

# Upbeat notes from the postal beat



**Philip  
Dine**

**I**n May, we told the tale of Nashville Branch 4 member Michael Charest’s role in the campaign for a stamp honoring country music great Johnny Cash, featuring praise for his efforts from Cash’s youngest sister, Joanne Cash. The column included the gripping story of Mike’s wife, Judy, whose rescue from a frigid river as a 3-month-old on Dec. 24, 1956, after her despairing mother jumped from a bridge with her baby in her arms, led to her being known locally as the Christmas Eve miracle baby.

That story now is slated to hit the big screen, with casting having begun a half-hour ago as I write this, and filming set to start a few days

before you read it. Judy, who helped Mike with his stamp effort on behalf of the Man in Black and who also served as personal assistant to country legend Waylon Jennings, passed away in March of 2022. “It’s more than a movie to me,” Mike says. “It’s about my wife. I want to keep her memory alive.” If the movie lives up to the real-life story, it will do that and then some. Stay tuned.

**A personal highlight of November’s rap session was the conversation with a carrier at an adjoining breakfast table.** Several things struck me about Logansport, IN Branch 323 member Rick McGlothlin—the cultural curiosity he displayed while overseas; his journalistic skills/devotion to the craft; and his down-to-earth humility. To pursue his dual interests in broadcasting and traveling, Rick joined the Air Force. A 10-year military stint took him to Italy, South Korea, Japan and the Philippines, followed by a second decade abroad as a civilian contractor.

To learn the languages and understand the people, at his own expense Rick lived in the communities, not in military housing; seeking “to absorb what I could, while I had the chance.” As a news anchor, he became an integral part of the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service. When a CBS news crew arrived at South Korea’s Osan Air Base, Rick shot and edited footage for the network’s evening news, prompting the producer to issue a future invitation to CBS headquarters in New York for a potential job. Despite viewing journalism as “a blast,” Rick decided that Indiana would better suit his 3-year-old daughter, so he returned from abroad to the Hoosier State in 2006 to carry mail. Elected branch president in 2017, he still leads the branch in retirement. Journalism’s loss, it’s clear, is our gain.

**My first conversation with Region 6 NBA David Mudd** took an unexpected twist. As we discussed his Army experiences in Cold War Europe, it became evident that in the fraught period of late 1989, shortly before the Berlin Wall fell and communism collapsed in Eastern Europe, we were in the same area but pursuing decidedly divergent goals. David’s assignment was with the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment to East Germany’s south, watching that borders were respected. For my part, I was covering the spiraling events, straddling the Hungarian-Austrian border to interview East Germans fleeing through Hungary to western freedom in Austria.

As tensions rose in East Berlin, I knew history would be made and I had to get there, but I also knew that East German officials were in no mood to grant a journalistic visa. So rather than the conventional West Berlin-East Berlin crossing, I decided to drive into East Germany through the mountainous south under the cover of night. Let’s just say, I’m glad my first encounter with Dave was here, and not over there.

**Victoria Leba of Minneapolis Branch 9 called recently** about a *Postal Record* matter involving Veterans Day and her late husband, David Leba, a member of the same branch and an Army Vietnam War veteran, who had died in August. As she spoke, things got intriguing. Turns out they both started carrying mail in 1968—she in February and he in August—met at the post office, participated in the 1970 strike and got married the next year. “I had seniority on him, which I never let him forget,” Vicki said. “I could always pick my vacation first, but I would wait until we got down to his seniority. We were an interesting couple, I can tell you that. I always told him I was the best thing that ever happened to him. I actually think he believed me, after a while.”

The husband-and-wife team each became a 55-year-member last year. Notwithstanding the old joke about a newsroom placard reading, “Warning, journalist doing math,” I calculate that their combined 110 years with NALC equate to more than 80 percent of our union’s 135 years of existence.

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