



THE VOICE



OF THE GOLDEN GATE LETTER CARRIERS

BRANCH #214

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS, AFL-CIO

January/February 2014

Award-winning newspaper

Vol. XLIV, No. 1

Branch 214 officers sworn in for 2014-2016 term

The new line-up of Branch 214 full time and part time officers was sworn in for the 2014-2016 three year term by Myra Warren, national Director of Life Insurance at the regular union meeting on January 8, 2014.

After the ceremonies, Branch 214 president, Lili Beaumont thanked the outgoing officers, Bill Thornton, Kim Truong, Karen Schuler, and Cathy Simonson for their service. Myra Warren spoke about problems the union faces in Washington DC from Congress. She also noted the wide variety of services in insurance and retirement the union offers at competitive or low prices as a non-profit organization.



Photo: Cathy Simonson

Myra Warren, National Director of Life Insurance



Photo: Cathy Simonson

Officers being sworn in by Myra Warren, visible between Juan Dominguez (third from right) and Karen Eshabarr, (2nd from right).

Branch Notes

John Beaumont honored

The Tri-Counties Central Labor Council honored CSALC (California State Association of Letter Carriers) President John Beaumont at their 25th Annual Dinner on October 5, 2013. John received the Labor Leader of the Year Award for his work helping to coordinate the congressional races of Walter and Lois Capps and Julia Brownley, and labor's successful campaigns against anti-union initiatives, Props. 32, 75, and 226.

The CSALC, under John's leadership, has worked with dozens of branches and assisted numerous Labor Councils in many successful Labor to Labor campaigns across the state, assisted by CSALC Vice President Harold Kelso and countless members from 8 California NALC branches. John is a member of Branch 214.

Source: "Carrier Relay," October/November 2013, Branch 2086, Burbank, CA.

Post office building saved

An article in the Thursday, January 16, 2014 *S.F. Chronicle* wrote about a Congressional vote to block the Postal Service from selling off historic buildings. One of

these buildings is the Renaissance Revival structure in Berkeley where protests have occurred to stop the sale of that building. Former officer, Dave Welsh, has written several articles in **The Voice** about this issue and about the organized protests which included camping out in front of the building. At press time Dave Welsh reported that the battle to save the building from private hands is not yet over.

Six day delivery

The December 26, 2013 issue of the *NALC Bulletin* had an article about 6 day delivery. "NALC grassroots activists and the American public scored a huge victory on Dec. 10 when efforts to include elimination of Saturday mail delivery in the emerging budget agreement for 2014 failed."

On January 13, 2014, Congress confirmed the agreement maintaining six day delivery and President Obama signed the budget bill into law on January 17, 2014.

Opposing privatization of clerks' jobs

On January 28, 2014 NALC Branch 214 demonstrated in cooperation with the APWU at a Staples store on Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco to protest the post office plan to place full service postal outlets inside all Staples stores, leading to a loss of full time clerks' jobs. Details and photos next issue.

Branch Officers

Lili Beaumont President
 Karen Eshabarr Executive Vice-President
 Juan Dominguez Vice-President
 Ron Caluag Secretary-Treasurer
 Jun Buccat Assistant Secretary-Treasurer
 Charles Gonzalez Sergeant-at-Arms
 Franklin Woo NALC Health Benefits
 Alex Munguia Safety and Health
 Roberta Bojo EEO Officer
 Mike Callahan MBA representative
 Norma Leonardo Director of Organization
 Sheila Gardner Trustee
 Cherry Vargas Trustee
 Sidney Wong Trustee

Voice Staff

Ivars Lauersons Editor
 Edwina Wu Associate Editor
 Gerry Lee Graphics

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GOLDEN GATE BRANCH
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 Phone: (415) 362-0214
 WEB page:
<http://www.nalcbayarea.com>
 Office hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday

WEB NEWS, www.nalcbayarea.com

Visit our new award winning website. Get forms, check manuals, link to national NALC website, see photos of Branch 214 stations, and more, more, more. Some areas are limited to shop stewards and union activists.

* * *

Go to *NALC.org* to sign up with the NALC e-Activist Network to receive periodic e-mail action alerts and information on issues important to NALC members. Join together with thousands of your fellow active and retired letter carriers to make your voice heard! FOR NALC MEMBERS ONLY.

NALC Branch 214 is on Twitter now! First you need a free Twitter account which you can create by going to <https://twitter.com> to sign up, if you don't already have one. You can get updates and information about what's important to letter carriers. Just follow us at @NALCBranch214.

Of course don't forget about our NALC Branch 214 Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/nalcbbranch214>. Or just type in NALC Branch 214 in the search box. It's awesome to see our members sharing photos, comments, events and links to websites that have current news about the state of the Post Office.

We are all family

Welcome CCAs to the post office

By Lili Beaumont, President

Thanks to the Das Arbitration Award to resolve our current contract, City Carrier Assistants or “CCAs” will be the future letter carrier craft of the postal service after all Part-Time Flexible (PTF) carriers are converted to Full-Time Regular (FTR) carriers and eventually retire. Now, whenever there is a need for the postal service to hire new city letter carriers, CCAs will be hired not PTFs.

CCAs, unlike Transitional Employees or TEs, have a path to become career employees. CCAs will become career employees once all the PTFs in an installation have



been converted to Full-Time Regular carriers. At that time or by 2016, they will be entitled to all the wages and benefits associated with being a career letter carrier. However, until then, they must endure 360-day terms and a minimal benefits package including a significantly reduced hourly wage from career carriers. This, combined with probable mistreatment from management, makes

it difficult for some postal installations to retain its CCAs. Although our branch is successful at recruiting approximately 90% of our newly hired CCAs into the union, the retention rate for CCAs is very low (possibly around 40% branch-wide). Aside from the CCAs’ minimal benefits and salary packages, the following issues may be other reasons for the low retention rate of our CCAs:

1. Poor treatment of our CCAs by management.

There may be a lack of communication from installation management with CCAs that leave the CCAs feeling lost, inadequate, and then frustrated with the job. In order to help our CCAs, all of us should act as “big (union) brothers and/or sisters” and watch over them. We should welcome them into our union, and into our stations and make them feel like “we got their back and we’re here to help with whatever they need”. You don’t need to be an on-the-job instructor or a union officer or shop steward to do this. It’s about making them feel like they’re part of our “postal and union family”. If we all approached our CCAs with this demeanor, it might help their morale and give them a source to turn to if they need help. They then wouldn’t feel so helpless or frustrated and may think twice about quitting the postal service. If management’s poor treatment towards CCAs doesn’t stop in a specific

office, the carriers in that office should report to their union officials anything they witness regarding management’s poor treatment of CCAs.

2. Many CCAs may not be acquainted with their contractual rights and management may not necessarily share those rights with their CCAs. Here are some of the CCAs’ contractual rights: CCAs may not be required to work more than 12 (consecutive) hours in one service day. Depending on the size of the installation, CCAs have a guarantee of either 2 or 4 hours of work when they are scheduled to work. A CCA may be permanently reassigned from one postal installation to another during their appointment provided the employee’s current appointment is being voluntarily terminated. To avoid a break in service a permanent reassignment to a different

CCAs have a lot of contractual rights.

installation must be effected on the first day of a pay period. Annual leave accrued over a CCA’s 360-day term is paid out at the end of the term. No annual leave is carried over. CCAs are not entitled to higher level pay under the national agreement article 25.

Uniform allowance

Upon completion of 90 work days or 120 calendar days of employment, whichever comes first, CCAs become eligible for a uniform allowance when they begin their first CCA appointment. When a CCA becomes eligible for a uniform allowance, funds must be approved through

(continued on page 4)

CCA NIGHT Attention City Carrier Assistants

The branch is holding a special meeting for all of our City Carrier Assistants. The purpose is to hear from you; what problems or successes you are encountering on a daily basis with the Postal Service. The branch wants to ensure that your contractual rights are being upheld. This is your opportunity to ensure your voice is heard. Come and vent. Come and talk to us and meet other CCAs from our offices. *You will be provided dinner and refreshments.*

If interested please RSVP by calling EVP Karen Eshabarr or Vice President Juan Dominguez at (415) 362-0214.

February 27, 2014

6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

**Union office, 2310 Mason Street
(Bay Street), 3rd floor, San Francisco, CA 94133.**

ANNUAL RETIREES LUNCHEON 2013



Photo: Ron Caluag

Robert "Mac" Harris and Arnold Jones.



Photo: Ron Caluag

Ace cartoonist Mr. Gerry Lee and Mrs. Jane Lee. Gerry was a long time contributor of award winning cartons for *The Voice*. The masthead design on page one is his work, and his name appears with the editorial staff on page two as graphics editor.



Photo: Ron Caluag

Retirees and guests at the luncheon enjoying the food.

Lili Beaumont (continued from page 3)

an eBay submission by local management. After approval, a letter of authorization form must be completed and provided to the employee within 14 days of the eligibility date. The CCA takes the completed form to a USPS authorized vendor to purchase uniform items. The letter of authorization can be located on the Uniform Program website on the Blue Page under Labor Relations. A list of all authorized USPS Uniform vendors is located under the Labor Relations website: *Uniform Program* from the Blue Page and also on *Liteblue* under *My HR*, and look for the link for *Uniform Program*. The uniform allowance amounts are as follows: November 21, 2013 = \$399; November 21, 2014 = \$409; November 21, 2015 = \$420.

Opting on a route

After April 10, 2013, CCAs are allowed to opt on (hold down) vacant duty assignments. Opts will be awarded according to CCAs' highest to lowest relative standing in an installation. CCAs may be temporarily assigned to

other post offices. A CCA who is temporarily assigned to another post office outside their employing office may receive payment for mileage for the difference between his/her residence and employing office provided the difference is greater. CCAs who believe they are being denied these contractual rights should contact their union officials who can then intervene on their behalf.

Opting on vacant duty assignments is an important right.

We cannot do anything at this time to change the CCAs' benefits and salary packages created by arbitrator Das in his decision to settle our national contract dispute with the postal service, but we can help along our CCAs so that they will want to stay with the postal service and become career employees. After all, they are the future of the postal service and they are the future of our union as well. They are part of our "family" so let's welcome them with open arms.

Grassroots action by City Councils to support 6-day delivery gains momentum

By John Beaumont, State President,
California State Association of Letter Carriers

Across the state letter carriers from every branch have been working together to help introduce a resolution that would put their community on record in support of continuing door to door delivery, 6 day mail delivery service, and keeping their local post offices from closing their doors. The resolution also promotes ending the onerous mandate placed on the United States Postal Service to pay for its future retiree health benefits up to 75 years in advance. Without this mandate the Postal Service would have been over 800 million dollars in the black and cuts to services would not even be a topic, let alone proposed legislation.



All postal unions in agreement

All four postal unions are in agreement on soliciting our City Councils and County Supervisors in a joint effort to show the public supports the continued operations of the USPS and workers who provide the service they have come to rely upon. To date 20 City Council/Board of Supervisors across the state have adopted our resolution including in our area; San Francisco, Millbrae, Daly City, Marin County Board of Supervisors, and most recently San Mateo County Board of Supervisors. There are even two cities so far in Orange County that have passed it as well. We also have an additional 35 more cities considering introducing our resolution and are working on adding even more as time goes on.

The objective of this grassroots effort is to enlist support from our communities, local government, veterans organizations, non-profit & faith based groups, labor, state and federal government to encourage our US Senators and Congressional Representatives to support progressive postal reform that would build and grow the Postal Service for the future and reject any legislation that would tear down our 200 year old institution.

There are still several more cities covered by, or are next to, our branch that still need to pass our resolution. Please consider helping us out when asked by one your branch officers or shop steward to attend your local city council meeting in support of the resolution when it is introduced. A copy of the resolution is box to the right.

City Council Resolution

WHEREAS, The US Postal Service is a vital component of this country's economic and communications infrastructure handling and delivering 160 billion pieces of mail and generating more than \$65 billion in revenues annually, while receiving no taxpayer funding; and

WHEREAS, The mailing industry, which employs 8 million Americans, generates over \$1 trillion dollars annually, and represents approximately seven percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), depends on the US Postal Service's invaluable mail processing, retail and last-mile delivery networks 6 days a week; and

WHEREAS, The US Postal Service is the only private company or federal agency required by Congress to pre-fund future retiree health benefits for 75 years, requiring \$5.5 billion dollars to be paid annually. In addition, the health benefits for postal retirees is fully funded with billions of dollars in excess, so there is no need to require a crippling \$5.5 billion additional annual payment that is causing unnecessary service cuts; and

WHEREAS, Protecting voting by mail, which is now commonplace in California, is essential to our democracy; and

WHEREAS, The US Postal Service is the second largest employer of US Veterans in the country with over 22% of its employees United States Veterans; and

WHEREAS, Rural communities, many of which do not have access to the Internet, remain dependent on the Postal Service for vital communications and for the shipment of goods; and

WHEREAS, Small businesses along with many Americans, particularly seniors, depend on the Postal Service for receipt of their prescription drugs; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the _____ City Council urges US Senator Barbara Boxer and US Senator Dianne Feinstein to support postal reform legislation that would: Secure the continuance of 6-day mail delivery; Stabilize the Postal Service's finances by reforming or eliminating future retiree health financing policies that are crippling the Postal Service's finances; Strengthen and protect the Postal Service's invaluable mail processing, retail and last-mile delivery networks that together comprise a crucial part of the nation's infrastructure; Retain door-to-door delivery for 30 million plus households and businesses; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the _____ City Council transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Majority Leader of the Senate, to both US Senator Barbara Boxer and US Senator Dianne Feinstein, and to the United States Postmaster General.

An introduction

Who am I?

By Juan Dominguez, Vice President

First of all I would like to thank all the members that voted in this past NALC Branch 214 election. As members, voting is one of our most privileged rights. I want to thank every member who voted for me and I want to thank all stewards and past officers who endorsed me. I would be remiss if I didn't thank my opponent, Bill Thornton, for his years of service and dedication to this branch.

It was a very close election. As you all know, the results were 411 votes for me and 378 votes for Bill Thornton.



This would make the third time I ran against Bill Thornton, and I guess it's true what they say, the third time is a charm.

Short biography

For those new members and for our new CCA's I will write something brief about myself. I started my career as a letter carrier in 1984 in the city of Tiburon. I worked 18 years in Tiburon, 16 of those years as a shop steward. I have served Branch 214 in many capacities, EEO Officer, Safety and Health Officer, Formal A des-

File grievances when necessary, and don't settle for less than we're entitled.

ignee, full time officer (Field Director) and was sent by the national union to the Bolger Academy to become an intervention specialist.

I transferred to the Bay Valley District in 2004 to be closer to home, the biggest mistake of my life, and returned in 2005 to San Rafael and became a shop steward. In 2006 I became a full time officer (Field Director), returned to San Rafael in 2009 for personal reasons and became the chief steward from 2009 to 2012.

I have been privileged enough this time to run with President Lili Beaumont's ticket and this is probably one of the main reasons I succeeded. I am grateful to her and the rest of the full time officers for their belief in me and for their trust.

Filling big shoes

Bill Thornton served this branch as a full time officer for over 22 years, in many capacities and he has left some big shoes to fill, size 13, I think. Most of the work Bill did

in the last few years was Workers' Compensation issues, which is a very complex issue; I will do my best to fill that gap.

As the newly elected Vice President I intend to work hard to represent you, our members, and this includes learning about and representing our injured carriers.

The duties

Article VI (duties of officers) of the NALC Branch 214 by-laws, section 3 describe the duties of the Vice President as follows:

"The vice president shall be a full time officer. He/she shall preside in the absence of both the President and the Executive VP, under the direction of the President, shall have the overall responsibility for Contract Administration, chairing the grievance committee, maintaining and updating grievance logs and other general advocacy responsibilities. The VP shall conduct regular station visits, be available to the branch and its members for all purposes during a forty (40) hour week and as needed, and shall perform other duties as assigned by the president and/or the members."

Grievance work

As you can see, among other things I am responsible for contract administration, and maintaining and updating grievance logs and other general advocacy and responsibilities. What I take that to mean is that, among other things, I am responsible in overseeing the grievance procedure and the resolutions that we are resolving grievances with. I intend to keep a close eye on this issue for it is our most important function as a union. We need to file grievances when necessary and we need to resolve grievances when possible. But resolving grievances does not mean compromising, especially when we don't have to, and does not mean resolving grievances for less than we are entitled to.

Delivering mail in the dark is increasing, with 43% out after 5 pm in September 2013.

I will look at all the grievances that we are filing, speaking with those stewards who are doing a great job and resolving grievances promptly and justly, and also speaking with those stewards who are not filing grievances and or are resolving for less than we are entitled to.

Delivering mail in the dark increasing

One of my main concerns at the present time is delivering mail in the dark. It is an important issue and one that is getting more dangerous as time passes. As you all

(continued on page 7)

Dominguez (continued from page 6)

know, we have had several tragedies lately, one being the death of CCA Tyson Jerome Barnette from Maryland. That is just one example of many that tells us that something has to be done.

As I write this I came across an article posted in the *Postal Reporter* entitled "Delivery after dark", and it cites the fact that the Postal Service just published data showing that since 2005, the percentage of carriers out after 5:00 p.m. has gone from less than 20% to over 40%.

From September 2005 to September 2010, the average percentage of carriers on the street who were out after 5:00 p.m. was about 18.5 percent. From September 2010 through September 2012, the average percentage rose to 26.7 percent, and over the next twelve months, it rose to 37.5 percent. In September 2013, 43.5 percent of carriers were out after 5:00 p.m.

The data set doesn't show at what time the carriers were returning, just that it was after 5:00 p.m. So one cannot determine how many were out after dark. But the percentages do provide convincing evidence that even though mail volumes are declining, the number of carriers on the street after dark is increasing.

Mail volumes may be down, but the routes aren't getting any shorter. In fact, some of them may be getting longer, since the total number of delivery points just keeps getting bigger (from 144 million in 2005 in to 151 million in 2011). It's no wonder that with a significantly smaller workforce, more carriers would be taking more time to deliver the mail.

We can protect ourselves from unsafe conditions.

Visit from national officer

National Officer Myra Warren, Director of Life Insurance, was just recently in our branch. She was kind enough to be the National Officer to install the new officers, me being one of them. She spoke about the fact that National is very concerned about the delivering in the dark issue and has engaged the Postal Service in talks. And let's give credit to the Postal Service that they are willing to talk, and are trying to resolve some of the issues of working in the dark.

Myra Warren said "that is not working in the dark that is a problem; it is the conditions of where we are working in the dark that are a problem".

Local safeguards from working in unsafe conditions

What can we do locally to protect ourselves from unsafe working conditions and working in the dark in unsafe conditions? There are several, and we should use them when appropriate.

- 1) Complete your 3996 in the morning requesting assistance to complete your assignment.
- 2) Inform your supervisor before you leave the office that you will be out after dark. If possible, write it on your 3996 and inform them that it is unsafe to be delivering after dark and why.
- 3) If your supervisor is ignoring your 3996 or has not given you a proper response to your 3996, ask to speak to your shop steward.
- 4) If after speaking to your shop steward you are still instructed to deliver in the dark, follow instructions and make sure to call your supervisor later in the day and inform them that it is still unsafe to continue delivering in the dark and ask for instructions.

There are a number of steps to take if we are ordered to deliver in the dark.

- 5) If after calling your supervisor you were still given instructions to complete your assignment, make an attempt to follow the instructions and if the condition is unsafe, and you are the one to make that determination, return to the office.
- 6) Upon returning to the office locate a supervisor and inform them of the curtailment and why (under no circumstances leave the mail without informing a supervisor). Fill out a 1571 detailing what you brought back and why.
- 7) If you receive any discipline for your actions, contact your shop steward and grieve the discipline.

I look forward to meeting everyone of you members and future members. Thanks to my good friends Ron Caluag and Cherry Vargas for their support and belief in me.

Branch 214 Meetings

Branch meetings, 7:00 P.M.

January 8, 2014	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
February 5, 2014	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
March 5, 2014	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF

Steward meetings, 4:30 P.M.

January 8, 2014	2310 Mason, SF
February 5, 2014	2310 Mason, SF
March 5, 2014	2310 Mason, SF

Retiree social meetings, 11:30 A.M.

February 3, 2014	740 Del Monte Avenue, South SF
April 7, 2014	740 Del Monte Avenue, South SF
June 2, 2014	740 Del Monte Avenue, South SF

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

CCAs: Terrence Kennedy, Javier Lorenzo, Fernando Pons, Edgar Aguayo, Joannis Lagos, Carolina Carillo, Daniel Walsh, Jackie Chan, Cenk Ozer, Joe Price, Jenessa Herren, Diana Carrasco, Richard Murphy, Sergio Cerda, Mia Henderson, William Wenk, Kevin Scott, Malaysia Tulley, and Mitchell Peppers. (Signed up by President Lili Beaumont, EVP Karen Eshabarr and Field Director Charles Gonzalez during orientation)

Mill Valley CCAs: Rodney Pacheco and Ingret Bruns. (Signed up by Steward Val Palattao)

SF-Bayview (CCA): Nhi Du-dinh.
(Signed up by Steward Yadira Levesque)

Daly City (CCA): Sean Jimenez.
(Signed up by Steward Edward Villaflor)

San Rafael (Regular): Parmjeet Hans.
(Signed up by Steward Carol Maggio)

SF-Parkside (Regular): Robin Lim.
(Signed up by Anthony Buencamino)

IN MEMORIAM

Raymond Kwong (SF-180 Napoleon)

Book by retired letter carrier

Rafael V. Ramirez, retired letter carrier from Steiner Station in San Francisco, is the author of a murder mystery book of fiction, *Going Postal*, which draws on his experiences as a letter carrier. When supervisors abuse their power in the workplace they may harass people with deep personal problems and the worker they harass may be a very dangerous person is a theme in the book according to the author. The book is available by going to the website www.gone-postal.co

About the book, from the web site

Joe Saunders, a letter carrier who's in love with Allison, but having affairs with multiple women. By the way, Joe is also a murderer all the while working at the Post Office trying to hold his life together. Joe will kill anyone to keep his relationship with his Allison together and to protect his secret murder.

Thank You

I would like to express my appreciation to those letter carriers who supported me in the last election and in many previous elections.

But especially thank you to Branch 214 letter carriers for the privilege of working with you in the resolution of problems over the years and for your friendship.—*Bill Thornton*



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Employee Appreciation Day



Composite photo by Lim Lim

12-18-2013

Postal workers celebrating "Employee Appreciation Day" with a feast at the San Rafael post office on December 18, 2013.

Holiday Bills Stacking Up?



We can help! Lower your monthly payments now by transferring your other credit card balances to our low-rate **VISA Card**.

There is no balance transfer fee, and with a rate as low as **8.49% APR***, you'll begin saving immediately.

Call us, or go to www.ppcu.org for more information and to apply.



Pacific Postal
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www.ppcu.org
800.696.6009

*APR = Annual Percentage Rate. Information provided here, including rates are subject to change without notice. Actual rate offered is dependent on individual credit rating; your rate may be higher. Call us for complete terms and conditions.

Food drive T-shirt contest for May 10 food drive



The wonderful artwork of the 2013 Food Drive 2nd place winner, Reena Hapa



The 2013 Food Drive 3rd place winner, Fiona Mak's great artwork

Children's design a food drive T-shirt contest

The contest is open to children ages 6 through 12 of Branch 214 letter carriers. First place \$150 gift certificate; second place \$100; third place \$50. All entries receive \$10 gift card and T-shirt for participating.

Deadline for submission March 21, 2014 with an attached application. See shop steward.

Artwork should be drawn on 8.5-by-11-inch white paper. Use crayon, color pencils, water colors or paint, but no more than 6 colors. Theme should reflect Letter Carrier Food Drive of Stamping Out Hunger, Giving Back to the Community, Diversity, the Food Bank and should have a "Bay Area" theme.

Further information: Karen Eshabarr or Juan Dominguez at (415) 362-0214.

Winner will be announced at the April 2 branch meeting. Winning artwork will be printed on our 2014 Letter Carrier Food Drive T-shirt. T-shirts may be pre-ordered.

Photo: Ivars Lauersons



The full-time officers being sworn in, from left, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Jun Buccat, newly elected Vice-President Juan Dominguez, Executive Vice-President Karen Eshabarr, and President Lili Beaumont. Secretary-Treasurer Ron Caluag was not present.

OUR BRANCH 214 OFFICERS

The part-time officers being sworn in, from left, newly elected Director of Organization, Norma Leonardo, MBA representative, Mike Callahan, NALC Health Benefits, Franklin Woo, newly elected Safety and Health officer, Alex Munguia, and newly elected Sergeant-at-Arms Charles Gonzalez. Newly elected EEO Officer, Roberta Bojo was not present.



Photo: Ivars Lauersons



Photo: Ivars Lauersons

The newly elected Trustees, from left, Sidney Wong, Cherry Vargas, and Sheila Gardner.

Opinion

Brouhaha at The Voice?

By Bill Thornton

Reprinted from *The Voice*, May/June 2005

When I started to write this article it was to be a response to recent articles/events involving **The Voice**, allegations that the paper was being censored, the nature of **The Voice** would be changed, poor editorial morale, and my desire, I guess like everybody else who writes, to express opinions and see my name in print. But then I noticed some other disturbing phenomena in the course of the story, having to do with allegations of cronyism and tales of unionists failing to treat each other with dignity and respect.



Recently, there has been an increase in same issue responses by a branch officer to respond to *offending articles*. The March/April issue also included an article entitled "... Chief Censor" indicating increased scrutiny of **The Voice** by the branch office. There were issues when the

branch officer took the "opportunity" to respond to an "offending" article in the same issue of the newsletter that that article appeared. This is in direct contradiction to the general criteria to the publication of submitted articles as indicated in a recent article by the Associate Editor.

There were two controversial articles in the November/December issue. One was entitled *Got Friends?* and the other *The Secret Castle*.

What happened in Vegas didn't stay in Vegas

In *Got Friends?* the steward, who very ably initiated and investigated and laid the important groundwork for a large grievance settlement, wrote an article questioning the size of the monetary settlement. A well regarded loved person from the union's business agent's office signed the Pre-arbitration settlement. In the course of the article, this steward brought up some ugliness from an NALC Convention in Las Vegas in the 1980s. The writer/steward named people involved in a shouting match in the Vegas hotel room who currently hold high level national union positions. At issue was a California State Association position that his fellow Branch Officer was interested in but was told that he would NEVER get. That this kind of *cronyism* is present is hardly shocking and the alleged behaviors is neither to those who have had experiences in this organization or any other for that matter. I personally doubt that cronyism entered into the Pre-Arbitration settlement but the steward/writer obviously differs and

the ugliness he was subjected to years earlier certainly did not assuage his concerns.

Years ago I had experienced something similar to the Vegas incident but in a less exciting venue, a Chinese restaurant. At that time there was a Local Joint Steering Committee for the Employee Involvement Process and the National Union had the authority to appoint members.

A person from the Business Agent's office pulled a couple of **Voice** articles from a briefcase and confronted the two prospective members of the committee. Questions were proffered about opinions that had been expressed by the two prospective committee members that were critical of Employee Involvement. I ultimately passed muster and was placed on the committee but the other branch officer was informed that he would NEVER be on the committee. The interrogator was one of the same people referenced in the 1982 incident. But not one of the screamers. In retrospect and after a passage of time, these kinds of incidents take on an absurd and humorous quality.

Does the *Got Friends?* kind of article that lends itself to "fact checking"? Should this article have been in fact checked in terms of what really happened in that hotel room over 20 years ago? Should the people remaining on this planet have been interviewed? How many cocktails were consumed?

In an apparent response to this and other controversial articles involving national officers, the writer in *Chief Censor* wrote "Other times misrepresentations of the actions of regional or national NALC officers cause members to resent and withhold support of these officers that is not deserved."

Secret Castle

Secret Castle was pure shoot from the hip stuff typical of the writer and was critical of the branch office purchase, certainly a subject of interest and relevance to members. The branch officer responded to *Secret Castle* in the same issue and used four plus pages to do so while

There has been a tradition of independence at The Voice.

complaining in a subsequent article, about the crowding out of articles. *Secret Castle* was not a direct personal attack and while containing inaccuracies an immediate response was probably unnecessary. The March/April issue had yet another *offending* article that got a same response from the branch officer. The *offending* article was entitled *Laboring over labor relations* in which the writer/steward described the circumstances by which a grievance he was investigating was eventually handled at Informal A by the branch president. He questioned the handling of the grievance outside normal grievance channels and referred to the acting manager of labor relations as a coward, for not submitting to an interview by him.

The branch officer wrote a same issue response to the article.

Historical Voice

There had been a tradition of independence in **The Voice** and no attempt to squelch criticism of national policy in regards to many subjects including Employee Involvement, the Dispute Resolution Process, expanding the parameters of Article 2. Unfortunately, the writer of the so-called offending article does not have an opportunity to respond to the counterpoint if he/she finds the counterpoint offensive. One episode years ago maybe points up the absurdities in all this. An article, somewhat funny especially after the passage of time and if you have a jaded sense of humor, was written that lambasted

Protect the nature of The Voice and the qualities that have made it an award-winning paper.

an officer for some political views he had espoused, etc. Essentially the article indicated some “communist” tendencies or other and was one of these guilt by association pieces. The paper had been printed before the branch officers became aware of the “offending” article. It was decided that a counterpoint article would be inserted in the already printed copies of the newsletter. The response from the offended officer was physically inserted in about 3000 copies of that issue. I remember disagreeing with the decision to do this but participated nonetheless in the inserting exercise. This was one of those cases where there was a serious personal attack on an individual.

In recent cases—about 5—where a branch officer responded in the same issue, it probably was not necessary for a same issue response even if it was a given that it is sometimes reasonable and necessary. Are we really not talking about fact checking but about articles that offend somebody?

Certainly there should be a realization that the branch has relationships with the National Union and with management and there is always pressure to mitigate any unnecessary ill will. This relates to a reference to “**The Voice**” being “widely read.”

Technology and content

While improvements, technological and otherwise are always appropriate, to change this multiple award winning paper into other than an independent, creative, high spirited voice of the letter carrier and union would be a shame.

This is a fact of life but not one that necessitates measures at **The Voice** unseen in years past despite a

history of iconoclastic articles offensive to some union officers. Previous administrations have withstood such pressure.

There is something disturbing in the use of terms and phrases like “disinformation, grave injustice, damage inflicted, willful disinformation, retaliating against reported injustices that have not occurred . . .” “Many articles are being given serious review before going to print.” “In most incidents, this one included, I have been given the opportunity to publish a counterpoint to the offending article.” Are these Orwellian terms?

“Goebels was in favor of free speech for views he liked. So was Stalin. If you’re really in favor of free speech, then you’re in favor of free speech for precisely the views you despise. Otherwise, you’re not in favor of free speech.” Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 1992.

Facts and opinion

Protect the nature of **The Voice** and the qualities that have made it an award winning paper.

There is no conflict between a newsletter including practical contractual information and one that is also interesting, fun and has a diversity of opinion, etc. within civilized parameters.

Fact check anything of a contractual nature but don’t waste resources on over scrutinizing what are strictly opinion pieces.

Immediate responses in the same issue should be prohibited or strictly limited.

We have people who are hungering to write, feel passionately about issues, and have helped make **The Voice** into what it has become, a vibrant union newsletter consistently acknowledged for its excellence.

Getting along

But the overriding issue may be our treatment of each other. The recent Bush nominee to be representative to the UN came under fire for his treatment of people, and was described as a kiss up/kick down kind of guy. (*SF Chronicle* 04/05/2005) This is in a reference to sucking up to the people with authority above but berating/abusing those below. In cases of abuse, findings indicate that abused people tend towards abuse, and so the conditions for such behavior continue, in families and in organizations.

Not wanting to sound too saccharine, it is nonetheless not exactly the golden rule. People are treated not as we would have them treat us but the way we have been treated.

The union is so much about the biblical admonition of what we “...do for the least of thee...” but it can quickly devolve into such mean spirited activities and a kind of bullying mentality.

Can’t we get along?

More activity at retiree luncheon



Photo: Ron Caluag



Photo: Ron Caluag



Photo: Ron Caluag

Top left: At lunch.

Top right: Holding 35-year membership plaque, Donna Esteban-Lee.

Left: Table at right holds large number of prizes raffled off at luncheon.

Below: Peter Deusch, head of retirees, speaks to retirees.



Photo: Ron Caluag



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VERNON CAPPS, 65 YEARS A MEMBER



Photo: Ron Caluag

Vernon Capps, 65-year member, is second from right in the group. From left, Branch 214 President Lili Beaumont; CSALC Director of Retirees Leroy Collier; Michael Conroy, 50-year member; Vernon Capps; and Retirees Committee Treasurer Steve Crisafi.

NALC BRANCH 214 retirees union membership service awards

At the December 2, 2013 retiree luncheon a number of awards for membership were presented to Branch 214 members. Honored were the following:

25 years – Gildo Lopez, Raymond L. Kwong, Melissa Ma.

30 years – Kevin Tong, Paul Tomanpos, Michael Ng, Alfred Hunter.

35 years – Donna Esteban-Lee, Gary Pacetti, Jerry Curtis, Arnold Asence Jr.

40 years – Jeffery Chung, Franklin Woo.

45 years – Marvin Weisner, Kathleen McConnell, Adolphus Kennedy Jr., Ken Kakiuchi.

50 years – Michael Conroy.

55 years – Edward Lovrin, David Lee, Ronald Tyeskey.

65 years – Vernon Capps.

On behalf of the members of Golden Gate Branch 214, thank you for your many years of support for the NALC and the labor movement as a whole.

The awards were presented by President Lili Beaumont and Secretary-Treasurer Ron Caluag.

—Ron Caluag

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- **Retirees' luncheon photos** —pages 4, 14
- **Local political allies** —page 5
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- **Reprint from 2005** —page 12