

Bus driver retires from 'temporary' job

When Chuck Moulton applied for a job with the City of Seattle back in early 1950, he wasn't planning to become a bus driver.

He had just been laid off from Westinghouse Corp., which had closed its Seattle office, and thought he could get electrical work with Seattle City Light.

There weren't any City Light jobs, however, so he took a bus driving position with the Seattle Transit System, hoping he could shift easily to City Light when a position opened.

But that change never occurred, not because the opening never came but because Moulton decided he liked bus driving too much to quit.

Now, 36 years later, Moulton has retired from his "temporary" job with many good, bad, embarrassing and scary memories:

- Like the time he returned to Central Base after driving Route 28 and walked into a surprise ceremony celebrating his selection as 1984 Operator of the Year. That honor was the culmination of many awards and commendations Moulton received for safe driving, attendance, courtesy and helpfulness.

- Like the time before bus radios when he accidentally splashed mud-puddle water all over a man parked in his car alongside the road. When the angry motorist pursued Moulton and confronted him at a bus stop, Moulton bluffed his way out of the situation by suggesting that the bus could move the man's car out of the way.

- Like the time when a "gal who was pretty loaded" fell backwards out of the front stairwell of Moulton's bus. She landed spread-eagle on her back on the sidewalk. Her skirt fell over her head, "and she didn't have a stitch of clothing under her skirt."

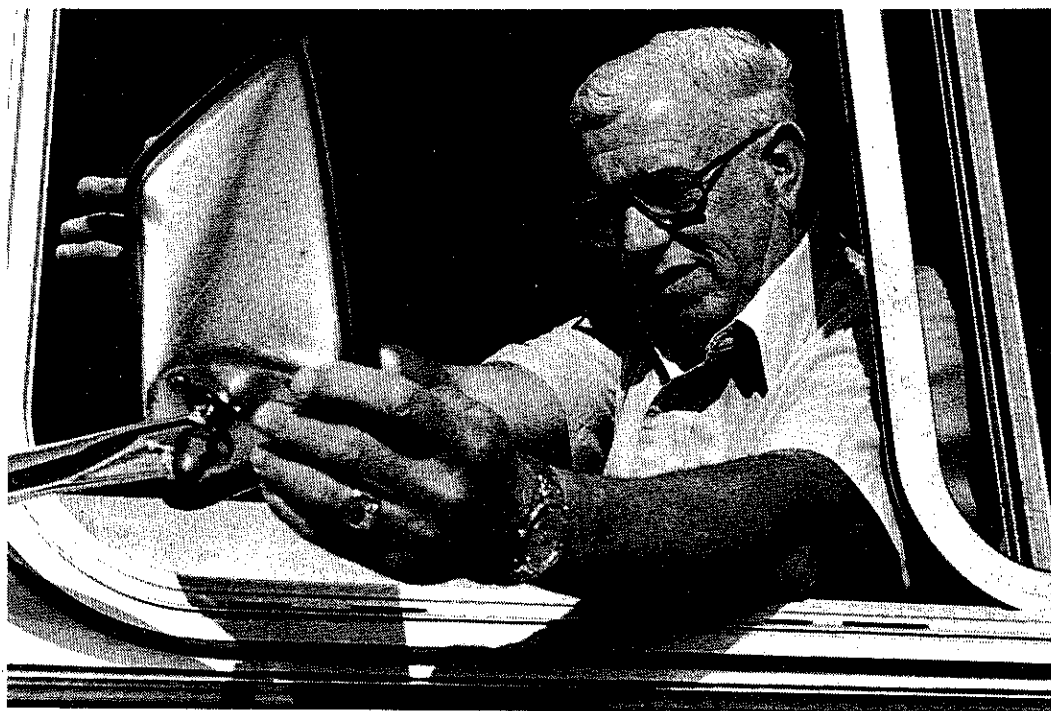
- Like the time when he nearly killed himself while driving a trolleybus to meet the Fautleroy ferry. It was a rainy and cold night when a trolley pole came off the overhead wire. In his rush to replace the pole Moulton almost touched it inappropriately, when an off-duty driver on the bus recognized what was happening and yelled at Moulton to stop what he was doing.

"I took on the idea that the bus was there to haul people," Moulton said. "We are out there to provide service, and that's what I tried to do."

"I felt personally involved with my passengers," he said. "I tried to get to know them and help them out, such as waiting a bit so passengers could make connections."

Of course, Moulton knows that bus driving isn't always a friendly pastime.

"A bus driver's job may seem like a menial job," he said. "But I don't think just anybody can handle it. There's a real stress factor. When you deal with the public every trip, you've got a different situation all the time."



Transit operator Chuck Moulton has 36 years of good, bad, embarrassing and scary bus-driving memories.

For their own safety, Moulton said, drivers need to recognize potentially dangerous situations and take preventive measures.

"If I had a close call and got away

with it, I tried to remember it and learn from it," he said. "You've got to be on the ball and concentrate on the action."

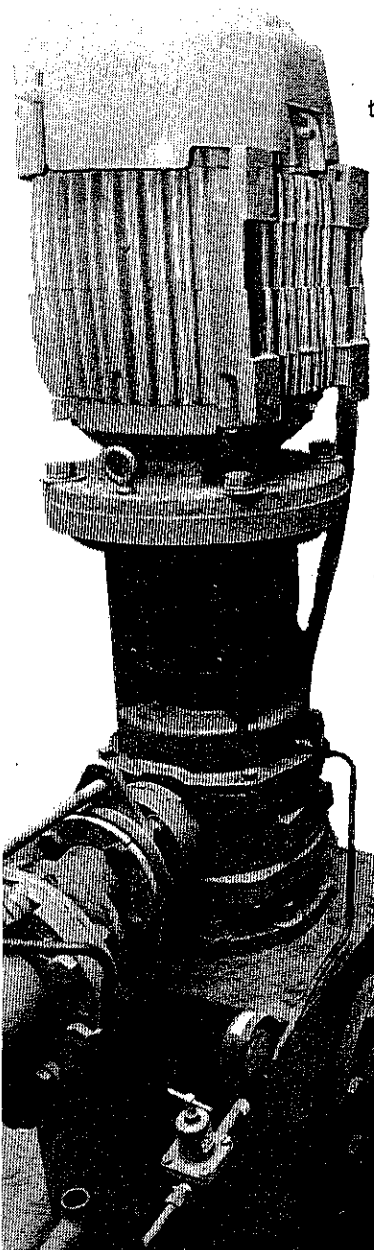
The Insider

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Plant workers get hands-on experience at Alki

New equipment and buildings makes treatment plant cleaner, safer and easier to operate.



Metro's Alki Treatment Plant is a nicer place to work these days. It's cleaner, safer and easier to operate than the plant that stood in the same location 20 months ago.

A major reconstruction project has just been completed at the plant, with upgrades of all treatment equipment. Thirty-year-old machinery has been replaced with more reliable, modern equipment and controls.

Responding to public concern, Metro has also installed odor control equipment that significantly reduces potential problems around the plant. Exterior improvements, artwork and landscaping have been added so the plant will blend more easily with the neighborhood.

One thing hasn't changed at Alki, however—the plant operators' continuing appreciation for the hands-on work experience available only at a small plant.

"I like working here," said Tammy Muirhead, an Alki operator for two



years. "You get universal experience on a smaller scale here—with the lab, the digesters, the settling tanks."

"When you're working in a smaller plant, it's easier to see the process," said Krista Matthiesen, a utility worker at Alki for about two months. "Everything is condensed. I can run a test in the lab and then adjust the process. It's nice to see the results of my work, to figure out what needs to be done and then make the adjustments."

Laboratory work at Metro's much larger Renton and West Point plants is done by process analysts assigned to that task. About the closest the operators get to lab work is taking samples of wastewater.

Five people can operate the Alki Plant, which treats 4 million to 6 million gallons of wastewater daily. Renton, which can treat up to 72 million gallons a day, has about 80 operations and maintenance employees.

Because of the smaller staff at Alki, plant workers there also depend more on each other for assistance and company.

"A lot of jobs one person can do," Muirhead said. "But it's a lot quicker and safer for two persons to do some of them."

Alki and Metro's other small plants at Richmond Beach and Carkeek Park are also good training grounds for operators who eventually move to other facilities.

"Almost everything at Alki was manual," said Todd Johnson, an Alki operator for about five years before

moving to Renton and then to the pumping station crew. "You can really learn things, get your hands on them."

"At Alki, you can work in the lab in the morning and then work the pumps or mow the lawns in the afternoon," he said. "In the larger plants, they have one person stationed at each area."

Of course, Johnson's memories are of a plant where operators were told not to go into the clarifier building when it was covered with

'At Alki, you can work in the lab in the morning and then mow the lawns in the afternoon.'

—Todd Johnson

snow, because the roof might not hold the weight.

"Cleaning the old bar screens was probably the worst job," Johnson said. "They had to be 'deragged' every week." Modernized bar screens have been installed to remove rags, sticks and other material with less operator involvement.

Johnson also remembers another responsibility that continues to be important, even in the modernized plant.

"Public relations is really an important thing here," he said. "People who live around here have very good noses for anything that's not salt water, so it's very important the operators run the plant the way it's supposed to be run."

Krista Matthiesen, utility worker at the Alki Treatment Plant, prepares to remove rags and other debris from a sludge grinder.

 METRO

2000: A transit odyssey

Metro staffers launch first stage in new approach to long-range transit planning.

Six Metro employees have started gazing into three different crystal balls. They are conjuring up images of what the future will hold for public transportation locally after the year 1990.

Led by senior transit planner Kathy Koss, they are in the early stages of developing a new long-range plan to replace the 10-year plan adopted in 1981.

And they are using a new approach in their planning, an approach new to Metro and possibly new to long-range transit planning nationwide.

"We learned a lot in our experience with the 1990 Plan," Koss said. "It took a blueprint approach, laying out exactly how things would be in the future to reach a significant ridership goal."

Success for the 1990 Plan, however, was dependent on conditions outside Metro's control, such as continued increases in the cost of gas and land-use changes supportive of public transportation.

Unfortunately, the favorable

environment for public transportation ridership of the late 1970s has changed, and the challenge of the early 1980s has been to maintain ridership.

The 2000 Plan, as a result, will include several alternative "futures," each based on differing assumptions about the economy, land-use patterns, gas prices and availability, transit technology, population growth and other conditions that affect transit use.

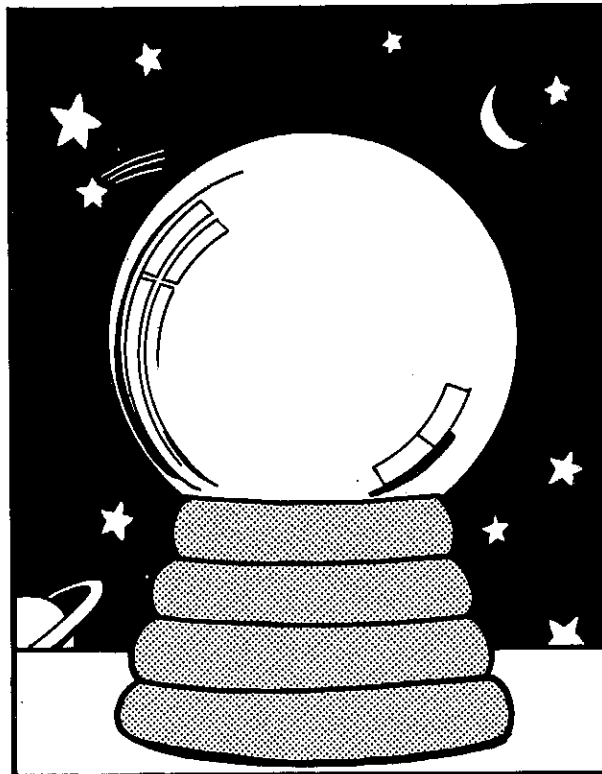
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"The new long-range approach," Koss said, "will provide both flexibility and a better process to measure changes in the environment that affect public transportation."

With the assistance of regional experts on economy, geography, local industry, public policy and



other fields, Metro staff will identify three different futures for the new plan.

Using these possible trends as a basis, Koss said, staff will look at the potential public transportation markets for the 1990s. They will predict who would choose to use public transportation in each of the three futures and what kinds of services and facilities would support the market needs.

"In developing the plan," she said, "we hope to see a lot of involvement with various divisions and departments within Metro."

Within the long-range planning staff, some employees will identify possible improvements to existing service in each of the future scenarios.

Others will look at issues pertaining to right-of-way priorities

'There will be a lot of involvement with various divisions and departments within Metro.'

—Kathy Koss

and facilities and at opportunities to respond better to customer needs.

And others will study financial considerations and the cost of each scenario.

"What we'll end up having," Koss said, "is three future scenarios, each with a range of proposed public transportation products and assessments of the products given the possible futures."

Metro preserves wildlife near construction projects

Blackbirds, geese and other wildlife make their homes in King County wetlands deep among tall blades of grass and stalks of cattail.

These wetlands—areas with

saturated soils—are a valuable natural resource, providing habitat for animals and plants, regulating flood-water flows and trapping sediments and pollutants before they enter receiving waters.

In conjunction with two of its



Metro staff and Adopt-a-Beach volunteers plant willow and black cottonwood shoots in a Duwamish River wetland.

construction projects, Metro is working to protect two wetlands—one in West Seattle near the State Route 509 interchange at First Avenue South and West Marginal Way and one near Metro's new south Federal Way park-and-ride lot.

Metro identified the West Seattle marsh as it prepared for building a 12-mile pipeline to carry treated wastewater from the Renton Treatment Plant to Duwamish Head. The effluent transfer system was completed in March.

As required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Metro committed to restore the wetland to a condition equal to or better than its preconstruction state.

In February, Metro staff and Adopt-a-Beach volunteers literally got down to earth to plant grass and more than 500 willow and black cottonwood shoots at the marsh.

Lynn Wilcox, senior project administrator for the pipeline, put away his briefcase that rainy Saturday and pulled on rubber boots to help replant the wetland.

"It was fun and therapeutic," he said, "to get out there away from paperwork, do something and see immediate results from our efforts—the trees and grass planted."

Assistant environmental planner Dan Wrye had been working since December with the volunteers to locate the best places to plant the trees and shrubs.

"It's very satisfying," Wrye said, "to be involved all the way from planning to implementation of a project that will help the environment."

In south Federal Way, Metro has just finished building a 547-stall park-and-ride lot adjacent to the Hylebos wetland at South 348th Street and Ninth Avenue South.

Rated Class 1—"unique and outstanding"—by King County, the 93-acre wetland provides shelter and habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, including 121 species of birds.

The county and neighbors of the wetland were concerned that the

park-and-ride lot could harm this valuable marsh during and after construction.

Metro worked with the county and a citizens' group, Wetlands of West Hylebos, to design and build a park-and-ride lot that exceeds the

'We want all our facilities to meet the requirements for protecting water quality.'

—Lanny Snyder

county's normal drainage control requirements.

Design of the park-and-ride lot includes a sophisticated storm-water collection system with a detention pond and drainage swale planted with cattails and grasses.

Plants in this "biofilter" will help trap oil, dust and other pollutants from surface water running off the lot and into Hylebos Creek. Landscaping plants include dogwood, salal and other native species with habitat potential.

Separated from the park-and-ride lot by a 100-foot landscaped buffer, the wetland is one of the first in the region to be enhanced during development.

This project provided challenges as well as opportunities for Metro, as an agency responsible for both water quality and public transportation.

"The Transit Department wants to ensure that all our facilities meet the requirements for protecting water quality," said transit planner Lanny Snyder.

Off-duty bus drivers assisting on-duty firefighters

When three Metro transit operators aren't serving the needs of bus riders, they're often helping out area firefighters and the victims of fires and other disasters.

Zero Horsmann and Carl Kietzke of East Base and Marc Lorrain of Central Base are members of the Seattle Fire Buff Society, a nonprofit organization serving local fire departments since 1964.

Society members provide a variety of free services, such as serving coffee and soup to distraught victims and weary firefighters, controlling traffic at the scene of fires and clearing kinks out of fire hoses.

"I have a long-term interest in firefighting," said Kietzke, who has family members in the profession. "Firefighting has got to be one of the most challenging jobs in the world, and firefighters have got to be some of the friendliest people from coast to coast."

Instead of making a career of fighting fires, however, Kietzke has

become sort of a technical wizard about the equipment and tactics used to fight fires.

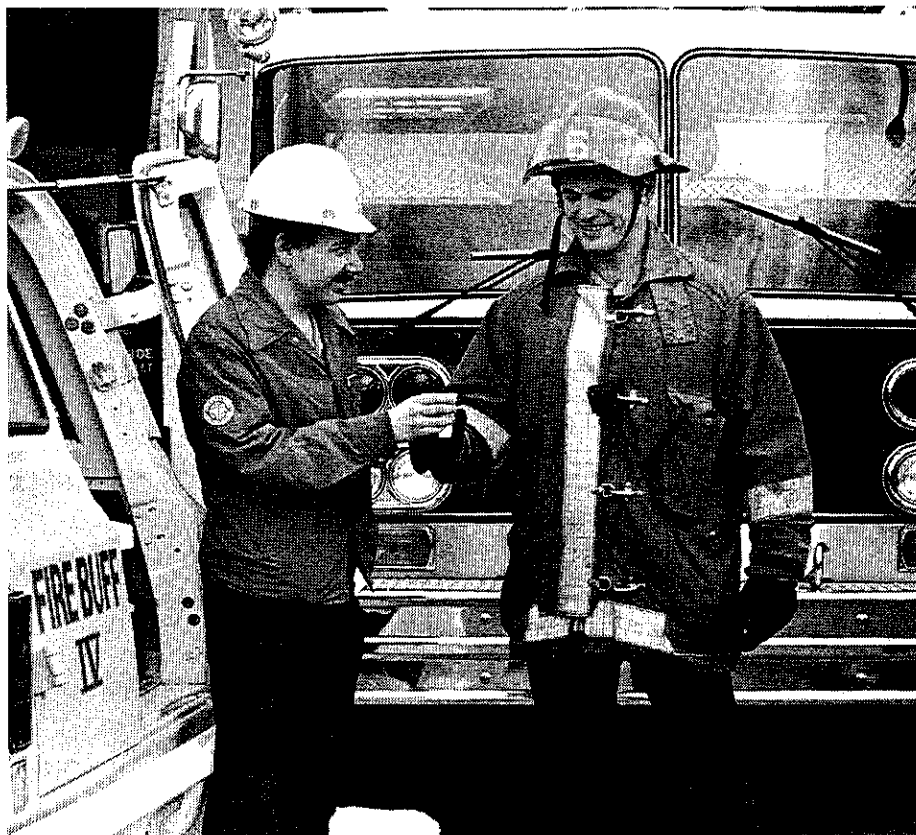
And he has spent 11 years with the Fire Buffs. Horsmann has 20 years with the group, and Lorrain has 10.

The 42-member group responded to 1,700 calls last year, ranging from residential fires in Seattle to flooding homes near North Bend. Up to 12 members respond to each call.

When a fire or disaster occurs, the members respond either because they monitored the call on their fire radios or because the officer in charge at the scene requested their assistance.

One of the members usually brings one of the organization's three disaster aid vehicles, which are loaded with blankets, refreshments and other supplies.

At the scene, the officer in charge tells the Fire Buffs what needs to be done. If not assisting the firefighters, they may work with the Red Cross to comfort victims, provide nonemergency transportation for victims and make other



Lt. Mark Moulton of the Bellevue Fire Department, right, appreciates the hot and cold drinks he is served by transit operator Karl Kietzke and other Seattle Fire Buffs.

arrangements for shelter, clothing and food.

"We all have a common interest in the Fire Service," Kietzke said, "and a

common objective of reducing the personal suffering and inconvenience of fire and disaster victims."

Print shop crew has reams of paperwork

Careful scheduling means more work with higher quality and lower costs.

The five people who operate Metro's print shop make a lot of good impressions.

In fact, they produced so many high-quality documents last year that all the pages stacked on top of each other would equal the height of four 76-story Columbia Center skyscrapers.

That pile of paper would contain nearly 12.4 million pieces of paper, and it would be 9 percent higher than the stack produced in 1985.

"We've been able to handle increasing volumes of work," said print shop supervisor Deb Hall, "by scheduling production time carefully and working with graphics staff to ensure we don't push our equipment beyond its technical limits."

Whenever possible, Hall schedules documents for in-house printing. In-house costs average one-half the rates of outside printing services.

Materials printed outside—because of paper size, quantity, scheduling or color constraints—include transit timetables, *The Book* for transit operators, *The Insider* and four-color publications.

"We often coordinate projects that have to go outside," Hall said. "It pays off if we can send jobs to shops that have proven track records of providing the best price and quality for different types of work."

For in-house production, the print shop tries to provide flexible scheduling, Hall said. Small photocopying jobs can be done within 24 hours, while large jobs—whether photocopied or printed offset—are scheduled in advance to help meet publication deadlines.

The shop's printing equipment includes two high-speed photocopiers that together can make 8,000 to 10,000 impressions an

hour. An offset press that prints on both sides of sheets simultaneously and a small offset press that prints two colors at the same time can each make 5,000 to 8,000 impressions an hour.

The shop's bindery equipment includes a machine that can make 10,000 to 15,000 paper folds an hour, a heavy-duty hydraulic paper cutter, a high-speed collator and various machines for binding paper

with staples, glue or plastic rings.

"For a small print shop, the equipment seems to be a good match for the needs of the agency," Hall said. "But it's really the people who make it all work. They've kept pace with a growing agency and changed from printing mainly forms to doing a variety of high-quality publications."

Employee committee seeking affirmative actions

Thirteen Metro employees want to know your concerns about agency policies and programs for hiring and promoting women and minority employees.

As members of Metro's Affirmative Action Advisory Committee, they make recommendations to management on implementing and enhancing the agency's affirmative action hiring objectives.

And they make recommendations to management on increasing equal employment opportunities for current women and minority employees within each department and agencywide.

With five members from the Transit Department and two each from the other departments, the committee meets every month to discuss continuing issues and concerns raised by employees.

"Committee members act as liaisons for their departments," said Maureen Varni, committee vice chairperson. "They are spokespeople for their departments within the committee. And they are responsible for getting information back to their departments."

After researching and discussing issues raised, the committee adopts specific recommendations and forwards those to Metro's equal employment officer and equal employment compliance officer.

"The committee is a really effective way to alert management to the real concerns of staff and to suggest positive steps that can be taken," Varni said. "We feel a responsibility

to make recommendations that will really work."

One result of a committee recommendation was the decision by Executive Director Alan Gibbs to evaluate supervisors, managers, superintendents and directors on their work and success in meeting

'The committee is a really effective way to alert management to the real concerns of staff.'

—Maureen Varni

affirmative action goals.

"That was a real step toward strengthening the affirmative action program at Metro," Varni said. "The agency has a real commitment to equal employment opportunities and affirmative action under Alan Gibbs."

Many issues facing the committee cross departmental boundaries, Varni said, becoming common problems that all committee members want to talk about.

"The committee is really action-oriented," she said, "and employees are the best resources for making it work."

Names of the committee members and their phone numbers are posted before each monthly meeting on Metro's employee bulletin boards.



Press operator Byron Smith prepares printing plates beneath a wall covered by publications produced in the Metro print shop.

Work mixtures create good chemistry at lab

by Tina Koyama
Information Services

"It's hard to plan what to bring in your lunch," said water quality technician Dave Waddell.

That's one of the difficulties in a job that may require collecting stream samples from freezing water one day and analyzing data in a laboratory the next.

But that variety of work is one of the things Waddell likes most about his job at Metro's Environmental Laboratories.

"No two days have ever been exactly the same," Waddell said, after a year and a half at Metro. Most of his work is out in the field—wading through streams in hip boots to learn

about salmon or collecting water samples of Puget Sound in Metro's research boat, the Liberty.

Waddell, like the other Metro technicians, also spends time in the laboratories analyzing samples. Since the technicians' daily schedules are planned according to project needs, every day can be different.

A Michigan native who has been around water all his life, Waddell is excited about a new project that involves sampling about 70 wetlands in King County to learn how they are affected by storm water.

Sue Hennig, another water quality technician, also enjoys the diversity of projects she's worked on during

her six years at Metro. Working with lab and field data on a computer gives her a broad view of the labs' work as well as the region's waters in general.

With a background in marine sciences, Hennig previously did research in Alaska for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. But she finds the Puget Sound area especially interesting because of the close relationship between Seattle and the many nearby lakes and streams.

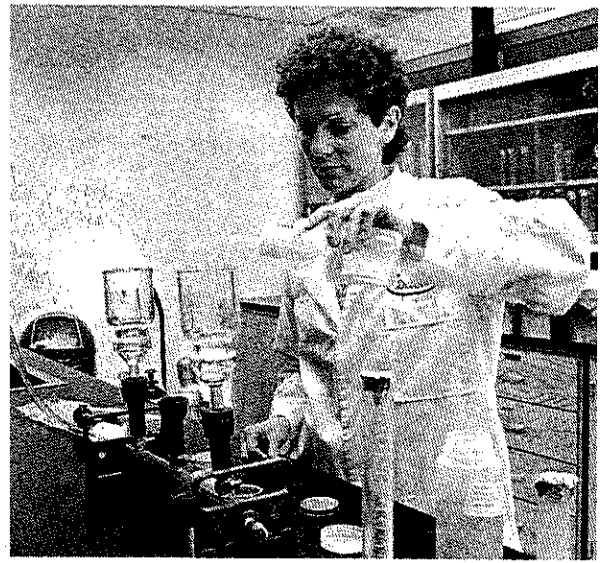
"There's a better appreciation for what's going on in the environment," Hennig said, "how the city affects it and what we can do to keep the environment clean."

Like the other water quality technicians, Carla Carlson's year and a half at Metro has been spent both in and out of the labs. The variety of projects and the field work involved never make her feel tied down.

Along with Waddell, she's currently working on the wetlands project, one she finds especially exciting because it hasn't been done before. Even routine tasks like cleaning glassware—a critical task, she points out, for collecting accurate water samples—are "more than made up for out in the field."

Debbie Turner gets a "big picture" by looking at organisms too small to see without a microscope. One of two microbiologists at the Environmental Laboratories, Turner analyzes water samples for bacteria and viruses.

Her responsibilities vary from writing a procedures manual that helps outside people follow the lab's work to hours of intensive sample processing.



Microbiologist Debbie Turner uses a membrane filtration unit to analyze water samples for bacteria.

Before coming to Metro two years ago, she studied microbiology—not of water bodies but of human bodies. Ten years as a clinical microbiologist gave her valuable experience, but her work at the Environmental Laboratories gives her a broader perspective.

"Before, I looked at organs. Now it's a lake or all of Puget Sound." What she finds most exciting about

'No two days have ever been exactly the same.'
—Dave Waddell

this bigger picture is that "there's so much to learn, so many more variables to consider" in determining what the effects are on the environment and people.



Water quality technicians Carla Carlson and Dave Waddell take measurements along the north fork of Issaquah Creek to determine the effects of nearby development.

Customer assistance staff helps bus riders off the bus

New 'cradle-to-grave' approach will improve Metro responses to passenger complaints and commendations.

"The customer is not always absolutely right, but the customer is the customer."

That statement expresses the importance of every person who writes or calls the Metro transit employees who handle complaints, commendations and requests for service.

Metro's lifeblood is its bus riders, especially in these frustrating days of falling ridership. Without satisfied fare-paying customers, Metro won't have all the revenue it needs to provide quality service.

So clerks in the Customer Assistance Office work to make sure riders' concerns get the response they deserve. And it's not always easy.

"There's a high stress factor here, and people can burn out," said Linda Evans, chief of customer relations since November. "Customers calling us may be very angry, but we have to be responsive and polite regardless."

Evans tries to prevent stress-

related problems first by "hiring genuinely nice people who like to help others. I want people who have a lot of flexibility and a variety of interests."

Evans is also developing an intensive training program for customer services staff. The training will include basic phone skills, stress management techniques and tips on how to defuse angry customers.

"We want to teach the clerks not to internalize the anger they hear and take things personally," Evans said. "We also want to give them steps to follow so they won't have to shoot from the hip during phone conversations."

In addition, Evans is organizing a new "cradle-to-grave" approach for responding to customer contacts. The clerks will be responsible for handling contacts they each receive—from obtaining responses within the agency to communicating those responses to customers.

The new approach should improve response time and coordination, Evans said. And it should make the clerks' jobs more meaningful.

"It's satisfying to know that you have accomplished something,"

Evans said. "Each clerk will now be able to follow up on customer complaints."

Of course, Evans said, the clerks don't just hear complaints all day.

"Metro drivers and other personnel get a lot of commendations," she said. "The peak is just before and after a service change, when riders compliment drivers they don't want to lose. And a lot of people just write out of the goodness of their hearts."

When the Customer Assistance Office receives commendations,

copies are sent to the commended employee and the supervisor. Another copy is placed in the employee's personnel file.

"We get a lot of the all's-well-that-ends-well type of commendations," Evans said. "People like to see our employees go out of their way to help someone else."



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