

Protecting our flanks



**Philip
Dine**

I received a phone call recently from a rather annoyed fellow.

His name: Daniel Rosenberger, a resident of Staten Island, one of New York City's five boroughs. His beef: An envelope he'd just received in the mail insulted letter carriers.

The CVS Pharmacy mass-marketing envelope, he said, had a message that cast aspersions on letter carriers—and as an old-school kind of guy, he took it as one more reflection of the trend toward gratuitous insults plaguing today's society.

Letter carriers in particular don't deserve that kind of treatment, Rosenberger said, noting that before going into a career in postal inspection, he'd carried mail.

I asked him to scan the envelope and email it to me. No, he said; he'd put it in the mail.

It turned out to be as he'd described. The front of the red, business-size envelope announced in white letters that a 30 percent coupon was inside. On the back, it read: "Your mail carrier was jealously eyeing this deal," then, in larger letters: "But it's just for you!"

I sent Rosenberger a letter that same Friday, asking him to call me. Promptly, on Monday, he did. "I just went out to get my mail from the mailman, because you can set your watch by him," he said. "I saw your nice letter, NALC letterhead. You asked me to call you."

I inquired about his background. He'd started carrying mail on Staten Island in 1977—"I was 20 years old; that's where I learned a lot of my work ethic"—and after four years on the job, he spent a couple of decades as a postal inspector in Manhattan, followed by stints with the New York City Housing Authority, the Metropolitan Transit Authority and the NYC Parks Department.

After all that time with USPS, and decades of public service, the envelope really irked him: "I just knew, like everything else in society, it's OK to put a statement like that on an envelope, like somebody's a thief, going to steal it right away."

Armed with the evidence he'd provided, that same day I sent CVS headquarters in Rhode Island a scanned copy of the envelope. To the company's credit, within an hour-and-a-half the senior director of corporate communications replied. His note said, in part:

"Please accept our apologies. No disrespect was intended. We have already reached out to our marketing department and that messaging will be removed from any future coupon mailings. I can also confirm for you that messaging

has not been used in any other mailings by our company.

"Thanks again for making us aware of this and providing us the opportunity to address it."

Actually, thank you, Daniel Rosenberger.

He's not alone.

Kevin Byrne, a letter carrier congressional liaison in Florida and health benefits representative for West Palm Beach Branch 1690, recently alerted us of an article by PolitiFact, the Florida-based journalism watchdog that assesses the accuracy of political leaders' remarks. PolitiFact's work has won a Pulitzer Prize and is widely circulated by newspapers.

The report in question examined President Trump's comments about Amazon and the Postal Service—but in so doing, erroneously indicated that taxpayers fund the Postal Service, that package deliveries are down and that employee benefits cause the red ink.

It was a Friday evening, PolitiFact staffers were scarce, but the outcome was good. A note from the PolitiFact reporter who wrote the article: "We updated the story. Thanks so much for the input, I really appreciate it!"

The thanks here goes to Kevin Byrne, who retired in October following 39 years at USPS. After enlisting in the Navy at age 17, Byrne signed on as a postal clerk in Boise, ID, in 1978; transferred to his native Long Island, NY, in 1980 to work as a clerk and then as a letter carrier; before moving to Florida 30 years ago, where he continued carrying mail.

It's not the first time Kevin's notified us of an erroneous report; he previously let us know of mistakes by Washington, DC's Federal News Radio, which led to NALC's appearance on the outlet to set the record straight.

Rosenberger and Byrne, two different backgrounds, two gentlemen who have our back. And they're not alone. Along with delivering the mail, assisting your customers and collecting food, many of you help us act quickly when letter carriers' message or image are at stake.

"When we see something that's negative or something that's not correct," Byrne said, "we feel an obligation to correct it. I say, 'Wait a minute, that's not right.'"

Thanks to those of you who help make it right.

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