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"Do you want to make it easy or make it hard? It's up to you."

--Advice given to MTS Bus Operator Juan Hidalgo when he began bus operator training in May 1973

Like many employees at MTS, Juan Hidalgo has deep roots in the transit industry. While growing up in Kansas his father was a track layer for Santa Fe Railroad. "When my dad retired, he liked the weather so much in San Diego that we moved here when I was a teenager."

Now, more than four decades later (43 years to be exact), Juan is the longest-tenured operator at MTS. During his career he's raised two children and has three grandchildren. And his son, Juan Jr., is a 31-year retired Marine now running for Congress in the 51st Congressional District. "My son started from the bottom and worked his way up to Sergeant Major," Juan said proudly.

So how did Juan end up working at MTS? "I showed up at IAD (the bus facility in East Village) and interviewed with the human resources department. They asked me why I wanted to work at San Diego Transit. I told them it was a stable job and it had a good future. Next thing I knew, I had the job. My instructors were great. I still use many of the driving skills they taught me back then."

Do you Prefer Driving a 40-foot bus or 60-foot articulated bus?

"I drove the artics for a couple years and it was fun, but I like the 40-footers better."

Favorite Bus Route

"Route 10 (Rolando – Old Town Transit Center) is a great route. There are other buses out there to help you out. Some operators stay away from Route 10. But you have to know how to work it."

Most important aspect to operating a bus:

"Safety is number one. And it's a challenge every day. Every route is different. Just like we can't treat customers the same, we can't treat every run the same. You have to stay alert."

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