

PUBLIC WORKS

44 Years, Still Going Strong

Gary Gsell marks 44 years with Bureau of Street Services.

Story and photos courtesy Public Works

Gary M. Gsell, Public Works/Street Services, received his 40-year pin at a ceremony in September. "That's really 44 years and some change," notes Gsell, a Street Services Superintendent at the Street Maintenance East Valley Area office in Van Nuys.

For the last three years, Gsell has spent most of his time representing the Bureau in about 200 depositions and 70 trials for civil litigation claims against the City of Los Angeles. He has been "the face of the City on the witness stand," he says, explaining "our responsibility to public safety and welfare in roadway potholes and sidewalk trip and fall cases."

He acknowledges he has come a long way since he started at age 19 in 1968, one year after graduating from Polytechnic High School in Sun Valley. "On my first day, the crew supervisor sent me to the oil house," says Gsell, who started with the Bureau as a Maintenance Laborer at North Hollywood Yard.

"My first job was cleaning lanterns used on

wooden barricades and filling them with kerosene oil," he explains. "Today we use plastic barricades with electric flashers. Everything has changed!"

"When I first started, we didn't use hard helmets or safety vests. Now, we are much more safety-conscious, and we have fewer injuries."

Gsell has spent his entire City career with the Street Services Bureau, except for two years in the Army. "It has been a quick 44 years," he says. "Seems like yesterday when I showed up for work as a teenager."

"This place has become like family to me. Generations of people have worked with me, fathers and sons and in some cases grandchildren." He has even worked with one employee's grandfather's brother.

Will he try to reach the 50-year mark? "That's a big challenge," he says. "How much longer with the City, I don't know." He confesses he is a "creature of habit" now with no plans to leave the area or to retire. "You become a lifer."



Gary Gsell.

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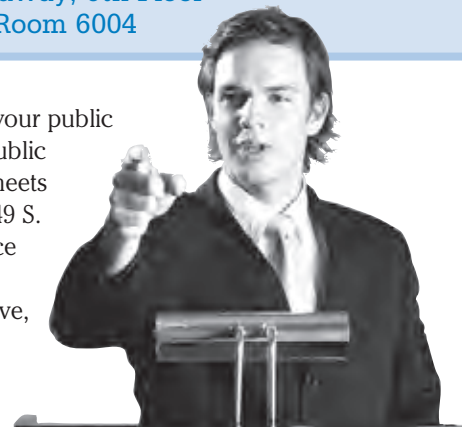
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