

## *History of ATU 757:*

### **1965-1970 Highlights**

#### **1965...**

Union drivers for the Rose City Transit Company became the highest paid among privately owned city transportation systems on the West Coast. The new agreement made Portland drivers the fourth highest paid in the nation among private transportation systems. They would be in the top 20 of both city-owned and privately owned systems. A new 3-year contract was achieved after months of negotiations. The agreement covered 470 members, including drivers, mechanics and office personnel. It also safeguarded the pensions of some 300 retired employees.

Earlier in the year, Public Utilities Commissioner Howard Morgan summoned the company's Charles Bowen, who at the time was a very unpopular figure. Morgan listened as Bowen explained how the line was losing \$300,000 a year on the passenger service. Morgan ordered him not only to continue the service but to improve it. Morgan, during the meeting, hinted at the possibility of a jail term for the San Francisco accountant and management expert who had purchased the Portland bus line and its Oregon City Railroad.

The Oregon Supreme Court sided with Bowen, marking the beginning of a turnaround for his Portland business. Bowen in those days was known as a financial expert from the Jesse Jones era of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation team, and his appraisal of the Portland properties as a good buy was enough to influence his associates in San Francisco. With \$5.8 million, almost all in borrowed capital, they purchased the transit operation in Portland and ran it through the lean years of declining passengers and rising costs that followed the 1946 purchase. There were years of no dividends and troubles.

Rufus Fuller went to work as a bus operator for Rose City Transit.

#### **1967...**

Local President Hugh Roberts led the celebration for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Local Union. The celebration was held in June with over 500 people attending the landmark event.

#### **1968...**

The Union negotiated a 1-year contract in January. It called for changes in turnaround time, minimum call, sick leave, wages up to 45 cents per hour and a 5-day work week.

By November, the drivers were locked out for 3 days while working on a new 1-year contract. The drivers went to work despite the lockout on November 1-3. Buses resumed operation at 4:14 a.m. on Monday, the 4<sup>th</sup>. The Union still faced 2-1/2 months of negotiations with the company.

## 1969...

Women drivers were featured in the *Labor Press* newspaper. Opal Lanier was “hostess and skipper” on the Sellwood-Union line. Mary Walker had begun driving in April 1943.

The Union found itself caught in the middle of a dispute between the company and the city over what amount should be paid to the company in the event of a city takeover of the transit system. Another issue in the dispute was the legality of the city termination of the Rose City franchise.

Concerns of the members included: “One of the operation corrections sought is the speed drivers must average in order to maintain schedules. Higher speeds result in frequent traffic violation citations.” The Union held a strike authorization vote. Federal mediation got underway in November. The city was attempting to take over the system, continuing the disagreement with the Union.

Business Representative Mel Schoppert—facing a crisis with privately-owned Rose City Transit on the verge of bankruptcy—spearheaded a bill through the Oregon Legislature enabling the formation of public transit districts. On October 1, the Portland City Council passed a resolution to create Tri-Met (under the authority granted by the 1969 Oregon State Legislature. On December 1, Tri-Met took formal possession of Rose City Transit properties and 293 aging buses and began operation as a public transit agency.

Highlights of the decade included the victory of runner Wilma Rudolph, who won three Olympic gold medals. The Portland-to-Salem freeway was completed in 1961. Marilyn Monroe died in 1962. A windstorm on October 12, 1962 wreaked havoc on western Oregon. John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. By 1964, California surpassed New York as the most populous state. The first American walked in space in 1965. A 48-hour Christmas truce was observed in Vietnam in 1966. In 1967, 50,000 people demonstrated against the Vietnam War in Washington D.C., and the first Super Bowl game was held when the Green Bay Packers defeated the Kansas City Chiefs 35-10. In 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated as was Robert F. Kennedy. In 1969, the United States landed the first man on the moon.]

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