



"Congratulations on your 35 years' of accident - free service with the tramways," said the manager of the Ballarat branch of the SEC, Mr H. W. Linaker as Mr N. McWilliam stepped from his tram for the last time. On the right is Mr L. J. Denmead, traffic superintendent.

TRAM MAN'S 35 YEARS ACCIDENT - FREE RECORD

Thirtyfive accident - free years of driving Ballarat trams, ended at 3.10 pm for Mr N. McWilliam, of 1001 Ripon street, when he stepped from his tram at the city terminus. It was Mr McWilliam's 65th birthday, and he was retiring from the tramways.

He was congratulated on his fine record by Mr H. W. Linaker, manager of the Ballarat branch of the State Electricity Commission and Mr L. J. Denmead, traffic superintendent.

Mr McWilliam recalled his early days with the service when he drove the old "bucking billy" type cars.

These, he said, were patronised by young couples when courting because on warm evenings double decker trallers were towed behind the trams. These trallers were used on the gardens run, and were dimly lit by a "lamp post" style lamp.

"They were a bit of a nuisance because the wheels were worn and they used to frequently leave the lines," he said. "It was not unusual for a pedestrian to run out to the tram and tell us that our traller was off the line and was being towed along the roadway."

Mr McWilliam has seen many improvements to both trams and the working conditions of the tramwaymen.

In the early days it was not uncommon for a driver to work a 14-hour shift and there were no such things as meal reliefs.

The introduction of the present day trams made the driver's life more comfortable because they were then sheltered from the weather.

"During the last war," he said, "the job was hectic because the trams carried no

lights and the conductor had to work in semi-darkness."

"The introduction of tail lights about eighteen months ago was a much needed safety factor, and it is hard to understand why there were not hundreds of accidents before they were fitted to the trams.

Mr McWilliam is a foundation member of the Ballarat sub-branch of the RSL. He also founded the league's brass band.

His son, Alec, is following in his father's footsteps and has already served six years as a motorman on Ballarat trams.

Mr McWilliam said that it was a coincidence that on his last trip before retiring he, the oldest driver, should have as his conductor, Mr Ian Wallace the youngest conductor, who has been on the trams for only three weeks.

On his last trip past the tramway sheds, fellow employees came out and waved farewell as the popular driver went past.

Mr McWilliam will be given an official farewell in the near future.

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