

# I rode shotgun on the Castor Bus

By Thomas Van Dusen

The Castor Bus comes through the rush-hour traffic like a tail-wagging, blue-and-white puppy. It's not big like the others but something like a school bus with Castor Bus Line on the side.

olic doctor, a girl going out to rejoin her husband's cavalry regiment, a rather notorious lady about whom the least said the better and a sallow-complexioned gambler in a cloak and white hat



I wasn't quite sure where it stopped. My daughter told me it was near the entrance to the underground parking entrance at the Arts Centre at Slater and Elgin and there I stationed myself.

who looked amazingly like John Carradine in Stagecoach. There was also an old time Western sherrif with a shotgun. By now, our driver was beginning to look remarkably like Andy Devine.

A few moments later, the bus piloted by former international rowing champion Martin Bielz pulled up and the group which I had been looking to for recognition rose and formed up on the curb with the almost military precision.

Humming gently to himself, Martin Bielz whipped the bus over the Mackenzie King Bridge and in an amazingly short time we were swinging through the Billings Bridge shopping centre where for possible passengers going down Highway 31. A lady rapped sharply on the bus door and entered. Apparently, she had been chasing the bus around the shopping centre. Martin said the place to wait was the donut shop, on the assumption that she could both watch and eat at the same time.

Most of those getting on were ladies. There were three or four gentlemen (including myself) and, with the driver, this represented a force capable of meeting any emergency as we headed into the wild Castor country.

At the end of Bank street, a youth sauntered out from the curb to inform the driver that while he wouldn't be taking the bus home, he would definitely be

There was plenty of room for everyone, a welcome relief after crowded city buses. My fellow passengers included an absconding bank manager, a mild and meek liquor drummer, an alcohol



# Beaver Bob

Groundhogs and Roadhogs

The awful slaughter on the highway must stop. We are not referring to people but to groundhogs, those charming and curious members of the bear family who inhabit the Castor Underground.

Scarcely a day passes but another furry corpse is found on our highways. The road between Russell and Metcalfe is particularly noteworthy as a killing ground of these interesting animals. Perhaps it is a case of road-hogs meeting groundhogs.

The ground-hog suffers of course from having been given a name which seems to abstract from him all public sympathy. When someone sees a rabbit, crushed and bleeding on the roadside, or even a cat, there are exclamations of pity. But the stiff, recumbent form of a

pulverized groundhog appears to be accepted as a natural feature of the landscape. We understand that there are even those so lost to ordinary understanding that they actually attempt to shoot these harmless creatures through the windows of an automobile.

The groundhog, also known as woodchuck from an Ojibway Indian word, is actually a marmot. This doesn't advance us very far. Although he whistles distinctively (thus his French name, siffleux) he is not the whistling marmot. That distinction is reserved for his smaller cousin, the gopher.

He plays a noteworthy role in weather mythology. Everyone is familiar with the old tale which says that if the groundhog sees his shadow on Groundhog Day,

we can expect six weeks more of winter. It is not our place to comment on the accuracy or otherwise of this ongoing prediction. Suffice to say that no one, as far as we are aware has ever claimed to have checked it out.

While there may be some doubts about the accuracy of the groundhog as a weather prophet, there is no doubt about his being an interesting and charming fellow.

Seen above ground he resembles a fat brown bear and you cannot help wondering how such a formidable creature can pass his life below the ground.

One wonders if he were called by some other name, such as whistling marmot, perhaps he might receive better treatment.

on it in the morning. Martin nodded as he absorbed this information and in a short time we were bowling down 31 through South Gloucester. One felt a sinking feeling as all signs of civilization faded and the vast, unbroken landscape swallowed us up.

My thoughts drifted . . . Not far from the Greeley Cheese Factory, a rangy young fellow stepped out of the chaparral with a saddle on his shoulder. He allowed as how he was the Ringo Kid and wanted to go on to Dodge.

"Is that near Morewood?" Martin Bielz asked. The Ringo Kid said the Piutes

were on the warpath, the Apaches were out and the Navahos were having a garage sale. Everybody moved back one and we let him on the bus. There was nothing else to be done.

The Ringo Kid said the road to Morewood was cut off. Maybe even Russell was surrounded. He said we could make a stand at the bridge if the cavalry got there in time. He said once the Piutes were out, this meant the Utes would be next; then the Cheyennes, the Arapahos and maybe even the Kickapoos. He said it looked bad all around.

On we rushed over the tortured landscape. We crossed the South

Castor, the North Castor and Middle Castor without event.

We were attacked once by Utes, twice by Piutes three times by Canutes. Then the Malemites came, but we drove them away easily . . .

A bump jarred me back to reality as the fiery red ball of the setting sun sank behind the Russell registry office and the bus pulled up on the Main Street.

As I stepped down and turned to watch the big coach thunder away. I thought I saw a blurred outline of a man slumped in his seat, hat pulled low over his eyes.

My imagination, only my imagination, I told myself.

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