

VETERANS REFLECT ON SERVICE

Veterans Day is a day to thank those who have served in the military for their service. *The Postal Record* asked NALC members who are veterans to tell us about their military experience and how it helped them as letter carriers. Here's what some of them had to say.

Ted Lee of Pittsburgh, PA Branch 84 said that as he gets older, "being a veteran is one of the things I am most proud of. It taught me the value of serving others along with serving my country. As an Air Force veteran of five years active duty and three years Army National Guard, I believe my active-duty service made me want to continue wearing a uniform once honorably discharged. What better way than to continue wearing blue—postal blue (instead of Air Force blue)."

Lee served in the Air Force from December 1988 through January 1994 and the Army National Guard from 1996 through 1999. He said that one skill that has come in handy is military bearing. "Military bearing is behaving calmly and reasonably even if you are faced with stress or live fire," he explained. "It also allowed me to be able to maintain self-control in my civilian work life."



Lee and others said that their military service led them to be leaders in their branches and state associations. "The military also taught me to lead, which led to me being a shop steward, to now the president of Branch 84 (since October 2016)."

"Once a Marine, always a Marine," **Dawn Ahnen** of Beloit, WI Branch 715 said. "As a Marine veteran, you live the meaning of 'Always faithful,' *Semper fidelis*. I continued my service as a USPS letter carrier for my community and for my NALC union brothers and sisters over the past 36 years."

"I served six years in the United States Marine Corps, and I am a Desert Shield/Storm veteran," Detroit Branch 1's **Benjamin Dixon** said. "The discipline that was instilled in me has made me

a stronger letter carrier. I just passed 30 years of service."

Dixon said the discipline has helped him make it as he delivered through some dramatic conditions. "Working through extreme weather events, from the coldest winter [to] most snowfalls, hot summers, flooding, tornado and a worldwide pandemic, I have only had two unscheduled workdays."

Linda Culp of Tulsa, OK Branch 1358 joined the Marine Corps in 1966 and served until 1969. She said that being a veteran "means that I stand upright with shoulders back. I shed a tear when I hear 'The Star-Spangled Banner.' My leather shoes are always spit-shined. I am physically in shape. I am loyal, honest, and I can work in a high-



stress, fast-paced situation. I can put in a hard day's work and expect nothing in return. I am always faithful, and I served with pride."

She pointed out that those same attributes were put to work when she became a union steward.

Some members took the opportunity to simply share photos or acknowledge their experiences.

Michael Ralph-Solebello "served honorably in the United States Marine Corps from Feb. 9, 2004, to Oct. 10, 2012," the Clearwater, FL Branch 2008 member wrote, primarily as an intelligence specialist.

"The first part of my military career was attached to Regiment Combat Team 8 (RCT8), 2nd Marine Division. While serving with RCT8 I deployed to Fallujah, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (2005-2006). In 2007, I transferred to 10th Marine Division and redeployed to Alsad, Iraq, (2007-2008) as the senior intelligence analyst for 1st Battalion 10th Marines. Between 2008 and 2012, I served with 10th Marine Division in many roles including senior intelligence analyst, intelligence chief, classified material control center chief, as well as leading and training junior Marines."

Ralph-Solebello noted how important those who stayed home were to him, writing that his wife, Melinda, "has been [my] constant throughout



Linda Culp

both [my] Marine Corps and postal career. [We] have been married 19 years and have two children, Kelly and Alexander."

"This a photo of myself near the Tigris River in Iraq, circa 2005," **Justin Lott** of Moline, IL Branch 318 said of the photo at right. "I was with



Justin Lott

the 18th MP Brigade at the time, 793rd Taskforce."

Tim Seekins of Newport News, VA Branch 609 served for 24 years in the Navy and the Coast Guard, retiring in 2004 as a senior chief petty officer. "I served on three Los Angeles Class attack submarines and four major Coast Guard cutters," he said. "I served in the food service ratings in each and at the time of my retirement, I was the food services officer and the command senior chief aboard USCGC *Hamilton WHEC 715*."

Seekins sent the photo at right of him and his daughter Sarah at her Army commissioning ceremony.

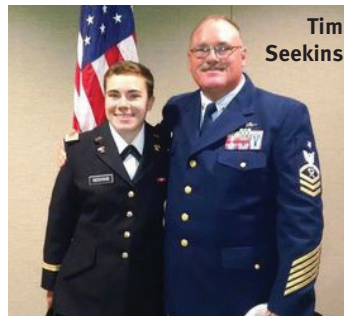
Meanwhile, **Jennefer Beck** of Southwest Missouri Branch 366 said that her nine years in the Air Force taught her much about how to treat people, which helped in her 28 years in the Postal Service. "I served from 1982 to 1992 as a E-4 buck sergeant and joined at the age of 19," she said. "The United States Air Force

was a wonderful start in my life, and I'm grateful my military experiences carried over as a mail carrier and as an NALC union steward. I have served honorably in both.

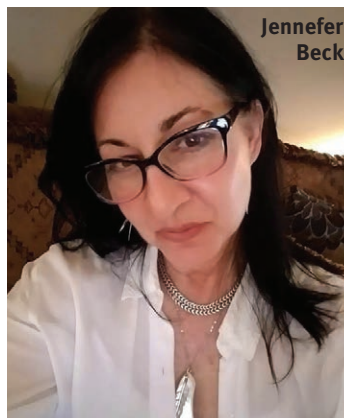
"My experience in the Air Force taught me about customer relations, as my job was a passenger service specialist. Working with passengers taught me about how important protocol is. Regardless of whether the customer was a four-star general or an E-1 airman, I treat each as though they were all VIPs. As a mail carrier in a very small town of Carterville, MO 64835, I carry this protocol with me. I wanted my customers to know they were all important to me; they were all VIPs." **PR**



Michael Ralph-Solebello



Tim Seekins



Jennefer Beck