

Upbeat notes from the postal beat, redux



**Philip
Dine**

Smallish branch, mega coverage. Southern Delaware Branch 906 has just 181 members and is the lone branch downstate, with the rest of Delaware's 1,000 NALC members divided among the three branches up near the large city of Wilmington. Yet, when Branch 906 held its Sept. 5 "Enough is enough" rally, news coverage abounded, including a network sweep of CBS, Fox, ABC and NBC affiliates, plus radio stations, local newspapers and Delaware's biggest paper, *The News Journal*, 85 miles north. Much of that reflected the efforts of Branch President Shawn Colleran, including his TV and radio interviews earlier that day, which helped alert the public and media to the rally. Shawn says he hadn't previously dealt much with the media, but "enjoyed the challenge." He still delivers mail while also serving as Delaware state association vice president, state AFL-CIO officer and more, confirming the adage that if you want something done, ask a busy person. His background as an Air Force staff sergeant surely didn't hurt either.

News and message. President Renfroe has done yeoman's work in recent weeks dealing with major outlets, including *The New York Times*, Associated Press, CNN, *New York Post* and the Fox affiliate in the nation's capital, on such topics as carrier safety, the new vehicles and mail voting in the fall elections. The engagement with the *Post* was noteworthy: It's the nation's sixth-largest newspaper, it has a conservative readership, and it wanted to know about public trust in ballot delivery after the union's presidential endorsement. Our president made an emphatic case invoking carriers' "integrity, responsibility and devotion to mission," then added a comment that served as the story's tagline (closer) and stood to resonate with the paper's audience and beyond: "To suggest that they would do anything less is to demean America's postal employees—many of whom, it's worth noting, are wearing their second uniform in service to this nation."

Local journalism. In our July magazine, we discussed how Carolyn, a retired carrier/St. Louis Branch 343 member, reads *The Postal Record* closely and so knew of our wish to be alerted to media errors. When she informed us that the local newspaper had quoted the mayor as saying that "tax dollars" fund the Postal Service, we raised the matter with the paper's editor, who fixed that online and committed to getting the point right moving forward. We also informed the mayor's office of the facts—and we thanked Carolyn for a

"win-win-win." Now, this has turned into a grand slam, with the paper running an op-ed discussing, among other things, postal funding via earned revenue. "I was glad to see that they followed up on this, and did what they should have," Carolyn says. And we, Carolyn, are glad that you continue to monitor postal coverage in your area.

Convention and conversation. Post-convention, I often note that the rest of the magazine will chronicle important, newsworthy events while I might highlight personally meaningful encounters with carriers. Boston offered no lack of such, partly because I didn't need to tour the city on off times, having spent most of the 1970s and '80s in Beantown, studying the labor movement, landing my first newspaper job, and getting to interact with Celtic legends like Red Auerbach, Bill Russell and Bob Cousy.

And so, on the weekend before the official proceedings got underway on Monday morning, I had a memorable conversation with Ron Holt of Boston Branch 34 about his seven years with the Coast Guard, including the 1980 Cuban boat lift when he was fresh out of boot camp, a peacekeeping mission in Haiti and drug interdiction efforts in South America; about, of course, his 27-year postal career; about his fatherly pride when his oldest son landed his dream job as a sports broadcaster for a professional hockey team in Los Angeles. And, about, well, Red and Russ and the Cooz—perhaps unsurprising given that Ron, who retired in June 2023, works as an usher at the fabled Boston Garden.

On that same theme, a few days after the convention ended, I called Central Florida Branch 1091 President Byron Shelton about a local Fox affiliate's interview request. Business completed, our conversation turned to how Byron had outdone even the hometown Boston hosts by stating from the convention podium, before he gave Monday morning's invocation, "You can't convince me Larry Bird didn't build this city." The Hoosier native/Navy vet told me he'd done that because he grew up right next to Bird's Southern Indiana hometown of French Lick and the two families knew each other from early on.

Never a dull day on the postal beat.

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