

Carriers engaged in a common cause



Philip
Dine

An old acquaintance, who at the time reported for a New York newspaper, once lamented to me about how readers were increasingly disengaged from the work he and his fellow journalists did.

It didn't matter what he produced; readers almost never called or wrote to tell him what an oaf he was, to compliment his work or to offer suggestions. The only time he'd hear from a reader would be when the paper got the TV listings wrong and the irate caller was mistakenly routed to him. His most provocative pieces—and there were many; he was a Pulitzer Prize-winning science reporter—were greeted with a deaf-

ening silence.

He should edit *The Postal Record*.

There may be a more responsive readership somewhere, but I doubt it. Letter carriers call or write to comment on our articles, or to propose story ideas. You suggest ways the NALC can engage with the media. You offer to submit a commentary piece for your local newspaper, or ask what to tell a TV reporter who's called you—or whether you even have the right to talk to him. You tell us about an act of heroism just performed by a letter carrier in your branch so we can alert the local media while the news is fresh. Or you notify us that your *Postal Record* is late this month, or that you haven't received a copy since you moved, and in either case that you're not happy about it. (Translation: You care.)

For every call I get from a reporter—and there is no dearth of those, believe me—I get multiple calls from you. Sometimes you're busy and you deliver a succinct message. Other times you're evidently in no hurry.

Your communications are valued. They let us know that, unlike the reporter I began with, we're writing for an audience that's not only interested but actually engaged. By reaching out to us, you motivate and inform us and you make your magazine better. And, critically, your communications often are invaluable in our common fight to preserve the great institution of the U.S. Postal Service.

We urge you to help spread the message, and you find creative paths; Sheldon Parker of East Lansing, MI, former president of Branch 2555, calls to discuss a speech he plans

to deliver to students at Baker College, where his studies include a class on public speaking. His chosen topic is the actual financial situation of the Postal Service—and his speech goes over well. We encourage you to talk to newspaper editors who run misleading articles about USPS; Nebraska State President Kevin Hevelone calls about reaching out to the *Lincoln Journal-Star* after it ran a shallow wire report—and then he follows through. We ask you to let us know what local media are saying about postal issues; just as I'm writing this, Ron Stavac, president of Branch 3262 in Beaufort, SC, tells us that a radio D.J. is asking his listeners to weigh in on whether customers would be willing to give up door-to-door delivery. Ron would respond but he's working—so he asks us to do so.

(By the way, since so many of you are interested in getting the message out, let me take a moment to notify those of you who'll be attending the National Convention in Philadelphia that there'll be a couple of workshops on the topic. One, by the communications staff, will cover effective branch communications with members. I'll do the other one, focusing on dealing with the media to get the real story across to the public and lawmakers.)

The fact that you're so engaged with your magazine says a lot about you. You take the time to read and to reflect. You're dedicated to your work and you're involved in your community. You realize that we're all engaged in a common struggle. And it says something about our union. We have leaders who bring us together and inspire us. And we have the good fortune of being in a union composed of one craft and with a single employer—meaning that everything in your magazine is relevant to every one of us.

So, keep directing those calls and letters my way, even if it's simply to say that your *Postal Record* somehow isn't making it to your new address. And after we've taken care of that particular matter, please don't be surprised to hear the following: "Since I've got you on the line, do you think you might be interested in writing a letter to the editor...?"

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