

# The mission



**Philip  
Dine**

**A**fter a decade-plus as a bomb demolition specialist with Army special forces fighting drug cartels in Central America and Iraqi troops in the first Gulf War, Kent Ming made a commitment to his family “to see my boys grow up.”

Twenty-nine years into his postal career, the Colorado Springs, CO Branch 204 member and wounded warrior remains enthusiastic about delivering the mail, representing USPS at school career days—and training new carriers at Southern Colorado’s City Letter Carrier Academy for the past 24 years. He quickly spots the vets among them.

“They bring a lot to the table,” Kent says. “They’re very organized and dis-

ciplined. They have a work ethic, because in the service they have done the 24-hour missions. Our mission in the Postal Service is to deliver the mail, and that’s what these guys want to do.”

**Before delivering mail for 33 years, Peter O’Keefe prepared C-130 military transport planes for critical missions, from Nevada to Italy to Saudi Arabia.**

“It helped me,” he says, “because of the loyalty to the country, and the Postal Service is to me an extension of the country. I was very proud of my job because I felt that people depended on me, just like they depended on me when I was in the Air Force.”

Peter, elected Southeast Massachusetts Merged Branch 18 president last year, sought to emulate his father, a military veteran and union man. “First thing he said when I told him I’d started at the post office was, ‘Did you join the union?’ I said, ‘Of course.’ He said, ‘Good thing.’”

**Linda Culp, a Pentagon-assigned Vietnam-era Marine in the late 1960s, pioneered as a female letter carrier for 28 years in Bartlesville, OK. She brought self-discipline, mission focus and rapid decision-making, the latter benefiting her as a Tulsa Branch 1358 steward.**

“All the lessons I learned in the Marine Corps, I never realized how important they were until I joined the Post Office,” she says.

Including respect: “In the Marines Corps, we’re all brothers and sisters. I looked at my union the same way, like union brothers and sisters.” Pride: “The same pride I took in wearing the Marine Corps uniform, I had in the postal uniform.” Determination: “In the Marine Corps, there’s no such thing as failure. If I made it through boot camp, I can become a letter

carrier. Nothing was going to stop me. I thought about that every day; I can do this.”

**Jennefer Beck, born in the Panama Canal Zone where her Navy father was stationed, spent part of her 10-year Air Force career organizing troop deployment to the Gulf War. The disabled veteran has had the same route for 26 years in Cartersville, MO.**

“This is a struggling little town,” the Southwest Missouri Branch 366 member says. “I made up my mind, they’re going to have an attentive letter carrier. I’m going to treat them first class, because that’s what they deserve. They should have a mail carrier who remembers their name, remembers their dog’s name, treats them nice.”

A young man working for the local cable company recently “made my day,” she says. “He told me I used to give him and his brother rubber bands when they were little kids, and that I remembered their names. Here he is, a dad with two kids. It’s really kind of cool to see the little kids grow up, become parents, stay in the area....[and] remember such a small gesture from the mail carrier.”

**Vada Preston joined the Hampton, VA, main post office 35 years ago, after four years with the Air Force’s nearby First Tactical Fighter Wing and two as a reservist. That helped from the get-go, the Region 13 national business agent says:**

“I think military veterans come into the Post Office recognizing that a postal career is an extension of service to the nation. When you take the oath, it’s not much different than the one you took when you raised your hand and swear to defend the Constitution. In the military, you understand what you’re doing is a sort of sacrifice. The satisfaction is in the completion of the task, not whether you get recognized or not. Completing your duty is for a bigger mission than yourself. I think that’s why it’s so easy for them to transition over to the Post Office.”

Vada adds: “The spirit of camaraderie is almost the same as in the military. You can travel anywhere in the country as a letter carrier, and if you see another letter carrier or branch, you can get help or assistance. You see a letter carrier and you say, ‘Hey man, I’m a letter carrier, too.’”

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