

# Gratitude to letter carriers from a charitable CEO



**Philip  
Dine**

**I** was in a local grocery store on a recent weekend, when a middle-aged man noticed my NALC T-shirt (my customary garb) and asked if I was a letter carrier.

I said I wasn't, but his curiosity didn't wane, so I told him that I worked there as director of communications and media relations.

To cut briefly to the end, before resuming this narrative, that led to a half-hour discussion in the store, to subsequent email exchanges and telephone conversations and then—as you already can surmise—to the subject of this column.

The man, it turned out, was Franklin C. Salisbury Jr., who for 21 years led the National Foundation for Cancer Research (NFCR) and who has served

as emeritus CEO since 2021, and who also co-founded the Hong Kong-based Asian Fund for Cancer Research. Three years ago, he helped found, and directs, a foundation that continues similar efforts.

Franklin Salisbury can safely be described as an academic achiever across a variety of fields—Yale University bachelor's degree in economics, M.A. in religion from the University of Chicago, master's in divinity from Yale, law degree from the University of Georgia—yet at this moment he had a singular message to deliver, in enthusiastic fashion: his gratitude to America's letter carriers, and to the union that represents them, for facilitating the achievements his organizations have realized.

**As shoppers walked around the produce section, Salisbury, who served in the Marine Corps, spoke at length about the indispensable role letter carriers have played in the breakthroughs of the NFCR over decades in the fight against cancer.**

How so? The work he has led relies heavily on the U.S. mail to engage in direct fundraising appeals to Americans and to build personal relationships that endure over time. NFCR has remained true to its strategy of reaching potential donors via their mailbox, because it has proven highly effective in serving the mission.

While relying on the internet for these purposes works in some instances, he said, charities that have made wholesale fundraising shifts away from the mail have seen sizeable drops in revenue, in some cases more than 30 percent.

Various paragraphs in his emails suggest the flavor of his views, and his appreciation of letter carriers:

*Too few appreciate that it is the U.S. Postal Service—the letter carriers—who are making all this possible. Through direct mail fundraising and the grass roots support of millions of Americans, NFCR has spent \$410 million funding innovative “high risk, high reward” cancer research break-*

*throughs that are leading to genomic approaches to prevent, diagnose and treat cancers.*

*Research doesn't just happen. Many of the advances in cancer treatments referred to in the National Cancer Institute study were made possible by cancer-related charities that rely on the U.S. Postal Service to raise funds and communicate with patients seeking hope and promise for a cure. These advances are being made possible by the National Association of Letter Carriers. Hope won't cure cancer; we need a strategy. Only by sustained funding and by engaging partners to work toward a strategy of better preventing, diagnosing, and treating cancer—only by working together—will research cure cancer.*

*We are at the dawn of a new era of diagnosing and treating cancer and genomic diseases like COVID-19. We are making a difference: funding innovative cancer research which is giving hope and promise to cancer patients everywhere. And by “WE” that includes NALC. Again, thank you.*

The subject line in his emails reads *Research for a Cure? Made possible by NALC!*

**I spoke to Jonathan Larsen, chief marketing officer for the National Foundation for Cancer Research and the foundation's top communications person, to check some facts.** I'd barely started when he stated that *The Postal Record* is “very well known. You reach a broad and diverse audience.”

Asked how he knew that, he said, “Everyone who's involved with direct mail is familiar with *The Postal Record*. It's kind of like the final say about what's going on with the carriers.”

Larsen noted that the NFCR had recently changed its slogan to “We make cures possible” from the prior “Research for a cure.”

And, he added, “Letter carriers are part of the cure.”

**The NFCR will celebrate its 50th anniversary on Oct. 21** at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, an “inspirational and joyous” event that Salisbury says wouldn't be possible without the U.S. mail, the carriers who deliver it, and the union that represents them.

Apparently, the contributions you make every day on the route and in the communities you serve are even broader than you might realize.

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