



# Alive!

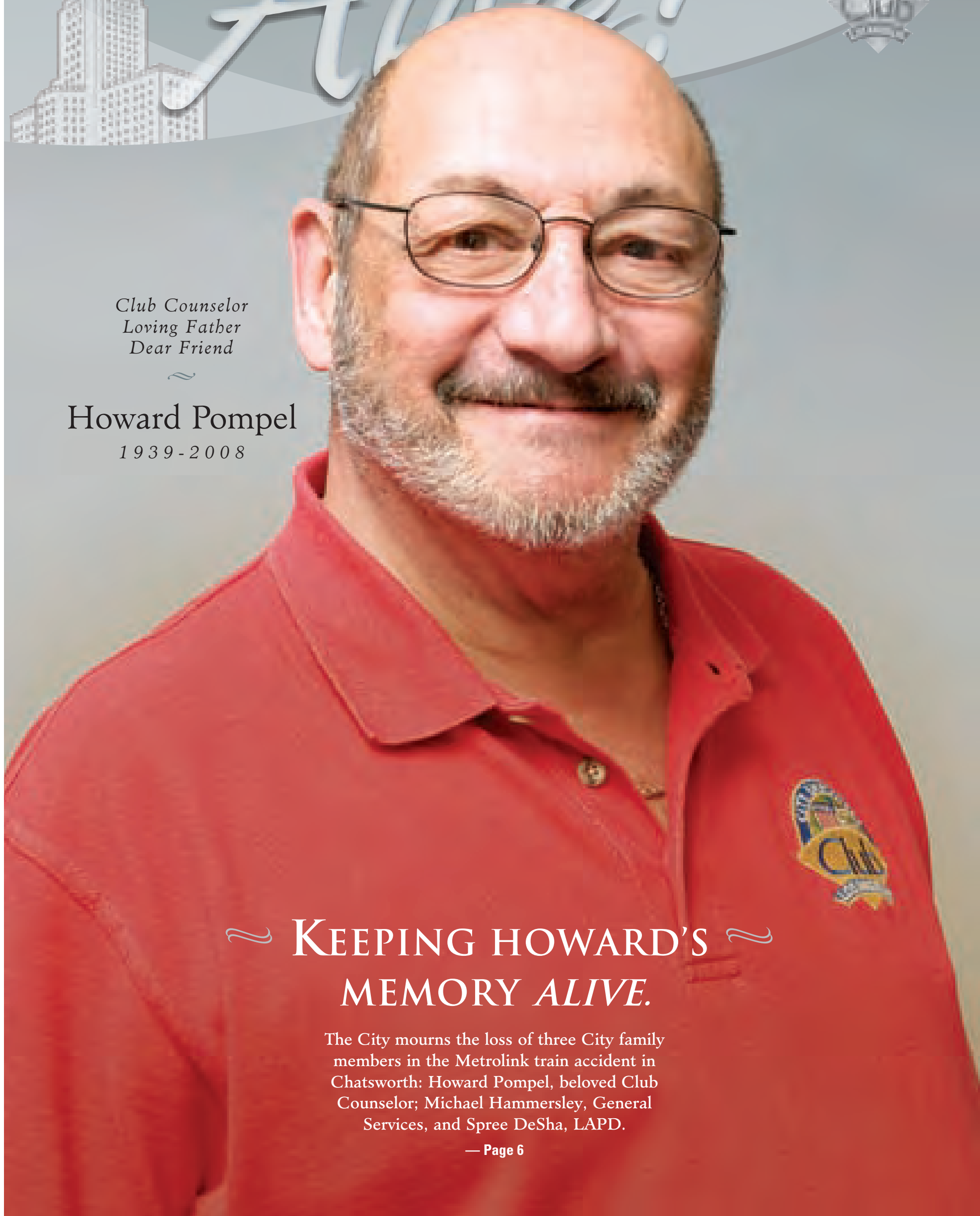


*Club Counselor  
Loving Father  
Dear Friend*



**Howard Pompel**

1939-2008



## KEEPING HOWARD'S MEMORY ALIVE.

The City mourns the loss of three City family members in the Metrolink train accident in Chatsworth: Howard Pompel, beloved Club Counselor; Michael Hammersley, General Services, and Spree DeSha, LAPD.

— Page 6

Alive! staff photo



City Employees Club of Los Angeles  
350 S. Figueroa St., Suite 700  
Los Angeles, CA 90071

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

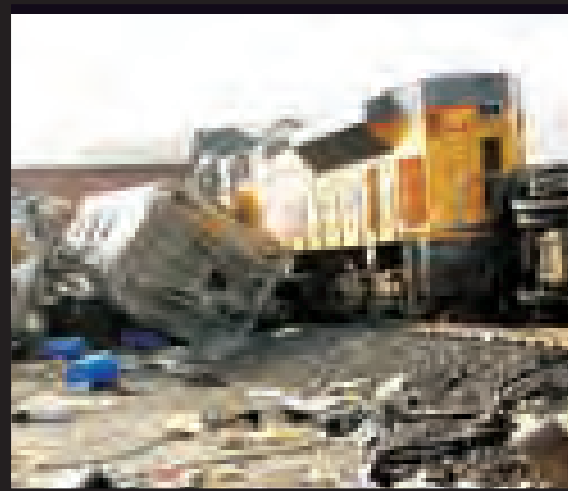
PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
LOS ANGELES, CA  
PERMIT NO. 447

## A SPECIAL TRIBUTE

*Alive!* pays tribute to Howard Pompel, Michael Hammersley and Spree DeSha, who perished in the Metrolink accident; welcomes back Richard Myles, Public Works, who survived; and honors the City heroes who rescued more than 100 survivors.

— Page 6

## SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE SECTION



## A CITY

On Friday afternoon, Sept. 12, Metrolink train 111, heading northwest having just left the Chatsworth station, collided head-on with a Union Pacific freight train, killing 24 passengers and crew on site. One additional passenger died later at the hospital.

Among the deceased were Howard Pompel, 69, Member Services Counselor, City Employees Club; Michael Hammersley, 45, Mail Services Division, General Services; and Spree DeSha, 35, Police Officer III, LAPD.

Agencies representing Los Angeles City, Los Angeles County, Beverly Hills and Ventura County Fire Departments, the Los Angeles Police Department, Los Angeles County Sheriffs, CHP, Metrolink and Union Pacific Railroad, working under a Unified Command, responded to reports of a train derailment in Chatsworth.

The cause of the collision remains the focus of a formal National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigation. There were 24 confirmed fatalities on-scene and an additional 135 patients treated for a variety of injuries. In all, there were 40 patients suffering from critical injuries, 40 seriously injured patients and 50 people with minor injuries. Forty patients were flown by air ambulance to area hospitals throughout the county, utilizing all 12 trauma centers in the Los Angeles County area.

One Firefighter was taken to a local hospital in stable condition with heat-related symptoms and exhaustion. The Firefighter was treated and released from the hospital.

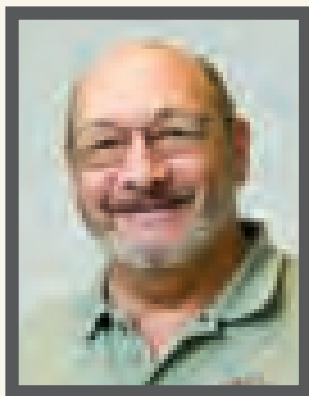
Please turn the page for much more on these three people for whom the City mourns.



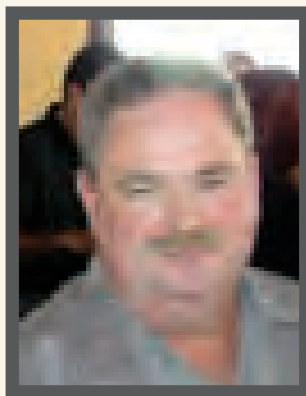
SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE SECTION

*Metrolink Tragedy Touches the City*

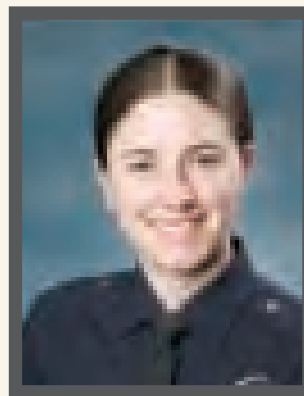
# MOURNS



Howard Pompel  
Member Services Counselor  
City Employees Club of Los Angeles



Michael Hammersley  
Delivery Driver, Mail Services Division  
General Services



Spree DeSha  
Police Officer III  
LAPD

The Metrolink train accident in Chatsworth cost the City family three lives, including one very near and dear to the hearts of the Club. In these pages, *Alive!* remembers all three ... tells the story of one who survived ... and recognizes the heroes who came to the rescue.

*Readers are invited to share their memories of Howard, Michael and Spree. See page 15.*

**H**oward Pompel, the perfect Embodiment of the City Employees Club, died Friday, Sept. 12, in the Metrolink train accident in Chatsworth. He was 69.

He is survived by his wife, Beckie, children, grandchildren, other family members, and countless friends from the Club and the train he traveled every day to and from his home in Moorpark.

"I can't think of a better representative the Club could have ever had," said John Hawkins, Club CEO and friend. "The happiness, safety and peace of mind of all Club Members were very important to Howard. He was everything we are, wrapped up in one person. He was special, one of a kind. It's a great loss for everyone who knew him, and for the City."

Howard, born in Brooklyn, NY, began working for the Club in June 2001 as the Association's in-house Insurance Counselor and specialist in Long-Term Care, Life Insurance and Disability Insurance.

He had more than 35 years of experience in the insurance industry. Before coming to work for the Club, he worked for Answer Financial, and before that, for Blue Cross of California and the Monarch Life Insurance Co. He also spent time as an independent life insurance agent.

John Hawkins remembers hiring Howard to work at the Club.

"I walked Howard with a beaming smile, the slight scent of a freshly smoked cigar, a firm handshake and his powerfully confident voice," John Hawkins writes in this month's CEO Column (page 3). "I thought to myself, 'Now this guy is a *real* insurance agent.' I hired him on the spot."

Howard Pompel was a past member of the Simi Valley Chamber of Commerce and was a current member of the Simi Valley Elks Club. He was a member and Ambassador of the Moorpark Chamber of Commerce and was a charter member of the Simi Sunrise Rotary Club.

"He was a loving individual, a loving husband, a loving grandfather," his widow, Beckie, said of her husband of 12 years. "He played Scrabble. We loved live theater and eating out."

Pauline Murano, daughter of a Club Member who recently passed away, received some paperwork and a sympathy card for her father. Signed by Howard on Sept. 12, the day he died, it might have been Howard's last piece of correspondence. "I want his family to know," Pauline wrote to the Club, "that Mr. Pompel spent his last day and probably every day helping people."

"He was so helpful and sympathetic."

"Our deepest sympathies go out to Beckie, his family and his friends," John Hawkins said. "We share their loss deeply. The Club will continue to thrive because of his leadership, his example and his friendship. But we will miss him terribly."

The Club invites everyone to contribute their memories. See page 15.



Howard Pompel at the party that launched the new City Employees Club in 2002.

*"Knowing Howard was a blessing;  
working with him was an honor."*

**– Arlene Herrero, Club Counselor**

## Metrolink Tragedy Touches the City

# HOWARD POMPEL

## 1939 - 2008

## CLUB STAFFERS MOURN HOWARD

*The Club staff, who worked with Howard every day, recall their co-worker and friend.*

"I've been working for LACEA for the past six years, and Howard was very knowledgeable with insurance. He was never shy about sharing his 30 years of experience. My schedule usually calls for me to be out of the office, and when we finally have a chance to catch up, he would always ask, "How is Arlene doing?" I would always tell him that I am very busy, and his response was, "Busy is good because that gives us job security," then we would just laugh about it.

"Howard was a very caring person. He would love the games I would come up with for our holiday party, and would always tell me that he looks forward to my games. He loved his family, those whom he worked with and our members.

"My last memory of him was at our Sept. 8 monthly staff meeting, where he made us remember that we are not just employees working at the same company, but we are family. I was devastated to learn of the accident and just like I would have done for my own family member, I did my best to locate him. Everyday is a struggle; we're lost without him. Knowing him was a blessing; working with him was an honor."

**- Arlene Herrero, Club Counselor**

"I remember when I met Howard -- it was my first day here at the Club and I was the lucky one who was going to share a cubicle with him! I was a little nervous, since this was going to be my first 'real' job straight out of college, but he made me feel so comfortable. He told me that this wasn't just a group of co-workers, that we were actually family, and that 'working here is like working at a county club,' and he was right! From that day on my relationship with Howie grew, and he became a new family

member to me. There were many conversations shared between us, most of them being his life stories. I believe those stories are what he cherished most because he told them with such vividness and enthusiasm, although at times we knew they were probably exaggerated a bit, and even if you had already heard the story once he would tell it again! After hearing his tales I would tell him, 'Wow Howie, you've lived a great life,' and he would just laugh.

"Howie was getting older, and so his aches and pains were becoming a daily complaint. But even through the pain he would always make sure he knew that you were okay. If it seemed like you were having a bad day he was always ready to listen or make you laugh. After moving to our new location, Howie was able to interact more with Club Members. His favorite part of the day was when he would give away our blue recyclable Club Store bag to the "25,000th" customer! He would get such a kick out of the reaction and excitement from

"The Club family has experienced a great loss. The affects of his passing will be felt for a very long time. We know that everyone who spent just one minute with him will remember his humor, wit and kindness. During the last eight years with the Club, he touched so many lives within the City of Los Angeles that we know his memory will live on for decades to come. "The Club is most thankful to everyone for their thoughts and support during these trying times."

**- Summy Lam, IT Business Analyst**



The Club gang at ClubFest 2003, bottom row, from left: Howard Pompel and John Hawkins. Top row, from left: Rose Hyland, Leigh Thompson, Alan Bound, Trinh Pham, Summy Lam, Beverly Haro, Jamie Bergantz and Bob Dow.

"He made everyone feel like family. He would always come over to my desk on his break and sit and just talk about everyday things. I think he had a cute nickname for everyone in our office. He always spoke highly of his family. Most anyone who knew him would agree that his eyes would light up whenever he talked about anything that had to do with live theatre or a favorite restaurant. I remember he would love the jellybeans that I had on my desk and he promised to replace them when ever it got 'low.' He shared his pretzels with me and raved about the delicious dinners that his wife Beckie prepared the night before. I'm never going to forget you Howard. I miss you."

**- Marla Fisher, Claims Assistant**

"Albeit our time together was short, a week to be exact, Howard has left a lasting impression on me. I learned very quickly that Howard is a genuinely caring and sincere person. He was very warm and welcoming on my first day. In fact, he was the very first person I spoke with in our break room that morning of our meeting.

"Howard was adamant about referring to our colleagues as 'family.' His exact words were, 'We're not a team, we're a family.' He continued on to describe how wonderful it was to work for the City Employees Club. His words gave me great comfort and inspiration. When I sat with Howard to interview him on his job responsibilities, he was very open to offering suggestions and advice on how I could succeed at my job. He gave me all the time I needed to answer my bombarding questions. Howard is a witty, charming, generous soul and he will be greatly missed. I am grateful I had the opportunity to meet such a wonderful man before his journey back to heaven."

**- Tiffany Sy, Member Services Counselor**

our members, and after they thanked him and they left he would ask me, "Do you think I made their day?" I would respond with, "I think so, Howser," and he would end with, "Good, I love doing that, I really do." That was the thing about Howie -- he was always loving and genuine, and those qualities are what make you feel so lucky to know someone that special. Every time I pass his desk I'll always remember his charm, laughter and love!

"Howie is someone who has left footprint on my heart. I love you, Howie!"

**- Jessica Segura, Merchandise and Ticket Sales Coordinator**

"Howard was my co-worker. He always made me smile whenever I heard him talk to our Club Members. He was so jovial and down to earth, and he always ended his phone calls with the slogan, "You know the rules around here, you can call me for anything, don't be shy." Then he would give that hearty warm laugh of his, and I would smile every time I heard that. It really made me proud to know that he was part of our team, representing City Employees Club.



During the Club's Toy Drive in 2005 were, from left, Angel Gomez, Howard Pompel, Sara Fama, Brian Trent, Jessica Segura and Ticket Guy (Navin Cotton).

— continues

# “He is and will be missed very, very much.”

## CLUB STAFFERS MOURN HOWARD

- continued

“Howard and I were the early birds at the City Club. We would always take a few minutes to catch up with each other every day. Our thing was to see how often we could make the other laugh! If I could make Howard laugh and have him say ‘You are sooo bad!’ my day was made!! Howard loved his family and especially those two beautiful little granddaughters. If you asked how they were, his face would light up like a full moon and he would just beam, and say they are adorable!

“Howie, my friend, I will miss our time and talks together, and you will live in my heart forever.”

**- Katie Hesseltine, Application Coordinator**

“Even now, days after his passing, one can see the scope of the lives he touched as the phone calls, emails, flowers and sympathy cards have poured in. Howard was a character unlike any other I’ve known. He was full of laughter with the kind of positive attitude that magnetized you to hang out with him all day long. He had stories about his life dating back to his birth. Frankly, I found it amazing that he knew all the events that went on hours after his birth. I always told him that he needed to write a book about the adventures of his wonderful life. The book would have been a national best-seller.

“I already miss his chuckle and two of his most common office phrase, ‘Now we’re cookin!’ and ‘Hey, boss!’ It was a genuine honor to have had the opportunity to work with him the last eight years.

“Farewell, Howard!”

**- Robert Larios, Director of Operations**

“Howard, I am missing you so much! I catch myself calling your name and turning on my swivel chair to ask you a question and you’re not there.

“I am going to miss sharing stories about our grandbabies and our family issues and events. I will always remember how you would always tell me, ‘Lu you’re such a mom!’

“I will never forget when you would hear a sad or unfortunate story about anyone, you would lift your arms and say, ‘Look Lu! Goosebumps don’t lie.’

“No matter what I asked, you always had an answer for me, weather checking on the origin of a word, insurance or just life itself. I was impressed on how knowledgeable you were on medical issues. You always made me feel so comfortable when giving me your opinion on any medical concern I had. I remember you would break it down to what I had and even knew what I should take. I always verified it with my own medical doctor and yes... you were always right! That’s how you earned the prestigious name of Dr. Pompel with the Medina family. On different occasions Red would tell me tomorrow when you go back to work, ask the Dr. what is the best remedy for a sore back, a side pain or night leg cramps. You always had an answer for him.

“I will never forget what you would say just before you left the office, in a strong almost singing voice. ‘I’m-a gonna leave you now!’

“Howie, rest in peace!”

“With a heavy heart.”

**- Lu Medina, Administrative Services Representative**

“I worked with Howard for eight years. He was always courteous and nice with everybody. Howard always said that at the City Employees Club of Los Angeles, we were not co-workers, but family. I felt him as a family member. He is and will be missed very, very much!”

**- Cecilia Talbot, Claims Administrator**

“I met Howard when I started working full time for LACEA. We became friends immediately. His wonderful sense of humor was infectious! We enjoyed talking to each other about all the little things that happened in our lives. He will always be missed.”

**- Leigh Thompson, Controller**

“I worked with Howard for over five years. He smiled everyday and always had a kind word. He called me ‘Kiddo.’ I’ll miss him and remember him fondly.”

**- Michael Anderson, Information Technology Manager**

“We send our condolences to the family and friends of Howard Pompel. His spirit was a big part of the daily life of the Club, and we share your grief at this time of sorrow.”

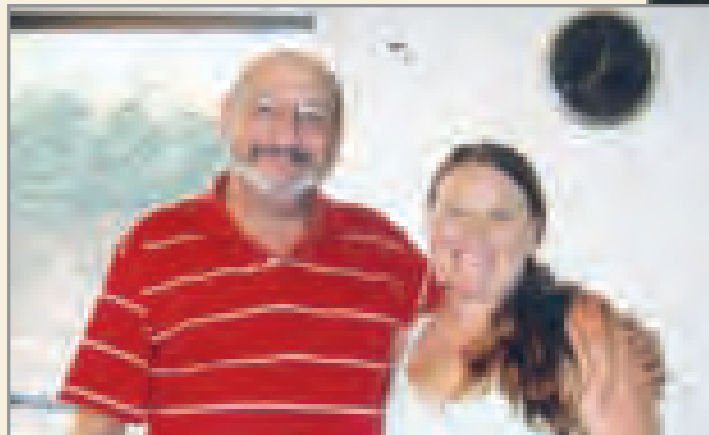
**- The Club Board of Directors, and the LACEA Insurance Services Board of Directors**

“Hey, John! It was as if I were the first and only person he had seen in weeks and weeks. Of course I wasn’t; he dealt with lots of people every single day. But every time I saw Howard, I was the most important person he had seen all day. When a person treats everyone that way, you know he’s special. And Howard was.

“Rest in peace, Howard. You’ve done more than your share to help Club Members live with peace of mind. Now it’s your turn.”

**- John Burnes, Editor, Alive!**

Howard with entertainer Charo.



Howard and a member of his family.

*“He had more than 35 years of experience in the insurance industry. Before coming to work for the Club, he worked for Answer Financial, and before that, for Blue Cross of California and the Monarch Life Insurance Co. He also spent time as an independent life insurance agent.”*



Howard's son, Cliff.



Howard's daughter and her family.

## Metrolink Tragedy Touches the City

# HOWARD POMPEL

## 1939 - 2008

### OTHERS REMEMBER HOWARD

*News of the death of Howard Pompel brought a wave of condolences from Club Members, former Club staffers, and others. Here are some of the notes that the Club has received by press time.*

*Want to leave your own note? See page 15.*

#### Hand-written notes came from:

- Vitolina Gandolise, LAPD;
- Rudy Lopez;
- Diana Medina;
- Aram, Mail Services;
- Lilia, Library;
- Brian Choi;
- Sam Allan;
- Ying Wong;
- Rio Broussard;
- Ken Meyer, Office Depot; and
- many, many others

#### Flowers came from:

- Tom LaBonge, City Council,
- Diana Medina, Universal Studios;
- Lilya, China Bistro;
- LAFD Civilian Recognition Committee;
- Kathleen Solano;
- Victor Solano;
- Nina and Paul;
- All City Employee Benefit Services Association (ACEBSA)
- Nels Hansen; and
- many others.

#### Emails, Web postings and phone messages:

"We've lost a great soul and my heart aches very badly. I'm still in shock. My voice shrieked as I read, 'Howard Barry Pompel.' I called the Club number, 'Please tell me it's not our Mr. Pompel who died in the train accident.' 'Yes, it was,' said the receptionist. And there was silence. I've shed a few tears since yesterday -- sadly, it won't bring Mr. Pompel back.

"You'd think I have, but I've never met Mr. Howard Pompel in person -- just those few phone calls over the past seven years that I've been with the City. He has touched my life -- his promptness in returning calls, his warm, friendly way of doing business, his reassurance and ability to quickly put one's worries at ease, not just because he knew the business so well, but because he genuinely cared about people.

"Let's all embrace the qualities Mr. Pompel consistently showed us in our encounter with him; and let's make our daily encounter with one another be the best experience -- in memory of Mr. Howard Pompel.

"He'll truly be missed."

- BCC

"Thank you Howard for your service to us, City employees. We will always remember you."

- Cecilia, Community Development

"My heart goes out to all you at the Club and his family. There were a few times when Howard helped me, and it was always a pleasant experience. He was always very friendly and helpful. This is a horrible loss to the LACEA.

"My prayers are with the family."

- Carolina Murillo

"Conversations, endless  
Loved good food.  
Enjoyed Las Vegas.  
Loved those horses.  
A gambler at heart  
I know you're at peace.  
Regards,"

- Miss Jake

"I was very sad when I heard the news of Howard's passing. While I don't claim to have known Howard well, I do know that after meeting him on three separate occasions he was truly a special person. Each time I met him, Howard would quickly rise to his feet, extend an opened hand and a warm smile. His welcome always felt genuine and he made me feel part of 'The Club.' Howard will be missed, but when I think of The Club I will remember him fondly. Respectfully,"

- David Butterfield, AIG (U.S. Life/American General)

"I wanted to extend my condolences and sympathy to Howard's family and co-workers.

*"To all of you at the City Club:*

*"Our deepest sympathies to all of you. Myself, as well as my coworkers, had the opportunity to meet Howard when purchasing our movie tickets, etc. We all looked forward to his bright smile and positive demeanor. Again, our thoughts and prayers are with all of you during this difficult time."*

- Denise Rivera, LAPD

I'm a City Club member and Howard was always there to help me, always ready to serve with a friendly smile. Time would go by in between our conversations, but he always remembered me. What a great loss to the City of Los Angeles employees and the Club.

"Thank you."

- Debbie Megliorino

"When I saw the name of Howard Pompel on my TV screen as one of the victims who perished in the Metrolink disaster of Friday, September 12, 2008, I was stunned, shocked, in disbelief. Couldn't be, not our Howard; I was hoping it wasn't our Howard. I'd just spoken with him earlier in the week regarding life insurance.

"Howard was such a nice man. Very helpful; he was just a 'sweetheart' and had a great sense of humor. He will be missed by everyone who knew him.

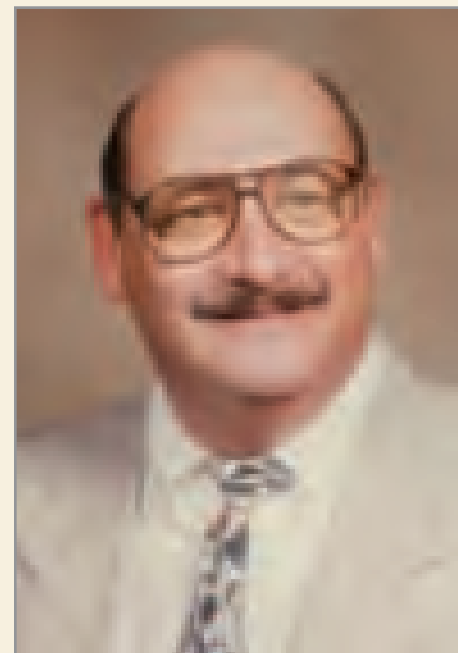
"My deepest sympathy to the Pompel family and to everyone at The Club. This is such a tragedy. I just spoke with Howard last week. He was such a nice person, just an outstanding individual.

"Howard will be greatly missed."

- Diana Medina

"When you lose someone so senselessly and unexpectedly, many share in your sorrow. My last memory of Howard was a few days before his death, at the Club office. He congratulated my son, Vincent, for receiving a scholarship from the Club. He gave us two thumbs up and, with one of his big smiles, he wished us luck."

- Frank Frias, Club Member



Howard in an undated photo, but probably from the 1980s.

"I just heard the horrible news while calling your office today. I know you must be overwhelmed with his loss; what a dear friend and co-worker he was to everyone. I always called him Mr. Fabulous whenever he answered the phone, and I only wish everyone I deal with could be half as great as Howard.

"Please accept my sincere condolences to you and the entire staff."

- Jim Quinney, Caliwai Insurance Marketing

"Last year, Mr. Pompel helped me with my additional insurance. When I came in with my application, he was very patient and reassured me with all his answers to my questions. When I received my policy and cards and my name was not printed correctly, I emailed him to see if he could have it fixed. Along with two other members of the City Employees Club staff, they were able to fix the problem quickly and efficiently. Mr. Pompel even called me to let me know that he was working on it. I had my new cards very soon after this. It was very exceptional customer service from your entire staff, and I was very appreciative of it.

"Although this was my only interaction with Mr. Pompel, I am still very saddened to hear of this tragic loss. My thoughts and prayers are with all of his loved ones."

- Anonymous

— continues

*“He always brought a smile to my face when I spoke with him.”*



Howard; his wife, Beckie; and other family members.

## THE WISDOM OF HOWARD

*Club Members and staff will always remember Howard's phrases, which rolled out of his deep baritone voice to amuse, inspire and delight. Here are just some of them:*

*“The perfect temperature for me is 72 degrees and slightly breezy.”*

*“One thing I'll never do again is get old, I promise!”*

*“Hey, Pretty-Face!”*

*“As my father use to say: Goosebumps don't lie.”*

*“Now we're cooking!”*

*“Hey Boss!”*

*“Outstanding!”*

*“Look at me...just thinking about sushi has me salivating!”*

*“You know the rule around here — don't be shy.”*

## OTHERS REMEMBER HOWARD

*- continued*

“First and foremost, I would like to express my sincerest sympathy to you and your staff. Howard was a genuinely great person, and I will miss him.

“Word of his passing has affected me deeply.

“I'll always remember Howard as a kind, warm and friendly man. The first time we met, he made me feel like we had been friends forever. And whenever I called the office, he would always put a smile on my face. He will be missed.

“My heart goes out to Howard's family, and to the staff of the City Employees Club of Los Angeles.”

**- Kristina Payne, Account Manager AIG (U.S. Life/American General)**

“My heartfelt condolences to you and your staff. My prayers will be with all of you and the Pompel family. With sympathy.”

**- Lori Kwiatkowski, LAFD**

“We are truly sad to learn about the fate of one of your great co-workers, Mr. Howard Pompel. The Facility Division of the Los Angeles Convention Center wishes to express its most sincere condolences to you and to his family, to whom we extend our sympathies and prayers in this trying and painful time.

“Though nothing can ever replace the loss of a loved one, we would like you to take some comfort in knowing that we will always be grateful to Mr. Pompel for his great service to the members of the City Employees Club of Los Angeles.

**- Luis Aguilar, Convention Center**

“To the Family of Mr. Pompel,

“I am so sorry to hear of Mr. Pompel's passing. I did not know Mr. Pompel, however he touched me even in a short telephone conversation. My father passed away Aug. 30 and I called the City Employees Club to stop delivery of the Alive! newspaper. Mr. Pompel answered my call, assisted with discontinuing delivery and mentioned that my father had a life insurance policy I may want to follow up on. I recall that I was a little surprised because he was so helpful, and sympathetic.

“Yesterday, my mother received a sympathy card from Club members and today she received a signed letter from Mr. Pompel to discontinue the insurance deduction. The letter was dated Sept. 12. I called today to ask a question about filling out the form and the telephone message stated that Mr. Pompel had passed away in the Metrorail accident on Sept. 12. This news saddened me, but I want his family to know that Mr.

*— continues*



Howard and his wife, Beckie.

*— continues*



Metrolink Tragedy Touches the City

# HOWARD POMPEL

1939 - 2008

*"I am so sorry to hear of Howard's passing. Even though I never met Howard in person, he always brought a smile to my face when I spoke with him. My prayers and thoughts are with all of you."*

**- Cathy Pomaski, AIG Benefit Solutions, Association Group Support**

**OTHERS REMEMBER HOWARD**  
- continued

Pompel spent his last day and probably every day helping people."

**- Pauline Murano**

"The first time I met Howard, it was his first week or maybe even his first day on the job with the City Employees Club. Howard was very excited and eager to help, despite wearing a leather jacket soaked from the rain. Howard had a great attitude and shadowed John Hawkins' every move that day, a day that turned out to be the beginning of a great relationship between Howard and the employees of the City of Los Angeles. He will be missed."

**- Arceo J. Ramos, DWP**

"Thanks for always being patient and understanding with me when I conducted business with you! You will be truly missed and I want your family to know that I offer my condolences and I thank you for assisting me with all my needs and concerns!"

"Everytime I've visited your offices, there has been enough time in between visits for you to have changed the look and presence of your entrance area, through different posters, marketing materials, or even furniture. And just when things were feeling different and foreign, there appeared Howard, every time, a friendly beacon of welcoming light extending a firm handshake with an assuring smile, making me immediately feel back at home with friends that I hadn't seen in too long."

**- Rick Vegh, AIG (U.S. Life/American General)**

"I was reading the list of the victims of the Metrolink accident and was shocked to see Howard's name there. Howard has been helping me for years with my needs. He will be missed by so many within the family of the City of Los Angeles."

**- Lendell Walker, Club Member**

"I was devastated and saddened when I saw Howard Pompel's name among the coroner's list of the Metrolink crash victims. Howard was a wonderful person to know. It must be difficult at this time for everyone among your staff to have heard of the loss of a wonderful man. My thoughts and prayers go to you and his family."

**- Terry Aguilar, Public Works/Engineering**

"On behalf of the Board of Directors of the DWP Retirees' Association, we extend to your our deepest sympathy on the loss of Howard. We will keep him and all of you in our thoughts and prayers over the coming days."

**- Dolores and Vince Foley, DWP Retirees Association**

"We're gonna miss you, buddy! Take care!"

**- Tommy Siu**

"It only took one minute to know that Howard was a very kind person. Howard helped me with my insurance needs when I lost my husband, and he showed a lot of care even though he did not know me. I went to make some changes to my insurance about a month ago and I remember it like yesterday. He was so helpful and nice and joking. Having lost my husband just two years ago, I feel what his family is going through. If his family sees this message, please know in your hearts that Howard is in a better place and he is now resting. I didn't know him personally, but I could see he lived a happy life :) My heart goes out to Howard's family."

"God bless you, Howard and God bless your family."

**- Yoly Ortiz, Club Member**

"There are no words that can describe how I felt when I heard about the passing of Howard. I will always remember his delightful voice, great sense of humor and his friendly ways. Howard was the bit of sunshine we need every day. He will always be remembered as a unique and very special person and will be greatly missed."

"My sincerest sympathy to Howard's family, friends and co-workers at the City Employees Club of L.A."

**- Jennie Aviles, AIG/American General, Policy Benefits**

"I am so sorry to hear of Howard's passing. I really enjoyed his smiling face every morning that I passed by your office. He was always quick with a 'Good morning' and was always so friendly. I remember he would frequently compliment me on an outfit or hairstyle and make my day. He would make it a point to say 'hi' or just smile. I miss my DEA OPR family and having you guys as our neighbors. Howard was an icon in your office and I am so sorry for your loss."

"Please give my condolences to your office crew and to Howard's family. I will keep him and you all in my thoughts and prayers."

**- Mary K. McElderry, ASAC I Los Angeles Field Division**

"I am with you and your sorrow right now. I wish I could be across this hallway and give you that needed hug. I myself feel bad and I was praying for all those people and hoping that no more bad news would hit so close to home. I don't know why but I had a gut feeling that someone in that fatal accident would be someone I knew. I am really in shock, really. I don't even have the words to soothe the pain because I am feeling it."

"But for now, Howie, as Jazmine called him, will definitely be in our prayers. May you rest in peace, Howard Pompel. Please give condolences to the family and all in your company, on our behalf."

**- Connie**

- continues



News of the Metrolink train accident dominated the local media for days.



Since the first business day after the train accident, the friends and family of Howard Pompel have sent beautiful flowers and cards, and signed a memorial book at the Club Store and Service Center.



A memorial for Howard at the Club Store and Service Center.

*"I worked for the City of Los Angeles for more than 40 years. Howard was the most kind, concerned and helpful City Employee I have ever come in contact with... We will miss him. May*

*God bless his family."*

**- Jesse and LV Oliver,  
posted on the Los Angeles Times Website**

## FRIENDS REMEMBER HOWARD

- continued

"I'm so, so sorry to hear about our Howard. I still cannot believe it. I didn't know he was riding the train always; I thought he was driving to work. Please give his family my condolences. I'm out words and don't know what to say.

"Please, if there is anything I can do or help, don't hesitate to call me."

**- Elizabeth Silva, America's Choice, Inc. West Region Office**

"To Brian Trent and everyone at City Employees Club, [I'm] so sorry to hear of Howard's death. I know this is hard for all of you."

**- Danna McDonough, former CEO, LACEA**

"With sympathy on the loss of Mr. Howard Pompel. We're thinking of you. Our thoughts and prayers are with you."

**- ACEBSA staff**

"Howard was really congenial, helpful and friendly. He was always so funny. I'll miss him very much, especially at the October ClubFest this year. My condolences to his family and the City Club."

**- Rosemary Delgado, Retiree, ITA**

"Howard always made it a point to spend time talking with L.A. City Employee Club members about a number of our concerns. He made you feel like a close family member. Howard was a true professional who cared a great deal."

**- R. Barron, Club Member, posted on the Los Angeles Times Website**

"Howard helped me to rectify a problem with a deduction from my check. His daughter went to school with my daughter Kelly. My family and I will miss him. His family is in our prayers! God Bless."

**- Mark Zorick, DWP, posted on the Los Angeles Times Website**

"I worked with Howard for three years and I always thought of him as my second grandfather. He was there when I needed advice, a hug and a laugh. He was a wonderful person with such a genuine heart. I will miss him."

**- Michelle Moreno, former Club Events Guru and staff member, posted on the Los Angeles Times Website**

"Recently I retired from the LAX Police Department. My wife and I spoke to Howard on many occasions regarding our insurance benefits. We spoke to him so often that we felt like he became our friend. I worked for the City of Los Angeles for more than 40 years. Howard was the most kind, concerned and helpful City Employee I have ever come in contact with. This year I told him I had seen his picture in the Alive! paper. He laughed. We sent him a Xmas card in 2007. Although we never met in person, my wife and I feel like we have lost a friend. We will miss him. May God bless his family."

**- Jesse and LV Oliver, posted on the Los Angeles Times Website**

— continues

## Metrolink Tragedy Touches the City

# HOWARD POMPEL

1939 - 2008



*"My deepest sympathy to the Pompel family. Howard always had kind words for everyone and worked hard for the Club. He will be fondly remembered."*

**- Joannie Mukai, Club Board Member**



"We never met Howard, but spoke to him on the phone for several years. My husband works for DWP and Howard was always so helpful to us, especially to me. I always had so many questions and he was so friendly to me. When I took my state insurance test, I called him for several questions and he helped me with answers. I was in shock when I saw his name today in the paper. It broke my heart to hear about his untimely death. We will pray for your family. God Bless your family. Again, we are very sorry for your loss."

**- Donna and David Hernandez, DWP, posted on the Los Angeles Times Website**

"I have been with the City of Los Angeles for five years. My kids and I would often stop by the LA City Employee Club when it was in the World Trade Center to purchase tickets for the movies, Disneyland, Raging Waters etc. When my son would visit from Colorado, I would have them in tow and they would be bouncing off the walls. Mr. Pompel was so helpful, even telling me where some of the best theaters were and telling me how to get the most from my discounts with the kids. He would always smile at my children and ask them if they were excited to be going to whatever point of destination we were headed off to. I will miss seeing him and miss his smile. My heart and prayers are with your family at this difficult time."

**- Mary Jaco, Public Safety Officer, posted on the Los Angeles Times Website**

"I'm very saddened to hear he is no longer with us. He was always so nice to everyone. I would go to the City Employees office and he'd always be there. I'm glad I was able to know him. Howard you'll be missed."

**- Rosie, posted on the Los Angeles Times Website**

"I am the spouse of a City Employee, and I signed on today to look up ticket information. It was such a shock to see that Howard was one of those lost in the Metrolink accident."

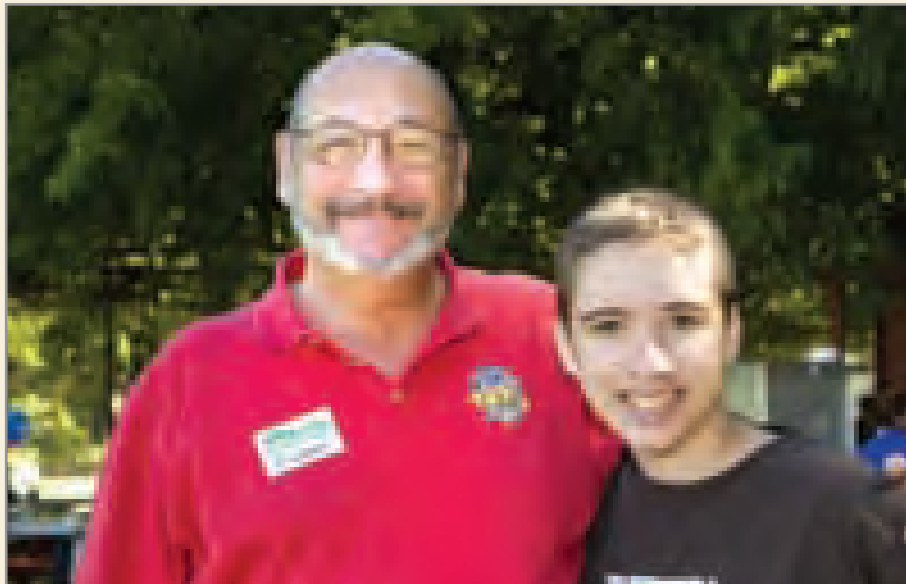
"I always do the ordering of tickets, merchandise, etc. for my husband. I knew Howard's face only from his photo in the monthly publication. However I had spoken to him many times over the phone with questions and requests for information."

"Each time he was so very helpful to me and patient when I called. I can recall the conversations and never once did he fail to make me smile or laugh."

"On behalf of my husband, Michael Kitley, East Valley Sanitation, and our family, we would like to extend our sincere condolences to his family and friends."

"I will miss his voice of kindness."

**- Adrienne Kitley**



Howard and his grandson Travis.

"Howard was like a grandpa to me and I miss him so much already. I remember Isaiah walking into his office for some pretzels and Howard would ask him how things were going. Howard was one of the greatest persons I ever met, and I miss him a ton. Whenever he would walk into a room everyone seemed happier, and I am sure everyone misses him. This is when in life you realize you should take every chance to see someone you love."

"I love you Howard."

**- Noah Hawkins, 11, son of John Hawkins, Club CEO**

"Howard was one of my favorite persons I've met in the Club. When I came to the Club the first time Howard gave me presents for the first two years. I miss Howard, and he was a very nice guy and I love him! Howard was one of the best persons I've met. To this loving memory of Howard I love him very, very much and I miss him very, very much. I've known Howard since I was very little. Howard is the best!"

"I love Howard."

**- Isaiah Hawkins, 8, son of John Hawkins, Club CEO**

"I logged on the Webpage today to purchase ClubFest tickets, and now learning of Howard's passing, I'm shocked it has brought tears to my eyes. I didn't know Howard, but I clearly recall just last month in August my little girls and I stopped by the new downtown Club Store location to purchase Disneyland tickets, and we were greeted by the warmest smile! It was Howard. Howard was a kind man who even joked with my girls."

"A great loss indeed. A warm smile like Howard's will never be forgotten. My sympathy and prayers go out to his family and friends. May he rest in peace."

**- Franki Marie Becerra, Office of Senator Alex Padilla**

"I wanted to thank you for all your thoughts and prayers. [Howard] was a truly wonderful man and will be missed terribly. He was a wonderful father, grandfather and friend, and will stay in our hearts forever."

**- Barrie Winston, daughter of Howard Pompel**

"I speak for myself and my sister, Anna Ingram, who is also a Club Member. The news of Howard's passing brought deep sadness and shock. On our many trips to the Club, Howard was also there with a smile on his face and was always going the extra mile to help, no matter if it was dealing with him over the phone or in person. That's one of the many reasons we enjoyed going over the Club and continue to do so."

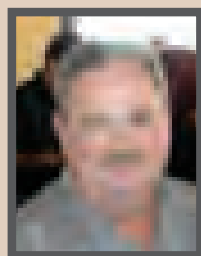
"Howard will be missed but not forgotten."

**- Angela Espino, Club Member**

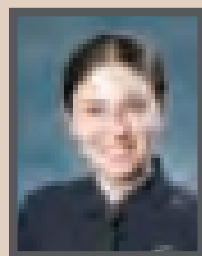
## ADD YOUR COMMENTS & MEMORIES



Howard Pompel



Michael Hammersley



Spree DeSha

*Add Your Comments and Memories  
Readers of Alive! are invited to add their comments, happy memories and reminiscences of Howard, Michael and Spree and condolences for their families and friends.*

*Send your thoughts by email to:*

welovehoward@cityemployeesclub.com

*Or by regular mail to:*

The City Mourns  
City Employees Club of Los Angeles  
120 W. Second St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

## Metrolink Tragedy Touches the City

### A Poem for Michael

Chandra Mosley, Michael Hammersley's former supervisor in Mail Services, wrote this poem upon hearing the news of his death. —Ed.



#### YOUR SPIRIT LIVES ON!

Because of your warmth and caring demeanor  
Your arrival brought smiles to our face

Because we all knew, when we saw you Mike,  
Our help was already in place!

Your glowing face had meanings untold, this poem can't begin to describe  
But for starters, you were a man of integrity,  
With a generous heart you couldn't hide

The City of Los Angeles  
has lost a family member ~ never, ever to be replaced!

We never heard an unkind word in anything you had to say  
Instead, you gave us balance that makes us proud today  
To know you were among us, and in our hearts you will always stay!

With closing thoughts,  
few knew you were a major "Trekkie" fan  
So, the Heavens above add another Star to a band of heavenly grace.

My friend, our lives will feel such a void as we process and accept what's true

But know that your spirit lives on and on in  
Memory and in Truth!

— Chandra Mosley, Sept. 16, 2008



## MICHAEL HAMMERSLEY, 45

Mail Services driver with perfect attendance record and a can-do attitude loved science fiction.

by Yvonne Liu, Office of Finance, with contributions from Melody McCormick and Aram Salmasi, General Services

More than 200 people gathered at the funeral services for Michael Sept. 17 at Reardon Simi Valley Mortuary. It was standing-room-only as friends, family and many City employees, sworn and civilian alike, arrived to the theme from *Star Wars*.

Michael died Sept. 12 in the Metrolink train accident in Chatsworth.

His funeral didn't feature a usual hymn like "Amazing Grace," but Michael Hammersley, 45, was not a usual City employee.

When a Senior Delivery Driver retired from the graveyard shift at General Services and no one wanted to pick it up, Mike volunteered for the job and stuck with it for five years.

When he finished up in the morning and if the team were short on drivers, Mike would volunteer to stay on for a couple of hours more without his supervisor even having to ask him.

Mike had not taken a sick day in the entire eight years of his City career.

"Mike was an awesome employee," said Chandra Mosley, former Chief of the Mail Services Division from April 2001 to September 2005.

That's why, when he didn't show up for work on Monday, Sept. 15th, Mike's fellow delivery drivers and other Mail Services staff were shocked by a new life without him.

As one of 15 Delivery Drivers with the Mail Services Division, General Services, located on the first floor of City Hall, Mike was part of the City's main outlet for collecting and delivering more than 15 million pieces of mail between City departments and between the City and its residents. The City depended on Mike daily for these vital communication services as he traveled to more than 40 different locations throughout the City, including numerous LAPD stations, Sanitation facilities, Animal Services, Council offices and Community Development.

Supervisor Delivery Driver III David Pongvarin remembered that Mike was always on time, dependable and reliable. For the last three years, David had supervised "Mikey Mike," as he was nick named fondly by all the drivers. "If anyone needed help to cover any part of a route, Mike would volunteer to cover any extra stops. If we needed a car to be dropped off at the garage [at Piper Tech], he would do it," David said.

Mike provided critical all-night mail delivery services to the LAPD. On route, he was the cheerful delivery driver that folks at the police stations looked forward to seeing. He shared his hobby—collecting trivia on science fiction — *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* — with the people he served and worked with.

David, who started with the City only five months before Mike, said, "Mike talked daily about science fiction. He would know a lot of information about the movies. He wasn't so interested in the movie stars, but he would know [the names of] the prop makers, special effects and all the backstage people, like make-up, costumes, weapons. He told me about his collectibles in storage, so I heard that he possessed a life-size replica of Han Solo from the film *The Empire Strikes Back*. I saw it for the first time at his funeral service," David said.

Mike's vacations were spent organizing his collectibles.

Delivery Driver II David Meraz has more than 15 years of City service with more than 10 years currently with General Services. He was an alternate supervisor for Mike and a fellow science fiction fan. Like Mike, he collected DVDs on obscure, older science fiction movies.

"Every Monday, Mike would bring me the Best Buy ads for

what's on sale with these movies, like the original *Blob*. He would know the release dates, who starred in it, location where it was filmed, and fine details that no one else would know. He was like a computer of sci-fi information," David Meraz said.

Mike was honored at the last Mail Services Appreciation Day in 2007 with an award for Perfect Attendance, as he had not missed a day of work in more than seven years. He was also honored for Exemplary Customer Service.

"[Mike] was an award-winning employee, always setting the standard of excellence by meeting deadlines," Chandra remembered. "He sent the notices out for LAFD and Bureau of Sanitation to constituents by deadline."

Late last year he decided it was time for a change, and so he came off of that shift in January 2008 and began working days instead.

"Mike never bragged about his awards," said Delivery Driver I Napoleon Fuller. "He was a real humble guy."

Napoleon, who has worked with him for five of his six years of City service, shared another interest with Mike. They were both avid fans of paranormal phenomena, and they eagerly talked about the television shows the next day after watching *TAPS The Atlantic Paranormal Society* or *Paranormal State*.

Along with Delivery Driver I Gus Cortes, they would share ghost stories and compare them. None of them has ever experienced a paranormal encounter first-hand.

"We wanted to investigate haunted houses and see if we can communicate with the ghosts," Napoleon remembered. "We heard that City Hall was haunted. This year, beginning of summer, the two of us went to the 24th floor of City Hall. They say that the eyes of one of the Mayor's pictures follow you around the room."

Napoleon described Mike's distinctive goodbye wave: "It would start by his hip, and he would shake his right hand a couple of times."

"That was hilarious!" he said.

David Pongvarin said, "The funeral service ended with the theme from *Indiana Jones*. It was fitting for Mike's [life]. Usually you leave a funeral service feeling depressed at the end. At Mike's funeral, it was uplifting. It was more like him as he was as a person."

Mike is survived by, among other family members, two younger brothers who are also City employees: Tim Hammersley, an Equipment Operator for Public Works/Street Services; and Thomas Hammersley, a Mechanic Helper, LAFD.



Aram Salmasi, Division Manager, Mail Services, awards Michael with an honor in this *Alive!* file photo.

*Metrolink Tragedy Touches the City*

# SPREE DESHA, 35

*Police Officer III had 34 commendations.*

Spree DeSha, Police Officer III, was aboard the Metrolink train that crashed head on into a freight train in Chatsworth. Officer DeSha was killed on impact, leaving her family, friends and fellow Officers grieving her loss.

Officer DeSha was appointed to the LAPD Feb. 12, 2001. She worked a variety of assignments, but was most recently assigned to the Office of Operations as a Staff Researcher/Writer.

Officer DeSha spent most of her career working in patrol, training new police officers. She was well respected by her colleagues and supervisors alike. For the majority of the past three years, Officer DeSha worked out of North Hollywood Community Police Station. The men and woman who worked with her there have perhaps been hit hardest by her sudden loss. North Hollywood Patrol Captain, Sharyn Buck expressed

deep regret and sadness on behalf of the entire Division, "Officer DeSha was a model officer. She will be sorely missed by those of us who had the privilege to know and work with her."

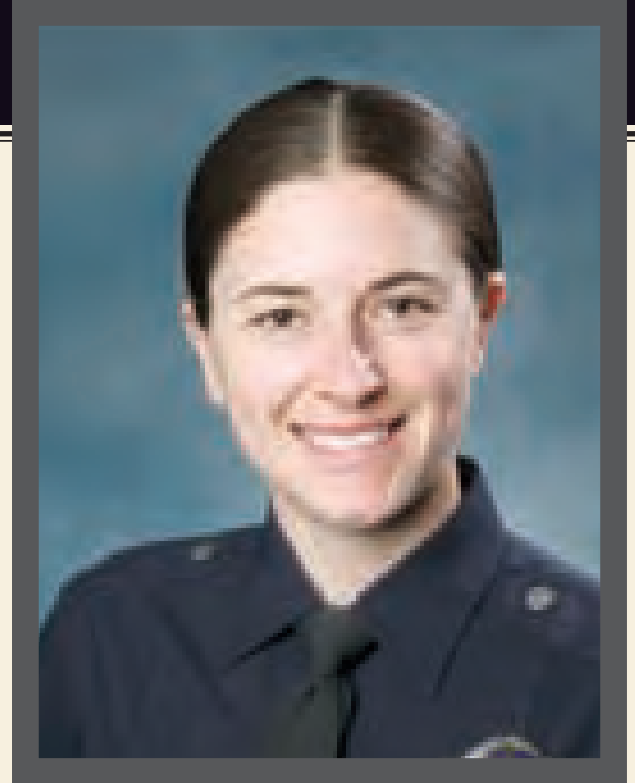
*"Officer DeSha was a model officer. She will be sorely missed..."*

**- Sharyn Buck, North Hollywood Patrol Captain**

During her seven years of service, Officer DeSha received 34 commendations for performance and qualities that reflected her professionalism, attention to duty, productivity and ability to connect with the community in positive ways. During one rating period, her supervisor wrote, "She approached her new assignment with enthusiasm and anticipation...She is an extremely effective officer."

Her parents were to attend roll call at the North Hollywood Division Sept. 15 in her memory.

The Club sends condolences to the friends, family and co-workers of Police Officer Spree DeSha.



# RICHARD MYLES

*Survivor*



# TWICE A SURVIVOR

*"It is times like this that we realize how fragile life is and how important family is to us."*

**- Cynthia Ruiz, President, Board of Public Works**

Richard Myles, Public Works/Sanitation, survived the Metrolink accidents in Chatsworth and Glendale.

Friends, family and co-workers greeted Richard Myles as he was released from the Kaiser Sunset medical facility Sept. 18.

Myles was aboard Metrolink 111 that collided with a Union Pacific freight train Sept. 12, killing 25 people. He survived that accident.

He was also aboard the Metrolink train that collided with a passenger vehicle left on the tracks in Glendale January 2005. That accident killed 11 people.

Cynthia Ruiz, President, Board of Public Works, said: "Richard has been a stellar employee. It is times like this that we realize how fragile life is and how important family is to us. We as a Public Works family stand behind him and wish him a speedy recovery."

All Pictures Above: Richard Myles at his release from Kaiser Sunset medical facility Sept. 18.



# EVERYDAY HEROES IN ACTION



## Metrolink Tragedy Touches the City

### THE METROLINK ACCIDENT PROVED THE BRAVERY OF CITY HEROES.



On that day, Sept. 12, 55 companies of Los Angeles Firefighters, 30 LAFD Rescue Ambulances, one Heavy Rescue, one Urban Search and Rescue Unit, two Rehab Units, one Hazardous Materials Team, four helicopters, seven EMS Battalion Captains, eight Battalion Chief Officer Command Teams, one Division Chief Officer Command Team, Foam Tenders 100 and 60, Emergency Air 1, the Heavy Equipment Company, and Emergency Lighting 72, 83 and 112, all under the direction of Dept. Chief Mario Rueda, responded to the accident in the Chatsworth area.

Agencies representing Los Angeles City, Los Angeles County, Beverly Hills and Ventura County Fire Departments, the Los Angeles Police Department, Los Angeles County Sheriffs, CHP, Metrolink and Union Pacific Railroad, worked under a Unified Command.

With a fire in evidence, Firefighters were faced with multiple responsibilities: fighting the immediate fire and extricating any surviving passengers from a multi-casualty incident and a potential Haz Mat problem. Firefighters initiated a swift attack on the fire with hand lines, quickly knocking down the fire. Their counterparts moved in to initiate an intense search for potential survivors and begin triaging the injured.

#### *Saving More than 100*

There were 135 patients treated for a variety of injuries. In all, there were 40 patients suffering from critical injuries, 40 seriously injured patients and 50 people with minor injuries. Forty patients were flown by air ambulance to area hospitals throughout the county, utilizing all 12 trauma centers in the Los Angeles County area.

One Firefighter was taken to a local hospital in stable condition with heat related symptoms and exhaustion. The Firefighter was treated and released from the hospital

Despite the painful loss of three who were so close to the City family, more than 100 survived the catastrophic Metrolink accident, in large part because of City Heroes like those in these photos.

*Photos by Ryan Ling, firelinephoto.com*



### THOSE WHO DIDN'T SURVIVE

*Here's the list of those who did not survive the accident.  
May they rest in peace.*

Christopher Aiken, 38, Thousand Oaks  
Dennis Arnold, 75, Camarillo  
Dean Brower, 51, Ventura  
Alan Buckley, 59, Simi Valley  
Yi Chao, 71, Simi Valley  
Spree DeSha, 35, Simi Valley  
Walter Fuller, 54, Simi Valley  
Ronald Grace, 55, Simi Valley  
Michael Hammersley, 45, Simi Valley  
Jacob Hefter, 18, Palmdale  
Chen-Wyuan Hsieh, 18, Newhall  
Ernest Kish, 47, Thousand Oaks  
Gregory Lintner, 48, Simi Valley  
Paul Long, 54, Moorpark  
Manuel Macias Jr., 31, Santa Paula  
Aida Magdaleno, 19, Camarillo  
Beverly Mosley, 57, Moorpark  
Charles Peck, 49, Salt Lake City  
Howard Pompel, 69, Moorpark  
Donna Remata, 49, Simi Valley  
Robert Sanchez, 46, La Crescenta  
Doyle Souser, 56, Camarillo  
Roger Spacey, 60, Simi Valley  
Maria Villalobos, 18, Moorpark  
Atul Vyas, 20, Simi Valley