

Douglas Davis – US Postal Service



Douglas Davis has worked for the United State Postal Service for 33 years, the last three years on a route in Chestnut Hill. Before the Covid-19 pandemic spread across our country, his job was enjoyable and routine. But, in March of 2020, the virus disrupted both that routine and his health.

Davis still isn't sure how he got Covid-19, or from whom. It started with a fever and chills. He lost his sense of smell and taste, and then it became hard to breathe through a pain that felt like inhaling icy cold air in winter. Davis notified his work at the first symptoms and quarantined while waiting five days for his test results. He then quarantined another 14 days after the test results came back positive. Unfortunately, his wife, Dorothy Davis, seemed to have caught the virus as well, and it hit her harder, sending her to the hospital for a couple days where she waited for treatment alone in the Covid ward until her oxygen levels were safe enough to send her home.

Mr. Davis is back on the job now and is continuing to follow all the safety guidelines. When he comes home, he takes his work clothes off in the laundry room and immediately washes up. He is very careful, because neither he nor his wife want to get Covid-19 again. They are still unsure whether they have antibodies or any kind of immunity. Every morning before he goes to work, he prays, "I hope I don't get it, I hope I don't get it," and he prays again when he gets home at night.

His routine of going from house to house, always moving forward, and moving naturally, is in the past. Davis now has to be much more conscious of what he is touching, making sure not to touch his face and to maintain social distance. He keeps up that vigilance for twelve or more hours a day, as the number of packages delivered to homes has dramatically increased and everyone is working extra to stay on top of it. The day to day reality of being an essential worker during the pandemic, of getting sick and seeing his wife get even sicker, of working longer hours, and of not knowing how he got it or if he might get it again stretches out ahead of him, with a return to "normal" life farther away than his eyes can see.

This week Davis was dealt another blow when his mother, Lizzie Davis, passed away. Her church wasn't open so they couldn't hold the service there, her family from South Carolina couldn't attend, and the funeral repast was a quick and socially distanced in and out affair in the yard. After everything he had been through, Douglas accepted a quick hug at the funeral. He chided himself for getting close: "I know you shouldn't, but I did..." But hugging people is the thing he misses the most.

Mr. Davis hopes that someday he will be able to hug friends and family again. He is also looking forward to the day when he can go to a ballgame, see a movie in the theater, and take his wife out to eat. Until then, he is cheered by notes of thanks people leave him in their mailboxes, signs of thanks in the windows, bottles of water and treats set out, as well as the genuine kindness and care he is greeted with by families on his route. "People on my route have been really nice. All over you hear people saying thank you," Davis says. "That is the good thing about it. People are being really really nice."