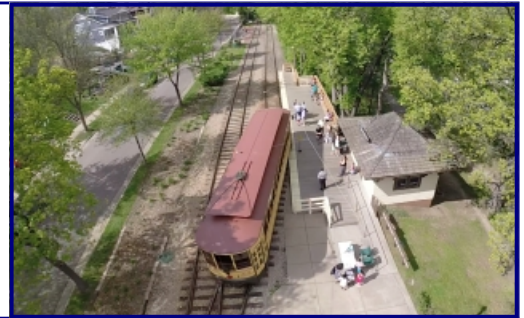


MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



Streetcar CURRENTS



June 2015

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota



Bill the Motorman Says:

- *Have YOU taken a ride on our streetcars yet?*
- *Encourage your friends, neighbors and relatives to come and ride our historic streetcars.*
- *You can help our Museum have another successful season. There are plenty of other jobs that you can help out with. Contact Jim Berry, MSM Volunteer Coordinator for more information: 952-922-2257.*



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Masthead. Here's an unusual perspective. TCRT No. 1300 has just crossed West 42nd Street and is entering the Linden Hills station platform area. Is this a spy satellite image? No, not quite. Volunteer **Bill Way** used his small drone with camera to take this unique photo. I'm sure there will more like this to come. Stay tuned! (Bill Way photo)

Our 44th Operating Season

Bill Arends—General Supt.

The busy months of April and May are behind us. Busy, not because of the many shifts to be filled, but because of all the re-certifying of returning Foremen and Operators, training of new Operators, setting up ShiftPlanning and processing membership renewals and new members.

Ridership-wise May was a good month. We had nearly 4,200 revenue riders at our Como-Harriet Line. This is down about 650 passengers, which can be mostly attributed to the bad weather. We have had 4 shifts totally cancelled due to rain and several others cut short. Unfortunately, many of the cancellations have come on Sunday-our best ridership day. We've had one Sunday totally washed out and two more shifts cut short by over 2 hours. That, along with the gloomy start of Memorial Day, more than explains the fewer number of riders this year.

But all is not gloomy at MSM. In fact, it's just the opposite. We're having one of the best years ever in recruitment of new Operators. We have 15 new operators at our Como-Harriet Streetcar Line who have either completed training or in the final stages of Revenue Training. We also have 11 new operators nearly ready to go at our Excelsior Streetcar Line. Wow! That 26 new names we will soon see at the controls of our streetcars. This is fabulous.

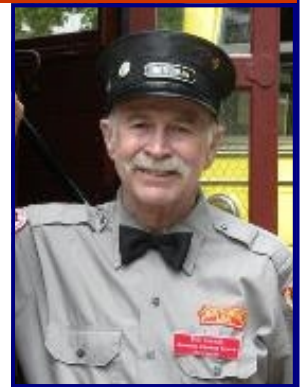
Coordinating and conducting the training are **Dave Higgins** at CHSL and **Bill Graham** at ESL who have spent a lot of time away from home to get all these new operators trained. They've had help from several others as well. Next time you see Dave and Bill, please give them a pat-on-the-back for a job very well done.

New operators means a lot of new memberships to be processed. And, with many of our returning operators also having joined during April and May, many more membership renewals need to be processed. My thanks go to **John DeWitt** and **Jim Vaitkunas** for keeping the member rolls up-to-day. When you get your membership renewal form, please make it as easy as possible for them. Write your check and send it in promptly. They'll be thanking you for that.

As most of you know we have been operating the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line for nearly 44 years, starting in August 1971. Something probably less well known is the loyal following of some of our charter customers. The Nicollet Elementary School has been scheduling a charter for 18 years. This year 50 kids and chaperones got to enjoy their trip from the Mankato-St. Peter area for a ride on No. 1300.

So now we head into our really busy time. Ten shifts per week at CHSL and 4 at ESL means we need 14 Foremen and 34 Operators/Station Agents each week to fill all the shifts. Please don't wait until the "Red Zone" emails come out to sign up. Let's fill up the shifts as quickly as possible.

See you on the line. 🚗



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



The Minnesota Streetcar Museum is a non-profit, all-volunteer organization with the mission to preserve and communicate to the public the experience of Minnesota's electric street and interurban railway history. To accomplish this mission the Museum operates historic streetcars at two demonstration railways.

COMO-HARRIET STREETCAR LINE
Excelsior Streetcar Line

For more information on our Museum, our collection of historic streetcars and our demonstration railways, visit our website: www.TrolleyRide.org

The museum's business address and telephone number are:

P.O. Box 16509
 Minneapolis, MN 55416-0509
 952-922-1096

Streetcar CURRENTS
 June 2015

Jim Vaitkunas—Editor
 Bill Graham—Distribution

Streetcar CURRENTS is a newsletter published for the members and friends of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum.

Deadline for submitting items for the next issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** is June 20, 2015.

Please send items to the editor Jim Vaitkunas at the following address:

13326 Huntington Lane
 Apple Valley, MN 55124-9481

You can send input or enquiries by e-mail to: jvaitkunas@msn.com


From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

The last month has seen several accomplishments. The fence along Queen Avenue has been extended to the pedestrian underpass. Its purpose is to discourage people from crossing the tracks near the depot, a potentially unsafe practice. Instead, it channels them to the 42nd Street crossing. Thanks to **Bill Arends** for managing the fence project.

Saturday May 9th saw the first track crew in about a decade. **Dick Zawacki** was the Foreman. See his article elsewhere in this issue. We pounded down any spikes that had worked loose, tightened track bolts and identified ties in need of replacement. This session took care of the loose spikes from the George Isaacs car barn to the Cottage City stop, and tightened most of the bolts. Bad ties were identified. Look for another session to finish those jobs. Next we'll check the track gauge for narrow and wide spots and check all the overhead wire poles for rotted bases.

Streetcar No. 265 received a make-over over the winter and looks great. The seats were reupholstered, the rest of the window shades were installed for the first time, some wood was replaced on the exterior and there was quite a bit of repainting, both inside and out. The volunteers who worked on this project includes: **Jim Willmore, Dennis Stephens, Russ Isbrandt, Mark Digre, Jim Otto, Mike Miller, Phil Settegren, Walt Strobel, Pete Connors, Ben Franske, Matt Leibel** and **John Prestholdt**.

The big project we've been involved with, of course, is the Isaacs Car barn addition. Grading and tree removal were completed in the first two days. Then the project stalled for about a week because of concerns about the proximity of the building's southeast corner to the steep hillside next to the Linden Hills Boulevard bridge. Stabilizing the hillside during construction would have added a major expense to the project, more than we wanted to spend. The solution is to shift the building north ten feet. Many thanks to **Dennis Stephens**, who has done all the concept drawings for the addition, for doing yet another to solve this problem. Thank you also to construction manager **Glen Sandness** for shepherding this through all the pitfalls that come with construction.

I'm pleased to report that we've received two additional grants to support Winona No. 10's final stage of restoration. The Winona Foundation has granted \$2500 and \$5000 is coming from the 20th Century Electric Railway Foundation. The Winona Foundation folks are planning to visit us later this year to view the progress.

I also want to thank **Dave Higgins, Rod Eaton** and **Bill Graham** for training the large number of new operator recruits this year. It's a big job, and we really need the help.

Until next time, take a trolley ride. It's good for whatever ails you. ♻️


Barb Durfee

We have the sad duty to report that MSM member and volunteer Barb Durfee passed away on Monday, June 1st. Barb, along with husband John Hotvet, were long-time members and volunteers of the Minnesota Transportation Museum, primarily in the railroad side. Barb & John later joined our Museum and Barb was a faithful volunteer on our Como-Harriet Streetcar Line as one of our dedicated Station Agents in the Linden Hills station. Our condolences to the Durfee and Hotvet families.



Thoughts From The Head Trainer — On Talking The Talk

Dave Higgins — MSM Head Trainer

(Editor's Note: MSM's Head Trainer, Dave Higgins wrote this essay primarily for our 2015 class of Operator trainees. However, both your editor and MSM Board Chair Aaron Isaacs thought it contains a message that would be appreciated by all of our Museum's members.)

The end-of-line talk is an opportunity to tell our passengers about our museum, publicize upcoming events and impart a little history as well. In those 2-3 minutes we can give our riders a memorable experience, or we can bore them, or (I hope not) make them wonder why we let people talk in front of the public. One or another of us is always complaining about operators whose talks take too long.

In this essay, which I first sent to the current trainees, I'd like to deconstruct the talk and hopefully give you some hints on how to make your end-of-line talk better.

Traditionally we have started our talks with the information that MSM is all volunteers and is always looking for new members, thanks for your contribution, etc. A lot of needs and wants with few clear priorities. What is the poor, newly commissioned Motorman to do? Consider:

1. Many of our riders are repeat customers, some serial customers. They get to listen to many talks, perhaps many of yours. They may have heard your best lines. Over and over. The streetcar is a recurring local summer experience, like Sebastian Joe's but with tokens for the fare box and no calories.

2. Some of our riders are brand new to our cars. Depending on their age they may have ridden the cars, heard about them from their parents or grandparents, or themselves grown up with TV cartoon trolleys and sightseeing buses with fake clerestories and electronic bells. They don't make a distinction among streetcars, cable cars, or even trains (parents exclaiming "Here comes the choo-choo!"). They probably have no grasp of an electric street railway as a vital part of civic life a century ago.

3. The kids largely think of us as a carnival ride. Our cars make fun noises, rock and bump a bit, and don't look like anything else they have ever experienced. Their parents and grandparents are waving cell phones about, trying to capture the ultimate My Kid on the Trolley photo. Transit history is not top of mind.

4. Aaron Isaacs believes that to keep the speech to

the strongly suggested 2-3 minutes, one can either cover a specific small historical topic or give general information about our museum, but not both. This is unfortunate but true. You will have to make choices.

The talk works best when the speaker has taken stock of the audience and tailors the speech accordingly. From the time one starts loading at Lake Harriet the audience takes on a composite identity. Percentage of seniors? Percentage of kids? Quiet? Loud? Conversations about Great-Grandpa riding the streetcar to school? Thomas the Tank Engine? What's that chugga-chugga sound? Why all the bells? Is the driver going to blow the whistle under the bridge?

Listen to them. They will give you a good idea of what they are willing to listen to from you. Then, as you run northward, you can figure out in what direction and in what detail to take your speech. (This is also a great way to stop brooding about the safe, smooth and accurate stop you want so very much to make at Lake Calhoun.) The end of the line is reached and up steps the newly certified motorman. Some look forward to their moment in the spotlight; many would rather be at the proctologist. But words must be spoken, and soon. If you read the crowd right, and you are on top of your speaking game, believe it or not some passengers will occasionally applaud you. Really. But If you don't get it quite right, by this point in your life you should be able to identify boredom when it appears in front of you. If that happens, EDIT IN REALTIME. Finish the thought and STOP TALKING.

Make yourself a few very basic talks, some historical, some museum centric, and rotate them. Keep them short, even if you know a lot about your subject. Always leave the crowd wanting more. If something you said goes over well, use it again. If something seems to cause people to start looking around or whispering, drop that point in future talks. Cut yourself loose from the safety of the front platform and move around the car a little. That will make it easier for passengers in the rear to hear you, and allow them all to see different sides of your discomfort. Just kidding. Movement may help you to reduce the discomfort and strengthen your presentation and confidence.

Often riders will ask you questions. You may well not know the answer. Don't guess and don't pretend you know. The other people on the crew may really

(Continued on page 4)

What's Happening?

June 9	Storytime Trolley at ESL
June 21	Father's Day at CHSL—fathers ride for free with the family
June 25	P.J. Party Trolley at CHSL
June 27	Special trolley fan operations at CHSL—Includes photo stops & run-bys
July 4	Normal schedule applies on both ESL and CHSL

**MSM News & Views — News of our Museum's Administration and Membership**

Jim Vaitkunas — MSM Corporate Secretary & Assistant Ops Chief

New **MSM Members.** Here are the new members who have joined our Museum since the May issue of this newsletter: Art Abrams and John O'Donnell. Art is currently enrolled in our Operator training program and will be certified very soon. Welcome, guys! 🌱

Track Maintenance is Important

By Dick Zawacki

What better way to start out your weekend than by helping to maintain the tracks of your favorite streetcar museum? As an operating museum, MSM has a goal of operating a historically correct, safe streetcar line. In support of this goal, our members put a significant amount of time and effort to preserve and maintain our streetcars. It can be easy to overlook another important asset that supports the safe operation of our streetcars--our track. A group of our members gathered on Saturday morning, May 9th, at the Isaacs Car barn to help insure that our track for the Como Harriet line is in good operating condition. Bright blue skies and moderate temperatures made for a great morning to work on the track. The crew, consisting of **Carmelle Abron, Keith Anderson, Bill Arends, Dick Bethke, David Gepner, Aaron Isaacs,** and **Eric Schwarzkopf**, tightened track bolts, reset spikes, and identified ties that need replacement. The crew worked diligently as they completed their tasks on all the track from the car barn to the Berry bridge. Certainly, the best part of the day was that the crew finished their work a half an hour early! As part of this effort, **Bill Way** repainted the safety stripe at the edge of the passenger



Our Track Crew (left to right): Dick Bethke; Bill Arends; Dave Gepner; Keith Anderson; Aaron Isaacs; Carmelle Abron; and, Erik Schwarzkopf.

platform outside the 42nd Street depot. We now have a very prominent yellow stripe to help remind our passengers to stay away from the edge of the platform. It adds a very nice look to the depot area. We will be planning another session to finish the work from the Berry Bridge to the north platform, measure the track gauge (we have a special tool to measure the distance between the rails), and check the condition of the overhead poles. Then we will need to move to Excelsior to do the same maintenance work on our track there. Watch for information on these sessions as we can use as many people as possible to make it an easy job to complete. Thanks again to our intrepid crew of volunteers who helped support the safe operation of our historic streetcars." 🌱

(On Talking the Talk—Continued from page 3)

know and be able to help you out. If you try to bluff your way through, inevitably the nine year old near the front of the car WILL know, and correct you in front of everyone and wreck your day. Don't guess and don't give wrong information. Read everything we have to offer. It's so much more fun to run these cars when you understand what they were about in the context in which they operated. Read. It's a dying art.

Speaking of dying, it's only an urban legend that behind the car barn are buried the bones of MSM Operators Past who perished while making the speech. No one ever succumbed while making one, although we may have bored a few passengers to death. Try not to do that.

To see about 20 sample scripts for end of line talks, go to our website:

http://trolleyride.org/Member_stuff1/Operations/End-of-line-talk_scripts_2013.pdf 🌱