

Details Fell Into Place To Bring Postmaster Here

BY SUSAN USHER

Shallotte may be Frank Bringoli's kind of town. Or maybe he's just one lucky New Yorker. Otherwise, it would be difficult to explain how well the pieces fell into place to bring him here.

"At first I was nervous about coming in from outside, having an accent and my New York background and all," Bringoli admitted in a recent interview. That was before he discovered that a large percentage of local postal patrons also once were "outsiders," many of them from New York.

They've been the first to voice complaints, said Bringoli, but that didn't surprise this Staten Island native. In fact, it probably came closer to setting him at ease. A grin flashed from his eyes as he added, "In New York you say what you think and you're not afraid of anybody."

A high school graduate, Bringoli, 41, is quick to explain that everything he's learned, he's learned by doing it—through experience.

That willingness to listen, watch and learn has served him well, as Bringoli has advanced steadily within the hierarchy of the U.S. Postal Service.

He started out in 1967 in New York City as a "flex" carrier, handling special deliveries in the Empire State Building—all 102 floors. "It took all day for two of us to do it," he said. "We worked together."

From there he transferred to Greenwich Village as a regular letter carrier.

The next stop, in 1978, took him to Beach Haven, N.J., as a clerk.

There he began training to be a supervisor. "I actually made it six years ago, at that office," he said. Since then he's worked "four or five" sites as officer-in-charge between appointments of regular postmasters, the last time in an office with 100 to 120 employees.

He and his wife, Maureen, had been vacationing for approximately 12 years in the Myrtle Beach, S.C., area. "We got to liking the area a lot and so I began putting in for jobs."

He didn't expect to hit the jackpot so soon—or in such a serendipitous way.

One of four or five finalists for the post, he was to fly to Fayetteville for an interview with the sectional center manager.

"The original flight for the inter-

view was canceled and I was going to be 3 1/2 hours late," recalled Bringoli, who thought at the time the opportunity was lost. "I called Fayetteville. They said they would work it out, to come on."

The manager was waiting when Bringoli stepped off the airplane in Fayetteville. "He interviewed me in the airport lounge. I got off the plane at 2:15 p.m. and I was on the same plane when it left for Charlotte at 3 p.m. I had to change my ticket from the six o'clock flight."

Soon afterward he got the recommendation and was hired.

Since Bringoli's arrival, other details have fallen into place also.

Though the housing market is sluggish in the East, his home in Barnegat, N.J., had a buyer within a month of his arrival here in mid-January.

He's house-hunting in the Shallotte area and looking forward to summer. That's when Maureen and the rest of the family will arrive after the youngest, Brian, graduates from high school. Frank, the oldest, hopes to transfer to N.C. State University to major in aeronautical engineering.

Bringoli's pleased with the transition at the post office as well. So far he's impressed with the quality of staff he's working with.

"I want people to know the employees here really care. They do their best to follow up on all complaints," said Bringoli. "They are doing a hell of a job."

While bringing a fresh viewpoint to local post office operations, Bringoli said he's also learning as he goes.

The biggest complaint he's heard from customers so far is that the mail is late. He's working on that problem and a few others as well.

While staff is keeping up to date now processing the mail that comes in, Bringoli said he hopes postal patrons will be patient.

There are some problems he may not be able to fix, at least not right away. These include mail that arrives late—or not at all—from other post offices.

"I see stuff that's late, but if it's not here I can't do anything about it," he explained. "There are only certain things I'm capable of and you can't make changes overnight. It just doesn't happen that fast."

He expects several recent changes

to help in getting the mail up earlier and in shortening waiting lines. Like many of his postal patrons, Bringoli said he "hates lines."

He's using extra clerks as much as possible and rescheduling others.

But, even with three clerks working the counter the first Monday after new postal rates went into effect, there were still waiting lines that went out the door.

Earlier this month he changed the scheduling of clerks, so that more counter assistance will be available in the afternoons. "I'm learning," he said. "It may take a while to get it right, but we're working on it."

Bringoli also expects some relief for the overcrowded office in about nine months, when the new South Brunswick Islands station is due to open in the Seaside area, taking over the routes in the Ocean Isle, Sunset Beach and Calabash areas.

"It should help people out here," he predicted. "It should not be as hectic in the mornings."

Meanwhile, Bringoli's trying to learn more about the community and the service routes. Instead of the fast-pitch ball he used to play in New Jersey, he's squeezing in a round or two of golf.

"It's tough playing golf with the ones who have complaints about their postal service," he said, "but it goes with the territory."



SHALLOTTE POSTMASTER Frank Bringoli (left) checks in with Larry Johnson (center), clerk, and Ronald Reeves, superintendent of postal operations.

IN SUPERIOR COURT

Teen Charged In Truck Theft Faces Jail Term

A Leland teenager who pleaded guilty to two counts of possession of stolen goods in Brunswick County Superior Court last week faces a possible maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

Robert Scott Milligan, 19, will be sentenced March 18. He entered guilty pleas to the two charges in an agreement with District Attorney Rex Gore's office.

Milligan had been charged with two counts of felonious larceny and two counts of possession of stolen goods along with two other men, Oscar Anthony Rodriguez and Christopher Shane Barr, both of Leland. The larceny charges were dismissed against Milligan.

Rodriguez pleaded guilty to misdemeanor breaking and entering and misdemeanor larceny during a Feb. 4 session of Superior Court.

He was ordered to spend seven days in jail and given a two-year suspended sentence.

Together, the three men were accused of breaking into KBK Enterprises in Leland where they allegedly took a typewriter and small refrigerator valued around \$500.

They were also accused of a break-in at Jones Ford in Shallotte, said Gore. The men allegedly jumped a fence and broke into a building where they took the keys to a 1983 Ford Bronco.

The Bronco was then driven through a fence on the lot, Gore said. The following day, Milligan was stopped by Brunswick County sheriff's deputies while he was driving the truck. It was valued at \$7,500.

Judge William C. Gore Jr. issued a prayer for judgment continued in

the case until the March 18 session of Superior Court.

In other court business last week, Judge Gore heard the following cases:

■David Paul Shupp, 18, of Stafford, Va., was given a one-year sentence, suspended for two years, after pleading no contest to possession of drug paraphernalia. Shupp was arrested at a cottage in Ocean Isle Beach where a party had taken place, said Rex Gore. As officers approached, a number of people fled the scene. Shupp was charged for possession of lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) after officers found four hits of the drug inside the house.

■Michael David Cates, 40, of Route 1, Supply, was given a two-year active prison sentence after pleading guilty to felonious larceny.

Cates was accused of taking \$420 in lumber from a construction site at The Beach of Bricklanding, where he was stopped by the developer, William F. Taylor. Gore said Taylor held Cates at gunpoint until Brunswick County Sheriff's Detective Kevin Holden arrived to make the arrest. Cates was ordered to pay \$450 in attorney fees.

■Robert Deon Smith, 26, of Kankapolis, was given a five-year active prison sentence after pleading guilty to possession with intent to sell and deliver marijuana. Judge Gore ordered that Smith not receive work release, citing his prior convictions as a factor in the case. He will be given credit for time served. Smith was arrested Feb. 16, 1990, after he allegedly sold SBI Agent Kelly Moser a bag of marijuana for \$80.

We're Making A Grand Entrance In Brunswick County.

If you've been curious about all the activity going on just west of Southport on NC. 211, here's some exciting news. The gently rolling berms and picturesque ponds are part of the grand entrance of what will be Brunswick County's premier golfing community, St. James Plantation.

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