

## Carriers and the mail make news online



Richard Vega

**M**ail-centered stories frequently appear on social media and online news sites. The following are a few that have come to NALC's attention recently. If you find a story you'd like us to consider featuring, send it to [postalrecord@nalc.org](mailto:postalrecord@nalc.org).

### California carrier retires after 41 years

At the end of August, 41-year letter carrier **Richard Vega** delivered his last piece of mail. In addition to his more than four decades as a letter carrier, the Eureka, CA Branch 348 member served six years in the Army, making for a total of 47 years of federal service.

He worked in three post offices since 1984—Oakland Post Office, Benicia Post Office and Arcata Post Office.

Vega loved being a letter carrier, telling an ABC affiliate, "When you find your dream job or your niche in life or where you're meant to be, when you feel like this is what I was called to be—this is a job that fits me well. Then you can really rejoice and look forward to going to work and really living life."

During retirement, Vega plans to spend more time with his family and continue to serve his community as a newly certified minister.

### Sark issues its first-ever postage stamps

Sark, a 2.1-square-mile British island off the coast of France with a population of about 600, issued its first

stamps at the end of August.

This is the first British island to issue a stamp since 1983, when the island of Alderney launched its own. The first issue of stamps will highlight its wartime history including the period of time when the island was under Nazi occupation during World War II and its liberation from German control, celebrating its 80th anniversary this year. The second set of stamps will feature photos of an array of Sark's wildflowers.

Sark is known for being the world's first recognized dark sky island, meaning that it has a sky undisturbed by light pollution, which is great for viewing stars clearly. The island has no cars or public lighting and is a 35-minute ferry ride from the nearest island with an airport.

### Postal Service honors humanitarian with stamp

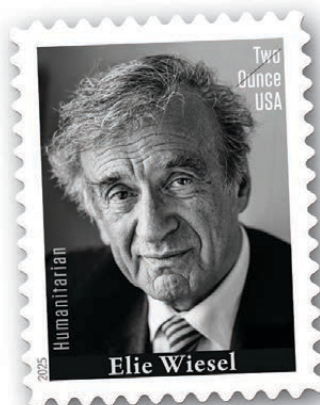
To honor the humanitarian contributions of Elie Wiesel, the Postal Service released a postage stamp on Sept. 17. Wiesel, who lived from 1928 to 2016, was a Nazi concentration camp survivor, writer, professor, political activist and Nobel laureate.

At only 15 years of age, he was taken to a concentration camp, where he was forced to work or face death. Of those who were taken to such camps, about 90 percent were mass murdered upon arrival. During the 13 months he was held at the camps, every member of his



The new Sark stamps





immediate family died at the camps.

Despite this horrific experience, Wiesel managed to accomplish quite a lot in his life. He authored 57 books in total, including his most popular, *Night*, a memoir that detailed his experience at the concentration camps. Throughout his life he was an advocate for numerous causes surrounding genocide and a professor at Boston University. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986, the Congressional Gold Medal in 1985 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1992.

The stamp is a black-and-white photo of Wiesel with his name underneath and the word “Humanitarian” on the left side of the photo.

## Retired rural carrier and last WWII ‘ace’ dies at 103

Donald McPherson, the last surviving World War II American “ace” pilot and a rural letter carrier, has died at 103 years of age. McPherson served as a Navy fighter pilot in the Pacific Theater during the final years of the war. During his time, he shot down five enemy planes, giving him the title of “ace.”

He was in his early 20s and saving for college when WWII began but decided to enlist to help the war effort instead. He flew in a fighter squadron and piloted a Grumman F6F Hellcat fighter, which could evade bombing and rocket attacks. His job was to act as air defense for Navy ships full of American soldiers in the Pacific, which were under threat by Japanese planes.

In a video shared by the Fagen Fighters WWII Museum, McPherson describes shooting down one Japanese

plane and performing a steep climb turn and quickly firing at the other, then using “violent maneuvering to try to get out of there without getting shot down.”

“I did go home that day with a hole or two in my plane,” McPherson says in the video.

By 1945, McPherson’s squadron had destroyed 292 Japanese planes and 11 of the squadron had become aces. It was a different era, as dog fights are rare in modern combat.

His service didn’t go unnoticed—he received the Congressional Gold Medal, along with three Distinguished Flying crosses.

After the war, he worked as a farmer for many years and was a rural letter carrier for 20 years in Adams, NE.

“He was up to his eyeballs in service in all sorts of ways once he got back [from the war],” McPherson’s son, Dean McPherson, told the *Beatrice Daily Sun*. “I mean, mail carrier, VFW, American Legion, scouting, anything in the church or the community, he was right there in the middle of it.” **PR**



McPherson in World War II



In 2024, McPherson flew in a SB2C-5 Navy Helldiver (below) in the gunner/navigator seat. He flew with Air Force Lt. Col. Ray Fowler (above).

