



UK's longest serving postman calls time on career Free 271224

Description



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Britain's longest-serving Royal Mail postman has recalled hand-delivering turkeys, kippers and last-minute gifts for Christmas as his record 60 years comes to an end.

Robert Hudson, from Leyton, east London, started his career in December 1964 – aged 16 – as a messenger in the Whitechapel Delivery Office distributing telegrams.

The 76-year-old, known as Rocky, will carry out his final shift overnight on 28 December at the Docklands Delivery Office – where he has spent the last four decades working.

Looking ahead to retirement, Rocky said it will be strange to be turning off his early alarms, but he is ready to “relax” and to spend time gardening and seeing his family.

Christmas parcels back in the 60s were also a strange affair as Rocky recalls hand-delivering perishable festive goods through the post such as turkeys “wrapped up in brown paper or a cloth with a leg sticking out”.

Salmon, kippers and cream were also part of his deliveries and Rocky remembers seeing the joy on someone's face as he handed them a last-minute gift from a loved one.

“We often wear Santa hats and go around at Christmas, seeing the look on the kids' faces when you're at the door is so nice,” he told the PA Media news agency.

“People used to say, ‘here comes Father Christmas’.

“The amount of work we get around Christmas is incredible, it's so busy, but you push through and get it done – there's nothing left behind.”

After spending 10 years going door-to-door, Rocky transferred to night shifts at the London Docklands Delivery Office.

This came after the sudden death of his wife, Sheila, at age 26, in 1980 and he needed to take care of their three children, who were around the age of 10 at the time.

“I had little kids to bring up on my own and the night shift was the only way I could sort of get round it,” Rocky said.

“I didn't start until midnight so I could be there with them right up until then, get them in bed, tuck them in, shoot off to work, come home again at 07:00 in the morning and get them up to go to school.

“It worked out absolutely perfect.”

Rocky has since spent the last 40 years from 23:00 to 07:00 emptying and organising the delivery trucks to go out each morning.

“It's very, very busy at Christmas and some offices struggle – I managed to keep my one running.”

To mark 60 years and the end of his service, Rocky and his colleagues celebrated his retirement party at the Docklands delivery office on 7 December – the date he first started in 1964.

“The first thing I’m going to do is turn all my alarms off,” Rocky said looking ahead to his retirement.

“I’ll finish building my shed down the garden and do some maintenance things.”

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Date Created

27/12/2024

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