

## Light notes from the postal beat



**Philip Dine**

**S**ince you'll read this in August, typically the year's hottest month, no heavy fare here in the form of theory, analysis or grammatical tips to weigh you down. Rather, a trio of simple tales that perhaps reflect something about you, our union, this magazine and labor history.

**Philip Whitman of Newport News, VA Branch 609** called to ask whether he'd missed any recent magazines, an inquiry that took on added meaning as we spoke. A devotee of postal history, he's made it a mission to ensure that the branch is well-stocked with back issues of *The Postal Record*—even building shelves in the union office to house them.

Between the office and his home, he has magazines dating to the early 1900s, and some from the 1800s. If an officer needs to know, for example, how a postal matter was handled in March 1925, he wants that information to be readily accessible to them.

Phil, who spent seven years in the Army, divided between Virginia, South Korea and West Germany, before joining the Postal Service in 1978 and carrying mail for 28 years, folded the above-mentioned tasks into his service as branch treasurer and on the newsletter under the presidency of Tommy Moore, who gave Phil "free range" to pursue postal history.

"He was like an historian for us," current Branch 609 President Quetcy Aviles says. "When new people would come in, he would talk to them about the history of the Post Office."

A decade ago, concerned about gaps in the collection, Philip reached out to carriers through the Branch Items, asking that anyone with extra *Postal Record* copies send them to him, and offering to reimburse them for the postage.

The response astonished him.

"I got a few hundred from around the country, and do you know that nobody would accept reimbursement? They just put them in a box and sent them," he recalls. "But that's the NALC for you. It's a fantastic organization."

**Alerting us to media reports that merit attention helps us** in many ways, including keeping journalists in line. Chris Paige of Racine, WI Branch 436 did just that, mailing us a commentary piece in a local publication. "It screams [out for] some type of response," Chris wrote.

Indeed, while such columns typically extol the virtue of a robust Postal Service in keeping local newspapers and magazines afloat and residents thereby informed, this publisher focused on cost-cutting, asking readers, "[Would] you

be amenable to getting your mail on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and I'll get mine on Monday, Wednesday and Friday?"

In a subsequent call, Chris said, "I get kind of irritated when I see articles that put down the Post Office or say it isn't needed anymore. Well, it is!" Let's just say that we're in contact with this publisher.

The call also provided some breaking news. After 35 years delivering mail and a stint as vice president, Chris recently retired. Thankfully, he remains branch scribe, with his interest in writing reflected in other ways as well. In January 2021, we cited Chris's letter to the editor about Santa's "busy crew standing by" to answer children's letters, adding that "a merry band of elves will always take stragglers up until Christmas!"

**By letter, David Lasley, a retired carrier from Abraham Lincoln Merged Branch 80 in Springfield, IL,** discussed the annual Mother Jones Dinner set for October. David, I learned, is secretary of the Springfield-based Mother Jones Foundation—which honors the fearless woman who fought for coal miners nationwide, and which also raises money to buy labor history books for Illinois school libraries.

"On behalf of the foundation and myself," David added, "I thank you for the article on Mother Jones in *The Postal Record*, June 2025." (Kudos to staff writer Rick, whose story initiated our monthly series on historic labor leaders.)

By phone, I learned that David delivered mail from 1976 to 2015, served as branch president and was "Dick Durbin's mailman," referring to the Senate's No. 2 Democrat. Small world: David, who's been involved with the Mother Jones Foundation for nearly its entire four decades, reminded me that I spoke at the 2009 annual event.

Branch officer Susie Jackson cited David's "awesome" work with local youngsters, including as longtime Santa Claus at the union's Kids' Christmas Party (our second winter mention; maybe a wishful counter to DC's stifling heat). "He talks to them by name, asks them questions, mentions their brothers and sisters," she says. "They are just in awe. They believe he is the real thing." Susie would know; as branch treasurer the past 30 years, she's run the children's party that whole time.

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