

## LIFESTYLES

Carriers  
fight myth  
'they'll go  
postal'By Bob Kostanczuk  
THE GARY POST TRIBUNE

GARY, Ind. — Sinbad, the comic, doesn't do the nation's postal workers any favors with his portrayal of mailman Myron Larabee in the hit holiday movie "Jingle All the Way."

A ranting, edgy father in search of a hot toy, Larabee runs around in his work duds and "goes postal" — a new part of American slang, meaning berserk.

Heavily publicized stories in recent years of gun-wielding postal workers who have cracked under pressure have fostered a term that is unsavory to many in the U.S. Postal Service.

After processing an estimated 275 million pieces of mail the Monday before Christmas (the busiest day last year), the Postal Service likes to emphasize it is up to the Christmas-rush challenge and won't crack or "go postal," so to speak.

That label, says the government giant, won't stick.

"It doesn't apply to me," assured Gary letter carrier Linda Tipton, who fervently defends her 16-year government profession. "People look up to the postal carriers. I am highly respected."

Lake Station letter carrier John Halkitis is also stung by the fact that "Postal" has taken on a new, twisted meaning: "I think we're being misrepresented. In general, the public doesn't understand."

Don Duncan, a Gary-based electronics technician for the Postal Service, bemoans the reality that the few "doing some really bad stuff" are "making us all look like maniacs."

In the same vein, film and television haven't exactly been putting the postal worker in the most favorable light either.

In a commercial for this year's "Dear God" — a film comedy centering on quirky postal employees — Tim Conway's character humorously hints that he may be on the verge of flipping out with a weapon. Also, promotional material from Paramount Pictures describes how the movie's lead character joins a band of "clock-watching, misfit co-workers" in a Dead Letter Office.

On TV, the Newman character on "Seinfeld" is a devious, somewhat creepy, mail carrier who once pirated a postal vehicle for personal use.

Then there's Cliff Clavin, the living-with-his-mother mailman from "Cheers," who practically resided at the bar that was the focal point of the show.

"As much as I loved 'Cheers,'" said Halkitis, "I always hated to see Cliff in a bar in uniform. I often wondered why the Postal Service didn't object to having him portrayed that way."

The portrayal may have helped feed what Halkitis believes to be a popular perception of postal employees held by cynics: "They see us as being well-paid, under-worked."

Thomas K. Capozzoli, a Purdue University professor who has trained Midwest postal employees in conflict management, said the mail-delivery people of this country fully realize they have a public relations problem on their hands.

Well-known stories in the Chicago area in recent years of postal personnel ditching mail haven't helped.

"They're concerned about the image," noted Capozzoli. "I think in a lot of instances that image is not well deserved."

Still, Capozzoli said that negative image even rattled him when he began training postal workers.

"It scared me a little bit because of the reputation," said

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## A touch of class



PHOTOS/SUE ANN JOHNSON

Alumni gather for a class photo 60 years after graduation. The group has remained close over the years, meeting monthly to keep in touch.

## Second Ward alumni mark 60

By Jeri Young  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

At the end of the year, Second Ward High School's Class of 1936 gathered to celebrate their 60th anniversary.

As the sounds of Lionel Hampton, Billie Holiday and Cab Calloway filled the ballroom of McDonald's Cafeteria, alumni shared their aches, pains and joys.

Gretchen Chisolm, 76, lost her daughter a few years back, but her granddaughter recently graduated from UNC Charlotte.

Gerson Stroud was a little under the weather, but came anyway.

They made fun of those who were a little slow and gained a little weight.

"Anyone that can step up needs to get on stage," the Rev. Ray Booton said. "If you can't, we'll get some of our great grands to drag you up."

A few came on canes and in wheelchairs accompanied by spouses and great grandchildren, but most were surprisingly spry.

"This is an amazing group," Booton, a member of the class of '36, said. "We take Advil, Motrin, Arudis and those other blue pills — all those pain killers. But we still look good."

When members of the class of 1936 and 1937 were students at

Second Ward High School, Charlotte was a different city.

J.T. Williams' Afro American Mutual Insurance Company on Trade Street was the insurance company of choice for Charlotte's "other city," the name given to the black community which then included Biddleville, Brooklyn and Second Ward. Rates were 75 cents a month for adults and 25 cents for children.

Davidson Street was unpaved and the Mecklenburg Investment Company Building on South Brevard Street was home to many of Charlotte's premier black businesses.

Trolleys still crisscrossed city streets, but students ignored them as they trekked across the city, often several miles, to classes at Second Ward.

"We all walked to school," Louise James said with a laugh. "We still had street cars. But most of the time, we didn't have the fare."

Schools were different back then, too.

Opened in 1923, Second Ward was the first African American high school built in Charlotte. Begun with an appropriation of \$150,000 in 1921, the school was to standardize education for black students and help train black

teachers.

According to Chris Polzer, author of "A Brief History of Second Ward High School," the school opened unfurnished and "inadequately stocked with second hand textbooks and equipment, using teaching aids often built and paid for by teachers themselves."

Located at the corner of 1st and Alexander streets, it was a beacon of learning for black children. For almost 50 years, it served the African American community.

"I remember some of my teachers," Chisolm said. "There

was Mrs. Dixon and Mrs. Spain and Jamie Waters Hemphill. I went to the Old Graded School. Amay James was one of my teachers there."

And there was math teacher Alene McCorkle, who often provided meals and shoes for severely disadvantaged children.

"We had good teachers," James agreed. "They saw that you got your lessons."

"They taught you respect," said Eva Huston, 80. "It influenced my life. You were taught to respect everyone that taught

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Graduates share paraphenalia gathered over the past 60 years.

Carolinians  
cook up  
collard  
cuisine

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AYDEN, N.C. — Collard pizzas, collard tacos and collard pies. Sound like a culinary nightmare?

Don't tell that to Laura Webb. An organizer of the annual Ayden Collard Festival, she can cook up just about anything with her favorite vegetable.

In fact, her culinary specialty is a five-layer collard cake — alternating layers of corn bread and greens, garnished with hunks of steamed okra.

"I make that cake every now and again, just for the fun of it," Webb said.

You might say Webb is a collard queen. But that title really belongs to Mandy Carroll, 15.

Mandy is the most recent winner of the beauty pageant held in conjunction with the town's annual collard festival in September. She won a \$350 college scholarship and the right hold the collard queen title for a year.

"The New Year's Day meal means more to me this year because I'm the collard queen," she said Wednesday after sitting down to a meal of collards, ham and black-eyed peas.

Mandy's meal was typical of a New Year's Day tradition in the South, but her collards were prepared with a Yankee twist.

"Most Southerners would probably be shocked if they knew how I make them," said Mandy's mother, Penny, a native New Yorker. "I put garlic in them."

While collards with garlic and collard cakes might suit some people's taste buds, most folks in Ayden, the unofficial collard capital of the world, prefer to keep their greens simple.

Guy Braxton, 65, picks the greens from his garden, boils some ham, then adds the collards and potatoes.

"My mama and daddy grewed them when I was growing up," Braxton said. "I've been eating them ever since."

Braxton did have to endure a 27-year stint in the Navy, where he never got a bite of collards.

"I sure did miss them when I was away," he said.

Town leaders started the Ayden Collard Festival back in 1975 after neighboring Grifton introduced its shad festival. Despite the vegetable's home grown roots, the idea for the festival came from another Yankee — who had just moved to Ayden and tasted collards for the first time.

"It was a lady from Ohio, of all places, who thought of it," said former Mayor Marvin Baldree.

## Around Charlotte

•Community Health Services will begin its annual health campaign Monday. The week-long event includes lectures, tuberculosis screening and immunizations. For more information, call 375-0172.

•The Central State University Alumni Association will meet Sunday at 2 p.m. at Renaissance Place, 201 North Tryon St. For more information, contact Helen Moore at 547-0627.

•The Lockwood Neighborhood Association will meet Monday at 7:30 p.m. at the Fighting Back Cluster II Resource Center, 1500 North Tryon St. The guest speaker will be Minnie Mitchell. For more information, call 375-4993.

•The Metrolina Chapter of Professional Secretaries International will meet Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. at Ramada Inn Central, Clanton Road and I-77. Jean Griswold, executive director of Mobile Health Outreach, will be the keynote speaker. Dinner will be served at 5:30 p.m. For more information or to make dinner reservations, call Karen Aiken at 532-5225 or Stephanie Lanier, 527-3000.

•Celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday with former television and movie personality Bob Tyson. Tyson will read from King's most famous works, including "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. at Barnes & Noble, 10701 Centrum Parkway, Pineville. For more information, call 541-1425.

## Golden anniversary celebrated



The Charlotte and Crown Jewels Chapters of the Links gather to celebrate the groups 50th anniversary. The organization was founded in 1946 to promote the educational and civic activities of members. The group will hold its annual convention in July 1998.