



THE VOICE



OF THE GOLDEN GATE LETTER CARRIERS

BRANCH #214

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS, AFL-CIO

March/April 2004

Award-winning newspaper

Vol. XXXIV, No. 2

NALC ANNUAL FOOD DRIVE

Labor takes the lead in restoring the social safety net

By Tony Gallardo, President

On Saturday, May 8, 2004, the National Association of Letter Carriers will be conducting its twelfth Annual National Food Drive. On this day we will demonstrate once again our commitment and our compassion for our community.

Already, all over the country, we, the letter carriers, on our daily rounds, are starting to talk up the Food Drive with the residents on our routes. We know which people are connected and well respected in the neighborhood. We know that when these individuals are convinced, they will help bring everyone else on board.

In this way, when the Campbell Soup cards get delivered in the mail, they are just the last reminders about an important event that the whole community has been talking about for weeks. The key to the success of the Food Drive, route by route, is with the Letter Carrier.

Talk about Food Drive now

Just by talking up the Food Drive early and often, I per-

sonally have been repeatedly overwhelmed by the generosity of the residents of my route. Every year that I have worked on my route during the Food Drive, I filled the entire back of the LLV, and bottomed out the shocks.

The job of a Letter Carrier is hard enough without the

Start talking up the Food Drive with customers now.

extra effort of talking up the Food Drive, plus the back-breaking double job of hauling mail out and food back, once a year. Why do we do it?

Fortunate to have jobs

We do it because we know that we are very fortunate to have our Union jobs. Because we have fought long and hard, we have secure jobs, living wages, health plans, and retirement plans.

But we also know that for American working people, it is an increasingly hard struggle. Many good jobs have been "outsourced" to third world countries. The so-called "recovery" from the recession, is not generating many new jobs, and most of the jobs that are being generated don't provide the wages and benefits needed to sustain a family.

At the same time, the current policy trend of our elected government officials is towards continued reduction or elimination of many of the vital components of our social safety net. For every action, there is an equal and oppo-

(continued on page 3)



San Rafael Food Drive, 2003.

**See Food Drive Cartoon
by Ed Cuadra
on page 9.**

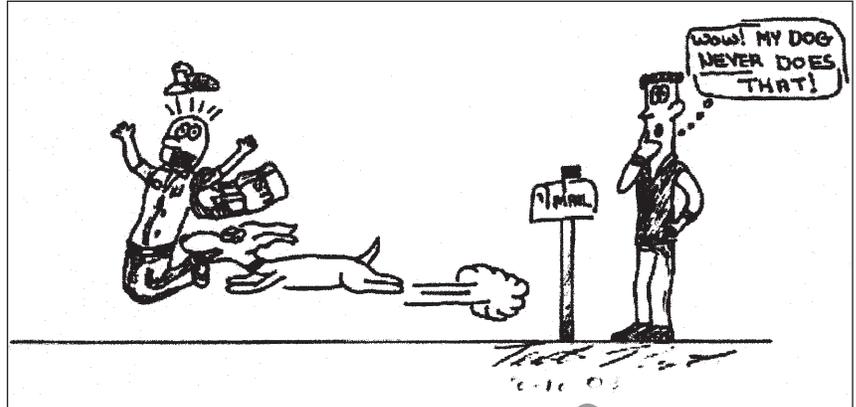
Branch 214 Notes

Deadline changed: The deadline for the next issue of *The Voice* is June 2, 2004, an extension of one month. This will be the issue to be distributed at the National Convention in Honolulu, Hawaii in July.

Our EEO officer, Carmen Jimenez, has resigned from her office for personal reasons.

Our new EEO officer is Cathy Simonson, a steward at 180 Napoleon Street, and a former Safety and Health Officer.

Tenish Proctor, the daughter of 18-year veteran Corte Madera carrier, Michael Proctor, had an original cartoon published in Branch 38's (Clifton, New Jersey) newsletter "The Sentinel". Her cartoon appears on the right.



Cartoon by Tenish Proctor

Branch Officers

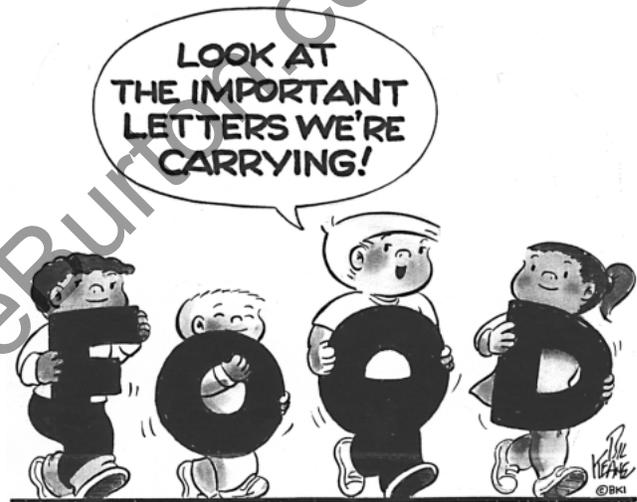
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- Bill Thornton Vice-President
- John Beaumont Secretary-Treasurer
- Ray Fong Field Director
- Carol Maggio Assistant Secretary-Treasurer
- Leonard Cruz Sergeant-at-Arms
- Franklin Woo NALC Health Benefits
- Jerome Tercero Safety and Health
- Cathy Simonson EEO Officer
- Mike Callahan MBA representative
- Kim Truong Director of Organization
- June Buccat Trustee
- Kathleen McConnell Trustee
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- Ivars Lauersons Editor
- Phil Vosburg, Juliette Chen Associate Editors
- Gerry Lee Cartoons and Graphics

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 Office hours: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday



LETTER CARRIERS' FOOD DRIVE
SAT. MAY 8, '04



YOUR POSTAL EMPLOYEES WILL CARRY THE FOOD YOU DONATE TO YOUR LOCAL FOOD BANKS.



T.V. 214 Schedule

SAN FRANCISCO, AT&T Cable Channel 29:
 Every third Sunday of the month at 7:00 p.m.
 April 18, 2004; May 16, 2004;
 June 20, 2004

Gallardo (continued from page 1)

site reaction. So, every victory for the greedy is a kick in the nuts for the needy.

Food now, political response later

The long-term response has got to be political. But in

The postcards giving the May 8 date will be the last reminder.

the short term, as the fabric of our social contract is ripped asunder, we are obligated to do what we can, to make sure that the children, the sick, and the elderly are adequately fed. This is where the NALC Food Drive comes in.

In San Leandro, all the food goes to the San Leandro Shelter for Women and Children. The San Francisco and Marin County Food Banks are the recipients of the food collected in those counties. Second Harvest of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties receive the donations from Daly City and Redwood City.

The Food Banks and Second Harvest supply food to many programs and organizations including, but not limited to, "Emergency Food Pantries". Here are a few examples.

Look at the list of organizations distributing the food.

- **Compassion in Action** provides on-going nutritional support to families where the primary breadwinner is suffering from long-term, severe crisis, such as AIDS or cancer and whose needs cannot be met by other existing services.
- **Brown Bag Program** for Low Income Seniors provides seniors over 60 years of age with an income of less than \$1,010.40 per month with supplemental food bags twice a month.
- **The Federal Government** regulates USDA Commodity Distribution. Food is available to people whose income falls below \$1,044 per month for one person, \$1,407 for a family of two, and so on.
- **The Healthy Children Pantry Program** provides critical nourishment to the children of low-income families.
- **Immigrant Food Assistance** addresses the unique challenge of the diverse immigrant communities

through neighborhood Immigrant Food Assistance pantry sites.

- The Food Banks also fill holiday food boxes, and supply food for non-profit agencies.

Letter carriers most trusted

Our communities trust us. A recent survey of 6,000 Americans by the Ponemon Institute, a leading privacy think tank, found that Americans have a higher level of trust in postal employees, and specifically letter carriers, than any other government employees. There is a reason for this. The residents on our routes see us every day. They know us personally. They know that we care. Programs like the NALC Food Drive are tangible and memorable examples of our compassion and commitment.

A survey shows a higher trust in Letter Carriers than any other government employees.

The community supports us because we support the community. This trust is priceless.

As a direct result of this special relationship that we Letter Carriers have with the residents of our routes, we, the Letter Carriers of Golden Gate Branch 214 of the NALC have collected a total in the last 11 years of 1,659,084 pounds of food. This is an average of 150,826 pounds of food per year.

Remind people of May 8

If you are a Letter Carrier, and you have not yet started talking to the residents of your route about the NALC National Food Drive, please start doing so tomorrow. The Food Drive is on Saturday, May 8. Please ask the residents to leave grocery bags of non-perishable food items by their mailboxes on that day.

I want to thank all of you in advance for your work.

Assure them that you will be picking the food up yourself. Remember that they trust you. Remind them that since there will be so much food to pick up, that you will probably be delivering later than usual, but that you will get their donation.

The Food Drive is the one event that we get to share with the residents of our routes. It is a great opportunity. I know that during this, our 12th Food Drive, we will once again show our community who we are, and what we stand for.

I want to thank each and every one of you for what you are about to do. You have a lot to be proud of.

Be back by 5:00!

Don't stress out over workload disagreements

By Bill Thornton, Vice President

The players and programs may change but there is no change in the accepted contractual procedures concerning workload assessment—how much time it will take to finish the route.

Despite attempts to tell you that you have undertime based on the latest computer generated report or that you “must be off the street by 5:00”, the carrier still has protections in regards to the time it will actually take him/her. Management rationale for this has varied, including getting carriers off the street before dark, collection schedules, etc. But carriers still have the same rights under the handbooks and manuals to report to management when the workload exceeds 8 hours.



Same as it ever was

If you have a different/more accurate assessment of the time necessary to perform the work than the supervisor: Article 41.3.G of the National Agreement: *The supervisor will advise a carrier who has properly submitted a Carrier Control Form 3996 of the disposition of the request promptly... Upon request, a duplicate copy of the completed Form 3996 and Form 1571, Report of Undelivered Mail, etc. will be provided the carrier.*

**“Get off the street by five”
is a management goal, not a
contractual obligation.**

Local Memos of Understanding have varied language concerning the 3996, etc. San Francisco LMOU Art. 2.7 reads: *Except in an emergency, as defined in Article 3.Sec.F of the National Agreement, when Form 3996... is properly executed and presented at least one hour and thirty minutes prior to scheduled leaving time the supervisor will notify the carrier at least one hour prior to scheduled leaving time as to whether auxiliary assistance or overtime is approved or whether mail will be curtailed.*

Use the safeguards

Use the safeguards against possible discipline and thus keep the process civilized to some extent. Part of the stressful aspect of the dispute over workload is not getting a response from the supervisor or getting one that is unintelligible. Many times the water is muddied by the supervisor telling the carrier things like “...the mail should have been up by...” Form 3996 is not about carrier performance but is the mechanism for the carrier to inform management when they cannot finish duties within 8 hours. There is no requirement to meet so-called *standards* on a daily basis. Standards are for route adjustment purposes.

**Carriers still have all the
rights on workload assessment
when filling out the 3996.**

Furthermore, Step 4 Decisions and 242.332 of the M-39 indicate that *No carrier shall be disciplined for failure to meet standards, except in cases of unsatisfactory effort which must be based on documented unacceptable conduct that led to carrier's failure to meet standards.*

The carrier submission of Form 3996 meets the reporting requirements of Sections 131 of the M-41... *It is your responsibility to verbally inform management... when you... will be unable to case all mail distributed to your route, perform other required duties, and leave on schedule or when you will be unable to complete delivery of all mail. (131.41)*

When you don't see eye to eye

If your assessment of how much time is necessary to process and deliver all mail is different from the supervisor's, the following are the proper and acceptable management responses: (1) Curtail mail. If this is authorized, utilize Form 1571 and then you will be in compliance with 131.44, 131.45 and 131.56 of the M-41: *Do not curtail or eliminate any scheduled delivery or collection trip unless authorized by a manager, in which case you must record all facts on Form 1571 (131.45).* (2) Authorize auxiliary assistance. (3) Authorize over-

**Standards are for route
adjustment purposes.**

time. (4) Instruct the carrier to call in from the street. (5) Deliver all the mail regardless of the time involved. (6) Bring back the mail.

(continued on page 5)

Thornton (continued from page 4)

“Do it in 8 and deliver all the mail” is not an acceptable response. If you are told to deliver it all there is a Step 4 Decision that indicates that: ...*grievant informed management of their inability to complete the route in 8 hours...ordered by management to complete the route...Although there was no expressed authorization to complete the delivery of the mail on an overtime basis, the permission would be inherent in the authorization to continue delivery after notification that the grievants were unable to complete the routes...*

Admittedly, calling in from the street can present problems in itself. Those include the phone not being answered at the station, abuse from the supervisor, etc.

Get copies of forms

Discussions about your performance should not be conducted on the phone. If unable to get through to the station, make a note as to when you called and if you do get through, indicate who you talked to, etc. Put this information on another 3996 when you return and fill out a 1571 if mail was not delivered. Get copies of all 3996s and 1571s.

Thank you

By Audrey Davis, Pacific Carrier Annex

Thanks to all those who voted for me during the recent election of officers in Branch 214. Special thanks to individuals who spent a great deal of time encouraging carriers to vote for a change of leadership. Although I am very disappointed to have lost the election, I am honored and humbled to have received so much support. THANK YOU!

A lot of issues were raised during the election campaign that need to be followed up on.

Most importantly the elected officers really need to come out to the stations more often.

Carriers are still being harassed and intimidated to work

Carriers are still being intimidated to work faster.

at a faster pace. We need a real campaign to stop the abuse.

We are still paying for officers to do Formal-A's, which could be done by designees on management's clock.

These are just a few of the issues that need to be addressed. It's *our* union and our elected officials (just like our senators and congresspeople) need to be held accountable to the membership.



Miami, November 2003 demonstration against FTAA.

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HOW MANAGEMENT HAS PUT
THE VOLUME BACK IN THE POST OFFICE

Cartoon courtesy Ken Bonin, Branch 25 by way of
Branch 43, Cincinnati, OH.

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New Officer

EEO complaints update

By Cathy Simonson, EEO Officer

Although the union is not obligated to represent employees in the EEO process we have helped members prepare and submit cases before the REDRESS program was established by the Northern District of California in 1993. This an alternate dispute resolution process, in which a neutral mediator is assigned to attempt to resolve the issue.



Branch 214 EEO representatives may assist in the counseling stage of an EEO complaint. No guarantee is given or implied that the representative will continue to assist beyond the counseling stage. It is the sole responsibility of the complainant to ensure that all time limits are met for each stage in the processing of the complaint. At any time the complainant is free to find another representative, including a lawyer,

The branch assists in the early, counseling stage of an EEO complaint only.

at their own expense. The complainant agrees to bear all costs associated with pursuing an EEO.

After the REDRESS program, if the complainant decides to go forward to the formal stage, it is up to the complainant to file the formal complaint in a timely manner. At this point the complainant will be advised to seek an attorney at their own cost.

Union EEO representatives can be made available only if the complainant contacts the union branch office directly. This is requested so a properly trained representative can be assigned to assist and to keep track of the many complaints arising.

It is up to the complainant now to file the formal complaint in a timely manner.

A Memorial Day essay

Prinseugracht 263

By Mike McAdoo, Parkside

This essay is intended to remind the forgetful and inform the uninformed of the longstanding and honorable relationship between the Armed Forces and the community of San Francisco. Of late, that relationship has been strained by the present political forces of certain elements of this community.

Mayor Geary

The first mayor (and the first postmaster) of San Francisco was John White Geary (1819–1873), a Mexican-American War veteran who was elected to office in 1850. He was the man who donated the land on which Union Square now sits. After having been mayor (and postmaster), Geary was governor of Kansas in the 1850s, a Union general who served with distinction at Gettysburg and rode with Sherman during the US Civil War. He also served as governor of Pennsylvania from 1865 to 1873. Geary was so revered that the street which borders the south side of Union Square was named in his honor.



Medal of Honor winner

Another man of distinction was Phillip Katz, who won the Medal of Honor in the First World War. Katz served on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors after WWI

As Memorial Day nears, let's remember also the victims in the attic at Prinseugracht 263.

and was active in the community throughout his life. Being the only Medal of Honor recipient to have ever served on the Board of Supervisors, Katz was among those honored by Mayor Diane Feinstein in a ceremony honoring Medal of Honor recipients in the 1980s.

Nor does this gratitude end with Phillip Katz. In 1907, a San Franciscan called Daniel J. Callaghan graduated from St. Ignatius High School. Rear Admiral Callaghan was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism at the Battle of Guadalcanal in WWII. The USS San Francisco, which had flown his admiral's pennant,

became the first ship in history to receive the coveted Presidential Citation. The ship is forever memorialized at an often fog-shrouded site on the shore of the Pacific, at Land's End.

We remember the honorable relation of San Francisco and the military.

Admiral Halsey and Admiral Nimitz

This relationship with the military was not limited to the native sons of San Francisco. In 1945, Fleet Admiral William F. Halsey, who was the Allied Commander at Guadalcanal and the Commander of the US Third Fleet in the Pacific in WWII, reviewed victorious troops from the Civic Center Steps of City Hall. Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific during WWII, was also honored by San Francisco.

A free dinner

A more personal anecdote also illustrates the kindred relationship between the military and San Francisco. In the

In WWII, a young soldier got his meal paid for.

1970s, when this unionist (who is not a veteran) was a letter carrier in Menlo Park, I met a Catholic priest who was a chaplain at the Veterans Administration. This clergyman had come to the Bay Area after retiring as an active minister in Minnesota. When I asked why he came to the Bay Area, the old priest's eyes misted as he told me his reason. In 1942, when he was a 19-year-old soldier in the US Army en route to the Pacific War, he and some other young soldiers went to dinner on Market Street. When the group of soldiers finished their meals, they went to the cashier to pay. They were told that their meals had already been paid

The first mayor, John Geary, was a soldier.

for by another customer. The good father told me that he had a special place in his heart for San Francisco ever after and that when the time came to retire, he wanted to breathe his last as close to San Francisco as he could.

In recent decades, it was not only passé to respect the

(continued on page 8)



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Branch 214 Meetings

Branch meetings, 7:00 P.M.

April 7, 2004	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
May 5, 2004	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
June 2, 2004	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF

Steward meetings, 6:00 P.M.

April 7, 2004	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
May 5, 2004	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
June 2, 2004	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF

Retiree social meeting, 12:30 P.M.

April 7, 2004	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
June 2, 2004	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
August 4 2004	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF

McAdoo (continued from page 7)

longstanding and honorable relationship between the US Armed Forces and this community. It has become fashionable for the politicians to deride the Armed Forces. These politicians, with the exception of Senator Diane Feinstein (a native San Franciscan), have migrated from other areas of the nation, such as Congresswoman Nancy

Pardon my French

Plus ça change, plus ça même-chose*

By Bob Yragui, retiree

Here's Mark Twain's colorful description of America at the start of the 20th century, as he watched the US and other western nations bully their way through the world: "I bring you the stately matron named Christendom returning bedraggled, besmirched and dishonored from pirate raids in Kiao-chou, Manchuria, South Africa, and the Philippines with her soul full of meanness, her pocket full of boodle, and her mouth full of pious hypocracies."



If this was Twain's description of American foreign policy during the time of McKinley and Teddy Roosevelt, what would he have said to Mr. "Dubya" Bush? Here we have a rerun of the days at the start of the 20th century, but now we're in the 21st century and Mr. Bush doesn't even realize we have done this once

before and he's stuck in the wrong century, and doesn't know it!

Again, a self-exiled literary figure living in Europe, the novelist Henry James, while on a tour of the US in 1904,

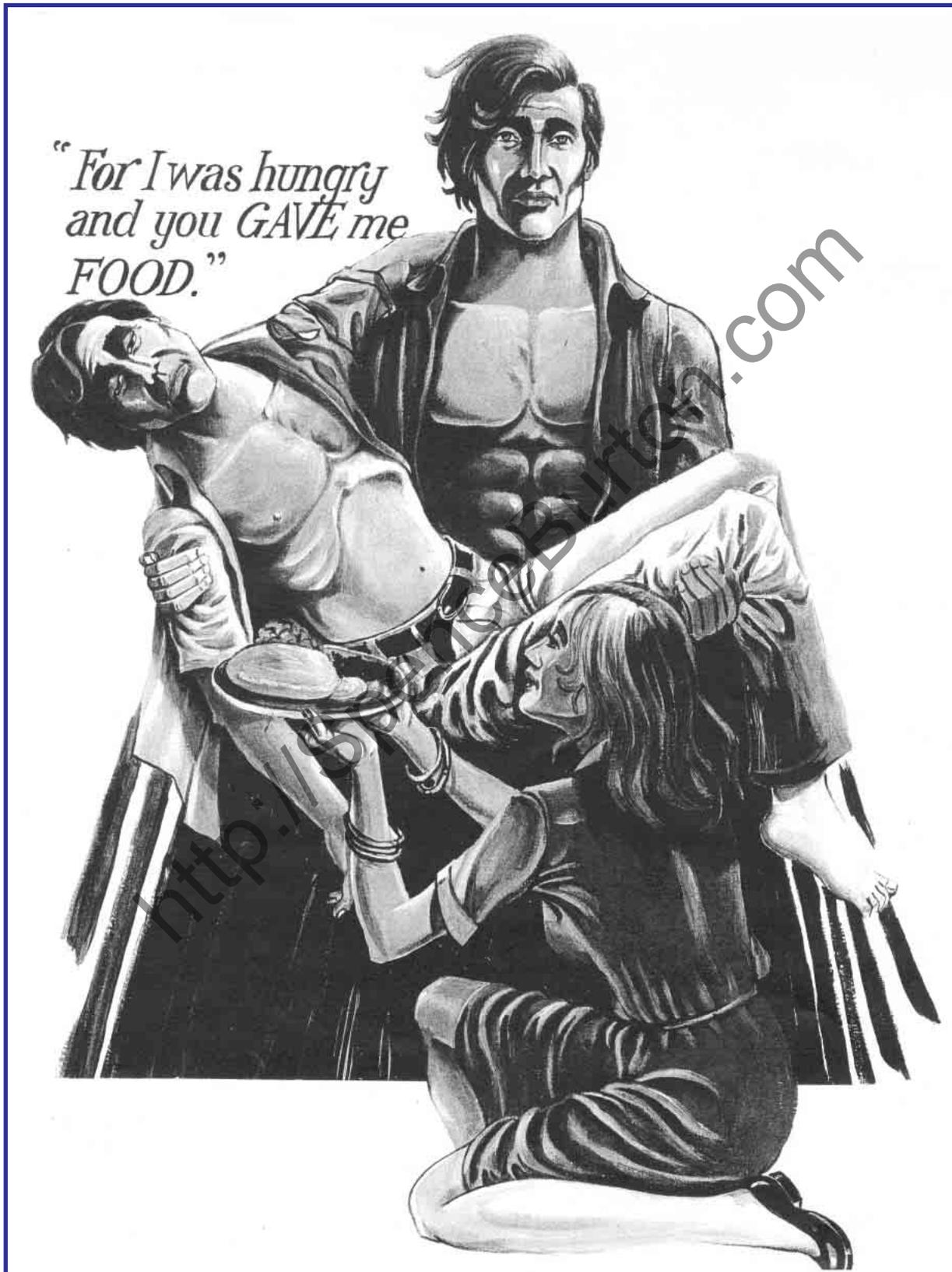
Mark Twain's description from 100 years ago seems fitting today.

saw this country as a "huge Rappacini garden rank with every variety of the poison-plant of the money passion". This was the time of the muckrakers, who raked up the mud and muck, and who contributed to the dissent by the simple act of telling what they saw.

**The more things change, the more they remain the same.*

Pelosi (an émigré from Maryland with family connections to the Kennedys) and ex-Mayor Art Agnos (an émigré from Massachusetts). Memorial Day 2004 is a time, truly the time, to redeem the relationship between San Francisco and those who have put their lives on hold to protect the world from the fate of the occupants of the attic of Prinseugracht 263, Amsterdam—the Anne Frank House.

NALC Food Drive — May 8, 2004



Artwork by Ed Cuadra

Branch resolutions for the California State Convention

Resolution on unity

WHEREAS: Given the political climate—workers in general are fighting to maintain their standard of living; and

WHEREAS: Given the state of the postal service—decreasing mail volume and loss of jobs due to automation; and

WHEREAS: The old adage ‘United we stand, divided we fall’; and

WHEREAS: It is time we put aside petty differences and not let our egos get in the way; and

BE IT RESOLVED: That the NALC reach out to the other unions and call for one united postal union; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That we do everything in our power to help resolve any problems to help further our stand for one union.

Resolution on ergonomics

WHEREAS: Letter carriers are vulnerable flesh and blood human beings, subject to the physical wear and tear of the unforgiving weight and volume of mail; and

WHEREAS: Letter carriers, in their work, are developing chronic and/or cumulative muscular skeletal disorders affecting feet, legs, back, shoulders, arms and hands; and

WHEREAS: An ergonomic risk reduction process has been implemented in 31 mail processing and distribution centers by year 2003; through agreement of the USPS, mail handlers union, and APWU; and

WHEREAS: NALC membership as well could benefit from ergonomic review, and adjustment of their work tasks; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the NALC negotiate a mutual ergonomic risk reduction process for letter carriers as a priority item.

(These resolutions were passed at the March 2004 meeting, and will be submitted for approval at the California State Association of Letter Carriers convention in May.)

Working toward retirement

By Daniel SooHoo, PTR Collections

Happy belated New Year! I am sorry. I've missed the deadline to submit my continuation of my thoughts on retirement for the January issue of **The Voice**. The bad thing is for those who are planning to retire in five years. You might have to stay one more year! The information I am presenting is an issue or two late. The good thing is my plan for retirement is clicking closer to the date I have set for myself.

Deadline for health coverage

Knowing your deadline for health care coverage is important. Health care coverage is one of the big chunk expenses. OPM, the office that issues your annuity check, deducts your health care before you receive any amount that you are entitled to. To have your coverage continue

You must have the same health provider for five years to continue it into retirement.

into retirement, you must be enrolled with the same health care provider for the *last five years*. A person would have to wait 'til this coming “Open Season,” late November to December, to make any changes to health care coverage and wait for five years to have the coverage continue into retirement. An article written by Lynda Beigel, retiree, in the July/August 2003 issue of **The Voice**, covers a question concerning health care coverage for individuals and family.

Saving bonds

Now, let's crunch numbers. If a reader had decided to start a savings plan using the U.S. Saving Bond method back at the time of the first article about retirement in the September 2003 issue of **The Voice**, that reader would have \$600.00 in bonds now and have saved \$300.00 purchasing the bonds (payroll deduction of \$25.00). Please let me know if any reader wants me to explain it. 'Til the next article.....!



Photo by Ivars Lauersons

Marina, SFO, carriers. From right, Joyce Kung, Nancy Gee, Carmen Guadron, Janet Pallera, Manny Feniquito, Howard Wong, Selena Tang.

A well deserved award

Recognizing an old friend for a lifetime of service

By Tony Gallardo, President

On Wednesday, February 4, 2004, NALC Branch 214 presented the lifetime achievement award to Spence Burton at the Regular Branch meeting. The award read as follows:

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
 SPENCE F. BURTON
 IN SPECIAL RECOGNITION
 OF YOUR MANY YEARS OF SERVICE AND
 UNSELFISH DEDICATION TO THE MEMBERSHIP,
 FROM SHOP STEWARD TO PRESIDENT,
 DPS COORDINATOR TO WEBMASTER,
 AND
 YOUR COMMITMENT TO NALC BRANCH 214,
 THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS
 AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT AS A WHOLE.
 THANK YOU.
 NALC BRANCH 214

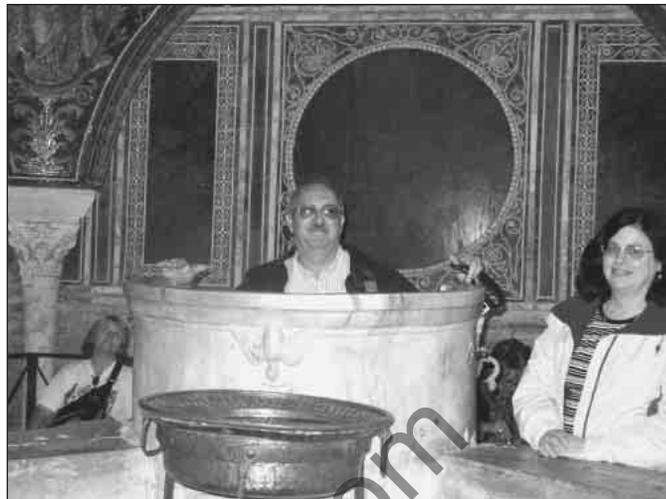
Spence Burton held the position of Secretary Treasurer of Branch 2856 Cedarhurst, NY in the late 1960s. He moved to San Francisco and was reinstated in the Post Office in 1970. He rose through the ranks in Branch 214.



Photo by Ivars Lauersons

Spence Burton at a recent Branch meeting.

Spence held the position of Vice President for almost 9 1/2 years. From 1984 through 1987 Spence Burton was the President of Branch 214. He also has held various positions in the California State Association of Letter Carriers (CSALC).



“Spence always seems to find a podium wherever he travels. Here he is in Ravenna, Italy with his wife Cathy in 2003 while they were leading a group of students from Tomales High School through Italy as part of the school’s Italian Exchange Program. You can find more information about the program on his webpage: <http://spenceburton.com>.”

East coast connection

When I first joined the Post Office, and the Union, in March of 1987, Spence was still the President. During my training in the North Bay, he was the Union Officer who got me to sign the 1187 to join the Union. Since then, I have had many occasions to count on him. He has always come through.

Spence and I have a lot in common. We are both from the East Coast. I grew up in Patterson NJ, and he hails from Cedarhurst NY. We are both former Taxi drivers. We share a Mediterranean heritage. His family is from Sicily, and mine from Spain. Of course, we have both been Presidents of NALC Branch 214.

DPS coordinator

Spence continued serving the Branch and the NALC even after being President. He is currently the NALC DPS Coordinator for the San Francisco District. I think that he is the last NALC DPS Coordinator in the country. As our DPS Coordinator, Spence has continued to ensure that Letter Carriers routes are not negatively impacted by the transition to Delivery Point Sequencing. Spence is also the webmaster for both the Branch 214 and the CSALC web sites.

I felt grateful for the honor and the privilege of presenting this special award to my good friend Spence Burton. As Letter Carriers, we have all benefited and continue to benefit from his many contributions.

We all live in Neverland

The adolescent nation

By Juliette Chen, Associate Editor

Qin Shi Huangdi, the First Emperor of China, was a book-fearing man. One of the first things he did when he came to power was to collect most of the books from previous regimes and put them to the fire. Some 400 scholars were also rounded up and buried alive. A few thousand years later, history repeats itself: when the communists came to power, they corralled the intelligentsia—scholars, doctors, scientists—and killed them. Nowadays, you can go to museums in Cambodia, and marvel at the piles of bones—stacked to the rafters—which is all that remains of some well-educated people. In some countries, having a good education can cost you not only an arm and a leg, but your life as well.



Dumb and dumber

If you are an insecure ruler, knowledge becomes a dangerous thing in the hands of the people you rule. When you allow the village idiot to run the village, it's in his best interests to make the electorate as stupid as he is. And thanks to public schooling, we deliver what he wants. John Taylor Gatto, a retired New York educator, writes in *Harper's Magazine** that "it is in the interest of complex management, economic or political, to dumb people down." Such a population, Gatto goes on to say, ensures that "government might proceed unchallenged and corporations might never want for obedient labor."

When you allow the village idiot to run the village, it's in his best interests to make the electorate as stupid as he is.

Bushwhacky

At a time when we are running one of the largest deficits in history in order to finance the war in Iraq, local schools are being closed down for lack of funds. Surviving schools are being trimmed to the bone—sports programs, music classes, libraries are usually the first to be axed. Public libraries, too, operate under the constant threat of closure. How the Bush Administration feels about education is evident in the statement made by his Education Secretary, Rod Paige, who recently called the

National Education Association (the country's largest teachers union) a "terrorist organization". So, here we have an administration that has no qualms about going to war but finds the idea of education terrifying.

We have an administration that has no qualms about going to war but finds the idea of education terrifying.

Prep for perps

Well, Mr. President, I, too, am terrified by the state of education in this country. In my old country I used to look with avuncular benevolence upon school children. When I came to this country, I couldn't tell a high-school student from a potential mugger. Not only are many American students big, loud, and obscene, but who knows what weapons lurk under those baggy clothes? Teenage boys, in particular, with their shifty-eyed, sullen slouch, look like they haven't had much practice in walking upright. Good kids and bad—they all look guilty to my immigrant eyes. Recently, my neighborhood has been plagued by a

No one ever looks for his or her "inner adult".

series of break-ins. The latest case involved four teenage boys whose idea of extra-curricular activity is to break into someone's home to steal and vandalize. When we spoke to the police investigator, he explained wearily that there is usually a spike in crime when school is out.

The old boys network

Why are there metal detectors in our schools? Why are police cars parked daily outside these schools? Why aren't more people outraged by this? Mainly because politically, culturally and economically, this country is run by adolescents trapped in the bodies of middle-aged men. We've elected Peter Pan and his Lost Boys to take control of our lives. These leaders spend their lives trying to relive a time when they were judgmentally-impaired, ethically deficient, and narcotized by raging hormones, i.e., when they were teenagers.

Writes Gatto, "Is it possible that George W. Bush accidentally spoke the truth when he said we would 'leave no child behind'? Could it be that our schools are designed to make sure not one of them ever grows up?" "We have become a nation of children," Gatto continues, "happy to surrender our judgments and our wills to political exhortations and commercial blandishments that would insult actual adults." And who can blame us for not wanting to grow up when "adult" is such a loaded word in this culture, more

associated with sleaze, as in “adult” entertainment. No one ever looks for his or her “inner adult”. What do you see when you watch a typical American film featuring kids or teenagers? Annoyingly smart brats outwitting dumb adults like parents and teachers. And we, the reluctant adults, wonder why we never get any respect from our kids.

The best consumers are brainless

“There are two groups of people who can always be convinced to consume more than they need to: addicts and children,” Gatto wryly notes. The teenage boy is king in this country. Marketers consider them the most desirable demographic. From a marketing standpoint, you want a big-spending consumer who has no taste, no self-control, is a total slave to peer pressure, and has no compunction about committing theft or peddling drugs to finance his purchases. Voila! The teenage boy fits the bill on every count. The school system “was useful in creating not only

As a society, we tend to glorify and reward bad behavior.

a harmless electorate and a servile labor force but also a virtual herd of mindless consumers,” says Gatto.

Exploding a few myths

I am doing American teens an injustice by focusing on the worst, rather than the best among them. I know there are many good students just as there are dedicated teachers who fight long odds to do their job. These are the kids who will grow up to be the silent majority of law-abiding, hard-working suckers who will keep the engine of this country humming. But they might as well be invisible. As a society, we tend to glorify and reward bad behavior, and we are overly forgiving of our prodigal sons. Children are not slow to pick up on this; delinquent youngsters know that we will reward their bad behavior with our attention, compassion and love. They know that we are extremely tolerant, and will make up any number of excuses to justify their misconduct. As for the good kids? They can sink or swim. Who cares?

Americans like to think of themselves as rugged individuals, and so any opposition to authority—no matter

Any opposition to authority—no matter how idiotic—is celebrated as courage.

how idiotic—is celebrated as courage. Just to name a few of the famous American folk “heroes”: Jesse James, Billy the Kid, Bonnie and Clyde, Al Capone—criminals, one and all. A mayor of a big city gets caught on police sur-

Letter

Dear Juliette,

A few days ago I received my copy of **The Voice**, and once again I am so impressed by your piece. I have been meaning to tell you so, and now I am.

I work in collections, so many things you write about don't affect me. And so far, I have had a very harmonious relationship with management. I do realize that could change at any time, so I am grateful to be a union member (though I must admit a passive one) and to know that the union is there if I should need their help.

But I'm straying from my intent. Your writing is so eloquent and concise. I appreciate how the idea originates from the personal and becomes larger. I love your metaphors. The first line of “New Year Resolutions” about T-6s and Santa knowing who is naughty and nice made me laugh with recognition and delight.

And I appreciate very much your being so fair as to criticize the union in this case, in being “way too good at defending chronic offenders”.

You are very talented and bright and we are lucky to have you.

*Sincerely and with thanks,
Ms. Sky Charlesworth
San Francisco, CA*

veillance tape doing crack with a prostitute. What's his punishment? He gets re-elected. A journalist gets fired from a well-known newspaper for fabricating stories. His punishment? Book and movie deals. Who are our children's role models? Trashy celebrities who compensate for their glaring lack of talent by dressing and acting like thugs and whores. (Come to think of it, most of them *are*

The jackass that brays the loudest is king.

thugs and whores in real life.) You don't need hard work or talent to succeed in America. That's the old myth. In our current culture, in which the parasite has completely overtaken the host, the loudest and most obnoxious are at the top of the food chain. If you're shameless enough, and slippery enough, you can behave badly and get away with it, time and again. The jackass that kicks up the most dust and brays the loudest gets to be king. And this is one lesson that our children have learned very, very well.

*“Against Schools—How Public Education Cripples Our Kids, and Why” by John Taylor Gatto, published in the September 2003 edition of Harper's Magazine.



Steward Appreciation Breakfast. From left, Herb Mitchell, Adrean Mitchell, Ray Fong, Norma Leonardo, Valencia Baugh. (Photo Branch 214 archives.)



Photo by Herb Mitchell

Bayview Steward Yadira Levesque



San Rafael carrier on left passing food to next distribution point.

**Carriers
at leisure**

**Carrier
at union meeting**

**Carrier
volunteering time**

Shop Stewards of Branch 214 for the 2004-2005 Term

* Denotes Chief Steward Status

Denotes Formal A Status

Bel-Tiburon vacant

Corte Madera Arnold Jones

Daly City Cherry Vargas
Rolando Caluag
Adolfo Vocal

Mill Valley Joel Bantly
Val Palattao

Novato Ken Schneider * #
Karen Schuler
Annette Mello

Redwood City David Barela
Roberta Bojo
Tauchia Cobbins

San Anselmo James Phalen

San Leandro Main Charles Gonzalez *
Richard Becker #
Melvin Moore

San Leandro South Valencia Baugh
Sue Garshol #

San Rafael Mission vacant

San Rafael Civic Pablo Vigil

San Rafael Main Sheila Gardner *
Eric Jones
Darwin Nimer

Sausalito Kian McCarthy

EPC North June Buccat

EPC South Art Ubungen

Rincon West Leonard Cruz

Rincon North Vims vacant

Rincon South Vims vacant

Rincon East Vims vacant

Station E Vicki Sawicki

Treasure Island Jerome Tercero *(EPC)#

Collections – AM Romeo Lacap
Robert Sy

Collections – PM Mike Callahan #

Station C Don Limin
Dede Cesena

Station G Norma Leonardo

Diamond Heights Tony Olvera #
Mitchell Anduja

Bayview Yadira Levesque

Station F Eduardo Sobalvarro *(180 NSCC)#
Cathy Simonson
Alonzo Hutton

Station J Gary Petersen
Regina Gillespie

Stonestown Alejandro Munguia

Visitacion vacant

West Portal Kim Truong

Parcel Post Mark Mindrup

Parkside Berta Quezada

Station P Eddie Reyna
Ker Mei Yu

Sunset PCA Leland Chune
Simon Dang

Sunset Finance vacant

Golden Gate Martin Macedo
Richard DeLeon

Steiner Roland Menis
Rey Menis

Marina Edwina Wu
Ivars Lauersons #

Pine Street Dennis Mackler #
Donald Griggs
Jose Espinosa

North Beach Aldo Fonda

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Larry La
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Shu Kit Lam
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Sophia Sayavong
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Harry Tam
Florence Tedja
Danilo Tualla
Natalie Watkins
Stephen Wong
Armando Zavala
Glen Zhang

IN MEMORIAM

Eugene Fung
Julius Meriwether



*Last year's Food Drive at San Rafael.
(Photos by Ace Photographer.)*