



THE VOICE



OF THE GOLDEN GATE LETTER CARRIERS

BRANCH #214

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS, AFL-CIO

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Postal supervisors and unauthorized time clock deletions Beware of postal pickpockets

By Tony Gallardo, President

When I went to the Committee of Presidents meeting in Saint Louis on March 15, I was surprised when my good friend Jerry DePoe reported on the issue of manipulation of time records.

Jerry is the President of Branch 1111, our sister Branch in the Greater East Bay. I was not surprised to find out that Oakland postal managers were manipulating time records, deleting time that letter carriers actually worked, in order to meet their budgets.

Shaving time

I was, however, surprised at just how widespread this practice has become. As President after President went to the microphone, it became clear to me that Oakland was just the tip of a huge and sinister iceberg.

Saint Louis Branch 343 discovered 10,000 hours deleted from time cards. Branch 283, Houston, Texas, reported finding over 2,000 deletions during one 90-day period in 2002. Presidents from Tri-Valley California Branch 2902, Florissant Missouri Branch 4839, and New Jersey Merged Branch 444, all spoke about similar violations.

Letter carriers must keep track of every minute worked and match them with their pay stubs.

Time deletion systemic

Apparently the practice has been occurring for a long time, and is systemic. Timekeepers, back when we had them, were part of a different ethos. Their job security as well as their pride hinged on their honesty and dependability.

When timekeepers were eliminated, their function was transferred to the postal supervisors. Supervisors are constantly pressured to make the numbers. They are expected to move up the food chain by showing that they can

make the carriers work more mail in less time, for less pay.

Fox and the henhouse

Apparently, nobody thought about the fact that putting these expectations on supervisors, and then putting these same supervisors in charge of timekeeping, amounted to a big conflict of interest. This is a good example of hiring the fox to guard the hen house.

So, what are we to do?

First of all, each of us letter carriers *must* write down our hours in a pocket memo book every day. Then we must compare our actual worked hours to the hours listed on our pay check stubs. Straight time hours, overtime

(continued on page 3)

2004 Food Drive Results

San Francisco	72,650 lbs.
Daly City	14,407 lbs.
Redwood City	13,480 lbs.
San Leandro	24,400 lbs.
Sausalito	1,745 lbs.
Bel-Tib	6,405 lbs.
Mill Valley	10,150 lbs.
Corte Madera	6,928 lbs.
San Rafael (Main)	18,417 lbs.
San Rafael (Civic)	7,582 lbs.
San Anselmo	9,300 lbs.
Novato	22,435 lbs.
Total	207,899 lbs.

Special thanks to all those who made the food drive such a great success: Coordinators, carriers, mail handlers, clerks, motor vehicle operators, supervisors and managers. This is the most successful Food Drive in the history of all the years that we have participated!

Branch 214 notes

Reprints

Former Branch 214 President Roland Garshol's article "Tough times don't last but tough people do" (*The Voice*, Jan/Feb 2004) was reprinted in the April 2004 edition of Eighteen and Eight (South Suburban Merged Branch 4016, Flossmoor, IL) and in the May 2004 edition of the Zenith Branch News (Zenith Branch 114 Merged, Duluth, MN).

Mutual exchange wanted

Redwood City, CA full-time regular carrier with 3.5 years seniority desires a mutual exchange with another carrier in Berkeley, Oakland, San Leandro or Hayward. Those interested please contact Dexter Loville, #0148, Route # 312, Redwood City, CA 94063. Tel: (510) 387-0353.

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Tony Gallardo	President
Lili Buencamino Beaumont	Executive Vice-President
Bill Thornton	Vice-President
John Beaumont	Secretary-Treasurer
Ray Fong	Field Director
Carol Maggio	Assistant Secretary-Treasurer
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Cathy Simonson	EEO Officer
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Gerry Lee	Cartoons and Graphics

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Big payoff to carriers as management repeats violation

One hundred forty-eight San Leandro carriers will divide up \$85,700 as a result of a grievance settlement regarding management's improper use of casuals as a year-round work force. This was the second substantial grievance award won in the last three years by San Leandro carriers for the exact same violation. The first was for approximately \$60,000 with an average payoff to each carrier of about \$400. The most recent settlement averages out to about \$570 for each eligible carrier. R.B.

A letter from Mary Deasy, Carrier from Rincon North Station:

I am happy to announce that my daughter, Ryder Diaz, has graduated from the New York University's College of Arts and Sciences. As one of the university's Honors Scholars, Ryder graduated magna cum laude with a double major in Women's Studies and Metropolitan Studies.

Ryder is currently working as an intern this summer at the Sylvia Rivera Law Project (SRLP) in New York City. The SRLP offers legal aid to low-income transgender and gender-variant communities. Ryder plans to travel abroad later next year. I want to thank the Union and my past supervisor, Shirlee Hepburn, for their invaluable support and advice. Ryder was a past winner of a Union Plus scholarship, among other scholarships she received.

Scholarship winner Edward Karuna

Edward Karuna is one of only eight winners of the Saxsenmeier Scholarship in California, and one of only five winners nationwide of the prestigious Doherty Scholarship.

The Doherty Scholarship Program will be paying the university of Edward's choice \$4,000 a year for the next four years.

The Saxsenmeier Scholarship program will be paying out an additional \$1,250.

Edward's parents are Gunananda, Novato letter carrier, and Camiliani Karuna.

T.V. 214 Schedule

SAN FRANCISCO, AT&T Cable Channel 29:
Every third Sunday of the month at 7:00 p.m.
July 18, 2004; August 15, 2004;
September 19, 2004

Gallardo (continued from page 1)

hours and especially penalty overtime hours must be carefully checked on our pay stubs, to make sure that they match the hours that we actually worked.

If you are a shop steward, and you are checking ETC printouts for violations of Article 8 or similar offenses, be on the lookout for entries made by someone with a Social Security number other than the carrier whose hours you are researching. If you see that begin times, end times, or lunch times are being entered in this way, be assured that the social security number in question will turn out to be that of a supervisor or manager.

For every disallowance of time, management is required to fill out a line on a PS Form 1017-A. PS Forms 1017-A are required to be kept for each carrier who has had a time disallowance. These forms are required to be kept by management for 3 years. I am sure that if we ask for these documents, management will not be able to produce them. Legitimate disallowances of time are allowed only when a supervisor observes or has reason to know that an employee did not work while "on the clock".

Without exception, if you are working you must be paid at your appropriate rate, for all the time that you

actually worked. Any time that a supervisor alters your time so that the record falsely shows you not working, when in reality you did work, whether authorized or not, that supervisor is stealing from you. This is a serious violation of your contractual rights, and of your legal rights. Theft is theft. A pickpocket is still a pickpocket even if he wears a tie.

If you are a letter carrier with knowledge of falsification of time and pay records, see your shop steward immediately. If you are a shop steward and you discover or are informed of these falsified time records, contact your branch officer.

Branch officers, when you find these violations in your branch, you should contact your business agents. Be aware. Falsification of time and pay records may turn out to be more rampant than you realize. If you find violations in one office, odds are that they are happening elsewhere in your branch. If you find violations for a certain time period, it is quite probable that the violations have been occurring for some time, and that they will continue into the future. Broaden and deepen your search.

We should never compromise on our right to a fair day's wage for a fair day's work.



Photo courtesy Herb Mitchell

Retirees at Branch 214 Annual Dinner, from left: Steve Saris, Secretary-Treasurer John Beaumont, Noble Phillips, Herb Mitchell, Ron Wong, Ken Shimosaka, Executive Vice President Lili Buencamino Beaumont, David Salsedo, Region 1 RAA Bryant Almario, Jack Baptiste and George Nolley.

Our own reality show

TV 214, 10 down and still punching

By Carl Bryant and Dennis Mackler

Last March Letter Carriers Today TV 214 enjoyed a significant milestone; our tenth anniversary. TV 214 is now more than a decade old. A whole decade of labor media produced by the National Association of Letter Carriers, Branch 214. That's very mind boggling, since I never expected this vision to last this long. The show has gone through transformations and many political situations.

So what changes occurred during all that time?

Well, technically we've gone from using SVHS video to digital video. Next we'll go to digital video disc (DVD). Soon Community Access Channel 29 will go from broadcasting in analog to digital, which means a higher quality broadcast.

What does all this mean to the letter carriers of Branch 214? It means that the letter carriers of Branch 214 are still the most progressive and innovative bunch of letter carriers in the United States because we have the foresight to see that Labor Media is the way to go. We recognized the need to fill the void in the corporate media that either ignores or glosses over the issues that are vital to working people. We have tackled tough issues in depth and exposed our viewers to relevant information. We've given letter carriers a venue to show off their talents, from music to art. We've covered National and State NALC conventions as well as other types of labor and media conferences. Thanks to the support of the branch officers



Photo by Herb Mitchell

TV crew videotaping California State Convention from left, Dennis Mackler, David Mabalatan, Carl Bryant.

and the members, Letter Carriers Today TV 214 has flourished and has inspired other letter carriers to start up their own shows, but we are still the first and longest-running letter carrier TV show in the US. Letter Carriers Today TV 214 has been streamed on the Internet; we've had exposure nationally and internationally.

We are still the first and longest-running letter carrier TV show in the U.S.

We look forward to continuing the vision of innovative and responsive television with all letter carriers of the NALC and especially Branch 214.

Believe it or not, we have always had fun doing this and will continue to have fun doing this! The fun has been the content of Letter Carriers Today TV 214 show and the input and response of letter carriers throughout the United States and especially Branch 214.

Buencamino Beaumont (continued from page 22)

4/2002), it is the supervisor's duty and responsibility to:

6) Notify all carriers that they are to expect daily supervision on the street just as they receive daily supervision in the office.

7) Act promptly to correct improper conditions. A positive attitude must be maintained by the manager at all times.

8) Furthermore, the manager must maintain an objective attitude in conducting street supervision and discharge this duty in an open and above-board manner.

9) The manager is not to spy or use other covert techniques. Any employee infractions are to be handled in accordance with the section in the current National Agreement that deal with these problems.

Purpose is safety, not discipline

In conclusion, safety procedures have been set in place by union and management officials to establish a safer work environment. Carriers should take the time to follow these procedures (at least the ones listed above) in order to avoid committing "unsafe acts". On the flip side, management has an obligation to set a positive tone on safety awareness and procedures for managers conducting above-board safety observations on the street. Management's goals should be to generate hundreds of positive 4584s per accounting period, not negative ones, and their focus should be on "How can we make the carriers feel and believe that we, as the employer, care about their safety?" rather than "Ah-ha! I caught you not wearing your seatbelt! Now I get to issue you discipline!"

Can this be the year?

Postal reform

John Beaumont, Secretary Treasurer

With the Postal Service facing a serious decline in the revenue generated by first-class mail, the only hope we have to preserve universal service to our patrons is the enactment of progressive postal reform. Positive postal reform is also needed to protect the wages and benefits we now enjoy and rely upon. But any postal reform is effective only if it allows the postal service to operate more like a business without many of the restraints it now faces. We need to be able to provide the same services that our current



competitors in the parcel market (i.e. UPS, FedEx, etc.) now have while being allowed to have pricing flexibility for our products when the market dictates it. *However, even more important than allowing the postal service greater flexibility in the open marketplace is the protection of our current collective bargaining provisions.* Any postal reform can only be accepted if it takes into account the workers who process, move, and deliver the mail. Any bill that attacks our collective bargaining process, retirement, or benefits must not come up for a vote.

Postal service 30 years old

It has been over 30 years since the Postal Reorganization Act changed the old Post Office Department to the current United States Postal Service. This change enabled us to successfully provide service to our customers while increasing wages and benefits for all our employees. The major drawback was not being able to prepare for the advent of the electronic revolution. Now, decades later,

The postal service should operate more like a business.

House Government Reform Committee Chairman Tom Davis expects the full House to vote on H.R. 4341 (Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act) in mid to late June. Working together with their counterparts in the House of Representatives the US Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE) have introduced S. 2468. While both these bills are similar in many respects there is still more work to be done before their passage.

What we have

Among other things, H.R. 4341 returns responsibility

for funding the military cost of postal retirees' pensions to the Treasury Department, while freeing \$73 billion in civil service retirement savings that have been held in escrow for the USPS. It also preserves universal service six days a week, and would streamline the agency's rate-setting process which currently can take as long as 18 months. It allows more commercial freedom in the parcel market and, at least at present time, does not contain any detrimental changes to our coveted collective bargaining process. The Senate bill contains many of these same provisions but is still being reviewed by our national legislative department.

What the individual can do

While this truly may be the year for postal reform we must be cautious not to drum up support too soon for passage of this legislation. To make sure that every employee is informed on whether this bill is the right one need-

Fill out the E-Activist form on page 19.

ed to secure the future of the postal service as well as protect our wages, benefits, and collective bargaining rights, the NALC has established the E-Activist program. Every member who fills out and mails in the E-Activist form (on page 19) will be notified, either by e-mail or regular mail, on what provisions are contained in the final draft of this legislation and what action will be needed to protect your future. *Please take a minute to cut out, fill out, and send in this form.*

A personal note

On a personal note, the delegation attending the 50th California State Association of Letter Carriers convention in Palm Springs last month voted to create a full-time position to be filled by the State President. This position will work with our branches and national office to strengthen those political and legislative programs responsible for preserving and protecting the benefits and wages of our membership as well as the future of the postal service. This position will become effective prior to our National Convention in July. Our branch's Assistant Secretary-Treasurer, Carol Maggio, was re-elected by acclamation as the State Secretary, and I was re-elected by acclamation as State President. So I will be stepping down as Branch 214's Secretary-Treasurer to serve full-time as your State President. Since this will be the last article I will be writing as your Secretary-Treasurer, I wanted to take the opportunity to thank the officers I have had the pleasure to serve with both past and present.

In closing, I would like to especially thank all the active and retired members of Branch 214 for your support and friendship over the many years I have had the honor to represent you. Thank you.

My reflections

State Convention— Palm Springs, CA

By Herb Mitchell, Retiree

Just returned from the state convention in Palm Springs, CA. The weather was great and Palm Springs is a beautiful city. It was a historical time for the state association and Branch 214. The delegates voted to establish the first full-time president of the state association in the history of the association. It was also historical that our own John Beaumont was elected as the first full-time state president. Our own Carol Maggio was also reelected as state secretary. Even though it will be a loss to our branch, losing our talented secretary-treasurer, every letter carrier in the state will benefit from the legislative and educational knowledge and hard work that I am sure John Beaumont will provide. We congratulate you, John and Carol.

As usual, one of our branch resolutions from our TV-214 team suffered from the 214 backlash when a national officer rose to complain about certain types of resolutions. I feel it was a very good resolution that would have passed had it not been for the timing of our national officer's complaint. Our new national president, Bill Young, addressed the delegates on the second day. He helped to clear debate over canceled route checks, and brought us up to date on postal reform. Bill reported that a lot of the issues that the NALC was concerned about are being included in the bill but we must still be aware as postal reform moves through Congress. He urged us to become members of the NALC E-Activist network and be prepared to inform our members about our desires. Bill also asked that all our members sign up for payroll deduction for COLCPE to help the NALC lobby Congress to back



Photo by Ivars Lauersons

Herb Mitchell, left, President Branch 214, Tony Gallardo, Executive Vice-President, Lili Beaumont at State Convention

our concerns. As usual, I was very proud to represent Branch 214 at the convention and look forward to the national convention in Honolulu in July.

Other reflections

Even though I have recently retired, I still prefer to be involved and informed about what is happening in the postal service and our union. I plan to still attend meetings and conventions. I would love to see more of our members become involved in what is going on in our union. I have always said that a small portion of our

Bill Young spoke on the status of postal reform legislation.

branch makes branch policy because only a small portion of our members attend branch meetings where policy is made. In a branch that has up to 1,200 members, only 30 to 40 people attend conventions. More people should be interested in how our union is run. It is an awesome feeling to walk into a convention center and see 9,000 to 10,000 delegates gathered to make policy on how the union is run and mandate what is to be negotiated in our contract. Plus you get to visit different cities in our state and nation. Become involved, be informed, and help make decisions.

More reflections

Postal reform moving through Congress, mail volume falling, new dispute resolution process, postal service automation—every letter carrier should realize that the job and the service is changing. The NALC is working hard to retain letter carrier positions and ensure that letter carriers are treated with respect on the workroom floor but it is each and every carrier on the workroom floor who will help to determine the future. Even though volume is falling, the amount of deliveries is increasing. Be it DOIS, handheld computers, linear measurement, only the letter carrier knows how long it takes to do his or her route on a daily basis. Carriers have recourse to the 3996 to request what is needed to complete his route. All carriers must be professional on our jobs on a daily basis. That makes it easier for the union to protect our jobs as change evolves. Letter carriers must understand that the job will change as the postal service changes. Be prepared.

Last reflections

In April 1969, I was hired as a letter carrier. Even though I am retired after 35 years, I will always be a letter carrier and NALC member. I will never forget my roots and will always support letter carriers, the NALC and the postal service. All letter carriers should become involved with their union, support their union (COLCPE / E-Activist) and be united against threats to your livelihood. SOLIDARITY FOREVER!



Photo by Tammy Kallen

Delegates to California State Convention, 2004, Palm Springs, California



Photos by Herb Mitchell and Ivars Laursons

State convention delegates picketing downtown Indian-owned casino and spa, demanding health care and freedom from harassment. State labor laws do not automatically apply to Indian-owned businesses.



Photo Branch 214 Archives

Doretha Taylor, left, of Daly City, accepts a check for \$1,000 from State President John Beaumont as Alternate Steward Kristina Solomon (center) looks on. The \$1,000 was the first prize in the COLCPE raffle held at the State Convention in Palm Springs.

IN MEMORIAM

Leta Bustillos (Active Letter Carrier)
 Michael Cummings
 Damita Daniels (Active Letter Carrier)
 John Razel (Active Letter Carrier)
 Lun Y. Young

Wake-up call

The case for paid maternity leave

By Vicki Sawicki, EPC

This is a call to arms. A call to all moms, present and future. Dads—we need your help too! For you see, girls/women/moms and infants are being discriminated against. And the sad thing is they are unaware of how they are being discriminated against and treated badly.

Paid maternity leave is a human rights issue. In order for women to care for their infants and breast-feed if they choose, they need a choice, a real choice to stay home or return to work. Without paid maternity leave, there is no choice.



WHO recommendations

The World Health Organization recommends that women breast-feed for two years. Yes! Two years. Women have a right to breast-feed and infants have a right to be breast-fed.

Benefits of breast-feeding include:

1. Developing the neurological system (develops the brain too, so if you want smart babies—breast-feed.);
2. Building the immune system;
3. Developing the muscles of the face;
4. Psychological benefits derived from the bond between mom and infant;
5. Recent studies indicate that breast milk may contain anti-carcinogenic properties;
6. Breast milk is one of the most nutritious foods for babies on the planet.

Benefits for moms include:

1. Breast-feeding is the most essential maternal function;
2. Reduces the risk of breast cancer. If a woman breast-feeds for one year, her risk of breast cancer is reduced by 4% to 7%; and if she breast-feeds for two years, her risk is reduced up to 14%.

Women in the United States do not have a choice. Why?

1. Most working-class women cannot afford to stay home and care for their infants—PAID MATERNITY LEAVE IS NOT AVAILABLE IN THE U.S.
2. Most work places do not have adequate facilities for women to nurse/express their milk. (Eighty countries have laws guaranteeing nursing breaks.)

The real tragedy lies in the facts. According to United Nations statistics, the U.S. has the distinct honor of joining five other countries: in that all six DO NOT OFFER PAID MATERNITY LEAVE. The six countries on the planet that do not offer paid maternity leave are: Swaziland, Papua New Guinea, Lesotho, New Zealand, Australia and the good 'ole United States.

Examples of countries that offer paid maternity leave:

1. Cameroon	14 weeks	100% coverage
2. Gabon	14 weeks	100% coverage
3. Kenya	2 months	100% coverage
4. Costa Rica	4 months	100% coverage
5. Mexico	12 weeks	100% coverage
6. Chile	18 weeks	100% coverage
7. Jordan	10 weeks	100% coverage
8. Iraq (pre-war)	62 days	100% coverage
9. Denmark	18 weeks	100% coverage
10. United States	3 months (unpaid)	0% coverage, and only if you work at a site with 50 or more employees, then you are covered under the Family Medical Leave Act.

Shame on us

In Sudan, Cameroon and Nepal, it is mandatory for a woman to receive her salary or wages while she is caring for her newborn.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) adopted its first global standards in 1919 to protect working women who become pregnant. In 1952, the standard was

Women have a right to paid maternity leave.

strengthened with a call for a minimum of 12 weeks of leave with full health insurance and pay pegged at a certain rate. The United States has not adopted this international standard.

America lags

So why do American women lag behind the rest of the world? Why do we not have paid maternity leave? Who is even discussing the issue? The United States has the highest incidence of breast cancer in the world and the lowest rate of breast-feeding in the world. Could there be a connection?

Quality care for the infant as he/she begins their journey into the world is the ultimate “family value”. Let’s call on the unions to lead the fight for paid maternity leave. For the sake of our children, for the sake of our moms and ultimately for the sake of our communities, let’s absolutely, without hesitation, demand paid maternity leave.

A new ad

Finding the union label

By Tony Gallardo, President

My maternal grandmother was a member of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU). She and her union sisters were active in their own struggle for decent wages, hours and working conditions. I grew up listening to her talk about the terrible working conditions in the garment factories of Patterson, New Jersey in the 1930s, and what the union did to change that.

When she and her union sisters retired in the late 1960s and early 1970s, they had decent pensions. Most owned modest houses, with nice back yards. Growing up, I remember going to many of their homes to mow their lawns. Most of these women still spoke with pride of their struggle, mostly in their native Italian. Their American dream had been realized through their union struggle.

My grandmother was Spanish, but her second language was Italian, learned at the sewing machine, talking with her union sisters.

Where is the union label?

How things have changed. Shopping in this modern age has become a nightmare of conscience. Where is the union label? Who did this company exploit to get me this shirt or pair of pants? Up until recently I was usually filled with dread when I was forced to go shopping for clothes, usually after I put my hand through a new rip in a threadbare shirt.

Of course, finding the union label is easy when you are purchasing postal uniforms. But until recently, shopping for "civilian" clothes was frustrating. Looking for the union label had never been so hard.

Recently I noticed an advertisement in "The Nation" magazine. Justiceclothing.com is a web site selling only union-made and sweatshop-free clothing. I purchased some clothing and was very pleased. Even better, the clothes were delivered to me by Priority Mail. This is the default choice on the web site.

I wrote a letter to the company and asked them to advertise in **The Voice**. Co-owner Eric Odier-Fink took me up on my offer. It turns out that his mother-in-law is a letter carrier, and a member of the NALC.

This month, **The Voice** is proud to carry an ad for Justice Clothing. I urge you to support UNITE (the successor to the ILGWU), and look for the union label. If you want to buy union-made clothes and save your own letter carrier jobs as well, then I suggest you shop at justiceclothing.com.



Take Your Child to Work Day 2004 in San Rafael. Alex Nimer, son of shop steward Darwin Nimer (right).



Photos courtesy Sheila Gardner

Shop Steward Sheila Gardner, left, Bianca Bryant, daughter of Lloyd Bryant, Patty Gutierrez, and her niece, Felicia Lewis-Dare.

Stand up for choice

March for women's rights, April 25, 2004

By Lynda Beigel, Retiree

We were there, **the 750,000 who said we were coming**—riding 20 hours on buses from Minnesota and 12 hours on planes from Alaska, with fellow students from universities in Central Florida and from synagogues in New York, health care workers from Africa and the Indian sub-continent. And the rest of us, **an additional 350,000 also came to bear witness for fear no one else would come**—with our children and grandchildren and parents, those who came to the first two rallies in Wash-



ington and those who have never been to Washington; we were there for our children and grandchildren and our relatives, friends, and neighbors who did not realize it was the event of a generation. We saw the signs of the radical right and realized they are very few. Ladies, WE ARE THE MAJORITY!

We were counted

We Stood Up for Choice and were counted in the hundreds of thousands (oh, yes, every one of us was counted and wore a little green sticker to prove ours was the largest event on the Mall, ever) from Texas and California, Catholics for Choice and atheists, joiners and solitary types, Heather who grew up in Bolinas and says “hi” to

everyone there, and I who wore my old Ventura County NOW T-shirt. **And we want you to Remember in November.**

Although the instigating sponsors were Planned Parenthood (“Stand Up for Choice”), NARAL (“It’s Your Choice, Not Theirs”), NOW, Ms. Magazine (“This Is What a Feminist Looks Like”), and others we would expect like the ACLU, there were surprises as well: conservatives like former Secretary of State Madelyn Albright and Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher stood in the front lines. Everyone brought their daughters... and my son brought me! The Log Cabin Republicans were there and so were the Socialists; the Sierra Club was there and so was CLUW (The Coalition of Labor Union Women). We were so united that it was difficult to choose the point in the march we felt most at home, and eventually we all merged together in one great mass of humanity. It is the battle of our lifetimes, not just for women’s health and abortion rights, but for our planet, its present and its future.

“Kirche, Kinder und Küche”: “Church, Children and Kitchen”

We want you to Register to Vote NOW. Be there at the polls. And if we lose to the Right Wing of the Republican Party—to the Oil’igarchs and their children who think governing is their privilege and not the population’s right; to the batterers and pedophiles who wear a ministerial pose; to those foolish enough to believe young adults will remember to abstain at emotional moments; to those *destroying Public Education while sending their children to elite institutions where teachers are underpaid*; to those who do not realize that the country as well as the remainder of the world is being overpopulated by

(continued on page 11)



Photo by Lynda Beigel

Part of the over million strong crowd marching in Washington, D.C.



Photo by Danny Armstrong

Maureen O'Brien retiring as carrier at San Leandro Post Office, June 2004.

Beigel (continued from page 10)

developers who would deny a decent standard of living to everyone but themselves and truly believe they can live in forested splendor so long as they keep everyone else enslaved, barefoot, and pregnant—we shall know there is no longer such an institution as the free and democratic election in this country.

The math of the election

We were there: one in every three hundred Americans, and all of us represented at least twenty who could not attend. That's 15% of America; all we need is another 15% who vote to Take Back the Night and the Day as well. WE CANNOT GO BACK to the Nazis' motto for women—we must renew the fight to go forward. We have seen the face of fascism and we are ready to Stand Up for Choice. There is no other path left.

And to those who say ours is "only a women's issue" and to those who say we are anti-religion, I point out what is happening in this country to our children in public schools and the National Guard. Would a child of privilege like Jenna Bush be disciplined for drawing a political cartoon as one was in Washington state in May? Did Michelle Witmer of Wisconsin sign up for health and pension benefits—or to make hers a Gold Star mother? To paraphrase Lutheran Pastor Niemueller who died in a Nazi concentration camp, "*First they came for the trade unionists and I said nothing, then they came for the Communists and I was silent, then they came for the Jews and I did nothing, and when they came for me, there was nobody left to come to my defense.*"

To stand up for choice is to stand up for freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from fear. No more coat hangers, no more fascism. **Never again.**



Photo courtesy Ray Fong files

Maureen as member of professional roller derby team, "Bay Bombers," San Francisco. Roller derby was a popular televised sport in the 1960's and 1970's.

Branch 214 Meetings

Branch meetings, 7:00 P.M.

- July 7, 2004 ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
- August 4, 2004 ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
- September 1, 2004 ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF

Steward meetings, 6:00 P.M.

- July 7, 2004 ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
- August 4, 2004 ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
- September 1, 2004 ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF

Retiree social meeting, 12:30 P.M.

- August 2, 2004 2310 Mason St. 4th Floor, SF
- October 4, 2004 2310 Mason St. 4th Floor, SF
- December 6, 2004 2310 Mason St. 4th Floor, SF

More sense, less sensibility

The Scarecrow and the Tin Man

By Juliette Chen, Associate Editor

When I first came to this country, I remember passing by a puzzling sign in rural Pennsylvania. “SHOCKS FOR LESS,” I read out loud, then turned to ask my husband, “What does that mean?” I pictured someone emerging from electro-shock therapy, a tad wobbly, with wisps of smoke curling from singed hair, but looking perfectly satisfied.

Having been in the U.S. for 12 years now, I would amend that sign to read: “SHOCKS FOR FREE”. After all these years, I’m still in a state of culture shock. The perspective that I bring to my new country is that of a first-generation immigrant, and it’s second nature for people like me to compare American culture with cultures that they left behind. I’m not so blinded by homesickness that I can’t see the flaws in my native cultures, but I know (and many Americans, immigrant and American-born, will agree with me) that American society has a lot of room for improvement.



Looking into the fish bowl

Mainstream America doesn’t often hear from people like me; after all, I belong to the so-called “model minority” that works hard and keeps quiet. Well, one of the reasons we keep quiet is because many first-generation immigrants speak English poorly, and secondly, where we hail from, the nail that sticks out gets hammered in. Speaking up can land you in jail, or worse. But if you can communicate with many of my fellow immigrants, you will find that they share many of my views and concerns. I don’t intend to keep quiet like so many newcomers, however, because I’ve learned the hard way that here, the nail that doesn’t stick out will just get railroaded. In spite of its vaunted diversity, and all the politically correct blarney about celebrating it, America is a very insular, navel-gazing, fractured culture. You could use more commentators with an outsider’s perspective.

A more intelligent species

The more time I spend with my pit bull, Pogo, the more convinced I am that dogs are much more intelligent—emotionally—than human beings. In return for food and shelter, a dog will love and protect you whole-heartedly, whether you’re rich or poor, stupid or bright, ugly or beautiful. So dogs instinctively understand and practice the virtue of grat-

itude; how many people you know are capable of that? A dog will accept us as members of his pack, even if, from his point of view, we’re odd-looking mutants that walk on two legs. Seemingly, dogs are capable of reading intentions; either another creature shares common ground, or it doesn’t, in which case it’s considered a foe.

Searching for common ground

Sure, human beings form packs too, but it’s usually insecurity or fear that motivates the forming of human alliances. And we tend to base our alliances on the most superficial features that we share: skin color, language, politics, religion, sexual orientation. When your connections are this tenuous, it doesn’t take much for fractures to appear. Say you put twins in a room. Both are completely identical except that one has a mole and the other one doesn’t. Already this sets up a potential for discrimination by one against the other. Our tendency to look for and emphasize differences, rather than commonality, in a society as diverse as ours, doesn’t bode well for our future. These days, who doesn’t belong to a minority? Marooned on our respective islands, we nurture within our tribes a sense of victimhood as well as of entitlement, justified or otherwise.

We’re all racists

Within our enclaves, our tolerance for diversity is extremely limited. Regardless of our ethnic background or beliefs, we’re all racists. It’s human nature to discriminate; it’s how we can tell someone is different from us. I recall a liberal Caucasian friend who was shocked when I told her that white people are not the only racists around. Asians, African-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans—all racists, every last one of us. Like many white liberals, my friend believed that she was not a racist because of her knee-jerk impulse to defend everyone who was not white. She was blissfully unaware that, instead of defending people, she was defending racial stereotypes, and in my book, that made her as much of a racist as your garden-variety neo-Nazi. Besides, you would not see yourself as a defender unless you were coming from a position of moral superiority, and hence your defense, no matter how well intentioned, will be compromised by condescension towards the people you defend.

Once we admit that racism is latent in all of us, then we can move forward. Your average racist is someone who cannot get beyond the stage of reacting against the *superficially* unfamiliar, and who, out of fear, sticks to others who share *superficial* similarities. The important, and most difficult step, is going beyond the merely superficial to find common ground in core values. To use a current example: I think the conservatives in this country are making a big mistake when they oppose gay marriage. For many of us, the word “gay” conjures up images of

(continued on page 13)

Chen (continued from page 12)

drag queens and outré exhibitionists, and we overlook the fact that there are many gays who just want to lead quiet, normal lives with their families.

On the one hand, because of the AIDS crisis, political leaders encourage the gay community to practice safe sex and refrain from promiscuity but offer no viable alternatives to gays who follow that advice. Once large numbers of gays show that they want to be monogamous and partake of those family values that conservatives are always prattling on about, they get the door slammed in their faces. It's as if the conservatives are saying: "We are very disturbed that some gay people actually follow our advice

A very insular, navel-gazing, fractured culture.

and want to emulate us. We miss the good old days when all gays slept around, dressed in drag and acted like drama queens." Conservatives, by siding with the lunatic fringes of the far right, miss out on snagging a very desirable demographic: many of the gays agitating for gay marriage are well-educated, politically savvy professionals with traditional beliefs in hard work and family. They also have deep pockets and money to burn for the political party that will accept them.

Don't get me started

Lest anyone accuses me of being left-wing, let me state that American liberals have been as culpable as the conservatives in bringing us to our cultural morass—and all achieved within one generation. Far too many liberals are still firmly stuck in the time warp of the 60s, and many of them behave as if they are still rebelling against their parents, even as they are raising their own crop of children and grandchildren. Well, the same people that the Baby Boomers rebelled against are now hailed as the Greatest Generation—the same anally retentive stuffed shirts who did the right thing without complaint when they were called upon to do so. We sneered at them for their moderation and self-restraint; we did our best to erase the self-imposed lines and boundaries that they would not cross. Now those lines are gone, perhaps forever, and we're paying dearly for their absence. You and I are living the flower child's dream of freedom without limits, but it feels more like a nightmare to me. There is always a price to pay for revolution: when you sweep out the old order, you don't necessarily replace it with a more effective regime. And revolution means that every generation has to re-invent the wheel, and start out at square one—it's a terrible waste of energy, resources and time. And the upshot of the 60s' revolution? A generation that is ignorant, selfish, and brutish—spoiled by liberal cod-

dling, and impoverished by conservative greed. We've produced citizens who are too stupid and apathetic for democracy.

So, having said all that, *where does she stand?* you might ask about me. I still haven't made my stand; I'm still firmly perched on the fence, watching the Tin Man (who desperately needs a heart, as well as an inexhaustible supply of oil) duke it out with the Scarecrow (who needs a brain, as well as some much-needed stuffing to give him substance). Like many people in our cynical age, I'm commitment-phobic; I will take sides on specific issues but I refuse to subscribe to an ideology. You don't have to look far to find some country that has been wrecked by unquestioning allegiance to ideology. When ideology takes on the aspects of religion, it becomes indistinguishable from idolatry. When people stop thinking, and stop asking awkward questions, then it doesn't take much for ideology to become "idiotology".

Each life is important

The cost of war

By Bob Yragui, Retiree

"Where do we have the right to kill our fellow human beings, or let them be killed?"

—Albert Camus

This is the moral reasoning of Raskolnikov in Dostoyevsky's "Crime and Punishment". In invoking the lesser-than-two-evils argument to justify his killing of an old pawnbroker and stealing her money, Raskolnikov kills her, takes her money, and dedicates it to serving mankind, to the general welfare.

Well, isn't that petty little crime effaced by a multitude of good deeds? For one life, thousands of lives saved from ruin and collapse. One death and a hundred lives. Isn't that such marvelous arithmetic? In return for just a few thousand dead Iraqis, and freedom for 25 million. Isn't that equitable?

What this clever argument ignores is that the benefits of war do not outweigh the cost, and that to kill even one innocent person to benefit others is a fundamental violation of the most basic human right: the right to live. This is the basic, fundamental, inalienable right enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. "Life is the immediate gift of God, a right inherent by nature in every individual," William Blackstone so wrote in his 18th century "Commentaries of the Lords of England", one of the leading sources of American civil liberties.

Labor needs to take a clear, fighting stand against Bush's endless war and the occupation of Iraq—five points

By Dave Welsh, Retiree

1. Since September 11, 2001, we have seen a relentless new assault on working people—from employers and from the government acting on their behalf—using the so-called “war on terrorism” and “national security” as a cover:

- Invoking the anti-labor Taft-Hartley Law (and threats to militarize the ports) against West Coast dock workers during an employer lockout.
- Attacks on the job security and union rights of 170,000 federal workers... Promises to contract out hundreds of thousands of federal jobs... Threats to collective bargaining in the postal service... Racist firings of experienced airport screeners.
- Threats to curtail the right to strike and organize. Government spokespersons have referred to union actions defending our jobs, working conditions, civil liberties and living standards as akin to “aiding and abetting terrorists” or “a threat to national security”.
- Spending the workers' tax dollars on war, while millions lose their jobs, and threats to dismantle or privatize national treasures like the Post Office, Medicare and Social Security.



2. With US bases in 130 countries, and combat troops in Afghanistan, Haiti, Colombia, and the Philippines, as well as occupied Iraq, the Endless War has become the main engine for the repression of labor. The Pentagon and CIA get a blank check to spend and spend. And where do they get the money? By rolling back the gains workers have won since the 1930s, including collective bargaining itself, and by cutting back desperately needed programs championed by the labor movement like welfare and unemployment insurance, and by piling up a huge debt that future generations of workers will have to pay back.

3. In order to wage a strong fight-back, labor needs to stake out a clear stance against Bush's wars and occupations. The anti-war and anti-globalization movements are our strategic allies. We need them if we want to defeat the assault on labor and move to the offensive. We got a glimpse of the potential power of this combination

during the 1999 showdown in Seattle, when a march of 50,000 union workers and militant street protests threw the bosses' World Trade Organization into disarray.

4. Opposing the US war on the Iraqi people [and their attacks or threats to other small sovereign countries around the globe] fits hand in glove with labor's defense of working people here. Wasting billions on the war translates into cutbacks of essential and job-producing social programs for education, health care, social security, child care and housing.

5. The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. embodied the coming together of the labor, anti-war and civil rights movements during the tremendous mass upsurge of the 1960s. We need to revive this powerful combination of the people's forces to defeat the US government's “war on the world” and the racism that underlies it and that it promotes.

The Million Worker March on Washington next October 16th — initiated by the San Francisco dock workers union (ILWU) and endorsed by many including the California State Association of Letter Carriers — is a chance to unite these forces and begin the resurrection of the labor movement.

IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL OF ALL US & ALLIED FORCES FROM IRAQ

Whereas, the US, British and all colonial occupying forces must leave Iraq, without preconditions. It is the brutal US/UN sanctions and US war that are the primary reasons Iraq went in 13 years from being a comparatively prosperous and modern society that provided for the basic needs of its people, to an impoverished country wracked by sanctions and war. Their immediate departure must be our unambiguous demand;

Whereas, the Occupation forces are the main source of the problem, and cannot be part of the solution. Only when the foreign occupiers are gone will Iraq be in a position to rebuild its society as a sovereign and independent nation. The people in Iraq want the US occupation to end, and the US soldiers in Iraq want to come home;

Whereas, during the Vietnam War the San Francisco Labor Council, along with the mainstream of the anti-war movement, raised the unambiguous demand, “Out Now” and “Bring the Troops Home Now”;

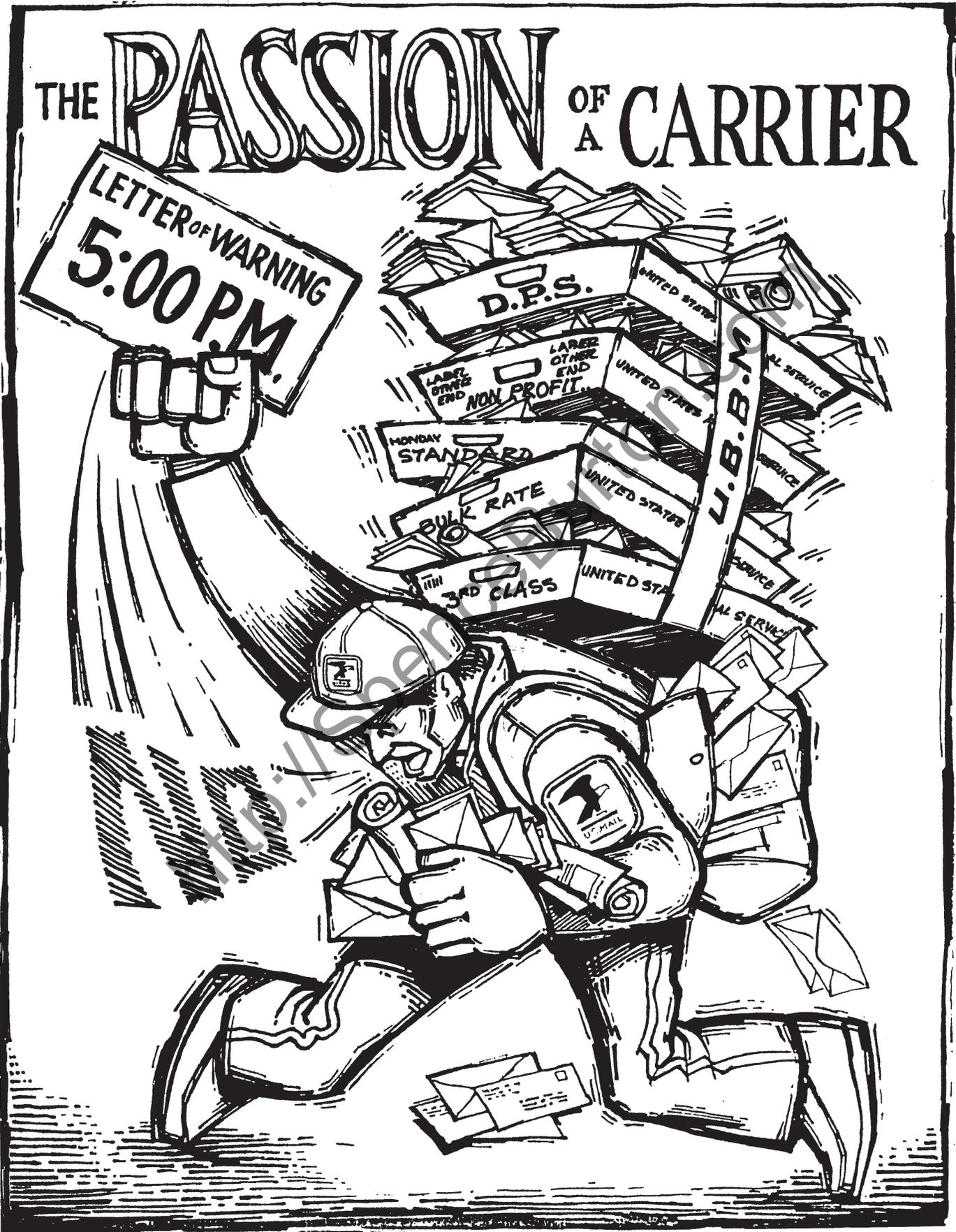
Whereas, Veterans for Peace, at their recent national convention in San Francisco, adopted three resolutions calling for immediate withdrawal of all occupation forces from Iraq, and this is also the demand raised by leaders of the rapidly growing movement of Military Families who are speaking out against the war and occupation;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the San Francisco Labor Council, AFL-CIO, reaffirms our commitment to building a movement for immediate withdrawal of all US and allied forces from Iraq.

—Adopted unanimously 9/22/2003 by the San Francisco Labor Council

THE PASSION OF A CARRIER

LETTER OF WARNING
5:00 PM



DPS

Why do we still have problems after all these years?

By Spence F. Burton, NALC DPS Coordinator San Francisco District
DPS@spenceburton.com

Over the last few years, since I took over this job from my predecessor, John McNees, I have learned much about DPS. While I will not go into specific examples in this article, I will cover what I have observed to be some of the more common problems and good things about DPS in general; what caused some of these problems and how to fix a few of them. This article is written with a hope that it will help others solve some of the problems with DPS that have been written about so often in the "Postal Record" and other branch publications. While



DPS is here to stay, I have always looked at my job as trying to get DPS to work as best as possible for us all! DPS mail that is not sorted accurately or swept properly from DBCS machines is an ongoing problem, but one that can be fixed if monitored regularly.

Commitment to accuracy

In our district, I believe we have been fortunate to have a commitment to have DPS mail worked accurately and consistently. Most of my time has been dedicated to this end. I don't mean to imply all things are perfect, but from reading accounts of DPS problems back East and hearing from people in other districts, we are much better off than many of the other districts around the country. Most offices and stewards know to contact me, or my management partner, if their DPS mail is consistently sorting improperly. While there are only the two of us, my

DPS works worst in big city downtowns with foot routes and relays.

management partner and I try to get back to every unit that contacts us with a problem. Some we can fix right away (like an apartment house that no longer comes sorted in apartment order), and others may take more time (possibly reviewing the actual DPS mail for accuracy as it comes off the actual DBCS machine prior to being dispatched to the unit). Other problems I realize we may never fix; for example, mail addressed to a business where the mailers refuse

to add the correct suite number. DPS problems are far more pronounced in older portions of cities, where it is not uncommon to find addresses like: 407½ Mission St. 3rd Floor Apt. 307G. Addresses like this one can cause a DBCS machine to have heart murmurs!

Works best in residential areas, worst in city downtowns

DPS seems to work best in a residential environment with curblines delivery. It seems to work the worst in big city downtown areas with foot routes and relays, where a DPS percentage of 30-50% can be found in some cases. Casing 50% to 70% of your letter mail in a single bundle case setup just doesn't seem too efficient! Maybe if we

In our district DPS mail is worked accurately and consistently.

had powered "Lazy Susans" to rotate between the cases rather than to keep twisting 180 degrees or more it might make some sense. Only kidding!

One major problem that surfaced about two years ago was the implementation of EES/WINSSI or an updated Station Input system. No longer could individual units control what routes would be on HiRise sortation (apartments and suites placed in exact delivery order); this was now a district function. Two problems immediately arose:

1. In some districts around the country nobody at the district level was assigned to take care of the upkeep of the system. As a result...
2. Whenever a new apartment or suite was added to an existing building that was on HiRise (*see above*), the entire section that the new apartment was added to would now be "mixed up" in DPS. Maybe not a problem if you are standing in front of an NDCBU or apartment gangbox, but what if you were delivering "door to door" and had to keep going back and forth or try to finger 10 apartments or suites at a time. Someone at each district level needs to constantly monitor all such additions; if not, we all get frustrated and the USPS wastes additional money handling and/or delaying this kind of mail. In our district we try to do the best we can to make sure we don't have this problem, but everyday I find more examples.

Well over a year ago, I started pressing to find a better solution, rather than a constant manual review of all new deliveries in our district. I am happy to say that within the next few months an automated system should be rolled out from headquarters to correct this problem, but this took almost two years to fix!

If you believe your route is on DPS HiRise sortation,

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Burton (continued from page 16)

and all of a sudden your apartments or suites no longer come in accurate delivery order, give me a call or have your steward contact me.

Business routes

One of the most common questions I am asked is "I have a business route, can't I have these business deliveries held out of DPS?" **Short answer: No!** In most cases we can find a way to sort your business deliveries accurately, albeit never perfectly! Remember your DPS training when DPS first started...you can expect to find up to 10 pieces per tray that are errors. In recent years, very few routes that I have reviewed get that many errors, but we still get more than I would like. The problems with business deliveries usually stem from the fact that customers don't address mail to the businesses correctly OR businesses move around in a single building. Doctors always seem to keep moving around in their medical buildings. These businesses need to file Change of Address forms just like any other postal patron. Mail for these COAs need to be sent through CFS, so that the addresses can be corrected and mailers notified of the correct addresses.

If you are delivering businesses "door to door" in a large building rather than to a central delivery point, we can take that mail that "does not" have a suite number on it (or cannot be properly sorted/read by our DBCS machines) out of the DPS mailstream for you to sort in

When problems arise, we try to get back to that carrier right away.

the morning at your case. Not all the mail for the building, just the mail that cannot be read by our machines! You need to inform your supervisor, DPS station input person, and/or me if this problem exists on your route. We need to verify that all requests meet area and district guidelines prior to removing this mail from DPS. The AMS codes must match and support any claim that a particular address is "door to door" delivery.

Station inputs

One of the least understood parts of DPS sortation is the EES/WINSSI or Station Inputs that should be done in your unit everyday. In our area and district there are strict guidelines, forms and requirements that inputs be done. Inputs that should be entered are:

1. COAs or Change of Address;
2. Holds or Temporarily Away on Vacation requests;
3. Window Callers or Truck Drops;
4. Non-Delivery Days, when a business is closed on the same day each week and has requested to not

have delivery on that day (usually they don't have a mail box).

It makes no sense at all to have these types of mail in your DPS. It is not efficient to bring all this mail out to the street and then return with it all later that day.

DPS percentage

Some offices are under the impression that if they don't have any COAs entered, and that mail is not held out of DPS with a Station Input, then their DPS percentage will increase and their superiors will be happy! Oooops, not true! The opposite will occur. If a unit fails to input COAs, and the average carrier brings back a ¼ foot of markups each day in a 40-route office, that mail is supposed to be left on the carrier ledge or throwback case for handling the next morning (unless of course there was undertime in the afternoon). That 10 feet of mail, markups brought back each day, must be counted the following morning as CCL or Carrier Cased Letters, thereby reducing the DPS percentage for that unit! Many offices understand this, but others still remain clueless.

In future articles I hope to address some other DPS issues that we all face. I will continue to do my best to make DPS as accurate as possible, in all the offices in our district. I depend on each and every one of you in our district to keep me posted on specific DPS problems in your units or on your route. If you have a DPS problem, let me know about it, and please be as specific as possible when describing it.

Four WLCA awards winners

The Voice won four awards in the 2004 Western Labor Communications Association Journalism Contest. The awards were presented in Los Angeles in June 2004 by WLCA President Rob Weinstein for performance in the calendar year of 2003.

A first place went to cartoonist **Ed Cuadra** for his cartoon on sexual harassment.

Audrey Davis won first place for Best Series, writing on privatization in the postal service.

John Beaumont won second place for a photo documenting the unveiling of the stamp honoring labor leader Cesar Chavez.

And Associate Editor **Juliette Chen** won an honorable mention for Best Column/Editorial for her article on women's rights.

The Voice competed in the category of Newsletter/Magazine (Print) against other labor publications in the western United States.



Photo by Sheila Gardner

Two carriers retiring at San Rafael, George Phelan (left), Postmaster Howard White offering words of praise, and carrier Rich Hazelhurst.

If you must leave

Working toward retirement

By Daniel SooHoo, Career Part-Time Regular
Collections Service

Correction:

In the March/April 2004 issue of **The Voice**, I stated that you must be enrolled with the same health care provider for the last five years. I stand corrected. It should be "enrolled with the *Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan (FEHB)* for the last five years". I want to say "thanks" to Franklin H. Woo, Branch 214 NALC Health Benefits Officer, and Tony Gallardo, Branch 214 President, for the correction.

National Convention 2004—



Aloha! Welcome to the NALC National Convention. I have been providing members of Golden Gate Branch Local 214 with a series of informative articles on retirement. To summarize, I have been planning my retirement for six years and I will be eligible in 18 months. I am planning to supplement my annuity with investment in U.S. Savings Bond and Thrift Savings Plan through payroll deduction. I am planning to continue to work on things I enjoy on a part-time base when I retire.

Thrift Savings Plan through payroll deduction. I am planning to continue to work on things I enjoy on a part-time base when I retire.

Next planning move: September pre-retirement seminar for the San Francisco section

I was told to attend a pre-retirement seminar at least three years from retirement. You would have to *register* to attend the seminar. The office of Personnel and Record of the Postal Service will provide a print-out of your record of employment of service time and other information to help you estimate your retirement benefits. The print-out will be passed out at the seminar. Even if you are eligible and not planning to retire, register and attend the seminar to get the print-out. The print-out has information that you might need if you change your mind. 'Til the next article...!

Note:

At the National Convention 2002—Philadelphia, I met a brother delegate named Ed—Local unknown. I still have the "Super Bowl XXXV" \$5 chip from Las Vegas. Please contact me at dj2kk@yahoo.com. **Enjoy and have fun** in Hawaii to all the delegates.



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Address:

City: State: Zip:

Home: - - Cell: - -

Email: @ Check if Auxiliary member:

Congressional District: - NALC Branch #:

Social Security No. (optional but helpful): - -

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A fair share for fair pay

Why COLCPE? Why me?

By Pete Hensel, Corte Madera

To the average letter carrier, the world of political lobbying and Washington insider politics can seem pretty far away. Yet, as postal reform discussions in Congress proceed on track, we can ignore this important forum only at our peril. More than merely the Postal Service's ability to set flexible rates and expand services is under discussion. Indirectly, salaries and benefits for postal workers also have been placed on the table. How so?

Postal reform legislation is moving through Congress as of this writing.

Postal reform process

In case you missed NALC President Bill Young's comments on page 3 of the April 2004 issue of "The Postal Record", here's a summary:

The gist of the matter is that presently, in the event of a contract negotiation impasse between the employer and the unions, a neutral federal arbitrator is appointed to settle disagreements by binding arbitration decision. But the way that Bush's Commission on the Postal Reform sees it, we don't need a neutral arbitrator. We need a politically appointed regulatory board—with the same binding decision-making power! Given an unsympathetic presidential administration as well as an unsympathetic and

partisan regulatory board, you can only imagine what that would do to letter carriers' pay scales and benefits. That's right; a fast trip south.

Obviously, we can't afford to let this recommendation become part of the postal reform bill that will be written

We should all sign up for the COLCPE automatic payroll deduction.

this summer and likely voted on by Congress this fall. To some observers, it seems a sneaky way to achieve *de facto* privatization of the Post Office—something that some Republican industry moguls have been advocating for years.

Active participation by carriers

Brothers and sisters, the stakes could not be higher. That's why we all need to sign up for an automatic biweekly payroll contribution to COLCPE, the political action fund of the union. Two dollars a paycheck would be great, but even one dollar—which everyone in our office could afford—would help. Does that seem difficult to swallow? Consider this: when our last five-year contract was negotiated, the union won us five periodic general wage increases, eight cost-of-living increases as well as a one-time cash payment of \$312. No entity fights harder to protect your job and your benefits than your union. Let's give the national union the tools to take the fight to where it now stands in the congressional arena. We will need voting friends in Congress, lots of them, to preserve what the NALC has built through collective bargaining over the last 30 years.

And beware. Contractual "givebacks" in pay rates and benefits have become routine in struggling industries over the past few decades. Don't think that many in the current Congress don't know it. Givebacks began in the airline industry as early as 1976 and continue today. Let's ensure that the same thing doesn't happen to letter carriers.

Unionism is like a chain. We can't control what those in other offices do. But we can make our links strong in Corte Madera. Let's all decide to participate in COLCPE. Confused as to how? Ask your NALC shop stewards.

Place
stamp
here

Legislative Department
National Association of Letter Carriers
100 Indiana Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20001-2144

Only two things

What's right in the post office

By Ivars Lauersons, Editor

When something new is proposed by the post office, carriers are routinely suspicious. It is widely believed that the new program will make our work harder, and that it will do nothing to improve service to the customer. Further, the new programs are often described as taking no additional time.

Yet among all the things that have gone wrong two innovations stand out as unequivocally successful. One of them is vertical flats, a post office innovation. Another is flexible starting time, a union-initiated program.



Routing flats and the dodo

When the order came down to convert all horizontal flat cases to vertical flat cases, there was concern that addresses getting a lot of magazines would quickly become overloaded, that oversize items would be a problem and that newspapers would make an awkward fit. These are real problems, but carriers were able to work around them. In the beginning, when we still had a separate letter case, and we didn't have to twist as much as we do now with no letter case, it was a pleasure to finish putting up your flats. When you were up, you were up. There was no more routing of flats, a task that was very time-consuming when the flats were heavy. This program worked partly because carriers had already modified throwing flats by using a top, bottom, and middle separation prior to routing, as well as using the off-limits tops of cases. Once the letter case was eliminated, and letters

With vertical flats, when you're up, you're up.

were mixed with flats, new problems arose. These were also accommodated by letter carriers. There must be someone who misses the horizontal flat case, somewhere, but not me. As a bonus, we are still getting credit for having to route flats under the 18 and 8 system.

Being flexibly on time

In San Francisco, and in most of Branch 214 we have flexible starting time, or flex-time. This means that if you punch in more than 8 units after the designated starting time, you are not considered late. If you punch in to what was deemed "late" in the past, you now have 15 or 30 minutes (depending on the particular flex-time agreement)

before you are considered late.

If you were a steward in Branch 214 before 1991, you handled endless cases of letters of warning which charged people with being "tardy". This meant defending people

Flex time allows carriers an element of dignity.

from discipline who came to work, did their jobs, but for whatever reasons, including traffic, could not punch in in the short time period of starting time.

After a pioneering effort to introduce flex-time in San Rafael in 1990, San Francisco signed an agreement in 1991. The San Rafael agreement was challenged by management, but it was upheld as being a proper part of the Local Memorandum of Understanding. In San Francisco a new postmaster unilaterally abrogated flex-time, but a B-team grievance decision upheld its validity. A uniform San Francisco-wide agreement has since been signed. We have two options now: an early choice of 15 minutes before the starting time, to 15 minutes after, and an option of up to 30 minutes past the starting time.

This is a program that works for the benefit of the carriers, has no detrimental effect on productivity, and is hated by upper management. The only reason given is that it makes timekeeping more difficult—hard to believe in the

If management dislikes it, it must be a fine program.

computer age. Most likely, it's despised because it removes an element of control by management over the carrier.

The trivial letters of warning about being tardy are gone. In the congested urban environment that is the San Francisco Bay Area, letter carriers who commute long distances, who have baby-sitting schedules to keep, and who have to search for street parking after arriving for work do not have to worry about being on time at a better rate than a bus, a train, or an airplane.

A failed success

The defunct Employee Involvement (EI) program was a grand experiment, like Prohibition in the 1920's, to change how the post office operates. If it had succeeded, there would be a larger number of items to point to as unqualified successes. This attempt to change postal culture was initiated at the top, but there was never any follow-up at the carrier level. This attempt at a partnership, with the union as a junior partner, was abandoned by the post office.

At present we have new problems to worry about, like postal reform and declining first-class volume. In the meantime, case your vertical flats, and in the Bay Area at least, punch in within the flex-time window.

Take time to buckle up

Unsafe street supervision

By Lili Buencamino Beaumont, Executive Vice-President

For about a year, management has issued a significant amount of discipline to carriers who have allegedly committed “unsafe acts” during the performance of their street duties. These “unsafe acts” are discovered by management’s designated “roaming safety specialist” whose sole purpose is to catch carriers doing something allegedly “unsafe” and write them up on a PS Form 4584 – “Observation of Driving Practices” form. This person’s main objective is to generate as many NEGATIVE 4584s as possible and not necessarily to encourage and create a safer work environment.

Practice safety

To minimize the number of negative 4584s and nurture a safer work environment, carriers should take the time to practice safety on the route by (as listed in the M-41 handbook of carriers’ duties & responsibilities chapter 8):

1. **Observing all traffic regulations prescribed by law.** Rules applying to the public also apply to operators of postal vehicles.

2. **Wearing seatbelts at all times the vehicle is in motion.** *Exception for LLVs:* In instances when the shoulder belt prevents the driver from reaching to provide delivery or collection from curbside mailboxes, only the shoulder belt may be unfastened. The lap belt must remain fastened at all times the vehicle is in motion.

3. **Closing all external vehicle doors** when travelling to and from the route, when moving between park and relay points, and when entering or crossing intersecting roadways. The right-hand sliding cab door may be left open when operating a vehicle with sliding driver’s cab doors on delivery routes and travelling in intervals of 500 feet (1/10 mile) or less at speeds not exceeding 15 MPH between delivery stops.

4. **Only working mail should be kept in the driver’s compartment** while performing delivery and collections duties. This rule applies to vehicles with separate driver and cargo compartments.

5. **Do not finger mail while driving or hold mail in your hands while the vehicle is in motion.** You must use the mirror to check for pedestrians ahead, in back, and on both sides before placing the vehicle in motion.

6. **Do not finger mail while walking up and down steps or curbs, crossing streets,** or at any other time the practice could create a safety hazard to you or the public. (EL-814—Employees Guide to Safety, 3/2001)

7. **Arrange letter mail, flat mail, and small parcels** in the work tray provided on the ledge behind the windshield so as **not to obstruct vision** or use of the vehicle controls. Trays must not be piled on top of other trays on the ledge behind the windshield.

8. **Always keep the rear door and/or tailgate of the vehicle locked,** except when loading or unloading the vehicle.

9. **Whenever the driver leaves the vehicle, the vehicle must be parked.** To park the vehicle:

- Apply the foot brake and place automatic transmissions in the park position. Place manual transmissions in gear.
- Turn the vehicle’s front wheels toward the curb if on a flat surface or when the vehicle is facing downhill. If the vehicle is parked facing uphill, turn the front wheels away from the curb.
- Set the hand-parking/emergency brake.
- Turn off the engine and remove the key.
- Lock any sliding door(s) between the truck body and cab.

10. **For smokers** (M-00950 Step 4): If a smoker is in a vehicle alone, then smoking would be permitted since no one else is affected. If, however, the vehicle is carrying more than one person, then there should be no smoking in that vehicle unless everyone in the vehicle is a smoker.

Rules for management to follow

Pursuant to Postal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Observation of Driving Practices (PS Form 4584), management [specifically supervisors and/or the designated “roaming safety observation specialist(s)”] must familiarize themselves with defensive driving techniques so that they know what the common driving errors are and how they can be detected and prevented. Those management personnel observing driving practices should be conducting the following procedures:

1) To the extent possible, not less than 15 minutes of actual driving should be monitored.

2) Deficiencies observed should be brought to the operator’s attention at the scene or as soon afterwards as possible.

3) Deficiencies presented to driver should identify training needs for improvement and should not lead to disciplinary action unless the deficient driving habit continues.

4) Deficiency discussions should be positive in nature and should include the benefits to be gained by changing driving habits (EL-801 – Supervisor’s Safety Handbook, p. 26)

5) Employees with two or more deficiencies (negative PS 4584) should be scheduled for Smith System Training.

In conducting street supervision (as per M-39 revised

(continued on page 4)

Thinking about the unthinkable

Evaluated route controversy heats up/whither the 3996

Bill Thornton, Vice President

The recent mail volume counts in conjunction with the route inspection moratorium have resurrected the controversies surrounding the system for carrier adjusted routes and re-ignited battles in the NALC. The current method, the 6-day route count, had at its core the principle of "it takes what it takes." Additionally, after the route was supposedly adjusted close to 8 hours carriers could still put in for/use more time if it became necessary because of mail volume fluctuations, etc. The M-41 under Sections 131.42 *et al* indicated that carriers were to report to management when unable to complete duties in allotted time.



Mail counts create confusion

The recent mail counts created some confusion among carriers about their rights and proper procedures for reporting to management when unable to finish in the allocated time. Carriers were under the impression that the volume count would be held over their head on a daily basis. This after constant harangues by the union to ignore reference volume and to utilize 131.42 etc. of the M-41 to protect yourself. If you need the time, let the supervisor know and let them make the decision. In reality it wasn't all that simple—carriers being harassed when they called in, jamming DOIS down carriers' throats.

Debating the future of route adjustments

But the long-term issue concerns the method for adjusting routes in the future. At the State Convention, Bill Young indicated some of the motivations for entering into agreements regarding alternative route adjustment processes. He said that 15,000 route inspections were scheduled for the spring and 45,000 in the fall. In addition to the desire to avoid acrimony, he put the search for alternative processes within the context of postal reform and declining first class mail volume and other changes to the business. Management looks kindly on a process whereby a budget can be planned well in advance, at the same time grabbing what is described as discretionary effort. There is no guarantee that any business model will succeed, even given the best outcomes of postal reform.

President Young also expressed a certain pique at being attacked for his advocacy of route adjustment changes, feeling insulted that union members would feel that he did not

have the interests of letter carriers at heart. With a little tit for tat, President Young characterized some of the critics as people who hang out on the Internet at 3:00 in the morning.

Prior to the Memorandum and mail count, he indicated in a 4/6/04 message that "...I haven't been able to figure it all out yet but I know one thing for sure: Step 1 is to ascertain what the cased volume is...we will take the next step and try to design a route evaluation system that is fair to all parties..."

The rural carrier model

The controversy goes back a few years and included resolutions at national conventions opposing evaluated routes. Most Rural Carriers are paid under a type of this system, based on periodic mail volume counts with time values assigned to the volume and ultimately salaries. Opponents of changes have feared that a new route adjustment system would mirror the rural's.

President Young has indicated that the search for an alternative to the current route adjustment process is also an attempt to eliminate carrier anxiety. But rural letter carriers have indicated that the count periods that determine the route evaluation and ultimately carrier compensation, create anxiety—arguing about whether a piece of mail is a letter or a flat. That form of adjustment process is not without anxiety. The current Rural Letter Carrier Contract: Art 9.2.C.3.a (4) includes "...a national mail count will be conducted on all rural routes for 18 working days beginning February 14 and ending March 6..." (2004). Check out the Rural Letter Carrier Contract for other aspects of adjustment procedures. Maybe on the Internet at 3:00 in the morning.

A recent NALC Bulletin indicates commitment to "...hourly pay...A mechanism for selecting routes to be adjusted and determining a recent representative period to base a carrier's office and street performance...Individual effort and performance—no time engineered or other artificial standards..." The latter seems to indicate that the core of the rural carrier methodology will not be utilized.

A long road ahead

But many serious questions remain, including the basic right of members to raise concerns and present ideas. President Young has reminded us of the progress carriers have made in terms of wages since the 1970 Postal Reorganization and the demise of the old Post Office and how carrier wages have risen favorably in relation to Federal GS wage levels. The Postal Service is a business and it's not 1970 anymore. You don't want to be on a train going in the wrong direction.

There would remain many concerns in the event of the adaptation of new wage calculation/route adjustment systems. These would be in addition to the overriding concern for the upholding of the most basic union principles and FLSA but also special needs of the older carriers and those with limitations, etc.

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Branch 214 delegation, Hawaii, 1970



Back row, from left: Mike Duerrenberger, Nate Wilson, Walter Stephens (with hat), Bill Saxsenmeier, Roger Groux.

Second row, from left: Robert Love, Bill Tezak, Frank Sullivan, Unidentified, Tak Momii, John Susleck, Don Hackett (holding jacket), Bill Lippi, Nolan Thrailkill, George Pieraldi (Branch 214 President), Ralph Selleck, Batista Cava, Eugene Mattei, William Healey, Ron Tyeskey, Cornelius Tamony, Charles Coleman, George Paiva.

Front row, from left: Steve Grasso (kneeling, in white shirt), Unidentified, Art Messier, Bobby Brun, Paul Mitchell.

(Our thanks to Kathy McConnell, Jerome Tercero, and our intrepid retirees for the photo identification. Photo courtesy Branch 214 files.)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Teresa Alfaro	Jason Li
Tamala Barnes	Rosie Lin
Alva Bautista Jr.	Wu Pei
Jackson Chau	Mathew Sneeringer
Julie King	Mathew Rubin
Teresa Lau	Sara Tam
Kam Leong	Jin Zhang
Raymond Leung	

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