

Writers Forum

by George B. Russ

April is Birthday month for "Miss Pheobe," the Union Baptist Church Bus.

"Miss Pheobe" made her debut for the Union Baptist membership, April 1971—a brand new, shiny blue and white conveyance—to erase the transportation problem of many of the church's Senior Citizens, handicapped members—and, friends wanting a lift.

"Miss Pheobe's" work day begins at nine o'clock each Sunday morning. Leaving the church, on North Roxboro Street, "Miss Pheobe" winds her way to Walltown where the first riders are picked up. From this point, the sullen silence of loneliness that hovered over the empty bus suddenly disappears in the wake of Sabbath good-cheer vibrated by the passengers. Onward they go: Hicktown—Morreene Road—Dearborn Drive—Geer Street—Hardee Street—back to Gray Avenue; then, across town to Ridgeway Avenue—Unity Village—Fayetteville Street—Pilot Street—and away we go, homeward bound now.

"Miss Pheobe" transports, averaged, 70 persons each Sunday: approximately 1820 passengers annually. The mileage meter registers 7300 miles. This mark-up includes extra trips, such as: Fayetteville; Riley Hill Church—Wake Forest; First Baptist Church, Rev. L. M. Daye, pastor; Newport News, Va.; Hatchet Grove Baptist Church, Morrisville, N.C.; North Durham Community Basket Ball Team—3 weekly practice evenings and 8 Saturday morning for combat.

"Miss Pheobe" has three men in her life—drivers: Clarence Jones, Robert Burris and Hunter Haskins.

Mr. Haskins thoroughly enjoys busing the well-dressed, cheerful, Sabbath commuters to and from church. He finds "busing" a joyous way and means of keeping everybody happy. Occasionally, he quizzes the passengers concerning their well-being: "are you satisfied with your driver? And the answer is always loud and clear: "We are happy!"

Hunter admits, enthusiastically, that driving

"Miss Pheobe" is no chore. "I feel that I am giving a service for a lot of people who otherwise would not make it to Union Baptist Church services very often. No joke, I really love helping the little old ladies aboard the bus. They have to take it real easy getting off and on the bus and I just give them all the time they need. I find that patience pays off—everybody is happy and I feel good inside being able to lend a helping hand."

Mr. and Mrs. Hunter Haskins reside at 2014 Mattiene Avenue. He is a recent retiree from Creative Printers, after 20 years of service. Mrs. Myrtle Haskins is a native of Wadesboro, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Rickett; a member of The Pastor's Aide Society. Up-To-Date-Galeda Club, the Senior Missionary Circle and the Galeda S. S. Class. Hunter is a Durham product; "I have been here all my life. I have always attended services at Union Baptist. I joined the church back in the 40s. I was baptized by Rev. A. S. Croom."

Interviewer: "Do you hold any offices in the Church?"

"No. I don't hold any offices—I am a member of the Pastor's Aide Society. I used to sing with the Male Chorus—Mrs. Dorcas Reaves, Rev. Croom's daughter, was in charge of the chorus when I tried to sing. I wasn't hitting on nothing trying to sing. I'm a member of the Men's Bible Class like most of the men in the church but I seldom attend, you see, I start

-LOVE

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couple told me they did not believe in legal marriages. I asked "Why, then, you have a wedding? Their answer was to get things they needed and could not afford to get. St. Paul stated, it is best to get married. This is for low moral people, preachers, Bishops and all spiritual leaders. Then he says, it is best not to get married. When you become married, you can not give full time to God because your mate feels he is being neglected. It is a must to rise and stand for Christ on all issues.

my rounds at nine o'clock. I tried ushering." Haskins chuckled spasmodically—"but I didn't do much at that—I just like helping out where I'm needed at the moment—lending a helping hand is my motto."

Interviewer: "Tell me something about the upkeep of "Miss Pheobe."

"Well, I tell you, the upkeep isn't much. You see, the bus was brand new when the church bought it. The tires are still good. A new tire was bought for the spare wheel that came with the bus. Except for gas 'n oil, there isn't much cost to running the vehicle."

Interviewer: "I see—Do you wash and polish "Miss Pheobe?"

"Yeah. I wash up once every three weeks. I clean up every Saturday morning."

Haskins has found a greater

happiness and won many new friends through giving service—being patient and courteous to others. Be assured that Haskins is not the kind of person described in one of William Hazlitt's essays:

"There are persons who cannot make friends. Who are they? Those who cannot be friends. It is not the want of understanding or good nature, of entertaining or useful qualities, that you complain of: on the contrary, they have probably many points of attraction; but they have one that neutralizes all these—they care nothing about you, and are neither the better or worse for what you think about them. They manifest no joy at your approach; and when you leave them it is with a feeling that they can do just as well without you. This is not silliness, no indifference, no

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absence of mind; but they are intent solely on their own thoughts, and you are merely one of the subjects they exercise them upon. They live in society as in a solitude; and, however their brain works, their pulse beats neither faster nor slower for the communion of life."

Such people will not be interested in driving a church bus like "Miss Pheobe."

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