



## Biographical Sketch

Peter R. Hefler

After a 22 year career in the USAF starting in 1963 as a General's Aide, Public Affairs Officer, and Tours and Briefing Officer for the Department of Defense at the Pentagon Peter Hefler entered the transit industry by going to the island of Martha's Vineyard in June of 1985 where the Heflers have a home.

"I retired out of the Pentagon in 1985 and wanted to take my wife and 2 year old to spend the summer on Martha's Vineyard " Hefler says to anyone who asked. "But I did not want to sit on the beach so I answered an ad in the MV paper for bus drivers." The service was two open air Chance jitney shuttles running around Edgartown and a Molly Trolley to South Beach. "I got there on 30 June of 1985, recruited drivers, fixed the vehicles, got Class 2 licenses ("sort of got 'em, leave it at that," he says) and got things running for the 4th of July 1985 "I was pretty much responsible for everything but mainly driving, finding drivers, and publicizing the service! Looking back it was a great job and I learned a lot." The Edgartown Katama Stageline, as it was known shut down on Labor Day. "During the rest of September and October I drove tour bus on the island" he notes. Back in mid July, the local newspaper did an article about the bus service and Hefler. "I had gone to school at U. Mass Amherst and knew about Peter Pan Bus lines so I sent a letter with the article to Peter Picknelly Senior asking for a job, what did I have to lose?" Mr. Picknelly wrote back that he did not have anything available but check back, something I did every Friday into November of 1985.

In late November he finally said you should plan on coming up to Springfield and talking with me, he thought he might have something for me so off I went for the interview. "I guess he was impressed or was desperate, he hired me to be the General Manager of Springfield Transit Management (STM) starting in January of 86. STM was the management company that provided service on the street for Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA). Overnight I went from three buses to 125 buses, 7 people to 175 people and all the Springfield politics you could mix in" It was a wild ride for the next 9 years, with 2 years trapped since he told me to do it, not offered it, running Travel Time school bus in Springfield and surrounding towns. "If I never see another yellow school bus it will be fine with me" Hefler notes. He finished up in Springfield in October of 1994 by accepting a job at Baltimore Washington International Airport (BWI)

This was a 40 bus operation and the buses were compressed natural gas, (CNG.) The CNG technology was in its infancy and was a bit shaky as were the buses. There were a couple of minor fires but all in all, while it was a challenge it was a great learning curve for Hefler. The CNG experience at BWI would come in handy later in his career.

After two years at BWI Hefler was asked to be the Deputy Administrator at Corridor Transportation Corporation (CTC) located in Laurel Maryland and serving four counties, Ann Arundal, Montgomery, Prince George's, and Howard. The system had about 70 vehicles, both fixed route and paratransit. "Service was provided by Yellow Transportation which had started life as a taxi operation and it showed!" says Hefler. "A bit of frustration and let's leave it at that," Hefler is fond of saying to this day! He was named Administrator of the operation in 1999, but realized administration in a transit job was sitting in an office looking for funding. "I had always noticed the Administrator at CTC never really got out to kick the tires and kick some other things when required, that's part of the enjoyment of transportation and I missed that" Hefler says. "Plus, I wanted to get a back to New England."

That opportunity presented itself in 1999 when while attending a NEPTA expo/meeting in Boston he ran into John Tibbets of the Greater Portland Transit District, (GPTD). "I had known John since my days at PVRTA and he was a good friend" notes Hefler. We spoke about it and the deadline for applications was in a few days, so Hefler faxed a resume to the head hunter handling the recruiting. Several months passed and the phone rang at Hefler's home in Sever Park Maryland. His wife Janet answered and it was the head hunter, Ed Pigman of Transit Resources Group calling to say Hefler was one of three finalists for the job. There was only one problem, however, In his haste to apply for the job months before he forgot to tell his wife and son! "Things were a bit dicey, I'd have to say but I assured Janet, my wife I doubted I would be selected".

After a trip to Portland and meeting the Board of the GPTD he was offered the job and he moved to Portland in October of 1999. Because his son was in his 2nd year of high school, Hefler commuted each weekend for 126 weeks so Brien could finish at the Severna Park high school. "I learned something about teenagers and high school, everyone I spoke to said if you can do it, let him finish school, a move while in high school where he is doing fine can be a big mistake." Each weekend he drove from Portland to Manchester, NH airport Friday and reversed the process on Mondays. "I think it is a tribute to the airlines that I made every round trip each weekend and as a plus earned a lot of frequent flyer miles on US Airways and Southwest" Hefler notes.

The GPTD was a fun job, perhaps the best he had in transit he notes. The fleet was replaced with CNG buses, the buildings upgraded and the service expanded. "The Great Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) was big on alternative fuels and we had a great working relationship with them. Also, Region One Federal Transit Administration (FTA) under the leadership of Richard Doyle, FTA Administrator in Boston was a great help to structure the funding, etc for the CNG program.

"In 2005, I turned 65 and felt it would be a good time to retire from transit, so we moved to our home on Martha's Vineyard, built back in 1971" he says. One plus he remembers is that it was nice for the first time in 35 years to own only one house.

However, he does still keep his hand in transit. "If the Martha's Vineyard Regional Transit Authority (MVRTA) was a big outfit, I'd be an "Information Specialists" since it's fairly small, I'm a "ticket seller," he notes with a laugh. He does this job during the summer months on Martha's Vineyard. Hefler has known Angie Grant the MVRTA Administrator for many years.

In summary: "The short of it is that I had a great time in transit, met many fine people and feel like I accomplished something that was worthwhile, and that's not all bad, Right?"