

**AFC 2021/010: Rural Free Delivery: Mail Carriers in Central Appalachia / Emily Hilliard
Interview with LeAnn Carpenter – 4/3/22**

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LeAnn Carpenter

Where: Conducted remotely over Zencast

Date: April 3, 2022

Location: Berea, KY (Hilliard) and Grant Town, WV (Carpenter)

Interviewer: Emily Hilliard

Transcription: Emily Hilliard

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LeAnn Carpenter (b. 1968 in Bangkok, Thailand) has been a regular rural mail carrier for 7 years out of the Morgantown, WV postal annex. Prior to working as a regular carrier, she was a substitute for 4 years. She is the coworker of Steve Honaker, who was also interviewed for this project. Carpenter grew up in Minnesota and is a veteran of the US Army. She now drives an LLV and is on a more suburban rural route with more affluent customers; on her prior route, which was more rural, she drove her personal vehicles—Chevy S-10s. In this interview Carpenter talks about differences in the job depending on the demographics of the community on her route, her relationship with her customers and the intimacy of the role of being a mail carriers, how her job has changed over time, and delivering mail during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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LC: LeAnn Carpenter
EH: Emily Hilliard

00:00

EH: Alright, so why don't you, well I'll give the date. It's April 3, 2022. I'm in Berea, Kentucky, and are you in Morgantown?

LC: I actually live in Grant Town, West Virginia, so next to Morgantown.

EH: Okay, great.

LC: And I work in Morgantown.

EH: Got it. So why don't you introduce yourself and tell me your name, where you're from and the year you were born?

LC: My name's LeAnn Carpenter. I was born in 1968 in Bangkok, Thailand.

EH: Wow!

LC: I was raised in International Falls, Minnesota, right on the Canadian border and I met my spouse in the military. We've been married 36 years and we are living in his hometown of, well, near Fairmont, West Virginia where he was born and raised. And I work in Morgantown at the postal annex as a regular carrier.

00:53

EH: Nice! And were your parents American?

LC: Yes, my dad was in Vietnam, my mom went to visit him and I was a lucky result of that.

EH: Oh, nice!

LC: Yep! (laughs)

EH: (laughs) And so when did you move to Minnesota?

LC: It would have been around 1969, the latter part of '69. But all of my memories as a child are in Minnesota, so.

EH: Yeah, nice. So how long have you been a rural carrier?

LC: I started in 2015 so that would be 7 years as a regular carrier. I worked as a sub for 4 years before that. I kinda started this endeavor a little bit later in life, you know. So, yeah.

EH: Alright. And have you been on the same route the whole time?

LC: No. I started off as a sub and then a rural carrier in an extremely rural route kind of on the back side of Morgantown. It contained a couple other zip codes and I drove my own personal vehicle for quite a while on that route. That was the part of being a rural carrier I absolutely loved, but as time went on and

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we got a little older I got kinda tired of working out of my own vehicles so I transferred to a route that uses a postal vehicle and it's more of a townie route, a little less rural, but it's still considered a rural route. But yeah, I like it.

EH: So do you have an LLV (Long Life Vehicle) now?

LC: I do, yes, I have an LLV now. Most of the time when it's running (laughs)

EH: (laughs) Nice. Tell me about how you first got interested in becoming a rural mail carrier?

LC: I, being I was prior service, knew that I could get a buy back and it would lean towards my time in the postal system and I actually didn't expect to make regular as quickly as I did. When I signed up it was supposed to just be a Saturday gig to help ends meet and give me something to do on the weekends and here I am! (laughs) So I just kinda got swept away with it, I guess! Yeah.

EH: Nice. So tell me about what it was like learning the job when you first started.

LC: Oh (sighs). When I very first started, I would find out where I was going to be the next day and usually go drive it on my own first so I wouldn't get lost because at the time, well, you know, no GPS, no cell phones, no whatnot. And actually the route that I delivered on for quite a while still doesn't have very good internet or very good GPS and the old adage in the Postal System you always make a right, on this particular route, if you were in doubt, you always made a left. It was pretty interesting, so yeah, the rules didn't apply that they kinda tell you when you're at the Postal Academy. So it was definitely an adventure! No signs, all backroads, mostly dirt roads. It was actually a lot of fun, a lot of challenges.

EH: Wow. And how long had you been living in West Virginia at that point?

04:04

LC: Moved here in 1980...boy, look at me trying to dig. 1990 we moved here. We came back to West Virginia in 1990, or that was my original step into the state to live. My husband like I said was raised here.

EH: Yeah. So you had been living in that community for a little while.

LC: Yeah. Kind of night and day, though. Where I was delivering mail was a lot more rural than here but being I was from a very rural part of Minnesota, I still felt like it was a bit crowded. It was kinda different how the term rural applies differently for where you're from, I guess, so.

EH: Right, right. So why don't you walk me through a typical day on the job from when you get into the post office to when you get home at the end of the day.

LC: Well, you walk in, you clock in, you basically get everything kind of piled on you--packages, mail, whatnot. Now, letters are given to you in sequenced order--I'm sure you've heard about that from other carriers. But as of right this minute, we're starting a new pay system that's been implemented called R-R-E-C-S RRECS, have you heard of that yet?

EH: Yeah.

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LC: It's a little bit of a game changer kind of the way we do things. I try to bunch what I do in a more followable way rather than just kind of running back and forth. But you sort the mail, you case it, you sort of plan ahead based on delivery stops and a lot of its gotta do with quantity and the size of the packages or the weight, whatnot, how you load your vehicle. When you get out there, you go kinda step by step, mailbox by mailbox, you follow the mail, supposedly. Honestly, the minute you walk in that building until you get done at night, it's hard to say how your day's gonna be. And even though I'm a regular carrier, we had a nation-wide the Postal System is hurting for people, so they let us for a short amount of time, help on routes so every day when I would get back from my route, I would go out and assist the subs or other carriers with what they needed done and I felt like a brand new mail carrier every day because I'm telling ya, I had no idea where these places were. It was just like I was green all over again and it was kind of refreshing and enlightening. It reminds you what it's like to be new and I'm glad I volunteered to do that. I was really glad I did. It seems like I've got a better appreciation for the younger people that are coming in and walking in on this. Phew, it's tough on them. It's pretty easy for us regulars but the new people are really struggling, so. And used up!

EH: And is the, yeah, so why do you think that is--is that because of changes in the Postal Service?

LC: Yeah. The starting rate for newcomers for the subs is pretty--it's not as competitive as it used to be. And they use them up and exhaust them so quickly and expect so much out of them for you know, people that haven't really been in the job market for a long time or worked at other careers for a while, their expectation and their reality are nothing alike. And when they hire there's such a long time between the time the applicant applies and when they're actually phoned in to come in and interview that a lot of times they've just gone on to other things because you know, they need to eat, they need to pay the rent. They can't wait. It's that type of a thing. And then they sort of get embedded in their new careers, so. Yeah. That's why

EH: [Cat jumps on desk] Sorry my cat has joined us (laughs).

LC: I love cats so--my door is shut so... (laughs)

EH: (laughs) Yeah, I was able to get one out but not the other.

LC: No, you're fine! I think it's wonderful.

EH: (laughs) So why don't you tell me about your customers--what kind of people you serve on your route.

LC: The original route that I worked on when I was really rural--like I said, a lot of dirt roads, a lot of, at one point in time I think they had been farms, like smaller farms where people mostly worked like in the mines or ran truck or did stuff like that and then they would go home and kinda do something. A lot of very poor communities like Jere and Osage [in Scotts Run] and kinda like little fringe towns on Morgantown that their parents had come from hard knocks and these folks, you know, they considered their mail as kind of sacred and they got real fussy real quick about things. The area I'm in now, it's more high-end real estate, a lot of town houses, a lot of medical associated come and goes because of WVU--the university teaching hospital in Morgantown--and it's just a different mood. They come and go, they're not as worried about things, they've got just more cash in hand, they can order more things. My original route if I had 50 packages a day I was--"Wow, 50 packages that's amazing!" and now if I have less than 250, I'm wondering what I forgot in the building. It's a whole different--plus with the pandemic and just now with the gas prices going up, folks are ordering more too, so yeah, it's [unintelligible].

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EH: Right, right.

LC: Yeah, my people, all good, had a couple stinkers over the years. I mean there's always, you've got your 80/20 or whatever the percentage is supposed to be. My other route was a lot of elders, a lot of older folks that appreciated time spent. This route that I'm on now, like I said, it's more of a town route, I barely see these people. I know their dogs and their cars but I barely know their faces. So it's a little different. But they know me because they all have security cameras! So I'll meet them in Walmart and I have no idea who they are! (laughs)

EH: Wow! That's wild.

LC: It's really--it's a bit unnerving when they say, "Hi, how have you been?" Just have no idea who they are until they, 'cause it's a one-way visual thing, you know?

EH: Right, right! Wow. I haven't really heard that.

LC: (laughs) Yeah.

10:29

EH: I have done some work in Scotts Run so I know Osage and Jere and that area.

LC: Yeah.

EH: I don't know if you know some of the folks, like Al Anderson [a gospel and R&B singer and shoe repair man from Osage, WV]

LC: Oh I know him well.

EH: And Mary Jane Coulter [The Executive Director of the Scotts Run Museum]

LC: He just lost his son and his grandson.

EH: I saw that.

LC: Yeah. That's a tragedy.

EH: Really awful.

LC: He's a wonderful man. I have his CD! He gave me one of his CDs.

EH: Oh yeah! (laughs)

LC: (laughs)

EH: Yeah, he's a great singer and shoe repairman. I've interviewed him before, so.

LC: Yeah, he was, and I didn't know any of this about him when I met him, I just thought he was wonderful to start with and then folks started to tell me more of his history, you know. When you first meet people, you don't know their history, they just are who they are and what not but when Osage shut

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down their post office, I was the carrier that had to kind of transition them to the little postal unit right outside on the sidewalk and boy was that a battle. They dug their heels in and did not want that to happen.

EH: I bet.

LC: Yeah, it was pretty rough.

EH: Yeah, I think Al even talked about that. He's a big defender and champion of Osage and sees those as big losses for the community.

LC: Yeah, it really was.

EH: Yeah. Yeah, tell me about some more of the customers you've developed relationships with over the years. It sounds like maybe less so on your current route, but maybe there's some special customers.

LC: Oh yeah. There's always a few. One of the customers that I'm very close with actually was a rural carrier for 30 years on the route that I delivered to at the time. And to this day we still chit-chat and she says, "Well boy am I glad I left!" Whenever I tell her about all the drama with what's going on now, but she is somebody who has some stories. She had a customer when she was young that worked with Eleanor Roosevelt when she did all of her work in Arnettville.

EH: Oh wow.

12:34

LC: And actually was hands-on helping her do her thing, and she talks about that lady telling her stories when she was a young mail carrier that now that she's older she realizes the significance of her stories and how it impacted the community and it was just 'cause she was young and just trying to get her job done, she didn't you know, she said it's funny, she always tells me "Listen to their stories, they're important!" They are.

EH: Yeah, wow!

LC: But now with this particular group it's more of if they have an issue, it's kind of a little bit of PR but a lot of it is you get to know their like I said, if I find a random dog wandering and I bring it home, it's, they kind of opens the front door and they talk and what not. Yeah, this particular group, there's a couple older veterans. I have a soft spot for my vets because I'm prior service, but being as I'm a female, they don't really, I don't mention that, but they know I'm married to a service member so they'll tell stories and what not and that makes it really fascinating to kind of hear the different stories from the Marines versus the Navy and how they kinda like to give each other a hard time and all of that. A big thing is tax time. You get to find out about issues with their taxes and that's what's going on right now. Politics not so much, but neighborhood shenanigans, yeah, that's always fun! (laughs)

EH: (laughs)

LC: But yeah, there's a couple that there's a fellow on my route right now who upcycles old bicycles and at Christmas time there's a charity organization in Morgantown that gives said bicycles to kids in need. And the interesting thing about it is I take old bicycle wheels and I make wreaths out of them! Just kind of as my little side thing. It's just kinda fun. And he knows this so he saves me bicycle wheels and we've kind of developed this little thing going on over time. But he said something interesting to me the other

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day, he said, "Do you know of any families from Afghanistan or you know, what not, that may need a bicycle, because I feel like I'm being called to donate things to these folks because we're in town and they may not have cars and whatnot." And I would love to be able to tell him that but because of I don't want to violate any confidences, you feel like you shouldn't. And that's something that you always have to be sensitive to. People mean well but sometimes you kinda have to watch what you say and they get a little offset by that because they're trying to do a good thing, but he's wonderful this fella. He's doing a really good thing with what he's doing and just the other day he asked if I knew of any Ukrainian families to let him know because he'd like to donate them a bicycle and I thought, wow, that just kicked the door open to a whole 'nother thing!

EH: Right! Yeah, is Morgantown an area where refugees are being resettled?

LC: I think, I think they have programs in place. I personally can't say of any I know of, and you hear things and being as it is a college town, I'm assuming they'll have grant money and whatnot to try to bring these folks in, to try to help them on their journeys and you know, new home country or wherever they're gonna end up. I'm hopeful. I'd like to say yes.

EH: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, what are the neighborhood shenanigans? Is it people who don't like each other or something happens in the neighborhood, or what are those stories?

LC: I'll tell you a side story about a fella on the old route that I was on. He was quite a character and he had decided that I was coming in the night and driving up a hill across from his driveway and spinning gravel into his yard. Now mind you, the way the route traveled, I did have to climb up said hill, but I had a 4-wheel drive S-10 and I knew to kick it in and I would make the turn and it was not, it was you know, not. Well, he started to bury things in the gravel so I would get flat tires. And I changed my own tires and in the snow, I'd put chains on all 4 tires and get wherever I needed to go, I rarely missed a box--it was quite a thing. And it didn't take me long to find out it was him because the people next door to him were building a 12-foot fence so he couldn't yell at them when they'd come home from work! (laughs)

EH: Wow!

LC: And the guy across the road was putting vehicles, it was like this fellow's getting barricaded in and it dawned on me, he must have an issue.

EH: Mmhm.

LC: When I would come through, the issue would be with me--I think it was just moment by moment. Well one day I took this crazy notion and I thought, a woman had gone that way, she was elderly and she'd gotten a flat tire, and I thought, okay, now it's time to say something, and I spoke to my supervisors and they were like, well just, you know, you can't prove it's him, yadda yadda. Well after about 8 flat tires, I kinda got tired of it and I kinda knew to swing wide. Well one day I decided to kinda deviate and go the other way and try to find a different way through this little area--it was like a big figure 8. And I saw him standing there with a 2X4. This I'm assuming had nails in it or what not, because that's what I found--a little piece of a 2X4. And so I pulled into his yard and was gonna say, you know, we're gonna figure this out. And that's how I found out he thought it was me kicking gravel. And I was like, it's not me, but before I got a chance to say anything, he swung my truck door open and dove into my truck. I went into panic mode! But not really, because you know, military (laughs). So...

EH: Yeah, right!

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LC: So I came out, all 5 foot 4 of me, just you know, calm but ready and backed him up--he was an elderly fella--and backed him up quite a few steps. Well he realized he had just been embarrassed because he didn't expect me to jump out. And he started yelling and I was kind of like trying to overtalk him to finally just, you know, "Okay, that's enough, I'm leaving, we're done." Well, when I went to back out, he grabbed a can of gas and dumped it all over the hood of my truck. (laughs)

EH: Wow! Oh no!

LC: I was like, okay, this guy has really got problems. And I'm laughing now--it actually wasn't funny. I was quite upset. Tried and tried and tried to call in, no phone signal. You know, I was in an area that was pretty remote. No, you know, cell phones didn't work. Finally got somewhere. Still couldn't get ahold of his supervisor. When I got back, they told me to call the postal inspectors. They went out and talked to him and said, he's just a silly little old man. They never did ever speak to me about it. So what I did in the meantime was I just said I'm changing my course of, the way I'm driving this, it's gonna add a mile but this has to, he really believes I'm doing this thing. He really believes I'm the bad guy. Let's fix this. In the meantime, you know, he suspended his delivery. But I have to tell you, the next day, before the postal inspectors went to speak to him, I was thinking about that and I had called the lady who had ran that route who is my friend--the carrier. And she told me of his long history. He had worked in the mines, had fallen, and had broken his back and they couldn't recover him for about 2 days. So he had been on massive doses of pain killers and had quite a bit of mental anguish due to his experience when he was younger and all the neighbors kinda knew it and kinda left him be. Well, I went to go the new direction and I saw him again getting ready to bury something in the dirt--I was like... So when he saw me, he panicked and he jumped over the bank. Mind you, it was probably 250 foot drop down this hill to where the creek runs low along this Cooley (sp?) Holler thing. And I was going high and that was the up that I was speaking of. So fast forward to a point, I drove around and I thought, well that stinker! How dare he still think he can bury things and give me a flat tires, you'd think after yesterday he would have you know, at least thought twice about it. He was even more adamant. But then I started thinking about what she told me and I felt so bad I got scared, what if he fell over the bank, what if he re-broke his back, what if he's laying in the creek unconscious and I got panicked so I went back to look for him to make sure that stinker was still alive! (laughs)

EH: Wow!

LC: And I thought, well okay, I guess you're over it and that was kinda the end of that. It was probably about 6 months later but he had done somethings, the neighbors talked about. He would walk on the roof of the house with a gun, pacing back and forth, kinda put me in mind of Winnie the Pooh when he's stomping with his gun! (laughs) So...

EH: Wow!

LC: Yeah, he was quite a character, so I didn't really take it personally, but I learned, don't stop and try to talk to customers when they're you know, a little not down the center. (laughs)

EH: Having an episode or something, yeah.

LC: Yeah, it was...

EH: Wow, well that sounds scary!

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LC: It was. The postal inspectors when they did call me, they kept saying to me, "Were you scared when this happened?" And I kept saying I was in a place in my head where I knew I had to defend myself, I didn't have time to be scared. And for some reason they decided that that wasn't the right answer so therefore it was a mutual issue and they just kind of let it fly. And I was thinking, if I would have been a fella who had not been in the military, this may have gone a whole different direction! I don't think he even knew it was a female because I wore a baseball hat. He may have thought I was a fella that was, so I don't know. I don't know.

EH: Wow. Also, yeah, if you hadn't had that training of dealing with those kind of situations, it might have been different.

LC: Just to kind of stay calm until it was over, then get upset!

22:18

EH: Yeah! Wow. Yeah, but you would think that would be something they would intervene in!

LC: No, [unintelligible]

EH: And after that you didn't have any issues?

LC: He was still burying things but it was kind of a moot point because then I had changed the way I traveled and made the figure 8--I kind of retraced a little bit so I would never have to go up that bank where he seemed to feel I was coming in the night. He had quite a long story to tell me when he was yelling at me in his yard. He thought I had 4 or 5 different vehicles and it kinda crossed my mind that maybe the neighbors were tired of his antics and were doing it on purpose at some point until then--I don't know.

EH: Right.

LC: I hope not, for his sake. (laughs)

EH: Yeah! Have you had any other safety concerns while delivering mail?

LC: There's been...right now I trade my mail out at the rail trail, right along the river, which is kind of nice. It's beautiful and people are coming and going all the time, but there's been a couple incidences where folks have been there and I've locked my door and waited out or gone somewhere else just because you realize that the pacing and the hovering--I don't think they mean to do anything nefarious as much as I always kind of assume it's a bit of a drug issue and they're just looking for an opportunity. So I...yeah, there's been times that I've really looked around and whatnot. One day I was driving out in that general direction and I have no idea why but the side window on my mail truck--it was up because it was cold and all of a sudden it exploded! And I thought somebody had shot my window out! So I didn't handle that real well, but it turned out it had just somehow dropped and exploded inside the door, but you know when you're driving along (laughs). Everyday there's something different. Every single day, something different. You know, bee stings and goats and you just name it!

EH: Yeah! Was it because of the cold, you think?

LC: I still don't have any idea why that happened! None. None.

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EH: That's very weird. Yeah, what about animal encounters--whether domesticated or wild?

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LC: If you leave your door open, the cats and dogs and children will get in! I learned that no matter what I drove. I had a fella on my original route, more rural route down in Core, that he had, he still has a lot of goats and I had to really watch because in that S-10, they could jump in the window and they learned really quickly where my dinner bag was, these little baby goats. They would just fly in the window and root around and of course they always left me presents when they would do that, in my seat, so it was a whole thing! But I learned to roll my windows up, shut the doors, but yeah. There were a lot of animal delays. One time a swarm of bees came over. I was up in a field at the top of a hill, out the backside of Core. And I thought it was a helicopter or plane! And I realized the hone was right above my head and I had too many doors and windows open--I was rotating packages to kind of get in my vehicle in time. Got in, shut the doors, realized everything was okay and then it dawned on me that my keys were still on the hatch in the back, so I had to wait it out because I couldn't get out. So I had to--about 45 minutes! (laughs) Yeah, no phone signal.

EH: Yeah, wow.

LC: I know I'm blathering, but yeah, if you get me thinking, there's...

EH: No, no, this is all great!

25:52

LC: There has been times you know it occurs to you, you know you open up buckets of mail or you take things out with you and you find spiders that you don't recognize or other interesting little things--bugs, millipedes and you know you didn't put them in there but you wonder what they came out of, which boxes or packages. You do have the whole world in your vehicle when you're driving around, you know, you kinda worry about that. It's kind of fun!

EH: What's the most interesting or unusual thing you've delivered?

LC: I was pretty fascinated by a coconut. I thought that was pretty neat. Somebody just mailed a random coconut and painted an address on it.

EH: Oh!

LC: During the Iraqi war, I delivered combat boots that were just taped shut with things in for spouses and whatnot. I personally haven't but...

EH: And those weren't in...Oh, go ahead.

LC: No! They weren't in anything. They were just the boot, the coconut. Messages in a bottle for weddings, where people will just get these plastic bottles and their invites are in little things. Yeah. Right now it's hard because we're delivering so many large items, you know, mattresses and big things, but the hardest thing I delivered and I probably shouldn't have done it because I'm not a huge person, it was a snowblower attachment for a yard tractor! And it was way overweight and everybody had this big discussion about it and I said, well if you can get it on the back of my truck, I will find somebody to get it off at their house. So that was probably, and sure enough there were a bunch of yard workers at the

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neighbors and they came and helped me get this snowblower attachment off and we just kind of plunked it in the driveway and left because of course the customer wasn't home, but that's another story. But yeah, I was kind of surprised that you could mail a snowblower attachment. I was kind of amazed by that.

EH: Wow.

LC: At least we don't deliver children like they used to back in the day! (laughs)

EH: Right! I was reading about that--yeah, on the train! (laughs) So before you had the LLV, you drove an S-10?

LC: Yeah. Well more than 1. I had I think 4 over the course of the time. Loved 'em. I could put 4 chains on them and go in the snow and I could just about get anywhere on that rural route. It was very rare I missed any place. Unless it was ice, then there's not much you can do but yeah. The LLVs now, being in West Virginia with the hills and the what nots, they're really 1 wheel drive and chains are okay, but not so much so it's frustrating for me to not be able to get to places that I knew if I had my S-10 I could have done it! (laughs)

EH: Right. And those were all left-hand drive I assume--the S-10s?

28:52

LC: The LLVs are, but yeah, I straddled in the S-10. I took the center console out and made a bench and just made it work!

EH: Oh cool.

LC: Yeah. Thank goodness for my husband! (laughs)

EH: (laughs) Yeah, right. And did you do your own maintenance on those trucks too?

LC: Yeah, yeah. We fixed everything ourself. My husband--that's what he does in the military--he's maintenance and he's in the reserves. He was home a lot and we had, we have a Silverado that I would use as my backup vehicle but it was so big when I would get done, I felt like I'd been a duck flat on my wings all day. That was kinda hard. One time I broke down and there was nobody to rescue me and I probably had about a third of the route left and my mother, she's in her 70s, drove a Subaru, drives a Subaru. And I phoned her and I said, "Mom is there any chance you could at least come and get me and we'll just deliver a few things and you could take me back to the postal annex 'til I call a tow truck--my husband was out of town at the time. And she said sure and she said, well, if it's allowable! So she decided she was gonna drive me! And when we got back to the postal annex, which I was still a rural carrier there, but we had kind of assimilated into the annex, they actually gave her a standing applause when she walked in the building with me, to thank her for helping me! So we got inside and she was all excited about it. It was a pretty fun day. And she had no idea what my job was like until she did that. She said, "I had no idea what you went through!" So we get back and she said, "Well show me on your mail case where I helped you deliver." And it was the last 3rd and she said, "It took us 5 hours to do this much?" (laughs) And she said "Never again. Never again am I helping you." But she still talks about that day! I think she had a blast. They let her help me for that day. It was very memorable.

EH: Oh, that's cool. Nice.

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LC: She got a kick out of it. I can't imagine the stories you hear asking these questions.

EH: Oh yeah, they're so wonderful. Yeah, tell me about an instance where you maybe helped a customer or a customer helped you.

LC: Many. One other time I broke down--my husband was deployed to Afghanistan when that all happened and I was a rural carrier then, so for about a year I was a little more dependent on the people. Like I said, it was very rural. And one fella actually brought me home to get my other truck in his car. And he drove a classic (sighs) I'll never think of what it was. It was a 1952 something. And it was one of the funnest rides I've ever had! He drove me all the way home to get my truck, my other back-up vehicle, so I could finish delivering the mail in this classic car, and I just felt like it was so worth it just to get to ride in this great big, huge red car! It was amazing--that was a lot of fun. I still see him from time to time. He's still fixing classic cars and he still gives me a hug. He's great, yeah. Just the other day, an elderly customer--it got warm, it was probably in the 70s here a few days ago. And he had been a little not feeling well and I knew that, and when I pulled up to deliver a package at his house, this is now in the more higher-end real estate place I deliver at. Well, they're very expensive homes is where I deliver too. He was laying in his driveway, and (phone rings) Sorry about that. He was laying in his driveway with his back to me and I panicked and thought (phone rings) I'm sorry.

EH: That's okay. I can pause it if you want?

LC: It's okay, it'll stop here in a second.

EH: Okay.

LC: It's a spam call.

EH: (laughs)

LC: Bad problem with having a landline.

EH: Yes.

LC: He was laying with his back to me in his driveway and my heart was just stopped because I thought stay calm, don't run, just walk, get your cell phone and see what's going on. And I got out of the truck and I shut it off and you know, chalked the wheels, and did everything that's kind of instinct and I walked up behind him and all of a sudden, he rolled over and looked at me which shocked me because I thought he was unconscious. (laughs)

EH: Yeah, wow!

LC: He said hi! I said hi! He said, "Oh do I have a package?" And I said no. And he said, "Oh, can I help you?" And I said, well I was just checking on you and he said, "Oh, okay. Thank you." And he had a caulking gun. He was laying on his side caulking the cracks in his driveway!

EH: Oh! (laughs) Well that's a relief!

LC: I didn't even know how to process it for a minute. I was so sure something bad had happened to this fellow. Well I was extremely relieved and I just said, "Well, have a good day," and you know, "Enjoy the warm weather." And we chatted for a half beat and then I got back in the truck and I left. Well the next

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day he walked outside and his face was red and he was laughing and he said, "You know, after you left it dawned on me what you thought." And he said, "I have not been able to stop laughing since then." Anyway, so [unintelligible] for quite a while, so.

EH: Yeah, right.

LC: He definitely scared me. But yeah, there's been a couple other incidences. I don't want to be a downer, but where you've knocked on doors and you've realized things aren't okay. I had an incident where a fella insisted that they'd lost their key and he wanted the mail and I don't know what made me think that wasn't a good idea so what I had done when I saw him coming was tuck everything under my armpit and he came around and he said, "Well there's nothing in there but a newspaper." And I said, yeah, okay. So he went the wrong way. He didn't go back towards his house and I was kinda thinking you know how you wonder? Well in my, tucked in my sleeve was necessary paperwork and things that this lady needed for her and her children and I was thinking, I think he had been there a couple other days too. And I was on this said route, and I go to the door and the door is smashed in and the windows are busted and she's a big of a wreck as the trailer house is.

EH: Oh no.

LC: And I asked her directly, "Are you okay? What can I do to help you?" And she said, "I don't know but he's trying to steal my mail and he's this and that." And I said, well I have it with me. That was a moment of you know, you really gotta, yeah, think about that. So you can't just take it for face value. It's hard to realize what an intimate and damaging or helpful thing you can do every day if you don't think. You can't just...so, yeah, there's a lot of stories like that but like I said, they're kind of depressing so I won't, but...

35:39

EH: No but I think that's important to see the importance of your work and to have these relationships with people, you know, if it were more mechanized or if you didn't know your community, your customers, you would lose all of that, you know, discretion or navigation of personal relationships.

LC: Yeah. And I never really realized when I signed up for it. Like I said I was nervous to do this interview because I don't, I thought I would just be pretty much getting in my truck and driving around all day and going back and that'd be the end of it and I didn't really realize just how much your heart plays into it once you've been out there a few times and you get to know the people. The boy who's my new sub, I trained him and he's been absolutely wonderful. I mean they're using him up and I hope he sticks. And I think he will because he's really enjoying his paychecks.

EH: Nice.

LC: He starts to come to me and say, you know, this person asked about you or that person told me this story and his feedback with me and then I tell him, which is you don't, do it your way, it's your route when you're working, you work for the post office, not for me. You do it however you feel best, but there's this story at this place, you know, and I deliver like I said to some really expensive million dollar houses and I also deliver to some really rough and tumble areas and the people's stories are remarkably the same--they're really, no matter what their income is. It's kind of surprising. So, anyway. Yeah. I'm sure you see that in--I know you've got a lot a things going on with you and I'm sure you see everywhere.

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EH: Yeah, I mean I get to be in people's homes a lot talking about their work and their art and all of that, so yeah, I get to see a lot of different situations and experiences. But yeah, that's one of the great parts of the job.

LC: Right. And sometimes do you feel like you see things they don't see? Like they've lived in their house and you're looking around seeing it one way and you know they are oblivious to what you're seeing?

EH: (laughs) Yeah, yeah.

LC: I mean even knocking on doors to get signatures I feel that way sometimes.

EH: Yeah, right.

LC: It's not, perspective is really different depending on the source, isn't it?

EH: Yes, definitely. Yeah, it's sometimes nice to--I'm not from West Virginia but I was doing a lot of work there and sometimes the outsider perspective was helpful, even people seeing why what they did was important, they might not see it that way, but I was there to listen to them and it helped them to maybe consider, "Oh yeah, this thing that I do or this art that I make, it does have value or it is important or have interest to somebody else."

LC: Yeah. Thank you for what you're doing. Validating mail carriers, artists--I understand that you have an interest in the music side of it. Steve was telling me that.

EH: Mmhm, mmhm, yeah. I mean it's really just a pleasure to meet all these wonderful people and do important work and make things and yeah.

LC: Well your skillset is outside the norm because you can bunch us like this and tell the stories.

EH: Yeah!

LC: That's the thing, it really is!

EH: Yeah (laughs) thank you! Yeah, it's been, I don't know--I've just learned so much doing this project. And one of the things I was curious about--are there other ways that your training--military training or other background--help your job or influence how you do your work?

39:43

LC: I would credit, well being a veteran--I was only in for 4 years, but my husband's in so you kinda see like the whole world picture and you don't pinhole things as much I don't think? You kinda remember that everything here has a ripple effect. And I try to remember that when I'm doing things even with the new subs when they come in sometimes, I'm tired, I'm frustrated, I'm exhausted, whatever, and I try to remember too that even though I may not feel comfortable in the moment, they're still learning something. Just the other day--they have a thing on our scanners where you can scan the packages and it kinda puts them in sequential order for people that don't know the routes. For some reason, I'm not real familiar with it, but it didn't work for me when I was leaving the office and I was out doing packages and I was doing them old school, which meant, alphabetical order, when you get to the house, you deliver it, try to remember, do the best you can and go quick, you know? This gal came out and she was a bit

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disgusted. She said, why didn't you just scan them and do this and do that and I explained it to her and she said, "Well what are you doing?" And then after a minute or so she looked around and I saw her light come on and I think she realized that her way of doing it, the new way, may not always be the only way. And I felt embarrassed because I didn't understand how to get the technology to work until it did, so. And she's young and she's very smart and she's very good at what she's doing. And I got to thinking afterwards, well, maybe she took something from me from the old school way when her scanner isn't gonna work, maybe she'll remember that she learned this from me and it's better than nothing. You can at least get most of it done. So I'm hoping, I'm hoping. (laughs)

EH: Yeah, how has your work changed since you first started?

LC: It's completely different. I don't feel like I work the same job that I did when I started as a sub. I mean even the level of respect that you feel and that you receive--the mood has shifted. Because we're considered--before we were interactive and we brought people their paychecks and we did this and that and now it's just, you bring us our dog food and our cat food because we don't want to have to lift it, you know.

EH: Yeah.

LC: Not for everybody. Some folks get it because they can't or because their dog needs, has special needs or whatnot, so I don't judge. But they feel a little bit more like you're in the service thing. And I actually had a conversation with the garbage man the other day, just a real quick one, and we were kinda not tisk-tisking but more hee-heeing and he said, "Ah, you give it to 'em and I take it from 'em!" And we just kinda had that kind of conversation. He said, we should just meet in the street and save the middle man! And we joked about it, you know? (laughs)

EH: Yeah! (laughs)

42:28

LC: And I thought about it for a long time after he said that. The relevance of that. It's a whole different thing. When my grandma stayed with me for a while and she would order things through the mail, and write her check and send it off and wait the 6-8 weeks to get it. When it came, it was a big deal. You put a lot of thought into it. Your medicine came, it was a big deal. It wasn't, her gifts from families were--it's not like now. It's a little different.

EH: Yeah, yeah.

LC: It's a lot different.

EH: So people take, they sort of take their delivery for granted that they can get anything delivered?

LC: Yeah, yeah. I think so. Well, my mom--she's more self-conscious [unintelligible] so she says she watches me come home tired so she feels guilty ordering things. And I said, "Don't feel guilty, it's not the same thing." But you know.

EH: Yeah! I mean I've had that experience too, just carriers talking about the huge bag of dog food and you know, I order cat food online and now I think about, "Do I really need to order this online?" (laughs)

LC: Please support our industry, please don't stop!

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EH: It's so heavy! (laughs) Yeah, right, but it's a pretty heavy package! I do a lot of things through the mail and I still send letters and cards, but it has made me think--what is the burden I'm putting on the carrier by ordering this really heavy bag of cat litter or whatever? (laughs)

LC: No, don't feel bad. Like I said, then again because there's no paper letters, if we didn't have this, this whole USPS function would barely exist. I mean, I understand now why they grabbed Amazon when they could and why they grabbed Target and Walmart and DSL and why they pulled all this stuff in. Somebody actually had the forward thinking to realize that with the internet and with email and with just all of this different type of technologies, even photo sharing, you know that used to be a big part of our job was delivering photos and people just don't need that anymore. So it was a lot of foresight and I'm grateful to still have this job. And the medical benefits and I raised my family with you know, all this things that we couldn't have done if I hadn't have done this job. So I'm grateful, and I'm still grateful. I'm in better shape than I probably would have been! (laughs)

EH: Because of all the walking and driving?

LC: Yeah, jumping in and out constantly, it's hard to not be in good physical shape to do this job. So.

EH: Do you know how many steps you get in in a day?

LC: I wore a Fitbit for about a 6 months and I'm not sure if it actually did steps as much as hand movements. You know sometimes, because it's on your wrist I felt like as I was like moving things in the truck it was counting steps when I actually wasn't stepping, but it said I walked an average of 17 miles a day and I thought that's almost impossible. But if you just count arm gestures and hand movements, you know, I don't think that was correct, but yeah. And I don't do the walking--it's the jumping out and delivering to the door, so, you know. It's definitely. It has its challenges. Especially in the wintertime! (laughs)

EH: Could you describe the landscape on your route? I know you talked about going from a more rural area to a more developed and kind of wealthier area but what about the environment and terrain and landscape?

LC: Where I deliver is between the city of Morgantown and the Mon River. Kind of in that area. It's more an older area but like I said, it's got new developments and it's got some lower income town housing. So whatnot. And it's kinda interesting because some places take care of the roads and some places just don't! I mean the gravel roads that I delivered on on my old route were pretty well taken care of, but I think they were managed in large part by the fact that there wasn't a lot of traffic on them and the folks that lived there filled the potholes themselves because they didn't want to damage their vehicles. They didn't have the extra resources to do those repairs. And when something went wrong, I reported it to the state road, just as much as everybody else did. You know, the typical West Virginia hill terrain. One of the hardest things, when my mom moved here from Minnesota, for her and I guess I was aware of it as well but hadn't really thought directly about it was where we were from, it may have snowed 6 feet, but it stayed cold and so the roads stayed clear and there were ditches for the snow to go. Here you've got 3 seasons in a day, you've got ice and then you've got rain and then you've got wet leaves and you've got all these other things, and gravel in the road and things like that and it's 1 lane and no guardrails. And so, that, that's a whole different thing. I learned my lesson about terrain and how it drops over the hill, when I was on that old route. I carried come-alongs and chains and whatnots because trees would come down. And if I had to deviate or retrace, it would be sometimes 15-20 miles out of my way because it was that rural of an area, up here behind Blacksville and, well, Scotts Run, and you go further back in. And there was a tree down

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in the road and I could see the road, well I was right there and it was over, and I thought, well I'll just hook the chain to it and I'll back up and I'll spin the tree enough to get around. Well, I hooked the chain to it, and when I started to pull the tree, the stump decided to roll and it rolled off the road and I was hooked to it and it started down the bank and I was in my truck and I started to panic. Panic mode. I thought that tree was gonna jerk me right over that cliff and down over that bank. No cell phone, I was in a remote area, and I remember thinking then, "Well, if I don't show up in the next half hour..." Right in that moment it's funny the things you think. "If I don't show up in the next half hour, Mr. Eddy is gonna call wanting to know where I am because I have his baby chicks in the back of my truck!" (laughs)

EH: (laughs) Oh wow!

LC: And I remember thinking that and then the tree stopped because it hit another tree and I hooked it and I thought, never again am I gonna do that! I learned my lesson just don't--you think, you're just in a hurry, you want to get done. And then I realized on this route and in modern delivery times with everything going on, and with the changes and all the postal stuff and the packages, every day is different and the timing is different--if I don't even show up somewhere, I probably wouldn't be noticed or missed, compared to 10 years ago when they knew when you would be there and they knew what you had, and now it's, what do they call it, the Amazonia--they don't even know what they order and if you do or don't come they (laughs), kind of thing. It is different. It's a whole different thing, maybe because I'm in town versus a rural area, but yeah, as far as terrain is concerned, it's the same types of roads and elevation, I think it's more of a maintenance thing. I actually feel like the rural areas I had less trouble. In town you have potholes and cars parked in the way and people are a lot more indifferent, I think. Somebody else's problem--they don't take care of it.

EH: Yeah. Yeah, and when you had a more elderly community of customers, they were probably home during the day and now it sounds like people are not or they don't interact if they are. Maybe they're working from home and in a Zoom meeting, or something like that.

LC: Yeah! I like it when I ring the doorbell, well I couldn't for a while because of COVID, but we're back to it, and they would talk to you through the doorbell, and I never really knew if they were in the house or somewhere else and that always made it interesting because you kinda had to wait and see. "Hi!"

EH: Yeah, that's kind of jarring. Yeah, and Scotts Run too, I don't know if the other areas [do] but Scotts Run has a very strong sense of community and "no one else is gonna fix these roads so we have to do it."

LC: Exactly. Yeah, they (sighs) they don't feel the sense of entitlement because they had to fend for themselves, that I think, I don't know, maybe, I don't want to blast people that come here from other places that come to work at WVU but sometimes because they were invited to work and they make these large paychecks doing what they do, they feel a little bit more entitled--it's not very fair, but it kinda seems that way I guess.

EH: Yeah, yeah.

LC: Jere and Osage--they saw a lot of tragedy. So they also know not to even take their days for granted. Their time is more precious to them, I think.

EH: Definitely.

LC: Yeah.

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EH: Yeah. Are you a member of the NRLCA?

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LC: Yes, I sure am. Yep.

EH: And are you active? Do you go to union meetings and that sort of thing?

LC: I haven't the last 2 that they've had for whatever reasons I just couldn't but because of COVID they kinda changed it up anyway, but I voted in the last, to vote on our new contract I did. I voted yes to the changes and I'm just gonna say, I voted, I know like arbitration, I understand--I won't get into all that, but in our new contract the subs will be able to accumulate time towards vacation and sick days. Not in a full day like we get but at least in hour-long increments. And to me that's important because it makes them feel, it made feel appreciated when I made regular that now I could you know, tend to myself, and take care of my well-being through my insurance. I know we're veterans but still. I still got the insurance.

EH: Yeah, definitely.

LC: And you know these kids are out there you know, they're banging up their vehicles and they've got no medical and they're all young so they've all got younger families and I just thought that that was such an important thing for them to have that. So I voted yes.

EH: Yeah.

53:05

LC: To the chagrin of a lot of people but I was thinking of them because that's the future of the postal system. I [unintelligible] may not be here a whole lot longer so, yeah.

EH: Yeah, I mean a lot of people seem to start as subs too.

LC: Yeah, I did.

EH: So it would be helpful to them.

LC: Well I got lucky! Back then, it was 8-10 years before you would make regular when you worked as a sub for the postal system. And I made regular in only 3 years because I transferred to the Madsville office because they needed subs and they had basically 3 routes and nobody so I went there and one of the carriers retired and then the other one retired! So I got in really fast! And then ended up back in Morgantown when they assimilated the offices. But yeah, I just got really lucky. It'd be nice if they could buy their sub time back. We could use that towards our retirement--that would be really wonderful, especially for us old timers, so.

EH: Yeah, right! What about your coworkers. Tell me about how you developed relationships with the people you work with?

LC: When I was at Madsville, because it was just 2 regular routes and one aux route, we were just in a tiny little building and it was just super tight and we really just, it was your day family. And I'm still close with everybody, even the other sub that ended up coming there--we're both in Morgantown now and we still joke around about--I was his day wife and he was my day husband and we'd joke around--it's a lot of

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fun. But you just, information isn't passed professionally in the postal system the way I would like to see it passed. Is that a gentle way to say that? (laughs) Without offending anyone?

EH: (laughs) What do you mean by that?

55:05

LC: Well you kinda have to depend on your coworkers and the barking chain or whatever you want to call it, to find out what's going on and what's the in and outs, the new rules that are coming, the things that came and went and you missed or even start times. There's really no, you know, we have cell phones and they can text us but legally they can't require us to have a cell phone. So if you don't kinda hear about it through word of mouth or see a note and you've been on vacation or whatnot, so you learn pretty quick who the dependable ones are that you can call and say, "There's an accident on the interstate." You know, you put it out and you text 2 or 3 people who pass it on so they know to deviate so you can get to work! There's an accident when you're on your route, it's that type of stuff. And the gal that works beside me right now I absolutely adore her. She's wonderful, she's a young lady, she's got her little ones and I kinda feel like I'm grandma-ed in because I get to you know, participate in all their stuff, it's pretty neat. And the fella I worked beside before her made my days terrible. I really had a tough time with that. He was just not appropriate and it's just as colorful as the rainbow--you've got everybody. You pretty much roll the dice and you hope you get next door to somebody who's nice, you know, and isn't gonna whistle or talk your ears off while you're trying to work. But yeah, everybody that we have in Morgantown right now is, their characters kind of wax and wane in impact based on kinda what they're going through, you know, if they've got an issue, you seem to see more of them or hear more about them and then that fades off and then a new thing comes up so this person's kind of in the spotlight, or they're the information spreader and you kinda know what's going on it changes just like everything else. Yeah. We see a lot of people walk out and quit and leave and then we see people come back that have been gone and it's like "Wow, how dare they come back!" You know (laughs) it's just for the fun of it, the human side of it. Yeah, we're not machines and that's the thing, if they automated it, it really, like you said, you need the human side of it and the office part is part of that, so.

EH: Yeah, what are the stories or jokes that rural mail carriers tell to each other when you get together? What do you talk about about your jobs?

57:35

LC: (laughs) Oh my gosh. Is this censored? No, I'm just kidding! (laughs)

EH: (laughs) Feel free to talk freely, but it will be online, so just remember that. (laughs)

LC: Where we are right now, we're really crowded, cause there's just so much stuff and we're sharing the building with the city-side and our building just needs to be larger, even though it's huge. And some people have bigger elbows than other and what not and kind of the running joke for some reason right now is people will bump each other with the hampers, the big hampers where you tilt packages back and forth with, and I think I've heard this phrase 50 times in the last 2 weeks, "Hit me hard enough to send me home!" (laughs)

EH: (laughs)

LC: What? No! (laughs) But it's just kind of like the running joke because it just seems like everybody's running over everybody's ankles, you know, it's just terrible right now! We're just all in such a rush to get

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things done and summer's here, everybody wants to go home. Daylight, you want to be home before dark, that kind of stuff.

EH: Yeah, yeah.

LC: And of course there's always cracking on a city carrier, or you call management "mangement" that was kind of a running (laughs). Shake your head and...UPS jokes, DSL jokes--they're pretty good. FedEx, you know. It's kinda fun.

EH: So you sorta make fun of...

LC: They walk in with attitude...pardon?

EH: You make fun of the private delivery services or they come in with attitude? (laughs)

LC: Kind of, yes, because you know we have to feel like we're all that because we're the postal system, because you know, nobody has it as bad as we do and nobody gets it and we're in the trenches and they're always joking around about how city carriers are all proper and clean and neat and organized and squared away and then the rural carriers coming in dragging a leg with a cigarette hanging off their lip or whatever like Zombies! It's pretty funny.

EH: That's funny (laughs)

LC: Yeah, it actually is. People do crack pretty good jokes, so.

EH: What do you think the importance of your work is to the community you serve?

59:51

LC: During the pandemic, and it wasn't this way before that but it was this way for me, I deliver to a huge student division where all the kids lived in their little apartments and whatnot, up on top of this hill. And you know, they'd just kind of, they're kids and they're new and they don't know what to do, so they get their little attitudes, but I was delivering packages from their homes that they couldn't get to and cards and it seemed like there were a lot more letters. All of a sudden there was a lot of handwritten letters coming and going and it kinda made my heart feel big because I thought that's touching home, even though you can call on the phone it was good to see where they could hold something. And the gift packages and whatnot. And then I started getting rolls of toilet paper given to me, and bottles of hand soap and cookie bars and little snacks from the students, thanking me! And I thought, it must matter a lot more than I realize because you're just standing there looking at a hole and you're putting stuff in it, and it's not, you're not facing a human being a lot when you're delivering the mail, and it's easy to get yourself kinda meh--this is just whatever, you know. But that made me feel like it really mattered when I was up there every day facing it, when in the beginning, I was scared. You know, I didn't want to get sick. And I could hear no cars, and there was nobody on the interstate and there was nobody anywhere and no planes were flying and there was nothing and I could hear people coughing in the apartments and you just kinda feel like wow, you know. It is so lonely. And then all of a sudden there's a roll of toilet paper with a thank you note and you're like "Look I got toilet paper!" (laughs)

EH: (laughs)

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LC: It was just so cool! Yeah. So if it mattered enough to them to do that, then it must matter, which got me up the next morning. When that happened, my husband was in Kuwait for a year. I was here really alone and getting up and going to work and whatnot so I didn't really have anybody here except for me and my cats and my dog. You know, and the kids would phone and whatnot. But to go out and do that and not see anybody and then to have that, even for me, I think it mattered a lot. For me personally, I was grateful for those little things. I think I'm a lot more patient with those kids up there now too because I know they actually do have a heart! (laughs)

EH: Yeah! They are noticing. Well that was a silver lining of the pandemic is it did bring awareness to things like service workers that a lot of people take for granted.

LC: Absolutely.

EH: And yeah, frontline workers. But there was that moment where people were concerned that it might be transmitted through the mail and I was kind of like wiping down packages (laughs). Was that something you thought about or took precautions for?

LC: I still put a mask on for my elders. I still do, even though the mask mandate just got lifted in our postal building Tuesday. So I keep them with me and I have a nursing home and a high school and all that, and I still wear it. Just to make them know that I still care about them, especially if I see them wearing one. But I would actually when I would go, we weren't supposed to ring doorbells, so I would just kind of whap-whap, and I had customers that would say, please just leave it at the end of the driveway. Just leave it right there and I'll come out and get it later. And I had absolutely no problem with that, none, never took offense to it. My mom was the same way--I'd get her groceries, I left them at the end of her driveway! I didn't even see my mom for a while because we didn't know. I mean that's just for you to interact with people as much as you do, I can imagine your whole profession changed.

EH: Yeah. I mean a lot of it went to virtual, which was sad but it's sort of next-best thing. It's better than not interviewing people, not interacting, but yeah. Well, what do you think the future is for the craft of rural mail carriers?

1:04:18

LC: I think we will still be the USPS but the emphasis on "postal" is going to be more of a trademark and less of a literal meaning. I can see them deciding to only do letter mail intermittently, but package delivery consistently to compete with the other parcel delivery services. I don't think that the separation, the segregation between rural and city is going to be like it is now. I'm, I just don't feel that there's going to be that division. I think that with the RRECS system being implemented and the city carriers going hourly to the extent that they have, I sort of feel that there's going to be a better, a bigger merge. And just in America, on its own, I mean our population is growing, densities in areas that used to be more rural is heavier. Like I'm on a rural route now and I even wonder sometimes how is this considered a rural route? Except for I do have some gravel roads, I mean I understand it, but yeah. It's going, it has to change. Everything is different. What's gonna be the next technology? We don't know, you know? 3-D printers. Right now it just seems like a blip, but so did Xerox when they started. It was just somebody's bright idea and look what they've done. So now we've got email and we've got, you know, it's gonna launch. Things are gonna launch differently, people are gonna have units in their homes, I think. Not in my lifetime maybe, but it's definitely gonna change. It won't be a box out there along the street. It's gonna be something right in your kitchen. Best guess!

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EH: Yeah, that's interesting. I haven't heard people talk about the merging of rural and city much, but yeah that is--there are carriers that talk about having a mostly suburban route and maybe those will get absorbed into the city. But it also seems like I've heard people say that city carriers get compensated better.

LC: They do. They do.

EH: So maybe the Postal Service wouldn't want to--you know, maybe they like the rural system because they don't have to pay you as much. (laughs)

LC: Yep, that's a very legitimate point and there's truth to that. There really is truth to that. Because we're in a personnel deficit right now on our rural side and I think on our city side as well. We have city CCAs coming over and doing rural work. And they just phew! Whole different way of thinking, whole different way of doing things, whole different set of expectations! So it's gonna be a couple of minutes before that happens. But under the USPS umbrella, somebody who delivers my mail and somebody who delivers my uncle's mail in downtown Minneapolis, when I talk to him, he tells me stories and I'm like it's a whole different craft, but he says you're all under USPS, what's the difference? So if the customers don't see the segregation, the difference, then it's just a matter of time before the mindsets gonna change kind of as a whole, you know. And maybe the city will lose some benefits and the rural will gain some, but yeah, I think there's gonna be a...the simple fact that they won't let new subdivisions or new places like that put in individual mailboxes--they're making them put up the CBU units, you know? That tells you right there it's different.

EH: Right.

LC: In my opinion.

1:08:09

EH: Yeah! Totally. Well, is there anything else we haven't talked about that you would like to share?

LC: Did you mean to ask me anything and I interrupted too much?

EH: No, I don't think so! No, it was a great conversation. I think those are all my questions. Yeah.

LC: Well can I ask you, are you looking forward to your book being released? Is it out yet or do you got any word on that?

EH: (laughs) It will be out in November and yeah! I'm excited about it, it feels a little vulnerable, but yeah, the pre-order link I think will be up soon so then it will feel more real. But yeah!

LC: Good luck with all of it! I mean I know luck doesn't have a lot to do with it...

EH: Thank you so much!

LC: But yeah.

EH: Thank you. Oh one thing I didn't ask--what's your favorite part of the job? As a good way to end it, I think.

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LC: My favorite part?

EH: Yeah, your favorite part. What do you like the most?

LC: I guess the feeling that when I get done at the end of the day, I've done something that does matter. I didn't like it as much when I worked at Sam's Club because I never felt a sense of accomplishment. I didn't like it as much when I worked--in the Army I had this same feeling. At the end of the day when we went to bed at night, we felt like we'd done something that mattered in the big scheme of things. That ripple effect. And I still feel that way when I come home at night and my husband is super supportive with all of it and you know, it's just, he wants to help me because he knows it's important, it's not just a you know, I don't know. And I actually told Steve [Honaker, LeAnn's coworker] you know when he asked me if I would be interested and at first, I thought no and I thought no, first of all I get to ask you questions, which is pretty neat!

EH: Right!

LC: And secondly, maybe me myself, I won't have anything to say that's important, but if it helps your momentum so somebody that does have something relevant to say, you know, it'll I hope--thank you for what you're doing, I guess is what I'm trying to say.

EH: Oh yeah, well thank you! I mean you shared a lot of really interesting points that haven't come up in other interviews so yeah, I really appreciate it. And everyone's perspective is helpful and interesting and I think, should be recorded! So thank you so much.

LC: Oh, thank you.

EC: For your time and for doing this. So I'll stop the recording now and then we can chat a little bit while the audio downloads. So yeah, thanks again. Stop this here.

1:10:56

END OF TAPE
END OF INTERVIEW