



THE Mail Bag NEWS

★ SOLIDARITY

★ EDUCATION

★ ORGANIZATION



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It's A Wrap Term Ending Report

By Frank Salazar, President



First of all, I would like to thank the membership for nominating and electing me and my team by acclamation. We have been trying to do our best in representing our membership in all phases of grievance activity whether it's a disciplinary issue or a contractual issue. And, as I will describe shortly, our team has done a more than adequate job. Per The Constitution for the Government of Subordinate and Federal Branches, specifically Article 6, Duties of Officers, President, it's my pleasure to offer this term ending report on the progress and condition of our Branch.

Finances

Financially speaking, Branch 2902 is in excellent fiscal health. The Branch has no debt and a contingency fund of over \$385,000. Our Branch leadership has been fiscally responsible and prudent in the allocation of our funds. However, the Branch membership has been in a steady decline. It's not because of representation issues or dissatisfaction. Rather, it deals with the decline in mail volume, Management's need to reduce the number of employees, early retirements, the National Reassessment Plan placing carriers off work or in other crafts, and the excessing of employees to other Branches or crafts due to the implementation of the FSS machines.

When I first started this term in January of 2009, the Branch had a total of 1414 active members of which 1380 were paying dues. Historically, the Branch has not billed members for dues when they have been on LWOP, disability or NRP. As of pay period 23 of 2011, the Branch currently has a total of 1214 active members of which 1184 are

dues paying. The numbers reflect a decline of 200 active members from 2009-2011, and a total decline of 196 total paying members. The numbers will only get worse as volumes continue to decline, more FSS machines come on line, or more early outs are offered. If the USPS goes to 5-day delivery, the situation may become more challenging. Therefore, the Branch has to start preparing today for what may happen tomorrow. In order to remain fiscally sound and to hold costs down, we had to decide not to continue with the annual branch picnic and to only have general membership meetings at Gaunce Hall eliminating our meeting in Newbury Park five times a year. We did not want to take these actions, but the Branch's first duty is protection of the membership through representation and contract enforcement and that's where our focus has always been and will continue to be.

Organization

I take great pride in the fact that we have an open shop and that we are over 94% organized. During our last 3 year term, Tri-Valley Branch 2902 won three consecutive annual awards (2009-2010-2011) for Membership Organization. The Branch was awarded First Place in Organization among all California Branches with more than 1000 members. I believe that this only reflects the confidence that our Membership has in its current leadership team. However, we can do better. Our goal has always been 100% membership. Although we might not get there, we always strive to educate every carrier on the benefits of joining the NALC. Now more than ever, we need to be organized in greater numbers. We are in the fight of a lifetime with our careers, economic stability, benefits, and work rules. If we don't stay strong and united, we can surely lose all that the

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

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previous generations had garnered for us. Talk to that non-member, and get them to join.

Charity

Branch 2902 continues to be involved in the nation's largest food drive; The Letter Carrier Food Drive. Over the last 3 years, Branch 2902 has collected over 995,897 pounds of food that was distributed in our local communities. Branch 2902 is also involved in raising funds for The Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA). The Branch sponsors an annual MDA Poker Tournament and participates in the national MDA Bowl-A-Thon every November. During the year of the National Convention, the Branch donates, at the Convention, a minimum of \$2,902 raised through the poker tournaments and the Bowl-A-Thon. In the off years, the Branch not only donates funds it has raised to MDA, but also to the Saxsenmeier Scholarship Fund. The Saxsenmeier Scholarship Fund is administered by the California State Association of Letter Carriers and is open to the dependent children or grandchildren of members of NALC Branches within the State of California. The children of some of our Branch members have been a recipient of this scholarship in the past. These are truly worthy causes and we will continue to participate and raise funds in the next term.

Legislation

Brothers and Sisters, whether you like it or not, we have to get politically involved and motivated in issues that affect us as working men and women, as families, and as Postal employees. We are not out to scare anyone. We don't have too. Just take a look at what some Congressmen and women are supporting. Many in Congress want to protect tax breaks for the super-rich and give tax breaks to the middle class by taxing the middle class or stripping benefits from senior citizens and the disabled. We have to be insane to elect these people. But, they get elected because many of us are apathetic or asleep. A recent bill in Congress supported by House Republicans, which passed in the House, H.R. 3630 the so-called Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2011 extends the current 2% payroll tax cut for one year in part by freezing federal employee pay for an additional year through 2013. It would also increase federal and Postal employee pension contributions by 1½% over three years and eliminate the retirement supplement that is paid to federal workers in lieu of social security for those in FERS who retire before age 62. I don't know about you, but I don't want to work until age 62, if I can retire at age 56! And, how do you call this a middle class tax cut, when the middle class is paying for this cut out of their own pockets?

Last term we had about 3½% of our membership giving to our political action committee, The Committee On Letter Carrier Political Education (COLCPE). At the end of this

term we have about 6½% donating to COLCPE. Even though we doubled the number of our membership donating to COLCPE, we need to get this number higher. Yes, we pay dues to negotiate a contract and enforce it, but we cannot use dues money to donate to politicians. All the money we donate to politicians is through voluntary contributions to COLCPE. COLCPE is job insurance for Letter Carriers. Remember, whatever we gain through negotiations can be stripped away through the legislative process. Just look at the states of Wisconsin and Ohio where conservative, right-wing, anti-union types are trying to strip collective bargaining rights from state employees, police, and fire fighters. However, giving to COLCPE is not enough. We have to get involved in activities like Carrier Corps, or attend a rally, or write or call a Senator or Congressman. On September 27, 2011, members of the Branch participated in rallies at Congressman Berman's and Gallegly's district offices to bring attention to Saving America's Post Offices and 6-Day delivery. Brothers and Sisters, for this term, get involved. Join the Branch in donating to COLCPE, join the Branch in a rally, join the Branch in a letter writing campaign, or join the Branch in a phone bank to get the vote out. We have to get involved. Don't rely on the other guy to get involved. Make an effort!

Grievance Activity

Although the numbers are not complete for the last term (2009-2011), I have calculated the current numbers and the numbers are as follows:

Letters of Warning Rescinded-	247
Letters of Warning Reduced to Review Periods-	183
Suspensions Rescinded-	47
Suspensions Reduced to L.O.W. Or in Length-	108
Suspension Days Saved (If, they were to be served)-	1,153
Removals Rescinded/Settled-	25
Contract Cases Resolved-	2,512
Contract Cases Denied/Withdrawn-	87
Carriers Removed From Restricted Sick Leave-	44
Total Cash Settlements-	\$392,898.35
Total Overtime Hours Recovered-	4,557.01
Total straight-time Hours Recovered	2,189.74
Total A/L Leave Hours Recovered-	523.03
Total Sick Leave Hours Recovered-	929.95
Total Administrative Leave Hours Paid-	231.15
Total Penalty O.T. Hours Recovered	91.11

Converting the hours recovered at CC1 Step N for each of the years in the term plus the cash settlements recov-

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Time Flies When You're Having Fun

By Ray Hill, Executive Vice-President

Happy New Year! It's Hard to believe that year 2012 is already here. The other day I was channel surfing while watching television and I came across "Back To The Future, Part 2", a movie that was made in 1989. I don't think I actually ever watched any of the "Back To the Future" Movies and I didn't watch Part 2 the other day while I was channel surfing. But I did press the "Info" button on my remote control and read that in the movie they went forward in time to the year 2015. I guess when the movie was made in 1989 the year 2015 seemed a long way off but here we are now in year 2012. My father was right when he used to tell me that the older you get, the faster time seems to fly by.

I am writing this as we wrap up year 2011 and there is currently a lot of tension in many of the Post Offices that I visit. What else is new? Letter Carriers are always under intense scrutiny from Management, especially in the FSS/COR Offices where the routes were not properly adjusted after the implementation of FSS. In some of the offices represented by Branch 2902, because of the incorrect base route times due to improper COR Adjustments, the carriers have to battle with Management on a daily basis over the amount of time that will be required for them to complete their routes. When COR creates a route that is **supposed to be** 8 hours then some Managers and Supervisors are of the usually incorrect opinion that the route really is an 8 hour route. Never mind the fact that the carrier has been consistently using 9 or 10 hours (or more!) to complete the route, DOIS says it should take 8 hours. I was talking to a carrier from the 91324 zone of Northridge today who told me that his case neighbor had been "arguing" with his Supervisor this morning over the supervisor's DOIS Projections for the day. The Carrier asked the Supervisor if he knew how many parcels or accountables the Carrier had to deliver today and the Supervisor told the carrier that no, he did not know how many parcels and accountables the Carrier had to deliver today. The Carrier then responded by asking the Supervisor how he could dispute the time the Carrier was requesting if he had not bothered to investigate the quantity of parcels and accountables the Carrier was asking additional time for but instead had relied solely on DOIS projections. Guess what? The Supervisor had no answer to that question. Therein lies one of the major inherent flaws in the DOIS projection system; parcels and ac-

countable items are not calculated into those projections.

The daily 3996 battle has to be the most aggravating part of the work day for many Letter Carriers and it is not limited only to the FSS/COR Offices. We as a Union have been writing about this battle and preaching (and writing) about the proper way to handle the battle for many, many years.

NALC Headquarters recently sent out the **2011 NALC LETTER CARRIER RESOURCE GUIDE** to all active (i.e. not retired) NALC Members. I hope you all took the time to read or at least skim through this excellent publication that was written at NALC Headquarters and should prove to be a very useful tool for Letter Carriers.

Chapter 1 Section 1 of this NALC publication is titled **"Daily Situations-PS Form 3996 and PS Form 1571...PS Form 3996 vs. Management's Daily Workload Projections"**. This section deals specifically with Letter Carriers daily battles with Management over DOIS Projections and reality. I urge you all to **at least** read pages 1 through 8 of this booklet and follow the instructions religiously. Remember to not lose your cool in the 3996 process; it just isn't worth the aggravation when you are dealing with a Supervisor who simply doesn't get it. Lord knows there are plenty of them to go around.

Speaking of tension, on the Management side, everyone from the Postmasters to the Managers to the front line Supervisors seem to be constantly on edge while dealing with the often unrealistic "goals" that they have been given from upper Management at the District, Area and Headquarters level. Most of these goals look good on paper but they don't translate too well to the reality of the workroom floor.

Local Management has always had a tendency to implement new "rules" in response to the unrealistic goals upper Management rams down their collective throats. Then, local Management rams these new rules down the Letter Carrier's collective throats, because, as we all learned quickly after starting our USPS careers, everything rolls downhill.

For example, Management sets an "absolute" time that they want carriers to be off the street, usually 5:00 PM or 6:00 PM at the very latest. Unless, of course, you are in an

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Welcome 2012

By Chris Alessi, MBA/NSBA Representative



Happy New Year Brothers & Sisters, I hope you all had a great a holiday season. As we start another year I would like to explain some of the basics of the Disability Income Plus Plan. For the

150 members of Tri-Valley Branch who still have the plan, and to the 5,100 policies still in force your plan stays active. The MBA is no longer offers this plan, but at the last training seminar the director stated that the MBA will be looking into the possibilities of getting the plan again.

The Disability Income is a policy which provides a monthly indemnity to a NALC member when they are disabled from work and they are under a physician's care for the disability. The insured must meet three conditions:

- 1-unable to do the material duties of regular occupation**
- 2-under the care of a physician for the disability**
- 3-Not engaged in any other gainful occupation**

The policy is guaranteed until the policy anniversary date after the insured's 65th birthday. There are three different Disability Income plans: Plan code **Y4573** issued between 1980 and 1990. Plan code **Y4578 & Y4579** issued between 1990 and 1993. The oldest plan Y4573 has only one benefit period – a maximum of 6 months {180 Days} with two benefit amounts available: \$500 or \$1000 per month. The newer plans Y4578 & Y4579 have two benefit periods and three benefit amounts.

Y4578

Benefit Period – 6 months {180 days}
Monthly Amount - \$500, \$1000, \$1500

Y4579

Benefit Period – 12months {360days}
Monthly Amount - \$500, \$1000, \$1500

There is an elimination period for these plans, the number of days beginning with the date that the total disability starts (Incurred date), for which no disability benefits are payable.

The Old Plan Y4573 Elimination Period is: 60 days for on-the-job injury and 14 days for off-the job injury or illness. For the newer plans Y4578 & Y4579 Elimination period is 14 days on or off the job injury or illness.

Concurrent Disability- Plan Y4573- At no time shall the insured be considered disabled from two or more disabilities concurrently. Plans Y4578 Y4579 if the total dis-

ability is caused by more than one injury or sickness, or from both, benefits will be paid as if was caused by only one injury or sickness.

Recurrent Disability- Plans Y4573– A disability is a recurrence of the prior disability if it is due to the same or related conditions and it occurs within 6 months after the end of the prior disability. Plans Y4578 & Y4579- A disability is a recurrence of the prior disability if it is due to the same or related conditions and it occurs within 12 months after the end of the prior disability. In these cases the disability will be considered a continuation of the prior period of disability whereas the maximum benefit period will be reduced by the number of days benefits were paid for the prior period or {periods} of disability.

Exceptions to paid benefits – Plan Y4573 will not pay benefits for suicide or any attempt thereat, whether sane or insane, intentional self-inflicted injuries or any attempted thereat, illegal use of drugs, war, or any act of war, declared or undeclared, or sustained while the insured is engaged in military service, commission of a felony or attempt thereat, pregnancy, childbirth, miscarriage or abortion, (except complications resulting there from), acute or chronic alcoholism, mental, nervous, or emotional disease or disorder. Plans Y4578 & Y4579 are act of war, whether declared or undeclared, normal pregnancy or childbirth, except complications resulting from them.

Waiver of premiums Provision-The old plan Y4573, MBA will waive the payment of any premiums due during the continuation of total disability, this waiver will continue until the next anniversary date after disability ends. The new plans Y4578 & Y4579 premiums will be waived after the elimination period while the insured is totally disabled until the disability ends, the insured is responsible for the payment of the premiums once the total disability ends.

Grace Period- The grace period for the payment of premiums is the same for all plans of the disability income plus insurance. The grace period is 31 days. If a premium payment is not paid on or before its due, the owner may pay the premium during the 31 days immediately following the due date. During the grace period, the policy remains in force. If the premium is unpaid at the end of the grace period, the disability income policy will terminate

In closing I just want to say thank you for all the members who voted for me as delegate to our next national convention in Minnesota, I will do my best to represent you all. Take Care, and Happy New Year

God Bless you, in solidarity, Chris



MDA Bowl-A-Thon 2011

By Sandy Gaunce, Branch 2902 MDA coordinator

On November 6th, our branch participated in the 3rd Annual NALC Bowl-A-Thon for MDA. This year we had 14 bowlers, bringing in a total of \$789. Everyone received a T-shirt and some also got MDA canvas tote bags.

Our bowlers and their high scores (sorry guys) were: Bev Sucich (120), Sue Degenhardt (113), Dan Gorman (148), Bob Golden (102), Frank Salazar (130), Jim Dearborn (135), David Hyman (174), Ray Hill (169), Matt Hill (118), Richard Uhlman (236), Paul Iwasaki (144), Louie Rodriguez (156), Stephen Kim (139), and Setu (Tatoo) Molina (267).

A big thank you goes out to Bob Golden for the large donation he collected for MDA, to Brunswick bowling alley in Simi Valley for donating the lanes and shoes for everyone, to Donut Time in Simi Valley for the donuts, to Yogi Reiley, APWU, for her donation, and to Dave Hyman for the bagels and cream cheese. Everyone had a lot of fun and I look forward to the 4th annual event.

A little history of the NALC and the Muscular Dystrophy Association. In 1953 our union became MDA's first national sponsor. That fall the Union organized the "Letter Car-

rier's march for Muscular Dystrophy" which raised over 3.4 million dollars. The letter carriers on their designated routes would mention to their customers about their mission to help MDA. They asked if they would like to donate anything to MDA, if so, to leave their porch light on. At the end of the day the carriers would stop by on their way home from work and pick up whatever donations the customer would have for MDA. Since that time the NALC has raised many more millions of dollars to help find a cure and to help those with neuromuscular diseases. This makes me very proud to be the MDA rep. for branch 2902. Thank you for all your support.

Brad Roseling General Manager	Team Member Since 1978
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Pictured above are the participants of the MDA Bowl-A-Thon held in November of 2011. Everyone received a T-Shirt and a great time was had by all. The branch raised \$789.00 for a great cause. We hope to see even more of you next year for more fun and an even bigger donation to the MDA.



Not ready to give up yet... I'm just saying!

By Angela Hale, Chatsworth Chief Shop Steward

I can imagine that all will be surprised that I am finally writing an article, but drastic times call for drastic measures. I have been away for a few months, and I have to say, we're not in Oz anymore! You might think that upper management would have figured all this out by now, but unfortunately they have not! They are still putting people in charge, which really should not be there. There is no "I" in team, and we are supposed to be "TEAM Players". What you have sent to us in Chatsworth, is someone who wants to make a name for her self, at any cost. So, how much do you want to spend, before you figure out that this one does not know the contract? She can sure talk on the phone half the day, but then what woman can't? I've seen the treatment of carriers, and I have noticed that males are treated differently than females. I guess, I should say, most males. That is, if there is something she wants from you. I wonder if that constitutes a hostile work environment?

God help you if you can't do what she wants. She gets an "A" at mocking. Our previous Postmaster was well liked, and I know for a fact that his employees would have done anything for him, and where is he? Well, he must have been doing something right, because I have heard Chatsworth has made more money than last year and was very productive. After all, we are the capital. I also want to tell all of you in Chatsworth, if you only hear that we're at the bottom, and we are the worst office, take pride in how hard we still work, and know that you are #1. There have been some obstacles, route adjustments, and routes overburdened, etc; you do what you can do. Don't let this OIC tell you to make it work, when the only way is from your lunch or break. Don't let her tell you when you are unloading your LLV, that you need to come and check in now while there is a clerk.

These are minutes from your street time, minutes that you will never get back! It's hard to make that percent to standard when there is no clerk to give you your accountable, mail, and no clerk to check you in. I am sorry that I wasn't back to work for JARAP, but I know that Laura was there, and you can't get any better.

Looking forward to the 120-day reviews

I'm hoping that some of the routes with too much business can be tweaked, so the Service, in Postal Service, can improve. This is what we are, a company that provides a service. We make our money by selling postage to peo-

ple who are selling products and sending them across the country, or all around the world. Not everyone has a computer, and not everyone chooses to send an email, verses a card, or a letter. The "Service", is what makes us stand out.

The vote came in that we are the most trusted public servants, we didn't get that vote for no reason. All this talk of taking Saturday delivery away is crazy. I'm not sure how they think that by taking Saturday business, and giving it to our competitors is going to save them money. This action would certainly break us. UPS, and FEDEX, would be able to offer more jobs to thousands but the aftermath would be that USPS would stand to lose thousands of jobs.

So, who wins? Our SERVICE is our ticket, the extra mile, nobody does it better. Management should be looking around for other ways to make money, such as sending some clerks to get certified for Notary SERVICE, or maybe every office should have passport SERVICE? There are several options we can explore. Someone created the idea of "if it fits it ships", and "click and ship", that in turn created extra revenue. We should be as one, on the same page! I'm not ready to give up yet, are you?

I have been thinking about why we can't get it done as fast as management would like us to. I've come up with several things that I think will help us. We are probably going to need some help from Santa Clarita. #1, Try putting the DPS right side up, you know, so we can read it faster with less strain on the eyes, because it takes no time to turn around 500 letters! #2, Try putting DPS in trays that don't collapse in the middle when you pick it up, so that you don't have to spend the time picking it up off the ground. #3, Stop taking a coverage that is already in order, and take it apart and spin it, and send it to the carriers to throw. So, who's the Goose?? You just cost the carrier a lot of extra time. I'd rather have the extra clerk passing it out in the office, and using that clerk to also pass out accountable mail, and perhaps throw a parcel or two so we can make our leaving time. I'm just saying! I guess what I'm trying to tell management is that there are a lot of very knowledgeable people in each or your offices with all kinds of experience. "You can take a good look at a T-Bone steak by sticking your head up a Bulls Ass, but wouldn't you rather take the Butchers word for it?" I don't know, maybe it is about power, and who needs it. I'm guessing that those same people will be wondering what happened to the Postal SERVICE. Last but not least, #4, Take those scanners and

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How Unused Sick Leave Affects your Annuity

By Reg Jones, Columnist for the Federal Times

There seems to be a lot of confusion about what part unused sick leave plays in your annuity. The short answer is: The more you have, the bigger its role.

Before we get into the details of how sick leave can enhance your retirement benefit, let me clear up two common misunderstandings: First, sick leave can't be added to your service time to make you eligible to retire. Second, it can't be used in determining the amount of the special retirement supplement (SRS) available to some Federal Employees Retirement System retirees. The SRS is based on actual years and full months of FERS service.

Assuming you have met the age and service requirements to retire, you'll get credit in your annuity computation for every year and full month of actual service. Any hours of actual service that don't add up to a full month will be combined with any hours of unused sick leave, and the total converted to additional months of service credit.

Here's how that's done. Because annuities are paid on a monthly basis, a year is divided into 12 equal parts. The end results are 12 30-day months and a 360-day year. The number of hours in a work year, 2,087, is divided by 360 to count an annuity day as 5.797+ hours and a month as 174 hours.

There are differences in the way unused sick leave credit is applied under the Civil Service Retirement System and FERS. Retiring CSRS employees get full credit. Retiring FERS employees are entitled only to half credit until 2014 and full credit thereafter. Until the passage of Public Law 111-84 in 2009, FERS retirees weren't entitled to any unused sick leave credit. When an annuity has both FERS and CSRS components, the FERS component is increased only by the amount of sick leave earned under FERS. Any sick leave balance attributable to CSRS service is added separately.

Here are examples based on a 55-year-old employee with 30 years' service and 1,460 hours of unused sick leave whose high-three, or average salary over three consecutive years of highest pay, is \$80,000.

Under CSRS: Based on actual service, the initial annuity is \$45,000 (0.015 x \$80,000 x 5 years, plus 0.0175 x \$80,000 x 5 years, plus 0.02 x \$80,000 x 20 years). Unused sick leave hours add eight months of credit totaling 1,391 hours, with 69 hours left over and dropped. The final CSRS annuity is \$46,072 (0.015 x \$80,000 x 5 years, plus

0.0175 x \$80,000 x 5 years, plus 0.02 x \$80,000 x 20.67 years).

Under FERS before 2014, where the employee has 20 years under FERS and 10 years under CSRS (of the 1,460 unused sick leave hours, 1,100 were under FERS): Based on actual service, the initial FERS component of the annuity is \$16,000 (0.01 x \$80,000 x 20 years). Half credit for the 1,100 unused sick leave hours adds 550 hours to the annuity service credit or three months — 522 hours with 28 hours left over and dropped. The final FERS annuity is \$16,200 (0.01 x \$80,000 x 20.25 years).

The initial CSRS component of the annuity is \$13,000 (0.015 x \$80,000 x 5 years, plus 0.0175 x \$80,000 x 5 years). Credit for the remaining 360 unused sick leave hours adds two months of service credit — 348 hours with 12 hours left over and dropped. The final CSRS annuity is \$13,267 (\$13,000 + .02 x \$80,000 x 0.167 year). The total FERS/CSRS annuity is \$29,467.

Under the same FERS/CSRS scenario in 2014 or later: Full credit for the 1,100 unused FERS sick leave hours adds six months to the service credit — 1,044 hours with 56 hours left over and dropped. The FERS annuity component grows to \$16,400 (0.01 x \$80,000 x 20.50 years). With the \$13,267 CSRS component, the final FERS/CSRS annuity is \$29,667.

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“Classic”: a book which people praise and don't read.”

-Mark Twain (1835-1910)



NEW KVETCH: ARE WE OUR OWN WORST ENEMIES?

By Steve Leyton, North Hollywood Chief Shop Steward

The newspapers, radio and TV are running lots of stories telling everyone that the Postal Service is going to be cutting service and laying-off workers. The NALC, by submitting petitions urging our legislators to enact the changes the postal unions are pushing for, made an effort to persuade congress to solve the Postal Service's problems. They asked all of us to obtain signatures on these petitions and send them to the union. I was disappointed about how few petitions I was able to contribute to the effort. I was disappointed in how few of us contributed at all. It's weird. Carriers express their concerns all the time about the uncertainty of the future of the Postal Service. Yet, when we had an opportunity to do something that could actually help, we fell short.

We have about 1200 active, uniformed members in branch 2902. Yet I almost never see more than 100 people at our meetings. Sometimes fewer and many are officers or stewards. That's less than 10% showing up. Or you could see it as more than 90% "no-shows". "So what?" you might say, "I pay my dues so that the officers and shop stewards will take care of things. That's what they're paid for." I've got news for you. There is a very strong connection between how successful any union is and how much the members participate. As I try to do two jobs at once at my office, I have often heard carriers proclaiming, "Why am I paying dues if (insert beef here) can happen?" Inevitably, the carriers making the noise have either never been to a branch meeting or have been to a couple of meetings during the course of their careers.

Two major issues affect you every day. First, our contract with the government, the source of your continuing employment, was negotiated by the union, on your behalf, with management at the highest level. If you have a problem with the way that's done, I suggest you actually read that contract. How do you propose to improve it? The union negotiators would like to know.

Whatever your opinion of Postal Management, don't forget that the U.S. government has been negotiating labor contracts since the American Revolution. Our top union officials are letter carriers. That's right. They may be full-time union officials at the moment, but they started as letter carriers like you. But they were carriers who found that they wanted to make a difference. That includes our branch 2902 officers, too.

I think our NALC negotiators do a great job. But the cur-

rent negotiations are taking place in the middle of an economic depression. Our negotiations are also strongly influenced by congress. Congress is populated, to a staggering degree, by people who want to end all government jobs so they can be done by private companies who don't have to pay their workers a living wage. What is even more unbelievable is the number of letter carriers who vote for these vultures.

I've had the honor of either meeting all of our NALC leaders, or hearing them speak. Without exception, they are sharp, and are dedicated to protecting carriers and to the improvement of our jobs. And they work hard, from President Fred Rolando down to our local 2902 officers.

NALC national Secretary-Treasurer, Jane Broendel, for example, described her experience after becoming a letter carrier, "Within five months, I was actively involved because it didn't take me long to see how the union assisted letter carriers," she said. "The support, education and representation offered by the union motivated me—and so did witnessing others' difficulties with management on the workroom floor."

Which brings me to the second major issue: Many of my coworkers on the office floor have so many expectations. They seem to believe that shop stewards possess magic wands that erase any kind of irritation. They believe that shop stewards have universal knowledge of every activity occurring at the office by every employee at all times. They don't need to tell stewards about violations, we should already know. They don't need to produce evidence, make a written statement or go to the trouble of making a written note about something they have witnessed. They don't need to learn the rule that is being broken. Shop Steward will fix everything, automatically. Puh-hleeeeeeeez!

The USPS and the NALC (us carriers) have a legally binding contract that must be met by both parties. You and management must both live up to the terms of that agreement. You do your job, delivering mail with integrity, safely and efficiently. They do their job, which is facilitating your job. That is, everything they do is meant to be in support of what you do. Right? Look at it this way, if what management is doing is making it harder or impossible for you to do your job, then it's probably a violation.

The shop steward is the policeman for the contract. We're just cops walking a contractual beat. Sure, our NALC leaders are sharper than most lawyers you will ever meet

continued on page 12



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TIME FLIES ...

Continued from page 3

FSS/COR Office like Woodland Hills, where they are just hoping and praying to get all of the mail delivered before the moon goes over the mountain. But that's another story for another day.

On the face of it, that sounds like a great goal, for the Carriers to have all their mail delivered no later than 5 PM or 6 PM. Why? Better service to our patrons, for one thing. Carriers also like to go home at a semi-decent hour for another thing and it's never any fun (or safe, or efficient) to deliver mail in the dark. But if all the mail is **actually delivered** by 5 PM or 6 PM then why must management make it an absolute rule that you have to clock in from the street no later than 5 PM (1700) or 6 PM (1800)? This causes a great deal of stress amongst carriers driving back to their respective offices in often horrendous traffic trying desperately to clock in off the street before the clock turns to 1701 or 1801 lest they turn into pumpkins or possibly burn in hell. If the Carrier is actually done delivering the mail by 1700 or 1800 then why must he or she have to stress out about missing a green light or two on the way back to the office because the time clock is going to change by a click or two? It's crazy. I'm surprised that we don't have more vehicle accidents caused when carriers are driving back to the office like chickens with their heads cut off in the PM before the time clock changes by that one forbidden click.

For another example of a stupid local "rule", in response to the District Manager's attempt to reduce overtime, Management in many of the offices represented by Branch 2902 is telling Letter Carriers that they only have 5 minutes to perform all of their PM office duties when they return from the street. When we learn of this improper instruction we file grievances challenging its propriety. We are always successful in getting this "5 minutes to get off the clock rule" overturned whenever we challenge it. That is because **there is no USPS rule** that dictates that carriers only have 5 minutes to complete all of their PM Office duties. As long as the Carriers are following their flow charts and remaining gainfully employed, it takes what it takes. We acknowledge that 5 minutes to get off the clock in the PM is Management's goal but we successfully argue that it is not a rule, because it is not a rule.

Far too many Letter Carriers try to abide by these bogus, unrealistic rules, leading to them taking "shortcuts" and doing things that can, and often does, get them in a lot of trouble. They will leave their arrow keys and accountables at the registry cage without actually being cleared because there is no accountable Clerk available and they are trying to get off the clock in 5 minutes. Guess who will be responsible if anything is missing without the Carrier being cleared by the registry Clerk? That's right, the Carrier will be responsible. Never leave your arrow key and accountable items at the registry cage unless you have been

cleared by the registry Clerk.

We have had Carriers manually enter their code 722 (return from Street) and other clock ring functions on the Electronic Badge Recorder or EBR (better known as the time clock) in order to make it appear that they were back off the street by 1700 or 1800 or whatever time Management wanted them to be back by. Carriers have manually entered their End Tours (ET) to make it appear that they ended tour prior to going into unauthorized penalty overtime, for example. Then later, management might check their MSP scans and learn that they were still out on the street after the times they manually entered on the EBR. Next comes the fact finding followed by a Suspension Letter or in some cases a Notice of Removal. Not only have the Carriers cheated themselves out of money that they earned and should have been paid when they manually enter an incorrect ET time, they are also risking removal from the Postal Service for falsification of an official record. For What? **Remember, the "cover-up" is almost always worse than the crime.**

I'll say it again; at the very least read pages 1 through 8 of the NALC **Letter Carrier Resource Guide** you recently received in the mail and follow those instructions every day. Never, ever do anything stupid like manually changing your clock ring codes on the EBR. If you follow the USPS rules and give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay you can avoid disciplinary problems while working at the USPS. It ain't rocket science or brain surgery, brothers and sisters. Keep it simple and let management make the decisions (I know that's a scary proposition) as explained on page 6 of the **NALC Letter Carrier Resource Guide**. Take the time to read the entire **Resource Guide** because you will learn a lot from it.

I hope to see a lot of you here at the Branch hall on March 3, 2012 for our Texas Hold'em Poker Tournament. Look for the ad in this issue of the Mail Bag News. I guarantee you that a good time will be had by all and, who knows, you just might catch some cards and win. Until next time...

Welcome New Members

Northridge
Rebecca Martinez
Oxnard
Louie Hernandez
Reseda
Dawn Johnson

NOT READY TO GIVE UP YET...

Continued from page 6

retire them, not the carriers or clerks that you think can't cut it, or that are CSRS and you want to cut them. Give us the tools to compete. Give us a scanner that can track from point A thru Z. Then stop crying about closing plants, people losing jobs, cutting days of delivery, and leaning the herd. Yes, you might have to spend some money to make some money, just get off your ass and compete. Take back our parcel business, and then some! Get out the gloves, reorganize and kick some UPS-FEDEX butt. Then maybe we will have enough money to buy our own planes. Don't ever forget who started this delivery business, THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE!! I'm just saying!

Hey, breaking news in Chatsworth. You've heard about the DPS machine and the FSS machine? Well, now management has come up with the 1 Foot cardboard box that doubles as a clerk!! Now because of this newest invention, they are able to let yet another Clerk go. They installed the security system on the boxes today. So security is definitely gone. Has this got Postal written all over it? You spend a lot of money making a secure accountable mail room that has got a lock on the door, and now we don't need it because we don't have a clerk to run it, and we don't need one because we have the Clerk Box. They will no doubt have to contract a crane operator to move all those boxes on the stand back to the cage to be downloaded, because the human clerk cannot move it. You would need 4 hands to take 3 boxes at a time. Hey, I have an idea. We install a drive-thru on the side of the building connected to the window and we could just wait our turn with the customers. Two mail trucks two customers. I can feel it, this will work!! Do the math, PLEASE!!! For as long as I have been with the Postal Service, I have always advertised for the Postal Service. I believe we take pride in what we do. This all makes no sense. The security of the mail should be our priority. If it's not broken don't fix it. I cannot wait to see who is coming to Chatsworth next, and what they will bring to the table. I'm just saying!

I guess, by the time this issue comes out, we will be a few weeks into the next OIC. Well, you know the drill, a lot of desk moving, pictures or whatever they hung on the walls. I'm surprised the colors of the walls have not changed. It's kind of sad that all this has to happen during the Holidays. All are trying to concentrate on getting the mail out, and making sure our customers get every parcel sent to them through the Postal Service. Instead, we are in Limbo, not knowing what or who is going "manage" us. It is Christmas; maybe we should make a wish list. We wish for a Postmaster who is even tempered. We wish for a Postmaster who listens to us, and thanks us for a good job done, not one that tells us that she wants to be #1, and in order for that to happen we have to do our jobs. Gee Santa, I thought we were doing our jobs! We wish for a Postmas-

ter, who sees all of us as equals, you know, like our old Postmaster. We wish for the person or persons in management that are doing the picking, and eliminating of OIC's or Postmasters, look at the big picture. Instead of trying to change someone, why not take the good and make it better? Last year it was the speech about how bad we are doing, and how half of our work force will be gone. Well, this year we wish that Management would open their eyes, and be more positive about all our futures. If there ever was a time that we needed to believe, it's now.

I'm hoping you all had a Merry Christmas, and a Happy, Hopeful New Year. I want to offer congratulations to the newly retired Dago Bretado, he started with the Postal Service in 1971. I believe that was the same year as the Sylmar earthquake, and James Brown came out with "Make It Funky". Dick Luman, started in 1983. The first Mobile Phone was introduced that year. Mary Ellenberger, started in 1979, that same year they came out with the first Sony Walkman. It's been great to work with all of you. Dago, it's so quiet without you. I can say that there is not one person in our office that hasn't laughed at your incredible wit; you never missed a beat! You left the office every day saying those special words "Goodbye everyone who is slower than me". Dick, I don't even know how many people came to you for advice on everything. I was fortunate to be next to you for at last 15 years. I'm only sorry for not taking any of those stock tips. We had many laughs over in "The Corner", as Lynda Buss used to call it. Mary, most of the time you really didn't have to say anything, it was your facial expressions. You were really good at that. We all spend more time with each other than we spend at home. We will miss all of you, and I'm sure your ears will be burning! Enjoy your retirements, you've earned it.



Pictured above (L-R) are the latest members of the last punch bunch to receive their union retirement watches. Jan Parker-Chatsworth, Pam Bolin-Northridge, Sharon Bermudez-Woodland Hills & Roy Jepsen-Port Hueneme. Enjoy the well deserved retirement folks!

NEW KVETCH...

Continued from page 8

when it comes to our contract. But think about all the cops you ever met. How sharp were they? They're about as sharp as the citizens they serve.

Cops try to use the law to end the crimes, punish the wicked and bring about justice. You know that isn't easy. They need citizens to report crimes, provide evidence and give testimony in court, in public. They need regular people who will stand up for themselves. The citizens live with the criminals in their neighborhoods every day. Those criminals can be intimidating.

So, what do you do? Do you stand up for your rights? Will you report violations, make notes and statements and provide evidence? Or will you be intimidated by punks? Our contract is only as strong as the union. The union is only as strong as the commitment of its members. Show up. If you can't be bothered to get involved, don't be surprised when your job disappears.

Help with issue #1 by giving as much as you can to COLCPE, the fund that helps support the politicians who support letter carriers and our concerns. Help with issue #2 by becoming a more active part of the whole process. Come to branch meetings to learn what your officers are dealing with and how that affects you. You'll also learn specific ways you can help yourself, in your everyday work life and for your long term career. Report anything that may be a violation of your rights to your shop steward. Provide as much detail as possible and write things down. And don't assume that the union knows about a problem just because you discussed it with your friends. Make sure.

HEY, PTF! IF YOU WORK LESS THAN 8 HOURS A DAY, 5 DAYS A WEEK, TELL YOUR SHOP STEWARD NOW. I, and others, have mentioned this in previous articles in this newsletter. I can't understand how it keeps happening. You know you're working tons of hours every week, usually more than 40. You see that we still have a lot of TE's around. The contract has provisions for promoting the most senior PTF's to regular carrier. One way is to have an uninterrupted string of at least 8 hours times 5 days for 26 weeks. If you have to clock out early or start late or take a day off, use a 3971 and get the appropriate paid leave. If you are denied paid leave, or a TE works non-OT hours you could have worked, or you simply don't get a full 40 hours this week, tell the union. There may be something we can do. We want to see you get promoted. You have to help us help you. It will work when you make it work.

So, what is "kvetch"? Google it.

"Good judgment comes from experience; and experience, well, that comes from bad judgment."

-Anonymous

PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

Continued from page 2

ered for the term totals \$679,110.92. However, we have many National Reassessment Program grievances that have been settled through arbitration or pre-arbitration, but that have not been paid. The overall amount recovered may come close to \$950,000.00, if we were to add those amounts in today. But, we cannot get an accurate total until the back pay awards are actually computed.

We started the term with the National Reassessment Process and many NRP grievances. Most of these grievances have been settled in arbitration or pre-arbitration with the Union only losing one decision. We've been struggling with management in many of our FSS sites over the length of the routes and the poor route structure due to management's unilateral actions in improperly adjusting the routes. And, in a very few offices, we are trying to put a stop to abusive management styles, but we need your help. In our next term, your elected officers will continue to fight the good fight and to police our contract. We thank you for your confidence in re-electing us. We hope to see you at the installation on January 17th, 2012. If not, all for now back in two.

\$20 BONUS

Any union member who signs up a non-member will receive a \$20.00 sign up bonus. Ask your steward for form 1187 to give to the non-member. Have the non-member sign up for union membership and either send the form to the branch office or give it back to the steward. Make sure you write your name on the top right corner of the form so we know whom to pay the bonus to.

In Memoriam

Gene (Arnold) Gray
Active Carrier- Port Hueneme

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When: Thursday,
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Time: 11:00am to 1:00pm



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The quickest way to double your money is to fold it and put it back into your pocket.

—Will Rogers

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Chatsworth Chief S.S.	Angel Hale
Fillmore Chief S.S.	Call Office
Moorpark Chief S.S.	Robbie Elsaleh
Alternate	Lori Stewart
North Hollywood Chief S.S.	Steve Leyton
	Louie Rodriguez
Chandler	Greg Gaddis
Laurel Canyon	Steve Leyton
Studio City	Greg Gaddis
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Northridge Chief S.S.	Onofre Varela
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Oxnard Chief S.S.	Ernestine Hernandez
Pacoima Chief S.S.	Steve Dickerson
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Alternate	Rocio Fraire
Alternate	Lorie Moore
Port Hueneme Chief S.S.	Kathi Albritten
Reseda Chief S.S.	Ray Hill
San Fernando Chief S.S.	James Perryman
Alternate	Albert Reyes
M.C.A.	James Perryman
North Hills	C.C. Flatts
Sylmar / Main Office	James Perryman
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Mt. McCoy Station	Sandra Gaunce
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PAULETTE DYER

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JAN 16 Martin Luther King Jr. Day-Holiday



JAN 17 Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Union Hall-Chatsworth
Installation of Officers

JAN 19 Retiree Lunch 11:00am
Hometown Buffet-Simi Valley

FEB 7 Executive Board Meeting 6pm
Executive Council Meeting 7pm

FEB 16 Retiree Lunch 11:00am
Hometown Buffet-West Hills

FEB 20 President's Day-Holiday



FEB 21 Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Union Hall-Chatsworth
Dinner served 6 pm

MAR 6 Executive Board Meeting 6pm
Executive Council Meeting 7pm

MAR 11 Daylight Savings Time Begins

