San Diego Celebrates 25 Years

by David Thornton; General Manager

Old Town Trolley Tours of San Diego celebrates 25 years of delighting guests in San Diego. On Feb 14 1989, Valentine’s Day, Old Town Trolley began tours with six trolleys and a staff of 20 employees. Some of those original CASTmembers attended our celebration party including the first General Manager, Don Harrison and CASTmember Nancy Nuhaily, who still works with us today.

Over the next 25 years, we have grown to a fleet of 28 Trolleys with a CAST of 120 employees during our summer season.

Besides our iconic orange & green trolley city tour, our fleet and tours now include our wedding white trolley – Felicity; our Ghosts & Gravestones trolley, The Trolley of the Doom; our amphibious sea & land adventure tour - San Diego SEAL Tours; and our seasonal Holly Jolly Holiday Trolley Tour. Last year we started our newest adventure, our beach tour to La Jolla and Mission Beach. 12 years ago we opened the Old Town Market property which consists of the reconstruction of the Casa de Aguirre building and the remodel of the Immaculate Conception Church’s Convent building.

As our special guests, San Diego’s Interim Mayor - Todd Gloria, joined us, presenting Old Town Trolley Tours with a proclamation.

Also joining us in our celebration were HTA’s CEO, Chris Belland, and our President and CFO, Ed Swift III, the founders of our company, having the vision and fortitude to be the Nation’s Storyteller.

And finally, many of our CAST of employees and managers were on hand in celebration as well.

Our CAST make vacations happen for our guests each and every day; they are our Nation’s Storyteller’s.

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Well, the grueling last quarter of our fiscal year is over which means we have, once again, survived the budgeting season. Of course, this pertains mostly to the management teams in each operation and the executive staff. I can tell you, it is a long, difficult process when you have a company that has grown as large as ours. It involves not only the tour operations in our six cities, but also a number of retail stores, food service operations, attractions, real estate rentals and the cost to run the headquarters operation here in Key West. That, my friends, is a lot of budgets and each one more or less takes the same amount of research, direction and focus. All in all, it takes every bit of three or four months to do. A special shout out to COO, Ed Swift, IV, Bobby Bernreuter and the Finance Department under Ben McPherson and Freddy Varela for making it as smooth as possible.

The reason I hate budgets, though, has nothing to do with the enormous amount of work that goes into doing them nor the budget review process which is going through each one with all the different managers. I can tell you for sure, it is just as hard on the managers as anybody, for they are doing their best to pull together all the information and be accurate so the reviews can go smoothly. No, the reason I hate budgets is because they are probably one of the most exciting times of the year for a different reason.

I consider myself to be a very fortunate person and, in fact, I consider most of the people who work for Historic Tours of America fortunate for the same reason. I see it almost every time I “walk the park” which is getting out and taking tours or walking through our attractions or retail operations. Simply, our CAST, for the most part, really like what they do. We like interacting with the many visitors who come to our cities and seek us out for a quality experience and souvenirs to remind them of a great vacation. Our actors, conductors and engineers go on stage three or four times a day giving the same presentation but, of course, to a different audience. I feel fortunate that what we all do for a living, whether on stage or backstage, provides a real service to our fellow man and, for the most part, it is a lot of fun. Then, of course, working with the people who make up Historic Tours of America is yet another reason to be thankful for what I and we do. CASTmembers of Historic Tours of America went through an intense screening process to find a particular type of person. It is nice to know that when you come to work each day, you are sharing a large percentage of your waking hours with people you like, admire and respect. In fact, we have always asked our GMs to silently ask themselves, when interviewing a prospective new hire, “Would I bring this person home to meet my family?” For the current CAST, the answer was yes.

But all this is still not why I hate budgets. The reason I hate budgets is because all of the different elements that make up Historic Tours of America, from retail and food service to tours, attractions and real estate development make Historic Tours of America a singularly very interesting company. Budgeting is another word for planning the coming year and when we do them, it starts the creative juices flowing and I realize that there are ever more interesting projects to do than I will ever get to do for lack of time or money. Simply, it makes me anxious, for I don’t want to miss a minute of seeing all the plans, visions and dreams come to fruition.

I have often said, “Nothing is ever as good or bad as we anticipate it is going to be”, however, in the case of the many dreams that have been dreamt by myself and many other CASTmembers, seeing them come to completion has generally been a great joy, much in excess of what I ever thought. If you had told me back on December 20, 1980 on the first day Old Town Trolley operated and when we carried only 34 guests, that just 35 years later we would have 1,000 CASTmembers and carry and entertain more than two million guests each year, I would not have believed you.

Maybe if budgets are a plan to see our dreams come true, then maybe I don’t hate them as much as I thought.
February started with some unfortunate news for OTT Boston, our newly appointed Operations Manager, Donnie Kraby went out on an extended sick leave. He had emergency surgery and is recuperating. Our thoughts, prayers and well-wishes go out to him for a speedy recovery.

Donnie being promoted left a vacancy in the Head Conductor role. We had quite a few very-qualified conductors apply for the job, which made the decision very difficult. However, only one could be chosen and that was veteran tour conductor Charles Person (aka Crackerjack). Congratulations Charlie!

You know that spring is right around the corner when we have our first training class of the year. The first to join us this year are two new conductor trainees, Rick Stec (aka Animal) and Chris Scheno (aka Gonzo) who started training on February 10th. By the time you read this they will have passed the CDL test and hopefully been certified to give tours. Welcome aboard Rick and Chris!

Boston’s Original Chocolate Tour hosted some very special guests on February 22nd. Thanks to the hard work of Michael Chandler, Steven Johnson and Mercer PR, we had members of the press for a day of chocolate bliss. It was a fantastic winter day, sunny skies and mild temperatures, which was the perfect scenario for the first stop: the fabulous Top of the Hub on the 52nd floor of the Prudential Tower. There, these VIP’s were treated to an incredible chocolate creation prepared exclusively for Old Town Trolley guests. The sunny skies highlighted the spectacular views from the top of the Prudential. The tour continued to the Omni Parker House for a sample of Boston Cream Pie from the place where it was first created. The last stop is the Langham Hotel for the incomparable Chocolate Buffet featuring over 100 mouth-watering chocolate creations. The tour was a huge success and has already generated a lot of buzz which has resulted in more reservations.

At the end of February I sent my Depot Sales Manager, Brian Buckley and Head Conductor, Charles Person to Savannah and St. Augustine for some quality time with two of our sister cities. They were treated like VIP’s, took tours, visited depots and absorbed as much as they could during their very short visit. A big “thank you” to the entire CAST of St. Augustine and Savannah and especially to Dave Chatterton, Charlie Brazil and Ed Swift IV for taking such good care of my guys. They returned to Boston with lots of new ideas which they are eager to implement here.

March is all about budgets and planning for the up-coming season. And, we have a lot of planning to do since Old Town Trolley Tours of Boston celebrates its 30th Anniversary on April 7th. Stay tuned for more details on that.

Give ‘em the Pickle?
Fuggetaboutit, Shannon Guillory Gave ‘em Lunch!

Shannon Guillory is a first year Depot Sales Representative here in Boston. About a week ago, on a very cold winter morning, Shannon was working at our Trolley Stop Depot (Stop #6). The Trolley Stop is an inviting store front across the street from the Boston Public Garden and the Boston Common. One of our competitors, Beantown (by the way, no one who grew up here calls
Boston Beantown, has a small kiosk in a food court about a block away.

Around mid morning a gentle elderly woman enters the Trolley Stop and asks if she can wait inside for her trolley as it is so cold outside. Shannon welcomes her, offers her a seat on our trolley bench and tells her that a trolley will be right along.

The woman said she has a ticket with Beantown and just wanted to get out of the cold. Shannon told her to make herself comfortable.

The woman then asked Shannon how often our trolleys came by. Shannon informed her that we run on a strict 15 minute schedule all winter long and if we need to we could run even more frequently if the business demanded.

The woman sighed and said the Beantown trolleys were running about every hour and had she known we were running that frequently she may have purchased a ticket from us. The woman then said that she didn’t have much time in the city and wondered how long our tour was. Shannon answered, “1 hour and 45 minutes to go all the way around.” The woman then replied that would have fit much better with her schedule.

A light went off in Shannon’s head. She asked the woman to wait for a minute, left the Trolley Stop and ran up to Beantown depot a few doors down the street. She then had what I can only imagine must have been an animated and passionate conversation with the Beantown sales rep and explained the woman’s dilemma.

I don’t know exactly what she told the rep but, a few minutes later she returned to our Trolley Stop Depot WITH THE BEANTOWN REP IN TOW! To the woman’s surprise the Beantown rep issued her a full refund – IN OUR STORE!

Shannon then sold the woman a trolley ticket and put her on the Orange and Green within few minutes!

Pickle you say? Shannon gave our guest a cup of soup, the club sandwich and a sundae for dessert and it didn’t cost us a dime!

Giving Back

by Charles Person; Head Conductor

Some thirteen people mostly from local churches around Boston packed up; filling their personal luggage with much appreciated medical supplies and headed out to remote areas of Guatemala with a mission of caring for eight days in February 2014. Their mission was accomplished in multiple ways; from running the medical clinic, to building homes (mostly one room homes from scratch) and by teaching children the three “R’s”. If the organization has enough funds they will also send students abroad to attend school. Conductor Stephen Kent (aka Clark Kent or Superman) of Old Town Trolley Tours of Boston and his wife Laura traveled under what is called P.I.D., or Partners In Development which was started by a women from Ipswich, Massachusetts on a shoe string budget. It has branched out to several other places, including the needy right here in the United States. Stephen and his wife Laura have gone three times now and have been enriched by helping these wonderful people with medical care and the building of homes. They are firm believers in the Golden Rule; “Do unto others as you would have done to you.”
I would like to introduce you to my children. All my children are furry and four legged! I have two beautiful Labrador Retrievers and three cats, one Persian and two Himalayans. My babies are not all babies. I refer to my dogs as puppies however Champ is 10 years old and he is a yellow lab and Callie is 8½ years old and she is a black lab. I refer to my cats as kittens and they are Samantha who is four years old and a white Persian, Isabella is three years old and a Tortie Himalayan and Zoey is the baby at two years old and is a Chocolate Point Himalayan.

There is nothing more amazing than the love of a pet. I have found that their unconditional love is amazing. No matter what is going on in my world, I put the key in the lock and open the door and I am greeted each and every day by the loves of my life. I am so very grateful and blessed to have these beautiful animals and anyone who knows me will tell you, they rule my world.

At night when I lay down to sleep Champ sleeps on the floor next to my side of the bed and Callie sleeps on the floor next to my husband’s side. The three cats are usually in bed with us so having a king size bed was one of the best purchases we ever made!

My dogs love to swim and if you ask my husband, the only reason we bought the house we live in right now is because it has an in ground pool and once I saw that it was a done deal. I love to watch my dogs swimming each day in the Summer!
The Omni Parker House Hotel in Downtown Boston is the oldest continuously operating hotel in the U.S. The hotel was opened by Harvey D. Parker in 1855. From the beginning, the hotel was praised for its luxury and splendor. One writer explains that “Parker built an ornate, five story Italianate-style stone and brick hotel, faced in gleaming white marble. The first and second floors featured gracefully arched windows, while marble steps led from the sidewalk to the marble foyer within. Once inside, thick carpets and fashionable horse-hair divans completed an air of sumptuous elegance.” Charles Dickens, who stayed at the Omni Parker House while visiting from Britain, described the hotel to his daughter in a letter. He ended his description with “the cost of living is enormous, but happily we can afford it.” While at the hotel, Dickens gave his first American reading of “A Christmas Carol” in one of the upstairs rooms. In addition to Charles Dickens, many other famous people have been attracted to the Omni Parker House Hotel over the years. Well known visitors have included writers - Homes, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Longfellow (who drafted “Paul Revere’s Ride” at the hotel), baseball players – Babe Ruth and Ted Williams, and politicians Ulysses S. Grant, James Michael Curley, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy and William Jefferson Clinton. Also, Edwin Booth and his infamous brother John Wilkes Booth stayed at the hotel. Along with the splendor of the hotel, the restaurant in the hotel has been drawing people in from the beginning. The restaurant is, and has been from the start, a fine dining experience. “In a day when a good Boston cook could be hired for eight dollars per week, or $416 a year, Parker hired the gourmet French chef Sanzian for an astonishing annual salary of $5000. Sanzian’s versatile menu drew large crowds and ongoing accolades.” In addition to superb food, Parker’s restaurant is famous for the invention of Boston Cream Pie and Parker House rolls. Furthermore, Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh worked as a baker in the restaurant from 1911 to 1913 while attending Harvard University and Malcolm X was a busboy in the early 1940s. It’s no surprise that with such a long and varied history, people say the hotel is haunted. There are reported sightings of Harvey Parker’s ghost traveling the hallways or standing in a guest’s room. Rumor has it that the elevators are always called to the third floor (which is the floor Charles Dickens stayed on) without a button being pushed or a guest waiting for the elevator. Tales abound of a room on the 10th floor from which a rocking chair can be heard rocking all night. There are no rocking chairs in the hotel. Bellmen have spoken of seeing bright orbs of light floating down the hallway and disappearing into thin air. Whether you are a ghost hunter, a history buff, a foodie, or someone looking to stay at a luxurious Boston hotel, the Omni Parker House can accommodate you. Furthermore, they have a wonderful concierge team. All of the concierges recommend the Old Town Trolley Tour to their guests. The Omni Parker House hotel concierge team will be featured in an upcoming issue of the Nation’s Storyteller.
Wow! On March 1, I celebrated my one-year anniversary in Washington DC and as I look back over the past year, I am very proud of what we have accomplished. I am also amazed at what we have put into place to make this coming season a huge success.

In the past, our commitment to guest satisfaction—while very good compared to our competition—wasn’t where it needed to be. We have spent the last year redefining that commitment and are positioned this year to provide genuine, positive encounters to each and every guest that boards our trolleys. We have retrained our CAST, redirected our focus toward quality over quantity and strengthened the relationships with our business partners to ensure that everyone inside and outside the organization understands the critical need to take care of our guests...first and foremost. I often say, “Take care of your guests and employees, and everything else will flow naturally.” This is a HUGE part of what will set us apart from our competition.

Company leaders, both inside and outside the DC office, have invested significant dollars, time, and effort increasing our CAST morale. Even with a third competitor entering the DC market, we haven’t lost any of our CAST to them. This tells me that we are doing the right thing and that the majority of the DC CAST is happy with the company, its executive management and my local leadership team. Again, “Take care of your guests and employees, and everything else will flow naturally.” This, too, is a HUGE part of what will set us apart...
VENDOR SPOTLIGHT

Aquia Pines Camp Resort
by Norm Allen; Vendor Representative

Stafford, Virginia is known as the boyhood home of George Washington, Government Island, where the stone was quarried to build The White House and Capitol, and now as the first vendor who will sell lots of Old Town Trolley Tour tickets to the thousands who pass through the gates of the Aquia Pines Camp Resort. Just a couple of miles from The National Marine Corps Museum, with 120 camp sites and full amenities for RVers, owner, Everett Lovell has spent the last 20 plus years building a family friendly atmosphere, but there’s plenty more here.

Everett is an accomplished brewmaster and regional supplier of brewing accessories and supplies. The mild aroma of hops and yeast float through the camp store inviting you to a happy hour that may be more than a little sing-a-long around the campfire. That’s the great life that Everett Lovell lives after a career as an engineer and now lining people up for the short 35 mile trip to Washington DC with freshly bought tickets from one of our newest online vendors. Thanks Everett, we will drop in soon!

From our competition.

In past seasons, we simply didn’t have enough vehicles or conductors to meet demand. The executives saw this and throughout 2013, increased our revenue fleet by seventeen trolleys. Seven of these are “CityView” vehicles, with a higher capacity than the Victorian vehicles we had become accustomed to. They are much more comfortable, quieter, and being new, much more reliable. Ten of these vehicles are what I call the B3s (Big Beautiful Babies). These are the stadium trolleys—vehicles with three-level stadium seating, offering a much clearer view of the beautiful DC monuments. The stadium trolleys have an even higher capacity than the CityViews and incredible graphics…the prides of our fleet. This helps with several issues: better vehicles for our conductors to drive, more-comfortable vehicles for our guests, and MORE vehicles to handle the DC demand. It’s a win-win-win!

Now, since we have all these new vehicles, we need talent to drive them, right? In December, we began our recruitment efforts with a myriad of media, including an incredibly successful job fair, held on Feb 21. We had over 300 job-seekers show up and hired about 10% of them on-the-spot. Next comes the extensive onboarding of this talent to prepare them for “the season.”

We are also working on several different “outside the box” sales depot ideas and I am super excited at the possibility of pioneering in directions the company has never gone. If we can’t sell on the National Mall, we’ll come up with other places to sell our tickets! Oh yeah!

Which leads me to my closing….watch us this year! What you see is going to be quite impressive!!

Archive Maintenance: Learning Safety from the Past
by Stephen O’Brien; Safety Officer

Each year, archived accident records are reviewed and those eligible for destruction are destroyed. Being The Nation’s Storyteller, however, we all know the value of studying and sharing the past…of being entertained by it and, more importantly, learning from it. Accident photos in particular, offer evidence to all CAST that “stuff” can and does happen. Viewing the photos in a training situation might well keep it from happening again. Perhaps we’d all benefit from a healthy curiosity of what we can learn from past accidents.

A reminder that curbs are potentially hazardous

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CASTMEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Lauren Sheldon
Washington DC

BACKGROUND
I am originally from North Andover, Massachusetts which is just north of Boston. I moved to Washington, DC on a whim in May of 2013 when I decided it was time to get out of New England. I graduated from the University of New Hampshire with a dual degree in Theater & Politics (because I figure they are the same thing :). Before working for Old Town Trolley, I helped to start the historic walking tour company, Cambridge Historical Tours on the Harvard University campus. There I portrayed Margaret Fuller, one of America’s first women to publicly speak out for women’s rights and education. Theater is my greatest passion and I often get caught singing show tunes at my desk. I am optimistic, upbeat, and a very positive person.

Q | Which living person do you most admire?
A | My mom, Gail Sheldon, is my hero. She is the most supportive, loving, and strong woman I know. I aspire to be just like her every day.

Q | What is your favorite vacation spot?
A | I love traveling to places where I can be immersed in a new culture, language, or learn something new. I would love to explore more of Central America, Southern Europe, or Africa.

Q | What or who is the greatest love of your life?
A | Theater is my greatest passion in life. I was introduced to the movie Grease on my 8th birthday and I’ve been singing and performing ever since.

Q | If there is one place you would like to live besides your current city, where would it be?
A | There are so many places I would like to live or visit throughout my lifetime, but at this point I would love to go to Chicago. It isn’t as big as New York, it is on the water, and it has a great theater scene.

Q | If you could choose one reality TV show to be on, what would it be?
A | Survivor. My family and I still watch it religiously each week. And even if I weren’t the contestant and my sister Colleen went out there instead, I would still be her “loved one” because in a challenge she knows I would eat a bug for her.
The New St. Augustine Distillery Opens
David Chatterton; General Manager

St. Augustine’s newest historic attraction opened this March, and Old Town Trolley wants to extend a very warm welcome to the new St. Augustine Distillery. We’ve added a stop to our trolley route to include this important new part of St. Augustine’s history.

The St. Augustine Distillery is housed in a historic ice manufacturing plant built in 1917. The original ice operation had a 60 ton capacity. When the ice plant was renovated in 1927 production was increased to 185 tons. By the late 1920s, St. Augustine residents used on average 125 tons of ice a day.

The current restoration began in December 2012 and concluded this past February. The opening of this meticulously restored building coincided with the release of the first spirit produced legally in northeast Florida since Prohibition. It is a working distillery, where guests are able to watch spirits made from scratch with locally farmed ingredients in two copper pot stills, using age-old techniques. St. Augustine Distillery’s line of distilled spirits includes super premium whisky, gin, rum and vodka. Batch 1 of the Distillery’s 100% Florida Vodka became available on March 7th, and future releases will include gin, rum, and whiskey.

The public tour experience includes a museum, theatre, and tasting room in addition to the working distillery. The museum features Florida’s distilling heritage, the building’s former life as an ice plant, info about how spirits are made, and the new St. Augustine Distillery’s quest to produce the country’s best farm-to-bottle spirits.

The guided tour begins with a short documentary film that tells the story of the Distillery’s development, the commitment to quality and focus on detail that have gone into all facets of the renovation, and features the local farms that are partnering with the facility. Guests are led onto the factory floor to watch the spirits being made from scratch. The tour ends with a cocktail demonstration and tasting.

The St. Augustine Distillery, located at 112 Riberia Street (Trolley Stop #12), is open for free tours and tastings every Tuesday – Saturday from 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. and on Sunday from 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Spring is Field Trip Season!
Suzann Maass; Museums Manager

Q: How many 4th graders does it take to fill a small historic town?
A: We’re still counting, but it sure seems like a lot!

Florida’s history curriculum calls for Florida history to be taught at the 4th grade level. That’s when students and teachers from all over the state flock to St. Augustine to see where our state and our nation began. Spring is the optimum time for field trips – the weather is beautiful, and the kids are feeling relaxed and happy as the end of the school year approaches.

For our Charter Department and History Tellers, this is one of the busiest times of the year. Scheduling educational tours in the Old Jail, the Oldest Store Museum, and the St. Augustine History Museum can be challenging. Sometimes it feels like an acrobat’s balancing act, with buses of students coming in at the same time as our regular museum attendance increases with the spring season. But it’s all worth it! The students are almost always responsive,
appreciative, and hungry for the information we have to give them. They also love seeing our history tellers and other CASTmembers at Old Town dressed in costumes from the early 20th century. It’s not uncommon for one of the children to say, “I’m going to be a tour guide when I grow up!” after a museum tour, and that’s some very satisfying feedback for our History Tellers. What could be better than telling a story that you feel passionate about and seeing a little of that passion reflected back to you from students at such an impressionable age? We love what we do!

Dear Customer Service:

Enclosed you will find the following:
1. Two Business Reply postcards for me and my wife
2. Copy of paid receipt.

First of all, we were very pleased with the Tour and our guide Jimbo.

Our complaint involves the map. We were trying to return back to the facility and went to where we thought #17 would pick us up. Unfortunately, the actual pick up location for #17 is a block to the SE located in the parking lot at the corner of San Marco Ave. and Aveida. Between walking back and forth trying to figure out the pickup location and being passed by from trolleys that were not allowed to stop, we spent almost an hour finding the true pickup location. We understand why your company is not allowed to post your company’s pickup location in the parking lot of a National Park facility, but that doesn’t help visitors, like ourselves, who are not aware of such an issue and is not marked correctly on the map. Because of the loss of time, we were not able to tour the jail which was part of our package.

I am very impressed with your “no questions asked” guarantee policy and will be utilizing your company when we visit Boston this fall.

Sincerely,

Harold R. Lacy

Original letter from Harold Lacy describing his experience in St. Augustine.

A copy of the TripAdvisor response to how we handled the situation.

Text Book...GREAT JOB to all!!!

“Customer Service A+”
Reviewed March 22, 2014
Every business at some time goes up and makes a mistake. The difference is how it is handled and the attitude in listening to a customer’s complaint.

Old Town Trolley Tours could hold a seminar for other companies in how to deal with a customer complaint. My wife and I encountered a problem with the map provided to us that indicated the various pick-up locations so that one could get on and off at various locations on the tour. The map indicated a pick-up site that was approximately one block away from the actual location.

After unsuccessfully trying to stop the trolleys at the incorrect location, I contacted the office and was given instructions on locating the correct location. After returning to main station, I complained to the manager about the incorrect map location and was told to mail in the customer survey card with a request for a refund.

Within a few weeks of my correspondence, I not only received my refund, but also two complimentary tickets for tours in six other cities.

St. Augustine Story Continued...

appreciative, and hungry for the information we have to give them. They also love seeing our history tellers and other CASTmembers at Old Town dressed in costumes from the early 20th century. It’s not uncommon for one of the children to say, “I’m going to be a tour guide when I grow up!” after a museum tour, and that’s some very satisfying feedback for our History Tellers. What could be better than telling a story that you feel passionate about and seeing a little of that passion reflected back to you from students at such an impressionable age? We love what we do!

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Nights of Lights Contest Winners

The Casablanca Inn was the 1st place winner. Pictured in the photo are Amber Payne (Mint Magazine), Amanda Sanders (Innkeeper at the Casablanca Inn) and Dave Chatterton.

The Raintree Restaurant was the 3rd place winner. Lorna McDonald, the owner of the Raintree, liked the framed photo better than any other part of the award!

2nd Place Contest Winner, the Peace and Plenty Bed & Breakfast Inn

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2nd Place Contest Winner, the Peace and Plenty Bed & Breakfast Inn

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February - March 2014
VENDOR SPOTLIGHT
Hilton Garden Inn St. Augustine

by Melissa Mezick; Vendor Representative

I am so proud of the Hilton Garden Inn on the Beach! The entire front office staff and sales team have really enhanced their guest experience in St Augustine by utilizing Old Town Trolley’s complimentary Beach Bus. Their guests can park their car and not touch it again until they leave – truly a relaxing way to vacation!

I am also extremely happy that the Hilton brought back their original General Manager, Marty, after a couple of years being away. Marty’s experience has enabled him to bring on an awesome Front Office Manager, Addie, and together they have hired an excellent staff that is dedicated to exemplary customer service.

The friendly team at the Hilton Garden Inn St. Augustine welcomes each guest with a freshly baked cookie. The hotel provides excellent business services and leisure amenities, such as the complimentary 24-hour business center, on-site breakfast restaurant, and complimentary WiFi in every guest room.

The firmness settings for the Garden Sleep System® beds are fully adjustable to suit each guest’s individual preferences, providing exceptional comfort and support. Business travelers can do their work comfortably at large work-friendly desks with ergonomic chairs and convenient desk-level outlets, and can take advantage of secure remote printing to the Business Center. Guests may eat whenever it is convenient for them, thanks to the 24-hour Pavilion Pantry® and in-room hospitality center. Upgrades to a King Whirlpool Suite or the larger Family Suite are available. Additionally, there are accessible rooms available, with such modified amenities as roll-in showers and a visual notification system for the door, telephone, and emergency alarm.

Guests can start their day with a delicious, hot cooked-to-order breakfast with light continental items served daily at an affordable price in the Great American Grill, or they can have a delicious meal brought to their room with the in-room dining service. The dedicated catering and events team is on hand to help with conferences or social events. Relax in the oversized whirlpool or enjoy a gentle walk through the beautiful landscaped gardens.
BACKGROUND

I was born in Youngstown, Ohio, in the late 1940s and lived there most of my life, until moving to St. Augustine in 2009. After getting my B.S. in physics, I worked in Lynchburg, Virginia, as a Nuclear Health and Safety Officer for B & W, which was the sole manufacturer of naval nuclear reactors. I left Lynchburg to get a Master's Degree and become a teacher, enjoying 20 years as one of the finest physics teachers in Ohio, impacting the lives of hundreds of students. During my teaching career, enrollment in the physics department went from 35 students to more than 140 per year, with an increase of over 40% in the female enrollment alone. During my last 11 years at Austintown Fitch High School in Ohio I was the Media/Library/TV Studio/IT Director. During this time I was one of four individuals who started the InbOhio project, bringing automated, online resource catalogs to all Ohio schools, including a large array of online resources available free to all Ohio students.

From 1976 to 1992 I was the Chief Negotiator for the teacher's master contract with Austintown Schools. I also became an official of the Ohio Education Association. In the early 90s I was in the founding cohort of PRAXIS III, Entry Year Teacher Assessment program. I became known as the PRAXIS Guru in Ohio, training over 500 teacher assessors in Ohio, over 100 assessors for the State of Arkansas and training over 100 Trainers of Assessors in both those states. I helped Arkansas get the state Teacher Assessment program going. I consulted with United Arab Emirates on teacher assessment, and I was instrumental in the development of PRAXIS III in Ohio. Over that time I also consulted extensively with Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey, to perfect and implement PRAXIS III in Ohio and Arkansas.

Ruth, my wife, and I relocated to St. Augustine in 2009 to enjoy the wonderful history, the fantastic weather and the ocean. We came here after visiting friends who had moved here, including our dear friend Linda McCowin Norris. We fell in love with the area. Linda worked for OTT of St. Augustine and helped me gain employment as a conductor in early 2010. Our son, Kevin, currently resides in St Augustine while our eldest son Sean and our granddaughter live in Las Vegas.

I am now a four-year veteran of OTT St. Augustine, working part-time as a conductor and dispatcher. I love the interaction with all the people I meet working in the Oldest City. Just as the students in my physics classes gave me much more than I gave them, my co-workers and guests give me so much. It is a true joy meeting so many fine people – just fantastic! You have to come and visit the Oldest City and all the fine people at OTT of St Augustine.

My St Patrick’s Day wish for everyone --
May your troubles be less,
your blessings more,
and may nothing but happiness,
come through your door.

Q | What is your favorite vacation spot?
A | Geneva- On-The-Lake, Ohio. As a child we would camp at the lake two months in the summer. My parents bought a summer cottage and when I was in college I worked at this vacation area each summer. As an adult we go to Las Vegas for four to six weeks a year to visit our oldest son and granddaughter. We enjoy doing short excursions while there, and I do like to play cards. My son manages Olive’s Restaurant in the Bellagio, so if you visit Vegas, stop in and say hello to Sean Patrick O’Brien

Q | Who are your favorite historical figures?
A | William J. Brennan, Jr., the most influential Supreme Court Justice in the 20th century and the consummate progressive. And of course, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, because he married Eleanor and he led this country out of the depths of despair during the Great Depression and through WWII.

Q | Who is the greatest love of your life?
A | Of course, my wife, Ruth, and my sons, Sean and Kevin.

Q | What is your favorite occupation?
A | My favorite occupation was teaching Physics for 20 years at Austintown Fitch High School.

Q | What is the trait you most deplore in others?
A | I am a very tolerant and patient person, but as I age I have become intolerant of STUPIDITY, which along with lying are the traits I most deplore.

Q | What three things will you always find in your refrigerator?
A | In our refrigerator you will always find yogurt, asparagus, and of course wine.

Q | What do you consider your greatest achievement?
A | My greatest achievements are being a good father and husband and teaching physics to over 2000 students. I have had a lasting impact on many teenagers who now are accomplished professionals.
Generally Speaking

by Charlie Brazil; General Manager

As of this writing I am wholeheartedly celebrating the arrival of SPRING to Savannah. I can assure you all of us here in Georgia’s First City are praying it is here to stay. We’ve had a horribly cold winter which precipitated the first “snow days” I’ve ever experienced in my 10+ years living here. Now, we didn’t get snow, but we did have some nasty “black ice” – and just like OTT-SAV, the folks in Savannah put safety first when it comes to our kids and school was cancelled. I took advantage of this opportunity to introduce my son, who is a southern child that has not experienced a lot of snow, to a “snow day” at a local farm where they actually produced a snow storm and had a toboggan ride. We loved it, and were glad that we were able to go home and change into shorts...

February and March for me mean one thing more than anything else - BUDGETS! I presented my 11th budget for the Savannah operation, and feel that FY2014-15 is going to be a great one (knock wood). This confidence is due in great part to the exemplary work of our entire CAST, Leadagement Team and corporate support staff to make the work we do here stand out as superior to all others. Whether it is our fleet, our depots, our packages, our new program initiatives or most importantly our people, I cannot adequately express the pride I have in being the bottom stone in our reverse pyramid. Looking forward to the year ahead can’t happen without expressing my gratitude for the great work everyone has done in the year about to close. Thank you all!!!!!

Now that St. Patrick’s Day is behind us (the only day of the year we don’t offer tour services) we can set about getting into the meat of season. On April 1, we will extend our daytime hours to 6pm, and we’ll put our head down until August 1, when we take a breath from more days over 1,000 riders than under it. I am excited to get to it, and to the wonderful weather we are known for as well. I invite you to come and join us, I’ll keep the sweet tea cold for ya...

Operations

by Marcie Larkin; Operations Manager

It’s all Orange and Green in Savannah! We are getting ready for the second largest St. Patrick’s Day celebration in the world. All our fountains are flowing green, guests are starting to arrive and the Irish flag is hanging on almost every flag pole. Our trolleys are perfect decorations in this beautiful city this time of the year. All of our CAST will be enjoying the green grits served that morning for breakfast and enjoying the only day that OTT Savannah is closed. Have fun and be safe! Erin Go Bragh!

Safety in Savannah

by Kenny Gresham; Safety and Training Officer

One would believe that January and February in Savannah, being the off season, would be a slow time of the year for the safety officer. Hopefully it would be. Not this year!! January brought a DOT inspection by the Georgia Department of Public Safety. Our yearly inspection was done in September. So what’s up? Well... the Sergeant wanted somewhere for his trainees to practice. We were the logical choice as we are always accommodating. I asked the Sergeant if this was just practice, he said yes for them but it counts for us. Twice in one year. WOW!! Out again came the backup “Emergency: Lift Handle, Push Window Out” stickers. These stickers are always in supply because the guests scrape them off the windows when the tour begins to wane. Needless to say, we passed the inspection.

Charlie Brazil, our beloved GM, asked how this added inspection benefitted us. I replied that it extended goodwill. Goodwill only goes so far when dealing with the Georgia State Patrol, a very imposing arm of the state government. I was wrong, the inspection counted more than I could have figured. You see, two weeks later we were going to have our city inspection. They
also inspect all the vehicles. This year though they were asking for a passenger permit and certificate. We have federal DOT and MC numbers which means we can carry guests anywhere in the United States, but not inside Georgia.

On July 1, 2012, the responsibility for commercial transportation was given to the Georgia Department of Public Safety (state DOT) from the Georgia Public Service Commission. Interstate we are fine, but in state (intrastate) must have Certificate and Permit. The application process was as involved as getting the original DOT number (to hear Jim tell it). This requirement has been on the books but only now enforced because the Georgia DOT has the manpower and desire to enforce it. We’ve always run off our federal DOT numbers and this intrastate requirement was new to me as well as 99% of Georgians, some of I would meet in class.

The process included, among other things, a three year MVR and background check for Joe Moyer, Ben McPherson, Chris Belland, and Ed Swift. A BIG Thank You to these guys for your help and for not firing me. I ask a lot of our Key West home office during this process, and I’m very grateful for all of their support. Kudos to Julie Leonard in HR for all her help as well! We finally got everything together and mailed it to Atlanta. Along with the so called not needed DOT inspection in February. That turned out to be one of the state requirements. We jumped through that hoop before it materialized. Yeah!!!

On February 17, I attended a training class in Atlanta and went over everything that I had put so much effort into obtaining during the earlier, lengthy endeavor. Finally we heard back from the state, everything has been approved! Thanks to all of HTA for your hard work. Go Orange and Green!!

**Ghosts and Gravestones**

*by Gary Patrick; Ghosts and Gravestones Manager*

St Paddy’s Day is just around the corner and our season is getting under way. We have 14 actors on board and five black trolleys ready to go! Our new script has been put in place and our training is all complete. Everyone is excited about the upcoming season and the opportunity to grow our ridership.

Through great fortune and much hard work, we were recently able to secure Ghost Adventures to come and investigate our Gribble House attraction on the G&G Tour. Look for it on the Travel Channel some time later this year. With an audience of over 97 million viewers, the TV exposure should translate to some nice increases in people taking our tour over the coming year!

**Human Resources**

*by Jon Watkins; Human Resources Manager*

Congratulations to our “Of the months” for January which were announced at our CAST meeting at the Davenport House. Conductor – Jim Beam, Sales – Janice Emerson, Supporting – Darion Williams, Ghost – Lexi Alexander.

I have been busily recruiting the spring additions to our CAST to get ready for season which is now upon us. We have brought onboard 24 new additions to the OTT Savannah family since January 1. Conductors – Andy Anderson, Ed Bogan, James Fields, David Giver, Brenda Hankinson, David Harper, Sharon Horne, Molly Kennedy, Ben Lawson, Christine Nealy, Dennis Pellegrino, Michele Price, and Melody South. Ghost Hosts – Josh Bolla, Mary Bright, Charr Floyd, Anita Jordan, Khamilla Shellman, and Travis Spangenburg. Concierge – Carroll Inglis. Sales Reps – T Floyd, Jennipher Laraway, Kim Story, and Peggy Takacs.

With the additions of the Hampton Inn and Holiday Inn Express on Bay Street to our Concierge staffed hotels we had the opportunity to promote three Sales Reps to Concierge at these hotels. Congratulations to Maggie Benevides, Petya Kostadinova and Cathy Vaccari. We’ve gotten great feedback from the hotels and the guests on their performance already!

We recently made a new addition to the Leadager ranks here in Savannah when we filled the Head Conductor position for the first time. After a rigorous interview process, in which we had quite a few good candidates participate, the Head Conductor opportunity was offered to Rich Montaudo. We all congratulate Rich and want to offer him all of the help he needs as he grows into and excels in his new position.

As an addition to our Conductor training initiative for this year we had Kayla Black heading up the training effort. Having come onboard as a Conductor in January 2013, Kayla had quite a few good ideas to help streamline and improve our Conductor spring training class. When she “pitched” GM Charlie Brazil with them little did she know that she would end up being put in charge of the training program. With the help of Carl Williams, Wayne Johnson and Rich Montaudo, the Conductor Trainees enjoyed smooth sailing as they acquired their CDL’s, passed the test for the
From Left to Right - Jessica Staats, Jack Sibley, Gail Sibley, Justin Bahl, Rob Derouse, Dave Roland, Leslie Allen, Joyce Dahlberg, Tommy Allen, Mike Gibson, Tricia Richmond, Andrew Kirby, Tomi Hutton, Sharon Wells, Christina Beliles, Taylor Sanderson, Haywood Barnes
Savannah Tour Guide Permit and completed script and route training. Kayla has also been working to revise the daytime script and also the Ghost and Gravestones script.

Vendor Happenings
by Robert "The Colonel" Hunter; Vendor Sales Manager

What can I say, the cold weather doesn’t slow us down! I am happy to say that the Vendor Department is ending the year way way over budget!

We welcome three new vendors, the Royal Bike Taxi Company, Oglethorpe Lodging and the Dresser Palmer House. We have already seen some nice numbers come by them and we look forward to a long and prosperous relationship with each of these companies. Welcome Aboard!

St. Patrick’s Day is a HUGE event for Savannah, so I took the opportunity to incorporate the festivities into my cookie program, handing out mugs, cups, cookies and magnets. It’s always great to visit folks in and outside if the Historic District, especially when in costume! It’s flattering to have my picture taken so much…now I know what it’s like for celebrities on the red carpet!

Spring begins this month and we are gearing up for our busy season. Hopefully we’ll have a few more names to add to the “New Vendor” list each month! Happy Spring!

Depot Sales
by Jim Rafferty; Depot Sales Manager

As I write this we have begun our season and it couldn’t come too soon. What a roller coaster for weather here in Savannah. It would be nice for a few days then very cold and windy. It would just repeat this pattern. We had a great Holiday CAST Party in mid-January where all had a good time. January is also our hiring season and I would like to welcome our new CASTMembers. Jennipher Laraway, Kim Story, Peggy Takacs, Theresa Floyd, and new concierge Carroll Ingliss. Welcome aboard!

We added two new hotel properties that are staffed with OTT concierges. The Holiday Inn Express and the Hampton Inn. We transitioned three of our sales representatives to these positions. Petya Kostadinova, Maggie Benevides, and Cathy Vaccari. They are going to do great!

Congratulations go out to Sales Representatives of the Month. Tramaine McCombs for November and Holly Edenfield for December. Great job! A big congratulations goes out to Tim Conway for our Sales Person of the Year. Well earned!

Savannah Story Continued...

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY
FEBRUARY
William Webster, 21 years
Terry Hayes, 13 years
Alexandria Bryant, 11 years
Cindy Cantrell, 10 years
Timothy Watson, 7 years
Kevin Delahanty, 6 years
Jon Watkins, 6 years
Carl Williams, 5 years
Francis Gleason, 4 years
Joseph Pelletreau, 2 years
Karen Mott, 2 years
James Garcia, 1 year
Kayla Black, 1 year
Christopher Dudzinski, 1 year
Kristina Prince, 1 year
Brittany Segal, 1 year
Linda Sickler, 1 year
Christopher Wood, 1 year

MARCH
Janice Emerson, 13 years
Jackson Barrett, 8 years
Barbara Roundtree, 6 years
Eric Coney, 4 years
Allison Tuten, 4 years
Willie Dennard IV, 3 years
Elizabeth Wiglesworth, 3 years
James Gibby, 2 years
Beverly Hodges, 1 year

James Fields
Theresa Floyd
Brenda Hankinson
Anita Jordan
Christine Nealy
Michele Price
Khamilla Shellman
Joan Story
Vimary Valdes
David West
Richard Anderson
Paul Harper
Margaret Kennedy
Dennis Pellegrino
Robert Lawson
Edward Bogan
Mary Bright
Melody South

RETAIL
Monty Newman Jr.
CASTMEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Tim Conway
Sales Representative; Savannah

BACKGROUND
I was born and raised in N. E. Ohio, I had a great life growing up on the river and then the lake. I had a great childhood! My parents were both professionals, a teacher and a dentist. They both grew up during the depression with a love of life, family and fun. They taught my sister, brother and I that family is FIRST. I live that to this day.

My life after “leaving home” was about wrestling in college at Kent State and at Western State in Colorado. I was good but not great. After college I joined the Navy, had great a great time and got to see a lot of the world. That’s when I became a Yankee! I met and fell in love with Rhonda, a southern girl, and stayed.

When I was discharged from the Navy I began my sales career. I sold everything from boats and windsurfers to marine supplies during my 25 years in industrial and commercial sales. I’ve spent as much time with my boys and their school and athletics as I could. They’re great! I could go on and on about them and especially Rhonda but I won’t.

Q | Which living person do you most admire?
A | If my father were still alive it would be him! He was the smartest, most fun to be around, hardworking, with an absolute love life and family. Since he passed it has to be my wife Rhonda. She has always been there for me and the boys, and has persevered through cancer and her mother’s death with grace and tenacity. She does her best to keep me in line! She has to be a saint to put up with me for over 32 years!

Q | Who or what is the greatest love of your life?
A | Easy peasy, my wife Rhonda.

Q | If there was one place you would like to live besides your current city, where would it be?
A | Two places, a winter home in Hope Town, Bahamas and a summer home on a lake up north.

Q | What is your favorite occupation?
A | SALES, I love what I do. I’m pretty good at it. There are so many opportunities! Every business starts with someone selling something.

Q | Who are your favorite writers?
A | Lee Child, James Patterson and Milton Freedman

VENDOR SPOTLIGHT

Royal Bike Taxi
by Robert “The Colonel” Hunter; Vendor Sales Manager

Royal Bike Tours has a fleet of approximately 40 open air pedicabs that provide a great way for our visitors to get around the busy Historic District. The company itself originated out of New Orleans and has been a staple of Savannah for the past few years. They are proud to have created jobs for 40-50 Savannahians! Not only does Bob Hunt manage Royal Bike Tours, he is also the Full Service Concierge for Oglethorpe Lodging. We look forward to a long partnership!

JANUARY
Jim Beam, Conductor
Janice Emerson, Sales Rep.
Darion Williams, Supporting
Alexis Alexander, G&G

FEBRUARY
Ruben Alegria, Conductor
Pam Hannel, Sales Rep.
Kim Evans, Supporting
Richard Cheely, G&G

twitter.com/savannahtours
facebook.com/savannahtours

CASTMEMBERS OF THE MONTH

February - March 2014
San Diego

Old Town Cultural and Historical Golf Tournament Fundraiser

by David Thornton; General Manager

The 2nd annual Old Town Golf Tournament was held Monday, March 17th. The event raised funds to support the transportation needs for the 4th grade San Diego school district educational history program. 4th graders of San Diego County visit Old Town to learn of the birthplace of California, the first European settlement on the west coast. Celebrity guest golfer Billy Casper, PGA Hall of Fame golfer, attended as well. Old Town Trolley, SEAL Tours and the Old Town Market helped sponsor the event. Ten CAST members, Erica Frost, Bob Hatcher, Karen DeHaan, Steve Brooks, Mike Devin, Richard Smith, Ken Hill, Steve Scott, Brian Richard and Susie Vetter, did their best golf efforts out on the greens to support this worthy cause. The event included awards, prizes, raffles and dinner. Our very own Erica Frost won the Ladies Longest Drive Award and had to say, “I was so completely surprised that I won the ‘Ladies Longest Drive’ contest at the annual Old Town Chamber Golf Tournament and Fundraiser. I think the key might have been not knowing when the hole would come into play because I didn’t have time to get nervous. I just approached the tee box, gripped it and ripped it! What a great feeling! Not only was it the longest drive it was also perfectly in the middle of the fairway too, just like I had intended. The prize is amazing! Two tickets to any sporting event in the U.S. WITH airfare! What an awesome prize, I’m so excited!” Congrats!

Trolley News

by John Savage; Operations Manager

We hired five new tour conductors who have made it through auditions and are in the final stages of a rigorous training schedule. They are learning to drive a 35-foot specialty vehicle, provide an entertaining and informative tour that covers over 450 years of history. Safely travel on a 25-mile loop of two cities while maintaining a schedule. And did I mention they have to do all of this at the same time?

We have a very strong class of candidates from a very diverse set of backgrounds, all working hard and proud to be part of the Old Town Trolley family class of 2014.

In addition, we are also adding two vehicles to our fleet that we procured from another city. More drivers and more vehicles make for a very happy charter department.

San Diego #1 in Safety...Again

by Bob Ross; Safety Officer

For the fifth year in a row, the San Diego team combined operations earned the company’s top safety recognition as the safest HTA operation for the 2013 calendar year. We drove a total of 465,854 miles in 2013.

For the year 2013 we had a total of 37 conductors, Park Tram drivers and SEAL Captains. 84% of the drivers qualified for safe driving awards and 77% of the drivers receiving awards earned the maximum award available. Three drivers were recognized for three years of safe driving, three for four years of safe driving, and two for five years of safe driving. The top awards went to one driver, Chris Chirotas, with nine years and another driver, Steve Brooks, with six years of safe driving.
Tony Salter with General Manager David Thornton. Tony won a new I-Pad mini as the CAST celebrate Old Town Trolley’s 25 years in San Diego.

Mardi Gras in the car barn

The CAST enjoy breakfast at the Tequila Factory restaurant after our monthly meeting. Pictured Tyler, Carrie, Ken and Bones.

John Savage

The CAST enjoy breakfast at the Tequila Factory restaurant after our monthly meeting. Pictured Oscar, Gina, Saul and Rick.

Carrie and Erin

Sales Rep Samantha Forsythe, Office support Cristina Valenzuela and Sales Rep Robin Russell celebrating Old Town Trolley Tours 25 years in San Diego.

Carmen and Nancy

The Key West Duck arrives in San Diego joining the fleet of SEAL vessels.

Tony Salter with General Manager David Thornton. Tony won a new I-Pad mini as the CAST celebrate Old Town Trolley’s 25 years in San Diego.

Carrie and Erin

Depot Sales Manager Tyler Grubenhoff and Director of Sales Rod La Branche bowling at the 25th anniversary party.

Carmen and Nancy

The CAST enjoy breakfast at the Tequila Factory restaurant after our monthly meeting. Pictured Tyler, Carrie, Ken and Bones.

Brenda Martin, Old Town Market Operations Manager, steadies her bowling skills for a possible strike.

Carmen Thulin, Office Manager looks on for a strike while bowling at the CAST party celebrating Old Town Trolley’s 25th anniversary.

Conductor Deb Hildebrand prepares for strike or gutter ball???
CASTMEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Nancy Nuhaily
Assistant Head Conductor

BACKGROUND
I was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois. I graduated from Morton West High School in 1967. After graduation, I worked as a Supervisor at Montgomery Ward, in the credit department. I got married in 1970 and had a lovely daughter named Victoria. In 1977 we decided to move to a paradise called San Diego. I began work at a golf manufacturing center and soon after that; I earned a promotion to General Manager. I worked there for 10 years. In 1988 the company closed and I was in search of a new job. I was looking for work in the golf industry, when I came across an ad in the paper which caught my eye, “Tour Company, Looking for Good People.” I showed up to apply but the secretary said that they were not hiring at this time. I asked to speak with the manager but he was not there. Over the next two weeks, I returned several times to see if they were hiring and finally the manager, Don Harrison saw me. I guess my persistence paid off. After we talked for awhile, Don said, “Take the tour and if you like us, the job is yours.” After taking the tour, I came straight back to Don and told him that I was in Love with the tour, the company and the nice people working there…and I never left.

I started with Old Town Trolley Tours San Diego, May 1989, when the company was just getting started. I became a Sales Rep, a Tour Conductor and I developed a character out of San Diego History named Belle Benchley. We all pitched in and did whatever was necessary each day to get the job done. One minute I would be selling tickets, the next minute I would be driving a trolley then suddenly I would need
to turn into my character, we did it all. I did that for many years. I now work in the office, handling purchasing and inventory. I also organize several of our charitable community service events, such as the Breast Cancer awareness Fundraiser, St. Vincent De Paul Christmas Toy Drive for the homeless children and Bookmarks for United way and would love to do even more charity work if it comes my way.

Q | What is your idea of perfect happiness?
A | When someone is able to figure out how to keep the homeless off the street and in a better environment and not just tossed aside.

Q | What or whom is the greatest love of your life?
A | My daughter Victoria. She is my love and my pride and joy.

Q | What do you consider your greatest achievement?
A | Working for Old Town Trolley since 1989 and all my Community Service Events I do throughout the year for OTTSD.

Q | What is your most treasured possession?
A | My LIFE!!!!!!

Q | Who are your favorite writers?
A | Nicolas Sparks and Ernest Hemingway
In The Kitchen With
Chris ‘Curly’ Chiotras

MEXICAN CHICKEN SOUP...OPA!!!!

Ingredients
- 1 1/2 pounds of boneless chicken breasts cubed
- 1/2 cup of water
- 1 envelope of low salt taco seasoning
- 32oz low salt V-8 juice
- 16oz red salsa (your favorite brand)
- 15oz black beans
- 10oz frozen corn

You can add whatever frozen veggies you like. I like okra and green beans too. If it comes out a little thick you can add some beer or white wine to thin it out. Thow everything into a crock pot on low and let it simmer for five hours or longer. Garnish with cheese, cilantro and sour cream.

For complete wellness, the hotel also offers "The Art of Spa", set in 7,500 sq. ft. of luxury and featuring nine treatment rooms, a fitness center with state-of-the-art equipment and a retail boutique. We thank the entire team at the Hilton San Diego Resort & Spa for being such wonderful partners!

This month I’m happy to spotlight the staff at the Hilton San Diego Resort and Spa. The Hilton San Diego Resort & Spa is set on the sands of Mission Bay and just six miles from San Diego International Airport. The hotel has 357 stylish guest rooms including eight spacious suites with beautiful views of Mission Bay. Jessica Maddock and Nicolette Kalic staff their Concierge Desk and are both terrific supporters of the Old Town Trolley and SEAL Tours. They both offer our tickets through our online Trusted Tours ticket program. The Bell Staff are also great fans of our tours as we offer a complimentary shuttle to the hotel every morning and the Bell staff welcomes our Trolley every morning at their lobby.

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Change is a Good Thing!
by Steven Burress; Operations Manager

We have all heard that often. For some people it brings a tight feeling in the chest. For other people, an excitement for new opportunity and growth. Both are completely acceptable reactions. In many cases, we have a bit of both that take over when we hear about a change. Old Town Trolley in Key West has had several changes recently as we undergo growth.

As you have possibly read from our Sales Manager, Justin Bahl, our sales team has consolidated with the Conch Tour Train making a new HTA sales team. Increased ridership from the cruise ships has led us to increased conductors on staff, making the total number of conductors the greatest in any season that I have been with the company. Perhaps the greatest change for me is my departure from Old Town Trolley after 8 years. I have decided to leave Key West and return to the mainland. This has been an amazing opportunity for me to grow with the company. I am fortunate to have been a part of the great things that have happened in Key West with the trolley. I will miss so many things about the daily life, the family that we have here, the leadagers that have helped me grow and who have worked so hard to make our daily operation such a success, and the guests that we work to impress on a daily basis. Thank you to HTA for being such an amazing part of my life. Thank you to the Key West team for being my family.

Welcome!
by Laurie Skinner; Head Conductor

Welcome back to Maria Allen and Ben Fox from the Old Town Trolley family. Maria and Ben have come back to part time help out on our busy cruise ships days. We are glad to have you back.

Many of our Old Town Trolley drivers have many hidden talents. This past St. Patrick’s Day we were treated to bag piping from one of our drivers, Joshua Thurston. He has played the bagpipes for over 15 years and later this year will be competing in a bag piping competition. Joshua played the bagpipes on the docks to welcome the cruise ships into port and to send them off. Phillip Baucom, fellow OTT driver also showed his dancing skills with his version of River Dance.

Wheelchair Training
by April Raskovensky; Safety Officer

This past month we had our annual wheelchair training. Both Key West Operations (Conch Tour Train and Old Town Trolley Key West) had a large joint meeting. We then broke off into groups rotating through the training video and two hands on stations sales force has still put up monster numbers in both February and March, crushing the goals from the previous year. The long overdue move to unite the sales force has not only paid off for us now, but is a positive change that I believe will lead the company away from the old ways of the past and instead guide us down a road of bright promise in the future.

"By changing nothing, nothing changes." – Tony Robbins
We had a combined CASTmember meeting between Old Town Trolley and Conch Tour Train. We covered how the wheelchairs work on three different vehicles.

each to see how each of our unique wheelchair vehicles work. It was very efficient with the aid of my training helpers and the cooperation and attention of the entire cast. My thanks go out to everyone for making this training so successful!

Cruise Ship World

by Kevin Delahanty; Old Town Trolley Excursions Liaison

Here we are in February and sales were good. We carried 10,776 passengers with 37 ships. March is the busiest month of the year with 47 ships. March is the busiest month of the year with 47 ships. With all the ships we have, the Excursion team takes the Shore Excursions managers and their teams for familiarization tours. We took the Celebrity Constellation team with about 15 guests showcasing HTA attractions. The goal is to take all ship teams on this tour at least once a month. This allows some of the crew a chance to see things other than Duval Street. When asked on board, “What can we do in Key West?” The crew and shore excursions team can recommend our different products. During the familiarization tour, they do a tour with the Truman’s Little White House, Shipwreck Treasures Museum, Aquarium and Conch Train. We finish up the tour with a lunch and gift bags for the Shore excursions team.

MaRCH

Richard Ware, 12 years

haPPY annIVerSarY

BACKGROUND

I grew up in a town called Keyport in New Jersey. I have a bachelor’s degree in Marine Science and I used to teach Marine Science for a non-profit organization for 11 years and for a community college for six years before moving to Key West. I had wanted to move to Key West for a long time but the timing was never right. Before moving here I lived in a little beach town called Sea Bright, until Hurricane Sandy hit us and pretty much turned my life upside down. I then decided it was time to make a change and had nothing to lose. So without a place to live or a job waiting for me, I packed my bags and moved to Key West! Thankfully, I found a place to live the second day I was here and was hired by HTA a short two weeks later. I love boating, fishing, scuba diving, paddle boarding – all of which has made Key West the perfect place for me.

Q | What is your greatest fear?
A | Failure.

Q | What is your favorite vacation spot?
A | It was Key West, now I have to find a new one.

Q | What is your most treasured possession?
A | My passport. I love to travel. I want to fill my passport with stamps at least once in my life.

Q | If there is one place you would like to live besides your current city, where would it be?
A | Back in Sea Bright, New Jersey

Q | What three things will you always find in my refrigerator?
A | Ketchup, salad dressing, and cheese

Cruise ship passengers waiting to ride the Conch Train

A SHIP TO SHORE

Jim gets training from the Safety Management Institute that April and he attended.

CASTMEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Jessica Staats
Sales Rep; Key West

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HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

MARCH

Richard Ware, 12 years

WELCOME ABOARD

Ashley Van Vleet

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CONCH TOUR TRAIN

Merging Sales Forces
by Eva Conway; Operations Manager

The Conch Tour Train had a great winter season this year. As our winter season comes to an end the snowbirds head North and the cruise ships go to different destinations for the summer. We are looking forward to a chance to catch our breath.

As season ends we will also be losing our Head Driver “MJ” (Michael Jordan). We wish MJ all the best in his future endeavors. He will be missed by the Conch Tour Train CASTmembers.

Congratulations go to Marty Shoeneman. Marty will take over the Head Driver position.

On January 6th 2014 the Conch Tour Train and the Old Town Trolley reps became one and now are the Historic Tours of America sales reps. The merger has been quite successful. The two companies have always been separated since HTA bought the Conch Tour Train in 1983. The Old Town Trolley in Key West had already been established. They continued to run separately, as they were both successful and gave two different types of tours. Conch Tour Train gave an hour and a half tour with a 10 minute rest stop during the tour. You were not allowed to get off and re-board. Our maximum speed is 25 mph. The Old Town Trolley made stops all over the island and you were allowed to re-board. The Conch Tour Train now has four stops and you can re-board at any of the four locations.

Changing Tides
by Michael Jordan; Head Engineer

We would like to welcome Marty Shoeneman as our Head Engineer for the Conch Tour Train. Marty has been with the Train since April of 2012 and has been a Lead Engineer for the past 6 Months. He moved to Key West in 2011 after moving from Colorado where he was in Real-estate Land Development for 20 years. Marty made the decision to move to Key West after he had been vacationing here for 12 years.

Marty is taking over for me (MJ) as I head back north to brave the cold of Philadelphia and will be going back to school for a nursing program. Thank you to everyone who has made my time in Key West one of the most memorable times of my life. We are very excited for Marty and know he is going to make a great addition to the Leadager Team in Key West.
27 February - March 2014

BJ Andrade-Ward, Bryan Lewis, Kenny Jones waiting for the ship to clear

Train and Trolley passing each other going to and from the cruise ship on the mole as shuttles

Michael Jordan showing how the ramp on bus works

Phil and Ed pulling train wheelchair ramp up

Brandon Williams unlocking the train wheelchair ramp for training with Gail Sibley and Marty Shoemenen

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You’ve Got to Believe

by Andy Kirby, Excursion Liaison Sales Manager

People may not remember exactly what you did or what you said, but they will always remember how you made them feel.

Sales are made for emotional reasons and justified with logic. You must “preach the gospel”. It’s impossible to think you can inspire others to take action if you, in fact, are not inspired. What’s important is you’ve got to believe in your heart that our products and services are right for our guests.

What is it that makes prospects want to buy? What makes prospects not want to buy – even when they may really need something? No one likes the thought of being sold to. People like to think they buy something because it’s their idea. They think no smart sales professional is going to persuade them any other way. The first rule of successful selling process is: Make sure you are not perceived as selling anything. People want to buy, they do not want to be sold to. The second rule of successful selling, before prospects buy from you, they have to trust you. Prospects have to trust that you want the best for them, trust your knowledge, and trust your word. To create trust, two things are important: how you are seen and perceived in a particular time frame. And whether your prospect is having a good day or bad day or a good or bad experience. Never take all the blame or all the praise. Instead, learn the third rule of successful selling: Find the warm button and press it. What is important, at that very moment, to your prospect or customer? Don’t just ask. Find out by listening. Pickup what appear to be insignificant throwaway words and/or signs, and explore them? You need to speak your prospects language. When you listen and make your prospect feel understood and that you have their best interest at heart, they will trust in you and in what you are selling. In our business of selling remember some quick helpful insights. Make a good impression. Make your true identity and purpose clear. Approach the person and have in mind an idea that fits the prospect’s needs. Build a rapport quickly with the prospect, listen, be polite and never challenge an opinion, instead look for areas of agreement. Don’t shy away from competition. Sell on a needs basis, and emphasize quality. Educate prospects, be patient this makes prospects feel that they are getting their money’s worth. Be a quality sales professional. Ask for the sale, Give them something to say YES to. And Always BELIEVE. BELIEVE in Yourself and the products you represent. I BELIEVE in our products but most of all I BELIEVE in all of You.

---- Enjoy your next Sunset
Oscar Contest Winners!

Congratulations to these three CASTmembers who answered all the Oscar Contest winners correctly plus the bonus/tie breaker questions. Each received a movie lovers gift basket that included all the essential needs to have a movie night in and out!

Evone Avites from Caribbean Cargo in Key West

Alec Toranzo from Caribbean Cargo in Key West

Evan Blanch from Boston Tea Party Ships and Museum
In March, the BlackDog team attended the prestigious Miami ADDY Awards. The top agencies from all over South Florida gathered on the Key Biscayne waterfront to celebrate the region’s best advertising. They were honored and excited to receive a total of 18 ADDYS, including nine Gold awards. Their work was recognized in categories across the board, such as consumer websites, collateral material, videos, mobile websites, integrated campaigns and photography.

While they were truly thrilled and honored when their work was awarded by the industry, their primary focus is not on winning awards but rather the success of what they produce for their clients. That success comes in no small part from the ongoing collaboration with their clients.

Blackdog Advertising received Gold honors for their work they did on the Old Town Trolley Tours of Boston Recycling Bins Video as well as Fort Jefferson Photography. Silver Awards were given to them for the Yankee Freedom Responsive Website, Yankee Freedom Website Interface and Video, and over all Yankee Freedom website. We at Historic Tours of America are fortunate to have this great team as part of our creative family.

To see more about the ADDY awards given to Blackdog please visit: http://www.blackdogadvertising.com/miami-advertising-blog/addy-awards-2014#sthash.Zw9isMn0.dpuf
Half Million Dollar Club News

by Bobby Bernreuter, Director of Sales & Attraction Development

HTA's fiscal year ended March 31st and we have BIG NEWS from the Half Million Dollar Club. I want to start by congratulating San Diego’s Head Sales Rep, Tyler Grubenhoff. With support from the sales oriented leadership of GM David Thornton and the Director of Travel Industry Sales Rod LaBranch, Tyler’s sales team racked up the highest sales to goal percentage in HTA with 114%. He is recognized as the “Goalie of the Year” and will be presented the annual award this month.

Our second place Goalie is Head Sales Rep Brian Buckley of Boston. His team came in with a percentage of 106% sales to goal. Third place goes to Key West’s Justin Bahl, whose sales team reached 104% of sales to goals.

The Really Big News

Not only did Tyler’s San Diego team help win him the Goalie of the Year honor, but two of his sales reps have reached new heights in sales achievement, each reaching the $750,000 mark and beyond. Karen DeHaan and Barbie Harrell will each receive an award of $750 for their outstanding efforts. Reaching almost $800,000 in sales, Karen DeHaan is our top sales rep in HTA for 2013-14 and she will also receive her Half Million Dollar Club pin and certificate. Barbie Harrell is already a charter member of the club.

San Diego’s David Mahl, also repeated as a Half Million Dollar Club sales winner and will receive an award of $500. Congratulations San Diego for these great sales accomplishments.

Two other repeat Half Million Dollar Club charter members, who will also be receiving an award of $500, are Linda Riskus and Bill Swicegood of St. Augustine. New members of this exclusive club are Jennifer Weigle and Lori Held, also of St. Augustine; Wanda Raimo, Tim Conway, and Rance Shell, all from Savannah; and Joyce Dahlberg of Key West. These top sales reps will all receive their silver membership pins, club certificates, and an award of $500. Please join HTA in congratulating these CASTmembers for their outstanding achievements in sales.

But Wait! There’s More!

HTA recognizes that our top sales reps will keep pushing the envelope and that someday soon, someone is going to hit a Million Dollars in sales. So in anticipation of that stellar event, HTA is creating the MILLION DOLLAR SALES CLUB. Anyone achieving this pinnacle of sales will receive a gold MILLION DOLLAR SALES CLUB pin, certificate of membership, and a bonus award of $1000. The award also includes an all-expense paid trip to Key West, where a special private dinner will be held at the Truman Little White House with the company founders.

And That’s Not All...

To further reward our top sales reps, any who repeat as Half Million Dollar Club winners for five consecutive years, beginning last year with the clubs inception, will receive an award of $2,500. We have four who have repeated this year and are on their way.

HTA thanks all of our reps who have done such an outstanding job throughout the year. While we are honoring our big achievers, remember it is a team effort. It takes everybody’s help, including the back of the house CAST and our really great conductors and engineers. So don’t forget to thank all your company’s sales reps because you know what happens when tickets don’t get sold? That’s right... nothing.