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William Dorsey has been a mechanic for 38 of his 61 years. He likes how easy the mule he's driving makes moving a "dead" bus. Photo by Jennie Harris.



After 38 Years, Mechanic William Dorsey Isn't Ready to Leave Metro

- South Bay Division 18 Mechanic "A" William Dorsey has seen Metro change in the past 38 years.

By JENNIE HARRIS

(July 6, 2007) William Dorsey was a little disappointed when he first came to Los Angeles, until an old classmate told him about a utility job opening with SCRTD.

On Sept. 8, 1969, Dorsey was hired as Utility "A," known today as a service attendant. He earned \$3.45 an hour. "Believe it or not, I was getting my bills paid and still saving money," he says.

Dorsey has the second highest seniority within Metro's maintenance group. Mechanic "A" Mack Evans of Division 1 is ahead of him by two years and three months, and Mechanic "A" Leader Jessie Ramsey of the support shops is behind Dorsey by 22 days.

Dorsey, 61, hails from Rosedale, La., a small town about 20 miles west of Baton Rouge. He keeps a copy of the 1987 Rosedale phone book, all 24 yellow



In this 1990 photo, Dorsey, at age 44, is dressed in his Army Reserve fatigues.

and white pages of it.

After serving two years in the Army during Vietnam, Dorsey moved to Los Angeles and worked in the phone company's warehouse. He said to a fellow classmate who was processed out of the Navy at Long Beach, "Man, if I don't find a job making at least \$3.10 an hour, I'm going to move back home."

His friend had recently been hired by SCRTD, and told Dorsey about an opening. "I thought he was joking, paying \$3.45 an hour for that...next thing I knew I was going to take a physical."



Dorsey's 1986 SCRTD ID card

'Glad to be here'

"I'm glad to be here," says Dorsey. "The job kept me from moving back to Louisiana."

Soon SCRTD was offering mechanic classes, and Dorsey took them up on it. "I just wanted to have some type of skill, and I wanted to make a little more money."

Dorsey agreed that some things have gotten easier during the last 38 years. "When you had to push a dead bus, we used a forklift. Since then they got the mule, which looks like a tractor. It's good because it's got battery charger on it."

He was trained on a tow truck with a flat tow. It took two people to load the rear wheels on the lift: one person in the bus and one in the tow truck. The mule operates with only one person.

Easier, safer

Power tools make his job easier. It's "like somebody's standing there helping you," he says.

Computers, however, sometimes seem like a handicap to him. One time he needed diesel fuel, and he had to swipe his badge and type in a code. "I couldn't get it to work, so one of the service attendants had to do it for me," he says. "I was late going on the road call."

Dorsey's job also is safer today. "A long time ago you were responsible for your own safety equipment." The agency now provides mechanics with hard hats, respirators, back braces, and safety shoes.

"I used to daydream about getting my 23 years," he says, but when it came, "I just wasn't ready to go. This job is kind of hard to want to leave. I plan to be here at least for another five years, for sure, [so long as] my health stays good."

