

# Staying with it



Philip  
Dine

**T**hey say that folks don't stay on the job for long these days—at least on the same job. Working for one employer for your whole career is a thing of the past.

But I read the newspapers, so I know there are exceptions. Lots of those exceptions, it turns out, involve someone who carries a satchel every day on the job.

**One of them is Nebraskan Larry Schultz**, who signed on at age 18 to deliver in his native Lincoln. As the Branch 8 member told the *Lincoln Journal Star*, he took the civil service test, raised his right hand, "And that's it."

Fifty-one years later, he's still delivering, uniform perfectly creased

every day.

"The union bought me these clothes. I wear 'em," he told the *Journal Star*. "When I taught the new carriers for 10 to 12 years, I was always in uniform. Because that's the way I was supposed to be."

He carries a flip phone—I already like him—and doesn't have a computer at home.

Nineteen years ago, he claimed Lincoln's Capitol section, where he grew up—and where he's been more or less adopted by the people on his route. At Billy's—where a brass nameplate reserves a seat for "Larry L. Schultz"—he stops every day for exactly half an hour for lunch and a soft drink, no ice.

**Hoosier Mark Stevens started delivering mail to his fellow Kokomo residents at age 20 and continued for 44 years, a mark reached by just one or two other carriers in the city's history, the local postmaster said.**

Stevens told Indiana's *Kokomo Tribune* that he knew he'd landed the perfect job when he entered the doors of the downtown post office on his first day at a permanent job.

On his father's advice, the Branch 533 member had taken a post office employment test in high school, later was offered a job by the Kokomo postmaster, and never has looked back.

"I thought, 'Man, I'm getting paid to do cardio,'" Stevens told the *Tribune*. "I was out there every day getting fresh air. This is great."

Soon after, his father—at age 45—signed on as a letter carrier and the two worked together for 20 years. "Not many kids get to do that," Stevens said. "It was a blast." Although Stevens recently retired, his son—third generation—is entering his second decade on the job.

Stevens told the newspaper that he was propelled by a simple motto: "Everybody deserves their mail every day."

**Near Chicago, Melrose Park's Garland Gralow's retirement** was covered by CBS and by several print publications. No wonder—he was 83 and had put in 60 years. It began in 1957 with the question: "Could you start tomorrow? Just like that—yeah, okay," Gralow told CBS.

Amazingly, the Branch 2183 member had walked the same route on 25th Avenue ever since—with lots of memories to show for it. "Every once in a while, there will be an older person, gray hair person, that will say, 'Oh yeah, I remember you from when I was a little kid.'"

**Over in Cleveland, Alfonzo Theodore Wilson Jr.—known as A.T.—**also has put in 60 years, but the Branch 40 member has no plans to retire.

"My father would tell me to read the Bible and if I found the word 'retirement' in there, to show it to him," Wilson told the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*.

Hired as a substitute clerk in 1957, he became a letter carrier a year later, was assigned a new route in 1968—and has delivered it for the past 49 years.

"I've stayed this long with the Postal Service because I love delivering the mail," he said. "It's all about service."

**I have my own thoughts about why our craft spurs such longevity—but I'd rather hear yours.** Please tell me why you've been on the route so long, or plan to be.

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**To letter carriers in Texas and Florida, Puerto Rico and St. Thomas—including Houston Branch 283 President Willie Ferguson** (who reveled in his beloved Houston Astros' first World Series win but who now is too busy to even discuss it, with his carriers coping with the holiday rush *plus* mail catch-up from Hurricane Harvey's flooding) and Branch 283's Dietra Young (who graced the recent, and superb, Leadership Academy class)—I'd like to thank you for doing your jobs despite the hurricanes, helping others, and still taking the time to share your stories with *The Postal Record*.

And I wish you—and letter carriers everywhere—the best this New Year.

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