

CELEBRATING 125 YEARS OF SERVICE

Winnipeg Transit



winnipegtransit.com



Proud of past, excited by future

Public transit is an essential element of healthy communities. By providing access to the many services and facilities that Winnipeg offers, transit adds value to our community both culturally and economically. Transit offers ecologically and economically sensible

transportation while improving the sustainability of our transportation infrastructure.

Winnipeg Transit has a rich history of innovation that continues today. Technologies such as automated vehicle locating will offer continuously updated information on bus arrival times to our riders, while on-board video cameras will provide improved security.

Infrastructure improvements such as Diamond Lanes, Queue Jump Lanes and Transit Signal Priority traffic lights, will enable us to provide faster and more reliable service. New air conditioned buses,



upgraded bus stops and terminals and additional park and ride facilities will add to the convenience and comfort of transit service.

Winnipeg Transit is nationally recognized as Canada's most efficiently operated transit system. The formula for this success is not limited

to the strategic application of technology. Transit's success has always been dependent upon the commitment and the efforts of its employees.

We are fortunate to have such high calibre people dedicating their careers to public transit in Winnipeg.

At Transit, the pride we share in our history is matched only by the excitement we share for the future. Please join me in celebrating this most important anniversary for Winnipeg Transit, and for our community.

Dave Wardrop
Director, Winnipeg Transit

A memorable day for Transit

By Roger Currie
For the Free Press

My experience as a Winnipeg Transit passenger goes back almost 50 of Transit's 125 years. I don't believe I ever rode a streetcar, but I remember seeing them, and missing them when they went out of service.

The bus I rode most frequently as a youngster was the Academy Road route, which was a trolley bus when I first rode it in about 1957. I was 10, and I believe the children's fare was 10 cents.

Something of a right of passage was being considered mature enough to board the bus alone before 8 a.m. Saturday and ride it all the way downtown to the YMCA. Many people still worked at least half a day on Saturdays then, and I got to know the familiar faces along the route.

Unlike subsequent generations, most of my crowd never expected to be driven to our various activities. Riding the bus was quite

fine, even at 30 below in the days before there were an abundance of heated Transit shelters.

As the years went by, I became a less frequent transit user. Getting a driver's license and then a car changed the routine dramatically. But now and then, circumstances

reminded me what a vital service Transit could be, especially in time of emergencies like snowstorms.

One of the most memorable storms to strike Winnipeg occurred in early November, 1986 and it was a doozy. Snow began falling heavily on a Friday night, and by Saturday morning, the city was just about shut down.

I was working in the newsroom at CJOB, and because the buses had just about stopped, I had to tramp



in through the heavy snow from River Heights.

Saturday night was spent on the floor of an office, but I wouldn't have missed being there for anything. By Sunday afternoon, some buses were moving, but just barely, and I was grateful to ride one home.

Schools remained closed on the Monday, and the city decided to make buses free to encourage people to leave their cars at home so the plows could do their job.

No encouragement was needed for me, since my vehicle was buried in the driveway and wouldn't be going anywhere for a while.

I managed to cab it in the morning since my early morning shift preceded the buses, but I used Transit a couple of times later that day.

(Cont'd on Page 4)

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Congratulations from the mayor

Service first began on October 20, 1882 under Albert William Austin. In recent years, we have made significant investments to our transit system that will see diesel-electric hybrid articulated buses, signal priority lights and more heated bus shelters serving our citizens.

Aside from the daily service our department provides to Winnipeggers, Winnipeg Transit has provided transportation to all

major events that have helped define our city. This includes the Pope's visit to Birds Hill Park in 1984, the 1999 World Junior Hockey Championship, the Pan Am Games in 1999, the 2002 Indigenous Games, and multiple Grey Cups.

On behalf of city council, I would like to congratulate Winnipeg Transit for providing 125 years of dedicated service.

Mayor Sam Katz



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925 Main Street in Winnipeg, >> looking north – 1883

By Todd Lewys
For the Free Press

To think that Winnipeg Transit is celebrating its 125th anniversary all because one man moved west to find his fortune.

"It happened way back when in 1882," says Alex Regiec, operations planner for Winnipeg Transit. "A fellow by the name of Albert W. Austin moved to Winnipeg to find his fortune."

"At that time, Winnipeg had about 8,000 residents and needed a convenient, affordable means of transport. Mr. Austin believed he was the man to meet that need."

Austin met those transportation needs with the technology prevalent at the time – horsepower.

"The first mode of public transportation was horse carts. They would go down (at that time) Main Road and Portage Trail. The first line originated from City Hall, the second from Upper Fort Garry."

Fortunately for Austin – and passengers of his company, called the Winnipeg Street Railway – the city was compact in size. That was a good thing, because the horses got you where you needed to go, albeit slowly.

Eventually, another line was added along Kennedy Street. It was official: Winnipeg had itself a real transit system.

Being a visionary, Austin was aware of the speed and range limitations of horses. Consequently, he looked for technology that would make his company more efficient – and profitable.

That technology came in 1891 in the form of the electric streetcar.

Regiec says that although the technology seemed to make sense, it wasn't readily accepted by everyone. After all, electricity was still a largely unknown commodity.

Ironically, when the first electric streetcar hit the street on July 26, 1892, it wasn't Austin's company that unveiled it. Rather, it was a rival, Winnipeg Electric Street Railway.

"The city was essentially divided into two camps – horse carts and electric streetcars," Regiec says. "By 1894, the streetcars won the battle."

"But Austin lost the war of rival companies, as his company was purchased by Winnipeg Electric Street Railway. Public transit was now totally electric."

By the turn of the century, Winnipeg was growing rapidly, with a population of about 50,000.



"It was quite a heady time for Winnipeg Electric Street Railway. As they started new transit routes, they also purchased land along the routes and developed housing communities," Regiec says.

Less than 10 years later, in 1915, Winnipeg Electric Street Railway Company ran into its first form of competition – private owners who ran their own cars to ferry passengers to destinations around the bustling city.

Predictably, Winnipeg Electric Street Railway responded. By 1918, the company had built its own buses, and began running its first route down Westminister Avenue. Eventually, the cars, which were called "Jitneys", were banned in 1918.

(Cont'd on Page 4)

'It's been quite a journey'

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By Todd Lewys
For the Free Press

When transit service began in Winnipeg 125 years ago, the goal was to provide affordable, convenient transportation to Winnipeegers.

Today, the team at Winnipeg Transit intends to add to that legacy.

“Our vision for Winnipeg Transit is to be the transportation mode of choice for Winnipeg’s major activity centres, says Dave Wardrop, Director, Winnipeg Transit.

“In order to achieve this, we are focusing our efforts on a number of key characteristics that include speed, reliability, accessibility, comfort, safety, and convenience,” Wardrop says.

“In short, we are pursuing and committed to excellence in service delivery, and we have to be, because we are in competition with the automobile every day.

“We are successfully achieving that vision today with the strategic application of technology and through customer service improvements such as on-board air conditioning, more shelters and more heated shelters.

“Suffice it to say it’s an incredibly exciting time we’re living in with respect to technology,” Wardrop says.

“At the present time, our operations are well recognized for their efficiency. But as we put better technology into use, users can expect to see all kinds of improvement.

“Buses will be more fuel efficient and, above all, users will find transit service much more user-friendly.”

Those efficiencies are expected to come from three emerging technologies – articulated diesel electric hybrid buses, a

smart card fare system and a global positioning system-driven automated vehicle location system (or GPS and AVL, for short).

Wardrop says these technologies are due to be utilized in the very near future.

“We are making substantial progress and we expect those systems should begin to roll out in the next few years,” he says.

“Once in place, we expect the articulated diesel electric hybrid buses will cut operating costs, while the smart card fare system will make payment that much more convenient for our customers.”

Wardrop can also hardly wait for the AVL system to be put into operation.

“It will permit enhancement of our current systems and will pave the way for features such as real time electronic arrival/departure displays, as well as on-bus next stop displays.

“Those real time arrival and departure times

will be available on the Internet, Navigo (Transit’s online trip planner) and on wireless devices.”

The ultimate payoff?

“Access to all that information at the touch of a button will make things so much more convenient for our customers,” Wardrop says.

“These technologies will help us take our service to the next level and will enable us to offer an even higher level of customer service by letting our customers know exactly when a bus will arrive at a stop.

“That means you won’t miss your bus and will be on time for an important appointment that you may have missed in the past. That type of improvement is invaluable.”

As far as comfort is concerned, he says to expect enlarged versions of today’s 40-foot buses.

“Not only will the buses be diesel/electric hybrids, but they’ll also be about 60 feet in length.

“Size and efficiency will increase substantially. Buses will be able to

accommodate more people comfortably, and the new engines will help us realize fuel savings of 15 to 25 per cent or better.”

Speed is also due to increase due to infrastructure improvements designed to promote faster transit.

“Those improvements are happening now,” Wardrop says. “We’re introducing more diamond and queue jump lanes, plus there will be expansion of the transit signal priority infrastructure.

“As the city grows, transit improvements will continue to evolve. The end result will be reduced travel time and more reliability.”

Inevitably, the question of cost of the myriad of improvements presents itself. Just how much will the cost of all the new technology and boosting the existing

system’s capabilities be felt by transit users? “Everything we’re undertaking will be done in a very cost-effective manner,” the Transit

Director says. “Much of the development is being completed internally.

“So not only will that make it cost-effective, but doing that will put us ahead of other cities,” he adds. “We don’t expect the improvements will have a substantive impact on fares.

“With bigger, better buses and better overall service, it’s anticipated that we will attract a greater ridership. That will greatly offset the potential for increased fares.”

Another benefit of going high-tech will be increased safety. In the near future, all buses will be equipped with on-board cameras. They will be placed in strategic positions throughout buses to ensure the safety of both operators and passengers.

“Camera quality will be high-resolution, and they will provide multiple viewing angles,” Wardrop says. “Safety is a paramount concern to us, and we know that the presence of cameras helps prevent incidents from happening.

“With the new on-board systems, drivers who now undergo extensive training will be even better equipped to deal with the daily challenges that come with operating a bus.”

Speaking of drivers, Wardrop says that recruiting is ongoing due to a steady stream of retirements. Becoming a bus operator, he says, is becoming an increasingly attractive career option for men and women in their 20s and 30s.

For one reason, it provides the opportunity to work with advanced technology on a daily basis.

“No question, technology – and the responsibility of moving people around the city quickly and safely – is attracting a younger crowd. More than ever, being a bus operator is a career that you can really dig into.

“You have to constantly upgrade your technical knowledge and skills, and you also have to have well-developed people skills. Our recruiting is very selective, but if you make the grade, you’re on your way to having

a very enjoyable and challenging career.”

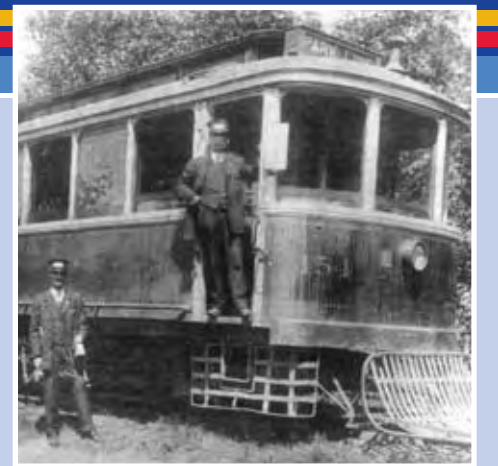
There should be no shortage of employment opportunities. Ridership has increased steadily since 2002, with 2007 on track to record another increase.

Other factors, such as service improvements, population growth, demographics and rising fuel costs, also suggest there will be no slowdown in public transit use.

As the years go by, Wardrop says that a system in the midst of positive transformations will be transformed to an even greater extent.

“With all the improvements that are happening and about to come on line, Transit and our customers are entering a very exciting time.

“I think it would be fair to say that five years from now, the system will be transformed into a high-tech transit service that will be more accessible, more reliable, more comfortable and faster.”



The Manitoba Transit Heritage Association Inc. is a non-profit organization whose members volunteer to restore vintage transit vehicles for historical purposes, and provides the restored transit vehicles for public parades and displays.

The MTHA also collects transit related memorabilia, such as photographs, tickets, passes, transfers, uniforms and other vintage items.

Come and see our display of vintage buses at Winnipeg Transit's 125th Anniversary Open House Saturday, June 2 421 Osborne St.

(Cont'd from Page 3)

It was now 1924, and Winnipeg Electric Street Railway had broadened its range of services to such an extent that it changed its name to Winnipeg Electric Company. Not only did it operate streetcars and buses, but built and ran power generation stations along the Winnipeg River.

As successful as the streetcars had become, it was only a matter of time before newer technology overtook them. That happened in 1938, when Winnipeg became the first Canadian city to set up a trolley bus line that ran by an electric engine attached to overhead wires.

It wasn't until 1947 that the decision was made to convert the streetcar system entirely to trolleys. Even then, it took eight years for the last streetcar to be put in mothballs.

Several telling events – ones that would affect the city's transit system in different ways – took place in the 1950s.

“The first was the 1950 flood,” Regiec says. “It challenged the system as never before, and it came through with flying colours. And 1953 was a particularly pivotal year. That’s when Winnipeg Electric Company was taken over by the province, and then by the Winnipeg Council.”

(Cont'd from Page 2)

What immediately struck me was the fact that many of the people riding the bus that day were not regular Transit users by a long shot.

If service had not been free, I’m sure most would have had to ask the driver what the fare was. Also, many

people got on the buses which were quite crowded and lingered in the aisle close to the front.

The seats were all filled but there was plenty of standing room in the back half of the bus. I guess the driver was intent on keeping the beast moving and not getting stuck in the

deep ruts that were still all over the place, because he wasn’t saying anything to move people to the back.

It was an extraordinary situation calling for extraordinary measures. So I put on my best radio voice and said with as much authority as I could muster: “Excuse me folks, but

we simply must move back or there will be no room for others to get aboard. Please move as far back as you can.”

Amazingly, the passengers responded, although I’m sure I heard at least one man say “Who the hell does he think he is?”



1933

Predictably, the trolley service also surrendered to a newer technology, this time diesel buses.

“The last trolley ran on October 30, 1970. Once that day was over, the fleet was now made

up totally of diesel buses, which remains the case today.”

Regiec says that although the 40-foot diesel bus is still city transit’s workhorse, evolving technology continues to make the fleet

about to unfold.

“Let’s just say it’s been quite a journey from 1882 to now. With all the new technology about to come on line, and forward planning on our part, I believe the best is yet to come.”

increasingly efficient. “Computerization has really helped us refine the service’s efficiency,” he says. “We also try to be sensitive to people’s needs to offer relevant service.

“In 1977, Handi-Transit was tried as a concept, and was made a permanent division of Winnipeg Transit in 1979. And in 1994, we put three low floor buses into operation to make it easier for people with handicaps to gain easier entry; by 1997, the decision was made for all buses to be the low floor model.”

Best of all, Regiec says, the 125th anniversary of Winnipeg Transit signifies that another exciting era is

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Kirk Wilkie says he found the ideal job when he became a transit bus operator last year.



Carol Doerksen says being named Transit's 2006 Operator of The Year was a huge honour.

Driven to serve

Transit bus operators say there's no life like it

By Liz Katynski
For the Free Press

Brian Darragh didn't want an office job. He enjoyed being outside, working with people and driving, so he applied for a job as a city bus driver.

For 38 years, Darragh drove for Winnipeg Transit. He drove streetcars, trolley buses and diesel buses. He speaks fondly of the job and encourages others to consider this career option that is now known as bus operator.

"I am proud of my record," he says. "I enjoyed my job."

When Darragh started in 1954, he made less than \$2 per hour. Operators wore a uniform with shirt, tie, vest, suit jacket, dress pants and cap at all times, although they could remove the vest in the warmer weather.

That changed when summer and winter uniforms were introduced in the 1980s and caps were no longer required.

Darragh was among 80 operator recruits in 1954, and among the first 20 trained as

streetcar drivers. He drove them for 17 months, and was the last former streetcar driver to retire from Winnipeg Transit in 1992.

On the streetcars, each 35 to 50 years old at the time, schedules and order were crucial because there were few places to pass another car on the track.

Operators had to stand during a certain portion of their downtown route. Their seat was a round wooden disk that swayed dramatically, and they held onto the controls to keep their balance.

The operator was at the front by the front exit door, and the conductor took fares at the rear entrance door.

Carol Doerksen was Winnipeg Transit's 2006 Operator of the Year.

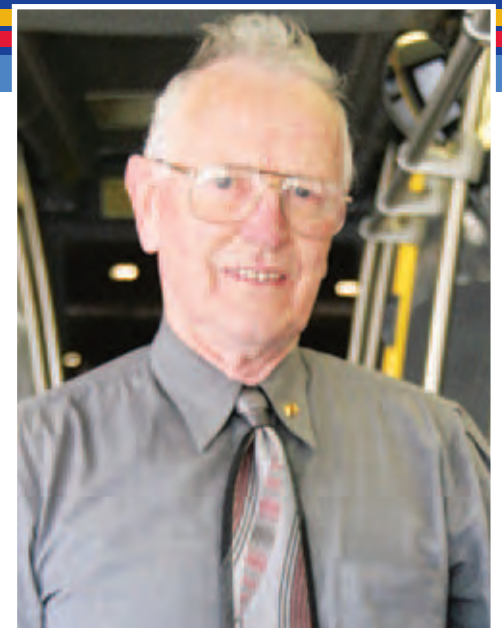
"It's a huge honour," says Doerksen, who has driven a bus for 21 years. She was encouraged to apply by her husband Stan, who was a bus operator when they started dating. She drove a school bus first. When she started with Transit in 1986, a female bus driver was a rare thing.

"I enjoy people and trying to be the best I can be for them," she says. "I am blessed with a really great job."

Doerksen starts work at 5:45 a.m. at the garage, with 10 minutes to prepare her bus for its route. She leaves at 5:53 a.m. and returns at 10:01 a.m. Then she is off until she heads out again at 3:37 p.m. and returns at 6:04 p.m. She gets weekends off.

"Driving to a schedule, with construction and traffic, you can't always help being late," she says. "But it is rewarding. I smile at people and they smile back. I get my smile back tenfold."

Kirk Wilkie joined Winnipeg Transit just over a year ago. With a retail and management background, he was looking for a people job with good pay and benefits that would give him more time with his family.



During Brian Darragh's 38-year career as a transit bus driver, he operated streetcars, trolleys and diesels.

Wilkie enjoys the flexibility of his job. The split in his working day gives him time to go to the gym, grocery shop or do lawn work, get refreshed, and go back to work.

"This is the best job I have had," he says. "I recommend it."

Winnipeg Transit would like to hire a number of operators in 2007 and 2008. Applicants must have a valid Class 5 driver's license with no demerits and a minimum Grade 10 education, says Darryl Antymniuk, senior instructor, Winnipeg Transit.

Applicants take a public relations test to assess their customer service skills in hypothetical on-the-job situations. There's a driving aptitude test, with coaching and 10 minutes of driving on a course, and a test based on a study guide that covers city policies and procedures.

Students qualify for a Class 2 license with air brakes through training with Transit, but must write their written test at the motor vehicles branch.

Operator training includes classroom time, driving time, route training and mentoring with another driver. New operators start as a spare. They get 7.5 hours per day, with routes chosen by seniority, and are paid about \$12 an hour while training.

Operators currently earn about \$22 per hour after five years. It's a union job with benefits and city pension plan.

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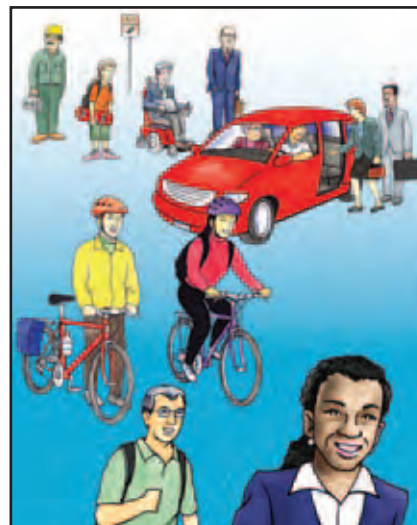
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Steven Gagalak, a Diesel Bus Technician at Transit, makes repairs to a city bus.

By Liz Katynski
For the Free Press

People always seem to remember the times they have been inconvenienced by a bus breaking down.

But they should consider how efficiently city buses transport them most of the time, Tony Dreolini says, and take a moment to appreciate all the work that goes into making that happen.

On an average weekday, there are only three or four service calls that cause interruption to service, says Dreolini, manager of plant and equipment at Winnipeg Transit.

Buses travel an average of 17,000 kilometres between stalls. From November to April, 456 buses are on the road in Winnipeg on a strict schedule during peak hours.

"When we do our job well, people don't even realize it," Dreolini says.

Winnipeg Transit has a nominal fleet of 535 buses, and ideally replaces 30 buses per year with newer low floor accessible models.

Buses have an average lifespan of 18 years. The oldest one in the current fleet was built in 1984. Condition and cost effectiveness of operating each vehicle are considered.

Since 2004, new buses have been built at New Flyer Industries under the watchful eye of a Transit inspector.

Typically, a bus is on the road about 22 hours per day. They need only refuel once a day, because they have 100-gallon fuel tanks.

Buses get an early start. Work buses pick up some operators before their early shift begins. Bus service is increased for the morning and afternoon rush.

Transit's 220 bus maintenance staff includes all those who repair, clean and fuel the

vehicles. There are 27 bus servicers who do basic checks and cleaning of buses between runs.

There are also a variety of trades on the job – from mechanics to welders, body repair people, body painters, sheet metal workers and electronics technicians.

During peak hours, service trucks are on the roads and just a call away for a bus in need.

Winnipeg buses travel 26 million kilometres per year and use 16 million litres of diesel fuel per year. Hybrid buses are under consideration for the future.

Buses get regular A, B and C inspections.

Every 3,000 kilometres, an A inspection by a journeyman mechanic includes a checklist of basics like mirrors, wipers and washers, break pedal, fire extinguisher, lights, steering, doors, brake lining and wheel tread. The B inspection – every 12,000 kilometres – is more thorough, going over the passenger compartment, seals on the doors, windows, cooling system and engine.

The C inspection, every 48,000 kilometres, is the most thorough, including a body inspection for corrosion, fuel tank check, bumper inspection and more.

"Ideally, we find problems and fix them," Dreolini says. "For big jobs, we sign a bus off to the body shop, engine shop, electronics shop, brake shop, tire shop or general



Diesel Bus Technician Ed Tsitrin, one of 220 bus maintenance staff, works on a huge motor from one of the Transit fleet.

maintenance shop for things like transmission, suspension and air system work."

In 2006, Transit buses cost an average of 54 cents per kilometer to maintain, not including fuel and operator salaries.

Corrosion from salt on the roads and cold temperatures are hard on buses. They put in long hours, carrying heavy loads. An average bus weighs 26,000 pounds with fuel and driver. It has 38 seats and can carry 53 people – an additional 8,000 pounds.

When the city removes a bus from its fleet and replaces it with a new one, the old vehicle is stripped for any useful replacement parts for other buses of its age and sent to the shredder. Its scrap is sold and the money goes back into a replacement reserve.

"It's not viable to sell them by the time we are done with them," Dreolini says. "There is not much left."

Guy Fontaine is a second generation Winnipeg Transit diesel bus technician. He joined his father on the job with Transit 30 years ago.

"It's a good place to work," he says. "I enjoy the people. They make the job enjoyable."

Fresh out of high school, Fontaine started as a summer relief worker, caring for buses and performing janitorial duties. He took an apprenticeship program at Red River College, and returned

as a bus mechanic.

"I have never worked anywhere else. It followed my line of interest. Like many maintenance people, I have been satisfied staying here."

Since he started on the job, Fontaine has seen lots of changes.

"Buses used to be similar from year to year, but in the 1990s, that started to change," he says. "Computers now run the electrical system, the engine, transmission and signs."

"High-floor buses are being replaced with low-floor buses where the nuts and bolts of things have been moved around. It's been an interesting challenge (to keep up to date)."

"It's all quite different than it was years ago when I was completing my training."

CONGRATULATIONS ON 125 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE CITY OF WINNIPEG!

I have enjoyed working with Winnipeg Transit over the past 16 years.

Wishing you much success and growth as you keep moving forward in a constantly challenging marketplace while expanding and pursuing new and exciting possibilities.

Frank Lisanti

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1930



1942



1947



1966