

Chicagoland

Section 2

Chicago Tribune Tuesday, August 13, 1991

South

CTA sees day when disabled sing its praises

By Gary Washburn

Disabled activists who once disrupted Chicago Transit Authority board meetings, publicly mocked agency executives and blocked bus in downtown demonstrations returned to the CTA on Monday with most work and a deep sense of satisfaction.

They were the victors in a long and often bitter fight for wheelchair lift-equipped buses, now, as an increasing number of the specially outfitted vehicles are hitting the streets, they received a new and exhilarating freedom.

They have ridden the buses, and they are fabulous," declared Steve Laska, a member of Accessible Transit for Accessible Public Transit (ATAAPT), a militant disability rights group.

"The independence and freedom I feel is spectacular," he said.

"It's nice to be able to talk about great stuff for a change," said Michael Ervin, an ADAAPT leader who blasted down CTA executives at occasion board meetings during the late 1980s.

"I was one of the biggest squatters that fit buses would work," he said. "Now I've found that my optimism was not so great."

The activists, along with other disabled riders, addressed the CTA board's Transit Services Committee, a panel headed by James Charlton, who works from a wheelchair in the board's lone disabled member and once was the agency's only senior official who supported accessible mass transit.

Conceding that the CTA should concentrate on its disabled program, staff executives agreed for years that lifts on regular buses would be too costly to buy and maintain, that they would malfunction in Chicago's rain, snow, sleet and that few riders would use them.

But the real policy change in 1988 after an administrative law judge ruled that the CTA discriminated against disabled riders. The issue became moot last year when Congress overwhelmingly passed the Americans with Disabilities Act, a measure requiring lifts on all new mass transit.

The CTA's lift service began in February when new coaches began operating on its routes. Now, about 30 of roughly 130 routes in the CTA system are accessible, and plans call for the addition of 20 more as new vehicles are delivered.

Eventually, all of the agency's routes will be open to the disabled.

Steve Nashman, a veteran of the accessibility fight, said he has ridden 24 times so far on three different routes.

"The experience has been overwhelmingly positive," he said.

Speakers said some able-bodied passengers have complained that "it's about time" people in wheelchairs ride, and most have been silent of the time it takes disabled people to get on and off.

Those criticisms and other problems sometimes have meant lengthy delays. CTA officials said Monday that the average stop for disabled lifts has been taking between one and four minutes.

Ridership of lift-equipped buses has grown every month in two routes have been added and the word of the service has spread. In February, only 23 disabled passengers rode, but by July, the number had risen to 552. The figure for last week was 255, officials said.

Compared with other cities, usage is still modest. The average number of lift trips per bus per day is 67 here, compared with 36 in Denver, 64 in Washington and 72 in Seattle, said William Moore, the CTA's senior manager of transportation administrative services.

But lift-equipped buses have been operating in those cities for as long as 12 years, he said, and Chicago's numbers are expected to climb.

Despite the generally positive, sometimes enthusiastic, assessment of service here so far, many who spoke Monday had some criticisms.

The most serious came from Alan Berman, who uses a cane. He said that drivers have refused to deploy lifts and have been abusive to disabled people who are not in wheelchairs.

Berman said he was "bumped up" by an operator on June 26 during a confrontation over



Fearsome foursome

Kevin Pettigou and his four boxers have the Waveland Avenue near the lake. The dogs sidewalk to themselves Monday on the dogs named Jackson, Ace, Kitty and Cash.

Recent parolee now suspect in woman's death

By David Silverman and Robert Enstad

Just two weeks after he was paroled from an Illinois state prison, police allege that Burt Mason crowded the narrow front porch of his mother's Spring Grove apartment, forced his way into a neighbor's house, tied her to a bed and strangled her.

Lake County Sheriff's police Monday issued a murder warrant for Mason, 31, three days after the naked body of Susan F. Pauly was discovered in the bedroom of her small, brown frame home in the heavily wooded Lotus Woods subdivision near Fox Lake in the northwestern corner of the county.

The 38-year-old Pauly had been housed with duct tape and strangled with the cord from an area investigation said "lets to determine whether she was sexually assaulted have not been completed, authorities said.

Police said physical evidence, including duct tape found inside Mason's mother's cottage that matched tape found on Pauly's belt, led Mason to the crime. Investigators also said Mason was seen by acquaintances Friday behind the wheel of Pauly's stolen light blue Chevy Blazer.

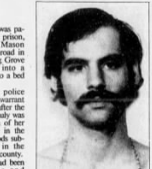
As they search for Mason, officials on Monday expressed anger that Mason—described by police as a "career criminal"—was free after serving less than half of a six-year term for burglary.

Mason spent most of the 1980s in prison, including a 10-year sentence for armed violence and home invasions, and one year for burglary. He has a criminal record dating to 1978, records show.

"He didn't belong on the street," said Lake County Undersheriff Willie Smith. "His record shows that his actions in the past show that. He didn't deserve to be out of jail."

Lake County Sheriff Clinton Greenleaf said, "I think we have to rethink this early release, and those parolees. We didn't even know he was out on the street."

Mason was released July 26 from Hill Correctional Center in Galesburg, where he was sent in 1988 after pleading guilty to charges that he tried to break into



Recent parolee Burt Mason is wanted on charges he strangled Susan F. Pauly

a truck in Lake County. He was released early for good behavior, correction officials said.

"When his time was up, he was out," said Neil Hovell, spokesman for the Illinois Department of Corrections. "With a five-year sentence, you do three years, plus up to 30 days off for good behavior."

"Mason did his sentence and got 30 days off for good behavior," Hovell said, who added that there was nothing correction officials could have done to keep him in prison any longer.

Mason was released under state minimum rules passed by the legislature in 1978 that took away of a prisoner's sentence for each day served. But there are good behavior credits.

Mason was arrested by the Department of Corrections in 1981, after being sentenced to three years for burglary in Lake County, records show. He was released on parole in 1983.

He was sent back here last year when he was sentenced to 10 years for armed violence and home invasion in McHenry County. In 1988, he was paroled again.

After his most recent release, Mason, an neighbor said he had seen Pauly playing golf to

See Parolee, pg. 6

School budget doubts grow

Few confident Kimbrough, unions can reach accord

By David G. Fludd

The question is murreted among key players in the school system's current budget saga.

Deputy Tom Kimbrough and the Chicago Board of Education have what it takes to reach a settlement with its unions and open schools on Sept. 4.

Jacqueline Vaughn, president of the Chicago Teachers Union, said she is not sure if the union and the board, she suggested the board "get someone on their side who knows how to put together a budget."

Her doubts about those on the other side of the table echo the concerns of Mayor Richard Daley, the School Finance Authority and education reform groups.

All summer long, those watching the actions of the board and Kimbrough have expressed doubts about their ability to solve their budget crisis—a potential deficit of nearly \$200 million.

"Vaughn could be implying that some of them know what they're doing," said a source close to the negotiations. "We had word on it [the board's position]."

The school system has several obstacles to overcome as officials try to reach a settlement with veteran union negotiators, and the least of which is the fact that both Kimbrough and the 15 board members are new to the huge Chicago school system.

Further, board members frequently have expressed distrust of Kimbrough's information about the \$7.7-billion budget. And not only must the board satisfy teachers, it also must satisfy parents who want to see economic footing, as long as their own school is not closed or their favorite programs are not cut back.

And there are questions about See Budget, pg. 6

City Hall revives talk of buying out Edison

By John Kassa

The Daley administration has said financial and engineering firms to draft a plan to take over Commonwealth Edison Co. in cities in Chicago as talks over a new franchise agreement have bogged down, the city's chief negotiator said Monday.

Robert Hagan, a lawyer who is negotiating for the city with Edison for a pact to replace an expired contract, said he is searching for a project manager to run the acquisition of Edison.

Hagan said the company has balked at the rates of price relief for low-income customers and a stepped-up affirmative action program.

"The reason is that negotia-

tions are not going well at all with Com Ed," Hagan said in an interview. "They're not willing to come forward on the sticking points in the talks. So we've decided to move forward two weeks ago, and responses are coming back. We're extremely nervous about it."

John Hogan, spokesman for Edison, said Edison would have no comment on the negotiations.

Edison says the city owes \$70 million in annual franchise fees from the 1981 contract, which was extended for a year to allow the city to study service reliability after several power outages in

See Edison, pg. 6

Vacationing officer comes to the rescue

By Ronald Koziol

The first letter that Jane Radabaugh plans to write when she returns from the Florida vacationing officer on her hands and other serious injuries sustained in his auto accident will be to Riverside Police Officer Marty O'Connell.

"If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't even be here," said the 35-year-old Radabaugh by telephone Monday from her hospital bed in Shands Medical Center in Gainesville, Fla. "I know I'll make it, thanks to him, and to Gene and I'll write him a thank-you note."

The injuries came as the result of a June 28 auto accident on Interstate Highway 75 as Radabaugh was driving her convertible with the top down from Orlando to Atlanta.

Exactly why Radabaugh skidded and plunged under the rear of a semitrailer truck's knower, but her car burst into flames as the truck dragged the car along the highway before it could stop, trapping the woman inside the mangled car.

O'Connell, 34, his wife, Gloria, 34 and two sons, Sean, 12, and Ryan, 10, were returning to Riverside from a family vacation in Florida when they came upon the accident only moments after it occurred. "I

See Here, pg. 6



Riverside Police Officer Marty O'Connell pulled a woman from a burning car while returning from a Florida vacation.

Justice not deaf to jurors who dislike cursing

By Matt O'Connor

Jurors with sensitive ears need not apply for service in the courtroom of U.S. District Court Judge James Rovner this week. The expletives won't be deleted.

Rovner said Monday that prospective jurors in the upcoming trial of former Judge David Shields will be excluded from duty if they are "offended by many words" that will be heard on tapes played in court.

Apparently to avoid having to announce the words aloud in court herself, Rovner said she intends to hand sheets containing the possibly offensive words to prospective jurors when jury selection opens Wednesday.

With the increasing use of secretly recorded tapes in recent years, judges don't want to take the chance that a juror would hold back language against a defendant.

Shields, the former presiding judge of Cook County's

Justice not deaf to jurors who dislike cursing

powerful Chancery Court, is accused of accepting \$6,000 in bribes in 1988 to rule favorably on a court case conducted by the government.

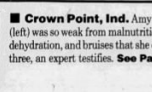
Also on trial will be lawyer Pat De Leo, who is charged with passing the bribes on to Shields from Robert J. Conroy, a lawyer who worked undercover for the government while wearing a body wire from 1986 to 1989.

As part of the investigation, the FBI was a court order to log Shields' chambers, reportedly only the second time that has happened in local history.

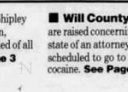
When asked Monday what kind of cursing is contained on the tapes, Alan Ackerman, a lawyer representing De Leo, replied with the usual expletives, many of which four letters in length.



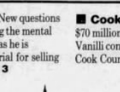
■ Crown Point, Ind., Amy Shipley (left) was so weak from malnutrition, dehydration, and bruises that she died of all three, an expert testifies. See Page 3



■ Will County New questions are raised concerning the mental state of an attorney as he is scheduled to go to trial for selling cocaine. See Page 3



■ Cook County A potential \$70 million settlement in the Milli Vanilli controversy is rejected by a Cook County judge. See Page 2



■ Chicago A new study suggests the city's school-reform program is destined to fail unless there are more efforts to solve the problem of poverty. See Page 5