

History of ATU 757:

1970-1979 Highlights

1970...

Union representation began a decade of expansion. Drivers with Local 1055, the blue buses, decided to switch to Local 757 for representation. Thirty drivers in Eugene asked for representation. They were getting paid \$1.70 to \$2.50 an hour. There was no overtime, no pension and no paid vacation. By the end of 1971, the Local represented employees of Lane Transit District and Portland Public School bus operators.

1972...

A dispute ensued in December. Tri-Met's board voted to continue subsidizing the struck Dunthorpe-Evergreen Bus Line. The board voted for a 60-day continuation of a \$700 per month subsidy. Local officials told the Tri-Met board that if the subsidy continued the strike with the bus line would spread. There was justifiable concern about inexperienced drivers on the buses. Concern for children and pedestrians was rampant because of scab drivers. In fact, the local PTA got involved when an accident occurred in November. Scab-driven school buses collided with two cars in southwest Portland, injuring five people including three students. The Union said the school district was as "anti-union" as they come. Division 757 then asked for a school bus boycott. With threats lingering over a possible strike, federal mediation was sought. Still, there was no strike in the history of the Union to date.

Elmer Mencer doesn't personally remember Portland's horse drawn streetcars, or when the goods was barged down First Avenue during the floods of the 1800s. But he's got photos and slides of those events and many memories and anecdotes to go with them. Brother Mencer had trained eight persons who provided the Tri-Met escort service. It helped senior citizens overcome the fear of riding a bus. The escort system was the first in the nation, starting in 1974. Tri-Met received letters from cities throughout the nation looking for information.

Brother Mencer retired after almost 34 years of service as a bus driver for Tri-Met and its predecessor companies. He guided streetcars, electric trolleys and buses with no chargeable accidents in one 23-year stretch.

1973...

The International Amalgamated Transit Union now had 113,000 members in the United States and Canada. A decertification vote was held at the Evergreen-Dunthorpe Bus Line. Former Union bus drivers moved into different positions. The Union held its first strike in September 1973 after the company refused to sign a first agreement. The Union asked for state aid in the school bus case. There were now 470 Union drivers working for Tri-Met.

The Union held another convention and Mel Schoppert was elected as International vice president. Mel Schoppert had brought the true meaning of

brotherhood to the local. Schoppert worked as an officer of Division 757 for many years, 18 in fact, 11 as business representative. Beginning his career as a bus driver with the Portland Traction Company in 1952, Schoppert helped take wage rates from a low level to one of the highest in the country, with ample fringe benefits. Brother Schoppert battled for and gained one of the first dental plans, job injury, "full pay" supplemental benefits, and broke the 6-week vacation barrier with 6 weeks after 30 years. At the Oregon Legislature he lobbied for and got 19 bills passed, calling for benefits and job security for transit employees. Division 757 had only two full-time employees at the time. Brother Schoppert predicted a larger staff would be needed to meet the growing needs of the members.

1974...

Del Hadley succeeded Mel Schoppert as the Union's business representative. The Union now represented employees of Tri-Met, Portland Traction Company, Portland School District No. 1, Freight Railroad and Portland Vancouver Bus company.

Dick Johnson went to work for Tri-Met as an operator in May.

Dorothy Rodgers was featured in the *Labor Press* for her compassion. Sister Rodgers stopped her bus to help blind people cross the street as did her fellow drivers. Dorothy said she was proud of the humanitarian courtesies that Tri-Met drivers provide to the blind and handicapped, and to others who rode the system. Dorothy, in 1975, stood number 31 in seniority among more than 800 drivers at Tri-Met who were Union members. Dorothy commented on the fact that there were only four women left who began driving during World War II. There were more women drivers than men then. She began her career with Rose City Transit Company on August 1, 1945. Dorothy was presented a 15-year safety driving award from the National Safety Council for no chargeable accidents.

1977...

Wally Feist went to work for Tri-Met as a bus operator.

1979...

The Union successfully lobbied the Legislature to pass a bill allowing public transit districts to create law enforcement units and to appoint peace officers.

Highlights of the decade included the first Earth Day observation in 1971. Portland was granted a National Basketball Association franchise. In 1971, cigarette ads were banned from television, and the World Forest Center opened in Portland. Tragedy struck 11 Olympic athletes killed by Arab terrorists in Munich. A world energy crisis unfolded because of a petroleum shortage and an Arab oil embargo. On a lighter note, the number one fad in America in 1974 was streaking. Girls could play in Little League baseball for the first time, and President Nixon resigned from office. In 1975, Saigon fell, ending the

Vietnam War. A total of 58,151 American lives were lost, according to the Department of Defense. Janet Guthrie became the first woman driver at the INDY 500, and the United States celebrated its Bicentennial in 1976. The big one hit Portland–Blazer Mania–when the Portland Trailblazers won the NBA World Championship series.]