

Dang, Alex! 48 years!!

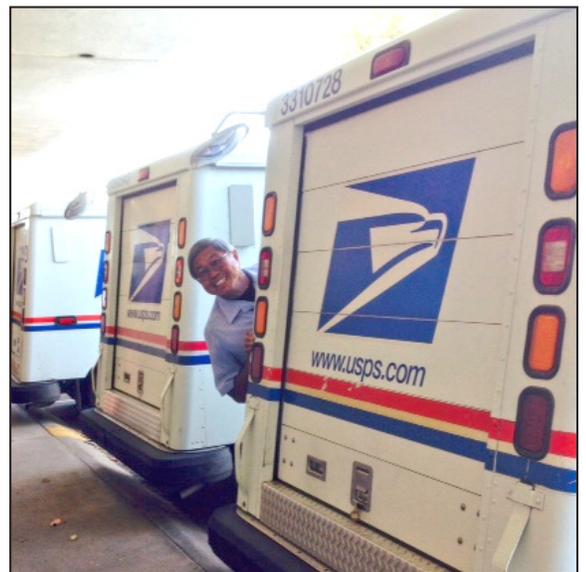
“At this point, I really don’t have any plans on any adventures that I want to take. After I start the renovation of my home and finish that, I will look at pursuing other projects. What fun!! There are always options...”



September 30, 2014



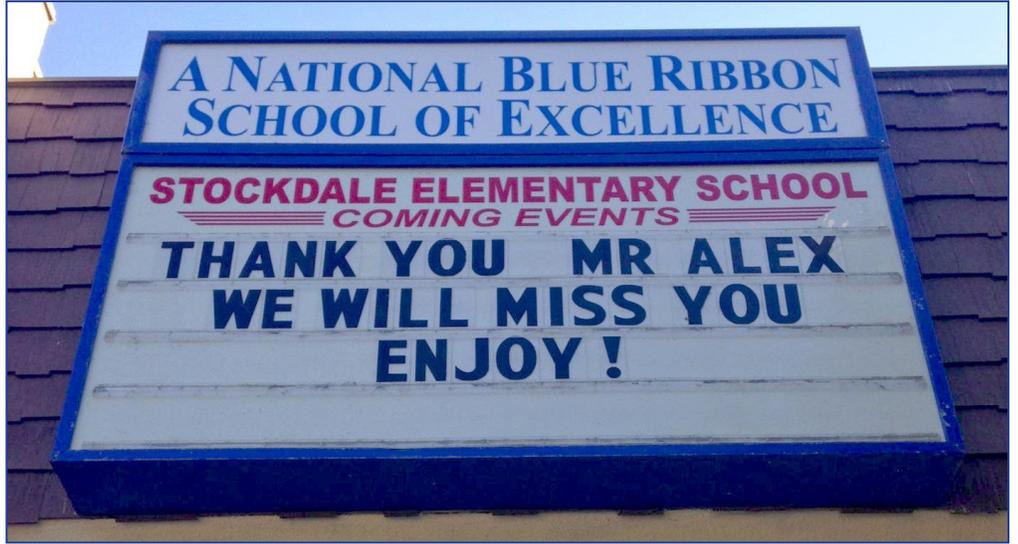
Stockdale Station had a special Retirement Party to honor Alex on his last day at work!!!

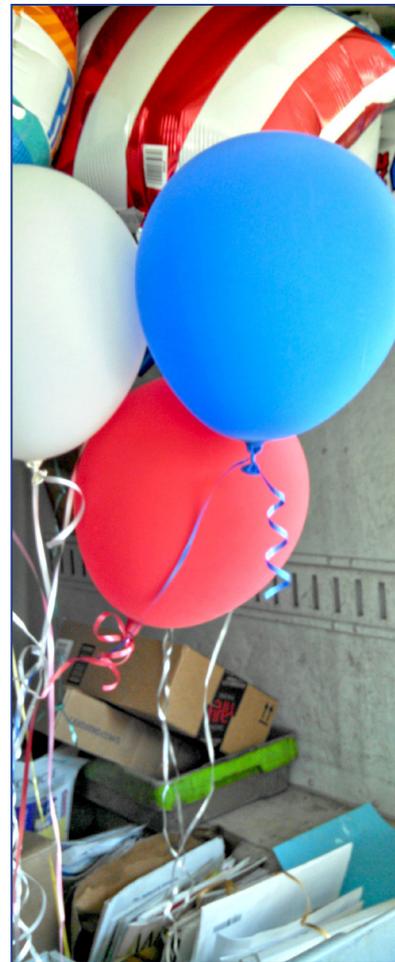


But, Dang, Alex! The **REAL** party was out on the route!!

The sight of balloons, smiling customers, signs, cards in mailboxes and other congratulations offered to Alex in *block after block* of his final journey! It was a real testament!











It should be self-evident that Alex Dang is a very PERSISTENT person... Once he starts something, he sees his job through to completion!

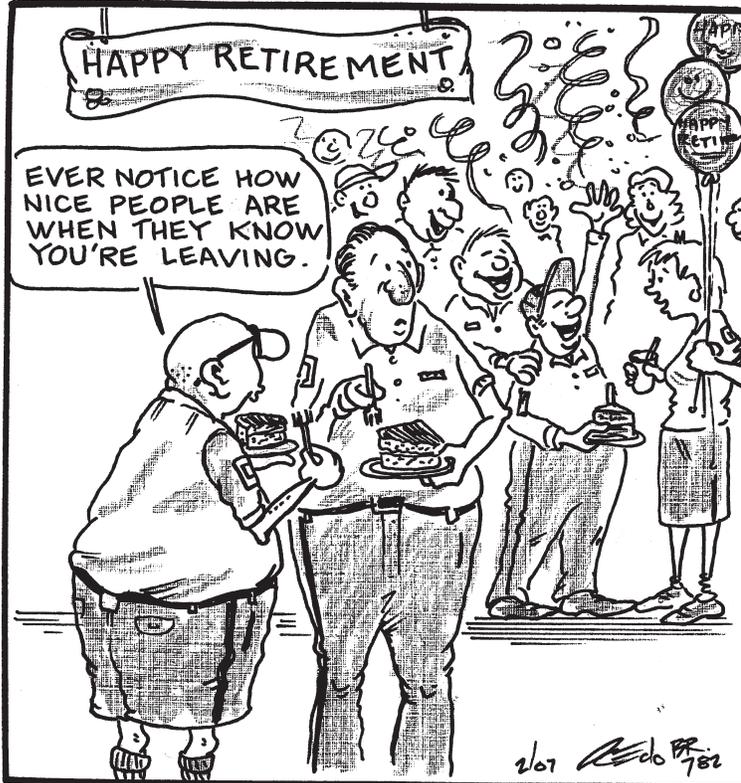
“...WITH MY ACTIVE AND RESERVE DUTY, MY TOTAL TIME IN THE MILITARY: 33 YEARS, 9 MONTHS AND 7 DAYS—PER OFFICIAL RETIREMENT DOCUMENTS....”

Eye Street

OUT THERE



OUT THERE



Whole pa

A good mailman is like a crackerjack barber: You hope you die or leave town before they do. Alex Dang is a good mailman, except that, in retiring after 47 years with the Postal Service, he's breaking hearts along the avenues, courts and ways of Stockdale Estates: Jamaica, Camino Del Oeste, Vista Verde, Dos Rios, Vista Verde, Kroll, Las Cruces and De Col-ores. Tuesday, Dang delivered mail to 401 houses along Route 913 for the last time.

Residents decorated their houses, mailboxes and fences with banners, balloons and ribbons. Decorated, reminisced and probably shed a few my-mailman-is-deserting-me tears.

Stockdale Elementary changed its marquee to read: "Thank you Mr. Alex. We will miss you. Enjoy."

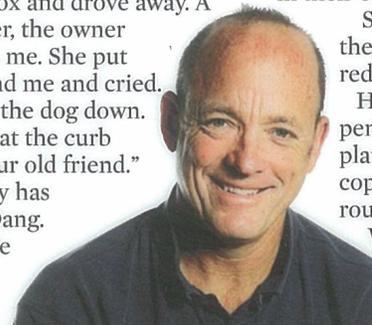
Dang became part of families, sharing their joys and sorrows.

"Years ago I was greeted at a mailbox by a young golden retriever. The dog jumped around, wiggled and tried to get into my truck," Dang said.

"Soon the dog was trained to take the mail in her mouth and bring it to the front door, where her owner awaited. The dog aged, and so did the rest of us. Eventually, she was unable to retrieve the mail and waited at the curb for me to arrive, and the owner would carry the mail into the house.

"One day, neither the dog nor the owner greeted me. I slipped the mail into the box and drove away. A few houses later, the owner caught up with me. She put her arms around me and cried. She had to put the dog down. We both stood at the curb and cried for our old friend."

Everybody has a story about Dang. Themes include loyalty, service and exceeding



expectati
"My h
mailbox e
when we
our daug
woman w
identifie
together.
decline!"
Wh
town, Da
whistling
"I w
my pregn
was so gr
kindness
door to g
Dan
Bakersfie
Elementa
Bakersfie
Bakersfie
Vietnam
Freedom
Army Res
service. F
Buscher-
They've b
have two
Morgen,
His
mail from
night. Ov
evolved i
guard an
Barbara C
away his
troublem
"He
noticed t
get into a
Grumbles
paying at
in their c
S
the
red
H
per
pla
cop
rou
V

Package: mailman and friend

ons.
husband met Alex at the
every day on his lunch hour
were expecting replies for
nter's wedding," said a
who preferred not to be
l. "They opened the replies
Bittersweet not a single

en Ali Norris was new to
ng would come singing and
at her door.

as bedridden during two of
nancies," Norris said, "and I
ateful for his simple act of
of walking 20 feet to the
ive me my mail."

g, 66, was born and raised in
ld. He attended Hawthorne
ary, Emerson Junior High,
ld High School and
ld College. A veteran of
and Operation Iraqi
Dang retired from the
serve with 33 years of
He met his wife, Maureen
Dang, at the post office.
been married 29 years and
daughters: Erika, 27, and
25.

first job had him collecting
n neighborhood boxes at
er his five routes, Dang has
nto "mailman, security
d friend," according to
Gar-diner. He has chased
share of prospective
akers.

was on his regular route and
two strange people trying to
back gate," said Carol
s. "Alex acted like he wasn't
attention and when they got
ar, he followed them down
Stockdale Highway, catching
m when they stopped at a
light at Fairway Drive.
e pulled out his trusty
n, wrote down their license
te, flipped a U, called the
ops and returned to his
ite."

When the cops caught them
in another break-in later
that day, Dang went to



Many Stockdale Estates residents, like Dianne Benschopf, show their appreciation for Alex Dang.

court and testified.

Dang loathed leaving unattended packages on the front porch and would bury them underneath cushions if necessary, calling the homeowners on their cellphones. He would check up on a house if its owner was out of town.

"Alex was more fairy godfather than postman!" said Laurie Paulson. "He made frequent appearances delivering lovely packages full of goodies, watched over my home after my chariot whisked me away on vacation and if there was an unidentified chariot in your driveway, he would make note of it. There was always a sparkle in his eyes and smile ... like he knew something you didn't."

Dang filled fountains, gathered newspapers and reminded homeowners to turn off their porch lights.

"I called him to let him know

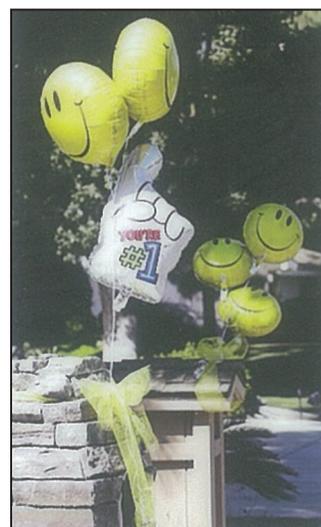
our travel plans had changed on vacation," said Dianne Benschopf. "When he picked up the phone, he explained that he was on vacation too ... but he would be happy to call someone and get our mail hold extended."

The first thing Dang did Wednesday morning was to go to the Stockdale station and play cards with everybody during the 10-minute coffee break and then go home. Dang's coworkers had thrown a potluck at the station two weeks ago.

Dang plans to be busy and useful and will probably not sit and wait for the mail to arrive.

"Although I will be happy to leave a cold drink in the mailbox for my own letter carrier," he said.

Retired, but not from that.



FELIX ADAMO / THE CALIFORNIAN

Retiring postman Alex Dang had many surprises on his final route for the Postal Service.

These are Herb Benham's opinions, and not necessarily The Californian's. His column appears Tuesday, Friday and Sunday. Call him at 395-7279 or write hbenham@bakersfield.com.

Dang, Alex! 48 years!!

It should be self-evident that Alex Dang is a very PERSISTENT person. Once he starts something, he sees his job through to completion! And, the point is?

Like most of us, Alex made youthful decisions that he was fortunate to survive. He shared that—at a young age—it took him *FIVE* strikes with a ballpeen hammer on a bullet to get something to happen...

I was attending Bakersfield College in 1967 and also working part-time evenings at the K-Mart on 34th Street earning maybe \$1.70 an hour.

My best friend from BHS mentioned that he was going to apply for a job at the U.S. Post Office....that a part time position was available. In May/June of 1967, I put in my application at the U.S. Post Office for a position as a 20 hour Regular, doing night-time mail box collections for maybe \$1.95 and hour. I was interviewed in August 1967 and reported to work on September 9, 1967.

The whole intent was to find a better paying job while attending school and to put some money in savings so I could go on to a four year College.

When I turned 18 years old, I registered for the draft...just to be that “law abiding citizen”! During my 2nd year at BC, my first DRAFT NOTICE arrived, and I filed for a deferment. My sister and I were attending BC at the same time and my parents could only afford to send one of us away to a four year school. I told my parents to send my sister (she graduated from San Jose State).

During my third year at BC (when I was still a part-time postal employee, my INDUCTION NOTICE ARRIVED: Report to the Greyhound Bus Depot at 0430 for a bus ride to the

induction center.. I can't remember the date but I do remember that I thought that it would be better if I finished out my 3rd year at BC. I also decided that if I was being drafted, why not just join up for 3 or 4 years and get a education while serving my country. My older brother was a U.S. Air Force and career officer. He agreed.

I really wanted to become a military X-ray Technician and it didn't matter whether it was in the Army, Air Force, Navy or Coast Guard. I discovered that only the U.S. Army offered a 21 week school for X-Ray.

After speaking with the Army recruiter, I found out that I could sign up and take a DELAYED ENLISTMENT, and go active duty after my 21st birthday, plus finish my 3rd year at BC! I turned 21 on August 13, 1969 and entered the U.S. Army on the 18th of August 1969.

The folks in the Post Office Personnel Office at our 18th & G Street Post Office did all the paperwork allowing me MILITARY LEAVE during my term of enlistment. John Loustalot was the Postmaster in 1967 and Patty Baird was his secretary. It was on her advice, that I chose to take military leave from the Post Office. (I hope I remembered her name correctly...)

I went to Ft. Ord, California for 8 weeks BASIC TRAINING, went to Ft. Sam Houston, Texas in San Antonio for 19 weeks of very condensed x-ray training and then flew back out to Ft. Ord Hospital

for 2 weeks additional training in the x-ray department.

After receiving graduation documents, I was ordered to take 8 days leave, then report to Travis Air Force Base and make my 27 hour journey to Viet Nam. I was in country for 11 months and 23 days and then returned to Ft. Ord and worked at that hospital till the U.S. Army gave me a 6 month drop, so I only ended serving 2.5 years total time on active duty.

Although, I was originally DRAFTED. I wanted to gain something more, than just be handed a weapon for shooting enemies of my country. My GOAL, during this time period, was to make this experience something I could carry into the future. Helping to save lives seemed like it would be more rewarding.

My MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) is 91P10/20/30....X-Ray Tech (Graduating Class date 30 March 1970). I was assigned to MILPHAP Team 27, City of MOC HOA, the capital city of Kien Thuong Province.

I was in Vietnam to replace an x-ray tech who had already gone home by the time I arrived. Three months after I arrived at Team 27...the OR/Operating Room Tech



went home. For the next 9 months, I cross trained (on the job training) as the OR Tech, assisting the SURGEON, handing the surgery instruments to the Dr. as he worked to save the life of the wounded. This was the MOST REWARDING PART OF MY MILITARY CAREER!

I was discharged at the rank/pay grade of SPECIALIST 5 from Ft. Ord, California... on 22FEB1972 and then continued my service in the U.S. Army Reserve.



In conjunction with my Reserve duty—at 55 years young—I was activated for OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom) and left my route and my customers for 18 months (from January 2004 through June 2005).

My unit from Bakersfield was the 736th Transportation Company. My company was assigned to a base called CEDAR II, located in IRAQ. This is the city where Jessica Lynch's convoy was ambushed. By the time my unit arrived in country,

Kellogg, Brown and Root had established many tent cities for units conducting operations in the war zone. We operated out of a base area protected by air & ground personnel. We were never hit. The tents were air conditioned, so we could rest and sleep on double decker bunks. Once we geared up and walked outside, then it became a furnace. I have pictures of thermostats reading 128 degrees and one reading 132 degrees. Working in Bakersfield is not a problem.

BEFORE I LEFT FOR IRAQ, I PROMISED MAUREEN THAT—UPON MY RETURN — I WOULD RETIRE FROM THE U.S. ARMY. I DID JUST THAT IN FEBRUARY OF 2006.

With my Active and Reserve duty my TOTAL TIME IN THE MILITARY:

33 years, 9 months and 7 days—per official retirement documents.

Anyway, back to my Post Office history! I returned to work at the Annex March of 1972.

During that time, we had something called “oral bidding”. You showed up in a room with other folks who

wanted an assignment and raised your hand. I heard about a truck run assignment that was available but I was out bid by the senior bidder: Richard Tucker. As I recall, this was the last oral bidding at the 18th & G Main Post Office.

Richard Tucker had vacated route 907. All I had to do was raise my hand to make my bid for Route 907. I remember the look in John Howlett's eye as he asked, “Where the hell did **YOU** come from? *How could*

YOU have seniority over ME?”

(Thank you, again, Patty, for suggesting that I take military leave instead of quitting! It helped big time!!!)

I was happy to have a route to call home. Robbie on Route 905 helped me out the most. Route 907 and 905 are both located in Kern City. Robbie had his ways and it was all about helping people, treating people right...and giving people service.

It took me actually about five years to decide that I was in the right place. IN THE ARMY, WE HAVE A SAYING, “IF YOU DO THE 10, YOU DO THE 20.” The 20 year commitment allows you to draw retirement pay when you retire from ACTIVE DUTY. In the ARMY RESERVES, you can do “the twenty”, but you have to be 60 years of age to draw a retirement.

I was on Route 907 for 15 years. The final year on 907 was spoiled by a absolutely ruthless DUMB ASS who wanted to leave his mark as the most evil Manager/Future Postmaster in the history of Bakersfield.

If he reads this, he should turn off his OXYGEN and light a cigarette to see if his black lungs will give him pleasure. Just for information: **YOU ARE THE MONKEY!!!!** If you had not helped me hurt my back, I would not have bid off 907.

From 907, I went to 925, 930, 928, 930 and 913. I never carried 928 one time. I rebid 930, out of the goodness of my heart, because Evie Tan asked me to give it up, so her friend could bid on it. End of story!

There are a lot of people that I came to know well during my time as a Letter Carrier. I will tell no stories, but John Howlett, Paul Zabala, Paul Trombetta, Mike Newton, Art Ornelas, Chris Pimiento, Clifford Fehdrau, Al LaBarge, Lew “KILLER” Garvin, Ron Huston, S.L. Surber, Marty Joregenson, Robbie Robison, Walt, George, Rudy,

Continued on next page...

Gordo, Gary Kimball (Bodfish), and Richard Tucker. (And, there was also Mr. Fry who was the mail carrier for my mom & dad's house. He used to write notes on my mail from home when I was in Nam!)



He wanted to be the terror of the station. His name was very common. But, once again, (a senior moment filled with laughter and joy) his name is NOT WORTH MENTIONING. I have spoken to people who JUST HATE HIM. Everyone should feel sorry for him....He was not a happy man. "ALL HE WANTED WAS HIS CIGARETTES AND BEER."



Letter Carriers and dogs? I experienced dog attacks at least seven times during my Postal Career. Only three broke the skin, one was just a bruise, and the other three found me wearing ripped uniforms.

I got to know many animals on my routes. I enjoyed the trained dogs who will carry the mail to their masters. As a Letter Carrier, all I had to do was rubber band the mail so it would not slide out of the dogs grip. I still had to carry the parcels up to the door. Maybe they could have been better trained?

I recently went to Stockdale Station to get my Vacation Hold mail on Saturday after spending a week in San Diego. I will go back down and visit after my morning session at the gym. I enjoy playing cards with the gang during their break. Now that I'm retired, I have a question. Does the USPS give out RETIRED ID CARDS? The U.S. Army has given me a ID CARD that say U.S. ARMY RETIRED and it has no expiration date, it says INDEFINITE. TILL DEATH DO US PART.

I have no regrets at retiring when I did. I started in September of 1967 and retired in September 2014 with 2628.72 sick leave hours on the books. I had the sick leave when I needed it and used it when I really needed it. BENEFITS are a good thing to have!

I was advised by HR that my last and final work check would be delivered as a hard



copy to my last place of assignment. Darlene, "THE BOSS", notified me of its arrival and I have picked it up and deposited it and spent it. Now I can say that I am on a fixed income and LIVING OFF MY BETTER HALF. LOL!!!! Should I say, that my check is being processed and will be direct deposited when OPM decides to give it up?

At this point, I really don't have any plans on any adventures that I want to take. After I start the renovation of my home and finish that, I will look at pursuing other projects. What fun!! There are always options.

I am not tied down to any one thing. It is good to have week ends free so I can participate in some chosen outdoor activities. Right now, cleaning out my garage is high on my list. I have to start somewhere!

I do have one parting comment: "All of our customers are expecting good service. Service with a smile is a good thing."

MY FAVORITE MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS ALL PASSED THE "HI, HONEY!" TEST....A SMILE IS A GREAT GIFT FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER.

There was *only* ONE manager that failed the "Hi, Honey!" test. He's the one guy who was a CHAIN SMOKER...(A WEAKNESS). And it really showed.

It broke his heart when smoking was banned from all Federal Buildings. When he was here, if you protested his poor smoking manners, he would just come closer and blow smoke in your case.

Fred Acedo* says, "Alex..."

OUT THERE



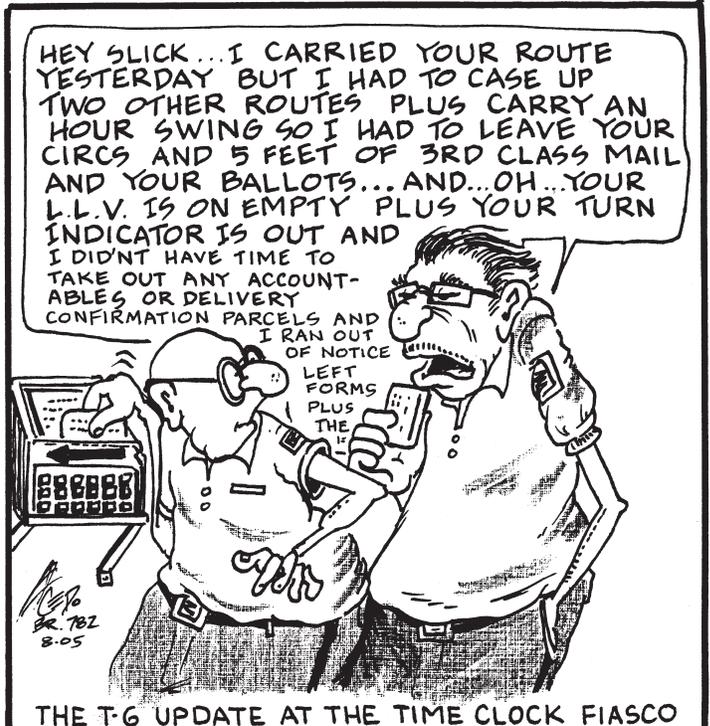
OUT THERE



OUT THERE



OUT THERE



NOTE: ANY SIMILARITY TO ANY LIVING PERSON IS PURELY INTENTIONAL

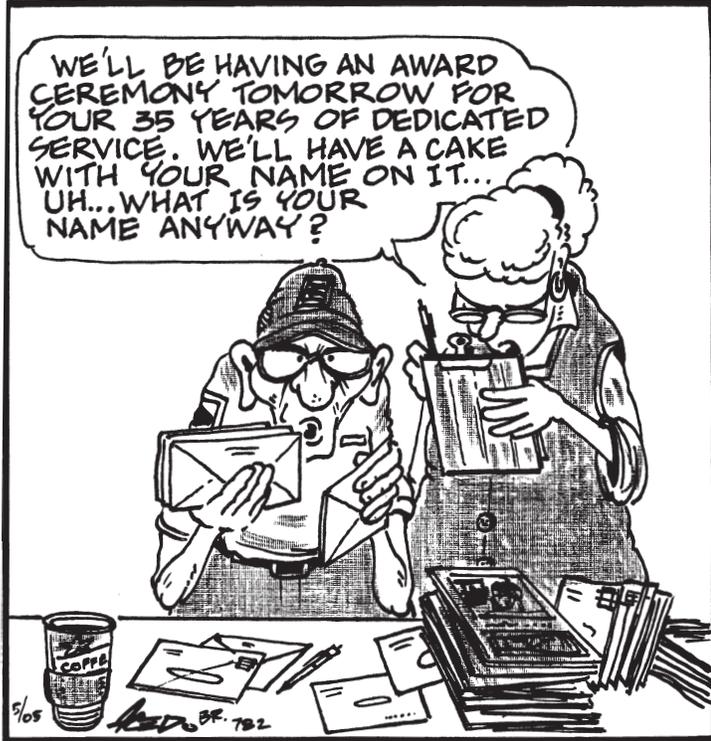
...enjoy the rest of your life!!"

*Fred Acedo is a cartoonist and retired Bakersfield Letter Carrier who carried mail for over thirty-seven years! He knows the world that Alex Dan worked in—intimately! He knows that Alex will relate to these "snippets" of the life of a Letter Carriers anywhere...

**Reserved for
whatever you
want on this
page...**

**Reserved for
whatever you
want on this
page...**

OUT THERE



OUT THERE



Congratulations, Alex Dang!!!

You are in a very small minority of USPS Letter Carriers who've worked at this job for more than forty years!

FORTY-EIGHT YEARS is an amazing accomplishment!

We hope you have a long life of good health, good times and loving people in your world as you move on from this day!!!

OUT THERE

