

A letter carrier legacy



**Philip
Dine**

interacting with all the people on his various routes and with his post office co-workers—he seemed to know everyone in Monongahela!

It noted his post-1985 retirement years in Arizona’s warmer climes; he died there on Feb. 2 (34 years after his wife) and was buried back in Monongahela.

Grist for a fascinating tale. But what exactly is the story, I wondered. Would anyone on his route even remember Henry Marini?

Decades had elapsed and information was initially elusive. City Clerk Tamie Gido arrived five years after Henry left, and a 1985 flood destroyed paper records.

Pam DeRose, who owns Frye Funeral Home, has been there longer—34 years; still one short. “I did not know him,” she lamented, then walked me through his online photo album: classic 1930s pictures, his 104th birthday fete, his 1964 postal vehicle. She offered to ask Henry’s daughter, in Arizona, to call me.

As for local businesses Henry might have delivered to, Tamie suggested DeVore Hardware, founded in 1903—predating Henry by just 13 years.

Hardware store, but also a goldmine. “I remember Henry very well,” Don DeVore, fifth-generation owner, said. “We put his hot water heater in his home. I knew Henry for a lot of years. I’m 66; I remember him when I was 5 years old.”

The Pittsburgh Branch 84 member’s route contained residences on the hill and businesses by the river. “He smiled, he whistled, and he sang,” Don, a volunteer firefighter, said. “He was a very cheerful man. Being from a small town, everybody knew him, and everybody liked him.”

The route’s size, however, precluded chatting in the store. “He just delivered the mail,” Don said. “He would be talking

This is a story worth telling, I thought, perusing a southwestern Pennsylvania newspaper. A letter carrier born in 1916 (midway through WWI!), who delivered in a small river town, had died. At age 104.

The Feb. 24 obit was short on details: *Henry Joseph Marini was born in Belle Vernon, on July 22, 1916...When he met and married Angela Curcio of Monongahela in 1938, that is where they lived thereafter...Henry was a mail carrier for the U.S. Post Office, first on the mail truck, then walking the often cold, snowy hills throughout Monongahela and ending up delivering the mail to the downtown business district for a number of years. He absolutely loved his job, especially*

as he walked. He had a good pace about him. As soon as he hit the door, he knew who to talk to and who not to talk to, who to give the mail to, then he was out the door. That was his routine. He always had a lot of gum bands on his hand, getting ready for his next drop-off.”

Daughter Cynthia said of her dad, son of Italian immigrants, who began carrying mail around 1950: “He loved the post office, he lived and breathed it. Everybody knew him. The kids I went to school with, if he delivered their mail, I’d hear all about him. Kids sensed the kid in him and responded big time.

“He was so much fun. He was hilarious, up until Covid took him. We thought we’d celebrate 105.”

Cynthia said her father’s best friend at the post office was John Yevincy. Indeed, they were “like brothers,” the 92-year-old Korea-era veteran told me. “Henry was a very, very liked man. He was on the upside all the time, always joking.”

John, who delivered mail to Henry’s house, saw his friend five years ago when Henry visited Monongahela, and had just about convinced him to visit again.

Henry knew the routes, addresses and names so well, his daughter recounted, that to speed winter holiday deliveries he’d spend entire days in the office casing for others. “He’d complain, good-naturedly, with some pride, ‘The bosses won’t let me out!’ ”

Larry Carr’s three-decade postal career began a half-century ago. The Army vet remembers some early advice: “One thing he told me when I first started was, always take care of the people. Give the people good service. That stuck with me the whole time I worked there.”

One resident recalled Henry letting him tag along in the 1950s, delivering an occasional letter. Inspired, the youngster later spent 31 years actually delivering mail, briefly assuming Henry’s route, before himself retiring in 2002.

So, this turns out to be a tale of a letter carrier plying his craft with such verve that he earned the lasting appreciation of the community he served.

Come to think of it, there’s a corollary—even as I write this, legions of letter carriers across this land are serving *their* communities with distinction, carving out their own legacies.

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