

## Designer of transit buses

# *This hall-of-famer keeps 'em movin'*

By ANGELA BLACKBURN  
Staff

The next time you see a bus, think of Erindale resident Peter Bigwood.

Bigwood, 75, was responsible for the design of the Orion buses you see lumbering around Mississauga streets.

"I watch the buses all the time," said Bigwood who has been inducted into the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) hall of fame. Ditto for the American Public Transit Association (APTA).

Bigwood is Chicago-bound in September to pick up his American award.

The Brussels-born Bigwood was raised in Belgium and educated at Britain's Bristol University.

During the Second World War, he was a mine sweeper in the Royal British Navy. Later, he worked on designing rail cars in Britain and Belgium.

In 1963, he was with Belgium's Bus & Car Company, a division of Trailways. By 1977, he'd joined Mississauga's Ontario Bus Industries.

As vice-president of engineering, he's grateful for the open-minded approach demonstrated by company owner Donald Sheardown's. Sheardown, who now heads the international firm, Parts Enroute Inc., nominated Bigwood for the awards.

"He is a gentleman and without doubt

one of the finest people I've ever worked with," said Sheardown.

"He had a lot of foresight, a lot of which he brought from Europe. He had a feel for the market and he felt strongly about people and those less fortunate."

The talented Bigwood commanded tremendous respect in the industry, spearheading designs for half-a-dozen Orion buses.

Those designs included a 40-foot, low-floor bus for the physically challenged. The Toronto Transit Commission is still using the buses in its Wheel-Trans service.

Bigwood also developed propane-powered Peoplemover buses used for tourism by the Niagara Parks Commission.

Bigwood helped redesign Orion buses to allow for a roof tank that opened the door for transit buses to be powered by natural gas. Bigwood was also involved with the development of electric-powered buses that are now used in New York.

"I've always had an interest in transportation," said Bigwood. "In Brussels there were tram routes and when I was very young, I used to take my long-suffering father from one end to the other."

"The one thing I regret in my life is that I was never involved with the high-speed trains," said Bigwood of the European trains that clock nearly 300 kilometres per hour.



Staff photo by Fred Loek

Erindale resident Peter Bigwood, 75, has been elected to the hall of fame for both Canadian and American public transit. The awards are the result of a lifetime spent designing public transit buses.