



# Streetcar CURRENTS



March 2005

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

## Join the MSM!

- Unlimited free rides
- Receive the *Minneapolis Gazette* and the *Streetcar Currents*
- Vote at the annual meeting
- Invitation to all members-only events
- Qualify to operate our streetcars
- Special members-only discounts on streetcar charters
- We need you to Operate our Streetcars

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Join the new MSM* 2
- Annual Recertification training dates are announced* 2
- We need new Streetcar Operators* 3
- Upcoming Events* 4
- Send in your Volunteer Survey Form* 4
- TEA-21 Project Update* 4

**Masthead Photo:** Snow operations are always fun! Here's DSR No. 265 on 1/24/05.  
Russ Isbrandt photo

## HONORING THE PAST

### IN THE BEGINNING...

**M**TM was formed to save a single streetcar, Twin City Rapid Transit Company No. 1300. Typical of the 1000 wood "standard cars" designed and built in the company's own shops, No. 1300 was one of only two that survived the 1954 TCRT abandonment completely intact. The other, No. 1267, resides at the *Seashore Trolley Museum* in Maine. No. 1300 was donated to the Minnesota Railfans' Association, a group that specialized in fan trips during the '40's, '50's and '60's before going out of existence. It was moved from TCRT's Snelling Shops in St. Paul to a siding in the western suburb of Hopkins in a way that would never be allowed today, on its own wheels in the consist of a regular freight train. There it sat for eight years, weathering under a tarp.

**M**TM was incorporated in 1962 and No. 1300 was moved to a stall in the Minnesota Transfer's roundhouse in St. Paul. A new roof was installed and all the bad wood in the carbody replaced. A generator was rigged up on a hand car to supply electricity and in May, 1963 it ran under its own power. MTM was left with the question, "What now?" The car was done, but had no place to operate. Undeterred, MTM announced that No. 1300 would operate back and forth in the Transfer's rail yard for the public. Despite the completely unglamorous setting, 10,000 people showed up over several days. The waiting line was a city block long at times, and the MTMers realized that the public would support an operating museum.

**A**t its first membership meeting in 2005, one of the first decisions of the new Minnesota Streetcar Museum board was to use the new MSM membership numbers as a way to recognize significant volunteers in the history of the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line. There was no question that George Isaacs should get No. 1. After that it was a matter of going back to see "who was here then," to acknowledge the contributions these individuals have made through the years. Be sure to give these folks a word of thanks the next time you see them.

### George Isaacs

George has been a central figure in the entire history of the MTM/MSM and is one of very few whose work has spanned the entire history of the organization. He has been a founding member, Board President, Operator, Foreman, and has been in charge of or involved in virtually every traction restoration project. More than anyone else, George has set the standard of excellence for the "traction culture."

### Russ Olson

Russ has been the premier historian of Minnesota streetcar history. Starting with working for the Twin City Lines in the 1950s, Russ has written the definitive histories of the streetcars in the Twin Cities as well as the history of the all the electric railways in Minnesota. In addition, Russ served as Board President, has worked on a number of restoration projects, and has served as Board Treasurer on multiple occasions.

### Frank and Judy Sandberg

Frank and Judy were also founding members (No. 1 and No. 3). Frank served as

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Join the New Minnesota Streetcar Museum

### Thanks for your Support Over the Years

The one attribute that, in my humble opinion, sets us apart from any other similar all volunteer organization is the loyalty of our members and volunteers. Down through the years, the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line, and more recently the Excelsior Streetcar Line, have been blessed by hard-working and dedicated volunteers and by Museum members and neighbors who ride regularly and who contributed down through the years to our annual appeals and to the Campaign for Como-Harriet.

So, we've changed our name. How does that change affect us? Actually, it doesn't. Our vision and mission remains as follows.

**Vision:** *To provide our visitors a vivid visual and emotional experience that will entertain and educate them and which will result in their willingness to return to ride again while encouraging others to ride.*

**Mission:** *To preserve and communicate to the public the experience of Minnesota's electric street and interurban railway history.*

That's what we're all about. Our goals and objectives fully support our vision and mission. Bottom line—even though we've changed our name our basic reason for being is as it has been since August of 1971, when the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line made its first run with No.

1300 pulling and pushing that little four-wheel wagon with a gasoline engine powering an ex-trolley bus motor. We certainly have come a long way over the last 34 years and we expect to make good progress in preserving and displaying our collection of priceless Minnesota electric railway equipment for many years to come.

### We need you now more than ever!

We invite you to join us to help us preserve our electric railway heritage. Also, all active volunteers are required to be members of MSM. You can join MSM by completing the membership application at the bottom of the enclosed flyer and return it, along with your dues payment, to the MSM business address indicated on the form. The flyer outlines the various levels of membership. However, for 2005 only we have a special membership dues rate of \$15 for those who already renewed their MTM membership at the current rate of \$60. While we offer this special rate we encourage you to join at the regular individual or household rate to help fill our small treasury with some much-needed cash. Your membership year will expire on the last day of the month you joined MSM.

Won't you take a moment right now and send in your membership dues? Thanks!

*Jim Vaitkunas—Chair of the MSM Board*

## ANNUAL RECERTIFICATION TRAINING DATES ARE ANNOUNCED

### Training Department Polishes the (soon to be replaced) Rails

Greetings rusty but trusty Foremen and Operators. It's recertification and training time again. **John DeWitt, Jerry Olsen, Dave French, Greg Taylor**, and numerous volunteers will conduct certification at CHSL, and **Bill Graham** will head-up the effort at ESL.

For those who operated last year at CHSL, certification will be much the same as last year. We'll have several dates and times available (see next column) for you to stop by (without appointment) for a short written quiz and a qualification trip over the line—or for some car handling practice first. People wishing to recertify must be members of MSM in good standing, have a current driver's license, and be in good physical and mental condition.

Our first priority will be to recertify Foremen so they may then recertify Operators at the beginning of revenue trips if necessary. We will try to have PCC No. 322 available for practice and recertification during the weekend certification sessions on the schedule below. As usual, all sessions are subject to dry weather.

And, we could use a few good Foremen to volunteer for conducting certifications, especially on the week-

end of April 16 and 17. Please contact Dave or Greg. For those of you who would like to master PCC 322, please contact **John DeWitt** or **Jerry Olson**.

The Excelsior Streetcar Line, MSM's "other" streetcar line, also needs volunteers to operate it. Previous operators must recertify to operate at ESL by passing a brief check ride and a short written quiz on safety rules. New operators must complete a short, painless training program and pass a written exam on car operation and safety. **Bill Graham** will coordinate the training and recertification program at ESL. Previous operators may show up on the dates indicated below for recertification, and they may recertify on new operator training dates if time allows. New operators should attend training on the nights indicated for new operator training or they may arrange with **Bill Graham** (952-435-9724) to train on another date.

### CHSL and ESL Certification and Training Schedule for 2005

(NOTE: \*\* indicates dates for training and recertification at ESL)

April 2, 10:00AM—CHSL car barn volunteers recertifi-

*(Continued on page 3)*

**(HONORING THE PAST** *Continued from page 1)*

Board President and as a member for many years. Judy was the Museum's first Secretary-Treasurer and also served on the board. The Sandbergs were active in operations and in many of the restoration projects, both traction and railroad, and have been consistently generous with their time and resources over the years.

**Bill Olsen**

Bill was active with streetcars even prior to the MTM. He was an active member of the Minnesota Railfans Association, and served as Chairman of the Minnesota Transportation Museum Committee which preceded the incorporated Museum. Bill served as an operator over the years and was instrumental in acquiring streetcar No. 78 and in donating the Belgian power truck that made the restoration possible.

**Ray Norton**

Ray was one of the leaders of the Minnesota Railfans' Association in the 1950s. He has been one of the longest serving operators and depot agents at Lake Harriet, worked on the restoration of streetcar No. 265, and volunteered on the railroad at Stillwater.

**Dave Norman**

Dave is an original MTM member as has served continuously for over 40 years. He has been an operator, worked on the original track crews and worked on the No. 265 restoration. Dave also served as Board Secretary and Membership Secretary in the 1970s.

**Roy Harvey**

Roy has been a fixture at Lake Harriet longer than most volunteers can remember. In addition to long service as a motorman, Roy has taken on a wide range of tasks for the CHSL and, more than anyone else, has been responsible for the immaculate condition of the carbarn and grounds at Lake Harriet. Not to mention his Ole and Lena jokes...

**Bill Cordes**

Bill rode the famous last streetcar trip in June of 1954, and was one of MTM's founding members. As such he is one of the few members who have volunteered continuously for the past 40+ years. Bill has served as motorman, on the early Railroad steam excursions, was on the Board in 1969 and 1982 and served as Membership Secretary. But his primary "claim to fame" is for his years of maintaining the Como-Harriet's overhead wire, along with "Electric" Mike Miller.

**Herb Pinske**

Herb was a career track worker and equipment operator for the Milwaukee Road. He was an early MTM member, No. 54 on the roster. Herb taught the museum members how to do trackwork at Lake Harriet, Stillwater and Jackson Street. He also worked on the Minnehaha Depot restoration in the mid-1960s.

**Corbin Kidder**

Corbin Kidder rode the MRA's streetcar excursions during the 1950s. He has been an operator at Lake Harriet since it opened, worked on track crews, and volunteered on the PCC restoration. But, most of all, Corbin has been Mr. Minnehaha Depot, making sure it stays in good repair and filling the majority of the station shifts himself.

**Jim Harrison**

Jim has been volunteering since 1963. He served on the MTM Board, was the newsletter editor in the 1960s and MTM President in 1968. He headed the site selection committee for the streetcar operation in 1967. He worked on the first Como-Harriet track crews, was an early Minnehaha Depot agent, and volunteered for the early steam excursions. He continues today as an operator at Lake Harriet.

*Mike Miller, Former MTM Board Chair*

**(TRAINING SCHEDULE ANNOUNCED** — *Continued from page 2)*  
cation.

- 11:30 AM—Foreman training
- April 9, 11:30 AM to 3:00 PM—Recertification and/or new Foreman practice
- April 16\*\*, 11:30 AM to 3:00 PM—Recertification and/or new foreman practice
- April 20\*\*, 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM—New operator orientation Class
- April 23\*\*, 10:00 AM—New operator class
- 12:00N to 3:00 PM—recertification & practice
- April 24\*\*, 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM—Recertification & practice
- April 26 & 29\*\*, 6:00 PM to dusk—Recertification & practice
- May 3 & 6\*\*, 6:00 PM to dusk—Recertification & practice

**WE NEED STREETCAR OPERATORS**

*Each year we must recruit new streetcar Operators to replace those who no longer can operate for a variety of reasons. If you have a friend, neighbor, relative, co-worker, etc., who has expressed an interest in operating our streetcars, now is the time to encourage them to join MSM and sign up for our Operator training program. Please give these interested people a copy of the enclosed volunteer survey form and help them complete the survey. You would be doing CHSL and ESL a great service by encouraging your friends to join MSM and operate with you.*

### Streetcar *CURRENTS* March 2005

Streetcar *CURRENTS* IS A PERIODIC NEWSLETTER FOR THE VOLUNTEERS AND FRIENDS OF THE MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING ITEMS FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE Streetcar *CURRENTS* IS APRIL 20, 2005.

PLEASE SEND ITEMS TO JIM VAITKUNAS AT THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:

155 CHAPARRAL DR.

APPLE VALLEY, MN 55124-9774

YOU CAN SEND INPUT OR INQUIRIES BY

E-MAIL TO: [jvaitkunas@msn.com](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com)



MINNESOTA STREETCAR  
MUSEUM

COMO-HARRIET  
STREETCAR LINE

Excelsior Streetcar Line

### WHAT'S HAPPENING?

April & May	Training and recertification at CHSL and ESL
April 30	Opening Day for 2005 season for CHSL and ESL—beginning of weekend service at CHSL & ESL
May 20	Beginning of daily service at CHSL
May 21 & 22	Linden Hills festival weekend
May 27 & 28	Special Operations for the <i>Central Electric Railfans' Association</i> at CHSL (27th) and ESL (28th)
May 30	Special Memorial Day "Early Bird" service to Lakewood Cemetery begins at 9:00 AM at CHSL



### Bill the Motorman Says:

Send in your membership application and volunteer survey form soon. MSM needs each and every one of you to continue the mission of preserving Minnesota's electric railway heritage.

### TEA-21 TRACK REBUILDING PROJECT UPDATE

The bidding period for our TEA-21 track rebuilding project is now on-going. The bids will be opened April 4, 2005. We do know that one of several problems that this bid process is facing is that the price of scrap steel has skyrocketed over the last year. In addition, the wages paid to the workers must be based on federally mandated guidelines and this contributed significantly to the overall cost of the project. These expenses are unavoidable. We just hope that by eliminating certain parts of the project that we'll get one successful bidder so the project can start this year. We'll keep you posted regarding this process via an e-mail announcement and in the next issue of the Streetcar *CURRENTS* which will be published in late April.

### YOUR VOLUNTEER SURVEY IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR MUSEUM

The MSM annual Volunteer Survey form is enclosed with this issue of the Streetcar *CURRENTS*. It is being sent to you later than usual because of all the "events" that have occurred over the last few months.

We use the information you give us in the survey for several important purposes.

- To verify the accuracy of basic information that we need on you such as your address, phone number, e-mail address, etc.
- To give our crew callers your preference regarding the days and times you would like to operate at CHSL and ESL.
- To allow us to know what special skills or abilities you have that can be useful to your Museum.
- To allow you to tell us that you're interested in contributing your talents and skills to further the goals and objectives of the MSM.

As you can see from taking a quick look at the reverse of the survey form, we are in special need of specific skills and help in certain critical areas. These critical areas are as follows:

**Computer Graphics.** We need one or more person who knows how to make flyers and posters for promotions and advertising, for our Linden Hills station bulletin board and for our website.

**Membership and Volunteer Services.** Now that MSM is separate we need to do our own membership services work. The work is not time consuming but it would be good if more than just one person did the work, mostly involving computer data entry, mailing, etc.

**Track and Overhead Wire Work.** The TEA-21 project will require a lot of people to do a lot of things that are related to the TEA-21 track rebuilding project.

**Publicity and Promotion.** We can use several people to prepare and mail out news releases to "get the word out" to our local media and the general public.

Even if you will just be operating this year we still need your survey form. This is an important tool for the crew callers and for those who rely on additional people to do the critical work that need to be done. So please send in the volunteer survey form as soon as you can to the address shown at the bottom of page 2 of the form.