



THE Mail Bag NEWS

★ SOLIDARITY

★ EDUCATION

★ ORGANIZATION



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF TRI-VALLEY BRANCH 2902,
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS AFL-CIO

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VOLUME 53, NO. 1

Circulation 2,500

January - February 2011

A Year of Challenge Ahead

By Frank Salazar, President

Happy New Year! The year 2010 is now behind us, and ahead lies a year of upcoming challenges. By the time you receive this newsletter, it is expected that the Flats Sequencing System (FSS) machines should be up and running for the Pasadena area. Once the Pasadena area is up and running, FSS will be coming to the Van Nuys area and selected zip codes within our Branch.

To be honest with you, we don't know what to expect with FSS. I'm told that when the machines run well, it puts out a good accurate product. However, when the machines don't run well, we have problems like we do with the DPS machines. In order to try and ensure as smooth a transition as we can, EVP Ray Hill and I will try to observe how FSS is implemented in the Pasadena Area, before it comes to us. FSS is going to be a learning experience for all of us.

The other big challenge expected to come this year is the Carrier Optimal Routing adjustments. After FSS is implemented, there will be a 60-day review period to see if the routes are properly adjusted. If either Management or the Union determine that a route or routes are out of adjustment, the route(s) will be adjusted to 8 hours in accordance with the M-39 Handbook or a locally agreed upon adjustment formula, if applicable. Whether it's a Joint Route Adjustment Process (JRAP) or the



regular old 6-day count and inspection, the routes will be adjusted using the COR program. Simply described, COR is like a MapQuest program for route adjustments. Basically, Management feeds the information for a route into a program, and the program adjusts the route to 8 hours. Yes, I know it's not as simple as it sounds and many problems will likely occur. This too we will have to work through.

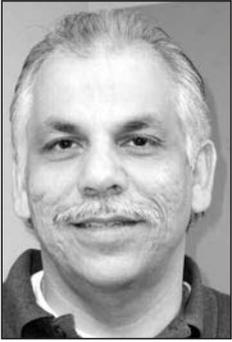
If everything goes according to Management's plans, after implementing FSS Management will attempt to excess Carriers to withheld positions in other offices. The reason for excessing is based on the fact that the FSS machines will reduce the amount of mail needing to be cased. Theoretically speaking, routes will be under 8 hours and auxiliary routes, vacant routes, and junior regular full-time routes will be broken up to add territory to the routes with senior Carriers under 8 hours. Junior regular Carriers losing their routes/assignments are guaranteed 8 hours, so they must be excessed to withheld assignments in other offices. This will not be fun and it may be very stressful and frustrating. However, in this environment it may be inevitable.

If this was not enough, and it is not, the NALC will be going through contract negotiations. Our current contract expires on

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

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November 20, 2011, and we will be in negotiations for better pay, benefits, job security and working conditions. And, we are going to be in for a fight. However, these negotiations will be about compromise and hopefully we can come to an agreement short of arbitration. In looking at the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) and the National Rural Letter Carriers Association (NRLCA) contract negotiations that are currently taking place,

Management is not offering very much.

According to reports I have read on the Internet, the APWU was basically offered a two-tiered wage system with a "grand father clause". All current employees covered by the APWU would be grandfathered in at the current wages and benefits. However, newly hired employees would be hired in at lower wages with fewer benefits. The danger in accepting this proposal is pretty obvious. Moreover, you can guess what would

happen in subsequent negotiations years later down the road. Management will claim that the legacy costs (retirement & health benefits) of "grandfathered" employees are too expensive and the USPS will attempt to negotiate or arbitrate the "grandfathered" protections away. In addition, Management will have an incentive to fire or harass into retirement "grandfathered" employees and replace them with casuals, TE's, or PTF's at lower wages and fewer benefits, if any. As of this date, the APWU has extended their talks.

On the other hand, the Rural Letter Carriers negotiations have come to an impasse and have ended. The NRLCA is going to arbitration. The NRLCA had no choice; they were not presented with any type of fair offer. To my knowledge, the Rural Carriers were offered a wage freeze, a reduction in benefits, and lower wages and benefits for new hires. Management also wanted to rescind the COLA and the no layoff provisions. In my opinion, the Rural Carriers were offered nothing.

As I have written, it's going to be a challenging year. But, we will get through it. We will try to keep the membership as informed as possible, so stay tuned. All for now back in two.

Oxnard Combined Federal Campaign a Huge Success



This morning, it was announced to the employees of the Oxnard P.O. that they had SHATTERED the goal of \$10,000 for this years CFC campaign. The final total for the Oxnard Post Office CFC contributions is a whopping \$13,013.28! Up from a previous best of \$4800.

The photo on the left is a picture of our CFC coordinator Ernestine Hernandez pointing to our goal thermometer, which has been and remains on our office "how are we doing?" board. Ernestine put a lot of hard work into this campaign, and its suc-

cess was due in part to her efforts.

The photo on the right is a close up picture of our thermometer "busting out the top" to show the world that the Oxnard Post Office employees have hearts of Gold.

This has to be one of my proudest moments as the Postmaster of the Oxnard P.O. Individual awards and praise pale when compared to the pride of being the leader of such a dedicated, hard working, and generous group of people. Oxnard Post Office Employees are THE BEST!



Ready or Not, here Comes FSS

By Ray Hill, Executive Vice-President

Happy New Year! 2011 will no doubt be a challenging year for Branch 2902 Letter Carriers with the implementation of the Flat Sequencing System (FSS) *finally* coming to some of the offices represented by Branch 2902 in January. We've been hearing about FSS for the past few years and the implementation dates kept getting delayed, time and time again, much to the delight of most Letter Carriers and Branch Officers, myself included.

However, all indications are that **this time** the boy ain't crying wolf, Armageddon is finally here, and that the FSS Machines really will be up and running this January. Ready or not, here comes FSS.

Do any of you out there remember the old "throw the baby in the pool, school of swimming"?

Well, I get the feeling that our Letter Carriers will learn how to handle FSS mail in much the same way that a baby thrown into a swimming pool learns how to swim. It's sink or swim, baby, sink or swim.

There will definitely be a learning curve when it comes to handling the flats. Fortunately, Letter Carriers are a smart lot and I have every confidence that our membership will quickly figure out the best way to handle and deliver FSS mail. What has yet to be determined is the exact impact that FSS will have on the route times. We do know that office times will be reduced and that street times will increase, especially while Carriers are learning the best way to handle the FSS mail.

How much will the office times be reduced? We really don't know yet. How much will street times expand? Again, we don't know and won't know until FSS is up and running and the Carriers learn the most efficient way to work with it.

Sierra Coastal District Upper Management has made some drastic predictions about the impact that FSS will have on the Letter Carrier Craft, including the loss of 50 routes per FSS Machine. There are 3 FSS machines in the Sierra Coastal District, all at the old plant in Van Nuys. If you believe Management's dire predictions, the District will lose 150 routes when all 3 machines are up and running. Maybe I'm wrong but I just don't believe it. I think that 50 routes per machine is way over the top and that Management will not see such drastic route reductions as a result of FSS.

We do know, however, that there will be an impact on the Letter Carrier Craft and that we will lose routes as a result of FSS. For quite some time now, both in anticipation of FSS finally being implemented and with all of the joint route adjustment processes we've gone through during the past 3 years, the Union has preached the importance of Carriers "protecting" their street times by completing their street functions on street time, not on office time.

We've preached that office times would be greatly reduced with FSS and that street times would be increased in offices with FSS. Some of you wisely listened to the preaching and understood that with FSS on the horizon, it would be to your benefit to have as much street time and as little office time as possible.

Others did not listen, and continued to perform various street functions on office time, thereby reducing their street times and skewing their "performance to standard" numbers. The Union's message was the same in IRAP, MIARAP, and JARAP: Perform as many functions on street time as possible.

Nevertheless, some Carriers continued to do the following street functions on Office Time: Getting DPS Mail, loading their vehicles, separating undeliverable street mail in the office instead of on the street as they worked throughout the day, unloading their vehicles, and sorting their outgoing mail. These are all street functions that should be performed on street time.

Some carriers continued to "sandwich" their flats, to rubber band individual stops and to do other things that increase office time and reduce street time. I understand that Carriers will ask the following question: "what difference does it make if I take more time in the office but less time on the street? After all, time is time, right"? I understand the Carrier's logic; however office functions must be performed on office time and street functions must be performed on street time.

Well, you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink, that's for sure. We preached and some of you listened; many others did not. Anyway, ready or not FSS is here and we will learn to live with it and effectively deal with it, just like we learned to live with DPS. Although there may be some rough sailing ahead, we will survive. I will report more on FSS after it is actually implemented.

Did anyone notice the 1.85 % contractual increase that we started earning on November 20, 2010? For a top step Letter Carrier this raise equates to 44 cents per hour or \$911 per year. A top step T-6 will earn an additional 45 cents per hour or \$931 per year. Especially in these lousy economic times, this 1.85% raise is a hell of a lot better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick, right?

In my last MailBag News Article I printed some of the regulations regarding Apartment Mail Boxes, Directories, etc. After that article was printed, I was contacted by Letter Carrier Manny from Oxnard, also known as Manny from Newberry Park. Manny was complaining about the conditions of some of the curb side mailboxes he has delivered to, where the boxes have broken posts and are sitting on a box or hung on a fence or the post falls over every time you put the mail in the box. Manny asked me to print the Postal Operations Manual provisions regarding curbside mailboxes. So here

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A NEW YEAR IS HERE!

By Ernestine Hernandez, Vice President/Oxnard Chief Shop Steward

Happy New Year to everyone, I hope all your Holidays were great! This year will be an interesting one. But before we go forward, let's take a look back. We have a lot to be thankful for as we remember some of the things that have touched our lives. For example, our very good friend and co-worker Joe Hererra pulled through from a serious health problem that

almost took his life. We are so happy for him and his family that he is doing okay. It makes us realize that we are all here by the grace of GOD and the love of our families, but can lose it all in a split second.

Another thing we can all be proud and thankful for is the big hearts that were displayed when so many of our co-workers pulled together to contribute to the CFC Campaign. Many families outside our own will be able to benefit from a variety of charitable programs that will help them meet the challenges of their lives. We reached our goal of \$10,000.00! Cheers to everyone who contributed!

This year we will face new challenges and will be going through contract negotiations, we can only hope they all go smoothly. Our National officers will be out there battling on our behalf for a decent contract. It doesn't matter if we are NALC members or not, the new contract will affect and benefit us all. But in the current atmosphere of union busting meant to hurt all working people and benefit corporation heads, our officers will have their hands full. We need to stand behind them and give them all our support if we want to see our contract stay strong for everyone. We want to see the Postal Service grow and see everyone's job protected. We want to have the PTF's become full-time regulars because they don't put in all their efforts to do a good job, just to be cast aside! Plus we want to see our benefits and salaries remain steady and not go into a two tier wage system that will hurt future full time employees. But remember, we are also under the control of Congress and the Postal Regulatory Committee. We need to be vigilant that Congress members are being made aware of the truth and are not focusing on negative propoganda that is attempting to force the demise of the Postal Service as we know it

One way to accomplish this is to sign up to be an e-activist to receive e-mail updates and alerts, and also by contributing to COLCPE. What is COLCPE you ask? COLCPE stands for Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education. It is the NALC's Political Action Committee or PAC. The COLCPE contributions are used by the NALC to fund campaign contributions and efforts to educate Congress members regardless of their party to defend Letter Carrier benefits and protect Letter Carrier jobs, support policies that are favorable to all working people, defending social security, improving health care benefits, and strengthening collective bargaining rights.

Show our friends in Congress that have supported us in the past on our legislative priorities, that we appreciate what they have done for us by convincing other Congress members to support us as well.

The interests we are protecting by contributing to COLCPE are to maintain a strong U.S. Postal Service, job security for Letter Carriers, affordable health care benefits and safe and secure pensions. But the NALC needs to count on a steady influx of funds to accomplish this, and asks that all members realize it is their jobs and benefits that are constantly being fought for. Sign up today for payroll deductions to contribute to COLCPE. If we don't stand together to do this, we may fall and lose it all. There are other Corporate PAC's already contributing millions waiting to see us fail, and take over our jobs. What sort of jobs will be out there for us if that happens?

It is not hard to sign up to contribute to COLCPE through payroll deductions and \$5.00 per pay period is not a difficult amount to give. Many say they cannot afford to give that amount, but can they really afford to stand by and do nothing and see themselves lose their jobs and benefits? All it takes is the stroke of the "Legislative Pen" for this to happen. Think about this when you are making your New Years resolutions this year and pledge to support your jobs through COLCPE contributions.

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Superficial Climate Assessment

By Robbie Elsleh, Moorpark Alternate Shop Steward

For about 5 years now, since the installation of our present Postmaster, the family atmosphere in Moorpark has deteriorated to the point where Carriers dread going in to work every day. We used to have Holiday office parties all the time, and now, we haven't had one in 3 years. One Carrier wants to transfer out, and another looks to be detailed out. The incivility treatment and arrogant disregard for our contractual rights have harmed and scarred many. Although attention is finally being focused on the climate in Moorpark, which is long overdue, the recently conducted and well meaning Climate Assessment Survey was shallow. It appears to me that it only dealt with, or attempted to comprehend what was on the surface, and this made the conclusion insubstantial and insignificant. I will attempt to point out some of my concerns with the Assessment Report and explain why.

Issue One

Given the past 4 or 5 years of conflicts between craft and Management in Moorpark, a 2-person team comprised of Management personnel was assembled to conduct a "Climate Assessment Survey" on Moorpark Management. Did I just say what I think I said? Management was put in charge of investigating Management. Yah, I guess I did. How could a fair and balanced investigation be done by Management investigating one of their own?

Issue Two

The report reads: *"Before beginning the survey, a discussion with Richard Sigman, Postmaster was held to gain some insight into the nature of the conflict in the office. One of the main issues he identified was a high volume of grievances being filed in the office by the alternate shop steward and the tension that it creates."* Well, the PM forgot to mention that there is also a high volume of unprofessionalism, disrespect, and repeated intentional contractual violations being committed by him and the tension that that creates. The Survey Team did not find it necessary to hold a pre-survey discussion with me to gain that insight.

Issue Three

The report reads: *"Twenty-three out of a total complement of 31 employees were interviewed in person (74%), who included 22 craft members and one management."* *"One employee reported that the alternate Shop Steward creates problems in the office by getting everyone riled up."* The Survey was to include 100% of the craft employees whether they were on a detail assignment or on vacation that week. I know for a fact that 2 employees (myself included) who were away from the office took it upon ourselves to contact and inform a member of the Survey Team of our whereabouts so we could be interviewed, but the interviews did not occur. I was even working in the same building as one of the members of the Survey Team but on a different floor. Maybe if they thought we had something positive to say about the PM they would have found time to survey us?

Issue Four

The report reads in part: *"Typically, in assessing the overall climate of a facility we look at grievance, EEO and VOE (Voice of the Employee) data..."* *"The VOE Index Score for FY2010 was 59.9..."* *"A VOE action plan was requested but not available..."* *"The Postmaster states that there were five EEO complaints filed within the last year; three from the alternate shop steward for insufficient union time..."* *"The number of grievances filed in the last 12 months, with brief descriptions of each complaint was requested but not provided to include in this report."* OMG... Where do I start? First of all, a VOE score of 59.9% is a "Failing" grade in any institution, yet there was no action plan created by Moorpark Management to improve on this? What does that tell you? Second, I have never filed a single EEO complaint in my life, let alone three. I once filed an Unfair Labor Practice against the PM for repeated denials of Union time. And third, if I was the PM whose Office Climate is being investigated, why would I want to give the Survey Team copies of all the warranted and upheld grievances against myself? It would be like acting as my own prosecution. On the other hand, if I was the PM making allegations that the alternate Shop Steward is filing too many unnecessary frivolous grievances, I would gladly provide copies to prove my case. Yet, the Survey Team says that grievances were *"requested but not provided."* No one asked me, Chief Steward Lori, or President Frank Salazar to provide copies of any grievances, I wonder why?

Issue Five

The report reads: *"While 39% of the employees were generally satisfied with their workplace environment and their relationship with management, a significant majority believed it could be improved."* In other words, **61% of the employees are dissatisfied with their workplace environment and their relationship with management.** Once again, OMG... A "Failing" grade, 39% is an "F" minus minus. In addition, if the Survey Team found the time to do a deeper investigation rather than just a superficial one, they would have insisted on getting copies of all grievances, and also reached out to interview the other 9 employees that were absent during their 3 day visit to Moorpark. This would have revealed an even higher employee dissatisfaction percentage.

Issue Six

The report reads: 1) *"When the lack of respect was discussed with Mr. Sigman, he said, it goes both ways."* 2) *"Mr. Sigman confirmed that at times he does raise his voice but he did not perceive it as yelling."* So there you have it. The PM has just admitted and confirmed that he indeed disrespects his employees. So from now on, every time an employee files a grievance of unprofessionalism against the PM, a copy of this report will be included in the file to substantiate the charge along with all other past grievances. By the way, since the completion of this Climate Assessment Survey, there has been 2 more unpro-

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Universal Your Life In 2011

By Chris Alessi, MBA/NSBA Representative

ness, Prosperity, and Good Health.

The Mutual Benefits Association's Universal Life insurance plan it is the most affordable and flexible way to protect your family while investing for the future. Especially in these days when money is tight you can decrease or even suspend paying premiums while your insurance coverage stays in force. As your financial responsibilities to your family grow you can increase the amount of insurance protection. For example, when the kids are off to college, you can tell the MBA to lower your insurance protection. You can also decide to accelerate the growth of your nest egg by increasing your payments.

Unlike Whole Life policies, if you need any of your cash back, in times of emergencies you don't have to take a loan from the insurance company and pay interest, you simply make a withdrawal. As long as your cash account maintains a positive balance, your policy stays in force. This policy is available to you as an NALC member and to your immediate family. It is always a good idea to insure your spouse, especially if your family depends on two incomes. Universal Life can help pay off

I hope all our members and their families enjoyed a wonderful Christmas and New Years and all the celebrations that go with them. My wish is that you will have a great year ahead filled with Love, Happiness, Prosperity, and Good Health.

your mortgage and buy your children things they need. You can even use your policy to contribute to their college expenses. Because the plan builds cash value, it can provide you and your spouse with a nice retirement nest egg. Premiums are based on your age at time of purchase.

The MBA will keep you informed by sending you an annual report of your policy stating how much insurance coverage you have, how much it costs to provide you that insurance coverage, how much your policy is worth in cash, and lastly how much interest you earned in the previous year.

I encourage all of the members of The NALC who may be deciding on life insurance needs, to look into the Universal Life plan. You may find that it is the way to go. You can choose to pay through convenient bi-weekly payroll deductions, or you can opt for direct monthly or annual payments. You can even make lump sum payments.

In closing I want to send my deepest condolences to the Degenhardt and the Speer Families for the loss of their loved ones, my heart goes out to them during this time and I will keep you and your families in my prayers for peace and strength. The word of God says we will reunite with our love ones when the time comes for his return, and we will rejoice together for eternity.

In solidarity, God Bless You, Chris

READY OR NOT...

Continued from page 3

they are for 2 of the pertinent provisions for all of you Carriers with mounted deliveries.

632.523 Posts and Supports

The Postal Service does not regulate mailbox supports in any way except for purposes of carrier safety and delivery efficiency. Posts and other supports for curbside mailboxes are owned and controlled by customers, who are responsible for ensuring that posts are neat and adequate in strength and size. Heavy metal posts, concrete posts, and miscellaneous items of farm equipment, such as milk cans filled with concrete, are examples of

potentially dangerous supports. The ideal support is an assembly that bends or falls away when struck by a vehicle. Post or support designs may not represent effigies or caricatures that disparage or ridicule any person.

Customers may attach the box to a fixed or movable arm.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has determined that mailbox supports no larger than 4 inches by 4 inches, or a 2-inch diameter standard

steel or aluminum pipe, buried no more than 24 inches, should safely break away if struck by a vehicle. According to FHWA, the mailbox must also be securely attached to its post to prevent separation if struck.

632.524 Location

Curbside mailboxes must be placed so that they may be safely and conveniently served by carriers without leaving their conveyances. They must be reasonably and safely accessed by customers. Boxes must also be on the right-hand side of the road and in the carrier's direction of travel in all cases where driving on the left-hand side of the road to reach the boxes would pose a traffic hazard or violate traffic laws and regulations. Boxes must be placed to conform to state laws and highway regulations. Carriers are subject to the same traffic laws and regulations as are other motorists. Customers must remove obstructions, including vehicles, trash cans, and snow, that make delivery difficult. Generally, mailboxes are installed at a height of 41 to 45 inches from the road surface to the bottom of the mailbox or point of mail entry. Mailboxes are set back 6 to 8 inches from

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2nd Annual MDA Bowl-A-Thon

By Sandy Gaunce, MDA Representative

On November 7th, we participated in the 2nd Annual NALC National Bowl-A-Thon. Brunswick Bowling of Simi Valley donated the lanes and shoes for everyone. We also provided Donuts for some quick

energy for the bowlers.

We had 12 bowlers and brought in \$1047 for MDA. A special "THANK YOU" goes to Bob Golden for the large donation he collected for MDA. Thanks again Bob.

Our bowlers were: Mike Charles, Ray Hill, Matt Hill, Richard Uhlman, Patty Uhlman, David Hyman, Frank Salazar, Ernestine Hernandez, Bob Golden, Bev Sucich, Dan Gorman, and Jim Kirkland. Prizes were given to Mike Charles (High Score), Ernestine Hernandez (Low Score) and Matt Hill for (Best Team Player).

Thanks to Brad Roseling and the entire team at the

Brunswick Zone bowling alley for their donation of free bowling lanes and shoes and helping us to make this a great event.

Everyone had a lot of fun and we look forward to a bigger and better next year.

Thank you for your support in helping MDA.

Brad Roseling
General Manager

Team Member
Since 1978



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FOR THE GOOD LIFE

By Bev Sucich, Director of Retirees



I hope everyone had a great thanksgiving, Christmas and a wonderful holiday season and a safe and prosperous New Year.

I would like to thank a few retirees that contacted me, who wanted to donate to COLCPE. We need to support this cause to better our union and our workers.

Don Esterman was in the hospital again for some minor medical reasons. He is home from the hospital and recovering and we wish him the best.

We lost one of our retirees this past week, Bill Speer, mostly known as "Wild Bill". We wish his family and friends our sincere condolences. I did not know Bill that well, but he attended our general meetings and retirement luncheons and he always was in good spirits. We are going to miss him.

Dan Gorman and I went to Chicago to spend Thanksgiving with my son Glenn and his family. It was 20 degrees at night and 40 degrees during the day. There was no snow but it was cold. Our weather is good here in California. It is always nice to spend quality time with your out of state families. If anybody wants to share their vacations or holidays just let me know.

The Shop Stewards had their annual appreciation night on Dec 7th at the union hall and it was a success. Sue Degenhardt, Debbie Riggs, Dan Gorman and I decorated the union

hall and had food catered from Stonefire and we all seemed to have a great time. Ernestine Hernandez and Steve Leyton entertained us with Karaoke and that was the hit of the night. A few of us were brave enough to join them and it was a lot of fun. They are invited for next year. Thanks everyone who made the night great.

Our luncheon for Oct. 21st at Hometown Buffet in West Hills had 20 members and 11 guests.

The winners were Al Covarrubias-an ice cream scooper, Carmen Lucio-a Chilis gift card, Greg Gaddis a subway gift card, John Mendez a clock, and June Tipton a Hometown Buffet gift card.

Our luncheon on Nov. 18th at Hometown Buffet in Simi Valley had 18 members and 9 guests.

The winners were Hal Grundland a chili gift card, Steve Garfinkel a Hometown Buffet gift card and Mike Zieper a Chili's gift card.

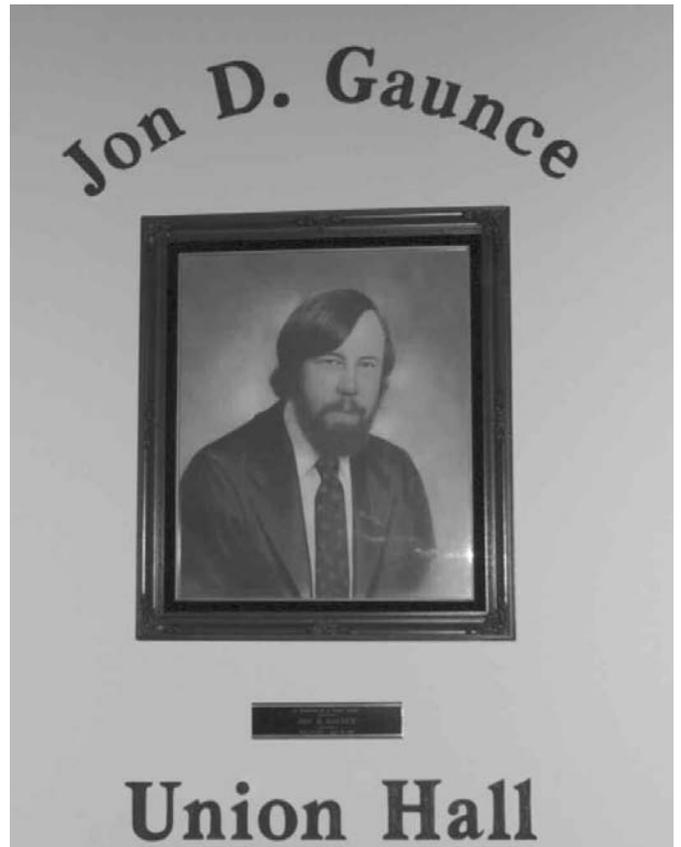
Paul thanks for doing such a great job on the Mail Bag News and thanks for your patience with my deadlines on the 10th.

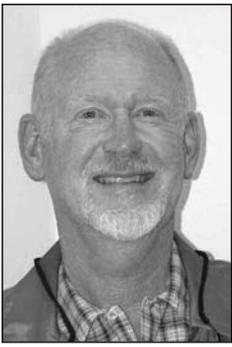
I just want to thank all the officers who did a great job in 2010 because they go out of their way to make sure everyone is protected from management. We have the best officers and we are proud to be part of Tri-Valley Branch 2902.

I wish everyone a prosperous 2011.

Jon D. Gaunce Union Hall Formally Dedicated

Pictured above is the portrait of Tri-Valley branch 2902 founder Jon Gaunce which hangs in the newly formalized Jon D. Gaunce Union Hall.





The PS-3996 and YOU!

By Greg A. Gaddis, Shop Steward / Trustee

Happy New Year to one and all, I can't believe another year has come and gone. I hope all of you had a safe and enjoyable holiday season. May the coming year bring you good health and fulfillment

for you and your families.

Speaking of another year, I have been retired for almost three years now from the Postal Service. Time sure flies when you're having fun, when it comes to my Shop Steward activity more free time at home, etc. This brings me to the title of my article. I know there have been a lot of articles and speeches written about the use of the 3996.... so here goes another one. Please continue to read my article and consider what I have to say... it's for your benefit.

Believe it or not, the 3996 is a very important piece of paper. I need the 3996 when I'm investigating a possible grievance concerning overtime issues. One of my wishes for all of the Letter Carriers this year would be the use of the 3996 whenever you are requesting extra time to complete your duties. This is not just a wish of mine, though you should be completing a 3996 as part of your job duties under section 2 of the M-41 handbook that is located at all of the route cases, when you can't complete your duties within 8 hours.

When I file a grievance for you over an overtime issue, whether you were mandated to work overtime on or off your route and you are a non-overtime Carrier, you need to complete a 3996. Or you are a work assignment Carrier and you had to work off your route on overtime, you should complete a 3996 for the swing you worked on. Or you are on the overtime list and management did not work you up to the required hours of overtime, before mandating the other Carriers, see your Shop Steward if this happens.

After I request your 3996, I will check to see how much time you requested, what was approved or disapproved by the Supervisor. I may also need to see a 3996 for any swing assistance that was given to a route that I'm investigating. In other words, I need to show there was a violation. I have to show that you completed a 3996 because you could not complete your duties, you were instructed to work off your route on overtime, or you were not worked the required hours, etc.

In most cases, I can get you paid if you were mandated to work overtime and an additional payment to the Carrier who should have worked the overtime. However it's very hard to win a grievance and get you paid if you do not fill out the 3996. You should also request a copy of the 3996 for yourself. Management can not refuse to give you a copy. I can't tell you how many times a Supervisor will tell me that there wasn't a 3996 and the Carrier tells me they forgot to fill one out, it was lost or they don't have a copy. If I can't prove there was a violation, there may not be a grievance and you may not get paid.

Remember that you have to request a 3996 if you can't complete your duties in 8 hours, be back by 5pm, etc. In most offices

management won't give you a 3996 unless you request it. The Supervisor will think you are just fine and going to do your assignment in 8 hours if you don't request a 3996. When you don't request a 3996 and go into overtime, you get into expansion of street time or unauthorized overtime issues.

You also have to complete a 3996 for every swing that comes off your route, if you are the regular Carrier or a Carrier on an opt assignment and you give off swings. For those of you who deliver the swing, the first thing you should look for is the 3996. The first portion of the form should already be completed, so you know where to deliver the swing and how long the swing is. You have to complete the bottom portion whenever you deliver a swing. This information is needed to show me how long the swing took you to deliver, including travel time. You also have to swipe your badge to the route you worked on when you return to the office. Please don't leave the office without the 3996. If a swing is brought out to you, make sure there is a 3996. You can always fill one out when you return to the office if you have to.

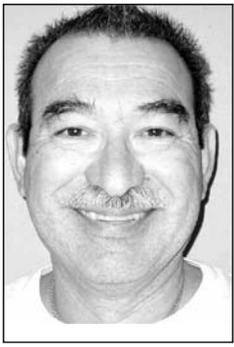
This goes for casing on another route, other than your assignment. When you swipe your badge and enter the route you worked on, the clock rings will show me where you worked and for how long. If you do not know how to input your time into the badge reader, ask a Supervisor to show you how to do it. They should not deny your request. It's their job to show you so the time is given to the right route. If they tell you they don't have time, see your Shop Steward. The bottom line is, complete a 3996 and use the badge reader to record your information if you are instructed to do the following:

- 1) Casing on a different route other than your own assignment, regardless if it's a.m. or p.m. and regardless if it's on overtime or straight time.
- 2) Any time you deliver a swing off your regular assignment regardless if it's on overtime or straight time.
- 3) If you are doing collections, pick-ups, etc that is not part of your regular assignment and regardless if it's on overtime or straight time.

The time it takes you to fill out the 3996 and swipe your badge is minimal and like I stated earlier, it's part of your job duties. When you don't complete a 3996 and you work on another route, the "numbers" are screwed up. If you are a regular carrier and you deliver a swing or case on another route, and you don't complete a 3996 or swipe your badge accordingly. Guess what happens? All of the time you spent off your regular assignment does not go away. It stays with your regular assignment. You have to remember when you swiped your badge in the morning but failed to swipe "move" to another assignment. All of the other time you spent off your route is still tracked to your route if you didn't fill out the 3996 and used the badge reader to show you moved to another assignment.

So if you spent 8 hours on your route and spent 2 more

continued on page 11



New Year, Better Plan

By Joe Gutierrez, Health Benefits Representative

you did comparison shopping and compared what all plans had to offer.

Now that you have made your choice during the coming months I will try to highlight what the NALC plan offers and how to take advantage of the cost savings.

The drug program has some huge costs savings if you read your brochure. When the plan is primary a 60 day supply is \$8 for generic and \$43 for brand name medication. A 90 day supply is \$12 for generic and \$7.99 for NALC preferred generic, \$5 for NALC select generic and \$65 for brand name.

These costs above are for mail order or purchase at a CVS or Longs drugs store. The new terms preferred and select generics are for drugs that are for people on what are call maintenance choice program.

People with high blood pressure, diabetes or any other condition that requires daily medication would take advantage of this program. The costs for people with Medicare part B would pay \$5 or \$4 for select generics. With preferred generics and Medicare part B you pay \$4. For seniors, antibiotic generics of-

fers select prescription generic medications at no cost for a 30 day supply when purchased at a local NALC Careselect or NALC preferred pharmacy and Medicare part B is primary.

For more information or a better understanding of the above costs see the NALC prescription booklet or give me a call.

Additionally, annual physical exams age three and over at PPO facilities are free, Well care for children up to age 2 and routine immunizations to age 21 are free. Adult routine immunizations and tests are free, all these if done at a PPO provider. Office visits are \$20 co-pay, lab services if done at Labcorp or Quest Diagnostics is free. Complete maternity care including inpatient hospital is free. Inpatient hospital care is only \$200.00 co-pay per admission. Just about everything else is 15% after a \$300 deductible.

The plan in partners with Cigna has many other discounts on health-related products and services. The savings can be anywhere from 5% to 60% on gym memberships, vision and hearing care, weight and nutrition programs. Wellness products, alternative medicine and certain dental care are also offered under the Healthy Rewards Member Discounts section of the health plan.

Remember that the plan is owned by letter carriers and has only you to answer to. The more you support the plan the more it can offer the members in benefits and cost savings.

Hopefully I will be at the January meeting, see you then

SUPERFICIAL CLIMATE...

Continued from page 5

fessional grievances appealed to the Dispute Resolution Team (DRT), and a 3rd grievance is in the works as of today. And as far as for the PM's response about his perceived yelling at employees, think about it this way: A cop pulls you over for speeding and you tell him; well officer, at times I do drive over the speed limit, but I do not perceive it as speeding. Come on, Give me a break... Speeding is speeding, and YELLING IS YELLING!

There are a few more issues of inaccuracies in the Survey report, but as Frank would say, I digress. I just want to get to the findings of the Survey. The report concludes that the PM's behavioral interactions with employees create, "animosities, resentments, and antagonistic reactions can arise. Instead of a team, an office can become an atmosphere of tension between craft and management. While we did not find any patterns of behavior that would violate our Zero Tolerance policy..."

I have news for the Survey Team; the atmosphere of tension is already there and has been for some time. That is why you were brought in. How can you find that an office climate has been cultivated to sprout animosities, resentment, antagonistic reactions and an atmosphere of tension, yet find no pattern of behavior that would violate the Zero Tolerance Policy? Let's take this word by word. Animosity is a feeling of strong dislike;

resentment is a feeling of displeasure at something or someone considered unjust, offensive and insulting; antagonistic means combative, hostile and unfriendly; and tension in this case refers to mental or emotional strain. Putting all this together means that the PM has directed and infected at least 61% of the employees interviewed to have a strong dislike of coming to work because of the unjust, offensive and insulting treatment that they are subject to, which can spark hostile and combative reactions due to the mental or emotional state of the ill-treated. But yet, that behavior is not inappropriate or unacceptable enough to violate the Zero Tolerance Policy or the Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace? Astonishing.

The Zero Tolerance Policy states: "Violence is not limited to fatalities or physical injuries. Intentional words, acts, or action(s) meant to provoke another can escalate into confrontation and physical violence." The Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace reads in parts: "Those who do not treat others with dignity and respect will not be rewarded or promoted. **Those whose unacceptable behavior continues will be removed from their positions.**" "Let there be no mistake that we mean what we say and we will enforce our commitment to a workplace where dignity, respect, and fairness are basic human rights, and where those who do not respect those rights are not tolerated." "Our intention is to make the workroom floor a safer, more harmonious, as well as a more productive workplace."

continued on page 11

SUPERFICIAL CLIMATE...

Continued from page 10

What more can I say. The behavior by the PM continues even after corrective action was instituted by the MPOO prior to the Climate Assessment Survey. As I stated earlier, 2 more un-professional grievances have been appealed to the DRT and a 3rd one is in the works. The PM continues to harm employees by his refusal to stop doing craft work after numerous DRT decisions. His most recent blatant craft work violation was committed right under the noses of the Survey Team while they conducted Carrier interviews in his office.

Nothing has and nothing will change. As long as the PM's offices productivity numbers are high, it's business as usual in Moorpark. But let it be known that the Carriers in Moorpark are amongst the best I have ever worked with and it's not because of the bully style Management tactics, it's because we care.

I hope everyone had a healthy and happy Holiday season.

THE PS3996...

Continued from page 9

hours off your assignment and did nothing after you started your duties in the morning. Your regular route assignment will show you used 10 hours. All of the time is tracked to your route because you did not complete a 3996 and swiped your badge to the other assignment.

Now I know what some of you are thinking. "Hey my route will now show it's longer and I'll get a route adjustment"....not gonna happen. You can bet your Supervisor will be at your case the very next morning wanting "their pound of flesh" to know why you used so much time to complete your assignment. Your Supervisor will have all the numbers from the computer (DOIS) and it will tell them you should have completed your duties in 8 hours, (which you did). Not the 10 hours that you used when you failed to use a 3996 and swipe to the other assignment for the other 2hrs. Worst yet, you could be hauled into the office for a fact-finding investigation and have to answer questions why you took so long on your assignment. You might even receive discipline for expansion of office or street time as a result.

Why would you want to put yourself in the scenario I just described? If you had used the 3996 and swiped your badge to the route you were casing and or delivering, none of the above would have happened. Of course after you completed the 3996 and swiped to the other route, your Supervisor has to do their job to insure the times are correct. Although I will have to say that for the Carriers that has used a 3996 and the badge reader correctly, the Supervisor has made sure the times are correct...most of the time.

The routes will not be adjusted properly if you don't use the 3996 and the badge reader to show where you worked. The routes that should have the extra time added to show they received additional assistance are now out of adjustment. That's because there was no recorded information.

If you didn't use the 3996 or the badge reader to show where you worked, you may not get paid when I investigate a possible grievance on your behalf. It's that simple, use it or lose it. Until next time.

William "Wild Bill" Speer: 1942 - 2010

Long-time Topangan William "Wild Bill" Speer passed away November 24 at age 68.

Speer is survived by his brother, Steve and son, Billy.

Gary Cheney remembers what it was like growing up as his friend:

Bill Speer moved into Topanga Canyon in 1946 when he was about five years old. His family built a house on a 40-acre parcel, part of the old Santa Maria homestead on Santa Maria Road.

Bill grew up like the rest of us Topanga boys at the time, catching baby ravens, hawks and owls for pets and hunting to put meat on the family table. He always had a love of animals and throughout his life there were always a lot of animals around his home. Of course, this included the usual dogs, cats, chickens and so on, but he also had some more unusual pets as well, including rattlesnakes.

At some point over the years, Bill got tired of killing the rattlers that would turn up on his doorstep, so he built a large wire enclosure and kept the snakes inside. He trapped ground squirrels and gophers to feed the snakes and they grew to be very large and lazy. It was quite a sight to see 10 or 12 enormous rattlers lying around sunning themselves in the pen!

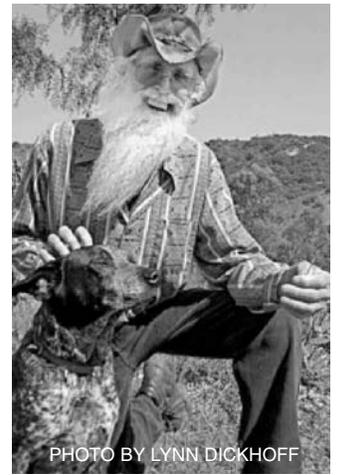
Bill was also a horseman and knew every trail in the Santa Monica Mountains. Dressed in black cowboy garb with a long grizzled beard, Bill sometimes cut an alarming figure as he bounded out of the brush on horseback, scattering hikers and bicyclists. But it took only a moment's conversation with Bill to learn that he was, in fact, one of the kindest and gentlest of souls—a real Topanga gem.

Another of Bill's passions was old cars. His 57 Chevy Bel-Air was his pride and joy but he had several other "vintage" cars including a 1970 El Camino. He drove the cars to work at the Woodland Hills Post Office, where he was a mailman for 37 years.

Bill lived life on his own terms and deliberately chose to allow much in the changing world to pass him by. A trip to the Speer property was like stepping into the past and always a treat for old-time Topanga guys like me. Whenever I visited the Canyon, I always made it a point to stop by and say hello and get a glimpse of "the good old days." I will miss Bill and the memories we shared of the open, free and more glorious Topanga we knew as kids. There aren't many of us left who know what it was like.

Godspeed, "Wild Bill."

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A real Topanga gem, "Wild Bill" Speer with his dog, Lucky, on his property on Santa Maria Road. He was a horseman and known to keep a menagerie of animals from llamas to rattlesnakes. His '57 Chevy Bel-Air was his pride and joy.

The Washington Post has done it again

Fredric V. Rolando, President, National Association of Letter Carriers

For the fourth time this year, the *Post* has offered an editorial on the Postal Service's financial problems that is remarkable in its ability to get even the most basic facts wrong. We have corrected the editors in published letters and we have met with the editorial writers. Yet the paper refuses to learn and appears to accept postal management's bogus talking points with an utter lack of skepticism. These are fundamental failings for so-called journalists.

Let's try it again. We hope they are paying attention over there on 15th Street.

1) The financial crisis at the Postal Service, including the large losses in recent years and the \$12 billion debt the paper decries, is not due to postal labor costs or the Internet. The entire amount is due to the massively unrealistic and unaffordable payments to pre-fund future retiree health benefits that Congress mandated between 2007 and 2016, of which \$20.9 billion have been made in the past four years. No other public agency or company in America, including The Washington Post Company (which does not pre-fund at retiree health benefits at all), is required to pre-fund such benefits.

The fact that labor costs represent 80 percent of total costs, as the *Post* editorial cites, does not mean that labor costs are excessive; it simply means that the USPS provides a labor-intensive service—we serve 150 million households and businesses each day, six days a week. Even so, labor costs as a percentage of total costs have declined (to 78 percent excluding the pre-funding costs) over time from a peak of 86 percent in 1979. Moreover, as new Postmaster General Pat Donahoe testified last week before the Senate, postal productivity has increased dramatically over the years. That allows the USPS to provide universal service at among the most affordable postage rates in the world.

2) The postal unions are not “lobbying the Congress to re-

READY OR NOT...

Continued from page 6

the front face of the curb or road edge to the mailbox door. Because of varying road and curb conditions and other factors, the Postal Service recommends that customers contact the postmaster or carrier before erecting or replacing their mailboxes and supports.

There you have the Postal Operations Manual provisions regarding curbside mailboxes. I especially like the language that says that “*Post or support designs may not represent effigies or caricatures that disparage or ridicule any person*”. God forbid we disparage or ridicule any person on the post or support designs on our curbside mailboxes.

Talk to you all in two months.

lease the Postal Service from its requirement to pre-fund about \$5 billion in retiree health benefits,” as today's editorial asserts. As we told the editors in our face-to-face meeting, we are simply asking Congress to allow the USPS to use its massive pension surplus to cover the cost of the pre-funding payments.

Two independent, well respected private sector actuarial firms, The Hay Group and The Segal Company, have found that the USPS has overfunded its pension plans by between \$50 billion and \$75 billion over the past 40 years. If we were allowed to transfer these funds to our retiree health benefit fund, which currently has more than \$42 billion in it, we would have fully funded all our future liabilities—currently estimated to be \$92 billion over the next 75 years.

A pension transfer is sound public policy that is consistent with best practice in the private sector among ERISA pension plans. It would not only allow us to save the \$5.5 billion we are being charged each year, but it would allow us to avoid the kind of draconian cuts in service that The *Post* seems to take such joy in advocating—the elimination of Saturday delivery, the closing of thousands of post offices and the elimination of 80,000 jobs in the midst of a recession.

3) The *Post* has exposed its gullibility by swallowing hook, line and sinker the bogus claim by postal management that “federal law gives unions the edge in collective bargaining with postal management,” as claimed in the latest editorial. It offers no evidence of this whatsoever, because there is no evidence. Postal wages and postage prices have risen in line with inflation over the past 40 years of bargaining and postal productivity gains have more than allowed the USPS to absorb the rising cost of benefits (especially health benefits) while taxpayer subsidies that once covered a quarter of the budget were eliminated.

Rather, the *Post* has bought into postal management's dishonest argument that arbitration boards “are not required to consider the financial condition of the Postal Service in their decisions.” This is simply not true. The law requires, and the practices and standards of professional arbitrators mandate, that arbitration boards consider all the evidence presented by the parties. Testimony and data on postal finances is always presented by one or both of the parties. In fact, management's claim is absurd: Postal interest arbitration is a tri-partite process, with arbitrators appointed by both management and the union joining a neutral arbitrator on boards established to resolve bargaining impasses. Apparently, the USPS has convinced the *Post*'s editors that its management arbitrators are struck dumb, like potted plants, when it comes to presenting management's financial evidence to the other arbitrators. This is nonsense and postal management knows it. And *The Washington Post* should know better than to fall for it.

Understanding the financial crisis facing the Postal Service is not easy. But it is not rocket science. Shame on *The Washington Post* for misleading its readers.

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



Where: Hometown Buffet
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When: Thursday,
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Time: 11:00am to 1:00pm



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Be who you are and say what you feel 'cause people who mind don't matter and people who matter don't mind.

—Theodor Seuss Geisel
(aka “Dr. Seuss”) Author,
Born 1904; Died 1991

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Fillmore Chief S.S.	Call Office
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At the monthly meetings (every third Tuesday of the month) coupons and flyers for various venues are available.

My famous homemade oatmeal chocolate chip cookies are 4 for \$1.00.

PAULETTE DYER

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DINNER starts at 6pm

KNOW YOUR HISTORY NO MORE SUNDAY WORK

As a result of intense lobbying efforts by the NALC, in 1912 Congress passed the Reilly Eight-in-Ten hour Act, which stated that Postal employees could not be forced to spread their eight-hour shift over more than ten consecutive hours. Equally important was a law passed at the same time, the Mann Sunday Closing act-which closed Post Offices on Sunday, thus guaranteeing postal employees at least one day off every week.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

The M-39 section 242.332 states that no Carrier shall be disciplined for failure to meet standards, except in cases of unsatisfactory effort which must be based on documented, unacceptable conduct that led to the carrier's failure to meet office standards.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JAN 17 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday-Holiday



JAN 18 Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Union Hall-Chatsworth
Dinner served 6 pm

JAN 20 Retiree Lunch 11:00am
Hometown Buffet-Simi Valley

FEB 1 Executive Board Meeting 6pm
Executive Council Meeting 7pm

FEB 14 Valentine's Day



FEB 15 Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Garden Palm Hotel-Newbury Park

FEB 17 Retiree Lunch 11:00am
Hometown Buffet-West Hills

FEB 21 Presidents Day-Holiday)



MAR 1 Executive Board Meeting 6pm
Executive Council Meeting 7pm

MAR 13 Daylight Savings Time Begins



MAR 15 Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Union Hall-Chatsworth
Dinner served 6 pm

MAR 17 Retiree Lunch 11:00am
Hometown Buffet-Simi Valley
St. Patrick's Day





THE Mail Bag NEWS

★ SOLIDARITY

★ EDUCATION

★ ORGANIZATION



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF TRI-VALLEY BRANCH 2902,
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS AFL-CIO

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VOLUME 53, NO. 2

Circulation 2,500

March - April 2011

FSS Is Coming, FSS Is Coming, FSS Is Here!

By Frank Salazar, President

After two years of delays, the Flats Sequencing System is finally up and running in our Branch. Before FSS hit our first office, I asked our District Manager, Kerry Wolny, if I could visit the plant and check out the FSS machines and visit an office outside our Branch that was receiving FSS before us. I just wanted to get an overall feel for what was happening and what to expect. I want to thank Mr. Wolny for giving me the opportunity to make my observations.

On January 3rd and on several other days, I visited the plant in Van Nuys to observe the FSS machines. There are 3 FSS machines in Van Nuys that are about 25 ft. tall, 90 ft. wide, and 120 ft. long more or less. The machines are capable of processing 16,500 pieces per hour or 280,500 pieces per day

to more than 125,000 delivery addresses. The machines are basically hands off with very little human labor involved. To be simplistic, mail can be hand fed into an inductor or fed through the use of a bulk mail container, which can be rolled up to the induction part of the machine. The inductor will mechanically lift and dump the mail on to a conveyor belt. The belt takes the flat material bundled or unbundled to clerk stations where clerks unwrap bundles of flats and face the flats labels up and binders down into green trays know as Automated Compatible



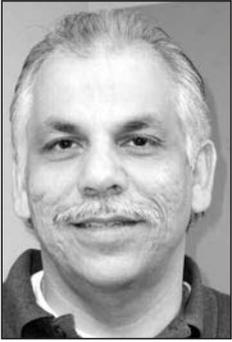
Trays (ACTs). When full, the clerk passes their hand over an electronic eye where the tray mechanically lowers and moves to another belt at the bottom of this machine. This belt takes the ACT to a stacker, which places it on a cart with wheels. Once the cart is full with ACTs, a clerk/mailhandler then moves this cart to the bigger machine, which sorts the mail into delivery order.

The bigger part of the machine takes the ACTs off the stackers and runs the ACTs through a series of belts and rollers where the mail is separated into stepped groups similar to two-pass. The mail is then transferred to Rigid Conventional Trays (RCTs), which are blue in color. The mail is then processed again and transferred into ACTs (green trays) where they are put into walk sequence order. Finally, the finished product is transferred into yellow street trays (the carrier takes these trays out to the street) where the machine stacks them into rolling carts. The carts are taken from this part of the machine and lined up for transportation. You have to see actually see the process to get a better idea. I may have gotten some of the steps and descriptions mixed up, but you get the general description. If you

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

Continued from page 1



want to check out the FSS machines in action, follow the links on the Branch website or check out Youtube by searching FSS machines.

La Crescenta Visit

On January 5th, I visited the La Crescenta office, which is part of Pasadena Branch 2200. I wanted to observe how the carriers were handling FSS, before it came to us. When I arrived, the MPOO Rick West was going to have carriers collate their residual mail (the mail you case) with the coverage. We convinced the MPOO that it would be better if the carriers collated the mail with the FSS flats. A joint memo signed by NALC President Emeritus Bill Young and USPS Vice President Doug Tulino (M-01663) states that if you're a park & loop route or a foot route or have that type of delivery on your route that you do not have to carry more than 3 bundles. Moreover, if the coverage meets the definition of carrying it as a 3rd bundle (ECRWSS- 90/75%), then a carrier is required to collate the residual mail with the FSS. If the coverage doesn't meet the criteria, then the carrier collates the residual mail into the coverage. However, if they gave us a choice, that would be the best bet. If they don't give us a choice, the rule is collate with FSS when the coverage is labeled ECRWSS. If the coverage is not ECRWSS, collate the residual with the coverage. Remember that this is only for Park & Loop and Foot Routes or sections.

When FSS does arrive at the unit, the yellow FSS street trays are rolled off the truck on rolling racks similar to what the DPS is staged on. Each tray is numbered and identified. Each letter carrier route has a color-coded placard assigned to it: Red signifies an all mounted route. There should be no collating of residual mail. Yellow signifies a combination park & loop and mounted route. There should be some partial collating. Green signifies a park & loop or foot route. There should be collating. Management devised this system so they can tell at a distance if you are doing something that you shouldn't be doing. Please remember that all collating is done in the office at the case, not on the street or in the parking lot.

S999 mail (holdouts, vacation holds, etc.) comes in its own street tray, which should be brought to your case by a clerk. I was told that some mail was shredded badly, but I was not shown this mail.

Loading

When I went out to the parking lot to observe the carriers in La Crescenta loading, I noticed a shelf retrofit system in the LLV's. It appears that the tray next to the driver was wider. However, the driver side tray would not accommodate the yellow FSS street tray and three hard white trays (the ones with metal) across. But, the tray would accommodate the FSS street tray and three flimsy white trays straight across. The tray system at the back of vehicle is helpful for storing trays, because it's on a roller system with pull out shelving. But, once again, there are problems. The retrofit takes up too much room

in the back of the LLV, which affects high volume, high parcel routes. A carrier cannot jump into the back of the vehicle. The shelf on the ride side of the vehicle that folds down to form a flat surface does not stay in the upward position on bumpy roads nor do the pins used to stop trays from moving forward on the roller system.

Other problems loading the vehicle were that carriers had a hard time figuring out how to load the vehicle in the most efficient manner. In La Crescenta, letter carriers were not instructed how to load their vehicles. The carriers having the most trouble were mounted carriers, because the driver side tray could not accommodate the DPS tray, residual tray, FSS tray, and tray of coverage straight across. They were not allowed to collate the residual mail, because these are mounted routes. Some carriers put mail on the floor next to them. I'll just say that I noticed some safety violations. We even had a Supervisor suggest unbolting a bar from the floor of the LLV to accommodate a tray of mail. We told her it was a safety hazard and that the bar was there to keep a tray from sliding across the floor. Please remember that you are not required to work mail from the floor and you should try to avoid this at all costs.

Feedback of La Crescenta Carriers

I returned to La Crescenta on January 12th to get some feedback on any potential problems that the carriers may have had. These are some of the things I heard. (1) Parcels were late and accountables were late, which caused carriers to leave late. (2) Mounted carriers stated that they were extending their street time by :10-:15 minutes, because they had more places to look (i.e., DPS tray, residual tray, FSS tray, coverage, & parcels). (3) More time to reload. (4) Forgetting to look in a specific place for a tray or parcel. (4) More time fingering mail. (5) Pulling mark-ups. (6) Addresses covered by barcode stickers.

Park & loop carriers also stated that they had some expansion, but a little less than the mounted carriers. Let me state clearly that you do not have to carry anything on your arms. There is no street or time standard. However, if you do choose to carry flats on your arm in a Park & loop environment this is what the carriers stated to me: (1) If carrying FSS and residual mail collated on your arm, there was a problem pulling addressed mail from the satchel, especially if an address skipped. In addition, inserts fell out of the coverage into the satchel. (2) If carrying the coverage on your arm, there was a problem pulling FSS and residual mail from the satchel, because smaller residual mail pieces ended up in the bottom of the satchel. (3) There was problems constantly looking in three places especially when the addresses for the different bundles of mail did not all line up for the same delivery point. (4) It took more concentration.

FSS Studio City & Newbury Park

As of the writing of this article, we've had five locations go live with FSS: Studio City, 25 zone in the Northridge Main Office, Newbury Park, 61 zone in Thousand Oaks Main Office,

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May I or Must I???

By Ray Hill, Executive Vice-President

Salazar has written a comprehensive article in this issue of the Mailbag News dealing with much of the doom and gloom currently affecting our membership, so I won't beat that dead horse any further in this article. However, although there is rough sailing ahead, I do know we will survive.

In my last article in the Mailbag News, I referenced some information from the Postal Operations Manual (POM) regarding mailbox regulations for mounted deliveries. One of the provisions that I referenced was Section 632.524 of the POM that reads as follows, in relevant part: "...Customers **must** remove obstructions, including vehicles, trash cans, and snow, that make delivery difficult..." (emphasis added).

A few days after the Mailbag News was delivered to the membership I received word from one of our Stewards that my article had caused a minor ruckus in the Sylmar Station.

From what I was told, a carrier in Sylmar was copying my article and handing it to other carriers, fueling the minor ruckus. I do not know all of the particulars involved that caused this Sylmar carrier's reaction to my article but here is the gist of it, from what I was told.

Apparently, this carrier was upset because he was having a problem on his mounted route with a patron constantly blocking his mailbox with a vehicle and the carrier felt that Management was not backing him up by suspending delivery to the patron.

Once again, I do not know **all of the particulars** of this carrier's situation so I might not be 100% accurate in this portrayal.

Again, from what I was told, this carrier was upset because I wrote an article in our newsletter referencing the provision of the POM that states that "*Customers **MUST** remove obstructions, including vehicles...that make delivery difficult...*" The word **MUST** is absolute and not permissive.

However, Management was not backing the carrier and the carrier was mad about it.

After I heard about the Sylmar carrier's complaints, I went back to the POM and found the following provision:

632.14 Approach to Mailbox

The customer is responsible for keeping the approach to his or her mailbox clear to facilitate delivery. Where the approach to the mail receptacle located at the curb is temporarily blocked by a parked vehicle during normal delivery hours for the area, or snow or ice hampers the approach to the mailbox, the carrier normally dismounts to make delivery. If the carrier continually experiences a problem in serving curblines boxes

*and where the customer is able to control on-street parking in front of his or her mailbox but does not take prompt corrective action after being properly notified, the postmaster **may**, with the approval of the district manager, withdraw delivery service.*

What this means is those carriers on mounted deliveries should dismount to deliver the mail if a parked vehicle **temporarily** blocks the box. However, if the carrier continually experiences problems "where the customer is able to control on street parking in front of his or her mailbox" the carrier should then utilize PS Form 4056 to notify the customer that the approach to their box "*should be kept clear of snow, vehicles and other obstacles*". Management can provide you with a supply of PS Form's 4056. The customer should then "take prompt corrective action". If the customer does not take prompt corrective action "*the postmaster **may**, with the approval of the district manager, withdraw delivery service*".

As you can read, this provision from the POM is "permissive" and in conflict with the other "absolute" provision from the POM that says "*...customers **must** remove obstructions, including vehicles...*"

Nevertheless, if the customer does not take prompt corrective action *after being properly notified*, using PS Form 4056, notify your supervisor who should then make an attempt to get the patron to comply with the regulations from the POM.

If that does not work the supervisor should notify the Postmaster, who **may**, with the approval of the District Manager, withdraw delivery service.

Once again, this language is very permissive, but we should still make every attempt to have Management comply with this provision.

The District Manager, Kerry Wolny, reads our Newsletter so he now knows to expect a phone call from San Fernando (Sylmar's Installation) Postmaster Tom Ludovico requesting approval to suspend mail delivery to a stubborn patron that will not remove his vehicle from in front of his mailbox. I'm starting a betting pool (**for entertainment purposes only**) on whether or not Tom will ever call District Manager Wolny requesting such approval. The opening line is 500 to 1 against Tom placing the call. We shall see. Just kidding, Tom, just kidding.

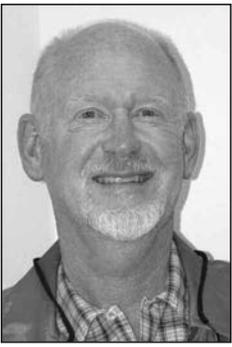
Spring training in baseball is just starting and for the next 6 weeks every team, including the Kansas City Royals, Pittsburgh Pirates and yes, even the Los Angeles Dodgers can dream of being World Series Champions. Yeah, right, like that's going to happen. Talk to you all in two months.

"The illegal we do immediately. The unconstitutional takes a little longer."

-Henry Kissinger

UNWANTED STRESS

By Greg A. Gaddis, Shop Steward / Trustee



I'm seeing and hearing more and more carriers who are getting stressed out and frustrated when dealing with management. I know everyone is already being bombarded with "doom and gloom" rumors about

the USPS and the need to cut down on the hours being used by carriers. There is not a lot you can do however, as far as the survival of the USPS. By that I mean you can't fix the financial troubles all by yourself. I think the best thing to do is continue to do your job the best you can by providing the best service to your customers each and everyday. Your motto should be "a fair days pay for fair days work" and let the chips fall where they may. We can't stop the changes that may come about as far as excessing of carriers, closing of offices, FSS, route adjustments, etc. We just have to deal with each issue a day at a time and not place unwanted stress on ourselves.

As a shop steward it's up to me to see that any changes that may come about are within contractual guidelines and file grievances if they are not. I can't change everything either, but I will do my best to try and help you deal with the stress that you may be experiencing. Getting upset won't change anything; it will only add more stress to your life that you don't need. I know you are probably thinking "that's fine for you, you're retired". And that is true to a certain extent. However I am still a shop steward representing the letter carrier craft. I am still dealing with management and trying to make your job as less stressful as possible. I may be retired from the USPS, but I take my job very seriously as a shop steward when I represent you for contract violations or disciplinary issues. I don't like to lose. I guess it's the competitive nature in me to fight every fight to win and not give an inch.

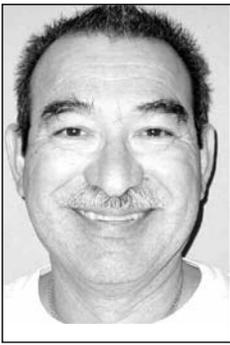
However if there is one thing I have learned over the years, it's to not get upset or stressed out and angry over something stupid that management did. I try to live by the motto "life is just too short". Sometimes you have to take a step back, cool down and just know that if you did your best, management can't take that away from you unless you let them. And I for one won't let them. Life is really too short, when all you are doing is getting stressed out day in and day out when dealing with management. We have to handle our own situations the best we can and not let them get the best of us. Getting angry and doing something you might regret will just add to your problems. Don't let management get the best of you. If you are experiencing a situation with management, request to see your shop steward. There are resources that might help you deal with management so you don't put pressure and stress on yourself that you don't need.

If a supervisor denies your 3996, or tells you that you have down time. Don't get upset...for those of you who know me, I always tell you to do what? I tell you to let the supervisor know you will do the best you can and you will call from the street if you can't make it. Don't argue if your request for time is denied in the office or when you call from the street for more time. Ar-

guing will only get you more upset, right? Has anything really changed? Probably not, except now you're mad.

Do you know of anyone who has received discipline just because they asked for a 3996 and requested extra time to complete their duties? Or when management denied a request for assistance on a 3996? Have you heard of anyone receiving discipline when they called from the street just to request more assistance? Don't argue with management... ask for further instructions if your time is denied. If you are told to deliver the mail and be back by their time and you can't make it. Simply say, "I will do the best I can" and continue to deliver the mail. When you get back to the office request to see your shop steward if you receive these instructions. If management is stupid enough to issue you discipline for expansion of street time or unauthorized overtime, don't get upset...see your shop steward. The shop steward will file a grievance because management issued you conflicting instructions to deliver all the mail after you informed them you could not make it back in time. A grievance may also be filed if you were mandated to work overtime. The bottom line is this. If you are doing your job correctly by requesting a 3996 when extra time is needed or if you are calling from the street when you can't make it back in time, then discipline won't hold up, just because you could not perform all of your duties in the amount of time that they expected you to do it in. It's only when you argue, get mad, and put pressure on yourself to meet their time and then forget to scan a bar code or forget to scan an express mail item that may lead to further fact-finding investigations and possible discipline. Don't put unwarranted pressure on yourself. If you can't make the time that management expects, tell them. It's when you try to meet an unrealistic delivery time that you get yourself into trouble. That's when you start making mistakes by "cutting corners". Don't do it!

In my 34 years that I worked for the USPS I only received one letter of warning for an accident and it was removed because it was not my fault. I was placed on restricted sick leave once and that was rescinded, and that's it. I don't tell you this because I was a model carrier. Believe me when I say, management was always telling me I was the slowest carrier in the office, that I don't try, etc. But did I get mad? The answer is no, because I was always consistent in my delivery times. If the mail was heavy my request for extra time was reflected on my 3996. If the mail was light the amount of time I used reflected it. I can't tell you how many times during my postal career that management told me that I didn't care about the USPS or my job. I was threatened with removal a few times if I did something they didn't like. I didn't let it stress me out though. What I learned was not to let them know it affected me. What I did was get even. I started to learn what my contractual rights were. I filed grievances whenever management violated the contract, or violated my rights. I always knew that if I was doing my job by the book, there was really nothing they could do to me. I let management get angry, mad and stressed out, but not me. Life is really just too short...Until next time.



Welcome to your new (best) plan

By Joe Gutierrez, Health Benefits Representative

I want to begin by thanking all of our new members who joined our health plan for 2011. My wish is that you never have to use it but to assure you that if the need arrives you will be well taken care of. As of now we

do not have a complete count of how many new members we gained but the count so far is 1047 new members with a complete count hopefully by the time you read this. There isn't much to report as I hope you have all read the brochure as to what the benefits are available to you.

If you have not received your new insurance card call the health plan or contact me to get a new one.

A reminder to our health plan members, you must belong to an FEHB for five consecutive years to be able to have health insurance after you retire. Also you must have family coverage at time of death AND a monthly survivor annuity for your surviving spouse and children to be covered.

I have had many members who lost their health insurance because they took their spouses insurance to save money and ended up with no coverage when their spouse died. As I said before, please read the brochure before any major procedure is done such as surgery which needs prior approval.

For those of us who are 65 or approaching that age we are eligible for Medicare and the NALC health plan will waive the co-pay for hospital admission, the coinsurance for hospital admission and the deductible for inpatient care in a treatment facility. If you have part B the PPO copayment is waived for office visits, allergy injections or outpatient visits along with the coinsurance for services billed by physicians and other health care professionals and facilities. Best of all, calendar year deductibles are waived. It is costly to have two insurance plans but in the long run peace of mind is more valuable.

If you have any question or problems with the health plan give me a call and I will assist you as best I can, but remember this is only for the NALC health plan.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

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and 64 zone in Woodland Hills. I'm most familiar with the Studio City, Newbury Park, and Thousand Oaks offices, so I will inform you about what I learned there. Note: The Union just learned at this writing that machine 2 failed to be accepted, so FSS implementation will be delayed in some offices. I've been informed that machine 2 was shredding a high number of mail pieces.

Volume Fluctuations

Let me preface by saying that when FSS comes on line there are volume fluctuations for the first few weeks. On the first day of FSS, the FSS is cased to ensure the quality, which is usually very good (but, not always). If you get a piece of mail that is backwards, it's because a clerk spilled the tray and manually put it in backwards. After the first day, the rest of the week will have a high volume of FSS. This is the burn in period. On the second and third week, the machines are in an acceptance period and the week's volume will be lighter or lower in volume. By the fourth week, volume will be high again like the first week.

Start Time Change & Waiting for Mail

Prior to FSS coming to the units, the start times were changed to 8:15 a.m. This was done because Management needs time to get the parcels and accountables ready for the carriers, so the carriers won't have to wait around. What we found in all offices is that carriers are still waiting for parcels to be thrown and for accountables to be distributed. In Thousand Oaks Main Office, I observed that the truck driver was waiting for the empty street trays and carts. However, there is not a second set of street tray carts so Management instructed the

carriers to take the street trays off the existing carts and stack them at their case. This, in my opinion, is a safety hazard (right of egress) that causes double handling of the trays, possible spilling of the trays, and clogs the isles for employees and equipment such as the movement of hampers and the rolling accountable cage.

Collating & Retrofits

There is also confusion on what to collate or not to collate. Management has failed to properly instruct carriers, because not everyone is getting the correct message on the proper methods (refer to the 4th paragraph in my article or see your Steward). When loading the vehicle in Studio City, carriers found that their LLV's were switched overnight with a retrofit system they were not trained to use. Management tried to rectify the situation by giving a video presentation on a computer. Picture 25 carriers huddled around a computer watching a video that they can barely see and hear. My suggestion is that Management get some good audiovisual equipment and get some one from safety to instruct on the proper use of the equipment.

Loading

When it came to loading the vehicles, the carriers had the same problems that they had in La Crescenta. Carriers were not sure how to best load the vehicle in the most efficient manner possible. Again, we reiterate that you do not have to work mail from the floor or under the tray. The Union recommends nothing on the floor, nothing on top of your trays, and nothing stuck on windows. For mounted routes, we recommend on the LLV tray to your left: DPS tray/Residual tray/FSS tray with Coverage behind it or a variant, if Management permits. If your Supervisor instructs you to do differently, follow the instructions of

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Step into Spring with Family Protection

By Chris Alessi, MBA/NSBA Representative

insurance products, they can offer policies that can suit your individual needs based on your families particular life styles.

According to the Life Insurance Marketing Research Association as reported in September 2006, 45% of widows and 37% of widowers say their spouse was **inadequately insured**. One or two years after spouse's death half of the widows and one-third of the widowers are barely getting by financially. 12% of U.S. households would have immediate trouble meeting everyday living expenses if a primary wage earner died, and another 15% would have difficulty keeping up with expenses after several months. Lastly, 25% of heads of household don't feel they have a plan in place to provide decent standard of living for their families if they died tomorrow.

This is why at least once a year you should review your income and debt ratio based on life's changes to see if you would have enough income to live a good quality of life for your family if your love one passes away and there is loss of their income.

Some Important expenses to consider are:

{1} Final Expenses- onetime expenses incurred by your death, including funeral costs, legal fees, and estate taxes.

{2} Outstanding Debt- to be paid off at your death.

{3} Readjustment Expense- to cover a transition period, including child care, additional homemaking help, and training for a surviving spouse.

{4} Dependency Expense- until all children are self-supporting.

{5} Educational Expense- Annual college cost in current dollars multiplied by the number of years and children to attend.

{6} Life Income for the surviving spouse- After all the children are self-supporting, estimated annual amount desired minus annual income from employment.

{7} Retirement Income for the surviving spouse- Annual Income desired in current dollars minus Social Security and any Pension Income.

Now is the time to plan your purchase of life insurance coverage and to do research on insurance carriers. The financial soundness of the insurer is a very critical concern, you have to have assurance that the company will be around in case you aren't.

The **MBA** was established in 1891 and is a nonprofit fraternal benefit arm of the NALC to provide low cost life insurance to members of the NALC. The MBA is financially sound with 200 million in assets and 30 million in reserves. You can always contact the insurance companies and ask about its ratings. In general its best to go with an insurer rated "A" or better, the most financially sound insurers are rated "AAA". Make sure any reports you get are current, specifically within the last six months. Always review your coverage every few years or when changes occur, such as buying a home or having children.

You can call me any time to make sure your coverage is always aligned with your needs or you can call the MBA at: 1-800-424-5184 Tuesday and Thursday 8:30-3:30 PM EST. Or call: 202-638-4318 from 8:30 -3:30 EST Mon- Fri.

Take care, and God Bless You. In solidarity, Chris

PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

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your Supervisor unless it is unsafe to do so. Do not argue with him or her, and see your Steward as soon as possible.

Street Delivery

The street delivery problems I heard were about the same as I heard in La Crescenta (Refer to my section of Feedback from La Crescenta Carriers), except that the expansion of street time might be longer. In Newbury Park, the Carrier Supervisor gave an instruction that carriers can no longer turn a letter for a parcel, which is causing longer loading and street times. Carriers in Studio City stated that it is difficult to estimate their street time, when looking at the FSS trays. Most likely, because we are not familiar using or carrying street trays. In addition, carriers constantly state that they are waiting for accountable items and that they are constantly pulling lots of for-

wards, vacation holds, undeliverable mail, and other mark-ups on the street.

I've Got What!

Management is showing no mercy when it comes to street time. On the first day of FSS, Managers from within or from outside your office are riding with or following carriers on the street to see what they are doing and how long it is taking them. From day one, Management is alleging that a carrier has undertime. Well, in a way, it's true. Take for example a carrier with a 2-hour office time. If this carrier is getting out of the office in one hour, in theory, he should have one hour undertime minus any expansion for learning and dealing with FSS. However, Management is not giving you time to learn how to deal with FSS. They're on a carrier from the jump. In Newbury Park, Thousand Oaks, and Studio City, Management is having carriers take swings to the street or Management is having

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THE GOOD LIFE

By Bev Sucich, Director of Retirees



I hope everyone had a good time at the December 2010 luncheon at West Hills Home Town Buffet. We had 21 members and 14 guests. I made cookie packages and had candy canes for everyone to make the day a

little more festive for all.

Our winners were Al Fitz, who won an overnight Bag, Lois Perkins who won a small overnight bag, Ed Smith who won an insulated bag, Lucille Meehan who won a small back pack, Greg Gaddis who won a jacket, June Tipton who won a Borders gift card, Lee Leighton who won a Subway gift card, Cynthia Smith who won a TGIF gift card, and Bev Sucich who won a Lowes gift card. Our extra gifts were donated by Joe Gutierrez, a retiree from Woodland Hills. Thanks Joe for all those extra goodies.

We started the New Year on January 20th, 2011 at Hometown Buffet in Simi Valley. We had 25 members and 9 guests. Our winners were Don Esterman, who won a TGIF gift card, Al Cox who won a Subway gift card and Dan Gorman who won a Coldstone gift card.

We were all glad to see Don Esterman back at our luncheon. He was very sick for quite awhile, but he is doing much better now.

We would like to send our sincere condolences to the family of Ben Kelly. Ben passed away in January 2011; he was a retired Letter Carrier from Simi Valley. He lived a long and good

life, he was 92 years young.

I would like to encourage all retirees to read articles in the Postal Record under the Director of Retired Members. There is always some good information there for us retirees. All new retirees should make sure to complete form 1189 and continue your membership in NALC. If you do not complete 1189 you will be cancelled from the union and you will not be able to be reinstated and I know you new retirees will want to come to the luncheons so fill out that form 1189. If you have the NALC health insurance you must continue to be a member of the union.

Just a little reminder about COLCPE. Even if you donate a dollar or two a month, it helps our active Letter Carriers and it protects our annuities and our health plans. So please give if and when you can. Thank you.

On a final note, I hope all retired and active Letter Carriers in the states that have been bombarded by terrible weather and harsh snow storms are safe and hopefully by the time this article gets out, the weather conditions will be much milder.

I announced at the January luncheon, that I am looking into a day trip to a casino within a two hour drive. I hope to have some information by the March luncheon.

If anyone has any problems that I can help them with, please do not hesitate to call me. If I do not know the answer to your questions, I will find out for you.

Be safe until next time.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

Continued from page 6

swings dropped off to carriers on the street to deliver on their alleged under time. The problems here are many; (1) If you're not on the overtime desired list, and you will be in an overtime status with the extra swing call from the street as early as possible. (2) If you are on the work assignment list and will be carrying off your assignment in an overtime status, call your office as soon as possible. Other problems that are arising are problems such as being unfamiliar with the route and territory of the swing, and the length of time for the swing. When Management tells you it's :30 minute swing, it usually takes longer for a variety of reasons like it was not a :30 minute swing to begin with.

This is just a brief report on what we have observed. As we go through your offices, talk to us and let us know what the problems are. Once again, my thanks to District Manager Kerry Wolny for letting me observe the different aspects of FSS and to FSS Coordinator Stacia Crane for showing me around the machines.

Early Outs?

The rumors may be true. What I've read on some very re-

liable websites is that there will be a reduction in force for Managers and a Voluntary Early Retirement for 80,000 eligible Civil Service and Federal Employee Retirement Service employees. However, the information states don't look for a financial incentive. Hmmmm, if there is no incentive, why go? You would figure if they wanted employees to leave, you would give them an incentive. We'll see how this plays out. Expect more details by March.

Excessing

Right on the heels of FSS comes the excessing meetings. Since FSS is expected to conservatively knock out 2-3 routes per zone, the affected installation has need for less full-time employees. As of the writing of this article, I have been involved in two excessing meetings: one in Newbury Park and one in the 61 section of the Thousand Oaks Main Office.

According to Management's current figures for the affected offices, 25 Level 01 Regular Carriers, 6 Level 02 Carriers, and 2 TE's would have to be excessed from the carrier craft. The TE's have already been reassigned at the time we had the meeting with the affected carriers. To say the least, the meeting was shock & awe! As in "Awe S@#!", I have to move!

Lisa Diniakos, the District Complement Coordinator has the

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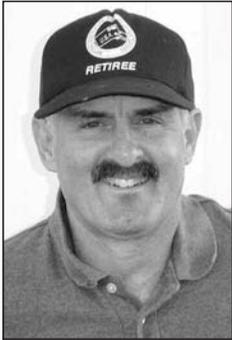


RETIREES CORNER

By Fred Shaw, *The Roaming Retiree*



Checking out Czechoslovakia!



We arrived in Prague in the early evening after a long seventeen hour flight. San Francisco to Frankfurt to Prague. My wife Lisa's cousin Shel picked us up at the airport and as we drove into the city. It seemed no different than most big cities. But outskirts can be deceiving. Once in the downtown it was obvious we weren't in Kansas anymore! Structures far older than

the United States loomed all around us intermingled with new department stores and grand music halls. The nighttime skyline from our hotel room was filled with spires, tall buildings, and lights from a bustling downtown.

The next morning, on our own, we walked a few minutes to Old Town Square. From here the famed astronomical clock with its attendant church was off to our right. Built in the 14th century it keeps perfect time (except for a 200 year lapse when its creator – blinded by the emperor so it couldn't be duplicated – killed himself by putting his hand into the workings). It then took two centuries for someone to figure out how to make it work again.

The Old Town Square becomes essentially the world's largest outdoor barbecue stand around 11 AM. The aromas of hams and roasts cooking over wood were enticing. From here we strolled – with our guide Klara – through the heart of Old Town. In one block we encountered a Baroque church, a Renaissance mansion, and a Gothic seminary, clearly a city of diverse and contrasting architecture.

Here I'll briefly mention defenestration – a curious Czech custom that has gained traction throughout the centuries. If you're the ruler you invite your opposition to dinner – several stories above the courtyard. Once they're all assembled, have been fed, and liberally plied with alcohol you have your palace guards throw them out the windows to their death. This has happened over thirty times since the 4th century when Prague was first built. You'd have thought by now that someone would have caught on, but it was done for the last time when the Communists took over the country. Slow learners! And this brings up another curious part of the

Czech psyche. The older generations walk around and act as though they're still under authoritarian control. The younger folks who didn't experience Communist rule are very westernized. Outspoken – lively – very into fashion and modern technology.

After wandering by the Jewish Quarter we came to the Vltava River and the Charles Bridge. The river separates the city proper from the Lesser City which is the area that grew up at the river's edge below the Emperor's castle. It used to be where all the effluent flowed from the palace but now is the most expensive real estate in Prague.

Once over the bridge we strolled up to the castle. The streets were cobbled – often narrow and steep – as we climbed the hill. Along the way we passed many restaurants and artisan shops. Here you could get a Pilsner Urquell for about 1.50 (for you beer drinkers a must) – less than half the cost of a bottle of water or a soda. The Czech diet seems to be heavy on dumplings and meat, but quite tasty. In front of the castle (which is still the seat of the Czech government) is a large square that can hold thousands of people. This is where President Obama spoke on a recent visit. As you enter the outer gates there are guards – much like Buckingham Palace – that go through the whole guard changing routine several times a day. We found ourselves in the outer courtyard which was about the size of a Junior College football stadium. Here are the government offices, the museum, and a plain white chapel with gold statues of the 12 apostles off to the right. The top floor (of 4) is the president's official residence.

Then you enter the inner courtyard you see the old castle and king's quarters to the right and a very ornate Gothic cathedral directly in front of you. Walking thru the walkway between, we follow our guide to the castle gardens from where the entire city of Prague is visible. Here our tour ended and after lunch nearby we walked, after getting lost some, back to our hotel. Locals say the city streets are somewhat like a spider web centering on the Old Town Square. That evening we went to a charity fashion show where cousin Shel and his friends were the musical background. A lot of fun for a good cause.

The next day we were off to Kutna Hora and its Bone Church. Seems this town lost nearly 50,000 people to the

RETIREES CORNER...

Continued from page 8

Plague and they memorialized their remains in a local church. Literally bones in the walls. Ensuing centuries saw the locals get more artistic so the church now has sconces, coats of arms, and even a chandelier made entirely of skeletons. Very macabre, but also interesting.

After indulging in handmade hot chocolate (it was in the low 40's) we had lunch at a local pub and headed back to Prague. That evening it was off to a jazz Gershwin concert in town and out for an incredible chocolate banana dessert.

The next day we took the trolley with Shel and his friend Mark over to Lesser Town and up to the local monastery where they've been brewing beer since the 5th century. Good beer, great food, and arguably an even better view than we'd had from the castle. We spent the last night with Shel and friends exploring some of the town at night. Then off to bed. Next stop Milan, Italy!

Benjamin J. Kelly (1918 - 2011)



Benjamin J. Kelly passed away at his home in Simi Valley on Jan. 9, 2011.

He was born in Peabody, Mass., on Nov. 9, 1918. Ben served as a Quartermaster in the U.S. Army during WWII. He was employed by the U.S. Postal Service and retired after 27 years. During his retirement he enjoyed golfing and loved to go to Vegas and Laughlin to gamble.

Ben was always trying to win the big one for his children. It is we, his family and friends, who really hit the jackpot because we had the privilege of knowing him. After 62 years of marriage, he was preceded in death by his beloved wife, June.

Ben is survived by his son, John; daughters, Nancy Milner and Patricia Cordle; foster children, John Paul Malloy and Nancy Lingenfelter; brother, Cecil; and brother-in-law, Roger Hanley.



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PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

Continued from page 7

hardest job in the Post Office. She has to conduct a meeting with scared and pissed-off carriers that don't know what is going to happen to them. Basically, there are too many regular employees for the installation so to provide work, the excess carriers have to be moved to other offices within a radius of up to 900 miles. Management will try to find openings as close to the duty stations as possible. And, if there are none within a 25 or 50 mile radius, they will look to other assignments outside the craft, but within the installation. However, this isn't going to happen, because clerks are going to be excessed too.

Ms. Diniakos did a good job in explaining what was going to happen and she gave out her email and telephone number. She also made things easier by having Thousand Oaks carriers only compete with Thousand Oaks carriers for jobs and by making EAP available for employees that need it. These meetings are difficult, because of the fear of the unknown. At this time, Management does not know exactly how many people they will be forced to excess or where the new assignments will be. Carriers are anxious, because they may be forced to move a long distance. And, if so, they might have to sell their homes, if they can. They might have to pull their kids out of school, leave friends and family, etc.. It's really a tough deal, but things are bad with the economy, the unprecedented volume drop, and the mechanization process wiping out good middle class jobs. Although, I can't cover every scenario about excessing, the following points are the most basic.

- Excessing is done by level. There are two carrier levels for Regular Letter Carriers-CC1 & CC2 (T-6).

- **Seniority:**

- If you are reassigned to a residual/withheld position in the carrier craft in another bid installation, you will be reassigned with your seniority.

- If you are reassigned to a withheld assignment in the clerk, mail handler or custodial craft either within your current installation or in another installation, you will be reassigned in a full-time status but you will begin a new period of seniority. However, upon being returned or retreated, as appropriate, you will take the seniority you previously had in the carrier craft augmented by the intervening employment in the craft to which you were excessed.

- **Retreat Rights:**

- If you are reassigned out of the installation to a withheld assignment in your own craft or another craft, at the time of your reassignment, you will have the right to file a written request to return to the first same level vacancy in your craft and installation.

- Additionally, you may elect to change to PTF status. However, please be aware that changing to a PTF to stay within your craft and installation does not preclude you from being excessed as a PTF at some later date, if the number of PTF's exceeds management's needs. The minimum work hour guarantee for PTFs in a non-200 man year office is 2 hours per pay period.

continued on page 10

PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

Continued from page 9

- If you are placed in another craft within your installation, you will also have the option of changing to PTF status in lieu of being reassigned to another craft. However, as noted above, if you elect to change to PTF status, you are subject to having reduced hours and/or being excessed from the craft as a PTF. The minimum work hour guarantee for PTFs in a non-200 man year office is 2 hours per pay period.

- **Placement Preferences:**

- You will receive a list of withheld assignments from which to indicate your placement preferences shortly along with instructions on completing the preference selection worksheet. If you are a preference eligible (veteran) you will not be placed in a lower level assignment. If you select and wish to accept a lower level assignment, you will be required to sign a waiver of your MSPB, EEO or Grievance-Arbitration rights relative to being placed in a lower level assignment.

- **Salary:**

- If you are placed in a lower level assignment, you will receive protected salary.

- **Relocation:**

- If you are placed in a withheld assignment outside of your current installation, you shall receive moving, mileage, per diem and reimbursement of household goods, if appropriate, as governed by the Bargaining Employees Relocation Benefits package dated November 2010.



- **Bargaining Employee Relocation Benefits**

- As a bargaining employee you may be eligible to receive relocation benefits if you transfer from one duty station to another for permanent duty and the transfer is primarily in the best interest of the Postal Service. To qualify for benefits, your transfer must also meet two additional requirements:

- The distance between your old residence and your new permanent duty station must be at least 50 miles greater than the distance between your old duty station and your old residence.

- You must agree to remain at your new duty station for 12 months.

Remember, these are just a few basic points. Carriers

who are being excessed will be given a 60-Day Notification Letter informing them of the process and what they are entitled too, along with appropriate phone numbers and e-mail addresses.

50 Year Gold Cards

On a very lighter and better note, the Branch at the January Meeting honored two brothers for 50 years of membership. National Business Agent, Chris Jackson and Regional Administrative Assistant James Henry presented Gold Cards to Don Bach of San Fernando and Richard Cinnater of North Hollywood. Brother Bach started with the Postal Service on July 13, 1959 and worked much of his time at the North Hills/Sepulveda Station. Brother Bach retired on December 31, 1989. Brother Cinnater started with the Postal Service on February 4th, 1960 and he worked much of his time at the Bendix/Victory Station in North Hollywood. Brother Cinnater retired October 1st, 1992. Congratulations to both Brothers for their long years of service and for their life long membership in and support of the NALC. All for now back in two.

By the Numbers Membership 2010

By Susan Degenhardt, Recording Secretary

As of Pay Period 26, 2010

Active 1279
Retired 397 (including 24 Gold
Card members) = 1676 total members

During the last year:

Separated	16*
Retired	26
Deaths	1
(Active carriers)	
Transfers out	6
Cancel	<u>9**</u>
Total	58

New Members	3
Transfer In	2
Re activate	<u>2</u>
Total	7

*Increase due to separation of TE's

**Increase due to members changing craft

Branch 2902 is 94.1% organized



Union Meeting

January 18, 2011
Chatsworth

The meeting was called to order by President Salazar at 7:13PM. Sonny Castellano led the pledge of allegiance. Roll call of officers was taken. Asking to be excused were Larry Orcutt, Ernestine Hernandez, Joe Vedder, Laura Walters, Kathi Albritten, Steve Dickerson, and Frank Mercado. Fred Shaw makes a motion to excuse these brothers and sisters, S/C.

Members are reminded to sign the attendance book and purchase tickets for the 50/50 raffle.

President Salazar introduces Region 1 NBA Chris Jackson and RAA James Henry.

Members review the minutes from the November 16, 2010 meeting. Fred Shaw makes a motion to accept the minutes as printed, S/C.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Training session on COR for union representatives on January 27, at 2902 union hall from 6-9PM.

AMP (Area Mail Processing) Study on 1/20/11. This is a public hearing at the Oxnard Performing Arts Center 6-7:30PM.

CSALC By-law changes. Will be brought up under new business.

COMMUNICATIONS

Voluntary Early Retirement (VER)- The rumors are true. Details have not been released yet.

Reduction in Force (RIF)- Possibly reduce administration by 30%, consolidation of districts, Postal Service looking to cut 7500 jobs overall.

FSS- USPS has invested over 1.5 billion dollars in this technology. President Salazar gives overview about implementation of FSS throughout the country. Our district will have three machines. The sort process is explained. Safety issues are discussed. Tray placement methods are discussed. Deployment schedule is reviewed. COR adjustments and excessing are discussed.

COMMITTEES

Recreation- Paulette Dyer gives members information on central coast attractions. She donates a See's gift certificate for the raffle. She has homemade cookies for sale.

Union Apparel- Lori Stewart gives a report on the union jacket order. Deadline is January 31.

MDA- Sandy Gaunce reports on the November Bowl-a-thon results.

Retirees- Bev Sucich reports on December luncheon and announces the January 20 luncheon will be in Simi Valley at the Hometown Buffet.

Legislative- David Hyman announces a City Candidate

Forum on 1/31 at the CIS building on Balboa Blvd.

Health Benefits- Joe Gutierrez discusses cost vs. coverage. Plan comparisons, drug coverage and benefits for belonging to NALC plan are discussed.

MBA/NSBA- Chris Alessi speaks to the membership about the Paid Up at 65 plan. Medical documentation requirements for disability claims are discussed. He reminds members that option B for FEGLI can get very expensive and the MBA offers coverage for less. MBA appointment calendars are available.

NEW BUSINESS

Paul Drapkin makes a motion to adopt an Executive Board recommendation to spend up to \$15,000 on new heating and air conditioning units (2) for the Branch office, S/C.

Fred Shaw makes a motion to provide refreshments for Informational COR meeting 1/27, not to exceed \$100.00, S/C.

Members vote to support proposed CSALC by-law change (1) to meet every 3 years instead of every 2 years and (2) a proposed change regarding submission of resolutions. These by-law changes will be presented and voted on at the upcoming state convention.

GOOD OF THE ASSOCIATION

- Know your rights

NBA Chris Jackson and RAA James Henry present members Don Bach (San Fernando), and Richard Cinnater (North Hollywood) with their 50-Year Gold Cards and pins.

NBA Jackson speaks to the members on the state of the Postal Service. Customer Connect, automation issues, COR adjustments, NRP arbitration success, excessing of carriers, FMLA forms, Get out the Vote 2012, and the Food Drive in May.

Membership reviews the Treasurer's report. Kurt Whitesell makes a motion to accept the report, S/C.

A motion to adjourn in the name of Marva Golden is made by Kurt Whitesell, S/C.

Louie Rodriguez won the 50/50 drawing for \$27.00. Mrs. Walter Williams won the See's candy gift card. Oxnard carrier Pablo Galvan was the name drawn for the membership drawing for \$828.50. He was not present to win.

Respectfully submitted by Susan Degenhardt, Recording Secretary

Only Irish coffee provides in a single glass all four essential food groups alcohol, caffeine, sugar and fat.

— Alex Levine

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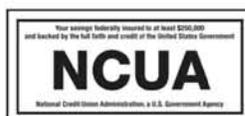


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RETIREES LUNCH

RAFFLE AT 12:30

Where: Hometown Buffet
Fallbrook Mall
6633 Fallbrook Ave.
West Hills

When: Thursday,
April 21, 2011

Time: 11:00am to 1:00pm



Where: Hometown Buffet
Vons Center
1855 Cochran Street
Simi Valley

When: Thursday,
May 19, 2011

Time: 11:00am to 1:00pm



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M.C.A.	James Perryman
North Hills	C.C. Flatts
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	Alex Lopez
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Woodland Hills Chief S.S.	Laura Walters
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should be.”**

*-Malcolm Forbes,
American Publisher
(1919-1990)*

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- MAR 15** Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Union Hall-Chatsworth
Dinner served 6 pm
- MAR 17** Retiree Lunch 11:00am
Hometown Buffet-Simi Valley
St. Patrick's Day 
- APR 5** Executive Board Meeting 6pm
Executive Council Meeting 7pm
- APR 19** Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Garden Palm Hotel-Newbury Park
- APR 21** Retiree Lunch 11:00am
Hometown Buffet-West Hills
- APR 29-30** NALC State Convention
San Diego
- MAY 3** Executive Board Meeting 6pm
Executive Council Meeting 7pm
- MAY 8** Mothers Day 
- MAY 14** NALC National Food Drive
- MAY 17** Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Union Hall-Chatsworth
Dinner served 6 pm



RAA James Henry and NBA Chris Jackson present members Don Bach (San Fernando), and Richard Cinnater (North Hollywood) with their 50-Year Gold Cards and pins.



THE Mail Bag NEWS

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OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF TRI-VALLEY BRANCH 2902,
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS AFL-CIO

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VOLUME 53, NO. 3

Circulation 2,500

May - June 2011

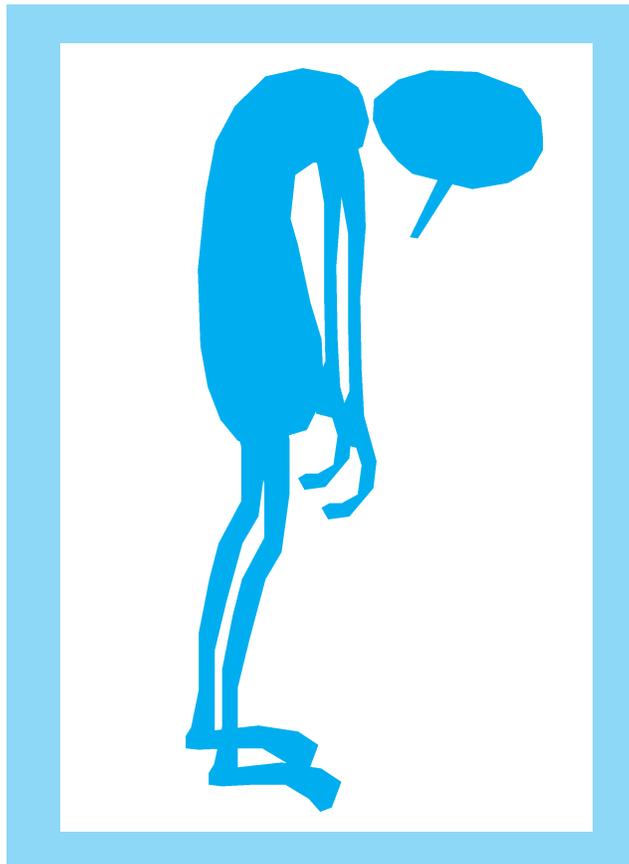
DIFFICULT TIMES

By Frank Salazar, President

For those of us in FSS offices, these are not the best of times. As we stated in previous articles, this was going to be a challenging year and so far our claims have come true. I hear the complaints every time I walk into an office with FSS. Sometimes, I feel like Daniel walking into the lion's den. I don't blame you all for being angry at what's happening, but you have to realize it's not the Union's fault. Management has the right under Article 3 to run the organization as they see fit. However, we as the Union have the right to enforce the National Agreement. I take pride in the fact that our Branch is the most aggressive in our District at policing the contract and protecting letter carrier rights and we will continue to do this day in and day out. But, remember this, we will get through this process just like we got through LLV's, routers, pencil whipping 6-day counts and inspections, vertical flat cases, 5 & 6 shelf cases, DPS, change in start times, scanners, delcons, msp's, the NRP, and anything else I missed. So, here's what's happening now.

FSS

As I walk through the FSS offices, carriers tell me that the DPS volume has been erratic. Some days the FSS is



heavy, other days its light, and other days the carriers leave the office and the FSS comes in after they have hit the street. I have heard that machine #2 is a problem machine to such an extent that it had started smoking and almost had an electrical fire. Maybe it was a bad connection or maybe it was cheap wiring, I never got the true story. But, what I do know is that flats, especially magazines are getting their covers ripped, torn off, shredded or crumpled. Carriers are getting flats for different offices, flats are being sandwiched, there are barcodes over the addresses, markups are not being taken out, flats are being put in backwards by clerks, and carriers are still waiting for parcels to be thrown. The District Manager has informed us that FSS volumes are starting to stabilize and that they are working on the parcel problem. Believe it or not, we have seen the

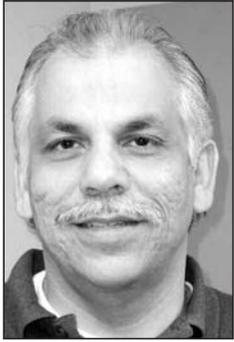
parcel problem improve in a few offices. So, it's a work in progress.

But, we are still having problems with harassment concerning under time and expansion of street time. These are two issues that keep Managers up at night. However, the Managers have to realize that DOIS is a tool. It is not gospel. A Supervisor cannot hold you to DOIS projections.

continued on page 2

PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

Continued from page 1



A carrier might be given a swing and told it's :30 minutes. Management has to realize that the :30 minute swing might take you :45 minutes. In addition, there is additional loading time, travel time, and allied time such as relays, accountables, parcel delivery, dealing with extra coverages and equipment (reloading), and unfamiliarity with territory, which all expands street time. Supervisors

don't want to address these facts, so use a PS Form 3996 and call from the street. Don't skip your lunch and breaks, because this will affect any future route adjustments.

COR Adjustments

If you've been following the articles in this newsletter or have been attending a Union meeting, you're ahead of the game. We've been telling the membership that the COR adjustments are going to be very stressful. Let me make this point clear, the Branch suggested to the District Manager that we use the Joint Alternate Route Adjustment Process to evaluate and adjust the routes, and to have involvement in moving the territory (joint use of COR). The Service chose their own method, which is their right under section 1 of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by past NALC President Bill Young. In that MOU (M-01643), which you can find on line at the NALC website or on page 31 of the April Postal Record, Management was given the right in fully implemented FSS offices to ". . . determine the methods to estimate impact in a delivery unit and make route adjustments accordingly". However, there is to be a 60 day review period after the adjustments and if either party determines that the routes are out of adjustment, then the routes have to be adjusted in accordance with the M-39 or on a "locally agreed upon adjustment formula". Check out the article by Lew Drass, our National Director of City Delivery on page 31 of the April 2011 Postal Record.

As I wrote above, Management has a right to unilaterally adjust the routes. And, this is what's causing most of the turmoil in our FSS offices. Management has made adjustments using COR that have wiped out senior carrier's routes causing Article 41.3.O to be triggered. Basically speaking, every route in the building under the most senior carrier having his/her route abolished has to be posted. In some instances, the most senior carrier had every delivery on his route changed. The only thing that didn't change was his/her route number. Other carriers have complained that the line of travel didn't make sense, they didn't get enough travel time or allied time, the loops are too long and too heavy, they are carrying uphill instead of downhill, they are dead heading, the geography of the new lay out does not make sense, and the list goes on. As you can see, there

was no carrier input. Management did it themselves and it's costing them. Overtime hours are up and so is the sick leave percentage. If Management had done it our way, the vacant routes, auxiliary routes or most junior routes would have been abolished minimizing the adverse and disruptive impact on the Installation.

In the District President's Meetings, Management kept throwing up the numbers, :48 minutes and :18 minutes. I asked, "What are those numbers? And, where do they come from?", because I didn't understand what they were talking about. Management stated that the :48 minutes is the savings per route from FSS and :18 minutes is the savings per route using the COR adjustments. COR is supposed to reduce the number of park points or relays, thus, it saves time, but only for park and loop routes. I said, "No way are you saving this amount of time!" It was explained that these are not actual savings. The numbers are anticipated savings on paper. "Oh, I see." I said. "The numbers are not real." So, I asked "What are the savings?" The response I got was that there are no savings! It's costing them big.

Ok, so what's next? The MOU states that if the routes are not properly adjusted, either side can ask for inspections. Guess what? The Union will ask for inspections. But, nobody wants to go through 6-day counts and inspections. Ok, there might be a few of you. The majority, I think would forego it and Management doesn't want to spend tens of thousands of dollars on inspections that will just lead to grievances and a host of special inspections. What we have decided to do to avoid these problems is a joint experiment with Management in the 77 zone in Agoura Hills and the 62 zone in Thousand Oaks. We will utilize the JARAP all the way through the COR process. So, if we want to avoid Management's unilateral adjustments, we have to make it work. I'm counting on the carriers in these zones to outperform the other zone(s) in their respective offices. I'll get back to you later and let you know how the experiment works out.

Excessing

In talks with the District Manager, he has agreed to try and hold off on excessing as long as he can. I think this is a good move, because based on the COR adjustments and subsequent adjustments to fix the COR problems, the numbers can all change and we might not have to excess as many people as we think or it could be a completely different group of people being excessed. For example, COR adjustments are triggering Article 41.3.O's in many offices. Some carriers that are currently CC2 (T-6) carriers, may be able to change their status to CC1 carriers and save themselves from excessing and vice versa. This may lead someone else to be excessed. It may not sound fair, but it is contractually correct and the situation only arose because Management took out a senior carrier's route.

On the other hand, offices like Studio City may not have

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WE'RE AS MAD AS HELL!!!

By Ray Hill, Executive Vice-President

Do you remember the great 1976 movie, **Network**, for which Peter Finch won the Best Actor Oscar for his portrayal of the “mad prophet” News Anchor, Howard Beale? Beale’s signature catchphrase in **Network** was, “**we’re as mad as hell, and we’re not going to take this anymore!!!**” Howard Beale’s catchphrase from **Network** perfectly sums up the feelings of the Branch 2902 Letter Carriers that are now **angrily** struggling with either proposed route adjustments or adjustments that have already been rammed down their throats.

The Branch 2902 Offices that are **as mad as hell** include Agoura Hills, Northridge, Studio City, Thousand Oaks (including Newbury Park) and Woodland Hills. The carriers are mad at Management and they are mad at the Union. Conducting Station Visits within the Branch used to be one of the best parts of my job as a full time officer because I like to see and hear what is happening in the trenches. However, it is no longer any fun walking into an office that has undergone route adjustments after the implementation of FSS. Carriers do not understand why their routes have been butchered or eliminated and they want to know what the Union is doing about it.

All of the past 3 route adjustment processes (IRAP, MIARAP and JARAP) were done jointly with Union and Management participation. Several carriers did not like these joint route adjustment processes and voiced their displeasure to me on many occasions. **In the offices with FSS, Management has not agreed to have a joint route adjustment process and the Union cannot force them to do so.** As much as some of you disliked the Joint Route Adjustment processes, they were a hell of a lot better than allowing Management to adjust the routes on their own, without our input. That is exactly what is happening now in the offices with FSS and, believe me, it ain’t pretty.

Make no mistake; Management has eliminated too many routes in the offices with FSS and the remaining routes are definitely overburdened. However, it is Management that has done this, not the Union.

Management deliberately chose to leave the Union out of the equation and sadly, the carriers will have to suffer for at least 60 days with their overburdened routes. After 60 days the routes will be reviewed to make sure that they are as close to 8 hours as possible. But the damage has already been done; done by Management, not the Union.

I’ve seen a **lot** of bull shit (BS) flung at Letter Carriers by USPS Management in my 21 years as a Union Steward

and Officer of Branch 2902. However, all the BS flinging I’ve dealt with in the past, with the exception of the harm caused by the National Reassessment Process (NRP), was minor compared to the BS being flung at the carriers working in the offices that are delivering flats processed by the “Flat Sequencing System”, better known as FSS. Management has taken the “**Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead**” approach to FSS and the resulting route evaluations and Carrier **Optimal Routing** (COR) adjustments they are proposing or they have already implemented.

FSS mail, in and of itself, is not that big of a deal. I realize that neither Craft nor Management seems to like it and if Management had looked into a crystal ball back when they conceived the notion of FSS, it never would have happened. I know that there are problems with the FSS machines, which seem to be of poor quality. Forwards and waste have to be pulled from the FSS mail out on the street and some mail is being shredded. Our patrons get very angry, rightfully so, when they receive damaged mail. Of course there is a learning curve for carriers learning on the fly, trying to figure out the best ways to handle the FSS mail. However, even though we may not like it, just like we learned to live with DPS, we will learn to live with FSS. No, brothers and sisters, **FSS is not the real enemy here and FSS is not the reason that “we’re as mad as hell”.**

The real enemy is the manner in which the routes are being evaluated and adjusted in the FSS environment using the Carrier Optimal Routing Process, better known as “COR”. COR is described by the USPS as “a Management tool to assist with the adjustment of letter carrier routes pursuant to Chapter 2 of Handbook M-39”. That sounds relatively harmless, right? Wrong!!! We all know that USPS Management Personnel at the Headquarters, Area and District levels are **drooling** over the prospect of eliminating routes in zones that are delivering FSS mail. USPS has invested (wasted) a ton of money in the FSS Machines and upper Management wants to recoup some of that money immediately. So, either routes will be eliminated or heads will roll! Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!

After FSS is implemented in an office, Management “determines the methods to estimate impact in a delivery unit and makes route adjustments accordingly”. You know how arson investigators look for the “point of origin” of a fire? Well, Management determining “the methods to estimate the impact from FSS in a delivery unit and make route adjustments accordingly” is the “point of origin” of all the **real** problems resulting from FSS.

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The Push for HR 137

By David Hyman, Branch 2902 Legislative Liaison



Being the NALC Legislative Liaison for Howard Berman over the last 15 plus years, I felt an obligation to represent our branch during the March 14th-17th 2011 Lobby Trip. I was part of a group of around 160 carriers representing 18 states, mostly in the West. The mission was to visit members of Congress to deliver a non partisan pitch as to why these members should support House Resolution (HR) 137 and become a co-sponsor. Many of them supported us two years ago when we had a similar resolution, HR 173. When this was the case we thanked them for their prior support and invited them to co-sign the new resolution by Sam Graves (REP, MO.).

House Resolution 137 reads as follows:

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the USPS should take all appropriate meas-

ures to ensure the continuation of its 6-day mail delivery service;

Whereas Social Security is the primary source of income for many senior citizens, and any delay in the delivery of their Social Security checks would make it difficult for them to purchase even essential items, such as food and medicine; and

Whereas reducing mail delivery service to 5 days a week would inevitably cause not only delays in the delivery of mail, but higher postal cost, due to the many hours of additional overtime that the Postal Service would require in order to handle the resulting back-up of mail: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that it is the sense of the House of Representatives that the USPS should take all appropriate measures to insure the continuation of its 6-day mail delivery service.

Monday the 14th we had an early 8 am EST briefing at the NALC's Indiana Ave. office by President Fredric Rolando. After President Rolando explained the issues we faced, we went into the basics of lobbying seminar followed by some mock congressional office visit training. Tuesday & Wednesday we were on Capitol Hill with our pre-scheduled visits with members of Congress or their Labor staffer. Tuesday the 15th I led our group of six into Congressman Berman's office to meet with his Labor staffer, Lelia Gomez. We thanked her for the support her boss has consistently given us in the past and she assured us he would continue to be there. Berman represents the south western and central portions of the San Fernando Valley.

Tuesday I led a group of five of us to meet with Elton Gallegys' staffer Kenneth Steinhardt. For some reason he was over booked and we wait-

ed 30 minutes to meet with him. The Congressman himself walked in while we were waiting and asked if we were being helped., We told him yes since we had an appointment but in hindsight should have said no so we could have eliminated the middle man. Kenneth was polite and apologized for the delay. We explained our non-partisan resolution, how we're mandated by the constitution to reach all



Local Legislative Liaisons from L-R are Leroy Collier, Rick Valenta, Jill Lemon, Janette Dolabson, Congressman Sherman, Roger Askew, David Hyman & Darcel Cole-Valenta.

ures to ensure the continuation of its 6-day mail delivery service.

Whereas the USPS has announced it may need to reduce the frequency of its mail delivery service from 6 days a week to 5 days a week;

Whereas 6-day mail delivery service is an essential service that the American people have relied on since

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BACK TO BASICS

Ernestine Hernandez, Vice President/Oxnard Chief Shop Steward



We are seeing a lot of things going on lately in our Postal careers, in our offices, and also out on our routes that call's for a serious wake up call for all! Bottom line is we all

need to get back to basics. As union members, as carriers, and as family heads. Unity, involvement and doing what needs to be done correctly is the only thing that is going to save our jobs.

As union members we have to stand together and get involved as our founding NALC Union brothers did. They took the time and actively went to meetings, and decided together how to deal with the problems they were facing. They had courage and went forward to face Management and Congress to get the wages, benefits, and tolerable working conditions that we enjoy today. It was not always this way. Each year brought new changes and challenges to deal with, but that did not stop our determined union brothers and sisters from taking the time out of their lives to give a meaningful fight to our collective cause. Sadly we do not see that kind of commitment from our members today, and I wonder why?

Don't they realize it can all be stripped away if there is no one who is willing to stand up and defend it all? Is taking one day out of the month to get educated on our union jobs, to find out what we can each do to save them, too much to ask? Get actively involved in saving your job. We are living a good life out there right now, but would we if we didn't have our union jobs? Could we live with less hours, less health insurance, less wages? These are just some of the things we risk losing if we continue to take it all for granted, especially when there are some Congressmen desperate to take it all away from union workers. Sign up to be an e-activist to stay informed of what is happening and to be ready to act when called upon.

We also have to be vigilant in our offices that the changes coming are not going to compromise our working conditions. Are we ready to settle back and watch our jobs being given away? Can we let overcrowding cause un-addressed safety hazards to grow? We need to be more actively aware of what is going on in our office and address them together. We really need more carriers to step up to the challenge of being stewards to oversee and correct problems as they arise. I have been trying to keep things running as smoothly as I can, but as many of you know, I can't be everywhere at once. I can't see everything that goes on. I NEED SOME ASSISTANCE! It is an eye opening experience being a steward and a very fulfilling one as well. Knowing that we are a united group helping one another as much as we can takes out

the scariness of standing up for what is right. All the materials and back up assistance is there to assist you when you decide to step up take the training to become an effective steward. With over 100 years of experience behind the NALC, you can be sure there is a wealth of information available to properly train you. It would be very beneficial for the newer carriers to get trained now so that when I retire there are still more stewards ready to continue to protect the rights we union workers have.

There is still a lot that needs to be done in our office as things keep changing daily. We know our routes are always being changed too, but we have to know how to keep our routes from becoming overburdened, back breaking routes. Taking shortcuts with our work is not the way to do it. We risk safety, discipline and loss of our jobs by taking unnecessary shortcuts. We don't even get appreciated for doing so, and only end up getting fact findings that can lead to discipline. Most carriers say they don't do some of the basic work requirements because they have to be back in 8 hours. Why do they think they have to carry the burden alone? They don't! If it is going to take longer on the route than 8 hours, fill out a 3996! Tell your supervisor you need help. Don't drive unsafely to make up time. Wear your seatbelts, close the vehicle doors, don't get out and leave the engine running, make complete stops. In other words, do not risk your safety or the safety of others around you just to try and make it back in 8 hours. And it is not a good idea to miss scans either, or to make constant mis-deliveries, or to throw away mail. This will only lead to discipline and possible removals. Like I said before, get some help instead. The mail can still get delivered even if it takes longer than 8 hours. Management may try to tell you that your base time is what you are supposed to make everyday, but remember this, the base time can vary either higher or lower depending on mail volume, coverages, parcels, accountable and other situations on any given day. But let the supervisor know what's going on if you have something out of the ordinary happening and WRITE IT DOWN on a 3996. That way Management cannot say they didn't know so they couldn't help you. By taking the time to do things right, it will be reflected in your actual route times. Making it less likely that Management will add on to your route.

Now all of this may seem ridiculous and time wasting to you, but if you fail to follow the advice given here you may find yourself unemployed. How will you be able to take care of your family then? It isn't wise to gamble on not getting caught taking bad short cuts like tossing mail, continually working unsafe, or repeating the same types of delivery mistakes over and over again. Like you've probably noticed

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I'm Just One Person

By Greg A. Gaddis, Shop Steward / Trustee



Hello to all, I hope everyone is doing well. My article is mainly addressed to my former office of Agoura Hills. It saddens me to hear that evidently a lot of Carriers at the Agoura office are not

happy with me and the Union. It seems I am not making enough of a presence when I'm there on Tuesday's. I will admit that I am not one to raise my voice, pound on the stand-up desk or lose my temper when I am on the work-room floor when I'm dealing with management. However...I am not a passive observe either. The Agoura office has been within the top three offices (Per 100-employees) with the highest grievance activity for the past two years. The Agoura office has been within the top three offices with grievance appeals for the last two years. As of the last DRT report dated 3/30/11, the grievance activity has declined somewhat. But out of the 15 highest offices listed in the report, Agoura was 5th for appeals and 8th for office grievance activity. And you also have to consider I am only at the Agoura office once a week, just like the other three offices I represent.

I am a bit confused though that there are some Carriers who feel I should be doing more. I am only one person. I can't see or know everything that goes on when I am at the office just one day a week. No one wants to be a Shop Steward though. It's not President Frank Salazar who is restricting me from going to the offices just one day a week. No one else wanted to step forward and become a Shop Steward in the other offices I am covering. I'm representing four offices that do not have a full-time Steward. I file Informal grievances and Formal grievances. I review numerous documents; prepare Formal grievances that are appealed to the DRT for three offices. I represent a few hundred carriers. I am only one person. I do my best to file grievances when I see a violation or when someone tells me of a violation. I step in and deal with management when I see or hear of misconduct by someone in management. I also have to rely on **YOU**, the Carrier who works at the offices I represent; to talk to me about issues that you feel might need investigating. For those Carriers who let me know of possible violations, I thank you. Please continue to be my eyes and ears when I'm not at your office. I would never "throw you under the bus" by giving your name to management if you want to remain anonymous. I understand retaliation.

One particular Carrier was very displeased with me because I did not inform two other Carriers about the possibility of being excessed out of Agoura. This Carrier was told that because I am the Shop Steward for Agoura and I knew about the excessing provisions, I should have talked to the Carriers when they bid to another assignment that may

have put them into an excessing situation. I acknowledge that I did not know all of the Article 12-excessing provisions that cover 29-pages of the JCAM. I am just one person. There are 41 Articles under the National Agreement, numerous rules, regulations, manuals and handbooks to follow. I acknowledge I am not proficient on every provision. I do however try to be as knowledgeable as I can on the issues that affect letter Carriers on a daily basis. In hindsight I probably could have done more to inform the Carriers about excessing.

Excessing of Letter Carriers has been discussed for a few years now, when FSS soon became a reality. It has been discussed in the Union Postal Record magazine. Excessing has been discussed in our MBN articles. Excessing has been discussed in our regular monthly branch meetings. No one from Agoura had asked me about excessing, before the two Carriers bid to a regular assignment and before the excessing meeting at Agoura took place. Yet I should have known as the Shop Steward who represents Agoura and informed those Carriers when they bid to the new assignments. No one from Agoura came to any of our branch meetings, even to this day, to ask questions or find out how excessing may affect Letter Carriers. I'm just one person.

At the time when the two Carriers started their new bid assignments, I did not know every detail of excessing as far as how it would affect a regular Carrier and a T-6 Carrier based on seniority. It was through meetings and reviewing the excessing provisions that I became aware, after the Carriers could not retreat back to their former assignments. Article 12 is a very complicated provision in our National Agreement. Our Union leaders try to educate the branch Presidents and they in turn try to educate the Stewards who represent the Letter Carriers in their respective offices. I wonder who should have informed the Carriers at the Agoura office when I retired and there was no Shop Steward? I will be retired for three years on May 1st of this year. If no one stepped forward and volunteered to be the next Shop Steward, who would be blamed for not informing Carriers about excessing, overtime issues and abuse of management for the last three years?

Every Carrier should try to educate themselves on issues that might affect them, by attending branch meetings and asking questions of Union officers. Try not to rely on someone else for all the information that may affect you. I can file grievances for you; I can deal with management on your behalf and try to stop the abuse whenever I can. But what I can't do is promise that every Carrier has all the information that may affect them day in and day out. I know that all you want to do is come to work, do your job and go

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Breath of Fresh Air

By: **Robbie Elsaleh, Moorpark Chief Shop Steward**

As I write this Article today, Sunday April 10th, 2011, it's been 3 weeks since Officer in Charge (OIC) Mike Dickerson and Supervisor Evan Juarez have been in charge of Moorpark while Postmaster Sigman is detailed out, and so far, it's been like a Breath of Fresh Air for everyone.

I don't remember exactly when OIC Mike arrived in Moorpark as a Supervisor, but it's probably been around 8 months now. In the beginning, I felt a little bad for Mike inheriting the depressing environment and feelings that we all harbored given the negative working climate, and also for the pressure of being placed in a position directly under the management style that brought on that atmosphere. But as time passes, now that Mike's currently the OIC, things are starting to change. You can actually feel the improvements on the floor, and the work is still getting done.

OIC Mike actually takes a few minutes out of his time every morning by going around from case to case individually greeting carriers daily. Wow! Who would have thought that saying Good Morning could mean so much? These few minutes of sincere interactions build respect and also give carriers the opportunity to inform Mike of any issues, work related or personal, that they may have experienced the previous day without letting things pile up.

From talking and meeting with OIC Mike on various occasions, he knew that coming to Moorpark he would have major obstacles to overcome. The good thing is that Mike came in as an outsider not influenced by the years of negativity that we have been subjected to and did his best to form a barrier in-between us and the root cause of our problems. Even Mike says that he didn't know just how bad things were until he got here. He listens to our concerns rather than turning them into arguments and grievances. He notices the good works that carriers perform and I've heard him many times commending carriers for a "good job today." He backs carriers up when it comes to issues such as dog problems, continually block mailboxes, searching for work hours for our PTF's, etc. I'm not saying that all of the problems just magically disappeared, there are normal disagreements that we sometimes have, but he deals with them in a professional and businesslike manner as it should be, rather than taking offense to everything and holding a grudge.

Supervisor Evan is new to the scene for only 3 weeks as of today. From our brief interactions so far, I like his fresh approach to many things. He has no prejudices, biases, and takes people at face value. He has Mike as a

positive influence and role model who doesn't spew unconstructive negativity about employees. When you bring up scheduling issues to Evan, he is receptive to recommendations. There are no floor confrontations or back and forth squabbles with Evan. He simply gives you your DPS & NLM volumes early in the morning, tells you what mail and coverage's must go out, informs you what he wants accomplished that day, and then says do your best. For the first time in a very very long time I've actually heard a Supervisor say, "You know your route best." I was shocked and speechless when I heard him say that.

I know having Mike and Evan is probably only temporary, but I hope it lasts as long as possible. I also know that every carrier in Moorpark is a professional and does his/her best every day. Let's continue to do that and prove that working under humane Managers works a lot better than the contrary, and saves the Postal Service a lot of money in unnecessary grievance expenses.

I hope that there won't be any Shadow Postmasters or Mobile Micromanaging this time around. Mike and Evan are very capable and are doing just fine. I'm sure if they need help with anything, they know how to ask for it.

Till next time, I hope all the Mothers had a wonderful Mother's Day and wishing everyone a Safe Memorial Day Holiday.

BACK TO BASICS...

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lately, Management has begun looking at how we are working out on the street again and has been calling attention to all the safety and delivery mistakes including scanning. Discipline has started to increase again and has kept me very busy filing grievances. But if you don't want to end up eventually getting removed because of them, it would be wise to remember all the basic rules of delivery and safety. Start following them again if you haven't been. Better to pick up good habits than bad.



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Come Together Collectively With Group Life Insurance

By Chris Alessi, MBA/NSBA Representative

In February of 1985 the NALC and the MBA established a \$5,000 basic group accidental life insurance G-001 policy. Currently all active and retired NALC members are provided this benefit at no cost to the members or the branches. Branch members are not required to pay any premiums for this policy. The NALC pays for all the premiums for basic G-001 accidental death policies.

In addition to coverage under the basic G-001 policy, The MBA offers supplemental group insurance policies to the branches that elect to provide additional accidental death benefits and/ or term life insurance for their active branch members, including TE's. No physical exams or individual insurance applications are required for a member to be covered by any of MBA's group G-001 policies.

The MBA's G-001 **Supplemental accidental Life insurance plan** will insure the active branch members for as little as 3 cents/month per member for every \$1,000 worth of coverage and as much 75 cents per month, per member for \$25,000 worth of accidental death coverage. There is no accumulated cash value attributed to either of the G-001 policies. Death benefits are paid when the death is a result of direct bodily injuries sustained by an accident based on documentation from the pronouncing physician, the coroner's office, or the medical examiner, the MBA does not determine the manner of death.

The MBA's G-001 **Supplemental Term Life Insurance plan** on the other hand pays a death benefit no matter what the cause of death is. Branch members can have extra protection at the rate of 44 cents per month, per active member not to exceed \$20,000 of term insurance. When a branch purchases one or both of the G-001 supplemental life insurance plans, it must provide coverage for all of its Active members for the same amount of coverage through the MBA.

After a branch member retires, their branch group coverage terminates under the G-001 Supplemental Insurance plans. Not to worry The MBA has a conversion period for retiring members, membership termination of active members or the cancellation of the group supplemental term life plans by a branch. Members previously under these plans have a 31-day option period to convert to an individual insurance policy with the MBA without taking a physical exam by providing a written application to the MBA. The conversion amount of insurance cannot exceed the elected amount of coverage that the branch has or had

covering its active members. Under the conversion option, premiums are based upon the individual insured's age at time of conversion.

Branches can also benefit from electing to give their members this added protection, because a pro-rated portion of all unused premiums is refunded annually to the participating branches as an experience refund. Since 1985 the MBA has paid over \$5 million in basic accidental claims. The member does not pay any premiums for the supplemental group plans; the branches pay the whole premium for its active members.

In closing, I would like to pass on my deepest condolences to Raul and Jamie and their families for the passing of their Mothers. May God give you peace and strength during this time.

Also for us as a branch family not to forget the founder of this great local union, Jon Gaunce, who worked so hard to keep our branch strong educated and united. This is the 15th year anniversary of Jon's passing. Jon would have been 56 years old on May 23rd.

In Solidarity, God Bless You, Chris

PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

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anyone excessed out of North Hollywood. They may get excessed out of Studio City, but may end up on a residual vacancy in LCCA, Chandler, or Valley Village. In an office such as Woodland Hills, half as many carriers may be actually excessed than previously anticipated. However, Woodland Hills has its own set of unique problems. Before Management can excess, it must separate all TE's and cut PTF hours. Instead, Woodland Hills has done the opposite. It has borrowed TE's and PTFs from other offices and the PTFs in Woodland Hills are working 40+ hours on a weekly basis. If excessing does occur, we will look for some offices close by for those affected.

National Reassessment Process

Here's a quick update on NRP. Many NRP cases are getting pre-arbitrated in the Union's favor. This means that some injured carriers are now working 40 hours per week or are working more hours than they had been working in the past. Some carriers were brought back and given new job offers, and others are still off work, but getting paid by the Department of Labor. In common, is back pay. Our

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

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biggest win to date was a back pay award of approximately \$142,000.00. After all the adjustments, taxes, TSP deposits, etc., the carrier ended up with a lump sum of approximately \$50,000.00. We are proud of this win, but it should have never gone this far. Management has the rights to do certain things, but it has to follow the law. To those of you awaiting a hearing, be patient. God willing, justice will also come your way in due time.

Route Structure . . . DUA's

I read a recent OIG report that used the term Delivery Unit Assistants (DUA's). The OIG recommends using part time workers such as PTFs and TEs as part time routers. In my opinion, we should not separate casing and delivery duties. Our craft should remain preparation of mail and delivery of mail as a whole not as two separate functions. We've been through this router thing already and what are the routers going to case, if the volume is steadily declining?

And, how are we going to get the mail to the office earlier? This model may work for UPS where they have loaders and drivers. We deliver more than just parcels.

In my opinion, if we are going to do something with route structure we should think green and customer service. On a National Level we should propose that business routes should be created at less than 8 hours. For example, take a business route and make it 7 hours of delivery. For the last hour, the carrier can drive back through the route in the pm and pick up parcels at its businesses who want their buildings cleared of product in the pm similar to what the UPS drivers do. In thinking green, the Postal Service can look to its past and go back to walk out routes and parcel post relay drivers in high density areas. This would get vehicles off the road, save on fuel costs, and vehicle maintenance. Going green and parcel delivery seems to be the trend. I'd like to get to the political news in this article, but I'm pressed for time with stacks of grievances. So, I will save those thoughts for a future article. All for now back in two.

I'M JUST ONE PERSON...

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home. I get that. But putting the blame on me because I was the Shop Steward and therefore should have known is wrong.

That is why I volunteered to be a Shop Steward in the first place. I wanted to know what my rights were and how the contract might affect me during my career. I did not want to have to rely on someone else to keep me informed. I started going to branch meetings and educating myself on the National Agreement. I know it's nice to have someone inform you about the different issues that come up, like excessing and having someone else deal with management for you. But to rely on one person who is only at the office just one day a week to keep everyone updated is asking a lot. I'm just one person.

If I'm not aware that management might be abusing your rights or violating the contract, I can't help you. It's a "catch 22" situation that I have been seeing out on the workroom floor. Carriers are upset by the way they are being treated, but some of you don't want to tell me because of possible retaliation by management. Well guess what, the problem usually does not go away. What happens is the Supervisor who you think has mistreated you continues to do the same thing, over and over again. You only give that Supervisor and management the "ok" to continue their abuse of you. Yet somehow I should have known and put a stop to it. I will say it again, if I'm not aware of what is happening with you, I can't attempt to fix the problem. You have to at least let me, or the Union know. I do not have a problem with confronting management, just let me know.

I wish I could say it's going to get better, but I would be

lying. The sorting of flats (FSS) is here and management is going to try to get as much down-time as they can from those of you who have FSS. This also means that some Carriers may be excessed from their offices when the adjustments are completed. The routes are going to go through COR to make route adjustments and I can't stop it; I can only make sure the process is within contract guidelines. Grievances have already been filed, concerning COR. The Union can't stop management from telling you that you have down time. I will deal with the unprofessional conduct when I see it or you bring it to my attention. But you have to tell me as soon as it happens. I only have 14 days to file a grievance. Call the Union office or put your name on the sign-up sheet. You can even pass me a note, telling me what's wrong.

I wish there were a Shop Steward in every office and an alternate Steward in those offices that require one. For those of you who feel I'm not doing enough. Are you coming to branch meetings? Do you read Union material that is mailed to you? Do you want to educate yourself so that you have some knowledge of your rights and not rely on someone who is retired and is only in your office once a week?

I made a pledge to you, the Letter Carriers of branch 2902 when I became a Shop Steward that I will represent you to the best of my ability and I will continue to do so. Have I make mistakes, yes I have. But I have also tried to inform you whenever I can about your rights and issues that might affect you. To the Carriers who are upset with me, I will continue to represent you the best I can, it's my job.

If you feel you are not getting the representation you deserve, please, please step forward and volunteer to be a Shop Steward or an alternant.

I'm only one person....Until next time.

WE'RE MAD AS HELL!!!...

Continued from page 3

Management will be using COR for their route adjustments and therein lies another of the real problems in the offices with FSS. I do not profess to be an expert on COR, so I searched "Carrier Optimal Routing" on the Internet and found a site that listed "**Carrier Optimal Routing (COR) Frequently Asked Questions**". The site provided the following information, which I have paraphrased:

COR utilizes algorithms to create compact, contiguous, safe city carrier routes. COR utilizes volumes from sector/segment counts to create efficient travel paths for city carriers while reducing park points and relays (emphasis added).

I did not know the meaning of "algorithms", so I looked up the word in Webster's Dictionary and here is the definition that I found: "A *step by step procedure for solving a problem or accomplishing some end.*"

Sounds logical, almost scientific, doesn't it?

The explanation of COR continues:

*"During the Route Adjustment Phase **Algorithms** (there's that word, again) create an optimal set of routes for review and changes can be made using a manual route transfer tool. After acceptance of the routes by unit management, a second set of algorithms is utilized to create optimal, safe carrier travel paths..."*

It sounds like COR Route Adjustments are made in Utopia, doesn't it? Well, from what I'm hearing from the offices that received COR adjustments, the travel paths are far from optimal and safe.

According to the COR website, USPS Management prefers COR to all other methods of route adjustments because,

"...In all other methods of route adjustments utilized by the USPS, volumes for sector/ segments are not being considered to create park points and relays. In COR, mail is counted by sector/segment and is then actually utilized to create relays for the routes."

Remember what I wrote a few lines back? COR "...create(s) efficient travel paths for city carriers while reducing park points and relays..." (emphasis added). Translation: COR eliminates park points and relays and creates gigantic loops/swings that would slow down the strongest of pack mules. It is apparent that Management, with the aid of COR, is determined to design routes with far less park points and relays because they think it is better to load carriers like pack mules than it is to have them returning to their vehicles for relays or moving their vehicle to go to another park point.

I totally disagree with this philosophy and although I

sympathize with USPS and their exorbitant fuel costs, they are wrong if they think carriers will save time/money by creating loops/swings of 40, 50 or even more deliveries on walking routes. I understand that the USPS regulations require carriers to carry up to 35 pounds but I also know that 35 pounds is a lot of weight to carry in the poorly designed, not ergonomically friendly, USPS Satchel. My shoulder and back start to ache when I think of the prospect of carrying a park and loop swing consisting of 40 or 50 deliveries. The 35 pound weight limit aside, there will be many days when it is simply not physically possible to fit all the mail for such a loop into your satchel. I am **positive** that it would actually take less time delivering two 25 delivery swings that required the carrier go to the vehicle an additional time than it will take to carry a 50 delivery loop/swing, with the pissed-off, aching carrier struggling to pry mail from the stuffed satchel while staggering along at a snail's pace. That's just dumb-ass stupidity, straight up.

I can guarantee you that the COR Technicians that create these 40 or 50 delivery loops have never carried a 40 or 50 delivery loop or they sure as hell would not create them.

Another problem created by COR adjustments is the resulting massive transfers of territory amongst the routes. Once Management eliminates 3, 4 or 5 routes in a zone, the territory from those routes has to be distributed to the other remaining routes. After COR adjustments take place, there is a great probability that you will end up with a totally different route than the one you bid on. In the 91325 zone of Northridge a carrier that had a mounted route before the FSS/COR Adjustments ended up with an apartment route. That sucks! But that is what COR does.

Carriers are as mad as hell about that. They're as mad as hell at Management and they're as mad as hell at the Union. Carriers want to know why Management can significantly change their routes and not have the route be considered as abolished, thereby forcing Management to post the routes junior to them.

I wrote an article in the November/December 2009 Mailbag news regarding Management's ability to change a route significantly and not have the route be considered abolished.

As I wrote back then, the Union used to take the position that if a route was changed by more than 50% it was considered abolished and Management had to post all the routes junior to the carrier that had his route abolished.

USPS Management challenged this position in a grievance that was filed by the NALC in Flint, Michigan. The case went to National Level Arbitration and in 2003 National Arbitrator Steven Briggs ruled in favor of the USPS. The bottom line is that now Management can leave one delivery on a route, keep the same route number and we can't do a damned thing about. We don't like it, but we lost the Arbitration and now we have to live with it.

continued on page 11

WE'RE MAD AS HELL!!!...

Continued from page 10

Once again, it is Management that is doing this, not the Union. The 91325 zone in Northridge will hit the 60 day mark after their route adjustments near the end of May. I can't wait to see the numbers the routes are averaging after 60 days when the routes will be reviewed. Management created this monster and from all I'm hearing their numbers in the offices with FSS are terrible. They are not seeing any savings from FSS and they are really crying the blues about it. Wah! Wah! Let's all get out our tiny violins and play them a tune. I just wish the carriers weren't suffering like they are from Management's and COR's mistakes. Until next time...

PUSH FOR HR137...

Continued from page 4

150 million homes and businesses, and the importance of the Postal Service in delivering prescriptions, checks and that we encourage our Veterans to become Postal employees since up to 28 % of our employees are Veterans. Potentially with the wording of this resolution and the fact that it was introduced by a Republican, we may get his bosses support. This was the only one of my visits where we met with the staff person in the office lobby vs. a side room. His comments on the Postal Service took us by surprise, he complained about Postal fraud and whistle blowers being fired. He also stated some in management got big bonuses. Gallego represents eastern Ventura County.

Tuesday night several of us went to a reception for Lois Capps. She represents a coastal district from Oxnard north to San Luis Obispo. She appreciated all the work Letter Carriers have done in her previous elections. She has been a consistent friend of Labor.

My Wednesday visits went well. Jill Lemons led our group of six as we met with her Congressman Henry Waxman's labor staffer Matt Weiner. Waxman is another strong labor friend we'll be able to count on. He represents the Fairfax area and heads North & West from there taking in Santa Monica, West L.A., Malibu and the western San Fernando Valley including branch 2902 in Chatsworth.

My final visit was to my own Congressman, Brad Sherman. Sherman's NALC legislative liaison Roger Askew led the group of six of us into a meeting with the Congressman and his staff member Rebecca Korman. When told of the new resolution, the first thing Congressman Sherman asked was, why am I not already listed as a co-sponsor? Needless to say we thanked Sherman for his previous support and we told him the resolution was just introduced in early March. The Congressman is no stranger to Branch 2902 and has been to a couple branch meetings years ago. Since most of us present either lived or worked in the Congressman's district, we extended invitations for him to

visit us any time. Sherman's district is like a horse shoe around Berman's district. He represents Reseda, Van Nuys, North Hills West, Mission Hills and parts of North Hollywood, Burbank, Sylmar, Sunland & Tujunga.

St. Patrick's Day we had an 8am Congressional Breakfast. John Beaumont, our California State Association President organized this week's program and went above and beyond on getting members of Congress from both political parties to visit us during this 2½ hour breakfast meeting. We had one Senator and 21 members of Congress visit us in the basement of the Rayburn building for this event. That's a significant number of the house when you consider there are 435 members. Most were from California (16), and a couple of them represent our members or branch offices. Lois Capps represents Oxnard and the coastal areas north of it. Brad Sherman represents many of the San Fernando Valley communities including my neighborhood west of the 405. We had Senator Michael Bennet from Colorado, three Representatives from Missouri including Republican Jo Ann Emerson, Mazie Hirono from Hawaii, and Shelley Berkeley from Nevada

The other California members that visited us were Susan Davis, Jerry McNerney, Zoe Lofgren, Barbara Lee, Lucille Roybal-Allard, Loretta Sanchez, Doris Matsui, Xavier Becera, Maxine Waters, Lynn Woolsey, Bob Filner, Joe Baca, Linda Sanchez, & Laura Richardson. Just about all of them were able to speak to us for a few minutes and Laura Richardson sang to us. She sang a Beatles song but changed the lyrics to make the song Six Days a week for Postal deliveries.

There are many challenges ahead for the USPS and its workers but together we are stronger. In the not too distant future, legislation will be drafted to address the injustice of the USPS Pension & Retiree Health Funding. Congress in 2006 mandated the Postal Service to prefund its future retirement health benefits at a cost of 5.6 billion for 10 years vs. 75 years or pay as you go used by other agencies. Setting aside this much money over the last few years with less Postal revenue is why the media reports us as having financial problems. If we are able to educate Congress that we need to be able to defer these payments since we have already overpaid and this is Postal Service money, not a bailout. There would then be no need to discuss cutting a day of mail deliveries. There have been two studies showing we've overpaid our CSRF pension fund between 50-75 billion dollars. We appear to be the best funded "failed business" in the country. If we could also educate the Postmaster General and the media about these options, 80,000 of our co-workers jobs would be secured with six day delivery and the finances of the USPS would be stabilized. We had company in the halls this week by active & retired Postmasters. They were out lobbying to prevent the closing of smaller Post Offices and were supportive of the efforts of the NALC. This last week of March we are up to 36 co-sponsors and the list keeps growing.



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



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Laurel Canyon	Steve Leyton
Studio City	Greg Gaddis
Valley Village	Steve Leyton
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Shop Steward/ Webmaster	Larry Orcutt
Porter Ranch Alternate	Larry Orcutt
Ojai Chief S.S.	Kurt Whitesell
Oxnard Chief S.S.	Philip Navarro
Pacoima Chief S.S.	Ernestine Hernandez
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Reseda Chief S.S.	Kathi Albritten
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M.C.A.	Albert Reyes
North Hills	James Perryman
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Mt. McCoy Station	Sandra Gaunce
Thousand Oaks Chief S.S.	Sandra Gaunce
	Jim Mette
	Alex Lopez
Alternate	Walter Williams
Newbury Park	Mary Stanley
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Woodland Hills Chief S.S.	Laura Walters
	Joe Vedder
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A government which robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul.

— George Bernard Shaw

RECREATION NEWS

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PAULETTE DYER

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DINNER starts at 6pm

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MAY 14 NALC National Food Drive

MAY 17 Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Union Hall-Chatsworth
Dinner served 6 pm

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

MAY 30 Memorial Day-Holiday



JUN 7 Executive Board Meeting 6pm
Executive Council Meeting 7pm

JUN 16 Retiree Lunch-CANCELLED

JUN 19 Fathers Day



JUN 21 Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Garden Palm Hotel-Newbury Park
Summer Begins

JUL 4 Independence Day-Holiday



San Fernando Chief Shop Steward, James Perryman (L) presents to newly retired Carrier, John McClaren his retiree watch. Congratulations John and enjoy the well deserved retirement.



THE Mail Bag NEWS

★ SOLIDARITY

★ EDUCATION

★ ORGANIZATION



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF TRI-VALLEY BRANCH 2902,
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS AFL-CIO

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VOLUME 53, NO. 4

Circulation 2,500

July - August 2011

Food Banks Get Fat... And Other Assorted Stuff!

By Frank Salazar, President

Despite a tough economic year, the 2011 Letter Carrier Food Drive was another successful event. Although the total amount of food collected was lower than last year, we collected an aggregated total of 293,761 pounds. I would like to thank all our membership, members of the APWU, the Rural Letter Carriers Association, and Management for making the effort to once again collect the food put out by our patrons for America's



problems. In fact, I just wanted to take this opportunity to make a few comments. In many of our offices, Managers helped out by letting Carriers come in early. In some of our offices, Management contributed soft drinks and food for the crafts. In Moorpark, OIC Mike Dickerson came in on his non-scheduled day and brought pizza for everyone. OIC Dickerson and 204b Evan Juarez also helped with unloading the food. At Simi Valley,

needed. Now more than ever, the need for food assistance has been climbing. Due to our current economic climate, more and more American families are slipping into unemployment and poverty with female head of households suffering the most. The recent flooding, tornado activity and wild fires across our Midwest and the severe snowstorms across the East Coast have just added to the pressure on our Nation's food banks. Our efforts went a long way in reducing the pressure on our system of food banks and charitable organizations across the nation.

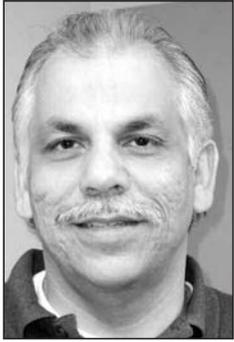
Mt. McCoy Station, 204b Cathy Silvek purchased pizza, candy and cookies for everyone. And, in Woodland Hills, former Postmaster Jing Madrigal helped out by allowing USPS vehicles to transfer food to the local food bank when the food bank was overwhelmed by the amount of food collected. But, we also have an example of a Letter Carrier going beyond the call, when PTF Carrier Pat Seifert of Reseda donated \$200.00 of her own money and used it to purchase groceries for the food drive. Thank you all once again for putting forward the her-

Locally, Branch 2902 did not experience any major

continued on page 2

PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

Continued from page 1



culean effort to once again Stamp Out Hunger.

Agoura Hills	3,500 lbs.
Chatsworth	17,520 lbs.
Fillmore	1,440 lbs.
Moorpark	4,140 lbs.
LCCA/ Valley Village	7,503 lbs
Chandler	15,000 lbs.
Studio City	5,233 lbs
Northridge/Porter	15,000 lbs.
Ojai	2,400 lbs
Oxnard/Saviers	33,170 lbs.
Pacoima	5,189 lbs.
Port Hueneme/Reseda	15,000 lbs.
San Fernando/MCA	11,258 lbs.
North Hills/Sepulveda	4,375 lbs.
Sylmar	5,701 lbs
Santa Paula	1,900 lbs.
Simi Valley Main	14,360 lbs
Simi/Mt. McCoy	19,070 lbs.
Thousand Oaks	36,295 lbs.
Newbury Park	8,000 lbs.
Ventura Main Office	9,530 lbs.
East Ventura Station	37,360 lbs.
Woodland Hills	20,817 lbs.

Bad to Worse

In writing this Article, I was told by our editor Paul Drapkin that I should lead off with a happier subject because the latest articles were filled with negative stories. Well, to tell the truth, for our membership in the FSS offices things have gone from bad to worse. The FSS program itself has its problems, but we can work through them. It can be bad, but not unbearable. However, Management's plan to do unilateral adjustments using the COR (Carrier Optimal Routing) program has made things go from bad to worse very quickly and the numbers tell the story.

When the Branch first heard from the District Manager that the Postal Service wanted to unilaterally use COR to adjust the routes, we suggested that Management use the JRAP process utilizing the DEAT's all the way through the COR process in moving territory. We also suggested doing territory adjustments rather than router, doing 1838Cs for disputes over line items, abolishing vacant assignments, auxiliary routes, or junior assignments and tweaking any problems. We also suggested that Management hold off on any excessing until we actually find out how many assignments we are actually going to lose. The District Manager agreed to these suggestions in March. However, he did not want to use the full 60-days

in the 60-day review period because the first 30 days were distorted by a learning curve. We agreed to use the last 30 days for reviewing the routes.

Flash forward to the District President's Meeting in May. District Manager Wolny informed us that he could not honor that agreement, because the 60-day review period numbers were too erratic and unreliable. Basically, if we used these numbers we would be adding too many routes back in. The 60 day review period contained erratic FSS numbers where on one day a Carrier might get two street trays, the next day that Carrier might receive 12 street trays, and the next day the Carrier might not receive any FSS at all. In addition, the DPS volume was also dropping resulting in more residual mail to case, problems with the parcels being ready, problems with scheme changes, lines of travel, missing labels, and Carriers new on route. The Union knew that Management's unilateral method was going to wreak havoc in the offices, we as a Union were just trying to minimize the damage and save the company money.

The worst example of these COR adjustments can be found in Studio City. I don't know who helped Postmaster Mary Jane Smith adjust these routes, but some of these Carriers are working over 14 hours a day. Yes, that's right fourteen hours in a day. (We are filing the appropriate grievances.) The problem in this office is that Management abolished a senior route and every route in that station was posted for bid. On top of this, COR adjustments were conducted changing the lines of travel and adding territory to the routes making them longer. So, we have unfamiliar new Carriers on new, bigger, and longer routes with line of travel issues, missing addresses, and erratic volumes which has resulted in one big hell of a mess. Basically, routes went from 7 1/2-8 hours to 13-14 hours long or more.

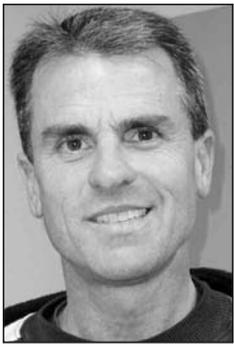
After that meeting in May with the District Manager, Executive Vice President Ray Hill and I were discussing the District Manager's decision to revoke his agreement. I was thinking of commissioning a cartoon with a character called Wolnocchio (long nose and all) with a title like DM Goes Back on Word: Wants Carriers to Suffer Longer. But, we decided not to. Our District Manager isn't really a bad guy. He has been better than his two previous predecessors by far and I think he really wants to do the right thing. This was the first time I've ever known the man to back out on an agreement without an escape clause. It was just disappointing to hear that happen. In the meantime, Management is going to proceed with excessing in Agoura Hills (3), Thousand Oaks (11), Northridge (5), and North Hollywood (4). At this time, Management will hold off excessing anybody out of Woodland Hills. Our only office to make it to a 60 day review period is a zone in Northridge. Barring a mutually acceptable agreement to adjust the routes to 8 hours, we may have to have Man-

continued on page 9



FOOD DRIVE 2011





IF YOU DON'T HAVE SOMETHING GOOD TO SAY...!

By Ray Hill, Executive Vice-President

want to drag everyone into the muck of negativity in this issue of the Mailbag News. Therefore, in the interest of sanity (especially mine), I will only briefly discuss FSS/COR at the end of this article.

This past April 28th, 29th and 30th I attended the California State Association of Letter Carriers (CSALC) 53rd State Convention in San Diego, California along with the other delegates from Branch 2902.

April 28th was a "training day", during which I attended classes on Excessing, the National Reassessment Process (NRP), OWCP and COLCPE/E-Activist. There was also a class on "JARAP 2" that was "co-taught" by Branch 2902 Steward and District Lead Team Member Laura Walters, who did an outstanding job in teaching her portion of the class.

All of the classes that I attended were informative and well taught but it would be preferable if the instructors of the classes minimized the questions allowed from the floor until all of the class information was covered. The entertaining of endless questions is a common problem in training classes because once the questions start rolling from the floor it is almost impossible to stop them. It would be much better to get through all of the material and then have a question and answer session, time permitting, at the end. This one small gripe aside, I thought the classes were, all in all, pretty darned good.

Friday, April 29th was the start of the actual convention. Branch 2902's Mutual Benefits Association (MBA) Officer, Chris Alessi, had submitted a Proposed Amend-

ment to the NALC Constitution that would allow parents or legal guardians (up to age 80) of NALC Members to be eligible applicants for membership in the MBA. This Proposed Amendment was approved by the delegates and will be brought up and voted on at the next National Convention in the summer of 2012.

There were several guest speakers on Friday including 2 members of Congress, Maxine Waters and Laura

Richardson. Both spoke in support of issues affecting Letter Carriers and the USPS. Laura Richardson also entertained the delegates with her version of the Beatles song "8 Days A Week" in which she changed the lyrics to "6 Days A Week" in support of 6 day mail delivery. Being the John Lennon fan that I am, I enjoyed Richardson's version of Lennon's song.

Arturo Rodriquez, President of the United Farm Workers (UFW) Union also addressed the delegates on Friday April 29th. Rodriquez spoke on a variety of topics affecting his membership and Unions in general, and he informed the delegates that the UFW had recently signed contracts with Dole Strawberries and Gallo Wine.

UFW President Rodriquez got a rousing cheer from the delegates when he told us that now that the Gallo Wine contract was signed we could "all start drinking Thunderbird Wine and Boones Farm Wine again". Now, that's what I'm talking about ("Hip-Hip- Hooray")!

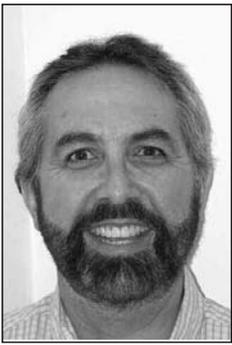
When I was a kid back in the late 50's and early 60's (I know, ancient history) in Northeast Los Angeles (Highland Park) we had a few resident "bums" and "winos" as we called them back then (my apologies to any bums or

Although things are worse in the FSS Offices than they were 2 months ago, prior to the COR adjustments, I don't



Branch 2902 State Convention Delegates are presented with a plaque for the most organized large branch in Region 1 by National Business Agent Chris Jackson (back center).

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ANSWER THE PHONE!

By Paul Drapkin, Senior Vice President

So, do you think that you have what it takes to become a Supervisor? I hope that you have the guts to at least be able to answer the phone. Clearly the current group of Supervisors that we have doesn't. One of the skills that you will need is the ability to answer the phone. After all, as a Supervisor, how hard can it be? You sit in an air conditioned office late in the afternoon doing your paperwork or computer inputting and if the phone rings, you answer it. Oops, I forgot, this is the Woodland Hills P.O. where Supervisors avoid answering the phone the same way you might avoid someone who has the bubonic plague.

For as long as I can remember in my Postal career, one of the cardinal sins that we as Carriers were always taught was not to be broken was to not make it back to the office by a certain time without having first called management and let them decide what they wanted you to do.

I always liked the rule myself. After all, if for whatever reason I was not going to make it back, I let management decide what they wanted me to do. It relieved me of the pressure to attempt to do anything unsafe that might lead to an accident or to attempt to run my ass off just to help my Supervisor.

Well guess what. That part of the job just became even easier here in Woodland Hills. As of April 15, 2011, due directly to all of you who stood up and participated in a class action grievance that was filed on your behalf, the rules have now changed...somewhat!

You still have to call from the street if you are not going to make it on time. As of this writing, it is 3:00pm. But it really does not matter, chances are nobody is going to answer the phone no matter what time you call, and this is where it just became easier for you.

When the union filed the grievance on your behalf, management of course denied that they had any responsibility to fix the problem of having to answer the phone, God forbid that the Postmaster at the time actually admit to her poor leadership skills and take some responsibility. Management claimed that since everyone has their cell phone numbers, you can always get a hold of them. That is a complete fallacy. Not everyone has their cell phone numbers. I know that I do not have all the Supervisors phone numbers. And that leads me to the next misconception. Even if you do have the Supervisors cell phone numbers, you are not required to use it anyway. You are only required to call one central location if you are not going to make it on time...It's called the Woodland Hills

Post Office.

The result of the grievance that was filed on your behalf was sent to the Dispute Resolution Team (DRT). The DRT agreed and handed down a decision that I thought would have brought management to the conclusion that they had better answer the phone. The DRT decision stated that *"Management is directed to put appropriate measure into place so that the telephones are staffed and answered when Carriers call from the street seeking guidance and instructions from management."*

Well guess what, management failed to put any kind of measure into place to insure that the phones are answered when you call from the street. Evidence the fact that shortly after the decision came from the DRT I was telling a few Carriers at the time clock just prior to clocking out for the day about the decision. One of the Carriers pulled out her cell phone and dialed the P.O. phone number. As the phone began to ring, the several of us who were standing at the time clock turned to the Supervisors stand up desk and watched as the Supervisor completely ignored the phone that had now rung at least 6 or 8 times. The only reason that this Carrier hung up her cell phone was because it had now become time to end tour for the day and she wanted to go home. This as we all laughed at the continued ineptness of management's inability to accomplish the very basic task of answering the phone.

When you do call, and if nobody answers the phone here are the new and improved Woodland Hills rules. I did not make these up. They are documented in the labor/management meeting minutes from April 15, 2011.

If you are an OTLD or a Work Assignment Carrier and you call by the designated time indicated by management and nobody answers the phone, you automatically have permission to continue on delivering the route. You are required to call again; however this does not mean that every 5 or 10 minutes you are required to call. It means that you must use common sense and when you have an opportunity to make the call again, do so. But, if you do go into an overtime status and you really did call from the street and nobody answered the phone, good luck to management in any attempt to discipline you!

If you are not on any overtime desired list and you call by the designated time indicated by management and nobody answers the phone, you automatically have permission to bring the mail back in order for you to get off the clock within your 8 hour tour of duty.

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FOCUS

Ernestine Hernandez, Vice President

There used to be a time when I could go anywhere and feel safe and happy. I wasn't rich, but I didn't feel poor either. The majority of men and women I saw around me were strong and decent. They cared about their families, their friends and their communities. People did not have to go around watching their back. I also remember it was a time when I, like everyone else I know, felt that if I cared about my future, that I would have to act responsibly by getting a good job, work hard and wait for the time I could finally rest and retire with a good pension. I thought I had accomplished all that when I started to work for the US Postal Service. The job was a good job, the people honorable and hard working; the future was in focus.

But things are now happening all around us now that are putting that future in danger. Here we are everyone, at the crossroads of our careers. Do you believe this? Well, you better because that's exactly what it is. We have seen people change, our job change and our country radically changing too. We need to work together to try to get it back in focus.

Where did the people at the head of our jobs go that were supposed to be watching out for the continued success of the US Postal Service. When did they begin feeling like it was their own company they could sell off to make their own profits? Don't be fooled! We are also on their hit list. Who are they selling us out to? Could it be to the corporate profit mongers who are trying to bust the unions first? Is it also to the crooked politicians who are supposed to be working for the people, but who are trying to beat the people of this country down financially by creating confusion and clouding the real focus from the working public on the real reason the economic crisis came about? "They" are the rich Wall Street bankers, crooked politicians and corporate traders who dangled that golden apple so that many people would invest in it, then snatched it out from everyone. "They" are now on an all out war to take everything we have, however modest it is. It starts with our jobs, then our homes, our pensions and our health.

How, you ask? By blaming the economic problems on the working men and women who had a plan for their future. By blaming the working middle class people who dedicated their entire lives to providing services to our communities, day in and day out. By blaming Postal workers, police, fire fighters, educators, medical workers, con-

struction workers and all the other service workers out there. These are the people "they" say caused the economic crisis. None of these people are rich; but what they do have are union protections. Protections that "they" want to take away from us. They already have so much but will not be satisfied until they have taken everything away from everyone else. We now have to look out for more than the street crooks, now we have to look out from our own representatives. Look around, haven't you seen it? Do you really believe all these workers are unnecessary or obsolete?

How can that be possible? With the enormous population that the country has, income taxes should be enough to cover everyone. But crooked politicians in cahoots with large corporations want to control it all. What do "they" care about the rest of the country? So "they" are blocking crucial votes that release funds that are supposed to go to states, counties and cities to pay for all the services working people provide. Cutbacks are now being put into effect along with work furloughs, and layoffs. "They" are cutting jobs, benefits and pensions. "They" are saying people can do without living wages, without healthcare, and without homes. Do you really believe people can do, or should do without all this? Are we going to accept being forced to live like third world countries to support the rich? I say NO; Hell No!

What should we do, you ask? Everything you can! Get registered to vote! Get on the E-Activist List. Join the Carrier Corps and assist in making people aware of whom we need to vote for. Talk to family and friends and get them on board too.

Let's not accept these false leaders to control our destiny any longer, when it is obvious their only interest is in their own growing wealth, achieved by the work done by all the working people "they" tax. "They" are not creating jobs in the U.S.A. that allow people to make a decent living, instead, they are sending it out of the country to be done with poverty wages. It's no wonder many other countries are beginning to hate U.S. businesses in their counties. And don't be fooled by those who claim to want lower taxes (the Tea Party), but who are sponsored by the same party that will not allow the budget to be balanced, and doing this by not voting. What are they there for then, to self serve? It looks that way.

What does all this have to do with my job you say? EVERYTHING! Who do you think controls our jobs too? CONGRESS. Now do you get it? LET'S GET BACK INTO FOCUS!



Lunches & MSP's

By: **Robbie Elsaleh, Moorpark Chief Shop Steward**

I'd like to start off by thanking all Moorpark carriers (rural included) and clerks for their contributions in the Food Drive. Collections were slightly lower this year than last, but given the stubborn economic conditions, it's no surprise. I also want to thank OIC Mike for coming in on his non-scheduled day and bringing in Pizza for the carriers returning from the street. I for one was motivated by the thought of that awaiting Pizza all day. It probably contributed to me sustaining my normal street time despite the added load of the Food Drive. Isn't the power of a blissful mind ascending from Managements respectful treatment with sincere caring and appreciation amazing? I definitely don't want to forget thanking Supervisor Evan for staying late on his own time that day and assisting with the unloading of collected foods. Having been in Moorpark for 6 Food Drives now, I can not recall a single Saturday that a Supervisor stayed late or a Postmaster showing up to assist. It was a true team effort!

Since I'm in a thanking mode, I want to thank all employees who voluntarily stepped up and took part in the online "Competency Behavior Inventory Survey" on Postmaster Sigman. It's only by voicing your thoughts and concerns that anything can improve. I have always been taught that doing nothing is actually doing something, and that inaction is action in itself. By ignoring problems not only causes them to fester and grow, but the problems also become accepted and condoned practices. My only concern with the Moorpark Survey was that it was open to other outside Management and Peers of Mr. Sigman to participate in as well, even Mr. Sigman took it himself, so how the outcome will be is anyone's guess. This is a new Survey procedure conducted by an external firm (Hay Group), and for now, we have to trust that they are the experts in this field and know what they are doing.

Now to the fun stuff: there's been some confusion lately about Lunches and MSP (Managed Service Point) Scans, so I will try to clarify both issues as best I can.

LUNCHES

Recently, management passed out Form 1564-A's and conducted a stand-up concerning updating information for carrier's lunch and break locations and times. They also said that lunches have to be taken between the hours of 11:30 and 13:30. Can they do this? The short answer is, yes they can. I will quote some regulations and then explain what it all means.

The ELM section 432.33 for Mealtime reads: "Except in emergency situations or where service conditions preclude compliance, no employee may be required to work more

than 6 continuous hours without a meal or rest period of at least 1/2 hour." So basically, carriers start time in Moorpark is 07:30 and a carrier reaches the 6 hour mark at 13:30, so therefore, lunch should be taken no later than that point. In addition, the M-39 section 171.36 reads: "The location of a suitable and reasonable lunch place and time must be a subject of discussion between the carrier and the unit manager. The authorized location(s) must be on or within a minimum reasonable distance from the route. Particular attention must be given to the reasonableness of the distance to the eating place and back to the route. If at all possible, the authorized lunch stops should be on the line of travel." For example, if you have a situation where you are normally delivering in an area too far from a place to eat at 13:30, but would be much closer at 14:00, you can discuss this situation with the supervisor and a 14:00 lunch time should be approved. Unique situations such as this can be dealt with on an individual basis.

MSP Scans

Also recently, management has changed the location of most MSP scan points in the office. I overheard floor conversations ensuing amongst carriers and management concerning lunch scan points. There is misinformation or misunderstandings that a carrier must take lunch at those exact scan points and that there should be exactly 30 minutes from the last delivery location scan point that a carrier scans, to the next delivery scan point that a carrier reaches after lunch. So here are some regulations on MSP scans.

In a Step 4 settlement regarding MSP scans between the Postal Service and the NALC, the settlement reads in parts: "**MSP does not set performance standards, either in the office or on the street.**" "MSP data may not constitute the sole basis for disciplinary action." "Section 432.33 of the ELM (which I quoted earlier) remains in full force and effect when MSP is implemented." "Lunch locations for both the incumbent and carrier technician on a city delivery route continue to be determined in compliance with the M-39 (which I also quoted earlier). PS Form 1564A lists the place and time that city letter carriers are authorized to leave the route for lunch. However, the parties recognize that, consistent with local instructions and operational conditions, city letter carriers may be authorized to leave at a different time and/or place. Notwithstanding this, **the parties agree that city letter carriers will scan MSP scan points as they reach them during the course of their assigned duties.**"

For example, on a normal 8 hour day, you take your lunch at 12:00. So management has set a scan point at that particular address that you normally reach at 12:00, and a scan

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NO HO HO!

By Steve Leyton, North Hollywood Chief Shop Steward



Article 7 and New Postal Product Jeopardy

Stick with me here...The **JCAM** is a document which enumerates and interprets our contract for management and the union. It serves as the controlling language and describes the boundaries for the agreement.

In **Article 7, 3.C. A part-time flexible employee working eight (8) hours within ten (10), on the same five (5) days each week and the same assignment over a six month period will demonstrate the need for converting the assignment to a full-time position.**

And, on page 7-24, a JCAM analysis of a binding **July 21, 1987 Memorandum of Understanding** says, ***This specific maximization obligation is similar to that of Article 7.3.C, because it is triggered by a PTF carrier working a relatively regular schedule over a six-month period. However, where Article 7.3.C requires work on the same assignment, this memorandum requires only that the PTF carrier be performing letter carrier duties of any kind.***

What does this all have to do with the price of gas? If PTF's are working full-time hours because there is a full-time need for them, the union can use their work records as a basis to establish new full-time assignments. This makes it more likely that our current employees won't be sent elsewhere when the big bad FSS machine rolls into town. We'll have a few local assignments saved for them. And, if the big bad FSS doesn't displace too many people, in North Hollywood and neighboring installations, we may have left-over assignments into which our PTF's can be promoted.

In the meantime, it is important for PTF's to be constantly aware of another JCAM provision: **7.1.B.3. Over the course of a pay period, the Employer will make every effort to ensure that qualified and available part-time flexible employees are utilized at the straight-time rate prior to assigning such work to transitional employees working in the same work location and on the same tour, provided that the reporting guarantee for transitional employees is met.**

What does that mean? Basically, straight-time work hours **must** be assigned to PTF's before TE's over the course of the workweek (Sat-Fri). Fundamentally, when these weeks repeatedly require 40+ hours of straight-time work over a six month period, it establishes the need for a full-time assignment. The more full-time assignments,

the more jobs saved. If you are a PTF, and you have worked less than 40 hours of straight-time in a week, tell your shop steward. Your office may demonstrate a need for a full-time assignment that is being distorted by the schedule you are working. You may be owed hours to which you have not been assigned and a grievance is necessary. Whether you are a regular, a PTF or a TE, we have a better chance of protecting jobs if we can continue to replace needed full-time assignments.

Article 7.3.D. If an office is under withholding at the time the criteria are met, the auxiliary route should be converted to a full-time assignment pursuant to this provision. The new position should be posted for bids and the resulting residual vacancy withheld pursuant to Article 12.5.B.2.

We are currently in a "withholding" situation. A minimum number of vacant routes (according to a pre-inflicted formula) must be set aside to accommodate displaced regulars when the "expected" number of routes is abolished as a result of the fabulous success of FSS.

It is critical that we establish the appropriate number of regular assignments in our installations. More places for regulars to stay, and places to which PTF's can be promoted. "Withholding" vacant assignments may seem to be going on forever, but it will end eventually. When it does, we'll need experienced carriers for new career assignments.

Transitional Employees (TE's) in my office, 91606, are among the finest carriers I've worked with in more than 20 years as a carrier here. In fact, those TE's with which I'm familiar in all the North Hollywood zones: 91601-91607, are well above average...even including the "scabs". Unquestionably, they wish to become career employees. We need to make sure there is at least a chance of maintaining jobs for them.

Gee Whiz! Is that the new Postal Product?!

Is it just me, or are you also becoming terminally confused by the variety and appearance of the latest postal products? You know, like: "Critical Mail" and "EVS". Even if I'm lucky enough to actually be present when a stand-up is given to describe the products and the carriers' responsibility for handling them, I may find out that the supervisor has less confidence in his or her description of the product than I do. How can the USPS be marketing these things successfully to the public when they can't even explain them to us? How can they make promises to our customers when the ones who have to keep the

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10 Year Renewable & Convertible

By Chris Alessi, MBA/NSBA Representative

The MBA offers a Ten Year Term Life Insurance policy that is renewable after ten years, and it can be converted to a whole life policy at time of renewal until the policy anniversary date after the insured's 80th birthday. These features offer extra protections and convenience; this means you get 10 years of insurance protection at a time, after each ten year term you are guaranteed the right to renew your policy for another ten years- without taking a medical exam. Your premiums will increase according to your age.

Convertible means that you may choose to convert your policy to an MBA Whole Life policy until the policy anniversary date after the insured's 65th birthday. It can be converted any time before that date (without taking a medical exam). The only requirement is that the face

value cannot be greater than the face amount of your existing policy.

You can select a policy from \$10,000, \$25,000, \$50,000, or \$100,000. You can also choose to purchase a policy for your Spouse, Child, Grandchildren, Great Grandchildren, Step-Children, Step Grandkids, and Step Great Grandchildren between the ages 17-70.

DIVIDENDS

Each year the NALC Board of Trustees determines if the MBA 10 Year Renewable and Convertible Term Life Insurance plan has a divisible surplus for distribution as a dividend. If so, the dividend amount is credited to each policy on the policy anniversary date. The policy owner has the following options:

- (1) Leave the dividend on deposit at an interest rate set by the MBA (never less than 2%)
- (2) Receive the dividend in cash or
- (3) Use the dividend to pay premiums on the policy.

You decide how often you want to pay your premiums—Monthly, Annually or Biweekly under MBA's automatic payroll deduction plan. It's very easy to get started, just fill in the application and mail it to the MBA postage free. The MBA will send your policy to your home. You may return may return it in 30 days for a full refund of your premium, if you decide not to keep the policy. The 10 year Renewable and Convertible Term Insurance Plan is designed exclusively for Letter Carriers from your NALC/MBA.

In closing I wish our entire union members, officers, and their families to have safe and fun summer ahead.

God Bless You. In solidarity, Chris

PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

Continued from page 2

agement conduct 6-day counts and inspections. We may not have a choice, because we cannot leave the routes overburdened. Hint to carriers in FSS offices, if you want to make extra cash sign the overtime list for the next quarter. There will be plenty of opportunities to increase your income. At this time, it's too early to comment on our experiment in the 77 FSS zone in Agoura Hills and our 62 FSS zone in Thousand Oaks. When the numbers are in, I'll let you know of the results.

100 Years of Gold

Congratulations to our two newest Gold Card Members: Ray Arguellez out of San Fernando and Jerome (Jerry) Moore of Oxnard. At our General Membership Meeting in May, Regional Administrative Assistant James Henry presented the gold cards to the Brothers and read a letter of congratulations from President Fred Rolando

Brother Arguellez spent his Postal career in San Fernando. He started on January 15, 1960 at Mission City Annex and retired on September 2, 1992. Brother Moore started his career on January 3, 1961 in Santa Monica and transferred and retired in Oxnard in 1992. We thank Brother Arguellez and Brother Moore for their long faithful dedicated service to the American public and for their 50 years of membership in the NALC. We wish them a long, happy, healthy and productive retirement and wish them all the best. All for now back in two.



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WELCOME
TO VASA PARK

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS Branch 2902 Picnic

Vasa Park, Agoura Hills, CA
(Directions on Next Page)

Sunday, September 11th 2011
11:00AM - 4:30PM

All-You-Can-Eat Lunch Buffet – 12:00PM – 2:00PM

BBQ Sliced Beef, BBQ Chicken Breast, BBQ Baked Beans,
Red-Skinned Potato Salad, Watermelon Slices, Garden Salad and More!

Hot Dog Station – 11:30AM-4:00PM

Grilled Hot Dogs, Fresh Buns, Chili, Cheese & all the Fixins'

Beverage Service

Soft Drinks Served All Day, Beer and Wine Served at 11:00AM

Delicious Desserts And Sweets

Cotton Candy at 11:00AM

Ice Cream & Chocolate Chip Cookies at 1:00PM

All Day Entertainment for Everyone!!

Including: Picnic Races 1:00PM-2:30PM
Slide Winder 274 ft. Water Slide, Swimming Pool,
Clown-Face Painter-Balloon Artist from 12:00PM-3:00PM,
Tiger Belly Bouncer, Three-Piece Obstacle Course,
And So Much More!!

Don't Forget to Bring your Swim Suit, Towel, and Appetite!

MEMBERS AND
FAMILIES ONLY.
NO PETS. NO SCABS.

PICNIC RSVP

Please detach and return by August 23rd 2011!

Member's Name: _____

Yes, I will come to the picnic and bring ____ adult guest(s) (Over 18)

Yes, I will be bringing my children - **Please Specify Number of Children.**

Age 8 and Under: ____ Age 9 and Above: ____

25 Year Membership Pins

The following members are invited to the September 20th meeting at the Jon Gaunce Union Hall to receive their 25 year membership pin

Agoura

James Calcante
Michael Pacione
Val Wilkins

Chatsworth

Richard Luman
Jan Parker
Javier Rueda
Maxwell Sales
Harold Strauss

Moorpark

Lori Stewart
James Yancey

North Hollywood

Michael Bickerstaff
Charlene Brown
Carol Butler
John Denos
Michael Friedman
Ray Hill
Hilarion Lacson
Robert Mitchell
Darcy Rager

Antonio Respicio Jr.

Bruce Seitz
Dianna Seitz

Northridge

Berj Basmadjian
Kin Eng
Kurt Linden

Pascal Nelson
Kim Twitchell

Oxnard

Beverly Anderson
Dorothy Best
Eddie Brewer
Larry Eyer

Linda Kraetsch
Ronald Martinez

Pacoima

Richard Calzada
David Nicholson

Port Hueneme

Elbert Jepsen

Reseda

Geraldine Coblentz
Astrid Cortes
Michael Free
Jeffrey Hastert
Charlie Lovitt

San Fernando

Brenda Bradley
Armando Casillas
Robert Gomez
Frank Gonzales
Olivia Harris
Benjamin Hawkins
Jaime Hernandez

Brennan Lai

Philip Robinson
Todd Sturdevant

Simi Valley

Richard Burnside
Elizabeth Cateriano
Karen Emerson
Sandy Gaunce

Thousand Oaks

Diane Bosick
Chris Brewster
Michael Charles
Keith Duvall
Frank Martinez
Jim Mette

Eliseo Perez
Kurt Schlemmer
Jack Taylor
Wanda Wallin
Sharon Wing
Hank Zarembski

Ventura

Frank Borja
Marilyn Trotsky
Charles Vegas

Woodland Hills

Candy Jenks
Edwin Kintanar
Janet Quinn
Stewart Sult

Wutisarn Techaphunphol

Directions to Vasa Park

2854 Triunfo Canyon Road, Agoura Hills, CA 91301

Ventura Fwy (101)

Exit at Kanan Rd and go South towards the ocean 3.2 miles.

Turn Right/West on Triunfo Canyon Rd.

Vasa Park/Camp Keystone is 1/3 mile on the Right
Look for the balloons on our mailbox!

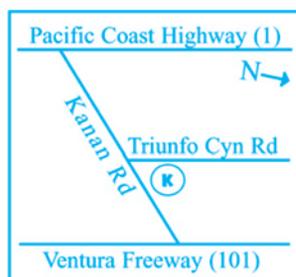
From Pacific Coast Hwy (1)

Take Kanan Rd North towards Agoura 8.8 miles.

Turn Left/West on Triunfo Canyon Rd.

Vasa Park/Camp Keystone is 1/3 mile on the Right
Look for the balloons on our mailbox!

**Please drive straight through our facility
and over our creek (use the cement bridge)
to our large parking lot.**



Check Out the Park at
www.TeamPlayEvents.com

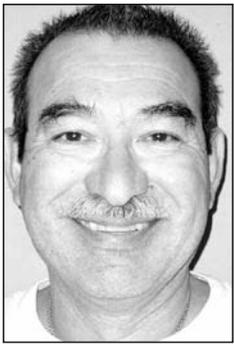
LUNCHES AND MSP'S...

Continued from page 7

point at the following address where you should be after your lunch. But today, the mail volume is so heavy, that you end up leaving the office one hour late and you will not get to the 12:00 scan point until 13:00. So you fill out a 3996 because you are one hour behind, and on the 3996 you indicate that you will still take your lunch at 12:00 because that's when you get hungry and you will still be in close proximity to your lunch location. Then management approves your 3996. So in this case, you will scan that particular scan point when you get to it at 13:30, and scan the following scan point immediately after that when you get to that one, probably at 13:31. In this case, there is only one minute in-between scan points. This doesn't mean that you only took a 1 minute lunch; it just means that you scanned them as you reached them like you are supposed to do during the course of your assigned duties.

An example of why you could have more than 30 minutes in-between where management has set up your lunch scans is: Let's say you are on route that is 50% park-n-loop and 50% mounted and there is a 3 minute travel within time from the park-n-loop section to the mounted section. You deliver your last park and loop delivery and scan the mail box but your lunch has not started yet. You still have to walk

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A Health Plan on the Move

By, **Joe Gutierrez, Health Benefits Representative**

The year is half over, can't believe the time is going so fast. Hope that everyone has been able to stay healthy and have not had to seek much in the way of medical attention. Judging by the number of phone calls I have been getting you have not had any problems with the health plan, or are just able to stay healthy.

When times are bad, we often have a lot of problems that may not be what we consider health related, but really are. Mental health is one that a lot of us ignore or just don't want to admit to. Alcohol & drug abuse, anxiety, dementia and depression are some. Bipolar, eating disorders, personality disorder, post traumatic stress disorders and schizophrenia are all mental health problems. The NALC health Plan has in-network and out-of-network plans available to our members. For in-network there is a \$200.00 co-pay per admission to a treatment facility or inpatient hospital and \$20 for per office visit, or consultation.

Learn the stress signals. Get plenty of exercise, rest relax and take time to smell the roses. Cut down on alcohol and eliminate drug use. Take regular vacations or find a way to have stress free weekends. Most important take your lunch and relax and decompress, it's your time.

The time will soon be upon us to think about open season. I can't stress how important it is to really compare the plans that are available to us. Those of you who are within 5 years of retirement really have a lot to think about. With the potential cuts to Medicare which health plan you choose can be very important to your health cost in retirement. When choosing a health plan, don't just consider the everyday savings or cost but what happens when you have a major medical problem. Just because you may have a HMO doesn't mean you are covered 100%. I had a recent experience with someone who had a HMO but found out their coverage was capped for the type of medical care needed and was on the hook for major bills that aren't covered because of the cap. Anyone have any questions or ideals on how to improve or make the NALC better, or maybe what benefits should be added please give me a call. There will be a seminar in October where I can address your concerns or problems.

I thought I would try to explain the new NALC card that you should have received by now. I was told that there is an article in the postal record that tries to explain the change. There is no change to our health plan except that we now have a different underwriter. The fact is Cigna is still our provider; it is just that they have different levels of

coverage. Ours will now be Cigna Plus. It is the same plan the only difference is that the doctors in the new plan charge lower rates. Because they have lower rates the plan is able to save money and you also will save money. Because the doctor has a lower rate once the plan reduces for customary charge the lower cost will result in your percentage being less. The only drawback is you have to make sure your doctor is a PPO member. If your doctor is not a PPO member you can ask them to join the plan. As I understand it, most PPO doctors belong to both plans but make sure you ask before treatment. If you have any questions call me and I will try to better explain the new change. Just remember that the only change is the rates the new plan pays, your coverage is not affected.

LUNCHES AND MSP'S...

Continued from page 11

back to the vehicle, empty your mail satchel from outgoing mail and sort your nixies. This may take 2 or 3 minutes, etc. Then you have to travel out of the neighborhood, which you would have to do whether you were going to lunch or not. Your lunch does not begin until you deviate away from your normal line of travel, which maybe another 2 minutes or so. So now it's been 5 minutes since you scanned your out-to-lunch scan without really being on lunch. At the end of your 30 minute lunch, you should reappear at the line of travel point that you deviated from 30 minutes prior. At that point, you may still have another 1 or 2 minutes route travel time to your next section of delivery. Have I lost you yet? So by the time you scan your end-of-lunch scan, there would be a 36 or 37 minutes time span, but that doesn't mean that you took a 37 minute lunch. Also, what if you stopped to get gas for 5 minutes on your line of travel that day after lunch?

So the point here is, scan the MSP when you get to it. As I always say, as long as you are not doing anything wrong and working diligently and safe, there is nothing to worry about.

I hope I've clarified lunches and MSP's for everyone. If you have more questions just let me know. Whenever you get instructions from Management, you may ask them questions to get clarification, but don't argue with them on the floor. If you feel something is incorrect or you're just unsure, request to speak to a steward by signing the request form hanging on the clip board at the stand-up desk and notify the Supervisor. The steward will look into the matter and get back to you. You have a right to see a steward within 2 hours of the request or by the end of the day.

Till next time...

The Good Life

By, *Bev Sucich, Director of Retirees*



Hi Retirees. I am back. I missed putting an article in the Mailbag News for May-June 2011. I will write a quick review from the last few months of the door prizes and who won.

At the February 17th meeting we had 20 members and 13 guests. The winners were Don Esterman-Subway gift card, Dan Gorman-Hometown Buffet gift card, Nusi Hulshoff-Lowes gift card and Alan Takagi-Lowes gift card.

At the March 17th meeting on St. Patrick's Day we had 29 members and 13 guests. The winners were Jose Betancourt- Subway gift card, Lois Perkins-Hometown Buffet gift card and Dan Gorman-Subway gift card.

At the April 21st meeting we had 22 members and 14 guests. The winners were Maynard Owens-Subway gift card, Lois Perkins-Hometown Buffet gift card and Sonny Castellano-Chili's gift card.

At the May 19th meeting we only had 8 members and 5 guests. The winners were Jon Mc Claran-Chili's gift card, Don- Bach-Starbucks gift card and Alan Cox-Coldstone gift card. Due to a major plumbing problem Hometown Buffet closed down for the rest of the day. I apologize to our senior group who came out for the luncheon. I know it was an inconvenience to all of you. The early birds were the ones who were served.

We had two more 50 year Gold Card union members added to our list. Terry Moore, who came all the way from Paradise California to accept his card and Ray Arguellez from Sylmar, California.

Ray Arguellez's granddaughter, Kaitland Jane Arguellez (daughter of Ray Arguellez Jr., a Carrier at the Canoga Park Post Office, and Betty Arguellez, a Clerk at the Sylmar Post Office) was just elected senior class president of 2011-2012 at Valencia High School and that same day she made the varsity cheerleading squad for the second year. She also has a 4.0 GPA and is considering going to Oregon or Arizona state college to further her education. Her older sister Corinna is currently attending nursing school in hopes of a career as an emergency room nurse. Their grandson Joshua Arguellez

graduated from Canyon High School and will attend a junior college where he will be playing on the baseball team while he pursues a nursing career. Congratulations and good luck to Ray Arguellez's grandchildren on their achievements. I thank Sally and Ray Arguellez for sharing their story with the union.

If anybody wants to share any events, please contact me by phone, union meetings or the luncheons.

Just a reminder, if you have not contributed to COLCPE please do so. You will save our brothers and

sisters their jobs and the benefits of the retirees. You can make a one time contribution or have it automatically come out of your annuity or checking account. Any amount will help. I do have the forms for you.

Here is some information for new retirees that are not getting their full retirement annuity. NALC officials wrote to the OPM about this problem in October 2010. In a March 8, 2011 letter to the NALC, OPM director John Berry is working to increase interim payments for new Postal retirees. So the NALC is working with OPM to speed up this process.

Hope you all have a good summer.



Region 1 RAA James Henry (center) presents Ray Arguellez (l) and Jerome (Jerry) Moore (r) with their 50 Year Gold cards at the May union meeting in Chatsworth. Congratulations gentlemen. Enjoy your free, well deserved membership for many years to come!

SOMETHING GOOD TO SAY...

Continued from page 4

winos reading this...we weren't politically correct back in the olden days), who had a preference for drinking Thunderbird (T-Bird) wine straight from the bottle they kept in the brown paper bag they bought it in. The alley behind Rosie's corner grocery store at the corner of Avenue 52 and Monte Vista Street was a popular hang-out of the "brown-baggers" and Rosie (God rest her soul) sold a lot of T-Bird wine back then.

There was even an old rhythm and blues song (circa 1950's) about T-Bird wine that went something like this:

"...what's the word? Thunderbird/ How's it sold? Good and cold/What's the jive? Bird's alive/ What's the price? Thirty twice..." With the price of "thirty twice", it's no wonder T-bird wine was so popular amongst the brown baggers. I guess Rosie didn't make her fortune from T-Bird Wine sales. Anyway, pardon my digression and congratulations to the United Farm Workers on their contracts with Gallo Wines and Dole Strawberries.

At the State Convention there was a tribute to former NALC President Bill Young who spoke to the delegates about the problems in Wisconsin and talked about how the Unions are being blamed for other's financial mistakes. Bill Young can still scream, that's for sure.

Our current NALC President, Fred Rolando, addressed the delegates and told us that he is spending a lot of media time attempting to dispel the many misconceptions about the USPS.

I remember feeling sorry for Fred Rolando when Bill Young retired before the end of his term as NALC President, thinking that Fred was really "stepping into it", taking over the Presidency of the NALC at the worst possible time. After hearing President Rolando speak 4 or 5 times now and after seeing how he ran our National Convention last summer, I don't feel sorry for him anymore. I am fully convinced that Fred Rolando is, without a doubt, the right man at the right time for the job of NALC President. It is apparent that President Rolando really enjoys what he is doing and that he is up to the various challenges facing our Union and the USPS during these historically difficult times. And, to his credit, his sense of humor sure as hell has not suffered or soured during these tough times.

While speaking at the State Convention, President Rolando said that he wants to educate the public about the value of the USPS which he called "*the only true universal communication system in the US, delivering to 150 million addresses with an unmatched transportation network utilizing letter carriers-the most trusted federal employees for 6 years in a row.*"

President Rolando said that last quarter alone, the USPS had a **net operational profit** of \$226 million,

meaning that after counting revenue on one side of the ledger and the cost of equipment, labor and fuel on the other, the profit topped a quarter billion dollars. However, this net operational profit was wiped out by the 5.5 billion dollar pre-funding requirement for future retiree's health benefits. Without this unfair requirement to pre-fund 5.5 billion annually, the USPS would have made an \$837 million dollar profit over the last 4 years, during the worst recession in 80 years. President Rolando had a lot more to say to the delegates but time and space prohibit me from writing more. Good Luck to President Rolando in his mission to dispel the myths about USPS.

Congratulations to the CSALC Chair Officers and District Officers who were all re-elected, by acclamation, to their positions. CSALC President John Beaumont has done an outstanding job during his tenure and he will continue to do so for **at least** the next 3 years, at which time he will no doubt be re-elected again.

On Saturday April 30th various awards were handed out and recognition was given to the NALC's Congressional District Liaisons (CDLs), including Branch 2902's Vice President Ernestine Hernandez and CDL David Hyman. Ernestine was also recognized as a graduate of the NALC's Leadership Academy. Branch 2902's Senior Vice President, Paul Drapkin was introduced as a member of the Sierra Coastal District Dispute Resolution Team.

Branch 2902 was recognized with an award for being #1 in organization for branches w/over 1001 members with 94.3 % membership. Congratulations to all Branch 2902 members.

Our former National Business Agent and current National Director of Health and Safety, Manny Peralta, addressed the delegates with a power point presentation on a variety of items currently on NALC's agenda. Manny talked about collective bargaining for our next contract and said that this will be the "most difficult round in our history", given the extremely bad economic environment we are in. The NALC's key issues in contract talks will be wages, Cost Of Living Adjustments (COLAs), Health Benefit contribution levels, subcontracting, workforce structure, route evaluations and revenue generation. Manny stated that the NALC is still open to early negotiations, if the USPS agrees.

Lastly, our current National Business Agent, Chris Jackson addressed the delegates and discussed FSS and COR and told us that we should challenge, in the grievance procedure, FSS/COR Adjustments if they violate the FSS and COR agreements, which is exactly what Branch 2902 has done in the FSS/COR Offices. As I am writing this, the Studio City Office is currently struggling with FSS/COR adjustments. Management eliminated 5 routes in Studio City, including the senior carrier's route.

continued on page 15

SOMETHING GOOD TO SAY...

Continued from page 14

Therefore, all of the routes in the office went up for bid and on May 21, 2011 everyone started on their new routes. There were massive scheme changes and for the first week it was mass confusion, to say the least. I will report more on Studio City in the next issue of the MBN.

The Agoura Hills, Thousand Oaks (including Newbury Park) and Woodland Hills Installations also implemented massive changes on May 21st and are struggling as well.

As of today we are in the process of working on an agreement to fix the mess in the 91325 zone of Northridge, another by product of FSS/COR. I will report on whether or not we have an agreement to fix the 91325 zone in the next issue. Talk to you all then.

ANSWER THE PHONE...

Continued from page 5

If we had a Postmaster that was a real leader instead of the typical management type of never taking real responsibility for the failure of her leadership skills or for her Supervisors lack of initiative it would never have been necessary to resort to this in the first place. But we didn't. We now have a new OIC. Perhaps she can show the kind of gumption it will take to insure that Supervisors can have a basic skill that at the very least will insure that they answer the phone. Don't hold your breath!

The Mail Bag News is the official publication of Tri-Valley Branch 2902 (Chatsworth, California) of the National Association of Letter Carriers. All opinions expressed are those of the individual author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NALC or its officers. The Mail Bag News welcomes articles and letters to the editor; however the editorial staff of the Mail Bag News assumes complete authority to decide which letters are presented for publication. Anonymous articles are not accepted. Permission is hereby granted to re-print articles. We just ask that you give the author and the publication appropriate credit.

NO HO HO...

Continued from page 8

promises, us, don't understand what was promised in the first place? We shouldn't have to guess about how to handle a given piece of mail.

And what's the deal with these barcodes? How can they sell these things without explaining some basic restrictions to the customers? Like: don't put a bar code around a circular container instead of across it; don't put a barcode across a seam; make sure the entire barcode is actually printed in full with all the numbers visible in case it doesn't scan.

As more products require scanning, the barcodes become increasingly harder to identify. What's with that? Most commercial mail displays numerous barcodes. The ones we're responsible for scanning are becoming less distinctive and more invisible. Now days, you have to stop in your tracks just to stare at every other envelope to determine if you're going to get yelled at for missing the scan.

BASIC MARKETING! MAKE THE THING YOU WANT PEOPLE TO SEE VISIBLY STAND OUT!

I don't know the specifics, but I figure that, when our patrons purchase products online that use scannable barcodes, the USPS uses computer programs that enable those customers to print out the labels containing the barcodes. How hard would it be to, say, include a box around every USPS barcode and numerology for which carriers are responsible? The box could be of a consistent and distinctive design, making it easy for a carrier or clerk to pick it out among the background noise of text and other barcodes displayed on the piece. The average home computer has no problem reproducing such a design.

And another thing: at least 2 or 3 times a day, I have to put those numbers in manually. At least once every week or two, neither the barcode nor the numerals are readable. Why don't the printed labels feature redundant (multiple) USPS barcodes and numbers. I'm a consumer, too. If I'm waiting for the replacement widget I ordered for my gizmo, I want to know where it is now. I want to know where the priceless artifact I purchased on eBay is. And I want to confirm that they are not claiming I already got it when I didn't. It's a great idea for us to sell scannable products, and we should sell a lot of them. So c'mon management! Can't you do a better job of describing these products to us; of making sure the barcodes meet minimum requirements, and giving us usable scanners.

And I want an electric delivery vehicle with left side drive, a curbside loading door and windows, lots of windows, too. It's hard driving around North Hollywood from inside a metal cave, especially with the steering wheel on the wrong side of the cave. I'm just sayin'.



Union Meeting Minutes

April 19, 2011

Newbury Park, CA

Meeting was called to order by President Salazar at 7:10PM. Sonny Castellano led the pledge of alle-

giance. Roll call of officers was taken. Asking to be excused were Albert Reyes, Chris Alessi, Bev Sucich, Dan Gorman, Mary Stanley, Bob Golden, Joe Gutierrez, Frankie Mercado, Steve Dickerson, Kurt Whitesell, Jim Mette, Lorie Moore, Angel Hale, and Joe Vedder. Fred Shaw makes a motion to excuse these brothers and sisters, S/C.

President Salazar reminds the members to sign the attendance book and purchase tickets for the 50/50 raffle.

Members review the minutes from the March 15 meeting. Fred Shaw makes a motion to adopt the minutes as printed, S/C.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Food Drive- Plans for the food drive have been made. Letters will be sent out to post offices and stewards with information. Cards will be sent to offices as soon as we get them.

MDA Texas Hold'em- Poker tournament to benefit MDA and Saxsenmeier scholarship will be held on May 21 at the Jon Gaunce Union Hall in Chatsworth. Flyers are in tonight's handout.

Branch Picnic-Sunday, September 11, in Agoura at Vasa Park.

COMMUNICATIONS

Early out- The early out that came in March was disappointing to the craft because it targeted only certain management levels.

FSS- All kinds of problems, sortation, destroyed mail, and mechanical breakdowns.

Excessing- Members are urged to see their steward if they get an excessing letter. Carriers have not yet been informed of where or when they will be excessed.

COR Adjustments- Members discuss the various problems with the COR adjustments. Out of sequence numbers, travel patterns, edit sheets are not correct.

JARAP 2011- Local office contact duties are discussed. Evaluation period is March/April or April/May. Management must post workhour/workload analysis. It is very important for the carriers to comment on the evaluations and adjustments if the figures are in error. Current 3999's must be used to transfer territory.

Legislation- See NALC fact sheet about HR 1351. Pension obligation recalculation is needed to help offset the cost of the Postal Service obligation to pre-fund the health ben-

efits for future retirees. Ernestine Hernandez announces that she has an appointment to meet with Rep. Gallegly to discuss this issue on April 26.

COMMITTEES

MDA- Texas Hold'em plans are done. Also, Sandy Gaunce reports that the Food Drive posters are in and stewards can pick them up tonight.

Recreation- Paulette Dyer informs the carriers that several U.S. cities are celebrating their centennials this year. She gives info on the Skirball Center, dining and entertainment.

She donates prizes for the raffle. She will be gone on vacation for the May meeting.

Apparel- Lori Stewart tells members that the jacket order will arrive at the Union Hall any day now. She will get them out to the members as soon as they arrive.

COLCPE- Ernestine Hernandez urges the membership to be active and informed about current legislation issues. The purpose of the COLCPE fund is to help us educate lawmakers about issues that are important to our union members.

Legislation- David Hyman reminds the members that now is a good time to contact their representative at their local office. Due to spring recess, many will be home from Washington.

NEW BUSINESS

Member Appreciation- Dodger tickets for July 23 game against the Washington Nationals will be sold for cost to the members. Details will be posted.

GOOD OF THE ASSOCIATION

Brother Joe Messineo is presented with his 40 year membership pin by President Salazar.

Know Your Rights

Article 41.3.0 is reviewed and discussed. Protected salary is discussed by the members. Article 41.1.B.2 is reviewed and discussed. Rap session regarding expedited bidding was held.

Members review the Treasurer's report. Marian Walters makes a motion to accept the Treasurer's report, S/C.

Sandy Gaunce makes a motion to adjourn in memory of Marva Golden, S/C.

50/50 raffle was won by Onofre Varela for \$20.50. Kathi Albritten won the door prize. The membership drawing was worth \$947.00. The name drawn was Jim Doll from Thousand Oaks. He was not present to win.

Respectfully submitted by Susan Degenhardt, Recording Secretary.

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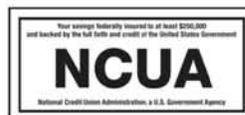
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RETIREES LUNCH

RAFFLE AT 12:30

Where: Hometown Buffet
Fallbrook Mall
6633 Fallbrook Ave.
West Hills

When: Thursday,
August 18, 2011

Time: 11:00am to 1:00pm



Where: Hometown Buffet
Vons Center
1855 Cochran Street
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When: Thursday,
September 15, 2011

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Chatsworth Chief S.S.	Angel Hale
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Alternate	Lori Stewart
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Chandler	Greg Gaddis
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Valley Village	Steve Leyton
Northridge Chief S.S.	Onofre Varela
Shop Steward/ Webmaster	Larry Orcutt
Porter Ranch Alternate	Larry Orcutt Kurt Whitesell
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Oxnard Chief S.S.	Ernestine Hernandez
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North Hills	C.C. Flatts
Sylmar / Main Office	James Perryman
Santa Paula Chief S.S.	Laura Walters
Simi Valley Chief S.S.	Sandra Gaunce
Mt. McCoy Station	Sandra Gaunce
Thousand Oaks Chief S.S.	Jim Mette
	Alex Lopez
Alternate	Walter Williams
Newbury Park	Mary Stanley
Ventura Chief S.S.	Jim Mette
East Ventura	Laura Walters
Woodland Hills Chief S.S.	Laura Walters
	Joe Vedder
	Paul Drapkin

No man's life, liberty, or property is safe while the legislature is in session.

— Mark Twain (1866)

RECREATION NEWS

SEA WORLD:

Adults: \$46.00 (Gate price \$69.99)

Child: \$46.00 (Gate price \$61.99)

SEE'S GIFT CERTIFICATE:

\$13.50 (Retail Value \$16.50)

At the monthly meetings (every third Tuesday of the month) coupons and flyers for various venues are available.

My famous homemade oatmeal chocolate chip cookies are 4 for \$1.00.

PAULETTE DYER

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DINNER

At the July
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DINNER starts at 6pm

TRI-VALLEY BRANCH 2902

ANNOUNCES

MEMBERSHIP APPRECIATION NIGHT AT

DODGERS STADIUM

VS. THE WASHINGTON NATIONALS

SATURDAY JULY 23, 2011

7:10PM

TICKETS ARE IN THE RIGHT FIELD
PAVILION AND INCLUDE ALL YOU CAN EAT
DODGER DOGS, PEANUTS, NACHO'S,
POPCORN & SODA

TICKETS ARE \$27 EACH

CONTACT DAVID HYMAN AT

(818) 893-8613 or at

davidahyman@aol.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- JUL 19** Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Union Hall-Chatsworth
Dinner served 6 pm
- JUL 21** Retiree Lunch 11:00am
Hometown Buffet-Simi Valley
- AUG 2** Executive Board Meeting 6pm
Executive Council Meeting 7pm
- AUG 16** Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Garden Palm Hotel-Newbury Park
- AUG 18** Retiree Lunch 11:00am
Hometown Buffet-West Hills
- SEP 5** Labor Day-Holiday
Muscular Dystrophy Telethon
- SEP 6** Executive Board Meeting 6pm
Executive Council Meeting 7pm
- SEP 11** **Branch 2902 Picnic**
Vasa Park-Agoura Hills 11:00am





THE Mail Bag NEWS

★ SOLIDARITY

★ EDUCATION

★ ORGANIZATION



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF TRI-VALLEY BRANCH 2902,
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS AFL-CIO

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VOLUME 53, NO. 5

Circulation 2,500

September - October 2011

USPS Proposes to Cut 120,000 Jobs, Pull Out of FEHBP, and Eliminate No Lay-Off Provisions!

President Rolando denounces PMG's latest 'radical' legislative proposals

August 11, 2011 – NALC President Fredric V. Rolando has issued a statement to denounce Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe's latest "radical" legislative proposals:

Today, city letter carriers across the country received a mandatory stand-up talk from supervisors as part of a concerted campaign by top postal management to convince Congress to slash postal employees' health and pension benefits and override lay-off protection provisions in the postal unions' contracts.

Just days before we formally open collective bargaining negotiations, the Postal Service has sent a clear message: It intends to use the financial crisis caused by the deep recession and the crushing congressional pre-funding mandates to strip postal employees of our bargaining rights.

Although we are prepared to seriously bargain over any proposal, we will resist this blatant attempt to subvert and circumvent collective bargaining.

In addition to the stand-up talk, the Postal Service is-

sued a press release to the media and distributed two "white papers" to congressional decision-makers. One paper, "Postal Service Health Benefits and Pension Programs," asks Congress to allow the USPS to set up its own health plan and pension plans outside the FEHBP and FERS/CSRS systems for all other federal employees. The other paper, "Workforce Optimization," takes the extraordinary step of asking Congress to void the lay-off protection provisions of the various postal labor contracts.

Although the stand-up talk claimed that the postal unions had been "briefed," the reality is quite different. The USPS developed their plans without any discussion or negotiation with NALC or any of the other unions. Not surprisingly, the health and pension proposals would dramatically cut employee benefits below those earned by other federal employees. Let me be clear: We would never agree to any benefit plan unilaterally designed by postal management.

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ELECTION NOTICE

This is official notice to all members of Branch 2902 that nominations for branch officers and convention delegates for the 2012 National Convention will be accepted at the October 18, 2011 meeting beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Palm Garden Hotel, 495 N. Ventu Park Rd. Newbury Park, and at the November 15, 2011 meeting beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Jon Gaunce Union Hall, 21540 Prairie St., Ste. C, Chatsworth. Ballots will be counted on December 20, 2011.

The following officer positions will be open for nomination: president, executive vice president, senior vice president, vice president, treasurer-financial secretary, recording secretary, director of retirees, MBA/NSBA officer, health benefit officer, assistant health benefit officer, sergeant at arms and five trustee positions. These officers serve a three year term. The president, executive vice-president, senior vice-president, vice-president, secretary-treasurer, and recording secretary shall be delegates to state and national conventions by virtue of their office.

All nominations may be accepted or declined verbally at the nominating meetings, or in writing no later than seven calendar days after the close of nominations. Failure to accept nominations as stated will result in an automatic decline.

The election will be conducted by secret ballot. Ballots will be mailed to each member in good standing at their last known address. Completed ballots will be accepted up to 5PM on December 20, 2011 at the Union hall.

Susan Degenhardt, Recording Secretary

Expect Change

By Frank Salazar, President



If you read my last article, you may remember that we are having a lot of disruption in many of our units. Currently, we are going through JARAP 2011 reviews and adjustments. FSS units are not covered by these adjustments. As I described in earlier articles, many carriers are getting upset by these changes. When reviewing the units, the District Evaluation and Adjust-

ment Teams (DEATS) are finding that some routes are over 8 hours and that some routes are less than 8 hours. As such, the routes have to be adjusted to as close to 8 hours as possible, which means that, territory has to be added to the routes that are under 8 hours and taken away from the routes that are over 8 hours. However, in order to accomplish this task, the DEATS have to look at every route in the unit; not just your route. And, this is where the problems arise.

When moving territory from one route to another, we have a "domino effect". Moving territory from Route #1 to Route #2 may mean moving territory to Route #3, which may affect Route #4, #5, or #6 and so on down the line until we have no territory left to move or just enough left over to create auxiliary routes. Inevitably, there are errors when territory is moved or we don't like the territory we are losing or receiving for whatever reason. Keep in mind that the DEATS have to take all the routes in the unit into consideration not just a few. They will take a carrier's input into consideration, but your input may not fit into the overall adjustment of the unit. For example, you make want to keep your last hour of mounted. But, to properly adjust all the routes in the unit properly, you might have to be given park and loop. Or your territory may have to be shifted north and you may lose your business deliveries and pick up park and loop deliveries in a residential area. There are a myriad of possibilities. Remember, in this environment change will be constant. The territory you lost in the last inspection may return to you in the next inspection. Or, all the routes in a unit may have to be posted for bid because of an abolishment of a senior carrier's route and you may end up on a route that is totally different. Please understand that in these economic times with businesses advertising less and first class volume continuing to drop, we will be experiencing one adjustment after another until things turn around in the economy. When this happens is anyone's guess.

Don't Take the Bait

Have any of you heard about the 7:01 Rule? The 7:01 Rule is a rule that has been on the books for many years.

If on any day, an employee has completed their assignment in less than 8 hours or has worked at least 7 hours and one minute and has nothing else to do, Management may let that employee go home and that employee will be paid 8 hours for the day. Wow, that's neat! I finish my route or assignment in at least 7:01 and Management will let me go home and pay me 8 hours for the day. What a deal!... Wrong!

Have you ever wondered why Management is offering this program now? I'll tell you why. This offer was mainly pitched in our FSS offices, which are not part of the 2011 Joint Alternate Route Adjustment Process (JARAP). These FSS offices are currently going through a 60-day review process. Now, if you bit on the 7:01 bait your route will evaluate at less than 8 hours during this 60-day review. And guess what, if your route is under 8 hours Management will add territory to your route to bring it up to an 8 hour assignment. Or, Management can evaluate your route less than 8 hours an attempt to abolish it and piece it off to other assignments or make it an auxiliary route. Now, if you skipped your 30 minute lunch and 10 minute street break to make it back in 7:01, you just added another 40 minutes to your route on top of the 59 minutes because of 7:01.

Nothing good has ever come out of 7:01. Only suckerfish bite on this kind of bait. Be warned.

One Day Counts

I've been receiving a lot of complaints and inquiries about one day counts. One day counts or Special Office Mail Counts are conducted to determine the efficiency of a carrier. Basically, is the Carrier making standards (18 & 8)? If Management doesn't believe you're making standards, they can do a one day count or special count. It's like a route inspection, but for one day. Management must give you one day advance notice. Just case and carry the route like you do every day. Management can only use this information to determine if you're making standards or to correct any deficiencies they may observe. Management cannot adjust your route using this data. However, if Management notes that you are doing something wrong or improper, they have to bring it to your attention and correct you in the proper manner. If there are no deficiencies, they should still discuss the results of the special one day count with you and that should be the end of it.

M-39-Chapter 2 Section 141.2 Special Office Mail Counts
When management desires to determine the efficiency of a carrier in the office, a count of mail may be made. The carrier must be given one day's advance notification of this

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Here We Go Again!

By Ray Hill, Executive Vice-President

The 91325 zone in Northridge was the first zone in Branch 2902 to suffer the ungodly ravages of FSS/COR Route adjustments. We had hoped to come

to an agreement with the Sierra Coastal District Manager (DM), Kerry Wolny, on a manner in which the routes would be adjusted after the 60 day review period, without having to request that Management perform 6 day counts and inspections.

Before discussing the results of our attempt to get an agreement with DM Wolny, read the below quoted item from The **Memorandum of Understanding Between the USPS and the NALC Re: FSS Implementation:**

2. Sixty days after implementing route adjustments for FSS, the local parties will review the adjustments to ensure the routes are as near 8 hours as possible...If either party determines that the route(s) is not properly adjusted, then the route(s) will be adjusted in accordance with the provisions of Handbook M-39 or, if applicable, a locally agreed upon adjustment formula..."

What does this mean? It simply means that there are 2 choices when it comes to "re-adjusting" routes 60 days after implementing the original route adjustments in FSS offices.

- 1) In accordance with the provisions of Handbook M-39 (6 day counts) or
- 2) A locally agreed upon adjustment formula (like we were attempting to get with DM Wolny).

Two of our Sierra Coastal District Evaluation and Adjustment Team (DEAT) members reviewed the Unit Summary Report for the 91325 zone of Northridge for the period of April 6, 2011 through June 4, 2011. They reported their findings to our NALC District Lead Team Member, Laura Rowe, who discussed them with District Manager Wolny in an attempt to come to a "locally agreed upon adjustment formula".

Prior to Laura's meeting with DM Wolny, Branch 2902 President Frank Salazar sent an Email to DM Wolny, letting him know that he (Frank) was "on board" with Laura Rowe's suggestions and to let him (Frank) know if he (DM Wolny) concurred.

DM Wolny responded to Frank in an Email stating that he suggested we start the process of requesting 6 day counts because "the performance in Northridge is unacceptable" to him and that the current data from the 91325 zone "does not accurately reflect the route structure".

Translation: The District Manager is of the opinion that

the 91325 zone includes more than a few "lecheros y lecheras" (milk men and milk women), who are milking the 91325 zone routes for far more time than necessary. I disagree with that opinion and I sure as hell hope I'm right and he's wrong. Because of our inability to come to a locally agreed upon adjustment formula after the 60 day review, our only alternative was to request that Management conduct 6 day counts and inspections on all the 91325 routes, which we did on August 1, 2011.

I received a response letter on August 8, 2011 from Nancy Villegas, who is the Sierra Coastal District's Manager, Operations Programs Support, notifying us that "M39 mail count and route inspections (6-day counts) have been scheduled...the week of September 19, 2011..."

I went to the Northridge Post office on August 3rd and participated in a stand up with Postmaster Nelson Ines during which we notified the carriers that Branch 2902 had requested 6 day counts because we were unable to come to an agreement with Management to adjust the routes.

During the stand up the 91325 carriers brought up some valid concerns that come with the territory when 6 day counts are conducted in a zone. For instance, everything is perfect, operationally speaking, when 6 day counts are done. All the mail gets distributed to the cases, accountables are ready bright and early, parcels are thrown in a timely manner and there is never any time spent waiting for anything! Conversely, on a normal day, the accountables are sometimes delayed, carriers have to go to the redis case numerous times, parcels are ready late, etc., etc.

Anyway, it is what it is, and we will have 6 day counts in the 91325 zone the week of September 19, 2011. I'll let you know how they turn out in a future issue of the Mailbag News.

The other Branch 2902 offices that implemented their FSS/COR route adjustments on May 21, 2011 (Agoura Hills, Studio City, Thousand Oaks, and Woodland Hills) are now past the 60 day mark after their adjustments, meaning that we will have to either come to an agreement on how to "re-adjust" the routes with DM Wolny or request 6 day counts and inspections in those offices as well.

My educated guess is that at least 3 of those offices (Studio City, Thousand Oaks and Woodland Hills) will end up having 6 day counts just like the 91325 zone of Northridge. I'll keep you posted on the FSS/COR adjustment battle as it proceeds.

On another topic, just when Branch 2902 Letter Carri-

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Reliable Info?

Ernestine Hernandez, Vice President



We had a stand up recently in our office where we were given the results of the employee surveys.

One of the main questions had to do with communication of information

by management to carriers which were scored low. This was not surprising. Mainly because a lot of the information we get is incomplete and false. Take for instance the DPS counts we are given in the morning. We are supposed to estimate how long it will take us to deliver our route, but when you are told (like I was) that you only have 889 pieces of DPS, you look at your mail and say No Way! I asked the supervisor to check his numbers again (end of run count) but he acted like he didn't know what I was talking about. I later found out the actual DPS count for that day was 1779. That is a big difference from 889!

Unfortunately, this is starting to happen more and more frequently. Management believes carriers are not giving a fair days work for a fair days pay. Let's look at that. I see supervisors allowing carriers to work off the clock and skip their breaks and lunches. That is not a fair day's work. I also see more and more accidents happening because carriers are rushing to get the route done within the supervisor's unreasonable expectations. And when a carrier gets into an accident and says it happened because he/she was hurrying, they are told "that is unacceptable". So what do you do? You work safe instead. The route will take what it takes. Don't be afraid to disagree with your supervisor and fill out a 3996. You know how long it will probably take you to deliver your route safely. If Management wants you to be back in 8.0 hours, and you know that is not possible, write down on the 3996 how much assistance you will need to accomplish this. Explain what is going to slow you down that day: heavy DPS volume, heavy parcel volume, coverages, accountable mail, express mail deviations, gas up your vehicle, trash day, weather, illness, etc. Sometimes cutting mail can cover it, sometimes it can't. Don't allow yourselves to be intimidated, because this only causes you to rush and make mistakes. If the supervisor does not believe your estimate, ask them to go out with you that day to see for themselves. Not every day is as light as the days they choose to go out with you.

Don't burn the route you are working on just to go home early. Don't think this will not come back to bite you in the ass. Management would like nothing better than to make this permanent. Think about it. If you make a route seem to take less than it actually does Management may feel justified that fewer employees are necessary. They are really working hard to prove this already and get rid of as many

carriers as possible. This also usually means the route will be added on to. If you are offered the 7:01 rule the results will be the same. Management is doing you no favors by offering this to you. But they are hoping you are dumb enough to take the bait. We are lucky to have 8 hour jobs. Why risk losing that especially in these hard times? We are seeing what is happening with the clerks, and must be on our guard to prevent going through the same thing. Thirty (30) hour work weeks, how are they going to manage their lives with that?

Another problem we see a lot of is trying to get any follow through from our supervisors. When you report your vehicle needs something to be fixed and notify your supervisor, you expect it to be taken care of, especially since VMF is right across the parking lot. Unfortunately it seems to fall on deaf ears and you are left to struggle trying to get another vehicle. And don't even think the phones will be bothered to be picked up. Nope, too much trouble. We didn't seem to have a problem getting the phones answered when we had limited duty carriers handling the calls, but Management sent them away to justify their own jobs. What a big failure that was, because now no one answers the phones.

Did you know our jobs are on the line if the people of this country, and Congress, are tricked into believing the Postal Service is obsolete. We have been seeing so many attacks on the Postal Service lately and are constantly having to take counter attack measures. Our e-mail activists have been called upon to respond to polls against 6-day delivery. We are still the most affordable and accessible means of communication. And our network across the country reaches everyone even if they don't have a street address, a phone or a computer. So why does Congress want to destroy this communication network that continues to faithfully serve our country? Think about it. Phones and e-mails are not that cheap and seem to get more and more expensive because they want you to buy into all the apps available. Computers can be bought easily, by those who have work and funds to do so. But with thousands of people out of work, and invested funds that keep on disappearing, a lot of people are finding out that it is not that easy. A 44 cent stamp still allows you to stay in touch with someone far away or close to you no matter what your circumstances are.

We will be going up next for contract negotiations so we really need your help. Contribute to COLCPE. Sign up to be an e-activist and to be on the carrier corps. It will be a political and uphill battle to get a fair contract, which also allows us to keep our collective bargaining rights (union). If

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SAFETY FIRST (RIGHT AFTER THE BUDGET)

By: *Greg A. Gaddis, Shop Steward / Trustee*

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? How many years have you been hearing the Postal Service talk about safety as being priority #1, uno, 1st, etc.? I know you have also heard that every accident is preventable, right? Stand-up after stand-up, after stand-up....STOP ALREADY!!! We all know that safety is 1st.... Right after the budget of course.

You have all heard your supervisor ask you "I need you to get this route delivered (usually over 8 hours) now, just be safe and by the way you can do it in 8 hours". Or how about your supervisor asking you, "Please can't you do this for me". Maybe you get along with your supervisor so you do him or her favor, but then if you were to sprain your ankle while you were trying to finish all your work in the dark and you filed an on-the-job accident claim, guess what? Next thing you know you are in a fact finding investigation meeting and Management wants to know why you were unsafe and injured yourself. Not too soon after the meeting, you are signing a disciplinary letter charging you with "Failure to Follow Instructions/Safety Violation". And let us not forget that, when you sat in the fact-finding that you were just trying to help out and save time (remember your supervisor was pleading for help) and you did not mean to cause yourself a lot pain by twisting your ankle. Remember how Management stated in the discipline letter that your answer was.... "Unacceptable". If you have worked for the USPS for any length of time, you have probably heard all this before; you may have even experienced similar incidents yourselves.

The following are just a few safety incidents that really happened. It's all about Safety being 1st... Right after the budget. A carrier in Studio City had his LLV mirror clipped off because of the narrow streets on Coldwater Canyon in North Hollywood and speeding cars going too close to the LLV while doing mounted deliveries. The mirror was snapped off, not once but twice. When the carrier inquired about his safety concern and a more serious accident possibly occurring, the carrier was told to just be careful when delivering that portion of his route. I felt it was just a matter of time before the LLV was struck by a speeding car, while the carrier was in the vehicle. Or the carrier might be in back of the LLV, getting mail and a vehicle were to hit the rear of the LLV. I advised the carrier to file a PS-1767 Safety Hazard Report in an attempt to correct the problem since Management didn't seem to care. At least by filing the report, Management and Safety has to address the safety hazard and not just ignore it when the carrier couldn't get

any one from local Management to look into the problem. I also found out that the former carrier, who had the route, told me his LLV mirror was clipped off too. The former carrier told me it happened four different times. The former carrier told me he tried to get Management to look into the safety hazard, but he was just ignored and was told to just be safe while delivering his mail. Of course if these carriers had an on the job injury, it would be their fault for not working safely. It seems that Management has too many things to worry about, like the budget and making the numbers look good, to investigate a carrier safety issue.

There was another incident in North Hollywood where I had to file a grievance directly to the Formal-A Step of the grievance process because of a serious safety violation in the Studio City office. For several weeks, on a daily basis carriers had to take the FSS flat trays off the racks and place the trays of flats on the floor around their work stations. The FSS truck has to leave so the carriers had to retrieve the FSS flat trays and put them on the floor. You see there isn't enough equipment to place the trays of flats on, so the only place to put them is on the floor where the carrier has to step over or around while trying to get the route ready every day. After all, the truck has to leave and the budget clock is ticking.

Now I ask you, is this a safety concern of North Hollywood Postmaster Mary Jane-Smith? Evidently not, I tried to resolve the problem on two different occasions with the Station Manager who told me she was working with Ms. Smith, but to no avail. So I filed the grievance to try and get something done. Carriers should not have to lift trays of flats off the FSS racks, bend over and place them on the floor and have to work around them, just to pick them up again and bend over to place them into their hampers when they are ready to leave. This unnecessary bending and stooping is clearly an unsafe practice, right? Placing undo stress on the carriers backs and shoulders should be a concern of Management right? It's an accident waiting to happen right? But of course the carrier would be blamed for not working safely if they injure themselves and file an on the job injury claim, right? Just a side note, the carriers are still having to put the flat trays of mail on the floor as of 8/5/11. Remember safety 1st....Right after the budget.

At the Sylmar office, the temperature is kept at 78 degrees. The problem is that the thermostat is in a room that is locked and away from the workroom floor. The room is dark so of course the temperature inside might be 78 de-

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What A Disappointment!

By: **Robbie Elsaleh, Moorpark Chief Shop Steward**

I'm so disappointed that I don't know where to start. I feel like I've been duped. Here we had an up-and-coming 204b Supervisor that started out with my total respect on March 21st 2011. He showed promise. I even commended him on his fresh approach and keenness on doing the right thing. I wrote positive things about him in the past 2 Mailbag articles and he started out with my complete trust. I had no reason to doubt him. Before I left on JARAP detail on June 4th, I persuaded some carriers to give him the benefit of the doubt and treat him fairly because we wanted to keep him. I was lenient with him on grievances because I considered it was his inexperience that led to honest and unintentional mistakes that needed educating. Was I a fool for trusting Management? Or did he become misguided, influenced, and mentored by the wrong Management crowd that distorted his judgment?

From when he first came to Moorpark on March 21st through the date I left for detail on June 4th, we had a few Labor/Management meetings along the way. During those meetings, we discussed the two major problems that were prevalent and ongoing in Moorpark. Number one was the disrespect and bullying tactics of Postmaster Sigman, and number two was the refusal of Postmaster Sigman to stop doing craft work and plucking money from the pockets of his employees. So what do you think started happening the day I left? I was informed of and had to investigate a grievance for alleged delivery of some Express Mail on July 19th, and what I discovered was very disturbing. The evidence uncovered shows that 204b Evan has been sneaking around delivering Express Mail since June 4th. There were a total of 20 different Express Mails revealed. That number probably only scratches the surface because as we all know, not all Express Mail packages have removable labels, and also, Moorpark Management states that they only keep the labels for 30 days.

In addition to delivering Express Mail on an ongoing basis, swings began disappearing off of the workroom floor and ended up mysteriously delivered by shadow Carriers. I initiated an investigation only to find more questions than answers. Some of which are missing clock rings/MSP scans for those same exact swings, and misinformation provided by Evan on who delivered them. When I interviewed the carriers that Evan told me had delivered these swings, all carriers denied doing so; and besides, the MSP scans for those carriers proved they were on different routes and could not have possibly delivered them. I personally informed Evan and OIC Mike of the proper proce-

cedure that needed to be followed if Evan was going to be utilized to deliver mail and Supervise on the same day. Having been exposed now, Evan ignored my instructions of notifying the Union in advance and started deliberately casing on routes and delivering mail without properly advising the Union and filling out the proper Form. Needless to say, all the appropriate grievances have been filed and the trust and personal respect has been lost.

To top things off, when I prepared the grievances and had them ready to be filed, I made an appointment to meet with Evan to discuss them and work out a resolution. When that date came, I arrived at Moorpark at the scheduled time and Evan refused to meet with me. He was actually informed by someone that he had a choice and didn't have to meet with me on these issues. He didn't even have the common courtesy and decency to pick up the phone and call to let me know that he didn't want to meet with me rather than having me waste Postal time driving to Moorpark. All he accomplished was to pass the buck and make more work for OIC Mike who would now have to meet with Branch President Frank. I am sure OIC Mike really appreciates this because he doesn't have enough of his own work to do. Right Mike? Just kidding. I actually feel bad for the many hours and late nights Mike spends at work. Perhaps if he had a 204b who actually did Management duties rather than sneaking around delivering mail, he wouldn't have to work so late.

Another issue of common courtesy and decency. A couple of weeks earlier, I scheduled a time for Evan and I to meet in Simi Valley to work on the route adjustments for his home office to assist me in the Line of Travel because of his knowledge of the routes. He was a no call no show. When we called him an hour later and asked why he didn't show up, his reply was because OIC Mike didn't know anything about the meeting, which is false, because I already got OIC Mike's approval before I even asked Evan for his help. Even if Evan was correct and OIC Mike didn't know anything about the meeting, once again, Evan didn't have the decency or common courtesy to call me and let me know that he wasn't coming. He was probably out delivering Express Mail instead.

I have one more thing to complete painting this picture for you. Have any of you ever gotten an email with a Delivery or Read Receipt Request? What happens is that the sender requests a Delivery or Read Receipt when they send you an email. As soon as you click on that email, a message pops up and lets you know that the sender requested this return receipt and you now have an option of, clicking yes or no, to send the sender back the Return

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Do You Need Life Insurance?

By Chris Alessi, MBA/NSBA Representative

How fast this year is going? It's hard to believe its fall already and how fast life goes by too. Some people think that there is no need for Life Insurance. Why not take a look at your insurance needs and your finances for the future. If someone depends on you financially, you probably need life Insurance. Some examples of specific life stages or life events that might trigger the need for life Insurance are:

(1) You are currently married or getting married soon. Many families depend on two incomes to make ends meet. If you died suddenly, would your spouse have enough money to cover your funeral costs, credit card balances, outstanding loans and daily expenses?

(2) You are a parent or about to become one. If you died tomorrow, would your spouse have the financial means to provide your children with the opportunities you have always dreamed they would have? Even parents who don't work outside the home need life insurance because they provide services that would be expensive to replace, such as child care, transportation, and household chores. Single parents need life insurance more than anyone because their children rely on them for everything.

(3) You are a homeowner. If you are like many people, your home is your most significant asset. Life insurance can protect your investment and spare your family the disruption of being forced to find a new and less expensive place to live.

(4) You (or your spouse) are changing jobs. If you or your spouse/partner have recently been promoted or started a position, it's a good time to reevaluate your life insurance coverage. You may not realize it, but when your income rises, your spending tends to rise too. Updating your life insurance coverage can help make sure your family would be able to maintain its new and improved life style if something were to happen to you.

(5) You are retired or planning for retirement. If your children are on their own and your mortgage is paid off, you might feel your need for life insurance has passed. But if you died today your spouse could outlive you by 10, 20, or even 30 years. Would your spouse have to make drastic lifestyle adjustments to make ends meet? Adequate life insurance coverage can help widows and widowers avoid financial struggles in retirement.

(6) You are Single. Many single people don't feel that they have a need for life insurance because no one depends on them financially. But there are a few exceptions. If you're providing financial support for aging parents or sib-

lings, or if you're carrying significant debt you wouldn't want to pass onto family members, you may want to consider life insurance.

When considering life insurance Your MBA has great policies at affordable costs because the MBA is a non-profit organization that is backed by our National Union and passes the savings on to its members.

MBA products are available for all NALC Members, spouses, grand-children and great grand-children up to a \$100,000 Death Benefit. The MBA has six Individual Life Insurance plans:

Whole Life Plans

MBA-20 Pay whole Life Plan

MBA-paid up at age 65

MBA-paid up at age 90

Independence (Single Premium)

Term Life Plans

MBA 10 Year Renewable & Convertible

Universal Life Plans

MBA Universal Life Plans

All these plans have a 30 day return policy which allows you to review the plan and if you're not satisfied for any reason, you may return them for a full refund of all premiums paid. These plans can be purchased through easy bi-weekly payroll allotment, monthly, or annual premiums.

For more Info you can contact the MBA directly at {202} 638-4318 or on the web at: WWW.nalc.org and click on Life Insurance & Annuity Department.

In Solidarity, God Bless you, Chris

"You can't do it unless you organize

—Samuel Gompers



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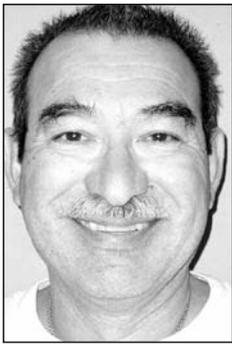
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The New Cigna Open Access Plan

By, **Joe Gutierrez, Health Benefits Representative**

As of July 1 you now belong to the Cigna HealthCare Open Access Plus (OAP) network. By changing the network members may realize an immediate savings in their out-of-pocket costs when using a provider that participates in the OAP. In my previous article I called the new plan Cigna Plus, this is incorrect and the new plan is as stated above, Cigna HealthCare Open Access Plus. The important thing to know before you go to the doctor is to find out if your doctor is an OAP member. Just because the doctor was a PPO member he may not belong to the new plan, although most doctors will belong to both. It is up to the members to verify before using the plan, as you will be out of network if the doctor does not belong to plan.

I know this article will reach you after the fact but in the Postal Record the new plan was addressed on page 45 by our Health Director in detail. In the article it explains the ways in which to find out if your provider belongs to the OAP plan.

In October I will be at the Health benefit seminar and will be able to address any of your concerns, just write or call with your concerns. I believe in the long run this new plan will be a great benefit to all of our NALC health plan members and another reason to join our plan when we have open season.

One more comment to our members who have Medicare as their primary provider. This change does not affect you as you are not required to use network providers.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

Continued from page 2

special count. Use Form 1838-C to record count and time items concerned. The carrier must be advised of the result of the office mail count.

Most of the complaints I am receiving on one day counts deal with the conduct of the route examiners. Some carriers state that the examiners are constantly talking to them in the office telling them what to do or not to do. On the street, other carriers state that examiners are telling them to put off comfort stops, to speed up, are setting the pace, are telling them not to deliver the parcel to the door, but to leave a PS Form 3849 and the examples continue. The M-39 Chapter 2 section 232 details the conduct of a route examiner. For the most part, examiners are to observe and notate. They are not there to discuss, comment, instruct or criticize. However, if a carrier is committing a serious safety infraction, the examiner should stop the examination, place the carrier on line 22 waiting time and correct the carrier and/or call the carrier's immediate supervisor to discuss the infraction with the carrier. Otherwise, the examiners observe and notate.

M39-Chapter 2 Section 232 Conduct of Route Examiner

232.1 The route examiner must:

- a. Not set the pace for the carrier, but should maintain a position to observe all delivery points and conditions.*
- b. Not suggest or forbid any rest or comfort stops but should make proper notations of them.*
- c. Not discuss with the carrier on the day of inspection the mail volume or the evaluation of the route. These matters must be discussed with the carrier at a later date when all data has been reviewed and analyzed.*

d. Make notations on the day of inspection on the appropriate form or separate sheet of paper of all items that need attention, as well as comments on the day of inspection. Also list any comments or suggestions for improving the service on the route, as well as suggestions or comments made by the carrier during the course of the inspection for improvement in delivery and collection service.

e. Make comments and suggestions clearly, and in sufficient detail for discussion with the carrier and for decision-making purposes. The manager who will actually discuss the results with the carrier must have enough facts and figures to reach a final decision on any necessary adjustments to the route.

MSP & Del Con Scans

Scan, scan, scan, we are required to scan. Make sure that you are scanning all your MSP scans and Del Con scans. Our customers ask us to scan and our employer requires us to scan, so make sure you scan everything you possibly can. If you are having problems with your scanner, bring it to Management's attention preferably in writing. If your labels are torn, worn, sun damaged or missing, also bring this to the attention of your supervisor. Although you should not be disciplined for missing scans, Managers in some of our offices are doing just that. They are issuing discipline to carriers for missing a scan. Our District Manager Kerry Wolny stated at a recent President's Meeting that it is not his intent to discipline carriers for missing scans. However, he wants us to emphasize to all our memberships that we should scan everything possible. When it comes to lunch scans, we have at least a couple of Managers requiring carriers to deviate to scan an MSP before and after lunch. This is not proper. We should scan

continued on page 9

PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

Continued from page 8

the MSP's when we get to them. However, follow the instructions and see your Steward as soon as you can. Scanning is part of the job, so make sure you do it on a daily basis.

M-01458 Step 4 Settlement March 13, 2002, Q98N-4Q-C-01045840

The Managed Service Points (MSP) initiative is a national program intended to facilitate management's ability to assess and monitor city delivery route structure and consistency of delivery service. The following reflects the parties understanding of MSP:

The parties agree that management will determine the number of scans on a city delivery route. Time credit will continue to be given during route count and inspections and will be credited in total street time.

MSP does not set performance standards, either in the office or on the street. With current technology, MSP records of scan times are not to be used as timecard data for pay purposes. MSP data may not constitute the sole basis for disciplinary action. However, it may be used by the parties in conjunction with other records to support or refute disciplinary action issued pursuant to Article 16 of the National Agreement.

City letter carriers have the option of using a personal identification number (PIN) other than the last four digits of their social security number.

Section 432.33 of the Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM) remains in full force and effect when MSP is implemented. It provides that Except in emergency situations, or where service conditions preclude compliance, no employee may be required to work more than 6 continuous hours without a meal or rest period at least hour.'

Lunch locations for both the incumbent and carrier technician on a city delivery route continue to be determined in compliance with Section 126.5.b(2) of the 39. PS Form 1564A Delivery Instructions' lists the place and time that city letter carriers are authorized to leave the route for lunch. However, the parties recognize that, consistent with local instructions and operational conditions, city letter carriers may be authorized to leave at a different time and/or place. Notwithstanding this, the parties agree that city letter carriers will scan MSP scan points as they reach them during the course of their assigned duties.

Rolando was Right

Those of you who doubted President Rolando when he stated that the Postal Service wouldn't stop at 5-day delivery, that they would cut it down to 4 days, 3 days, 2 days, 1 day until they finally piece off it were wrong. In an article published in USA Today in July, Postmaster Donahoe was quoted as stating that in 15 years we will probably be talking about delivering mail 3-days a week (Monday, Wednes-

day, and Friday). After this statement, UPS corporate officers commented that their company would come in and pick up the slack for parcel delivery on Saturdays. UPS spokesmen also commented that they could pick up the pieces after Postal Management shuts down post offices in many communities across the country with their UPS stores. Brothers and Sisters, we have to pay attention to the political arena. We can't be so absorbed in our personal lives and families that we do not know what is going on around us. A good place to start is on page 6 of the August 2011 Postal Record. What we need now is to have members who reside in Congressman Gallegly, McKeon, and Waxman's Districts to write or call their offices to have them support HR 1351, The United States Postal Service's Pension Obligation and Recalculation and Restoration Act of 2011. We also need members to contact Congressman McKeon and Waxman about supporting H.Res.137 Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States Postal Service should take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of its six-day mail delivery service. Please remember that we are not out of the woods with 6-day delivery or contracting out. Republican Congressman Darrell Issa of San Diego is not our friend, and neither are the crackpots in the Tea Party. The job you save may be your own.

Is NRP Dead?

No, not quite. However, according to a postal item I read on the Internet, the National Reassessment process ended on January 31, 2011. It seems that the Postal Service has been losing so many cases nationwide and paying out millions of dollars that it finally noticed that the process was in violation of the Employee & Labor Relations Manual 546. Therefore, the Service in its infinite wisdom changed some language and renamed the program

continued on page 10

The Mail Bag News is the official publication of Tri-Valley Branch 2902 (Chatsworth, California) of the National Association of Letter Carriers. All opinions expressed are those of the individual author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NALC or its officers. The Mail Bag News welcomes articles and letters to the editor; however the editorial staff of the Mail Bag News assumes complete authority to decide which letters are presented for publication. Anonymous articles are not accepted. Permission is hereby granted to re-print articles. We just ask that you give the author and the publication appropriate credit.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

Continued from page

ELM 546. Management still has to make every effort to find work within the injured carrier's defined medical restrictions by doing daily job searches within the craft, outside the craft, within the installation and outside the installation, but it still hasn't stopped Management from improperly putting carriers out. We will continue to file the appropriate grievances.

Locally, our Branch has been very successful in NRP grievances collecting hundreds of thousands of dollars for our injured members. If you are an injured carrier who had been violated by the NRP and won a recent grievance, the Branch has sent you a copy of the decision. Management should have sent you a PS form 8038 to recoup back pay and lost leave. You should have also received a TSP Form, if you were unable to make deposits into the TSP while you were out on the NRP. If you have not received these forms, please contact your Steward or the Union Hall a.s.a.p. We will continue to fight the good fight and make it right for those who have been wronged. All for now back in two.

P.S. As the Mailbag News was going to press breaking news came out from the United States Postal Service that may have a big negative affect on our future. Please consider donating to COLCPE now by calling Vice President Ernestine Hernandez and signing up for E-Activist on the NALC website.

NOTICE PROPOSED BY-LAWS AMENDMENT VOTE

This shall serve as notice to all members that the proposed By-Laws amendment shown below will be discussed and voted on at the next regular meeting on September 20, 2011 at 7:00PM at the Jon Gaunce Union Hall in Chatsworth.

Article XIII Section 2 currently reads:

One dollar fifty cents (\$1.50) per member, per month shall be placed in an interest bearing account, to be known as the "Convention Fund".

Proposed to read:

One dollar (\$1.00) per member, per month shall be placed in an interest bearing account, to be known as the "Convention Fund".

This proposed by-laws amendment was signed by three (3) members in good standing, and read to the membership at the August 16, 2011 meeting.

Susan Degenhardt, Recording Secretary

USPS PROPOSES...

Continued from page 1

I issued the following statement to the press:

The issues of lay-off protection and health benefits are specifically covered by our contract. Each of them has historically been covered in collective bargaining between NALC and USPS. The Congress of the United States does not engage in contract negotiations with unions and we do not believe they are about to do so.

Of course, pension benefits for federal employees, including postal employees, are set by law. But rather than advocating pie-in-the-sky proposals, we believe USPS and Congress should focus on pending legislation (H.R. 1351) that would allow the USPS to recover massive surpluses in its CSRS and FERS pension accounts. Under the bill, which has 181 co-sponsors from both parties, the surpluses would be used to cover the unfair burden of pre-funding future retiree health benefits—a burden that no other company or agency bears and which accounts for 100 percent of the Postal Service's losses over the past four years.

Contract negotiations for NALC open Thursday, August 18.

USPS is free to bring these issues to the table. If they do so, we will bargain in good faith.

These new legislative proposals constitute a transparent attempt to gut our benefits and reduce our bargaining rights without negotiations. Indeed, the USPS admits in the two white papers that if these radical proposals were to be put before an impartial interest arbitrator, the USPS would not likely prevail. It's time for postal management to negotiate; the time for unilateral legislative end-runs is over.

HERE WE GO AGAIN...

Continued from page 3

ers are feeling totally unloved by Management, along comes an incredibly benevolent offer that sets them straight; Management really does love Letter Carriers! This past July, out of the goodness of their hearts, Management in Post Offices represented by Branch 2902 offered "7:01" to carriers for 3 days of the week: Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The 7:01 Rule is printed in ELM Section 432.53 and reads as follows:

432.53 City Letter Carriers (7:01 Rule)

A city letter carrier who actually works more than 7 hours but less than 8 hours of a regular scheduled day and who is officially excused from the completion of the 8-hour tour is credited with 8 hours of work time for pay purposes. This is known as the 7:01 rule.

Interestingly (and transparently), Management **did not** offer 7:01 to Branch 2902 Carriers for Thursdays, Fridays or Saturdays.

continued on page 11

HERE WE GO AGAIN...

Continued from page 10

Hmmm. Let's think about this for a minute. The District Manager and all of his underlings are on the Pacific Area "hot seat" because the numbers in the FSS Offices are **horrific**. Carriers are out past 18:00 (which is a great big USPS "no-no") in record numbers, tons of overtime (including the dreaded penalty overtime) is being paid, carriers are angry and disgruntled, VOE scores are really bad, etc. etc.

The Pacific Area Management Personnel want to know: How can this be happening??? Or, worse for DM Wolny, they want to know **how can he be allowing this to happen???**

FSS/COR was supposed to eliminate a bunch of routes, save the USPS lots and lots of money and we were all supposed to live happily ever after FSS/COR. Well, USPS got the first part right, FSS/COR did eliminate a bunch of routes. Unfortunately, the remaining routes just so happen to be a **wee bit** overburdened. Further, to the dismay and anger of the Pacific Area Management honchos, FSS isn't saving USPS any money in the Sierra Coastal District; to the contrary it's costing USPS **a lot** of money. So, in a flash of brilliance (ha-ha), desperate to get off of the Pacific Area hot seat, the District Manager makes a highly transparent decision and wheels out the old 7:01 rule with a new twist: **only offer it to carriers on the 3 heaviest days of the week, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday!** Management is hopeful that those Sierra Coastal District lecheros y lecheras that carry the mail won't be able to resist that carrot dangling in front of them and they will be all over 7:01 like white on rice, no matter what the consequences are. In the short term USPS will save money on overtime and the carriers will be off the street well before 1800! This will help to get those annoying Pacific Area people off of the District Manager's back. In the long term, after the carriers run their routes in 7:01 on the 3 heaviest days of the week, they will have demonstrated that they have 7:01 hour routes and Management can add territory to them during our next "Joint Route Adjustment Process"! Absolutely brilliant!

Fortunately, the brilliant carriers of Branch 2902, who really did not have to be so brilliant to see through this devious, transparent ploy, quickly sniffed out the intended results and have resisted the temptation to go for 7:01. On a side note, if any of the Management personnel that crafted the new and improved, 3 days a week, 7:01 plan are reading this and like to play "No limit Texas Hold em", bring your wallets and we'll set up a game anytime you like. You are all welcome to play!

C'mon now, is that **really** the best idea you could come up with? Really???

Although I have the utmost respect and admiration for all of Branch 2902's "Gold Card Recipients", there is a new Gold Card recipient that is a little more near and dear to my

heart than the others: North Hollywood Retiree, Tony Perrotti.

I first met Tony in 1988 when I bid on and was awarded route 512 at the LCCA office in North Hollywood. Tony was the carrier on Route 534 at LCCA and he also lived on my new route so I got to know him and his wife Judy very well. Back in the pre-cell phone days, I could always use the Perrotti's phone if I needed to make a phone call for any reason (calling the post office, etc.)

Tony and Judy moved to Las Vegas in 1994 or 1995 and the route was never the same without them. Fortunately another LCCA Carrier, Ed Roberts (and his wife Barbara), lived across the street from the Perrotti's, so I was able to use their phone after Tony and Judy moved.

Congratulations on your 50 year Gold Card, Tony, and I swear I will call you the next time I go to Las Vegas so we can go out and make some money at the Craps Table.

I wish I could say wait until next year for us Dodger fans but Frank McCourt still owns the team, so we're screwed. Talk to you next time.



Retiree Jim Stevens is happy as it gets cruising in his beautifully restored 1956 Chevy Bel Air.



Branch 2902 President, Frank Salazar presents retiree Joe Messineo with his 40 year pin at the branch meeting in Newbury Park. Congratulations Joe!

RELIABLE INFO? ...

Continued from page 4

you don't think that is important then ask yourself:

1. Do I want a full time job?
2. Do I want sick leave and health insurance?
3. Do I want vacation pay and holiday pay?
4. Do I want a good living wage or do I want minimum wage to do the same work?
5. Do I want to retire with a pension plan?

ETC., ETC., ETC! Well if you said yes to these and all the others benefits that we have today, then we will be calling on you to help defend them. SO BE READY!!! COL-CPE-CARRIER CORPS-E-ACTIVISTS-FUTURE LEADERS.

SAFETY FIRST...

Continued from page 5

grees or cooler. But the temperature on the workroom floor is closer to 80+ degrees in the morning hours, especially when you factor in all of the lights and all that body heat being generated. Of course the answer from Management is to turn on a few fans and tell the carriers to hurry up and get out to the street. Turning on a fan is like turning the fan on in your car on a hot summer day. The fan just blows a lot of hot air, something like the hot air that comes out of Management's mouth when they tell you safety is #1. And of course there are not enough fans to really help cool the employees in the first place. But hey, Sylmar carriers remember, safety 1st... Right after the budget of course.

At the Agoura office a carrier sprained his ankle on the job and was fitted with a soft-boot that had an open toe. The carrier had medical restrictions of sedentary work only. For those of you in Management and in Safety, that means sit-down work. Well guess what local Management and the Safety unit did. They called the carrier at home and told him to report to work to deliver part of his route that has mounted deliveries. The carrier was instructed to be on the workroom floor with his open toe footwear to get his route set up to delivery. Then the carrier would push his hamper to the loading area, load his vehicle, drive to his route and deliver a mounted portion of his route, while wearing the open toe footwear. The carrier asked the Postmaster and Laura Landgraf who is from safety, about his restrictions of sedentary work. He was told to just be careful and that he would only be doing mounted deliveries. I guess the part about his medical restrictions of sedentary work meant when he sits and drives the LLV? The carrier was allowed to be on the workroom floor with open toe footwear that is in violation of the USPS work rules. The carrier was allowed to handle equipment on the workroom floor, handle trays of mail, push the hamper full of mail, load his vehicle, drive to his route, get in and out of his vehicle for accountables, parcels, replenish his mail, etc. all with open toe footwear. Now if the carrier were to injure himself further

while he was working, guess who would be at fault. It certainly would not be Management. Remember they did tell the carrier to just be careful and that he was only going to sit and deliver mail. I guess Management and the Medical Unit forgot about the part when the carrier would be on the workroom floor with open toe footwear, or the part about getting in and out of the vehicle, etc. I would hate to think what would have happened if the carrier had to defend himself against an attacking dog while trying to maneuver around wearing the open toe boot. I immediately filed a Formal-A grievance against Management for the work rule violation and instructing the carrier to work with open toe footwear and being on the workroom floor, delivering mail and the fact the carrier had medical restrictions of sedentary work only. The carrier was called at home and told not to come to work, after my initial phone call when I heard the news. Just remember carriers, SAFETY 1stRIGHT AFTER THE BUDGET. See ya next time, be safe now ya hear.

DISAPPOINTMENT...

Continued from page 6

cept that indicates you got their email, or to ignore it. I have sent emails like this on Union matters to Evan on a couple of occasions and have not received any Return Receipts. Why? What's the justification behind that?

I am very very disappointed. I know that this is not all of Evan's doing. He is being led down the wrong path by "old school" Management. All these old schoolers need to wise up or be RIF'ed (Reduction in Force) ASAP so that the Postal Service has a chance to succeed. Before you know it, it will be more than just delivering mail, Evan will be brainwashed into thinking all carriers are slugs and perhaps start mistreating them. Evan may think he's doing what's best for the Postal Service, but his actions transmit harm to his employees and cost the Postal Service more through grievances and moral. Till next time...



Thousand Oaks Shop Steward Walter Williams (R) presents 40 year pins to his fellow T.O. Carriers Steve Packer (L) and retiree Richard Chavez(C) at the July union meeting. Thanks for the continuing support gentlemen!

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RAFFLE AT 12:30

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When: Thursday,
October 20, 2011

Time: 11:00am to 1:00pm



Where: Hometown Buffet
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When: Thursday,
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Show me a man who cannot bother to do little things and I'll show you a man who cannot be trusted to do big things.

—Lawrence D. Bell,
Aircraft Manufacturer 1894-1956

SHOP STEWARD LIST

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Chatsworth Chief S.S.	Angel Hale
Fillmore Chief S.S.	Call Office
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North Hollywood Chief S.S.	Steve Leyton
	Louie Rodriguez
Chandler	Greg Gaddis
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Sylmar / Main Office	James Perryman
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Simi Valley Chief S.S.	Sandra Gaunce
Mt. McCoy Station	Sandra Gaunce
Thousand Oaks Chief S.S.	Jim Mette
	Alex Lopez
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At the monthly meetings (every third Tuesday of the month) coupons and flyers for various venues are available.

My famous homemade oatmeal chocolate chip cookies are 4 for \$1.00.

PAULETTE DYER

THE MAIL BAG NEWS

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Will be serving
DINNER

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Union Meeting

DINNER starts at 6pm

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEP 6 Executive Board Meeting 6pm
Executive Council Meeting 7pm

SEP 15 Retiree Lunch 11:00am
Hometown Buffet-Simi Valley

SEP 20 Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Union Hall-Chatsworth
Dinner served 6 pm

OCT 4 Executive Board Meeting 6pm
Executive Council Meeting 7pm

OCT 10 Columbus Day-Holiday 

OCT 18 Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Garden Palm Hotel-Newbury Park

OCT 20 Retiree Lunch 11:00am
Hometown Buffet-West Hills

OCT 31 Halloween 

NOV 1 Executive Board Meeting 6pm
Executive Council Meeting 7pm

NOV 6 **NALC MDA Bowl-A-Thon** 
Daylight Savings Time Ends

NOV 11 Veterans Day-Holiday 

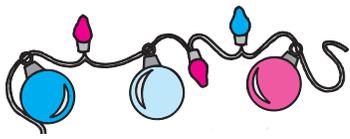
The AIDS walk
Los Angeles
is coming up
Sunday, October 16, 2011



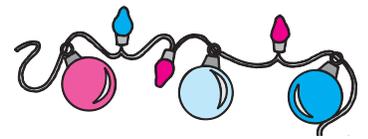
The USPS is a Corporate sponsor and encourages all members to participate by either walking or sponsoring someone on the 10 Kilometer walk! In Hollywood starting at 10 a.m.

David Hyman of North Hills
(818) 893-8613 will be walking in case you'd like to sponsor a Branch 2902 member.

For walk forms or more info call
(213) 201-WALK or visit their web site at
www.aidswalk.net



Happy Holidays



THE Mail Bag NEWS

★ SOLIDARITY

★ EDUCATION

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VOLUME 53, NO. 6

Circulation 2,500

November - December 2011

Letter Carriers Take It to Congress To Save America's Postal Service

By Frank Salazar, President

On Tuesday, September 27th, Letter Carriers across the nation rallied at all 435 Congressional Districts. Our message to Congressional Representatives was Save America's Postal Service by supporting H.R. 1351: United States Postal Service's Pension Obligation Recalculation and Restoration Act of 2011. Quoting from the NALC website;

"H.R. 1351 takes the necessary first steps toward ensuring a financially sound future for the United States Postal Service. The bill was drafted with three major components, taking into consideration the recent Segal Company Report issued by the Postal Regulatory Commission:

1. It calls on the OPM to recalculate the USPS surplus



Pictured above is Congressman Howard Berman (D-28th District) and a small army of Postal Employees showing their support for HR1351 on September 27th 2011.

in the Civil Service Retirement System within six months of enactment, using a methodology that fairly allocates the cost of pensions between the Post Office Department and the U.S. Postal Service as proposed by the Segal Report.

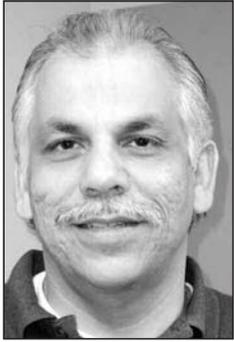
2. Then, once the accurate "postal surplus" is determined by the OPM, the agency would have 15 days to transfer the surplus to the PSRHBF.

3. Direct the OPM to permit the USPS to use most of its \$6.9 billion surplus in the FERS system to satisfy two obligations in FY 2011: a \$5.5 billion payment due to the PSRHBF, and a \$1.2 billion estimated payment to the Department of Labor for Federal Employ-

continued on page 2

PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

Continued from page 1



ees Compensation Act (workers' comp.) expenses. Any remaining funds would be used to reduce the Postal Service's normal cost-percentage for FERS in future years.

H.R. 1351 does not address the legally mandated pre-funding payments into the PSRHBF beyond the FY2011 payment, which costs the USPS \$5.5 billion annually. Rather, it simply fixes the massive overfunding to the postal CSRS and FERS accounts. Additional legislation would be necessary to repeal the future scheduled pre-funding payments to the PSRHBF.

Additionally, the date of the transfer for the overcharge is less important than the acknowledgment by Congress and the OPM that the USPS has sufficient assets to cover all its retirement obligations—for both pensions and health benefits. Since the PSRHBF already has more than \$42 billion in it, and since the surplus transfer from the CSRS pension fund would likely leave the PSRHBP fully funded, passage of H.R. 1351 makes an irrefutable case for the repeal of the pre-funding payments called for by current law.

The Lynch bill would transfer surplus CSRS and FERS assets paid for by ratepayer and employee contributions—not taxpayer funds—to the Postal Service's retirement health fund, and it would have absolutely no effect on any current or future federal retiree's annuity."

In a nutshell, the Postal Service is not broke! The Postal Service has at a minimum about \$57 billion it cannot use, because Congress will not give the money back. According to recent actuarial studies, the Postal Service has overpaid somewhere in the amount of \$50-\$75 billion into the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and overpaid about \$6.9 billion into the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). This is not taxpayer funds. This is ratepayer and employee funds. If we can get H.R. 1351 approved, we can get a proper calculation of overpayments and get the funds transferred back to the Postal Service where they rightfully belong. Then, the Postal Service can use these funds to fully fund the Postal Service Retirees Health Benefits Plan (PSRHBP). Eliminating or reducing the payment into the PSRHBP will be another battle. As you may know, the Postal Service is currently paying about \$5.5 billion a year to fund health benefits for future retirees that are not currently working for the Postal Service or haven't been born yet? Isn't this ridiculous? We are pre-funding for the unborn and those not yet hired! It's like paying off a 75 year mortgage in 10 years for someone that doesn't even own the house yet. No other government agency or company in America is doing what the USPS is doing. Ever wonder why? The USPS is a cash cow for Congress. Congress sucks the money out of the USPS to use elsewhere.

I know that not everyone was able to attend the rallies, because it was a coverage day and many of us were working late. We realize that, but we would like to thank the Brothers and Sisters that made it. We put on a good show. Our Branch split our membership between Congressman Howard L. Berman (D-28th) in the San Fernando Valley-Van Nuys (see the photo above) and Congressman Elton Gallegly (R-24th) in Ventura County-Camarillo. Representative Berman is a friend of letter carriers and supports H.R. 1351. He came out and talked with us and took photos. Mr. Berman was really good about showing support for America's letter carriers. On the other hand, Representative Gallegly left the office early. He wasn't there to hear our voices, but we got to talk with one of his staffers and presented him with our petitions. Currently, Mr. Gallegly is not a co-sponsor of H.R. 1351. The way we were greeted by each of these representatives is exactly the way they represent us in Congress. One Congressman supports us and the other one ignores us.

I also wanted to give a big thank you to the APWU, Rural Carriers, the local Ventura County Labor Council, SEIU, Teachers, and Teamsters who also came out to support us. If you weren't able to make it, you can still help out by writing or calling your Congressman and asking them to support H.R. 1351. We especially need our Republican members to contact their representatives. Most of the Democrats are with us, but we need to move our Republican Representatives on this issue and get them to support H.R. 1351.

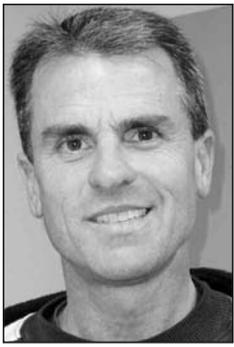
At a recent Committee of President's meeting I attended, President Rolando outlined many important issues. One issue is that the Unions are fighting a 3-headed monster: Congress, the USPS, and the Media. Congress doesn't want to give our money back. The Postal Service is trying to dismantle the company. And, the media is spewing mis-information. Our membership and the public are our friends. President Rolando and our National leadership have gone to President Obama, Vice President Biden, the House leadership, the Department of Labor, the media, etc., in an attempt to correct this information. The Postal Service is not broke!

It's true that the Postal Service has lost first class revenue. The Great Recession just sped it up faster—a more precipitous decline you might say. However, we have to replace this lost revenue by taking advantage of our network. 1) We deliver to over 150 million addresses. 2) We have 37,000 retail units. 3) We are the most trusted Federal Employees. 4) We are the last mile of delivery. Everyone uses us to deliver the last mile including FEDX and UPS. In contrast, PMG Donahoe wants to dismantle the whole thing. According to President Rolando, we have to move forward in the future by 1) Taking advantage of the USPS cash flow. 2) Taking advantage of our employees being the most trusted. 3) Taking advantage of our nationwide network.

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Pictured above are just a few of the very dedicated Carriers that came out on September 27th to support the cause and to help make America aware of the importance of saving America's Post Office.



The Past Always Repeats Itself

By Ray Hill, Executive Vice-President

As I wrote in the last issue of the Mailbag News, we were unable to come to a "local agreement" with Management on how to "re-adjust" the routes in the 91325 zone of Northridge after the FSS/COR Route adjustments that were implemented on March 26, 2011. Consequently, Branch 2902 requested that Management conduct 6 day counts and inspections on all the routes in the 91325 zone. The 6 day counts and inspections were conducted during the week of September 19, 2011 and we are now awaiting the results of those inspections.

We have not had any 6 day counts and inspections in the Branch for the past several years, going back to well before we started the "Joint Route Adjustment" Processes that began with IRAP back in 2008. Visiting the Northridge Main Office during Inspection Week brought back some unpleasant memories of the "olden days" when we were the "Van Nuys District" and a cadre of pencil whipping, brow beaters conducted the route inspections. The Northridge Route Inspection Team was comprised of a few seemingly decent route examiners and a few of the "old guard" Van Nuys District types that are not such decent route examiners. Allow me to recount the highly unpleasant inspection week experience of one of the 91325 carriers.

The carrier's inspection day was Monday, September 20, 2011, and he used 9 hours and 25 minutes of street time that day. On Tuesday morning of the inspection week I observed the Northridge Postmaster and this particular carrier having an "animated" conversation at the carrier's case. The Postmaster then instructed the carrier to go to his office with him. I asked the Inspection Team Leader, Dave Aultman, what was going on between the Postmaster and the carrier and he told me that the Postmaster was talking to the carrier because during his inspection the carrier had been "knocking on customer's doors to deliver parcels and then waiting for them to answer the door". I replied, "yeah, so what??? That's what we're supposed to do when we deliver parcels".

I then briefly discussed the rules as outlined in the M-41 Handbook with Mr. Aultman for the *proper* attempting and delivery of parcels. After our brief conversation I borrowed a nearby carrier's route book and made a copy of the below listed provisions regarding parcel delivery from the M-41 Handbook:

322.311 When the Carrier Is Authorized to Leave Ordinary Parcels

a. Parcels must not be left in an unprotected location

such as a porch unless the mailer participates in the carrier release program by endorsing the package "Carrier-Leave If No Response" or the addressee has given written directions for an alternate delivery location. Examples of protected locations are a locked vestibule, locked hallway or with the doorman of an apartment building, inside a storm door of a residence, etc. **Form 3849, Delivery Notice/Reminder/Receipt, with the "It is located: _____" block completed must be left in the mail receptacle notifying the addressee of the mail left in the authorized alternate location.** Parcels must not be left where adverse weather can affect them (emphasis added).

b. By following the mailer's or addressee's instructions, the Postal Service provides customers with a more convenient way to receive parcels. Carriers are not liable for loss or theft where these instructions and postal regulations are followed.

c. Mailers who participate in the carrier release program understand that there are areas where the Postal Service will not leave parcels for security reasons. Mailers also understand that carriers do not leave packages without protection from inclement weather. If there is not a suitable location to leave a carrier release parcel, Form 3849 must be left.

322.312 When the Carrier Is Not Authorized to Leave Ordinary Parcels

a. *When someone is usually available to receive parcels.* When an ordinary or unnumbered insured parcel is not delivered on the first attempt and the carrier knows that someone at the address is usually available to receive parcels, do not leave Form 3849, *Delivery Notice/Reminder/Receipt*. Write the date and the carrier's initials and route number near the address and return the parcel to the office. Place the parcel in the gurney at the carrier's case. Attempt a second delivery on the next delivery day. If the parcel is not delivered after the second attempt, complete and leave Form 3849. Legibly endorse the form with the following information:

- (1) Article number (if applicable)
- (2) Date
- (3) Sender's name
- (4) Type of mail
- (5) Article requiring signature at time of delivery (if applicable)
- (6) Addressee's name and address
- (7) Amount due (if applicable)

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Don't let it Happen to You!

By Paul Drapkin, Senior Vice President

As a Steward I am always challenged by something new. The same old grievances can become as routine as walking across that same lawn at Mrs. Johnson's house every day to deliver her the Advo and her monthly annuity check.

Over the past few years we as a union have been challenged by many new tactics taken by management to make many Carriers lives as miserable as possible. One of those has been the National Reassessment Process (NRP) in which management has seen fit to place limited duty Carriers out of work with the proposition that there is no work available without even going through the motions of searching for work as is required in chapter 5 of the ELM.

No, I am not going to bore you with another story of how wrong management's position is on this subject. An awful lot has been written on the subject both nationally and in this very newsletter by some of the national officers and the other officers of branch 2902. I am not even going to brag about how through the grievance procedure, the union has been kicking ass so hard on this subject that management has pretty much folded like a house of cards on this particular grievance and now routinely settles at the pre-arbitration stage of the grievance procedure and simply agrees that they violated the contract and pays whatever the amount is to make the grievant whole. I even know of one particular case where the grievant received well over \$100,000.00 in back pay and benefits.

Instead I am going to discuss just one particular aspect that actually happened to a Carrier as a consequence of their being placed out on NRP and inattention to details that cost severely. This example is not meant to embarrass the Carrier. It is meant to be a lesson I know that I learned but I want to be sure that it does not happen to you.

In this particular case, the Carrier had taken out a loan against their Thrift Savings Plan well before having been placed out of work on NRP. The Carrier was repaying the TSP loan through regular payroll deductions. However, once the Carrier was placed out of work on NRP, they were now in a non-pay status. Being in a non-pay status is not a real problem as far as the TSP is concerned as long as you make sure that the TSP is aware of your situation. They have provisions for just such a situation. However, this Carrier failed to inform the TSP of what was going on, and that is bad, very bad. So bad, that this Carrier is now responsible to the IRS for many thousands of dollars in taxes and penalties. All of which could easily have been avoided had they read the provisions of loan repayment the TSP has for employees in a non-pay status. The TSP has a special

form for just such an event. It is TSP-41. It is required by the TSP that management submit this form whenever you are placed in a non-pay status. The catch is that you are responsible to insure that management submits this form on your behalf. The following is taken directly from the TSP website and states in relevant part:

Suspending Loan Payments

The Internal Revenue Service allows you to suspend your loan payments:

- If you are in approved non-pay status, you may suspend your loan payments for up to one year.
- If you are a civilian entering non-pay status to perform military service, you may suspend your loan payments until you return to pay status. However, you cannot repay your civilian loan(s) from uniformed services pay.

Make sure your agency or service notifies the TSP when you enter non-pay status and when you return to pay status, so that you do not default on your loan.

Notifying the TSP of your non-pay status is a very important step, because if the TSP does not suspend your payments when you enter non-pay status, or your agency does not resume deducting your loan payments from your pay when you return to pay status, you will default on your loan.

There are important consequences if you default on your loan.

- The TSP will declare a taxable distribution of your loan.
- You will lose the opportunity to repay the loan and you will have to pay taxes on the unpaid balance of your loan for that tax year.
- You may be subject to a 10% early withdrawal penalty tax.
- For 12 months following the date of the taxable distribution, you will not be eligible to apply for another loan.

In addition, interest on your loans will continue to accrue while you are in non-pay status. For this reason, many TSP participants continue to make loan payments while in non-pay status. If your loan suspension period ends and you are still in non-pay status, you **must** make loan payments, or a taxable distribution will be declared

The Carrier that I spoke about earlier had all of the above happen to them and there is no recourse that can be taken by this employee or the union on their behalf. It was an expensive lesson and if nothing else I would hope that the information contained on this page is enough to insure that you don't let it happen to you.



OK, NALC! WHAT'S IT GONNA BEE?

(The Buzz That Needs To Bee Told)

Ernestine Hernandez, Vice President

The buzz is that Letter Carrier jobs are again under attack, as are other Postal worker jobs! We as NALC members cannot afford to sit back and wait to see what happens; instead we need to once again **bee united and fight!** History has shown that letter carriers do not back down whenever politicians have initiated job problems, and right now, the fight is on to preserve our jobs! The NALC's strength has always been the membership and their willingness to bee ready to do whatever is necessary to improve a letter carrier's job. That is how we have come this far. And now, like in other tough times throughout history, we have to bee strong to survive. We should not stand by and watch our jobs bee flushed down the toilet!

BEE A COLCPE CONTRIBUTOR

Our politicians throughout the country need to bee informed of the harm they would bee causing the whole American public if they vote to follow the Postmaster General's destructive path, bee-cause everyone will be affected; from the people in out of the way areas, to the buzziest metropolitan areas. The contributions to COLCPE are used to organize our legislative groups to get out and educate the elected officials who have a direct vote on what happens to Letter Carriers, and the Postal Service. We are prohibited by law from using union dues for political activities. Voluntary contributions to the Political Activities Committee (PAC), for Letter Carriers can be made by payroll deduction to ensure that there are enough funds available to fight the political battles we keep coming up against. The funds we provide are going to have a direct impact on us letter carriers having jobs, so, sign up today and bee a COLCPE contributor.

STAY INFORMED WITH E-ACTIVIST ALERTS

Our Leadership has established an e-activist network online to keep the membership informed at a moments notice when harmful developments occur, and we need to contact our local elected officials to support our positions immediately. It has proven to bee extremely effective. We have dodged fatal bullets by having these important and informative e-mail alerts sent out to us. Sign up to keep on top of what is going on with our jobs, and to bee ready to act when needed.

JOIN THE CARRIER CORPS: Bee-cause NOW IS THE TIME TO BEE INVOLVED

Help us get the word out to the public of what is really happening to the U.S. Postal Service. Your help is needed to do phone banking, neighborhood canvassing and buzziness contacting, rallies, petitions, etc... The Postal Service is not obsolete and is still provides a vital service to many, for many reasons, and we need to protect it from those who say otherwise!

With our network of letter carriers that reach all areas of the United States on a daily basis, we still provide deliveries to the last mile for other delivery services that can't. (UPS, Fed Ex, etc.)

5 Days? NO WAY! If the 6 day delivery protections we have right now are eliminated from the Postal Regulations, it won't bee replaced with anything! This will open the door to the complete dismantling of the Postal Service for Privatization, and will also mean the loss of good living wages and jobs to hundreds of thousands of Postal workers.

Universal Service will bee a thing of the past, and so will low mailing costs. Electronic Mail (e-mail) is not the answer either, as prices for internet service can bee costly. Power outages are constantly causing problems for computer users, as are hackers. Plus not everyone has access to a computer and printer, nor does everyone know how to use them. The economy would also bee taking another major hit if the US Postal Service was allowed to go under.

How will our military's morale hold up, without letters from family and care packages, when they are in areas where internet communication is dangerous to use? These items keep our soldiers strong & hopeful and can bee carried with them wherever they go.

*Some people also do not realize that we, as letter carriers are also there in the neighborhoods ready to alert someone or lend a hand when there is danger, to watch over elderly persons who live alone, and also by helping the communities with our Food Drive, our Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) donations, and our Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) charitable donations. If we lost our jobs, how could we bee able to do all of these things for our communities? We would also bee out of jobs, and might bee forced to seek public assistance too, and that would bee awful!



HAPPY HOLIDAYS from the MBA

By Chris Alessi, MBA/NSBA Representative

As we start into the holiday season it would be a good time to review your insurance needs to see if your family protection is accurate for your life now and the future ahead. It is important to make sure that if the breadwinner is not there because of death, will there be sufficient income to take care of all the family's needs. The simplest rule of thumb is the multiple of income rule. This is by far the most popular rule of thumb and is a recommendation that the amount of life insurance should be 7 to 10 times your annual income. When it comes to nailing down the actual amount to purchase, your best move is to consult a fee-based financial professional.

These life insurance plans are for members of the NALC and their families. There are five whole life plans and 1 term plan. These plans are available for the member, member's spouse, children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, step children, step grandchildren, and step great grandchildren. The MBA offers the following:

MBA Life Paid Up At Age 90 - This is a whole life policy that you choose coverage from \$10,000 to \$100,000. Premiums remain the same throughout the life of your policy. This plan is paid up on the anniversary after the insured's 90th birthday. You can borrow against your cash buildup and still keep policy in force

MBA Life Paid Up At Age 65 - This is a limited whole life policy that you choose coverage from \$10,000 to \$100,000. This policy offers lifelong insurance protection without lifelong payments. This plan is paid up on the anniversary after the insured's 65th birthday. You can borrow against your cash build up and still keep policy in force

MBA 20 Pay - This is a limited whole life policy that you choose coverage from \$10,000 to \$100,000. This policy is good for letter carriers who want to insure their young children. After 20 years the plan is paid up and you can keep the coverage at no cost, or surrender your policy for its cash value.

MBA Universal Life - This is a whole life universal policy that you choose coverage from \$10,000 to \$100,000. You can increase or decrease your coverage, add lump sums to your cash account, withdraw cash, change or even stop premium payments while your insurance coverage stays in effect.

Independence - This is a whole life policy that you choose coverage from \$5,000 to \$100,000. This is the most convenient plan with "single, once-in-a-lifetime premium payment" You get immediate real cash value, tax free

interest earnings, and low interest loans, a no cancellation guarantee, and full death benefits.

MBA 10 Year Renewable and Convertible – This is a term policy that you choose from \$10,000 to \$100,000. Your premium will remain the same until the 10 year term has ended. You can renew for another 10 years of coverage without a medical exam. At each renewal period, your premium increases according to your age. You can continue coverage until age 80, and you can convert this term policy to a whole life policy without taking a medical exam if the insured is under the age 65.

All of these plans can be paid annually, monthly, or through biweekly payroll deductions. All plan premiums are based on the insured's age at time of purchase, and all have a 30 day review period with a full refund to decide if the plans are right for you.

In closing, I would like to say thank you to all the officers of 2902 for another great year of dedication and hard work, thanks for keeping our Union strong!! May you and your families have a great Thanksgiving and a very Merry Christmas.

In Solidarity Always, God Bless you, Chris



San Fernando Carrier Paulette Dyer shows off her 25 year union membership pin presented to her at the August union meeting in Newbury Park.

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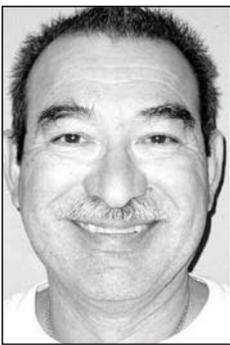
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The Choice is Yours!

By, *Joe Gutierrez, Health Benefits Representative*

By the time you read this article the membership of branch 2902 we will be given the opportunity to pick who you want to be your health insurance carrier. I would hope that the membership of this branch would chose the NALC health plan as their choice, but every year I am amazed at what our membership chooses. We have a fantastic plan offering benefits that are equal or better than the other plans have to offer.

The reason I hear given for not choosing the NALC health plan is that I have been in the other plan since day one, or this plan is cheaper or I'm covered under my spouses plan. I don't know if the membership is aware of the attack that certain members of congress are taking to curtail the benefits that we as letter carriers have earned through the years. It is time that we wake up and do our part to protect these hard fought benefits that we have earned.

One of these is the FEHB plans, we have the ability to

join or change insurance plans every year, what would happen to this benefit if congress were to eliminate this provision or reduce it to one or two choices or the Postal Service itself were to successfully remove us from the FEHBP.

What if your plan is not one that is offered to you, and the one that is turns out to be an HMO or really restricted one? These are all possible if we don't get involved in the political process.

Now back to picking a health plan all you have to remember is our health plan is owned by you the letter carrier, and is not for profit. The goal of the NALC health plan is to give you the letter carrier the best health care at the best possible rates. The other plans are, what is the best rate of return to their stock holders.

This year please read the brochures that are offered to all employees and compare all the plans. If this is done with an open mind I'm sure you will make the right choice and pick the best plan, NALC, the letter carriers own health plan.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

Continued from page 7

has been sent to every member called Daily Situations. The pamphlet describes work hour work load reports, time codes, work methods, route adjustments, initial consultations, the route review process, etc.

On the local level, grievance activity is way up. Figures, it's the beginning of the new fiscal year and the word from USPS headquarters is screw the carrier! What we got is an old fashioned speed up. In the FSS offices, Management unilaterally and improperly utilized COR to make route adjustments. Management is blaming the letter carrier for not making the adjustments work. Management feels that they have done proper adjustments, but the carriers don't want to make it work so they are expanding their office and street times. I guess Management fails to notice that their trucks are late in arriving, caseable mail has increased, parcels have increased, the accountables are late, the parcels are late in being distributed, there's a lack of complement in some offices, and by the way, the adjustments were screwed-up. Management would not agree with the Branch in a methodology to adjust the routes, so the Branch was forced to ask for 6-day counts and inspections. Now Management refuses to do 6-day counts and inspections hoping that the routes will miraculously "right-size" by putting pressure on carriers to run their routes. Hence, discipline for attendance is up, discipline for scanning is up,

discipline for accidents is up, discipline for work performance is up, vehicle observations are up, street supervision is up, restricted sick leave is up, etc. Basically, the pressure is up on everybody to work faster and do more. Word to the wise, this job is a marathon not a sprint. If you are going to do this job for any length of time, learn to do the job right. All for now back in two. Talk to you all next year.



Vice President Ernestine Hernandez (L) proudly awards retiree Carmen Lucio with her 25 year union membership pin at the October union meeting.

Special Guest Article

WAYS TO SAVE OUR JOBS AND POSSIBLY THE POST OFFICE

By Greg Szpak, North Hollywood Carrier

Postal workers are going through a very uncertain political and economic time right now. To rely on upper management to find a solution would be foolhardy. The USPS workforce is worried about the future and rightly should be. One person alone can't do much, but our real strength is in our numbers. We have approximately 574,000 employees and hundreds of thousands more retirees that need to act as one.

There are four ways all present and past employees can contribute and improve our situation:

- 1. Give to COLCPE.** Even small contributions, if we all pitch in, say \$5 a paycheck, gives us the kind of access to our legislators than only billionaires and major corporations now enjoy. Many of them are using that access to try to "privatize" the Postal Service, which would mean the end of our jobs and the high level of delivery service Americans now receive. COLCPE is our best way to oppose that destructive influence.
- 2. Protect your job.** Do your job well and treat your

customers the way you want to be treated. Don't give any customer a reason not to use our services.

- 3. Use our services.** Use postage stamps and priority shipping. Have all your bills mailed and discourage online bill payment. Order a magazine subscription. The number of employees and retirees, multiplied by a monthly or weekly subscription equals a very large amount of income for the Postal Service.
- 4. Vote.** We need everybody to register and vote in the upcoming elections. Members of the Republican Party have publicly sworn their distaste for the Postal Service and all government jobs. They would like to privatize or do away with the USPS. We need to stop these people from winning in the upcoming elections.

Love or hate the USPS, we are very fortunate to have good paying jobs with great benefits. These kinds of jobs are very hard to find nowadays. That is why it is necessary to ACT NOW before it is too late!

THE PAST ALWAYS REPEATS ITSELF...

Continued from page 4

(8) Date and time customer can pick up article at post office.

b. *When someone is not usually available to receive parcels.* If no one is available to receive the parcel and the carrier knows that someone at the address is not usually available to receive parcels, complete and leave Form 3849 (see exhibit 322.312b) after the first attempt. When the carrier does not know if someone is usually available to receive parcels, Form 3849 should be left after the first attempt. Endorse the parcel near the address, showing the reason for nondelivery, e.g., "No Response", date delivery was attempted, and the carrier's initials and route number. Upon returning to the office, deposit the parcel in the designated place for undelivered parcels.

As you have just read, these rules from the M-41 are clear, unambiguous and there are no "gray areas" that should create any disputes in the application of these rules. **It is clear that carriers are not supposed to simply leave parcels on the porch unless authorized by either the mailer (i.e. "Carrier Release") or the customer to do so.** Even when we are authorized via the "Carrier Release"

Program to leave parcels when customers are not home, we are still supposed to leave a PS Form 3849 in the mailbox notifying the customer that we left them a parcel and where we left it. We don't just chuck the parcel onto the porch and run like the UPS and FEDEX drivers often do.

After copying the above listed provisions from Handbook M-41, I went back to attempt to discuss them further with Mr. Aultman. He dismissed me by saying "*I know what the M41 says*" and he then told me that it has been "*District Policy for the last 20 years*" to leave parcels on porches whether authorized to do so or not. That, brothers and sisters, is pure, unadulterated, Grade A BS! **It has never been "District Policy" to deliver parcels in a manner that violates the M-41.**

On my route I had about 35 letters that I kept in my route book with instructions from customers that wanted me to leave parcels somewhere (on the porch, behind a gate, etc. etc.) when they were not home. Otherwise, unless it was a "carrier release" parcel, I would not leave parcels when the customers were not home. I followed the M-41 rules religiously and I never had any problems with delivery (or loss) of parcels. If a customer was annoyed because I did not leave a parcel on their porch, I told them to

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THE PAST ALWAYS REPEATS ITSELF...

Continued from page 10

simply write me a note authorizing me to leave parcels when they were not home and to sign the note. I then prepared a "Special Notice" Card for my replacement carriers and left the note from my customer in my route book. No muss, no fuss. Life at the USPS is really very simple when you follow the rules. Unless you are dealing with old school "Van Nuys District" type Route Examiners like Mr. Aultman that apparently like to make up the rules as they go along in the interest of saving precious time, service be damned.

I found out later from the Northridge carrier that he had been given a "Direct Order" on Tuesday (of inspection week) to simply leave parcels on the porch whether authorized to do so or not. This improper direct order generated 2 grievances; one grievance for Management ordering the carrier to violate the M-41 when delivering his parcels and one grievance for Management changing, during the week of inspection, the manner in which the grievant performs his carrier duties from the way he normally performs them throughout the year. Both grievances are currently awaiting adjudication in the grievance procedure as of this writing.

To give you an idea of the impact this improper instruction will have on this carrier's route inspection time, on Wednesday of inspection week the carrier had 45 parcels. It takes a lot of time to attempt or to deliver 45 parcels when done in compliance with the M-41 provisions printed above. It takes a lot less time when you just leave the parcels on the porch, whether authorized to do so or not, as the carrier was ordered to do by Management on Tuesday of Inspection week. Aside from this being a clear cut violation of the rules, it is also just plain lousy customer service. But the "Van Nuys District" folks **really** don't give care about service or following the rules, they **really** only care about how fast we deliver the routes. On Tuesday of inspection week the carrier used 8 hours and 25 minutes of street time, delivering his parcels as "ordered" by Management and in violation of the M-41.

On Wednesday the carrier used 8 hours and 20 minutes of street time, including the obviously reduced time it took to "dump" his 45 parcels on the porches instead of delivering them properly in compliance with the M-41.

On Thursday of Inspection week, Management called the carrier into the office and notified him that they were cancelling his route inspection and that they were going to change his mode of delivery from mounted and dismount to park and loop! Instead of admitting that the route was obviously overburdened and cutting the route, Management cancelled the inspection and punished the carrier by telling him his route would be changed to park and loop and they would re-inspect him at a later date, after making this dumb-ass change.

The houses on this route have large lots with mail

boxes that are far apart and set up for mounted deliveries. There are no sidewalks on many of the streets, meaning that the carrier has to walk in the street, which is totally unsafe. When it rains the carrier will be walking in flooded streets without sidewalks. There are other safety factors involved, including the crossing of a very busy street at uncontrolled areas, that up to now have been ignored by Northridge management and we are also dealing with in the grievance procedure.

The Route Inspection Team Leader, Mr. Aultman, could not find the carrier doing anything wrong, other than delivering his many parcels in compliance with the M-41 rules. However, the carrier is too damned slow for Mr. Aultman, so he figures he will punish him by making his mounted route park and loop. It will actually take the carrier **much more** time to deliver this heavy mail volume route that gets a ton of parcels as a park and loop, but what does he care as long as the carrier is suffering? By the way, the carrier is 56 years old. Can you say "Age discrimination"? I know I sure as hell can.

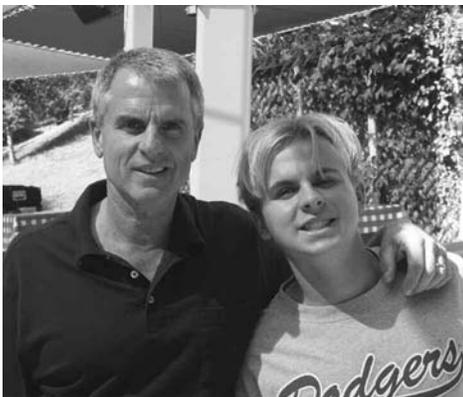
This is **exactly** the same type of crap that a previous old school Van Nuys District Terrorist, Dale Herbert, used to pull during his reign of terror in North Hollywood. If Herbert couldn't find you breaking any rules he'd still find a way to mess with you and make your work life miserable. Dale Herbert would be proud of this brilliant, punitive plan. Old school Van Nuys District tactics are alive and well! I guess if your office is in Van Nuys you really can't help yourself, eh? When in Rome, or should I say when in Van Nuys?

It's true that the past always repeats itself, especially in the good, ol' USPS. Try to enjoy the holidays, in spite of it all. Until next time...



Pictured above are the latest members of the 25 year pin club. All the above members received their 25 year union membership pin at the September union meeting.

PICNIC 2011, GREAT FUN IN THE SUMMERTIME!



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RETIREES LUNCH

RAFFLE AT 12:30

Where: Hometown Buffet
Fallbrook Mall
6633 Fallbrook Ave.
West Hills

When: Thursday,
December 15, 2011

Time: 11:00am to 1:00pm



Where: Hometown Buffet
Vons Center
1855 Cochran Street
Simi Valley

When: Thursday,
January 19, 2012

Time: 11:00am to 1:00pm



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- Bob Golden

TRUSTEES:

Debbie Riggs
James Perryman
Sandy Gaunce
Greg Gaddis
Kurt Whitesell

“Experience is a wonderful thing; it enables you to recognize a mistake every time you repeat it.”

—Anonymous

SHOP STEWARD LIST

Agoura Hills Chief S.S.	Greg Gaddis
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
Valley Village	Steve Leyton
Northridge Chief S.S.	Onofre Varela
Shop Steward/ Webmaster	Larry Orcutt
Porter Ranch Alternate	Larry Orcutt Kurt Whitesell
Ojai Chief S.S.	Philip Navarro
Oxnard Chief S.S.	Ernestine Hernandez
Pacoima Chief S.S.	Steve Dickerson
Alternate	Frankie Mercado
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
Santa Paula Chief S.S.	Laura Rowe
Simi Valley Chief S.S.	Sandra Gaunce
Mt. McCoy Station	Sandra Gaunce
Thousand Oaks Chief S.S.	Jim Mette
	Alex Lopez
Alternate	Walter Williams
Newbury Park	Mary Stanley
Ventura Chief S.S.	Jim Mette
East Ventura	Laura Rowe
Woodland Hills Chief S.S.	Laura Rowe
	Joe Vedder
	Paul Drapkin

RECREATION NEWS

SEA WORLD:

Adults: \$46.00 (Gate price \$69.99)

Child: \$46.00 (Gate price \$61.99)

SEE'S GIFT CERTIFICATE:

\$13.50 (Retail Value \$16.50)

For each See's Gift Certificate purchased received one \$5.00 Gift Card. (While supplies last)

Additional Gift Cards can be purchased for \$5.00 each.

At the monthly meetings (every third Tuesday of the month) coupons and flyers for various venues are available.

My famous homemade oatmeal chocolate chip cookies are 4 for \$1.00.

PAULETTE DYER

THE MAIL BAG NEWS

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Will be serving
DINNER

At the **November**
Union Meeting

DINNER starts at 6pm

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NOV 15 Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Union Hall-Chatsworth
Dinner served 6 pm

NOV 17 Retiree Lunch 11:00am
Hometown Buffet-Simi Valley

NOV 24 Thanksgiving Day-Holiday



DEC 6 Executive Board Meeting 6pm
Executive Council Meeting 7pm

DEC 15 Retiree Lunch 11:00am
Hometown Buffet-West Hills

DEC 20 Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Union Hall-Chatsworth

DEC 25 Christmas Day *Season's Greetings*

DEC 26 Christmas Day-Holiday

JAN 1 New Years Day *Happy New Year 2012*

JAN 2 New Years Day-Holiday

JAN 3 Executive Board Meeting 6pm
Executive Council Meeting 7pm

JAN 16 Martin Luther King Jr. Day-Holiday



Vote-Vote-Vote-Vote-Vote-Vote-Vote-Vote

REPRESENTATION EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

In December of 2011, the membership will vote by mail ballot on a new team of officers to lead Branch 2902 for the next three years.

President Salazar has been a solid, steady and dedicated President serving the membership with the kind of leadership skills required as we navigate the turbulent times we face.

President
Executive Vice President
Senior Vice President
Vice President
Financial Secretary
Recording Secretary
Director of Retirees
MBA/NSBA Rep.
Health benefit Officer
Sargent-At-Arms
Trustees

Frank Salazar
Ray Hill
Paul Drapkin
Ernestine Hernandez
Dan Gorman
Susan Degenhardt
Bev Sucich
Chris Alessi
Joe Gutierrez
Bob Golden
Robbie Elsaleh
Greg Gaddis
Sandy Gaunce
James Perryman
Debbie Riggs

Paid for by the committee to elect strong leadership