

Local News

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Train station sparks numerous memories for readers



(Photo / Contributed)

The railroad station photo brought back some memories, both good and bad. I remember the inside terminal building — the dark wooden benches, the smell of the trains coming in, the crowded platforms, and the young boys jumping on the trains to sell newspapers.

In 1943, when I was 11 years old, I traveled from Johnson City to Akron, Ohio, by myself, to stay with my father and his new wife. The train (what we called a “troop train”) was going to Knoxville and then to Cincinnati where I had to change trains and then on to Akron. The train was so crowded with soldiers going to war that I had to stand, along with a number of the soldiers, all the way to Knoxville. Some of them got off there and I finally got a seat at the end of the aisle (it was a longer seat than the rest, it went across the wall and extended out in to the aisle). I never forgot the faces of the young men that were on the train. Some of them did not look any older than me. There was no laughter or goofing off, just a scared look in their eyes. There is a lot of noise in a war, but only silence getting there.

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I did not stay long in Akron and in a few months I returned to Johnson City on the train. The trip was a little more pleasant this time, There were not many soldiers returning home from the war then and I could find a seat.

When I attended Science Hill High School, I walked through the railroad station parking lot to get to school. That is now the parking area for the John Sevier Hotel.

I am saving all of the "old photos" you are publishing to put in a book for my grandchildren and thank you for renewing old memories.

P. L. Counts

Jonesborough, TN

I remember going to the old train station when I was 5 or six 6 years old to meet my uncles who were coming home from World War II. My family would also go whether we knew anyone just to welcome the soldiers home. These were real men. They were my heroes then and they still are.

Richard L. Jackson

Knoxville, Tn.

In August 1954, Ralph & Janice Shipley were married.

At that time Ralph was stationed with the US Army in Fort Hood, Texas. Shortly after they were married (October 1954) Ralph was sent to Louisiana on maneuvers. As he would be gone for several weeks, they decided that Janice would come home to be with her family while he was gone. As soon as Ralph was finished with maneuvers and was back at Fort Hood, Janice could not wait to get back there to be with him.

In 1954, her choices for transportation were very limited. She says that she can remember her father (Sherman Jarrett) driving her to the Railroad Station in Johnson City and waiting with her to catch the train to get her back to Fort Hood. It was a long ride home (almost 2 days), but she says it was worth it to get back to her new husband.

Now more than 51 years later they are still together.

Thank you for your interest in these memories.

Diana Mitchell

The picture of the Southern Railway Depot in your paper Dec. 10 brings back memories. I worked for Southern Railway 42 years, many of those years were at that depot as a telegraph operator-ticket clerk.

One of the things I remember during Christmas time in the 1950s passenger travel was heavy and the trains would run late. Danny Thomas had a cousin that lived at Blowing Rock, N.C. He was waiting

for the train to go to Memphis to meet Danny at Saint Jude Hospital. The train came in and he went out in a hurry to get on the train and left his top coat, newspaper and lunch he had gotten at the John Sevier Hotel. I sent a message to the conductor at Greeneville to tell him I would save his top coat, but I had eaten his lunch and read his newspaper.

That was the best turkey sandwich I have ever eaten.

Jack R. Dempsey

Johnson City

• Gas station recollection

The people in the picture (of Shell's Gulf Station on the Dec. 3 Heritage page) were, from right to left, Dudley Dean. (He worked here for approximately 32 years until he died of cancer about 25 years ago). The young boy was me at age 13. Next was my father, M.E. Shell. He spent 50 years here until he retired in 1997. He died in 2000 at age 88. Next was John Fine. He was my father's partner until he sold his interest to him in approximately 1957. I don't remember who the man in the background under the tire bargains sign was. This building was torn down about three months after this picture was taken to make way for the building we now occupy. The one thing I remember about this place was all the work was done outside — winter and summer, cold and hot — we worked and serviced cars, fixed flats, etc., outside.

Thanks,

Kyle Shell

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