

Two tales from the postal beat



Philip
Dine

My call to the president of a Wisconsin branch was meant to be brief. Having spent a couple of years in France, I was intrigued by the juxtaposition of *Fond du Lac* Branch 125 President *Aaron Le Duc* and wanted to check the spelling.

That done, I asked as usual for the carrier to let me know if the media ever sought his comment on a postal matter or if a local member did something noteworthy on the route that we should tell news outlets about.

He paused, before stating: “I literally didn’t expect that day to happen, nor do I want any accolades or any light shined on it.”

His reticence was unsurprising—he is, after all, a letter carrier, so helping folks is part of the job, humility part of the deal—but from my reportorial perspective, I wanted the story.

In late October, Aaron was delivering a route when, approaching a stop sign, he heard what he thought was a child talking. He checked through his passenger window—and noticed a hand waving from a porch and a woman yelling for help.

He rushed over and found a collapsed deck that had created a ramp-like effect that sent the woman plummeting.

“All I could see was her hand waving, but I couldn’t see her. It was just her voice,” Aaron said. “Obviously, I had to get down to where she was.”

After ascending with the elderly resident, who lived alone, had injured her foot, and was concerned about the possible ambulance cost, he waited inside 45 minutes with her for a hospital-bound taxi, while comforting her worried dog.

Six years ago, Aaron performed a similar feat after hearing an elderly woman yell for help. He spotted her on the garage floor, where she’d fallen, breaking her leg or hip, and stayed with her until first responders arrived. She survived the fall, but unfortunately soon succumbed to pneumonia.

When he’s not aiding injured customers, this three-year branch president and 18-year carrier serves as branch food drive coordinator and as Northeast District representative for the Wisconsin State Association of Letter Carriers.

Sixteen years ago, Chuck Hester became a letter carrier in Fort Payne, AL. That same year, he acquired his dog Rusty, a red wiener (aka dachshund).

The juxtaposition of those two events recently turned Chuck into a first-time author who, as I write this, is prepar-

ing for his initial book signing at a local pastry shop.

Chuck teaches Sunday school lessons for adults and tells stories about Rusty to illuminate biblical parables; so many that a student suggested he write them down.

“At first I was a little hesitant,” Chuck recounted, “because I’ve never written anything. But finally I decided I would try it, and it pretty much just fell out of my pencil. I showed the stories to some friends and family members, and they suggested I try to send it to a publisher.”

That seemed a stretch to this Fort Payne Branch 3359 member who had briefly attended community college, but he researched publishers, talked to a writer in a nearby Alabama town, contacted a South Carolina publishing house, and sent his manuscript.

To his surprise, “they read it, and they liked it, and they wanted to publish it.”

He was “ecstatic” but “also a little nervous, because I’ve never done this sort of thing before. But I prayed about it a lot, and I knew that God had led me to this point, so I had to go forward.”

Which brings us to the book’s genesis. Way back, Chuck had a job working weekends, so he couldn’t accompany his wife and kids to church. One child asked in 2001, “Why doesn’t Daddy ever go to church?” By then he had Sundays free and began going. After 9/11, he pondered issues of “mortality” and “eternal state,” became a born-again Christian, and soon began teaching Sunday school.

His book, *What Rusty Taught Me About God*, was published in late October, the same time Aaron saved the resident. The book’s first few stories deal with rough periods such as losing his father at age 12 and being diagnosed with Parkinson’s at 49. The rest are lighter, with some humor.

Is Chuck, who on his route in 2010 saved the life of a teenager who’d severed his foot leaping from tracks as a train approached, astonished at writing a book that’s drawing attention?

“Yes and no,” Chuck says. “From what I’ve learned about God, he doesn’t call on people who are equipped to do jobs, he equips people he calls on to do jobs.”

EDITORIAL STAFF:
Director of Communications and Media Relations Philip Dine
Managing Editor Mike Shea
Writer/Editor Rick Hodges
Writer/Editor Jenessa Wagner
Editorial Assistant Sarah Eccleston

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