



## Used Bus Sales at Trailways in 1969

by Larry Plachno

Above: Another time, another era. This Continental Trailways Eagle departs from the Trailways Terminal and offices in Washington, D.C. in the 1970s. By this time Eagles had been operating for Continental Trailways for more than a decade and were replacing the older GM coaches in the fleet. In fact, the Eagle itself became the first 40-foot model on the used market. Take a look back in time when Continental Trailways was still making the transition to the Eagle and selling their older coaches themselves. ROBERT REDDEN, REDDEN ARCHIVES.

It all started when Dick Shelley came across an advertisement from September of 1969 showing the new used bus prices from Continental Trailways. He passed it along to Jon Hobijn who in turn sent it to us. While it brought a smile and some fond remembrances to the faces of us old timers, the newcomers had more questions about it than we could answer. This article was generated as a result.

We humans tend to see the world in the context of our past experience. As a result, everyone sees the world differently. From the standpoint of marketing, advertising and even magazine articles, it helps to understand other people's experiences and how they see the world.

I am reminded of my recent experience serving on the local library board. Unless you intentionally made an effort, the mate-



rials and services offered by the library tended to be geared more towards the directors than the users. What does the world look like from the eyes of today's American teenager? Their world has always had push-button phones, color TV and MTV. Personal computers and the Internet have always been here, and e-mail has existed as long as they can remember. Moreover, stick shift exists only on racing cars and relics.

The same situation applies to the bus industry. Younger people and those new to the bus industry missed a great era and some great times in past years. These "New Used Bus Prices" from 1969 bring several facets of that era to mind.

Today, with Greyhound suffering financial woes like many other businesses, it is difficult to conceive of an era when there were two major players in the long distance intercity bus market. While Greyhound and Trailways had a great deal in common, they also were different in many ways. Greyhound operations were traditionally under one management or at least closely affiliated. On the other hand, Trailways has always been an organization of independent operators working together under a single banner. Greyhound traditionally used blue as their primary fleet color while Trailways used red.

The differences continue in several other areas. Greyhound primarily operated GM coaches in the 1950s and first half of the 60s and then switched to MCI. While the larger Trailways companies also operated GM coaches in the 1950s, it was not unusual to find some Flxibles, Brills and other occasional brands in Trailways livery. With the introduction of the Eagle in the later 1950s, many of the Trailways operations began switching to Eagles on longer and heavier routes.

Geographically, Greyhound was stronger in the Central and Northern states. A portion of this may stem from Greyhound's early heritage in Minnesota. However, a few people have also suggested that the MCI was more adept at dealing with cold climates than the Eagle. The Trailways' influence was strongest in the Southern states, particularly the Southeast, where there were numerous smaller carriers and local routes. The fact that the Nashville entertainers preferred Eagles for years is due both to their ride and the past Trailways/Eagle prominence in the Nashville area.

To a large extent, Continental Trailways was the backbone of the Trailways system. Most of the Trailways members were regional carriers although some had longer routes linking major cities. Continental Trailways was the result of a consolidation of smaller operations. It ran coast to coast and effectively became the most important link between the regional members.

As a result of both its size and operation, Continental Trailways became a prominent member of the Trailways organization. It took the lead in equipment and was responsible for the initial appearance of the Eagle and later owned the Eagle manufacturing plant in Brownsville, Texas. Reflecting its prominence, the company name was later changed to Trailways, Inc.

At the time that this used bus advertisement was published in 1969, I was a frequent visitor to the Trailways depot in Chicago. Located at the edge of Chicago's Loop, the terminal had an entrance on Randolph Street, only a handful of bus docks, and most buses

ran through the alley to exit on Wabash under the "L" tracks.

Friday evenings at the terminal were hectic and exciting. The interior of the terminal was often standing room only as people sought to get out of town for the weekend. Both Deluxe Trailways to St. Louis and Southeastern to Indianapolis ran extra sections on Friday nights. Continental, of course, ran the main east-west route between

New York and the West Coast via Chicago. In those years there was no Trailways operation going north out of Chicago.

Some readers may question the fact that Continental Trailways sold their own used buses in 1969. Frank Millet presided over used bus sales at the Continental Trailways headquarters on Continental Avenue on the north side of downtown Dallas. However, you could also purchase used buses at the

September 1969

## CONTINENTAL TRAILWAYS NEW USED BUS PRICES

Model	Year	Was	Now	
4104s	1953	\$9,500.00	\$9,000.00	
	1954	10,000.00	9,500.00	
	1955	11,000.00	10,500.00	
	1956	12,000.00	11,000.00	
	1957	15,000.00	14,000.00	
	1958	16,500.00	15,000.00	
	1959	17,500.00	16,000.00	
	1960	18,500.00	17,000.00	
	4106s	1961	23,500.00	22,000.00
		1962	25,000.00	23,500.00
1963		26,500.00	25,000.00	
1964		28,000.00	26,500.00	
1960		17,500.00	15,000.00	
Flxibles Silver Eagles	1958	18,500.00	17,500.00	
	1960	23,500.00	22,500.00	
	1961	25,000.00	24,000.00	
	1962	26,500.00	25,000.00	
	1963	30,000.00	28,500.00	
	1964	35,000.00	33,500.00	
	1965	37,500.00	36,000.00	
	Golden Eagles	1957	21,000.00	20,000.00

All prices quoted are less tires. All equipment is in service and selections are available at major points throughout the United States. For further information contact -

**Frank Millet**  
315 Continental Ave., Dallas, Texas 75207  
Riverside 8-5211 Area Code 214

or

George Buzklin	Alexandria, Louisiana	(318) 442-3331
J.W. Powell	Boston, Massachusetts	(617) HU2-6620
Vincent Batts	Charlotte, North Carolina	(704) 372-0823
Kenneth Reese	Charlottesville, Virginia	(703) 295-9181
Dan Barre	Chicago, Illinois	(312) V12-6450
Ralph Benndt	Denver, Colorado	(303) 222-4521
J.W. Kirkpatrick	Hoboken, New Jersey	(201) 656-3440
B.T. Lawson	Indianapolis, Indiana	(317) ME8-1883
P.A. Dobyns	Jackson, Mississippi	(601) 353-4616
Ed Shull	Kansas City, Missouri	(816) HA1-0143
J.E. Pryor	Knoxville, Tennessee	(615) 525-0291
Wilbert Giese	Little Rock, Arkansas	(501) FR5-6457
J.F. Carpenter	Los Angeles, California	(213) 749-6031
H.W. Loring	Nashville, Tennessee	(615) 256-7141
H.E. Robarts	Omaha, Nebraska	(402) 342-6930
W.Y. Mann	St. Louis, Missouri	(314) CH1-0795
Ralph Campbell	Washington, D.C.	(202) 393-6670
M.E. Hylton	Wichita, Kansas	(316) AM7-4344
W.H. Edwards	Williamsport, Pennsylvania	(717) 322-6104



In 1969, the Trailways Terminal on Randolph Street in Chicago was a busy place. Several Trailways routes stopped or terminated here, and other suburban and long-distance carriers also used the terminal. This photo from the late '40s or early '50s shows an Indiana Motor Bus Aerocoach pulling into the terminal from Randolph. RON VAN KLECK COLLECTION.



Three ex-Trailways Eagles are lined up behind the Valley Transit garage in Justice, Illinois, in the early 70s. All three were purchased from the Trailways garage in Chicago and were the first 40-foot coaches operated by Valley Transit. Hundreds of similar Eagles found their way from Trailways to the fleets of other operators. NBT.

major garages of Continental Trailways which are listed in the ad.

I ended up doing this very thing in the early 1970s. At that time I was working for Valley Transit of Justice, Illinois, and what was to become Coach Travel Unlimited. We wanted to move up to 40-foot coaches, and I made several trips to the Trailways garage on Chicago's near South Side to inspect used Eagles. We ended up with three or four of them and thereby took a step up to 40-foot coaches. Since I was the driver trainer at that time, I ended up being one of the first to drive the Eagles. They shifted slower than the GM coaches, but their ride was great.

Continental Trailways would change its name to Trailways, Inc. but failed to survive the 1980s. New management in the early 1980s pumped some new life into the com-

pany and its Eagle subsidiary. The company, however, was unable to cope with the economic realities of life. Both the operating company, as well as the Eagle plant, were purchased by the new owners at Greyhound in mid-decade. This effectively marked the end of having two competitive carriers on national routes. However, many of the old Trailways companies are still alive and doing well on a regional basis.

Over the years there has been a slow transition to bus dealers. In fact, both of the major used bus dealers got their start from Greyhound. Gerry Hausman can trace his big start back to a group of ex-Greyhound 743 Yellow Coaches. Likewise, ABC Bus was pushed into the big time because of a group of ex-Greyhound PD4106s. When NATIONAL BUS TRADER was founded in 1977, both Greyhound and Trailways were still selling

some of their own buses. However, the transition to used bus dealers was already well underway and became stronger in following years.

In addition to all of this history, I personally feel that two things are noteworthy on the 1969 Continental Trailways used bus ad. One is the prices for the used buses. They range from \$9,000 to \$36,000 which is substantially lower than what we see today. This only goes to show that inflation is an ongoing factor in everything including used bus prices.

The second interesting point is the names listed in the ad. I knew some of these people and had a high respect for most of them. Then, as now, it is the people who are involved who make the bus industry what it is. □

In later years, Continental Trailways would be renamed Trailways, Inc. The company enjoyed a flurry of activity in the early 1980s under new management but was purchased by Greyhound in mid-decade. This Trailways, Inc. Eagle was photographed in New Orleans in 1983. ROBERT REDDEN, REDDEN ARCHIVES.



From the  
September, 2005  
Issue of

**National Bus Trader**

9698 W. Judson Road  
Polo, Illinois 61064  
Phone: (815) 946-2341  
Fax: (815) 945-2347

Visit our Web Site at  
[www.busmag.com](http://www.busmag.com)