

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

I found a recent Times/Standard "Letter to the Editor" quite interesting. The letter, authored by Wynona Nash described her early student teaching years and three mentors who helped develop her career through their kind deeds and friendship. There are many people we should remember as heroes and mentors in our lives. I thank Ms. Nash for sharing her memories with us. This brings to mind some of the people who helped me start a postal career that lasted for forty years. When I was a high school student, the letter carrier on the route where I lived, recruited me as a "Christmas Helper" for a two week period. His name was Ray Coupal. He took me under his wing and very thoroughly taught me the basics of the job. During one of my first days, Ray entrusted me with a registered letter for delivery and I carelessly lost the item somewhere on the route. Rather than suggest my firing, he went out on the route after hours and searched until he found the letter and treated me with great respect. Believe me that was the first and last piece of mail that I ever lost. Later, when I started to work full time, Ray was always there for me and we remained friends over the years. I was also assigned to duties inside and trained as a dispatch clerk. My mentor was the Chief Dispatch Clerk, a fellow by the name of Shirley Hanna, a former school teacher. Shirley was a kind man and very thorough in his work. I not only had the honor to work with him, I was able to spend what little slack time we had, listening to his words of wisdom not only as a dispatch clerk but as a former school teacher and as a local historian. There was another letter carrier who was his own man. His name was Will Crowley. Will worked hard and played hard. He had a certain amount of disdain for the younger more inexperienced carriers. You either measured up to his work ethic, which was brutal, or you stayed out of his way. One of my early Christmas seasons was spent as Will's helper. At first, there were very few words exchanged between us but I did as I was told. I inadvertently broke the ice one day by arriving back to the office on time. He would send the helper ahead to deliver and he would follow with a second delivery, passing up the helper. He pulled me to one side and told me that he never could catch up to me and that I was the first helper to stay ahead of him. From then on he called me by my first name and recruited me to assist him in preparing letter carrier dinners, which he was famous for. Those three individuals gave me a unique postal education that led to my very successful postal career.

Fred Nelson for Community Comment