

Larry Gervais One of a Kind

By Willie Mellen NBA Clerk Division APWU

“Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking” is how Larry opened up the majority of his speeches, presentations, and classes over the years. Larry was one of a kind, and this Union, the USPS, and this **world** are better places because of his intelligence, his caring nature, and his fortitude. Others have already written about the history of our Union, and Larry’s place in it, so this will be some personal musings about my friend and mentor.

Larry set the standard of excellence for what we now call National Business Agents (NBAs). I cannot begin to tell you how quick witted and all knowing he was. Of course, some of the reasons for that is he was there at the foundation of our contract so he helped write portions of it, as well as being a brilliant advocate for us in arbitrations that solidified the application of the contract. I am I am humbled that I get to continue the work Larry laid the foundation for us as an NBA. I am so proud that I get to sit and work at the very desk Larry and Hugo Monkkonen “procured” from the Postal Service in the early 70s. Larry was always teaching, always pushing us to be better, and so if you read articles about Larry they all include how he mentored us.

Larry told me when I was elected to NBA to “always wear my braces and a suit”, to this day when I attend an arbitration hearing representing the APWU, I wear a suit and suspenders (Braces) as that is what Larry told me to do. Larry taught me how to “salute” people properly with his famous way of giving “one for you and one for your horse”. When Larry announced he was retiring one of my fellow Union stewards asked him what we will do without him. He told us everyone is replaceable; then he paused for a moment and said well it might take 4 or 5 to replace me, but I am replaceable. When Larry retired we were asked to say a few words about him; I said that Larry set the bar for the rest of us, and he set it so darn high that none of us will ever surpass it as we can only hope to equal it. Yes, he was that good, and that smart!

Even after Larry retired he would frequently come into our office, generally on Saturdays. I would come in on Saturday too using some excuse to do work so I could pick Larry’s brain on our contract and his views on life. Outside of my wife April and my parents no one had a greater impact on my life. He truly taught me to be a better person, not just in my Union position, but as a husband, a friend and just being a kinder human being.

I know I rambled a bit but I will end it with this; I still have that 12 year-old bottle of Scotch in my home waiting for you Larry in case you want to drop by with Barb.