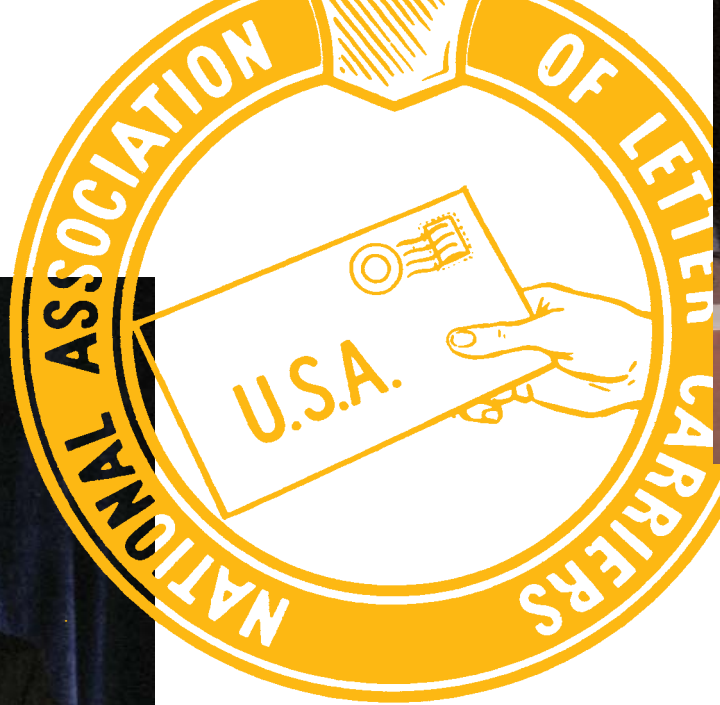


Heroes of the Year 2006

NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
OF LETTER
CARRIERS



President William H. Young presides over the awards ceremony, recapping the heroic actions of the honored letter carriers.

A half-dozen letter carriers who stepped up in the face of natural disaster, stood up against personal danger, and displayed cool judgment and resourcefulness to aid their customers were honored as the NALC's 2006 Heroes of the Year at a celebration in Washington, DC on September 7.

The annual luncheon ceremony, a highlight of the union's year, was presided over by President William H. Young and attended by an impressive array of dignitaries, including NALC's resident national officers, leading labor movement, mailing industry and political figures, and top Postal Service officers.

"No other public servants feel the pulse of everyday life like we do," President Young said in his opening remarks. That explains why letter carriers are so often the "front line of safety for our communities," he said, providing a measure of "extra service" as they deliver the mail.

Before describing each hero's exploits and presenting commemorative certificates, Young pointed out that the six NALC members being

honored this year are far from alone.

"There are literally thousands of letter carriers who could be sitting on this stage today," he said. "So while we honor these heroes, we also are honoring every letter carrier who delivers that 'extra service' every day."

Among those joining Young in honoring the award winners were Deputy Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe; AFL-CIO President John Sweeney; Sens. Bill Nelson (D-FL) and Daniel Akaka (D-HI), and Reps. Mark Foley (R-FL), Danny Davis (D-IL) and Lois Capps (D-CA).

This year's heroes, selected by a panel of independent judges, are:

James M. Osborne, West Palm Beach, Florida Branch 1690, National Hero of the Year: Osborne towed his airboat 800 miles to New Orleans to join the makeshift search-and-rescue fleet in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Cruising streets filled with toxic flood waters and braving random gunfire, Osborne collected more than 20 people and ferried them to safety.

Rowland L. (Lane) Anderson, Santa Barbara, California Branch 290, National Humanitarian of



NALC President William H. Young and Deputy Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe join award winners following the ceremony. Pictured, l-r, are: National Humanitarian Lane Anderson, Br. 290, Santa Barbara, CA; Bernadine Morris, wife of New Orleans, LA Br. 124 member Leonard Morris, Central Region Hero; Carrier Alert Award Winner Samuel Dickson, Br. 271, Richmond, IN; Eastern Region Hero Terry Hampton, Br. 270, Macon, GA; Donahoe; Young; Western Region Hero Luis Espinosa, Br. 283, Houston, TX; and National Hero Jim Osborne, Br. 1690, West Palm Beach, FL.

the Year: Anderson spearheaded a project by the Santa Barbara chapter of Veterans for Peace to create “Arlington West,” a memorial display of hundreds of small, white crosses arranged each week on a stretch of beach, each one honoring an American serviceman or woman killed in Iraq.

Terry G. Hampton, Macon, Georgia Branch 270, Eastern Region Hero of the Year: Hampton caught sight of a knife-wielding robber fleeing an unsuccessful car-jacking, pursued the assailant and ultimately provided police with his hideout. As he returned to the scene of the crime, he was stunned to discover the victim was his own wife.

Leonard J. Morris, New Orleans, Louisiana Branch 124, Central Region Hero of the Year: Morris, a 74-year-old retiree, already exhausted from battling Hurricane Katrina, physically dragged his fuel-less motorboat through the foul flood waters of New Orleans to rescue six neighbors trapped by rapidly rising water.

Luis J. Espinosa, Houston, Texas Branch 283, Western Region Hero of the Year: Espinosa alerted fire fighters to a burning duplex unit on his route, then entered the apartment and crawled through dense smoke until he found the occupant unconscious with his pants on fire. He swatted out the flames and pulled the man to safety.

Samuel R. Dickson, Richmond, Indiana Branch 271, Special Carrier Alert Award: Dickson administered first aid and called for paramedics after he discovered an elderly patron who had been seriously injured in a fall from a

ladder while working outside his home.

Each hero’s story is recounted in the following pages. The judges declined to present a Branch Service Award for 2006, concluding no single branch stood out sufficiently to merit the honor.

This year’s ceremony was notable for the turnout of members of Congress, most appearing to praise an honored constituent. Representative Foley, the congressman for National Hero Osborne, said he is thankful there are people who don’t simply call 911, but step up and render aid.

“You certainly made Florida proud when everyone else around the world was wondering who was there to help Louisiana,” Foley said.

Senator Nelson, also attending in Osborne’s honor, noted that America is as good as its people. “The kind of stories we have heard today tells you what kind of people our country has been blessed to have,” he said. “In the face of great odds and enormous danger, (these people) set aside self-interest to try to help our fellow men and women.”

Congresswoman Capps, who represents National Humanitarian Anderson’s Southern California district, said she was not surprised the Vietnam veteran took the lead in creating the Arlington West memorial, and she praised the NALC for honoring him “and in so doing honoring those who have served and died in defense of our country.”



A reporter interviews Bernadine Morris, wife of Leonard Morris, the Central Region Hero of the Year.



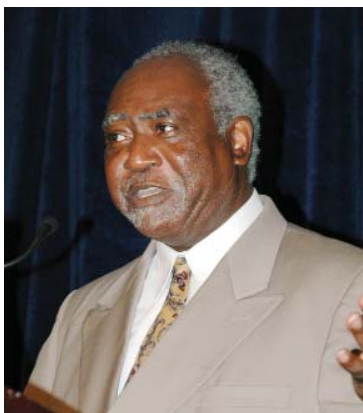
**AFL-CIO President
John Sweeney**



**USPS Deputy
Postmaster General
Patrick Donahoe**



Hawaii Sen. Daniel Akaka



Illinois Rep. Danny Davis



**AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer
Rich Trumka**

Deputy Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe, representing PMG Jack Potter who could not attend, said it takes all the crafts to move the mail, but “really, the face of the Postal Service is the letter carrier.... Our customers get a good feeling when they see that carrier coming around.”

“They know that letter carriers are public servants and trusted members of the community,” Donahoe said. “They know about your compassion and your courage and your sense of duty.”

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney noted that each of the six honorees showed “tremendous courage and decency and unselfishness.”

“Each is a role model for all of us in the trade union movement,” Sweeney said. “But the truth is that they are not alone. For the last 150 years, ever since we first had home delivery of mail in this country, carriers have been saving lives, caring for the people they serve, rescuing the injured, building their communities—and day after day they all bring us together in a way no one else does.”

Among the others in attendance were USPS Vice President-Labor Relations Doug Tulino, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Rich Trumka, Charlie Matta of the National League of Postmasters, Louis Atkins of the National Association of Postal Supervisors, John Campo from Pitney Bowes, Chairman George Omas of the Postal Rate Commission, and Gary Amelio and Tom Trabucco from the Thrift Savings Board.

The independent judges were Jordan “Bud” Biscardo, AFL-CIO Community Services liaison at United Way of America; Director Shelby Hallmark of the Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs; and Phil Guercio, Chief of Montgomery County, Maryland’s Fire and Rescue Services.

The heroes were selected from letter carriers whose deeds were reported in *The Postal Record* between July 2005 and June 2006. Branch officers are encouraged to contact *The Postal Record* at NALC Headquarters with reports and photographs of local union charitable projects, as well as accounts of individual members’ humanitarian activities and heroic deeds for inclusion in the Proud to Serve section and other features.

James Osborne

WEST PALM BEACH, FL BR. 1690



Left: Florida Sen. Bill Nelson (l) joined NALC President William Young (r) in honoring Hero of the Year Jim Osborne.

Below: Florida Rep. Mark Foley spoke of his state's pride in Osborne.



CARRIER'S AIRBOAT BECAME LIFEBOAT FOR KATRINA VICTIMS

A couple of days after Hurricane Katrina savaged the Gulf Coast of Louisiana and Mississippi, Jim Osborne got a call at his home in Port St. Lucie, Florida. A member of West Palm Beach Branch 1690 and a 23-year letter carrier, Osborne owns an airboat and the call was a buddy telling him disaster officials were looking for the shallow-draft craft to help with search-and-rescue operations in New Orleans.

Osborne was ready to answer the call. The next day he, his son Ozzie, and two of Ozzie's friends hooked the airboat to Osborne's truck and joined a 10-boat caravan making the 800-mile westward trek to the Big Easy.

Initially, Osborne believed he would be gone for only a few days. He ended up staying in New Orleans for nearly two weeks. "Once I got there, the devastation and desperation was way beyond anything I could even conceive," he said. "I decided, 'I'm not just packing up and leaving because it's hot, miserable and nasty.'"

And dangerous. The flood waters were like poison, filled with every kind of pollution. And there was senseless violence—snipers serving as lookouts for looters. For 12 to 15 hours a day, Osborne piloted his craft through the disaster zone, accompanied by armed guards, seeking survivors.

"He simply would not be deterred," the judges said in choosing James M. Osborne as NALC's 2006 Hero of the Year. "He put himself on the line for two weeks in the most chaotic climate, in deplorable conditions."

After nearly three full days on the road, winding ever closer to the disaster area, Osborne and his companions drove onto the tarmac of Baton Rouge International Airport at almost midnight on Saturday, September 3. It was a scene of utter confusion.

When a National Guard lieutenant briefed the crews—members of the South Florida Airboat Association—he asked them, "Did you bring protection?" They were baffled until he added, "I hope you red-necks brought some weapons, because there's a lot of shooting going on."

It was Monday, September 5—a week after the storm hit—when Osborne first worked his way through the flooded streets. Progress "was really, really slow," he said. "Dead bodies were everywhere, and we ran over the tops of literally hundreds and hundreds of submerged cars." At one point, he scraped over a hidden fire hydrant, ripping a hole in the craft's hull. He managed to race back to dry land for repairs before the boat went down.

At night, the letter carrier and his crew returned to a makeshift base camp set up in a church, grabbing some food and what little sleep they could in his truck's camper before heading back out for another day of searching for survivors.

In fact, Osborne gave a lot of credit to his son and friends for their service as "oilers," working nearly round-the-clock helping keep the flotilla of airboats running. Without them, there would have been no rescues.

"I had one goal in going there," Osborne said. "If I can save one kid, the whole trip will be worth it." In the end, he estimates he brought nearly two dozen survivors out of the flood zone. ✉

Joining Osborne and President Young at the ceremony were (from l) his postmaster, Sal Vacca, Br. 1690 President Mel Rexroth and Deputy Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe.





QUIET MEMORIAL ON BEACH HONORS AMERICA'S FALLEN

By midday, Santa Barbara's Stearns Wharf is teeming with pedestrians and bikers, tourists and residents. But at 7 o'clock on a Sunday morning, before the sun has a chance to warm the California sand, the wharf is a quiet, peaceful place. That's when Lane Anderson, a retired member of Santa Barbara Branch 290, arrives and meets up with a group of about three dozen volunteers. Together they get to work on what has become a weekly ritual: respectfully placing hundreds of small, wooden crosses in the sand in carefully marked rows. Each cross is a memorial to a soldier killed in action during the war in Iraq.

The display has earned the nickname "Arlington West" because of its resemblance to the parade of white headstones marching across the landscape at Arlington National Cemetery near Washington.

"Arlington West grew out of a protest during the fall of 2002, asking President Bush not to go into Iraq," Anderson explained. After the battles and the deaths began in Iraq, Lane and his friends settled on the idea of the memorial crosses as a way to honor those who have died.

"I call it an intervention," the Vietnam veteran said, part of an effort "to wake people up" and get them to really think about the war without the taint of partisanship or "us" versus "them" rhetoric.

It is this ongoing, powerful "intervention," a continuing campaign for peace in a troubled world, that prompted the judges to choose Lane Anderson as NALC's 2006 Humanitarian of the Year.

"In these patriotic times his efforts have real significance," the judges said. "This is a remarkable, sustained effort, a true labor of love."

Anderson retired on disability in 1987 with a bad knee he brought home from Vietnam. He spent nearly a decade as a letter carrier in Santa Barbara, a community about 100 miles up the coast from Los Angeles. He was an active NALC member and served as Branch 290 president from 1986-1987.

In 1990, in the run-up to the Persian Gulf War, Anderson helped found the Santa Barbara chapter



Top: California Rep. Lois Capps, a member of Veterans for Peace, tells of her own reaction at first visiting "Arlington West," as Young and Anderson listen on.

of Veterans for Peace, a national organization that mobilizes veterans to work for peace and justice.

The Santa Barbara group was active in urging restraint when talk of invading Iraq grew hot. "By the time the war started in March of 2003," Anderson said, "we had 200 people marching every week for peace." One of those marchers, Steven Sherrill, gave Anderson the idea of placing memorial markers in the sand.

A dozen volunteers tend to the crosses throughout the day and answer visitors' questions. At day's end, the 24-inch-wide markers are carefully packed away and stored in private garages until the next weekend.

When the Arlington West exhibit first began, it consisted of 340 crosses, but by the time Anderson received his award the number was over 2,600. The group plans to stop making more crosses should the number of deaths in Iraq reach 3,000.

Anderson said his experience as a letter carrier has helped him challenge the government's "slow approach to change."

"Waging battles with postal management prepared me to deal with the government," he said. "It is just as intransigent." ☒

Terry Hampton

MACON, GA BR. 270

CROOK CAPTURED IN A CASE OF EXTRAORDINARY COINCIDENCE

Terry Hampton was beginning his daily deliveries when he heard a woman shout—or scream, he wasn't quite sure which. Moments later, the Macon, Georgia Branch 270 member heard more yelling, including an angry man's voice.

Now on full alert, Hampton spotted a shady character hurrying out of the stairwell from the parking garage across the alley from his vehicle. He called 911 to see if a crime had been reported. When police told him that, indeed, a robbery and attempted car-jacking had happened a couple of floors up, Hampton began to surreptitiously trail the knife-wielding perpetrator, relaying a play-by-play to police that ultimately led to the man's arrest.

Terry G. Hampton's dogged pursuit of the assailant earned him NALC's Eastern Region Hero of the Year honors, but the award was really icing on the cake—it turned out that the victim was the letter carrier's own wife. She suffered only a minor wound when she refused the thief's demand that she drive him away from the scene after the man grabbed her wallet.

Hampton knew none of those specifics as he followed the man in his vehicle and then on foot. He stayed on the phone with the 911 dispatcher describing his progress as police closed in on the attacker.

As the mugger slipped down an alley, Hampton noticed the man toss something into a pile of pine straw. He relayed a description of the man

to the dispatcher just as the assailant escaped from his view. Hampton then parked and, aided by another citizen, went after the man on foot.

When the man ducked down another alley, Hampton fol-

lowed. When the thief scrambled over a four-foot wall, Hampton did, too, discovering a 12-foot drop on the other side. Eventually the crook went into a real estate office where police grabbed him—the office was next door to a police precinct house.

Hampton led police back along the thief's trail, discovering the discarded wallet and, in the pine straw, the 12-inch knife used in the car-jacking attempt.

It was then that the carrier's cell phone rang, with the caller ID showing his wife's number. When he answered, the astounding coincidence was revealed—a man told him his wife had been the victim of the robbery. It turned out the ruffian had threatened Hampton's wife, who was on her way to work, as she exited her car. He demanded her wal-



Eastern Region Hero Terry Hampton with wife, Angela.

let and threatened her with the knife. When she refused to drive him to another location, he brandished the blade, slicing her finger, but fled the scene when she began screaming.

While Hampton was honored to be named Eastern Region Hero, he said his story—but for the amazing twist—is typical of the heroism of many letter carriers. "There are many carrier's stories in the *(Postal Record)* magazine each month that are just as deserving," he said, modestly. ☒



While unable to attend the ceremony in person, Leonard Morris was there in spirit as President Young presented the award to Morris's wife, Bernadine.

FLOODWATERS CAN'T STOP DETERMINED RETIREE

When retired New Orleans letter carrier Leonard Morris saw the news reports about Hurricane Katrina last August, he thought to himself, "I haven't left home for a hurricane yet—I'll ride this one out." A year after the fact he said, "Boy, was I wrong!" But for a half-dozen of his neighbors, the 74-year-old's brazen decision and extraordinary courage were the difference between life and death.

In the wake of the storm, after the levees broke, the New Orleans Branch 124 member towed his small, powerless fishing boat through rising floodwaters to rescue two separate groups, earning him recognition as NALC's Central Region Hero of the Year.

As the monstrous storm bore down on his hometown, Morris got his wife of 50 years, Bernadine, and his daughter Karen on the road to safety while he settled in to ride out the hurricane. The father of nine children, Morris is both resourceful and enterprising. He stocked some water and soup in his small fishing boat. He stashed more up in the attic—and he cut a hole in the roof, a fortuitous decision.

After the worst of the storm seemed over, the levees broke, and the situation turned dire. When the surging flood waters reached knee-deep, he unhooked the boat from its trailer and tied it to the house. When the water reached his waist, the refrigerator began to float. Morris looked at the bobbing appliance and said to himself, "Leonard, that's a coffin—you better get in the boat."

Earlier in the day he had promised to pick up some neighbors if the waters rose. He motored up the street and picked up three, but returning home the gas tank ran dry.

Morris put on his life jacket, slipped over the side and dragged the boat through chest-deep waters back to his home.

Exhausted and with the sun going down, he was ready to rest. But across the street, Toni McNeil, a friend of hers and a little boy were calling for help. The wind was kicking up

and the flood current was running against him. Morris called back that he would come over in the morning and went inside to try to get warm and rest.

He was dozing a short time later when the neighbors on the boat woke him, shouting that McNeil needed help now—across the street they were standing on the bed and the water was up to their necks. "I knew if I waited until morning there would be no one to save," Morris recalled.

Morris untied the boat, still with its three passengers, and dropped back into the water. He hauled up the anchor and threw it ahead, then pulled the boat to it. He did this repeatedly until he made it across. He collected the three additional neighbors—plus a dog—and hauled them all back to his house.

It was two days before a Navy helicopter plucked them all from the roof, hungry and thirsty, having exhausted the meager supply of water and soup.

"A lesser man would have given up," the judges commented. For his part, Morris said he and his shipmates "really became a family. We all took care of each other."

Morris was unable to attend the awards ceremony and his wife accepted the honor on his behalf. Three of his daughters also attended. ☒

Leonard Morris' wife (c) and two of his daughters proudly accepted his award; medical issues kept him at home.



Houston, TX Br. 283
Pres. Prissy Grace (r)
congratulates Luis
Espinosa.



PATRON PULLED TO SAFETY THROUGH SMOKE AND FIRE

The scent of something burning at a duplex apartment in Dayton, Texas, caught letter carrier Luis Espinosa's attention. At first he thought his elderly customer, David Dunn, might be having a late lunch and left a pot on the stove. But the smell soon was overwhelming and convinced the Houston, Texas Branch 283 member that it was certainly the apartment itself that was burning.

Espinosa immediately called 911 to report the fire, then turned his attention back to his customer. After first knocking and calling out, Espinosa cautiously tried the door and it opened—releasing a cloud of thick, dark smoke. The letter

blaze further.

The letter carrier recalled the extreme heat as he crawled toward the rear bedroom. "I was thinking how horrible it would be to die that way," he said. "A primal fear kicked in and I knew I had to save him." When he reached the bedroom he found Dunn unconscious and with his pants ablaze from the knees down. Espinosa quickly smothered the flames with a blanket and took stock of the situation.

The man's head was badly bruised and swollen, he was too heavy to carry out, and the fire was growing more intense. The carrier quickly secured his customer's head, then dragged him through the unit, keeping as low as possible, until reaching the front door.

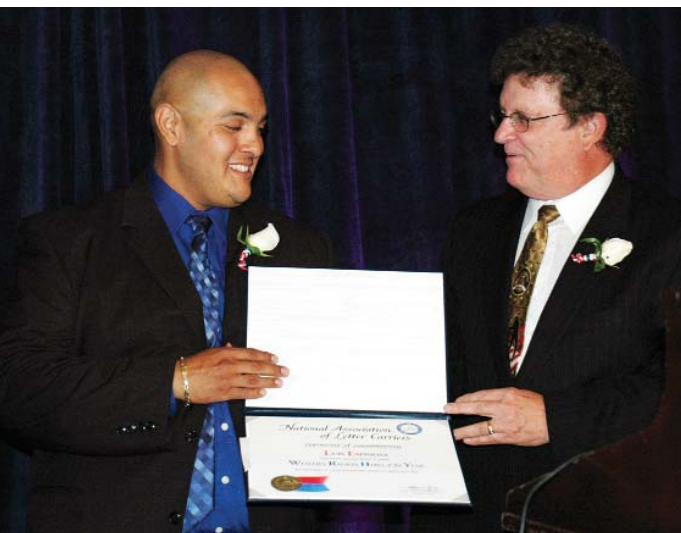
Once outside, Espinosa prepared to administer CPR but found Dunn was breathing. While waiting for fire and rescue, Espinosa called out to Dunn's neighbors to warn them of the danger. When the next door neighbor came to her door, he told her to evacuate the burning structure.

Once fire and EMS personnel arrived, Espinosa went back to his route. With the exception of a nagging cough from smoke inhalation, he came out of the situation unscathed.

Espinosa checked on Dunn in the hospital the week after his daring rescue and found his patron distraught over the loss of his home and the extent of his injuries. The carrier tried to reassure his customer that his neighbors had pledged to help get him back on his feet. Unfortunately, a few weeks later, Dunn succumbed to his injuries.

In selecting Espinosa, the judges commented on the difficulty of the rescue. "This was a physically amazing feat—to pull someone out of heavy, low-hanging smoke." And they also praised his good sense: "He did all of the right things in the right order. He took calculated risks, not unnecessary ones."

Espinosa has tried to deflect the praise aimed his way. "Wouldn't anybody just do that," he asked, "go a little out of their way?" ✉



carrier was assessing his options when he heard a strangled cry from the rear of the apartment.

Without hesitation, Espinosa continued into the burning apartment and pulled his incapacitated customer to safety, earning the title of NALC's Western Region Hero of the Year.

Espinosa displayed both steady nerves and good fire awareness. He stayed on the phone, keeping emergency services apprised as he worked his way through the apartment, and carefully checked doors before opening them so as not to feed the

Luis Espinosa

HOUSTON, TX BR. 283

WESTERN REGION HERO OF THE YEAR

FOR THIS CARRIER, CONCERN DOESN'T END WITH RESCUE

Sam Dickson has delivered mail for 37 years. For the last few, he's had a mounted route serving mostly businesses, but every day the member of Richmond, Indiana Branch 271 also winds his way down a mile-long, tree-lined road carrying mail to a remote seven-home cul-de-sac.

The neighborhood's relative coziness made it easy for the letter carrier to get to know its residents. He learned that 79-year-old J.D. Wickersham, a widower who lived alone, was a former Peace Corps volunteer and that the two men shared a passion for goose hunting.

One spring day last year, as the letter carrier delivered mail from one house to the next, he noticed a ladder sticking out of the bushes in Wickersham's yard. While that seemed a bit unusual, Dickson initially wasn't concerned. But later, as he drove his LLV back to the main road, the letter carrier had the feeling that "God jerked my head out of the truck."

"I looked back over my shoulder and from that angle, I saw a man's feet and the bottom of pants legs" protruding from the bushes. Dickson rushed into Wickersham's yard, where he discovered his patron lying injured across the top of the fallen ladder.

"He had been there probably an hour or two," Dickson figured. "He was semi-conscious and his eyes were closed, but he knew my voice."

Dickson went inside Wickersham's house to first call 911, then found a coat and covered the elderly man with it to keep him warm until help arrived.

"It was then that I saw his whole groin area was covered with blood," the letter carrier said. Dickson remained with Wickersham until emergency crews showed up about 10 minutes later and took the injured man to the hospital.

Because of his attention to detail, which helped him discover his fallen patron, Samuel R. Dickson



Top: Dickson and wife, Karen, pose for a photograph.

Above: President Young tells of Dickson's heroism in helping an elderly patron who had fallen from a ladder.

was named as NALC's 2006 Special Carrier Alert Award winner.

The award is presented to one letter carrier as the representative of the thousands who every year use their special knowledge of their patrons and their neighborhoods to render critically needed aid, whether or not the patron is enrolled in the formal Carrier Alert program. The judges said that Dickson "knew something wasn't right, and he went back. He sensed something was wrong and then he did everything right."

The judges also were impressed by Dickson's caring actions afterward. He learned that Wickersham had been airlifted to a trauma center in Indianapolis, and on his next day off, he visited his elderly patron and learned the man had broken a hip and punctured several internal organs.

After a six-week hospital stay, Wickersham was moved to a rehabilitation facility closer to his home, and Dickson visited him there as well. Sadly, the elderly man soon developed pneumonia and died a short time later. ✉

President Young thanks judges (from l) Shelby Hallmark, Phil Guercio, and Jordan "Bud" Biscardo for selecting the deserving winners.

