

## *History of ATU 757:*

### **1980-1985 Highlights**

#### **1980...**

In 1980, Rogue Valley Transportation District bus drivers decided on representation by the Union. Negotiations began in early January. Peter McCabe, business representative for the Union, worked with local drivers in organizing the union.

Alice Tipton, who had just finished serving as mayor of Gold Hill, was named chair of the Division unit. Although the buslines served primarily Medford and Ashland, McCabe hoped the Rogue District would expand.

The Union went on record supporting Jason Boe in his primary election bid for the Democratic nomination for state treasurer. The Multnomah County Labor Council endorsed City Commissioner Frank Ivancie for mayor of Portland at a COPE meeting. His opponent in the nonpartisan race was Mayor Connie McCreedy.

Division 757 picked up members from Winston Network (now Obie Media, Inc.), and employees of The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company (now employees of Tri-Met).

Soaring fuel prices, combined with a 30-percent increase in bus ridership in the first part of 1980, created a financial problem for the Lane Transit District. Division 757 Business Representative Peter McCabe attempted to help obtain financial assistance to prevent possible service cutbacks. McCabe dealt with Governor Victor Atiyeh and the State Emergency Board for relief. The need was for a state transportation trust fund that would assist all transit districts.

Tri-Met drivers, in 1980, were looking for some assistance, and the Union was demanding more police protection and prosecution of anyone who physically or verbally abused drivers. An estimated ½ of 1 percent of the 150,000 daily passengers were causing problems, leading to 23 assaults on drivers in 4 months. Although the problem was not new, it had been aggravated by inflation and bus fare increases. In April, a woman driver was severely beaten and her nose broken by a passenger who brandished a pistol and demanded personalized bus service to his destination.

Brother McCabe and Rufus Fuller, who was now Local 757's secretary/treasurer, and other Union officers took a position insisting that Tri-Met beef up its police force and place it on buses. The top priority apparently was a radio equipment system that included a silent alarm. Although Tri-Met police were part of the bargaining unit, there were not enough to cover the district's many buses.

#### **1981...**

In January, members of the Amalgamated Transit Union Division 1537, who drove for Pacific Trailways, became a part of ATU Division 757. The consolidation involved more than 120 over-the-road drivers for routes between Bend and Salt Lake City employed by Mount Hood Stages, doing business as Pacific Trailways. Fred Spivey, Local 1537 president and business representative for 15 years, served on Local 757's executive board. Local 7857 now had membership in southern and central Oregon, in addition to the Portland area.

Peter McCabe became a patient in a Eugene hospital after an aneurysm resulted in a cerebral hemorrhage. When the problem began, McCabe had been in the Eugene-Springfield area for a meeting with Local 757 members and was to meet with the Lane County Transit District for continuance of contract negotiations.

In November, McCabe was expected to be transferred to a Portland hospital. He had gone through two operations, and his condition had varied from critical to serious-critical and serious-stable. McCabe was later moved to Portland.

### **1982...**

The first charter for the retired members of the Union was presented to Brothers Mercer and Becker. In February, 200 delegates from units of the Local attended a 3-day conference in Portland. Main speakers included John Rowland, the Union's International president, and Raymond Wallace, International secretary-treasurer, both from Washington, D.C.

In February, the Union went to court in an attempt to force the Lane Transit District to honor the arbitration provisions in its labor-management agreement. A full day of testimony was taken in Federal District Court. Lane Transit's 145 Union employees had been working under the conditions of the former contract, which contained an expiration date of June 30, 1981.

Construction on the Banfield light rail project began in March. It involved about 665 workers the first year, 900 the next year, and a total of 2,600 jobs for the 4-year project that would build a 15-mile line from Gresham to downtown Portland. The total cost was said to be \$309.7 million.

Tri-Met signed a 3-year agreement with the Union. The pension program was improved, and a disability plan was negotiated. The Local negotiated with the company to allow members to accumulate 30 days of sick leave. The Union agreed that Tri-Met could increase the percentage of part-time drivers from 10 to 14. The new contract also gave the publicly owned bus system permission to contract out maintenance work that exceeded the normal workload of staff. The total contract cost the company about \$10 million in terms of maintenance of health and welfare benefits and in cost-of-living increases for the previous 2 years. The contract covered 1,684 members of the Union.

Del Hadley defeated Rufus Fuller in a runoff election to return to the office of business representative and recording secretary of the Union. Other runoff victories were scored by Tony Bryant, who defeated Wally Feist for the post of financial secretary/treasurer to succeed Fuller, and Rowland Creighton, who defeated Larry Sullivan for the Tri-Met Merlo Road Garage executive board position. Albert Zullo was elected president.

Ron Heintzman joined Tri-Met's Transit Police Department in August as the agency increased its sworn police force with ten new officers.

Union transit workers in Eugene won a victory when a Circuit Court judge granted a preliminary injunction barring imposition of a contract that had been arbitrarily imposed. The injunction followed a temporary order issued earlier.

### **1983...**

In November, striking Greyhound workers turned out in force to protest the bus

company's efforts to resume limited service out of Portland and other cities. Ed Mattingly, vice president of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1055, representing about 600 active and furloughed Greyhound workers in the Pacific Northwest, said only one Portland driver had crossed the picket line. Nationally, only 49 Greyhound workers out of more than 12,000 members of the Union became scabs. Greyhound demanded that Union members accept a wage cut of 9-1/2 percent, which was just one chunk of the proposed takeaways that amounted to at least a 23-1/2 percent reduction in benefits and wages.

Union member Jerry Thatcher was honored for his work in helping put out a house fire. Thatcher stopped his bus, called the dispatcher for help, and then helped extinguish the blaze with a garden hose.

### **1984...**

Early retirement came to some 32 members of the Union. Tri-Met proposed a "Golden Window" early retirement program as a means of reducing its staff. The program, which offered a \$5,000 bonus, allowed workers with 15 years' service to retire at age 60.

Brother Hadley was named chair of the newly formed Oregon Lottery Committee that circulated an initiative petition for a constitutional amendment calling for a state-operated lottery. Proceeds would be dedicated to funding public transportation throughout the state. Hadley said the Legislature's Revenue Office estimated the first-year profits of the lottery at over \$40 million, leveling off in future years to \$30 million.

In May, Tri-Met's board adopted a barebones budget for the year. The Union undertook the promotion of a state lottery in an effort to keep members working. Tri-Met announced that 74 full-time and 101 part-time drivers would be laid off as part of a severe cutback. Union members and supporters of full-service public transportation systems in Oregon circulated petitions so that the issue of a lottery, with proceeds going to support public transit, could be placed on the ballot.

The driver of the year was Shirley Panit. She was the first woman to receive the honor. Panit also received her seventh safety award.

About 70 members of the Union's Northwest and California Joint conference Boards met in Portland during the summer for a training seminar on advances in the transportation industry and in the conducting of union business.

Local 757 picked up additional members with the addition of employees of Valley Transit of Walla Walla. About 30 full-time and part-time workers comprised the new bargaining unit, having met with the Local for about 11 months. At Tri-Met, a new one-year contract provided a 73-cent-an-hour raise in two stages to a top of \$8.50 for operators and an 83-cent-an-hour raise in two stages to a top of \$9.71 for mechanics.

### **1985...**

Rich Ries, a bus driver for the Lane County Transit District, became the new Union business representative, succeeding Del Hadley, who retired. Ries was a former member of the executive board and defeated Al Zullo, Rufus Fuller and Ed DeSantis for the Local's top executive position. Tom Bernards was elected president and Tony

Bryant was reelected as financial secretary/treasurer.

Light rail came to Portland. In July, retirees got a chance to try out the ride between downtown and Gresham. They also checked out the new shops for maintenance of the 26 light rail cars and viewed an informational film on light rail produced by the company.

The 30th annual convention of the Oregon AFL-CIO began in August. Highlights of the convention included the reelection of officers and discussion regarding a state sales tax.

The summer got even warmer with negotiations. The Union agreed to a new 3-year contract. Local 757 now represented some 1,400 drivers, maintenance workers, mechanics and clerical personnel at Tri-Met. The pension plan would be partly financed by a rollback of wages. Management maintained some work rules changes involving mini-run or part-time drivers and the right to hire an increased percentage of part-timers.

Mayor Bud Clark got involved to reach a contract settlement by averting a Tri-Met bus strike. Seventy thousand people would have been affected by the strike. Negotiations last for 5 months. Following the agreement, the Local decided to ask the 1987 Legislature to make binding arbitration mandatory in labor disputes involving public transit districts, just as it is required for disputes involving police and fire personnel. The binding arbitration bill failed by one vote in the House of Representatives.

The District insisted it was in dire financial straits and was seeking to ensure continued operation by means of saving \$3.7 million over the next year through employee wage cuts and revision in the work rules.

Union leaders said the pension plan improvement was the key in reaching the settlement. All Union employees would be fully vested for a pension after 10 years of employment with Tri-Met. Union members could draw payments at age 55 or 62. The pension agreement was for 5 years. The labor agreement was for 3 years. The rollback in wages affected all employees earning more than \$10 an hour. There would be a 5-percent cut the first 18 months. A 3-percent increase would occur in the next 6 months.

Willie Jack was chosen as the 1985 Operator of the Year. Operators were selected for the honor because of their perfect attendance and driving records.

Local 757 became the representative for emergency medical technicians and paramedics at American Ambulance in Vancouver, Washington and Tualatin Valley Ambulance and Care Ambulance in Portland.