

## Proud to Serve

Proud to Serve is a semi-regular compilation of heroic stories about letter carriers in their communities. If you know about a hero in your branch, contact us as soon as possible at 202-662-2851 or at [postalrecord@nalc.org](mailto:postalrecord@nalc.org). We'll follow up with you to obtain news clippings, photos or other information.

**“You try to keep an eye on the elderly, especially when you see them every day on the route. If something out of the ordinary happens, you try to do something.”**

—Branch 84 member George Zilk



Bill Lindsay Jr.

# Honoring heroic carriers

**H**eroism, like the mail, comes in many packages—think of police officers or firefighters. But for some citizens in need of assistance, their heroes come in the form of concerned letter carriers.

Letter carriers are members of nearly every community in this nation and know when something is wrong. Spotting fires and injuries, they often are the first to respond. The following stories document their heroism. For them, delivering for America is all in a day's work.

## Staying alert and helping to save lives

On Sept. 11, Southern Illinois Merged Branch 1197 member **Bill Lindsay Jr.** was going about his route in 100-degree temperatures when he saw an elderly customer sitting on the ground, slumped against his garage.

When the man saw the carrier, he weakly waved him over. “He said he had fallen and had pushed his life-alert button 20 minutes ago,” Lindsay said, so he looked the man over and asked if he had any injuries.

“The man said he didn't think so, but a cut was evident on the man's elbow,” Lindsay said. “The man stated that he had tripped on his porch ramp and that he wanted back on his motorized chair.”

The carrier realized help was not immediately available, and with the very hot weather, the man needed to be in cooler conditions soon. Lindsay lifted the man back onto his motorized chair and then told him to drink the rest of the water from his water bottle.

A neighbor who had been contacted by the life-alert dispatcher soon arrived to see the man sitting on his chair, drinking water, and talking to Lindsay.

“After explaining the situation to the neighbor and being assured that she would take the man inside and examine him for any other possible injuries, I proceeded along my route,” Lindsay said.

The carrier later found out that the neighbor had taken the customer to the

emergency room and that the man also had badly bruised ribs from the fall. The woman praised Lindsay, saying that she would not have been able to get the man off the ground by herself.

This isn't the first time Lindsay has helped a fallen customer on his route. You can read about his other heroic actions in the January 2013 issue of *The Postal Record*.

## Twice a hero

Pittsburgh Branch 84 **George Zilk** really seems to keep an eye on his elderly patrons.

After an ice storm on Feb. 28, the carrier had a package for an elderly customer, so he knocked on the door. “She was getting ready to go to her car,” he said. “Her driveway was a sheet of ice.”

He tried to convince her to stay home, but she told Zilk that she had a doctor's appointment and she was set on attending it. Soon, she began her way to her car with her walker. “I asked her if she had any salt,” he said. He figured he would at least try to treat the driveway, and he also scraped the windows, helped her get to her car and got it started for her.

Then, on a Monday last August, Zilk noticed that the same elderly customer had not picked up her mail from the previous week, nor her weekend newspapers.

The 27-year letter carrier was concerned. “She picks her mail up every day,” he said. “She's like clockwork.”

He knocked on the door and received no response, so he went to the neighbor's house and asked if they knew whether the customer was home. The neighbors did not know, but they had a key and went to check on the woman. They found that the woman needed medical assistance and called for help.

Zilk, a former firefighter, said he doesn't think he's a hero; he was just doing his job. “You try to keep an eye on the elderly, especially when you see them every day on the route,” he said. “If something out of the ordinary happens, you try to do something.”

## The constant professional

Anchorage, AK Branch 4319 member **Mike Erdelyi** was out delivering his route one Saturday last summer when he noticed that his next delivery was down a dirt road that had one house at the end, that of an 84-year-old customer.

“He only had one piece of mail for the customer,” Branch President Jim Raymond said. “No matter to Mike. He is a professional and all mail is just as important as the next.”

So, the carrier turned down the dead-end street, made his turn in the circle at the end and pulled up to the mailbox. As he was placing the letter into the box, he looked up the

driveway and could see a pair of legs sticking out from under a car. He said to himself, “Geez, I can’t imagine this guy working on his car.”

Then Erdelyi heard a faint call for help.

The carrier secured his vehicle and ran up to find the customer on the ground under his car. The man had been trying to get out of his car the day before. He usually uses the door handle to steady himself as he gets his cane ready, but that time, the handle broke and he fell to the ground, flipped onto the dirt and rolled under the door.

He had been there for 21 hours

before the carrier arrived. As Erdelyi pulled the man from out under the car, sitting him up, the man turned to him and said, “I prayed to God that you would come today.”

“He wanted me to bring him inside and leave him, but I couldn’t do that,” Erdelyi said. He called 911 and stayed with the man until paramedics arrived and took control of the scene.

He doesn’t consider himself a hero, though. “I did it because he needed help,” the seven-year postal veteran said. “I think anyone who would have pulled into his driveway would have done the same thing.” **PR**

## Eye on the elderly



Tandra “Joy” Reagor

**Tandra “Joy” Reagor** was delivering mail on April 16 when she saw an elderly patron get out of her vehicle with her groceries and head toward her house. “I noticed she was stumbling,” she said, “so I watched her for a few seconds.” The Muskogee, OK Branch 1042 member went over and helped the customer since she was very unsteady. Reagor assisted her onto her porch and then inside her home.

The customer’s speech was slow and Reagor feared that the woman was suffering a stroke. The woman told the carrier that she didn’t want her to call an ambulance, so Reagor called her postmaster for help, and they called 911. Paramedics confirmed that the woman had suffered a mild stroke. The eight-year veteran found out that the woman recovered at the hospital and soon returned home. Reagor doesn’t think she’s a hero, though—she just said she likes to help people. “That’s just me,” she said.

**C**ovington, IN Branch 3546 member **Andrea Stover** was delivering mail on Jan. 28 when she noticed that an elderly customer in her small town had not picked up his mail for a couple of days. Stover knocked on the door. “He didn’t come to the

door—it was very unusual,” she said. Concerned, she called 911. Responding police officers had to break a window and climb through it to get in. The man was found lying on the floor, dehydrated, disoriented and suffering from kidney failure. The 18-year postal veteran said letter carriers help people every day. “We just notice when things are off. It’s part of our job,” Stover said. “If you see something, you go with your gut.”

**O**n Aug. 20, Greenville, SC Branch 439 member **Jimmy Highsmith** was approaching 97-year-old customer Dorothy Webster’s home on his route. “I put her mail in her box and heard her call for help,” he said. Highsmith made his way to the back yard, where Webster had fallen on the brick patio behind her house and

couldn’t get up. “It was a bit muddy, and she slipped,” the 27-year carrier said. Highsmith gently helped Webster regain her footing and got her back into her house. Once inside, the carrier called for help and stayed with his patron until it arrived. “No hero here,” Highsmith said. “I just happened to be there at the time she fell.”

**W**hile delivering her route on Jan. 21, **Theresa Rogers** saw a customer, Ms. Grant, who is in her 80s, fall on her back porch. The Louisville, KY Branch 14 member was on the adjacent street, but quickly made her way over to the woman’s house. Rogers downplayed her actions, though. “She was already inside the house,” she said. “I knocked on the door and I checked on her.” Luckily, Grant only suffered minor bruises. **PR**