



NEWS RELEASE



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30 Years On the Job and Still Going Strong -- Big Blue Bus Honors Four Employees for Decades of Outstanding Service

SANTA MONICA, Calif. – September 7, 2007 – Back in the days of bell-bottoms, tie-dyed shirts and platform shoes, when Santa Monica was just a nice little beach town to many, four very different people came to work for Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus. Fast forward thirty years later and those same people are still giving their best every day to make the city's transit agency one of the best and most admired transportation systems in the nation.

On Friday, September 7 at 1 p.m., the Big Blue Bus will hold a special awards ceremony to honor 30-year employees Ed Anderson, Marva Cobb, Bob Ayer and Tim Giroux for their years of service to the agency.

"These individuals represent the best of the best," said Big Blue Bus General Manager Stephanie Negriff. "They are deeply respected by their co-workers for their dedication to their jobs, and for their leadership abilities. In this day and age of job-hopping, I find it admirable that these four unique people elected to make the Big Blue Bus their family for so many years. By their actions, they have demonstrated that this is more than just a job to them. We are very lucky to call them both colleagues and friends."

Thirty years at any one place comes with memorable highlights not easily forgotten. To Operations Manager Bob Ayer, one of his most memorable experiences was when actress Sandra Bullock trained at the Big Blue Bus for her role in the hit movie "Speed."

"I was involved in setting up the training," said Ayer. "Sandra was excellent, and learned to drive a full-size city bus in about an hour and a half. A practice area was set up in the parking lot, and by the end of the training session she was doing everything perfect. Everyone was so impressed with her abilities that we decided to make her an honorary driver. She's got a second career if she ever decides to leave the film business!"

Another vivid memory for Ayer was being at work during the 1994 Northridge earthquake.

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“The buildings were shaking immensely, and there was broken glass everywhere. We had to decide how to deploy service to get people around. Even though we only had limited radio communications, we found out what streets were still open. We were able to get back in service pretty fast. I was really proud of how everyone pulled together to get the buses moving again.”

Motor Coach Operator Training Coordinator Marva Cobb had a few other jobs early in her career before starting as a driver for the Big Blue Bus in 1977, but said she instinctively knew she had found the right job once she started working there.

“I remember seeing a Big Blue Bus on Pico Boulevard, and I asked the driver if they were hiring. She said yes, so I followed her in my car all the way down Pico – stopping at all the bus stops along the way! – until the driver showed me where city hall was so I could put my application in.”

Cobb remembers that when she first started, it was a real oddity to see a woman bus driver in Santa Monica.

“At first, a lot of people didn’t want to ride with me because I was a woman. Even other women wouldn’t ride with me!” said Cobb. “Sometimes people would verbally abuse me, but I decided I wasn’t going to let others make me quit. I knew if I stayed I could win people over. That was 30 years ago, and now I teach others how to drive. I’m really glad I stayed because I’ve met some lifelong friends here that are like my family now.”

Maintenance Supervisor Ed Anderson said doing the job right has been a top priority for him since he began his career at the Big Blue Bus as a maintenance mechanic in 1978.

“Each vehicle I work on, I think of as a vehicle my family might ride on,” he said. “Quality, and not quantity, is what’s most important. That’s something I’ve emphasized over the years.”

Anderson remembers that when he first started at the Big Blue Bus, the buses were completely mechanical with no onboard electronics. That has certainly changed over the years.

“Our bus fleet is more like high tech jets on wheels now,” he said. “Many of our bus systems, including the engines, are computer-driven, and this requires the maintenance staff to stay on top of all the technological advances. I have such great respect for the mechanics and technicians who work here,” said Anderson. “They’re the ones who make me look good.”

For Motor Coach Operator Tim Giroux, it’s all in the family to work at the Big Blue Bus. “My dad also worked here,” said Giroux. “so that makes me a second generation team member. He started in 1939 and finally retired in 1972. I wish we could’ve worked together, but he was really happy that I made the decision to come to work at the Big Blue Bus.”

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Giroux drove the same route for 17 years and just recently switched to a different one. “I really enjoyed watching some of my regular passengers grow up,” he said. “People I saw riding the bus on their way to high school are now adults with children of their own. It was really hard to leave that line because so many of my passengers were like friends I got to see every day.”

Giroux is considered a top driver at the agency, and has won the annual Big Blue Bus safe driving contest, called the “Rodeo,” seven times since the event began in 1996. He’s also been the recipient of some special rider appreciation over the years, with one customer writing in to say “I’ve been riding the bus for over 30 years, and Mr. Giroux represents the best in customer service that your organization extends to the public.”

The 30-year employee awards ceremony will take place on **Friday, September 7 at 1 p.m. at the Big Blue Bus administrative offices, located at 1660 7th Street in Santa Monica.** For more information, please contact Customer Relations Manager Dan Dawson at 310-458-1975 ext. 5831 or Francine Pares at 949-244-4574.

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