equipped with power steering. "You just had to muscle the wheel around," he says.

Fifty years later, he's behind the wheel of a sleek new Metro Rapid Bus, Line 715, which he expertly navigates Firestone and Manchester boulevards on the route between Downey and the Los Angeles World Airports.

The transportation job that became a career was meant to tide him over. Just released from a tour of duty with the U.S. Army's Third Armored Division in Friedberg, Germany, Dube went on to college with the goal of becoming an aeronautical engineer.

But college didn't pay well in those days and the job as a bus operator turned into a career that extended well into his golden years.

"In fact, when I first started working here, I figured I'd be here for six months," he said. "I was going to school at the time and I ran short of cash, so I thought I'd work some then go back to



Aboard Model 4801 in 1958, base fare was seven cents, Dwight D. Eisenhower was president, Norris Poulson was mayor, and buses were replacing the last of the street cars.

school. I kept putting it off and putting it off, and here it is, 50 years later."

In 1958, Dube operated out of Division 5, now named after the long-serving centenarian Arthur Winston. After short stints at West Hollywood and Venice divisions, Dube clocked in at Division 12 in Long Beach in 1966, where he worked for 32 years. When Division 12 closed in 1998, he took up his current post at South Bay Division 18 in Carson.

Operating a bus is much easier today, said Dube. "The equipment is much better, but the traffic is much worse, heavier. It was bad in those days, too, and you could actually see the smog. The passengers are about the same – good working people."

He takes traffic as it comes. "You can't fight it; just do what you can. I don't worry about the outcome providing I'm doing everything I can and doing it right."

He prefers the life of a bus operator because of his contact with people. "I used to enjoy going to downtown L.A. years ago. People would recognize me and shout out greetings. I knew they recognized me from taking the bus."

Dube's personal fitness program keeps him steady at the wheel. His day begins at 4 a.m., but he's up at midnight so he can have a good breakfast and exercise, which includes a half-hour of yoga before and after work. His daily diet he admits is a "careful one" virtually free of salt, sugar and processed foods.

Plans for the future do not include retirement. His doctor, he said, has given him a clean bill of health.

"I enjoy working," said Dube. "As long as I am healthy, I'm going to come to work. I have no goals other than doing the best I can everyday."