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Rasheeda Hicks-Rashid accepts a jacket from UTU member Gerardo Perez for her 24 years with Metro. SFV GM Richard Hunt stands on the right.



Photos by Jennie Harris

Four Chatsworth Retirees Leave Behind a Century of Service

By Jennie Harris

(August 22, 2207) One hundred years of combined service was honored at a Chatsworth Division 8 retirement party last Friday.

TOS Joe Putt (36 years) and bus operators James Sherman (31 years), Rasheeda Hicks-Rashid (24 years) and Russell Ilejay (10 years) are all now busy with post-retirement plans, including traveling, fishing, and spending time with their families.

Ilejay was unable to attend the celebration.

"It's bittersweet to see these employees go," said Transportation Manager Maria Reynolds. "We're very proud of the service that they gave us, and we wish them well."



TOS Joe Putt poses next to one of his retirement gifts, a lamp constructed from an old-fashioned fare box. Only retirees with 30 years of Metro service receive this gift. "I worked 36 years for one of these," he said.

Reynolds briefly took Putt back to 1971, the year he was hired, by calling out that year's top songs such as "How Can You Mend a Broken Heart" by the Bee Gees, and noting the average cost of a car was \$3,700, and the minimum wage was \$1.60 an hour.

Putt, who has a badge number of only 908, has quite a history. He worked for IBM for eight years, and then was activated with the Army Reserves to Chu Lai in Vietnam. When he came home, he ran his own business for about a year, "It just didn't pan out as I wanted it to," said the Los Angeles native.

Putt took a test to be a traffic controller, and after placing 90th in the western third of the United States, "Dick Nixon said they were freezing federal hiring, so this dream job disappeared." And that's when he went down to SCRTD and applied for a bus operator position.

When Putt was in high school in the 1950s, "everybody thought that riding the bus was for losers," he said. Los Angeles officials modified ordinances with hopes of making the city the automobile capital of the world. "It was very nice for the first 10 years, but long-term it proved to be very shortsighted."

Putt has two daughters, Jennifer, 22, and Joanna, 18. Once his youngest moves out, "I'm out of here." He wants to move somewhere smaller, greener, with less aggressive drivers than Los Angeles.

"In the 70s, most of the Valley was farmland," Putt said. "Suddenly you got all of these people and you have to stand in line for everything. It's just not the same."

After being recognized for



10 years as a bus operator and 21 years as a bus mechanic, James Sherman pauses with his wife, Ellen, and grandson, Steven, in front of Division 8.

Sherman, who has spent the last 10 years as a bus operator and the 21 years before that as a bus mechanic, looks forward to spending more time with his 11-year-old grandson, Steven.

“One thing about retirement, is that you gotta get used to it,” said Sherman. “I’m still waking up at 2 a.m.”

Hicks-Rashid recently moved to a new home in Texas and plans to open her own business some day. But for now, “I’m just resting, because I was hardly home,” she said.

What was it like working for Metro for 24 years? “It helped me raise my children and send them to college,” said Hicks-Rashid, who has three adult daughters.

Richard Hunt San Fernando Valley General Manager said to the retirees, “We hope that your next set of endeavors is rewarding and that you have a long, happy, prosperous retirement.”