

# Midwest Bus Museum

501c3 Not For Profit Corporation

Visit Us Online @ [midwestbusmuseum.org](http://midwestbusmuseum.org)

## April 2024 Newsletter



### President's Message

We are about to embark on another great year full of bus transportation history preservation. Each year our membership grows, and we continue to see more new faces at our events. Please enjoy this newsletter as we reflect on a successful 2023 and look forward to an exciting year in 2024. We have several events planned for the year, please help to get the word out about MBM and encourage your friends to become members to support the cause. I want to take the opportunity to thank all of our members and directors for your support, without you MBM would not be what it is today. - Tom Schwartz

#### **2023 Year in Review and What's Ahead**

2023 was a successful year for MBM, more great things happening in 2024!

#### **MBM Acquires Fully Restored 1978 Ford Carpenter School Bus**

A generous donor recently donated a fully restored 1978 Ford Carpenter school bus to the museum. See why this bus was so special to warrant a nearly 20k restoration.

#### **Married to a Bus Nut**

A wife's story of being married to a bus transportation enthusiast.

#### **MBM Wisconsin's 100th Anniversary Checker Event**

More information and pictures from the MBM Wisconsin Check Motors event.

#### **The Jail Bird**

Read about MBM's most recent historic bus acquisition, a 1987 Prison Bus!

#### **Renew Your Membership Today!**

Thank you for your supporting the Midwest Bus Museum. Your membership and donation contributions are vital to our continued operation to preserve, restore, and promote transportation history for future generations. Please log on to [midwestbusmuseum.org](http://midwestbusmuseum.org) to renew your membership.

#### **Stay Updated on Facebook!**

[facebook.com/midwestbusmuseum](https://facebook.com/midwestbusmuseum)

## 2023 Year In Review

2023 was another great year for MBM with several great events for our members and transportation enthusiast community to enjoy. 2023 kicked off with our annual ATHS Day event, followed by several parade showings and culminated with our annual museum open house. Thanks to all who made it out to an MBM event last year!



## 2024 Events

May 4th - ATHS Day (Richmond, IL)

May 24,25 - Highways and Heros Event (Johnson City, Tennessee)

May 27 - Johnsborg Memorial Day Parade (Johnsborg, IL)

July 4 - Spring Grove Independence Day Parade (Spring Grove, IL)

Aug 4 - Illinois Railway Museum's Vintage Transport Extravaganza (Union, IL)

Sep 14 - MBM Illinois Open House (Richmond, IL)

Sep 21 - Illinois Railway Museum's Bus Day Event (Union, IL)

## MBM Acquires Fully Restored 1978 Ford Carpenter School Bus

*By Tom Schwartz, President*

Bill Wilkinson, a transportation history enthusiast from Virginia, has generously donated a fully restored 1978 Ford Carpenter school bus to MBM. Before embarking on his career in the transportation industry, Bill drove a school bus for Montgomery County Schools, just outside of Washington DC while attending college. After becoming successful in the transportation industry, Bill often reflected on his early days of driving in the 1980's. Fast forward almost 40 years, during a drive through the back roads of Virginia, Bill spotted what looked to be an old Montgomery County school bus for sale at a church. The bus had been poorly painted white and it





## 1978 Ford Carpenter Cont'd

didn't run, but couldn't resist the price at a few hundred bucks. Bill bought the bus, got it running and brought it home to where it would undergo a full cosmetic and mechanical restoration. Come find out, Bill drove bus #541 back in the day earning money to pay for college and this bus was #540, the bus that was parked next his in the yard.

Bill's passion for the bus shows through the beautiful restoration work that he performed. MBM is thrilled to have been able to acquire this bus and showcase it for future generations to appreciate and enjoy. Thank you Bill for your outstanding contribution to Midwest Bus Museum.



## Married to a Bus Nut

*By Heather Schwartz, Treasurer*

I never imagined that marrying a bus enthusiast like Tom would lead me on such incredible adventures. I wasn't a bus enthusiast until I met him, but together, we have embarked on countless road trips with our daughter Evelyn, all in the pursuit of rescuing old buses and bringing them back to our home in Illinois.

From the moment we met, I knew that Tom and I shared something special. It was evident that we shared a profound connection rooted in our mutual fascination with history.





## Married to a Bus Nut (Cont'd)

Our love for buses only grew stronger as we worked together to save them from being forgotten. With each rescue, we added a new chapter to the bus museum, showcasing the history and beauty of each vehicle.

One of our most challenging rescues was traveling from Chicago to Enid, Oklahoma via Greyhound. It was a 23-hour trip, and Evelyn tolerated it so well. This journey marked my first bus rescue. That old Chevy Wayne will hold a special place in my heart as a testament to our determination and love for these iconic vehicles. It also has some pretty neat rainbow seats that Wayne offered during the 1970s, adding a colorful and nostalgic touch to our collection!

Through our adventures, I have learned so much about buses and the history behind them. I can now identify various bus bodies and the years they were built. One of my favorite facts to share is that the Wayne Corporation was one of the first companies to specialize in the manufacturing of school buses. With their headquarters in Richmond, Indiana, Wayne Corporation began producing horse-drawn school buses in the early 1900s before transitioning to motorized school buses in the 1920s. Their early innovations and commitment to safety helped establish them as a leader in the school bus manufacturing industry.





## Married to a Bus Nut (Cont'd)

I never would have imagined that my life would be filled with buses, but I wouldn't have it any other way. Tom and I have created a beautiful life together, full of adventure, passion, and love for buses. The Midwest Bus Museum is not just a collection of buses, but a representation of our shared love and dedication to preserving history. I am grateful for the opportunity to share my love for buses with my growing family, and with fellow bus enthusiasts.

As we continue to rescue and restore buses, I am excited to see what the future holds for our family and the museum. Whether it's embarking on another cross-country road trip or adding a new bus to our collection, I know that our love for buses will continue to bring us joy and fulfillment for years to come. And who knows, maybe one day Evelyn will take the reins and continue our legacy, sharing her passion for buses with future generations.



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## MBM Acquires 1997 Bluebird All American

*By Emerson Zentz, VP*

In the summer of 2023 the Museum was graciously donated an absolutely beautiful 1997 Bluebird All-American and with this donation it now puts the Midwest Bus Museum collection of school buses into the late 90s early 2000s era! The donors purchased the bus themselves from the district, fixed it up, fueled it up, acquired extra parts and delivered it to the MBM Wisconsin.



## 1997 BB All American (Cont'd)

The staff at the MBM would like to thank and recognize Josh Bump & Andrew Eggert, two big bus enthusiasts and preservationists with the insight to save this old girl. Thank you to Josh and Andrew, with your efforts you have preserved another bus for future generations to admire, touch and ride!



## MBM Acquires 1936 International Wayne School Bus

*By Tom Schwartz, President*

A generous donor has donated what is now MBM's oldest bus, a 1936 International School Bus. The bus comes to us from the Pacific Northwest. Originally operating for Hermiston Unified School District #8, the bus was later restored by Hendrick's Bus Company of Forest Grove, OR. The bus has been stored inside for the last 20 years. It made its nearly 2000 mile trek to MBM in the summer of 2023. Volunteers are currently working to restore the bus to running condition and evaluation wood repairs that will need to be completed at the base of the windows. Midwest Bus Museum is a 501c3 Not for Profit Organization, all donations are 100% tax deductible.





# Checker Motors Corporation 100th Anniversary Celebration

By Emerson Zentz, VP

On May 30th, 2022, the Midwest Bus Museum (MBM) was happy to host a 100th anniversary celebration of the iconic Checker Cab and the Checker Motors Corporation at MBM Wisconsin.

Checker Motors Corporation was a vehicle manufacturer and tier-one subcontractor located in Kalamazoo, Michigan. It manufactured the renowned American taxicabs used by Checker Taxi. Morris Markin established the company in 1922 –initially named the Checker Cab Manufacturing Company – in Chicago through a merger of Commonwealth Motors and Markin Automobile Body. The manufacturer moved to Kalamazoo in 1923 and was renamed to "Checker Motors" in 1958.

Checker made the iconic American taxicab, highly regarded by taxicab companies for its durability in heavy use. Special features included wide rear doors, large rear seats and trunks, and jump seats for two extra passengers. The company had trouble competing with fleet discounts offered by the larger manufacturers, as well as economies of scale in procuring components. The final models were produced in 1982. After 1982, Checker invested significantly in the third party manufacturing business, serving GM and Chrysler.





## Checker Event (Cont'd)

On January 14, 2010, the Checker Motor Company closed its doors for good ending 88 years in the automotive field.

The MBM and Internet Taxi Cab Archives (ITCA) coordinated the event with over 50 Checker cars in attendance, as well as many "one-offs" coming out for rare appearances. Guests travelled from all over the world to attend the event, and we were also honored to host families from France, Australia & England. The MBM was able to give tours, rides, and showcase the various generations of all of bus transportation classes that shared the busy streets of America with the Checker cab. It was a memorable weekend with friendships formed, museum grounds tours, car & bus cruises, and a fantastic dinner banquet.

The MBM & the ITCA Preserving Transportation History!





## The Jail Bird

By Emerson Zentz, VP

On March 2, 2024, members of the Midwest Bus Museum traveled to Canon City, Colorado to pick up a 1987 Chevrolet C60/Bluebird Bus. While the museum has several examples of this combination, this one was out of the norm and was specifically built for a rough and tough service life.

The State of Colorado ordered this bus to transport prisoners to and from other penitentiaries and to work gang outings. In its final years, it was used for a prisoner run horse camp called "WHIP" (Wild Horse Inmate Program). She is equipped with a 8.2 liter Turbo Detroit Diesel, Allison MT653, & Air Brakes. After 36 dedicated years to the State of Colorado, she was finally retired and replaced. A goal of the MBM is to diversify its collection of buses in order to showcase how builders have outfitted buses for a variety of needs; this old '87 is a perfect example.

Members arrived in Canon City on March 2nd and started pre-trip inspections and small repairs. MBM's Vice President Emerson Zentz had been in contact with representatives of the Department of Corrections, and they assured us she was a runner and was a reliable bus ready for travel. That evening, we positioned her in front of



## The Jail Bird (Cont'd)

the old prison to take some final pictures, and we hit the road for Denver. The morning of March 3rd we had an appointment to replace a few questionable tires, and after those, we had a measly 1,100 miles back to the MBM grounds lol. In the famous song by the late great Jerry Reed, we were "East Bound & Down loaded up and bussing!" We asked a lot out of that old bus in the next 21 hours driving non-stop and only turning her off twice to check fluids. We drove all day and through the night, arriving back at 8am on March 4th.

The old Jail Bird didn't miss a beat and we now look forward to showcasing her in upcoming events.

Big thank you to my wife and Secretary Rachel Zentz for operational support and co-pilot and museum member Al Schultz for sharing steering wheel time. Without their help this could not have been possible, and a thank you to all of our members that support us in keeping this history safe and preserved for another generation.

**2024 Board of Directors**  
**Tom Schwartz, President**  
**Emerson Zentz, V.P.**  
**Rachel Zentz, Secretary**  
**Heather Schwartz, Treasurer**  
**DJ Wedding, Logistics Director**  
**Earl Ford, Fleet Director**  
**Jeff Waxman, Historian**

