

A Mother's Day tribute



**Lew
Drass**

Let me start by wishing all the mothers out there a very happy Mother's Day!

I am using my space this month to talk about my mother. Her name was Rita Drass. You may be wondering what my mother and NALC have to do with each other. She was never a letter carrier or a member of our union, but she stood out by creating and supporting my NALC career in particular and our union in general for more than 40 years.

I was hired as a clerk in October 1977. It took me less than a year to figure out I wanted to be a city letter carrier. I applied for a transfer when the first opening came along. I had a creepy postmaster at the time. He

did not care for me. The feeling was mutual. I was surprised when he turned me down. I figured he wanted to get me out of the clerk craft as much as I wanted to go. He turned me down three times altogether. Keep in mind this was a small office. Openings do not come up every day. I was pretty angry about the deal because it was quite obvious my postmaster was just being a jerk about the matter.

I was searching for a way to do something about it. A path more rewarding than the grievance procedure presented itself. I was talking to my station manager one day and he says, "You have a string. Pull it!" I had never thought about it before. It turns out that my mother also worked for the Postal Service. She was a secretary for a wheel at the big house. His name was Mr. Roberts and he was my postmaster's boss. I asked my mother if she would say something to Mr. Roberts on my behalf. She told me later that she overheard Mr. Roberts talking to my postmaster on the phone and he said, "Give that boy the next letter carrier job." Sure enough, I got the next letter carrier position. That is how I became a city delivery letter carrier.

Eight dozen deviled eggs and more

Our branch began doing organized fundraisers for the Muscular Dystrophy Association in 1990. My mother made donations every time we told her about a fundraiser for 29 years.

My home branch (like many) has a December holiday party each year. We always suspend the normal order of business and invite everybody to come to the union hall for food and fellowship. My mother was good for eight dozen deviled eggs, a mess of potato salad, and a Coca-Cola cake for the event. All three dishes were mighty tasty every time.

We also began participating in the food drive in 1994. On Food Drive Day, my mother was always good for three big bags of food. I would take them into the city with me and she would hang another bag on her mailbox to remind folks in the neighborhood to do the same.

Kitchen-table volunteer

I decided to run for national business agent in 2002. I campaigned hard, but we were on a shoestring budget. I wanted to do a mailing. It was a lot cheaper just to have my campaign materials printed by a union printer in Alabama, put them together ourselves, and then send them to the NALC printer for mailing, so that is what we did. My campaign materials consisted of a platform, a couple of glossy advertisements and a Weingarten Rights card with my picture on it. These materials had to be sorted, paper-clipped, placed in flat-size mailing envelopes and sealed. We had more than 12,000 of these things to put together. My mother sat at her kitchen table day after day for weeks working on the project. I won that election because of her and many others' help.

The afghan connection

Around the time I became a national business agent, my mother got into making these super-sized afghans. She was really good at making them. They are nice. Anyone who has one knows what I am talking about. She used to say, "You buy the yarn and I'll do the rest." She sure did that. The branch used them to raise money for muscular dystrophy and I used them to raise money for my campaign fund.

By the time I went to headquarters in December 2010, my mother could no longer do many of the things referenced above. She continued making donations for the Food Drive and muscular dystrophy, but her body would not let her do any more. One thing she still could do was read. My mother read every *Postal Record* article I ever wrote. I hope she is reading this one. Thanks for everything, Mom!

Just one more thing to do

As many of you know, my mother passed away on Feb. 4. She was 93. She had a good run and is in a better place, but I will always miss her. She was a good friend to me and a great supporter of the NALC. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your prayers, words of condolences, cards, flowers and attendance at her services. The NALC helped give her quite a send-off. I will always be grateful to you for all of your kindnesses.

There is just one more thing to do. I make a motion to make Rita Drass an honorary member of the NALC ... Seconded by? ... All in favor?