

BY WALTER ELLIOTT

Obituaries of Local Hurricane Irene Victims

The three men whose tributes appear below have left their mark on the Local Talk area in various degrees.

The first two "Local Talk" natives are also linked by being among the 12 so far known victims of Hurricane Irene. The third made his mark as the impresario of a local legendary 1980s rock and roll venue before moving on to North Carolina.

Postal Supervisor Ronald Dawkins (1964-2011)

ORANGE : An estimated 151 mourners came to Cotton Funeral Service luncheon here Sept. 2 to pay final respects to their relative, friend and colleague Ronald Dawkins, Sr.

The mourners, which filled three of Cotton's rooms, included family members from as distant as Alabama and Trinidad, United States Postal Service colleagues and Orange's Last Chapter Church. A USPS delegation had chartered a private bus from their Kearny plant both for the funeral and the Sept. 1 viewing.

South Ward Councilman Edward Marable, Jr., was seen among Friday's mourners. At-large Councilwoman Donna K. Williams, Mayor Eldridge Hawkins, Jr. and Cong. Donald Payne, Sr.'s condolences were publicly read during the service. East Ward Councilwoman Linda Jones-Bell also expressed her sympathy during her Sept. 6 council meeting comments.

"I didn't know Ronald Dawkins but I know his wife, who works at Rosa Parks Elementary School," said Jones-Bell. "I'm going to spend some time with her."

They came to honor Dawkins, 74, as a father of three children. The 23-year USPS employee and former Marine, according to two other relatives and several colleagues, said that he was like a father to them.

Dawkins had died while trying to report to work in Kearny Aug. 28. Witnesses and the Kearny police and fire department reports said that he had fallen into a flooded drainage ditch and was swept away before he could be saved.

Dawkins, for the record, was on his way to the USPS Priority Mail Processing Facility at 1200 Newark - Jersey City Tpk./Harrison Ave. when his car stalled in two feet of floodwater after exiting Interstate Route 280.

Witnesses said that he was walking west and had passed the Bergen Street Extension intersection when he fell into the obscured 12-foot-deep ditch that separated the postal plant from the road's north side. That ditch channels Franks Creek southward beneath the turnpike

LOCAL NEWS flash

and across Wal-Mart property to the Passaic River.

Kearny Police Det. John Plaugic, in one published report, called USPS's Christopher Johnson a "hero" for diving twice into the creek attempting to save Dawkins.

Ronald Dawkins was born to Willie Richard and Julia Dawkins in Belleville July 16, 1964. What became a family of seven settled in Newark's South Ward, from where Ronald graduated Weequahic High School in 1982.

Dawkins enlisted with the United States Marine Corps in 1983 for a four-year tour. He was honorably discharged with a 93 percent grade average in word processing and as a legal clerk. Dawkins joined USPS in 1988, eventually being promoted as a postal supervisor at the priority mail processing plant.

Dawkins, an NFL New York Jets fan, met and married Debbie Ann Walker by Nov. 29, 1993. Their family, which had settled in Orange, included sons Ronald Jr. and Jeffrey Manning plus daughter Lisa Marie.

Dawkins' parents, brothers Jerome and Michael and sisters Marie and Diane predeceased him. Two grandchildren and relatives from the Craddock, Gilmore, Regis and Walker families are among his survivors.

Co-workers have left a memorial shrine to Dawkins by the entrance to their postal facility.

Homeowner Robert Napoliello (1937-2011)

BLOOMFIELD : It was no surprise to those who knew Robert R. Napoliello that he was fond of the house in Edison he and wife Carol Anne had moved from Bloomfield into in 1964. Carol Anne and daughter Carolyn McElwain said Napoliello, 74, had been bailing out floodwater from the basement throughout the overnight when he had a massive heart attack at about 8 a.m. Aug. 28.

"Robert was a dear friend for 30 years," said Edison Mayor Antonia Ricigliano to "Local Talk" Sept. 6. "He and Carol Anne lived on Sherman Avenue in the High Trees section - about a block away from (Woodbridge's) Colonia. Robert was going to Bloomfield High School the same time I was in Irvington High."

It was only after Napoliello's announced death at Edison's JFK Medical Center later that Sunday when the father of three's Bloomfield roots became more widely known.

Robert Roy Napoliello was born June 21, 1937 to Newark-based American Bread Company route salesman Remus

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