

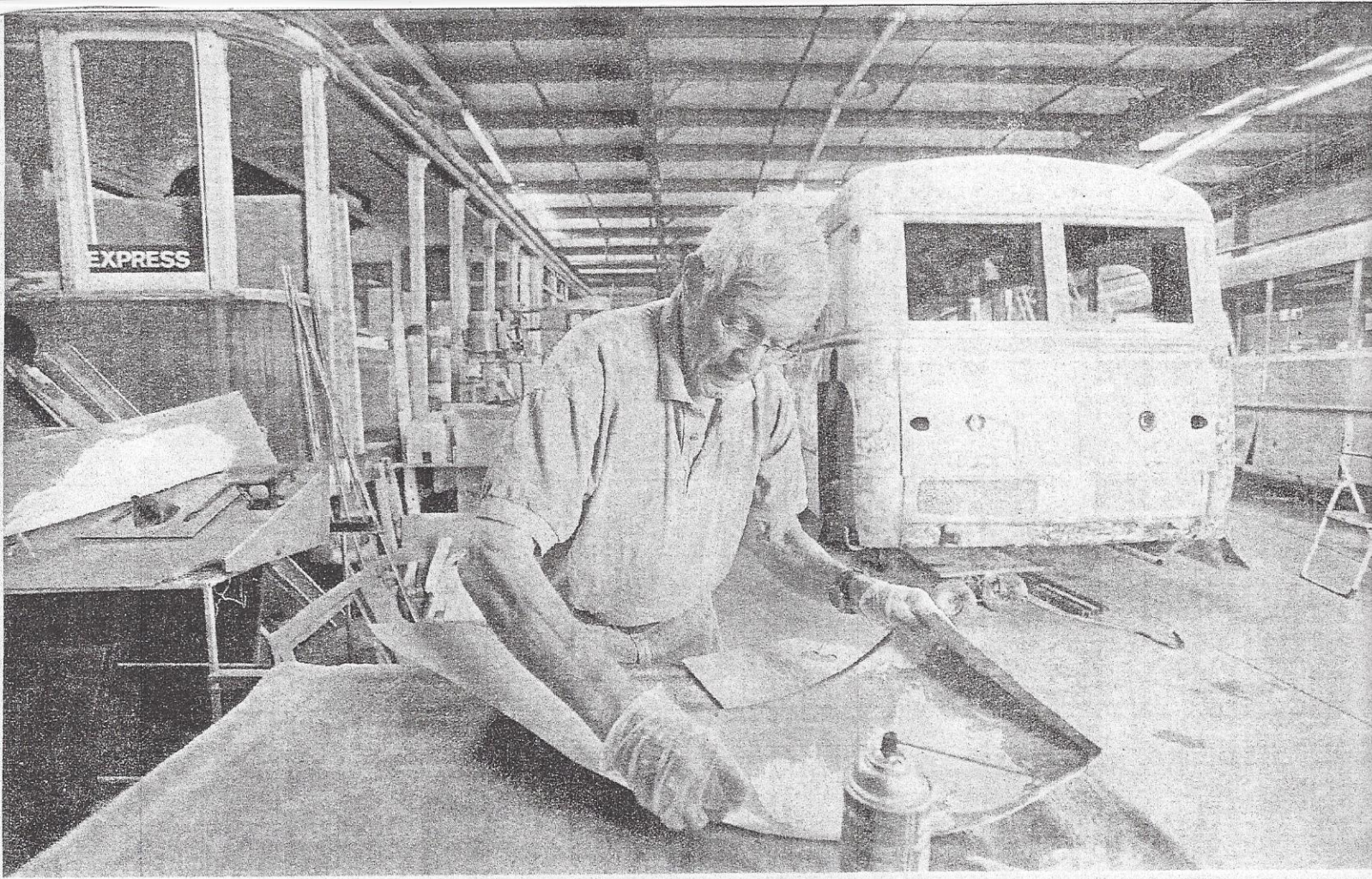
Gene Caywood walks past buses from the 1950s and '60s that are waiting to be restored by the Old Pueblo Trolley bus division. Caywood is the group's project manager. MAMTA POPAT / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

LIFE IN THE SLOW LANE

Restored buses offer a glimpse into Southern Arizona's past

Gene Caywood's fleet has nothing to do with sailing the high seas. As project manager for the bus division of Old Pueblo Trolley, Caywood and his crew have been restoring classic buses from Tucson and beyond for the last 20 years.

More than 30 vehicles, spread between two storage yards, make up the mass-transit treasures that the group has to work with. Many of them will be resurrected as teaching tools for schools and community events like this week's Fourth Avenue Street Fair. **See Page E5.**



PHOTOS BY MAMTA POPAT / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Bill Bownas, a volunteer with the Old Pueblo Trolley bus division, helps with the continuing work on a 1928 Twin Coach bus that used to run from Bisbee to its Warren suburb.

Restoration group focuses on Arizona's bus history

By Gerald M. Gay
ARIZONA DAILY STAR

A walk around the back lot of the Old Pueblo Trolley's bus division restoration shop is like a time-traveling tour through Arizona's mass-transit history.

More than 20 wheeled relics, in various states of disrepair, sit in rusted rows just feet from the roaring traffic of East Broadway.

They represent bus lines from different periods and cities.

There's a 1960 General Motors Coach, which ran for the Old Pueblo Transit Co. for more than a decade, and a 1953 Tucson Rapid Transit bus, one of the first in town to employ air conditioning.

A 1948 Aerocoach model, used as transport from the city to Fort Huachuca, was previously a tour bus in Los Angeles and played a bit role in the 1953 film "The Big-ambist."

Inside the shop, the division's oldest bus, a 1928 Twin Coach, is undergoing a top-to-bottom restoration, courtesy of the not-for-profit's small army of volunteers.

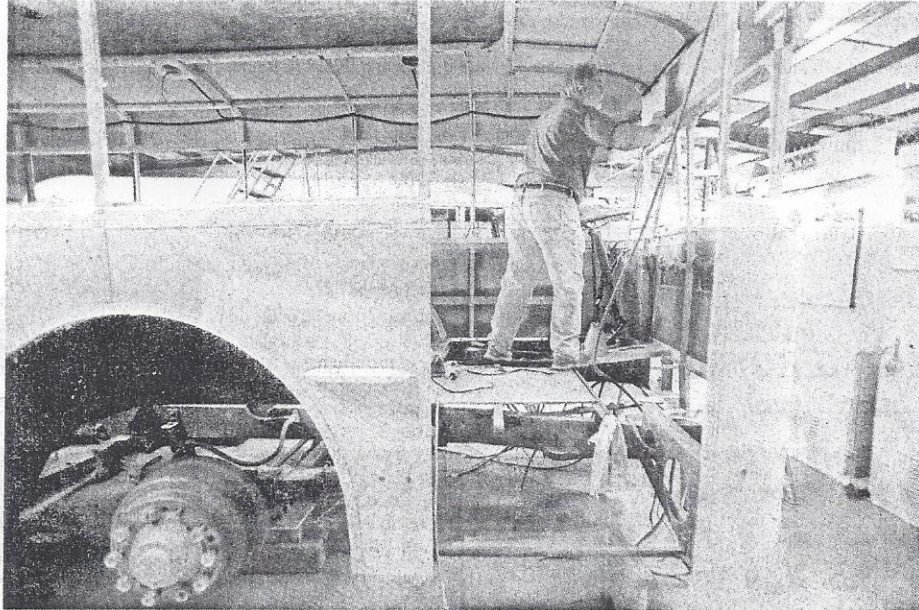
The bus was part of the Warren-Bisbee line, which ran a seven-mile trek between the Bisbee suburb of Warren and the neighborhoods in Tombstone Canyon.

"Each engine had its own transmission and drive shaft that drove each side of the rear axle independently," said Gene Caywood, bus project manager. "It was an extremely unusual technology."

The pride of the collection is a 1938 Yellow Coach bus, another Warren-Bisbee vehicle used for transport through World War II.

The bus was being repurposed as storage space behind a couple's home when it was discovered in St. David in 1995. It was restored over the course of a decade using grant money from the State of Arizona Heritage Fund.

Today it serves as an education-



Bus project manager Gene Caywood keeps his balance as he adds filler to the inside of the 1928 Twin Coach bus. Most of the work is done at the bus division headquarters at 10 N. Park Ave.

al tool. Caywood and other members take it to schools and community events around the city. Next weekend, it will be showcased at OPT's Trolley Barn on East Eighth Street in conjunction with the Fourth Avenue Street Fair.

The ultimate goal is to bring the majority of the buses in the collection to their former glories, so that they may be used in the same way.

"That is basically what we do," Caywood said. "We try to preserve them and take care of them for history."

The bus division has long played second fiddle to the trolley division of Old Pueblo Trolley.

When Caywood and other like-minded individuals formed OPT in 1983, the original intent was for an all-encompassing

transportation museum.

But the trolley came first.

Caywood said the group put nearly a decade's worth of energy into getting the trolley line completed — getting initial approval, and installing the track and overhead power lines — before it moved into the bus business.

In 1994, they asked for their first bus donation from the city. They have since amassed a mighty collection, through further donations and by hunting them down in fields and back lots across Arizona. They own more than 30 in all, spread between the shop on North Park Avenue and a second lot on East 18th Street.

More than 20 are slated for resurrection. The rest are parts buses.

The trolleys ran for 17 years, but stopped service in 2011 to make

way for the modern streetcar.

Caywood is realistic about what the group is capable of doing. A lot of the buses need a lot of help, and funding and volunteers are limited.

A 2011 brush fire that spread to the 18th Street storage yard and destroyed seven vehicles in the collection didn't help.

Still, the workforce is dedicated. Most have been participating for years.

Bill Bownas and his wife have been traveling from Ohio to Tucson every winter for more than a decade. He has volunteered with the bus division for seven of those years.

Bownas' background is in computers, which is how he got into buses and trolleys in the first place. For a time, he served as the

DID YOU KNOW?

From 1924 to 1978 two main bus companies ran in Tucson. Old Pueblo Transit covered the south and west sides of town. Tucson Rapid Transit operated on the north and east sides.

IF YOU GO

- **What:** Fourth Avenue Street Fair
- **When:** 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Friday-Sunday.
- **Where:** Along North Fourth Avenue from East Eighth Street to East University Blvd.
- **Cost:** Free.
- **Info:** fourthavenue.org

SEE '38 BUS UP CLOSE

Old Pueblo Trolley bus division's fully restored 1938 Yellow Coach bus will be on display at OPT's Trolley Barn Friday-Sunday during the Fourth Avenue Street Fair.

They will be set up from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. at the barn, at 360 E. Eighth St., behind O'Malley's.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

The bus division is always on the lookout for volunteers. Visit oldpueblo.trolley.org or call 360-0268 for more information or to arrange a tour of the North Park Avenue restoration shop.

information technology director for the transit authority in Columbus.

"I got to know transportation pretty well," he said. "I understand the vehicles."

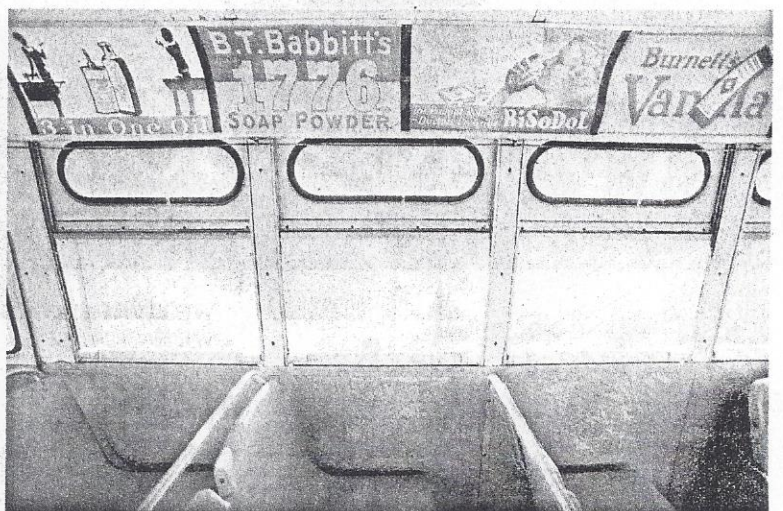
Bownas, 75, discovered the bus division after hearing first about the trolley system.

"This is by far the most organized

See BUSES, E6



Gene Caywood, right, shows Bill Bownas what work needs to be done as part of the restoration of the 1928 Twin Coach bus that was used in Bisbee.



Here's the inside of a 1960 General Motors bus, with reproduction advertisements placed above the windows. The bus will eventually be fully restored by the bus division.

BUSES

Continued from Page E5

and comprehensive restoration operation I've seen," he said. "They are very thorough, very methodical. They try hard to make sure everything is restored to as close as original condition as possible."

Bob Gosnell has been working with the bus division for a decade.

A self-proclaimed history nut, Gosnell, also 75, enjoys researching each vehicle in the collection. He is often in talks with other transportation groups.

"My wife thinks I am the common carrier for Old Pueblo Trolley bus division," he said. "When we go back East to see the grandkids, I always seem to be taking parts to and from the museums out there."

Caywood said the bus division folks have a long wish list. They'd like one day to



MAMTA POPAT / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Bob Gosnell has been volunteering for about a decade. He enjoys researching the history of the buses in the collection.

have a large, central location where they can store all of their buses, preferably with an indoor component for their oldest and newest vehicles.

"The new ones have plastic and fiberglass, which the sun is really hard on," Caywood said. "The oldest have already rotted because they have wood in them."

Caywood said the divi-

sion is also on the lookout for buses it has yet to find. Those include Tucson buses from before 1935 and vehicles from Prescott, Yuma and Douglas.

"We are trying to tell the story of Arizona's history," Caywood said. "That is our focus."

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