



THE VOICE



OF THE GOLDEN GATE LETTER CARRIERS

BRANCH #214

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS, AFL-CIO

March/April 2005

Award-winning newspaper

Vol. XXXV, No. 2

LOBBYING TO PROTECT OUR FUTURE WHERE THINGS GET DONE

By John Beaumont

President, California State Association of Letter Carriers

Last month over 150 letter carriers, including six sent from Branch 214, set out to Washington DC to lobby Congress for positive postal reform. These carriers were part of an overall delegation made up of NALC members representing California and eleven other western states. Joining in this assault on Capitol Hill were Branch 214 members Jerome Tercero, Carol Maggio, Kim Truong, Sheila Gardner, Daniel Soo Hoo, and Herb Mitchell. The objective of this effort was to inform our Congressional Representatives on the need for postal reform and hopefully enlist their help as co-sponsors to House of Representatives bill 22 (HR 22). HR 22, which was reintroduced earlier this year, is almost exactly like another NALC-supported Postal Reform bill which was shelved by the Bush Administration just prior to last year's election.

Postal reform bill

HR 22 contains changes which would allow more commercial freedom for the Postal Service to adapt to losses it is currently experiencing through the continual drop of our first-class mail. The bill also leaves our cur-

HR 22 calls for more flexibility.

rent collective bargaining rights and our benefits package completely intact. However, if HR 22 were passed by the House of Representatives it will still have to be reconciled with a Senate version which has yet to be introduced.

As the Bush Administration and the Postal Board of Governors stepped up renewed attacks aimed at trying to get Congress to revisit making changes to our binding arbitration system and our health benefits it became apparent that we, as letter carriers, needed to be pro-active in pushing HR 22 for support and co-sponsors.

The delegation from Branch 214 spent three full snowy days traveling between the House and Senate office buildings, as well as the US Capitol,

representing letter carriers in our joint effort to protect the future of the United States Postal Service while preserving the collective bargaining rights and the benefits we have all worked so hard to achieve. *At first count since the trip thirteen California Congressional Representatives have signed on as co-sponsors of HR 22 with approximately 20-25 more leaning in our direction.* This same success was also achieved by the eleven other states which joined us on this trip.



Branch 214 lobbying group on Capitol steps, March 2005. From left, Dan Soohoo, Sheila Gardner, Carol Maggio, John Beaumont, Jerome Tercero, Kim Truong and Herb Mitchell.

Photo courtesy Herb Mitchell

Seven Branch 214 members were among the 150-plus carriers who lobbied Congress for postal reform.

Branch 214 notes

Welcome new stewards: Eric Jones (San Rafael Main); Robert Grimmer (San Rafael Mission); Enrico Hapa (EPC/Rincon North).

Welcome new alternate stewards: John Carriaga (San Leandro South); Patrick Filer (San Rafael); David Kubenik (Novato); Bill Foster (EPC/Rincon South); Quang Luu (Pine); Francia Finnigan (Golden Gate); Jeanette McLaine (PCA/Sunset)

On-line mysteries, with zingledude@aol.com, also known as Arnold Jones, shop steward at Corte Madera, last appearing in the Nov/Dec 2004 **The Voice**, will continue in the next issue. The most recent topics on the chat room were the training of under-40 year old activists, pros and cons.

The Voice thanks Dan Soohoo for his assistance in the preparation of this issue.



Photo by Leonard Cruz

Unionist of the year Karen Schuler, Novato, and her husband Doug, at the steward brunch, March 6, 2005.

Branch Officers

- Tony Gallardo President
- Lili Buencamino Beaumont .. Executive Vice-President
- Bill Thornton Vice-President
- Jerome Tercero Secretary-Treasurer
- Ray Fong Field Director
- Carol Maggio Assistant Secretary-Treasurer
- Leonard Cruz Sergeant-at-Arms
- Franklin Woo NALC Health Benefits
- Larry Gerigk Safety and Health
- Cathy Simonson EEO Officer
- Mike Callahan MBA representative
- Kim Truong Director of Organization
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- Kathleen McConnell Trustee
- Vicki Sawicki Trustee

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- Ivars Lauersons Editor
- Juliette Chen Associate Editor
- Gerry Lee Graphics

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Photo by Leonard Cruz

Dana Davis (left), alternate steward 94104, and Bobbie Mixon, Station "E", at the steward brunch in Berkeley.

T.V. 214 Schedule

**SAN FRANCISCO, AT&T Cable Channel 29:
 Every third Sunday of the month at 7:00 p.m.
 April 17, 2005; May 15, 2005;
 June 19, 2005**

Do the right thing

How you can defend your job and stay out of trouble

By Tony Gallardo, President

Your shop stewards are experts at helping you get out of trouble and at defending the contract in order to maintain or improve your working conditions. However, I have noticed that there are some things that you can do to help the stewards do their jobs, and to keep troublesome situations from occurring in the first place.

The following habits, if followed consistently, will help you defend your job and stay out of trouble.



Record your clock rings

Always write down your starting and ending time. Supervisors have been known to alter time clock rings, eliminating pay rightfully owed to you. By tracking your hours and comparing them with your check stubs, you will verify whether or not you are being paid for all the time you have worked. If you find a discrepancy, immediately bring it to the attention of your shop steward.

Daily vehicle inspections

Do a complete vehicle inspection every day. This time is built into your route for a good reason. Finding bald

Your input is vital to this process.

tires or a puddle of brake fluid under your vehicle is a great way of preventing an accident, possibly even a death. Finding a broken mirror or a new dent, at the vehicle inspection, will keep you from being blamed for someone else's accident.

Keep an accurate record of work done off of your assignment.

Before you case on another route always record the move at the time clock. Don't forget to swipe back to your route when you are done.

Curtailing mail

If a supervisor asks you to curtail mail, always fill out a PS Form 1571 (curtailment slip). Have your supervisor sign it, and keep a copy for your records. Never curtail mail without instructions from your supervisor. Mail that is curtailed for two days in a row must be delivered on the

third day. Your curtailment slip will allow you to point this out to your shop steward, so that your route does not back up. Also, your curtailment slip will help defend you from discipline for delaying mail, since it shows that the curtailment was the supervisor's decision and not yours.

PS Form 3996

Always fill out a 3996 when you need auxiliary assistance or overtime, and keep a copy for your records. Always fill out the bottom portion of the 3996, when you work on another route. When you come back to the

Supervisors have been known to alter time clock rings, eliminating pay rightfully owed to you.

office, always enter the time from the bottom of the 3996 on the time clock whenever you have done a split or a pivot on another route.

Distribution of overtime

The union is constantly defending our right to appropriate and equitable distribution of overtime. Sometimes carriers on the Overtime Desired List (ODL) or Own Assignment List are not given all the overtime that they are entitled to in a given day, or in a given quarter. Conversely, carriers who are not on the ODL are sometimes improperly forced to work overtime.

In these cases your steward will have a much easier time figuring out what happened, and getting a fair settlement, if your forms are properly filled out, if you keep copies of those forms, and if you clocked on and off of assignments properly.

Don't skip your breaks

Never skip your lunch and breaks. By skipping your lunch and your breaks, you cheat yourself out of time and money. Worse than that, the data on your route will show that it is 50 minutes shorter than it really is. This could be used against you when adjusting your route.

Mail that is curtailed for two days in a row must be delivered on the third day.

If your supervisor has unrealistic expectations, ask for time to see your steward. Don't be intimidated. Never, ever skip your lunch or your breaks.

It is likely that the routes in your office will be inspected and adjusted in the near future. Properly filled out PS Forms 3996 and curtailment slips and accurate clock rings will help you get a fair adjustment.

(continued on page 5)

Don't make MEGO

Guidelines for contributors

By Juliette Chen, Associate Editor

If you are a contributor to **The Voice**, or are thinking of becoming one, please take five minutes to read this article. As for everyone else, feel free to skip to the next article.

As Editor of **The Voice**, Ivars Lauersons' insistence on publishing a broad spectrum of writers, regardless of political correctness or persuasion, is the major reason why **The Voice** is considered an award-winning paper among our peers. We do hear, from time to time, grumbles from some union members that **The Voice** is too diverse; i.e., that **The Voice** fails to sufficiently toe the union line. My answer to that is: nothing is as tedious (and misleading) to readers as monotony of vision and voice. Dissent, opposition and dialogue are vital for a free press. It'll be a sad day if **The Voice** degenerates into a propaganda mouthpiece.



Having said that, Ivars and I also have our editorial differences. In his wish to preserve the "voice" of the individual writer, he eschews heavy editing. I, on the other hand, come from the slash-and-burn school of editing; you might not recognize your article after I'm done with it. On average, Ivars and I balance each other out.

What I would like to see for **The Voice** is not so much a consistency of voice, but a consistency of style. Every major newspaper or magazine has a style that is instantly recognizable. A newspaper rife with misspellings, factual inaccuracies and stylistic inconsistencies reflects poorly

It'll be a sad day if *The Voice* degenerates into a propaganda mouthpiece.

on the editorial department. Most newspapers and magazines, even badly run ones, have entire departments devoted exclusively to fact-checking, proofreading, caption-writing, photography, etc. At **The Voice**, for obvious budgetary reasons, all those functions are combined in two people, Ivars and me. Some of our writers are very experienced and require minimum editing; others are less experienced. Regardless of your skill level, there are things that you can all do that would make your editors' lives a lot easier.

Submission and deadlines

Ideally, all submissions should be in the form of email attachments. These should be sent to either Lili Buen-camino Beaumont (ExecVP@nalc214.org) or Bill Thornton (VicePres@nalc214.org). We also accept articles on disk but please make sure that your article is formatted as a Microsoft Word for Windows document. If you are unfamiliar with using email or a disk, please ask a computer-savvy friend or relative to help. If you are an orphan with neither kith nor kin, call me and I'll walk you through the process (or refer you to someone else who can).

Personally, I am reluctant about accepting typewritten or handwritten articles as they require retyping by Yours Truly. As our time and money on **The Voice** are limited,

Regardless of your skill level, there are things that you can all do that would make your editors' lives a lot easier.

time spent on typing would not be a good use of membership dues.

As a rule, please include a contact number on your submission in case we have any questions about your article.

If you are writing your article on a computer, please run it through a spell check before submitting it to us.

As for deadlines, we accept time-sensitive articles within the same week as the monthly branch meetings. Any article, *no matter how brilliant*, which fails to make the deadline will be saved for the following issue. Articles which are not time-sensitive can be submitted at any time.

A few stylistic points

Acronyms: The Post Office, like the military, is lousy with acronyms. As a writer, a reader and a woman, I heartily detest them. Acronyms tend to proliferate in male-dominated businesses where objects are assigned such long-winded, over-inflated names that they end up as acronyms because no one has the time to use the full names. I've often noticed that a certain type of men are fond of using acronyms because they act as a kind of secret and divisive language that is only known to the privileged few. You won't hear a woman referring to a rolling pin as a Dough Expansion and Augmentation Device (or DEAD).

But I digress... Too many acronyms can give your readers and your editors a serious case of MEGO (My Eyes Glaze Over). Unfortunately, in our business, acronyms are often unavoidable. If you must use an acronym, please spell it out the first time you mention it

(continued on page 5)

Chen (continued from page 4)

in your article and include the acronym in parentheses. For example: *Branch 214 shares a building with the United Educators of San Francisco (UESF)*. Use the acronym by itself for subsequent mentions in the rest of the article. Exceptions to this rule are extremely common acronyms, such as USPS, USA, PTF, NALC, etc.

Any article, no matter how brilliant, which fails to make the deadline will be saved for the following issue.

Names and titles: Ditto. Spell out the title (if there's one) and name for the first mention; use the family name by itself in subsequent mentions. For example: *NALC National President Bill Young stood up to speak. Upon sitting down, Young had an epiphany.*

Quotations: Please include full attribution for all quotations. For example: *"It's the economy, stupid," said Bill Clinton advisor James Carville.* If you cannot work the attribution into the body of your text, include it as a footnote. If the quotation is from a book or a movie, please include the name of the book (and the author) or the movie, and the name of the character from whom you quoted.

Capital letters, and other capital crimes: Most union publications tend to over-use capital letters. There's no need to capitalize "union", "labor" or "management" unless these words are part of the name of an organiza-

Too many acronyms can give your readers and your editors a serious case of MEGO.

tion. This tendency, coupled with a proclivity for overblown sentiment and quaint revolutionary jargon, can make a piece of writing look dated and somewhat pompous, as if it was written by a bewhiskered Victorian gent who entertains romantic notions of being a radical. The same goes for the use of boldface and italicized text, exclamation marks and ellipsis points. These are all devices employed for emphasis and therefore should be used sparingly. Over-usage will cause *Our Dear Readers* to suspect that your corset is too tight and that you're in need of sal volatile to restore you to your senses.

At **The Voice** we are very lucky to have a stable of concise and prolific writers. Nonetheless, we are always on the lookout for new voices and talents. If you have a burning issue that you wish to share with fellow union members, or if you're a cartoonist with a wicked sense of humor, we'd like to hear from you.

Gallardo (continued from page 3)

Scan all MSP points

Scan all of your Managed Service Point (MSP) scan points every day on your route. Never use a cheat sheet, even if your supervisor gave it to you. Carriers have been disciplined and even fired for falsifying their MSP scans. On the plus side, the union has been able to use MSP scans to win grievances. For example, if a supervisor clocked you out at 3:30pm, and you hit your last MSP scan at 5:00pm, the union can show that you were cheated out of at least one and a half hours of overtime.

Follow all the rules of the road. In San Francisco, the union and management have joint observers doing street observations. This is for our own protection. Driving is the most dangerous part of our job. If we follow safe driving practices, we are more likely to avoid accidents. If a joint observation team stops you, your name will not be given to your supervisor and you will not receive disci-

Never use a cheat sheet, even if your supervisor gave it to you.

pline. You should nevertheless pay close attention to what you can do to improve your driving habits. This could save your life.

If management (not the joint observers) catches you committing a driving or safety infraction, you could be disciplined. The union will represent you, but it is better to prevent discipline than to contest it. The most important thing to remember is that driving safely may keep you from being hurt or killed in an accident.

Safety tips for mounted routes

Always use your seat belt and keep your door closed whenever your vehicle is in motion. If you are performing curbside delivery, you can take off your shoulder harness, but keep your lap belt on. When you are done with the curbside delivery, don't forget to put the shoulder harness back on. Seat belts are the single most effective life-savers in vehicle accidents.

PS Form 4584

If management conducts a street observation, and you are doing everything right, insist on a copy of the PS Form 4584 (Observation of Driving Practices). Keep copies of all of your PS Forms 4584. If you are ever disciplined for a negative driving observation, a stack of Forms 4584 for all the times you were observed doing things right, can be used to remove the discipline, or at least to reduce its severity.

Your stewards and officers are very good at defending your rights. By following these good habits, you will be helping us to be even more effective.

When the grievances don't work

EEO complaints

By Cathy Simonson, Branch 214 EEO Officer

As the current part-time Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Officer I would like to inform my fellow members on some of the procedures you must follow if filing an EEO complaint.

First and foremost it is important that you know Branch 214 will provide an EEO representative to help you during the precomplaint /informal stage of an EEO complaint *only*.



If you decide to go on to the formal stage you *must* choose another representative or lawyer at your cost. You will be asked to sign a waiver at the time you request union representation. Please remember it is your responsibility alone to ensure that all time limits are met for each stage in the processing of the complaint.

Referral names of experienced lawyers are available upon request.

As always, you are free to find another representative, including a lawyer at your own expense.

Precomplaint process/informal stage

As a Postal Service employee or applicant for the Postal Service, if you believe you have been discriminated against because of your race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, physical or mental disability, or in retaliation for involvement in prior EEO activity, you must take part in the precomplaint process before filing a formal EEO complaint.

Beginning the process in a timely manner

To begin the precomplaint process, you must contact the EEO office in your Postal Service District within 45 calendar days of the incident you believe to be discriminatory, or in the case of a personnel action (suspension, removal, etc.), within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the action.

If you want a union representative

It is preferable that you contact the union *before* initiating an EEO complaint. The union office can provide you with the appropriate forms and advise you, if needed, on how to fill them out. In any case ask the representative you wish to represent you if they are available before designating them on your form.

The union office will make copies and send the originals directly to the appropriate Postal EEO Dispute Res-

olution Specialist via certified mail. Please be aware that it must be received by the Postal Service within the 45 calendar days. Make sure the union is able to mail it so the time limits are met. Do not wait until the 40th day to contact the union.

You may wish to initiate the contact with the Postal Service EEO Dispute Resolution Specialist (DRS) your-

Branch 214 provides you an EEO representative at the precomplaint/informal stage only.

self if time is short. Once the forms are sent and a representative is assigned to you, you may receive a phone call from the Postal Service EEO Dispute Resolution Specialist. The only reason they should contact you is to arrange a date and time for the REDRESS mediation. Defer any other questions to your union representative by telling them to contact your representative.

The precomplaint/informal stage can include REDRESS mediation in which a union-appointed representative would be designated as your representative.

REDRESS

When you seek EEO counseling you will be told about REDRESS which is an opportunity for you and the appropriate management official to discuss your complaint with the help of a professionally trained mediator who is not an employee of the Postal Service.

Your participation in REDRESS is voluntary and may be done on the clock. The Postal Service pays the media-

If not resolved, you are responsible and must choose another representative.

tor. The mediator keeps everything said in mediation confidential. Some issues are not appropriate for REDRESS. The Postal EEO office tells you when the issue you have raised is inappropriate.

The union representative will meet with you before the mediation to discuss your complaint and your goals. He/she will be present during the mediation meeting and help you negotiate an agreement with management that can resolve your complaint. Please let the union representative know of any open or pending grievances filed related to the complaint.

If the matter is not resolved the Postal Service DRS issues you a PS 2579a, Notice of Right to File Individual Complaint. You must mail your complaint postmarked no

(continued on page 7)

Through snow and sleet

Storming the Capitol

By Jerome Tercero, Secretary-Treasurer

During the first week of March 2005, I, along with 175 letter carriers representing California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming descended on Capitol Hill. Our mission was simple—lobby Congress for postal reform. HR 22, introduced by John McHugh (R-NY), and co-sponsored by Henry Waxman (D-CA), is the most important legislation for the survival of the Postal Service since the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970, which was signed into law by then-President Richard M. Nixon.

The legacy of the Postal Strike of 1970

Ironically, March 2005 marks the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Postal Strike of 1970. It was through that effort of the brothers and sisters of the NALC that we enjoy the wages, benefits, and collective bargaining of

Simonson *(continued from page 6)*

later than 15 calendar days after you receive PS Form 2579. You may also deliver it personally during the same time limits.

Formal complaint process

If you decide to continue to the formal stage of the EEO process you will be asked to choose another representative. The union does not have the manpower, expertise or money to represent members in this complicated stage. At your request a list of attorneys experienced in Postal EEOs can be mailed to you. If you retain an attorney this will be at your cost.

Filing formally in a timely manner

To file a formal complaint, you must put your complaint in writing and sign it. Your attorney, if one represents you, may sign it instead. If someone who is not an attorney represents you, you must sign the complaint yourself and designate your representative in writing. You should file your complaint with the EEO office that is indicated on the PS Form 2579, Notice of Right to File. If you are unsure of the address of where you should mail or personally deliver your formal complaint, contact the EEO office that processed your precomplaint.

To be timely, you must mail your complaint post-marked no later than 15 calendar days after you receive PS 2579, Notice of Right to File, or you may deliver it in person no later than 15 calendar days after you receive it.

today. Those brothers and sisters were committed to making a difference and they did! We all thank you and are deeply grateful.

Winning half the battle

So now it is our turn to make the commitment to the next generation of letter carriers. We must collectively make our voice heard. During our visits with our Congressional Representatives, we discussed the position of the NALC, which is to maintain collective bargaining, universal service, and to allow the Postal Service to operate on a real business model. I am happy to say that the

We must collectively make our voice heard.

California Democrats are behind this effort, but that is not enough. We must convince Congress on both sides of the aisle of the importance of postal reform, and what it means to them and their constituents. The Postal Service is in every community and we deliver mail to every citizen in this nation. We are in a unique position to have our finger on the pulse of the nation. If the Postal Service cannot survive in today's economy, it would have a devastating effect. The small communities of America would be hardest hit. Big Business does not care about these communities as we do.

How to stay informed

As a member of Branch 214 it is important that you keep informed on the issues of postal reform. This can be achieved through various means of communication: the Postal Record, **The Voice**, station bulletins, the Internet and web sites of both the NALC and Branch 214. GET INVOLVED! Make that commitment, because our survival depends on all of us. The NALC has created the network for the members to mobilize, called the e-Activist Network. If you have not signed up, please do so immediately. When the call comes we must all be ready! Contribute to COLCPE (Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education). The NALC has made every effort to simplify this process through PostalEase and electronic transfer.

In closing, I would like to thank Branch 214's own and California State Association of Letter Carriers President John Beaumont. John has a relationship with the men and women of Congress who are committed to letter carriers and the working people of America. He has fostered these partnerships for the benefit of all of us. He is a tremendous asset to the NALC. It was a pleasure and an honor to see Congressmen and women as well as Senators have the respect and the back of letter carriers. Thanks for your tireless efforts, John. We won't let all your hard work go for naught. Now let's go to work.



Photo by Herb Mitchell

Zoe Lofgren, Santa Clara County, District 19, addressing Congressional breakfast for lobbyists from California and Nevada.

To all retirees

Our December get-together

By Bob Murray
Chairman, Branch 214 Retirees

At our December meeting, we were very pleased to have in attendance 78 retired members and their spouses. Our branch provided a full Turkey/ Ham lunch with all the trimmings. No speeches or politics except where it applies to retirees. Now we have a *new* meeting place

We now meet at a place with plenty of parking.

with plenty of *free* parking at the site—**Grace Covenant Church, Fellowship Hall at 740 Del Monte Ave., South San Francisco.**

Due to the effort of our retiree secretary, Vernon Capps, we are allowed to use this facility. We have been meeting at the branch headquarters in San Francisco. Very few retirees attended the meeting there because of the lack of parking. Certainly we appreciated the use of the Longshoreman's parking lot, but the two blocks of walking was too much for some of the members.

I urge each and every retired member to attend our bi-monthly meetings at our new facility. Granted we won't be having a Turkey/Ham lunch at these meetings, but the branch does provide cold cuts, salad with other goodies, plus beer, soda, and coffee. Please check your latest **Voice** issue as to when these meetings are held. We will try to

No speeches, unless it applies to retirees, and food and beer.

have the latest information of our COLAs and anything else that pertain to retirees' issues as far as the "action or lack of" by Congress.

Come and enjoy seeing the other retirees and enjoy lunch. You may find fellow workers that you have not seem in years. I know I did.

P.S. Recording Secretary Capps also wants to mention that 24 retired carriers received their reward pins at the December meeting.

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Photo by Leonard Cruz

The Steward Brunch, honoring hard-working stewards and their families and guests, was held on March 6, 2005 at H's Lordships restaurant in Berkeley on Sunday, March 6, 2005. Other photos on pages 2 and 13.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

- | | |
|--|---|
| Corazon Cabrera (San Rafael Main) | Robert P. Navarro (Steiner) |
| Daniel D. Du (Novato) | Yvonne L. Ngai (Novato) |
| Vive Fu (Diamond Heights) | Tan N. Nguyen (Redwood City) |
| Mahmoud Hechmi (Corte Madera) | Zhi Ou (Bryant Street) |
| Raymund Laplana (Bryant Street, Station C) | Tiffany C. Tran (Pine Street) |
| Jansen T. Lee (Marina) | Isagani D. Velarde (San Rafael Main) |
| Robert Liang (Bayview) | Josephus S. Villanueva (Mill Valley) |
| David Lin (Novato) | |

Branch 214 Meetings

Branch meetings, 7:00 P.M.

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| April 6, 2005 | ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF |
| May 4, 2005 | ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF |
| June 1, 2005 | ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF |

Steward meetings, 6:00 P.M.

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| April 6, 2005 | ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF |
| May 4, 2005 | ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF |
| June 1, 2005 | ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF |

Retiree social meeting, 12:30 P.M.

- | | |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| April 4, 2005 | 740 Del Monte Ave., South SF |
| June 6, 2005 | 740 Del Monte Ave., South SF |
| August 1, 2005 | 740 Del Monte Ave., South SF |

In Memoriam

- Allen Cross (former Branch 214 member)
James Torres (North Beach)

Working toward retirement

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)

By Daniel SooHoo, Part-Time Regular, PM Collections

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is the bulk of the retirement fund for federal employees under the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS). The first percent is automatically funded by the employing federal agency for each employee under FERS. In other words, every FERS employee receives a free one percent of their gross biweekly pay. The next three percent is matched dollar for dollar. The next two percent is matched 50 cents for every dollar the FERS employee contributes by the federal agency. Effective December 2004, the maximum amount allotted under FERS is fifteen (15) percent.



Federal employees under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) receive no matching fund from their agency. As of December 2004, employees under CSRS can allot up to ten (10) percent of their gross biweekly pay to the TSP to supplement their retirement finance.

Employees of both retirement systems cannot withdraw their fund until 59½. There are exceptions due to financial hardships which allow the person to withdraw early.

The TSP investment options are as follow:

- G Fund**—Government Securities (US Treasury index of four-year-plus bonds)
- F Fund**—Fixed Income (Lehman Brothers aggregate bond index)
- C Fund**—Common Stock (S&P 500 stock index)
- S Fund**—Small Company Stock (Wilshire 4500 index)
- I Fund**—International Stock (Morgan Stanley's European, Australia, and Far East stock index)

There are new improvements now in effect with the TSP. They have a new record-keeping system, a toll-free phone number to call (1-TSP-YOU-FIRST, or 1-877-968-3778) with longer service office hours (7:00am to 9:00pm EST, or 4:00am to 6:00pm PST), plus new retirement tax incentives.

The future changes that will affect the TSP are the development of a "Lifecycle Fund" or **L Fund** that reflects asset allocation/maturity fund and, with legislative support (from both the House and the Senate),

the elimination of open seasons. For help with questions about your TSP account, please contact Thriftline at 1-877-968-3778 or www.tsp.gov.

I personally want to thank Jim Sauber, NALC Research Director at the National Association of Letter

Future changes at the TSP will include the creation of a L Fund and the elimination of open seasons.

Carriers headquarters in Washington D.C., who gave the TSP workshop at the National Convention in Hawaii 2004. The information I presented about TSP to the members of Branch 214 are from that workshop. Please check the issue of November 2004 of the *Postal Record* for the feature story "Open Season," pages 14-15 plus Department's article on "Annuity Chart", page 37 for more information on the Thrift Savings Plan and its benefits.

Note to members of Branch 214: I am asking you to come to the branch meetings every first Wednesday of each month and attend at least 18 of 24 meetings during

As of December 2004, employees under CSRS can allot up to ten (10) percent of their gross pay to the TSP.

a two-year period to qualify to become a delegate for the State and National Conventions. Then you can attend workshops and learn about retirement, Thrift Savings Plan and its benefits, your future at the U.S. Postal Service, and topics of many interests.

And one last note: Thank you, Vicki Sawicki, Branch 214 Trustee, on the Savings Bonds; I was referring to the EE Series Bond.



Jane E. Broendel, NALC Secretary-Treasurer, led the Branch 214 delegation on a tour of the Headquarters building in Washington, DC.

Photo by Herb Mitchell

The nitty gritty

Practical solutions to some everyday problems at work

By Bill Thornton, Vice President

Need more time to finish your route

Get Form 3996. Management must respond to the request for overtime or assistance. When calling in from the street for instructions when you cannot finish, management should clearly indicate whether the remaining work is to be curtailed, you will be given assistance or authorize overtime. If management tells you to finish the route, the time is authorized.



Getting injured

Notify management immediately. This means that if you are on the route, don't try to finish the route but call the supervisor and follow the supervisor's instructions. Increasingly, carriers are being issued disciplines for "Failure to Follow Instructions" when they delay in reporting an injury.

The next step is for management to provide you emergency medical treatment if necessary.

Get a CA-1, fill it out and check Continuation of Pay (COP). If you are disabled your regular pay must be continued for up to 45 days. ***There should be no interruption of your pay.*** You have 10 days to provide medical documentation of your disability. Don't delay.

You have a right to choose your own doctor. Rules allow management to take an injured employee to the contract doctor if it does not delay the injured employee

If management tells you to finish the route, the time is authorized.

going to his/her own doctor. In San Francisco, the Postmaster has agreed to limit this gratuitous taking of injured carriers to the contract physician. But it is good to have a doctor in mind in case of an injury and try to make an appointment with your own choice of doctor as soon as possible after the injury. If, somehow you end up at the contract physician, you still can choose your own doctor but going to the contract doctor more than once may make that your doctor of choice and necessitate a request to change doctors from Office of Workers Compensation Program (OWCP).

Worried about payment for the doctor; request Form CA-16—"Authorization for Examination and/or Treatment." Management should provide you with the CA-16 within four hours. It should be noted that Form CA-16 will not be given after one week.

Called into the office

If you are called into the office and questions are going to be asked of you or if there is more than one supervisor present, request/demand a shop steward. This is known as ***Weingarten Rights***. You must ask for a steward to exercise these rights. If management does not provide a stew-

Increasingly, carriers are being issued disciplines when they delay in reporting an injury.

ard or tell you none is available or some other excuse, you do not have to provide them with information.

Long term illness/chronic conditions of yourself and family members

You and your immediate family members (parents, spouse, kids*) are covered by the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). You are guaranteed 12 weeks of leave each year including coverage for a new child in the family or caring for a family member with a serious health condition.

Your own serious condition is covered.

These 12 weeks need not be taken consecutively.

Safety issues/broken satchel carts, etc.

Get Form 1767 to report any safety and health hazards that are present in the work place. Management must respond to you by the end of the day. If they do not, talk to your steward and the issue can be pursued through the grievance procedure.

Management is responsible for providing all equipment needed to perform your work.

Harassment

Request to see a shop steward. Within all the offices of Branch 214 there is a union/management agreement that a carrier gets an immediate 5 minutes with steward on request.

If you suspect that you are being discriminated against because of race, age, etc., you may file an EEO. Our EEO

You have a right to choose your own doctor.

Officer, Cathy Simonson, can assist you. See her article on pages 6 and 7.

*The cut-off age for FMLA coverage for children is 18, unless the child has a serious physical and/or mental handicap.

At least arm's length

Relations with management

By Ivars Lauersons, Editor

There is no practical advantage to dealing with management at any level as if they have our interests at heart. Whether you are dealing with them as an individual, as union representatives, as part of a B team group, or as a national union, our interests do not coincide with their interests. We are not management. Be very, very careful.

A rule that is good in politics is also good for the union: We have no eternal friends, we have no eternal enemies; we only have eternal interests.



This rule means that we approach each problem with a solution to that particular problem in mind, the same as if in politics we are negotiating for a temporary alliance. If we have a goal or interest common to both, then we can negotiate to meet this specific goal. If we reach agreement, the agreement is for this issue only. It does not mean that we are now friends, that we will find it easier to get along next time, or that we can trust each other unconditionally.

The current line of the post office that we are all part of the problem is not true. Don't fall for it. The post office tells us there is a decline in first-class mail volume. The post office made a profit this past fiscal year. Projections are for another profit next year. Don't fall for the line that we all have to put in an extra effort to help the post office

We do not have the same interests as management.

survive financially. Skipping our lunch and running our routes is not going to save the post office, but it may help your local manager make his bonus target. Our best and only response is to follow the contract we have negotiated, and to expect management to do the same. That is our best protection.

The individual and the group

The individual carrier who tries to make a private deal with management hurts every other carrier.

If you don't think so, apply this test. Are you willing to let other carriers know exactly what kind of arrangement you have made outside of the contractual rules? If you are not willing to take the openness test, you are probably

getting favorable treatment at the expense of another carrier, or doing something against the rules of the contract. If you are also gaining financial advantage out of it, you may also be breaching commonly accepted ethics rules.

A private deal with management hurts every other carrier.

Will you tell other carriers that the supervisor will punch you out on the clock so that you can go home early?

The individual deal is related to the favoritism that management displays. If you are getting maximum overtime each day, always working your day off, choosing which routes to do and whether to do overtime in the

The steward's message is simple: follow the contract.

office or on the street, are you willing to claim that this is only a coincidence? If the supervisor changes, would you still get the identical treatment?

The individual within a group—the union

Carriers as a group are represented by the union, and the shop steward is normally the face of the union to the carrier and to the supervisors and management. Cooperation in an ideal world between the two is adherence to the contract. Sometimes the idea of the contract is a mystery to both as well. It is a set of rules that both sides have agreed to follow. They originate in an agreement signed at the national level and incorporated postal manuals under Article 19 and a number of precedent-setting arbitrations and memos of understanding. To help wade through a thicket of interpretation, the two sides have developed the J-Cam manual as an interpretative help tool.

Cooperation on a formal level has to end at this point. Informally, the steward (or any union official) may work with management, but this cannot be in a manner that would not survive scrutiny by an outside party. It would

The B-team has an extra obligation to look fully at each side's arguments.

be possible as a steward to get favored treatment, maybe getting extra overtime, or getting days off when no one else can, but that would be unethical. However, if the cooperation extends to overlooking contract violations, or not representing carriers if they are disciplined, stewards

(continued on page 13)

Lauersons (continued from page 12)

(representing the whole union) are in violation of the law and should not be stewards. In our branch this is unlikely to happen because it would be quickly noticed by the carriers, reported to the officers, and the steward could go apply to the 204-b position he wants.

Once more speaking for our branch, we have fine representation in our full-time and part-time officers. And if we don't like them, we have a chance every two years to vote them out.

Above the workroom floor

There is another intersection of the workroom floor and the union that bypasses the officers. That is of course the B-team, where grievances go if they are not resolved at the bottom two layers of the grievance procedure. The decisions made on disputes here are by a union-manage-

Postal management unilaterally got out of the route evaluation agreement.

ment team. There are decisions from them that we like, the keeping of flex-time in San Francisco, for example, and decisions we don't like. The decisions are explained by the B-team, and the relevant articles being used to make the decisions are cited. Having been on the receiving end of these decisions, I would make two suggestions that would make me feel more comfortable with the decisions. Don't take a typed version of the argument, usually management's, as more persuasive than the union's, usually handwritten because of the rules within which the



Cartoon courtesy Aceto, Branch 782, Bakersfield, CA



Photo by Leonard Cruz

At the steward brunch on March 6, 2005, from left, Lupe Perez and Ana Valladares from Station "G", and Daniel Yee from Station "C".

appeal is made, as being more persuasive. The steward does not carry his own laptop to the grievance procedure. Second, please read all of the argument the union makes. If an argument is three pages long, it is not edited in newspaper style with the lead paragraph being a summary of the argument, and the rest being more and more of an elaboration. It may be that the last two paragraphs are a rebuttal of management's position, which they have given to you only after they have seen the first two and a half pages of your argument.

The national level of cooperation

The history of withdrawal from agreements, or unilateral initiation of policy, is apparent to all of us. Working backwards, we point out the withdrawal from the agreement to find a new method of route adjustments as one example. The post office withdrew from the Employee Involvement program unilaterally. And DOIS has been thrown at us, in the analogy used by former Branch 214 president Roland Garshol, as having come down the mountain with Moses.

Where cooperation has no caveats

Management, craft; we are all employees of the post office. Wages, COLAs, retirement, health benefits, all affect everybody. Changes in Social Security affect all employees under the FERS system, as one instance where our relations with Congress put us all on the same side.

Hold the presses! An urgent email message of March 14, 2005 through our e-Activist Network warns us that management is trying to get an amendment in a new postal reform bill that would force us into bargaining for our own health care and pensions, unlike other federal employees.

One step forward, two steps back

Laboring over labor relations

By Eddie Reyna, Shop Steward, Pacific Carrier Annex

I would like to begin by emphasizing that **The Voice** is paid by the members for the members and provides a forum to inform members of their rights, expand information by the Branch President and officers on hot topics, report from conventions nationally and locally, provide detailed breakdowns of the budget on how your money is being spent and carry the opinions of stewards and retirees, etc. Let's face it, of the more than 2,000 members and some 350 retirees, many are unable to attend the monthly Branch meetings. This award-winning newspaper is the next best way of keeping the membership informed. The Branch has now ordered a censor on articles prior to being published in **The Voice**. I believe that if those who wish to *voice* their opinions have a right to do so—after all, this is **The**



Voice. Is this an attempt to limit what and how much the membership needs to know?

Management still gets away with it

Often, the questions asked by the membership is: what is the union doing to improve our working conditions? The daily abuse by management? When will it stop? Why is management allowed to repeatedly and blatantly violate the National Agreement and suffer no consequences or reprimand?

Déjà vu

Having filed many grievances that resulted in management agreeing to cease and desist the same violations over and over again with total disregard of the contract, I can honestly say that I expect to continue to file the same grievances over and over again until our union, with its might, forces management to be compliant.

Unlike my previous articles, I am not bashing management nor am I bashing the union. Without question, I believe our Branch President and officers are competent, educated and contractually knowledgeable.

Incident with Labor Relations

Recently I attempted to file a grievance against management (Labor Relations) and with a possible charge of unfair labor practice for unreasonable delays in furnishing for review my adverse/actions file, ie., any "live" disciplines on file. As it turned out, my adverse/actions file contained several disciplines that were settled through the

grievance procedure and which required management to expunge and remove the discipline from all postal records and files. (Note: if you wish to review your adverse/actions file to see what, if any, disciplines are "live" on your file, submit in writing to Labor Relations).

Unexpected interference

There is a standing order from the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ordering the Post Office to cooperate and not interfere with or delay providing information to the union. (This is posted in all stations.) Like any other grievance, I proceeded to first interview the responsible supervisor or manager regarding the unreasonable delay. Much to my surprise, our Branch President phoned me to say that he would be handling this grievance and asked if I could kindly no longer pursue this matter and that he would conduct the interview. I soon received a letter from our Branch President stating that he and our National Business Agent concluded, after reviewing the matter, that there was no violation on management's part. I also received a copy of a PS form 8190 Informal A grievance settlement signed by our Branch President and the Acting Manager at Labor Relations, I was further appalled to see that the 8190 as well as the remedy were filled out in their entirety by the Acting Manager at Labor Relations.

This coward, a former supervisor out of San Leandro, now the Acting Manager at Labor Relations, contacted our National Business Agent who then contacted our Branch President to grant his request that they forgo having the Shop Steward meet with him on post office time.

So let's see now, I wonder how that would work if say, our National Business Agent or our Branch President attempted to contact the District Manager, Postmaster or this same Acting Manager to rescind a discipline issued to an employee?

Post office time versus union time

It has always been the union's position to conduct grievances, *at any level*, on post office time rather than on union time. Is the union soft on management? What could have possibly caused our National Business Agent and our Branch President to remove themselves from their very busy schedule and union business and have them conduct an Informal A grievance on membership time? From a financial viewpoint, is this union money well spent? One could only imagine how expensive this grievance turned out to cost the membership. Why would they spend their valuable time on such a minor matter rather than jointly assist those employees slated for removal? If, by having both our high-profile union officials collaborating on an Informal A grievance benefits the membership and outweighs filing an unfair labor practice with the National Labor Relations Board against postal management, well then, I support them to the fullest.

Once more onto the breach

A response from the Chief Censor

By Tony Gallardo, President

The preceding article by Brother Eddie Reyna (page 14) has not been censored. In fact, no articles in **The Voice** have been censored, though many articles are now being given serious review before going to print.

My position on *The Voice*

Why are we giving these articles such careful scrutiny?

Articles published in **The Voice**, which put forward willful disinformation disguised as fact, have frequently alarmed me. I have asked the editor, Brother Ivars Lauersons, to review these articles for factual content, since many of these false allegations can be refuted by looking at such records as the budgets (published in **The Voice**), branch minutes (stored in our archives) or grievance settlements (stored in our files).

Our editor has made it clear that he does not have the time or the staff to go through this process. Upon being so informed, I assigned Executive Vice President Lili Beaumont to this task. The editor, either in levity or sarcasm, now calls Lili "the censor". To my knowledge, I (not Lili or Ivars) am the only one to have delayed the acceptance of an article in **The Voice**. Each article delayed for consideration got published.

Why am I so concerned about factual content?

The Voice is a widely read publication. When so-called facts are published that are false, misleading, or inaccurate, the branch is responsible for the damage inflicted. Oftentimes the damage is to our own organization, since people can be incited to retaliate against reported injustices that have not, in fact, occurred. Other times misrepresentations of the actions of regional or national NALC officers cause members to resent and withhold support for these officers that is not deserved.

Too many divisive issues

In most incidents, this one included, I have been given the opportunity to publish a counterpoint to the offending article. This, at least, gives the membership an opportunity to decide for themselves. However, every word printed on these divisive issues crowds out an opportunity to publish more practical fact-based articles that the members desperately need.

The membership needs to know, in practical terms, what they can do to safeguard their contractual rights and to improve their working conditions. In my opinion, we do the members a grave injustice every time we indulge

in these exercises at the expense of more hands on practical articles.

Next item on my rebuttal

This leads me to the next item in Brother Reyna's article. Despite his statement to the contrary, Brother Reyna is, in fact, bashing both the Branch President and the National Business Agent. Furthermore, Brother Reyna has failed to mention two facts that are critical to his case.

The first fact is that Brother Reyna's original request for information was impossible to respond to because it was totally unclear what he was asking for, or why he needed it. Management was correct in asking for clarification. The second fact Brother Reyna failed to mention was that once he clarified exactly what he was asking for,

This union is not soft on management.

the information was immediately provided. Given these two facts, the grievance was settled appropriately.

This is a perfect example of the kind of disinformation that must be carefully scrutinized in **The Voice**.

Brother Reyna is quick to call the Acting Manager of Labor Relations a coward, and to imply that the Business Agent and the Branch President are management lackeys. He specifically asks if this union is "soft on management."

Not "soft" on management

This union is not and has never been soft on management. On the contrary, this union is highly effective at strict enforcement of the National Agreement at every level. We are only so effective because our credibility with management on every level and with arbitrators is untarnished. When we make allegations, we uphold our burden of proof. Our accusations are credible and on point. This reputation is the one and only reason why we are so successful.

It was Brother Reyna who decided that he had to interview the Manager of Labor Relations at the district level on this case. Brother Reyna was representing himself and only himself in the grievance in question. Brother Reyna's own unclear written request for information was the only issue in this case. In reviewing the facts, I, as President, made a decision to intervene, to bring swift, fair and final closure to this issue, saving the union, and the Postal Service money, and more importantly, leaving the union's power through its all-important credibility intact. I take full responsibility for my action, and I would do exactly the same thing again, under similar circumstances.

I invite you, the readers of **The Voice**, to give your feedback. Would you like to see more attack articles and rebuttals, or would you like to see more nuts-and-bolts, know-your-rights articles? Let your voice be heard.

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OUR REPRESENTATIVES IN CONGRESS



Lynn Woolsey, of Marin and Sonoma, District 6, speaking at Congressional breakfast to Western States' NALC lobbyists.



Oakland representative, District 9, Barbara Lee addressing lobbyists at Congressional breakfast.

Photos by Herb Mitchell

ANNUAL DINNER / DANCE HONORING THE RETIREES

Saturday Night, April 16, 2005 • No Host Cocktails 6:00 PM

Deadline !!! Send Money by April 1

Italian American Social Club, 25 Russia (off Mission), San Francisco

Theme: *Mardi Gras*

Delicious dinner with wine 7:00 PM

Roast Beef Italiana, Roast Chicken Rosemary plus antipasti, salad, pasta, dessert, etc. (Vegetarian upon request)

Dancing after dinner Music by Luis Romero

Tickets \$25 for members and guests—Send coupon below

Branch members who retired between May 2004 and April 2005 and guest receive complimentary tickets.

Ticket Order – Mail to ANNUAL DINNER, Attn: Bill Thornton, NALC 214, 2310 Mason St., 4th Flr., San Francisco, CA 94133

Member's Name _____ Phone # _____

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Send _____ tickets @ \$25 each. Enclosed is my check or money order for \$ _____

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