

WAR VETERAN RECALLS DAYS OF THE COOKEVILLE TRANSIT LINE

COOKEVILLE -- Nowadays, the familiar bus in town is the CATS (Cookeville Area Transit System) bus. But did you know that there was another bus service that was in operation in the '40s?

If not, ask 85-year-old Arthur "Shorty" Daniel about it. He drove one of the five privately owned city buses for Cookeville Transit Line for three years.



(Pictured: Arthur "Shorty" Daniel stands in front of the Cookeville Transit Lines' city bus in 1949. The bus service was owned by Clarence Carrington and S.T. Brown. The bus is pictured in front of the Post Office on Broad Street, with the Princess Theater in the background. Herald-Citizen Photo/Ty Kernea)

His story starts in Clay County in the Willow Grove area. His family was the first family to move from there when the area was flooded by Dale Hollow Lake.

"We moved to Cookeville in February of 1942, when I was 16," he recalled in a recent interview with Putnam County Archivist Glenn Jones. "My dad bought the West Side Grocery, across from the Planing Mill on West Broad."

He wanted to attend Baxter Seminary with a friend, but that didn't work out. So he began working for Ray Maloney's plumbing company next door to his father's grocery. Then he worked for Ragland and Potter Wholesale on Broad Street, which was located in the parking lot next to the Cookeville Gas Company.

At the age of 18, he received a draft notice. His journey began when he caught the bus in front of the Methodist Church in Cookeville and went to Camp Forrest. From there, he went for his basic training at Camp Blanding in Florida. After 13 weeks of basic training, he came home for a week and then went to New Jersey and boarded a luxury liner that had been converted to a troop ship.

He landed in Liverpool, England, then took another boat to France.

"I served in two battles toward the end of the war -- one in Germany, arriving at the end of the Battle of the Bulge," he said. "I started out as an assistant tank driver and ended up being the driver."

With only three months in combat under his belt, the war in Europe ended in April. At this time, he was scheduled to stay another year in training to go to Japan. Instead, he came home and worked in his family's store for a while.

In 1947, he began driving one of the five privately owned city buses for Cookeville Transit Line. He began his morning around 4:30 when he would pick up the bus at the M&H Service Station, located where the Justice Center currently is. He would drive to Silver Point and leave there about 5:30 or 6. By the time he got to Baxter, the bus would be standing-room only.

"These were workers going to their jobs in Cookeville," he noted.

Another bus, he said, would be waiting in Baxter to take some of his riders on to Cookeville. Shorty would then drive the remaining riders to Cookeville as well.

"The buses would take the people to their work place, such as the Cookeville Shirt Factory," he said. "The bus would also go to Algood on what is now 10th Street, turn around on the northeast side of town, and return to Cookeville."

People could catch the bus anywhere by just flagging down the driver. The fare for rides were: 35-cents to Silver Point, 20-cents to Baxter, 15-cents to Algood and 10-cents anywhere in town.

Shorty would get off of work at 2 p.m. and another driver would take the workers back home to Baxter, Boma and Silver Point.

He drove the bus until 1950 when Luke Medley bought the line from S.T. Brown.

Following his bus driving days, Shorty worked on his brother-in-law's farm in Algood for a year. He then worked for Dero Brown at the Allen and Brown Hardware store on the square. The hardware store was located where Henry Fincher's law office is now. He also worked for the Pan Am Oil Company, a division of the American Oil Company, which changed names to Amoco and was later bought by BP. He worked for the oil company for 45 years.

As for the current bus system, Shorty said he hopes it continues.

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*See more about the history of Putnam Co., TN at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>