

## Making the holiday rounds with Peter Brager by Lois Levihn

The holidays will soon be here which means the USPS workers will be working extra-long hours to deliver mail and packages on time. MPO Member Peter Brager is proud to work for the USPS in Indianapolis, Ind. I caught up with him just before the busiest mailing season of the year begins.

LL: Peter, tell us a bit of your Macedonian heritage.

PB: I'm half Macedonian on my mother's side: The Alexoffs (baba-side) and Evanoffs (dedo-side) emigrated from Macedonia and headed for the same region of America (Youngstown) around the same time. Pete and Vera Evanoff were married for 59 years and left this world almost exactly a year apart. They had four daughters and ten grandchildren. My parents are Larry and Patrice Brager. My grandparents didn't live to meet their great-grandson, my son five-year-old Kallen.

LL: How did you get started working for the USPS?

PB: Honestly, I didn't even think I would leave my job at the Indiana Pacers Arena. I walked into the Post Office to ship a package and saw a sign they were hiring with great benefits so I decided to apply online and got the job two weeks later. Best decision I made: great benefits, great insurance for myself and my son and great retirement plan. Everything happens for a reason.

LL: What was your first week on the job like?

PB: My first week of the job was very hectic. I only got trained for three days by soon-to-be-retired mail carrier Otis. Then they put me on a route I didn't know for the rest of the week. I had to teach myself the route but nothing I couldn't handle.

LL: Do you have a walking route or do you drive your route?

PB: I had a walking route for three years in the lovely ghetto of Indianapolis: different experiences you see daily, people you meet and volume of packages weren't that high but some very nice people on that route. A few months ago, I took a T6 route which means I do three driving routes, one business route and one walking route a week. It is basically a sub but your salary is more and it is a different challenge daily.

LL: What's the funniest thing that has happened to you while on your route?

PB: There have been so many weird and funny moments in my career so far, but I have to say the funniest moment was when these little kids were making a funny Vine Video to the "Old Town Road" song and wanted to get the mailman in it! So, I decided to break down some dance moves while delivering the mail and just to see them laugh and smile was priceless!

LL: Any dog bites?

PB: About a month and a half ago, I got attacked by a very vicious pit bull. It was the first time in my career. I was leaving the front porch, walking down the steps and the pit bull ran through the screen door and attacked me. The

pepper spray didn't work but I was lucky to defend it off me and walk away with a few small ankle bites and holes in my pants and shoe.

LL: How is mail delivery for Mid-November – December different from the rest of the year?

PB: Mid-November-December is the craziest time of the year. I barely get to see my son, girlfriend and her son because I usually work 9 to 9 most days of the week because of the volume of packages. It seems like in today's society, most people would rather order online instead of going to the local mall so we are swamped with packages. Luckily, we have some holiday help to just deliver packages but it is still super, super busy.

LL: Do people stick treats in their mail box for you?

PB: When I had my old walking route, people would always leave treats for me in the mailbox during the holiday season. Anything from lottery tickets, gift cards, gas cards, candy and even hot chocolate! Some customers are so appreciative of what we do in the winter, walking in many inches of snow and freezing weather just to get them their mail and packages.

LL: What mailing/shipping advice would you give our readers?



*Peter Brager*

PB: My biggest advice around the holiday season is don't wait until the last minute! I can't tell you how many times I get questioned on where is my Christmas card, where is my package, etc? Some people don't realize there are millions of packages and cards that go out every season and it could get backed up at the plant that will put your package or card a few days behind. The best thing to do is ship it a week or two early so you aren't flustered and wondering where is your package or card.

LL: Thank you Peter for sharing your insights on the life of a postal carrier. Now if you will excuse me, I think I'll get out my address book and get to work on my Christmas cards!