



# THE VOICE



OF THE GOLDEN GATE LETTER CARRIERS

BRANCH #214

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS, AFL-CIO

November/December 2004

Award-winning newspaper

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*The Impossible Dream*

Ed Cuadra, Branch 214, NALC

## Branch 214 notes

**Welcome New Stewards:** Enrico Hapa at Rincon North/EPC; Harry Tam at Visitacion/180 Napoleon; James Yeung at Parkside; Bladimir Arguello at Station G/Bryant Street Annex; Tom Prado at San Leandro South.

**Welcome New Alternate Stewards:** Antonio Herrera at Pine; Danilo Tualla at Stonestown/180 Napoleon; Leo Garcia at Novato; Andrew Taylor at San Leandro Main; Audrey Davis as Formal A at Bryant Street Annex.

**A correction** on our Hawaii, 1970 delegation (**Voice**, May/June/July 2004, page 16): The person in the second row identified as “Batista Cava” is actually Frank Ruggiero. **The Voice** regrets the error.

Our full-time president of the California State Association of Letter Carriers (CSALC), **John Beaumont**, is now located at 626 Jefferson Street, Suite 4, Redwood City, CA 94063. Tel: (650) 368-NALC(6252) and (650) 368-6255. John is the former Secretary-Treasurer of Branch 214.

### 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  
 June Buccat . . . . . Trustee  
 Kathleen McConnell . . . . . Trustee  
 Vicki Sawicki . . . . . Trustee

### Voice Staff

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

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Our award-winning cartoonist, **Ed Cuadra**, continues to be reprinted in other letter carrier publications. His “The Passion of a Carrier” appears in the August 2004 issue of “The Parlor City News”, Branch 373, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

On Nov. 11, 2004, 20 Branch 214 activists joined the **locked-out San Francisco hotel workers’** (from **HERE**, Local 2) **picket line at the Hyatt Regency Hotel** at the Embarcadero. The arrival of the NALC gave the hotel workers, now in their 7th week of being locked out, a much-needed jolt of energy.

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Jose Contreras	Shelly Su
Donn Davis	Ming Tsang
Michael Frideger	Xiao Qin Wang
Richard K. Lai	Kent G. Zheng
Samuel S. Lee	Maung H. Win
Chung V. Nguyen	

### SAVE THE DATES

#### STEWARD BRUNCH

Sunday, March 6, 2005  
 10:00 AM Fellowship – 11:00 AM Brunch  
 H’s Lordships Restaurant – Berkeley Marina  
 199 Seawall Dr., Berkeley, CA 94710

#### ANNUAL DINNER HONORING RETIREES

Saturday, April 16, 2005  
 6:00 PM Fellowship – 7:00 PM Dinner  
 Italian American Social Club  
 25 Russia Street, San Francisco, CA 94112

### T.V. 214 Schedule

**SAN FRANCISCO, AT&T Cable Channel 29:**  
**Every third Sunday of the month at 7:00 p.m.**  
**November 21, 2004; December 19, 2004;**  
**January 16, 2005**

Our building

## The secret castle

By Bob Miller, Sunset Finance

Remember a few years ago when the Branch was pushing to buy a building? Remember when we got one? Hear anything lately about the building? There hasn't been much said about the building at the branch meetings either. Members looking at their pay stubs know they're paying for a building. What's going on?

In anticipation of losing our hall at the old 214 12th Street location (the landlord was not going to renew the lease which ended at the end of December 2002), the union went forward with a temporary dues increase in order to buy a building for the branch.



The selection of this particular building was made by the branch officers without any input by the rest of the membership about this selection.

### Joint ownership

The building that houses our branch offices on Mason Street was jointly purchased with the United Educators of San Francisco (UESF); with Branch 214 owning a little over a third of the building, the teachers' union the rest. There were problems with the building at the time of purchase. Extensive repairs are needed (the roof, conforming the

### Extensive repairs are needed to the building.

building to code, plus restructuring the offices). Until the renovations are done, branch meetings cannot be held in the Mason Street building.

There are other problems with the building site. There is only enough parking for the full-time officers at the site. It is located near Fisherman's Wharf, where free on-street parking is almost impossible to find. The neighborhood parking restrictions, where non-residents are obliged to move their cars every two hours, extends to nine p.m. on many blocks in the area. Meters are similarly monitored well into the evening. The cost of using a parking garage is staggering. In short, no parking is provided for members for after-work meetings or any potential branch meetings at the building, if any should ever come to pass.

### Teachers want out

The problems multiplied when the teachers' union offi-

*(continued on page 18)*

Our building is no secret

## Good choices, good investment, and a great location

By Tony Gallardo, President

I apologize in advance for having to put you, the members of Branch 214 through this spy vs. spy crap, but the preceding paranoid drivel disguised as an article of fact can't go unchallenged.



The facts are very different from what Brother Miller professes. Branch 214 is your Union, the most democratic organization I have ever experienced. It is an honor and a privilege to serve this organization. Our Union is transparent. It relies on official posted notices, minutes of meetings, contracts, by-laws, audited books, and all the necessary checks and balances to make sure everything is as it should be. This includes the Building Fund. There is no secret castle

If you want to know what is going on, just ask. It is your building, and there are no secrets. There is no conspiracy. As members, you have every right to know how your money is being spent. The budget committee reports to the Branch members on the Branch's income and expenses every 6 months. When a question was raised at the April '04 Branch meeting that was more in depth than the budget committee's report could accommodate, a detailed breakdown was provided at the May '04 Branch meeting. Nothing is hidden.

In Brother Miller's article, he claims that the Branch went looking for its own building because the landlord did not want to renew the lease. This is not true. The land-

### The facts are very different from what Brother Miller professes.

lord did want to renew the lease, at 10 times the price. At that time, rents elsewhere were sky high. Members who were in favor of buying a building argued successfully that our budgetary process was poorly served by depending on the whims of the volatile office rental market. A fixed mortgage would be impervious to the roller coaster fluctuations of the rental market, and the bulk of the money invested in our own building would build equity

*(continued on page 19)*

*Danger signals*

## Got friends?

By Ken Schneider, Chief Steward, Novato

Cronyism is hardly novel in America. The NALC appears guilty of accommodating management's emphasis on cost reduction in the grievance procedure. One need only read the branch items in the "The Postal Record" to understand the frustration with the Dispute Resolution Process and the lack of monetary awards for blatant and repetitive grievances. Is our union ripe for the picking? Let's look at some national examples.

### Politicians and companies

When Bill Clinton was in office, he almost started a trade war on behalf of Chiquita Bananas, who just happened to be a major campaign contributor. The Bush Administration appears unconcerned about the appear-

### Cronyism at a national level extends to awarding contracts in Iraq.

ance of any conflicts of interest. We all know about Enron, Kenneth Lay and their relationship to President Bush in Houston. Back in 2001, Vice President Dick Cheney led the energy task force. Enron helped Cheney devise an energy plan that certainly looked like it was written by and for the companies that advised Cheney's task force. When the lights went out all over California in the spring of 2001, the price of electricity was soaring. The Cheney task force concluded that the energy crisis was a long-term problem caused by "meddling bureaucrats and troublesome environmentalists." Their solution was to scrap environmental rules and give the energy industry multibillion-dollar subsidies.

### Radioactive waste in Nevada

A few days before the fall of Enron, the Bush Administration stated that it wanted to weaken pollution rules on power plants and store radioactive waste in Nevada. Each of these decisions was worth billions to companies with very strong ties to Bush. In fact, CBSMarketWatch.com stated in its story about the nuclear waste decision that "one group of major energy business political donors just hit the jackpot!" They also stated "a small group of business leaders exert enormous clout over Bush and his team in getting the rules changed to their benefit."

### The Carlyle Group

The business magazine Red Herring has published arti-

cles on the Carlyle Group, an investment company specializing in buying "down-and-out" defense contractors. They then resell the companies when their fortunes miraculously improve after they receive new government contracts. Bush's father, former President George H.W. Bush, is an employee of the Carlyle Group. An investor until October 2001 was the Bin Laden family of Saudi Arabia. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld awarded the Crusader Artillery systems to his college friend Frank Carlucci, who just happens to be the head of the Carlyle Group. See where I am going with this?

### Not to forget Iraq

Cronyism is an important factor in our country's Iraqi disaster. It is warping our government's policy in Iraq. The administration treats contracts as "prizes to be handed to their friends," stated Paul Krugman, a columnist for *The New York Times*. For example, Middle Eastern firms started offering cell phone service in Baghdad after our invasion. U.S. authorities promptly shut down the compatible cell phone service only to award the contract to MCI. The exclusive electrical contract was given to Bechtel, whose Republican ties are almost as strong as Halliburton's. Cheney was the CEO of Halliburton just before becoming Vice President, and is under investigation for doing business with Iran and Libya, two countries with reputed terrorist ties.

### Military draft

More recently, an article published on September 23, 2004, by *Inside the Pentagon*, a military affairs newsletter, quoted the study by a Pentagon-appointed panel:

### We are not getting monetary awards for blatant and repetitive violations.

"current and projected force structure will not sustain our current and projected global stabilization commitment." What garbage is that? What they really mean is if Bush is "re-defeated" this November and is our President for the next four years, he will enact the draft (Bush vowed not to in the third presidential debate).

This will most certainly push his agenda forward to accomplish his cronies' goals both in Iraq and here in the United States. Two of the board members on the panel for a larger military force are Craig Fields and Phil Odeen. They are both former defense industry executives with — you guessed it — ties to Dick Cheney. Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island recently took a troubling stand: He leads a group of Democrats who want to expand the size of the military based on the aforementioned Pentagon study. I have a really bad feeling about this.

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**Schneider** (continued from page 4)

What makes this all possible is the complete lack of effective watchdogs to police the Bush Administration and their cronies. Are we all afraid to speak our minds for fear of being called unpatriotic, or not supportive of The Team, if we suspect cronyism or special deals being made among concerned groups?

#### **Our own house**

Cronyism is in our own house, the NALC, and it has shaped my view of the leadership of our union. My first taste of this was at the NALC National Convention in Las

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### **Is cronyism a problem within our national union?**

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Vegas in the early 1980s. Evan Wilson is my good friend and was president of our local before we merged with Branch 214. I was there because I was vice-president of our local and Wilson was seeking a state position for the office of education for California. He just happened to be running against Dale Hart, who was slotted for the position with support from Bill Young (now National President), Tom Young and Brian Farris. We sat in a room along with Spence Burton, President of Branch 214 at the time. I remember Bill Young and Farris yelling at the top of their lungs at Wilson. I remember Bill Young telling Wilson that he would never hold a NALC state position as long as he was in charge. He threatened Wilson for opposing Hart, who was slotted for that position. Actually, Bill Young and his cronies were about to pull a bait-and-switch, and Wilson was in the way of their plans. I felt bad for Wilson and disdain for Bill Young, Tom Young and Brian Ferris and the California NALC leadership. Welcome to the NALC, brothers and sisters! Guess who the foxes are in the hen house?

#### **Cronyism in the grievance procedure**

In the past month, cronyism has come to the surface again. Let's say you've just completed a college term paper on corporate corruption. Your economics professor, who has an excellent reputation, assigned this to you. You have worked very hard and followed all guidelines and instructions. A few weeks after turning in your term

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### **How do you explain a settlement of \$190,000 reduced to \$80,000 without an argument?**

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paper, you receive a call from your professor's assistant, congratulating you on such a fine job. In fact, in addition to making your argument clear and easy to follow and

understand, the professor has awarded you a very high grade. You are told that your paper, based on the professor's instructions, just needs two of his/her associates to sign your paper and the high grade will be yours. Weeks go by and you are told that one associate refused to sign it and your high grade is now a low grade. You are told even though your grade has been lowered, you should be very pleased with your score, including all of the employees who were awarded this grade because of the corporate corruption going on with their employer.

#### **Cheaper to violate the contract**

Well, I am not pleased. Let me backtrack. In November 2003, I attended a class on Article 7.1B1, regarding casuals working in lieu of full-time workers. The first thing I was told was that it is cheaper for the post office to violate that part of the contract, to have the union file a grievance, and to settle the grievance at pre-arbitration for a monetary award, and then to hire the PTFs. So right off the bat, the post office is the BIG WINNER.

You might ask yourself why our union is settling our grievances for below market value and not pushing them

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### **And what happened to the creation of the four career positions we asked for?**

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to arbitration if we have done such a great job with the facts of the case. Do you see a loophole anywhere? San Francisco had a casual settlement of more than \$589,000.00 a few years back. When I asked for the documentation on the grievance, I was told there was none. They cut a deal at pre-arb. I would be interested to hear from the union leadership in San Leandro on their two casual monetary settlements, and if they feel they received a fair deal.

Are we having our rights defended to the fullest, or is the NALC comfortable in its role, working with management to reduce the cost of the grievances filed throughout the country? How can it explain the reduction of a grievance settlement from \$190,000 to \$80,000 without a bulletproof argument? And it is not about the money. I would have been happier if the casual grievance went to arbitration and the award was to eliminate the casual position altogether. And what happened to the four career employees that I asked for in the grievance? So which is it?

I believe it looks a lot like cronyism. You decide.



*Be reasonable at least*

## Penny-wise, pound-foolish

By Charlie Gonzalez, Chief Steward, San Leandro

I have been employed by the San Leandro post office for over 18 years and during that time I have experienced varying levels of us vs. them adversarial mentality from both labor and management. For the most part, we have been able to resolve our differences at some level of the grievance arbitration procedure and sometimes short of this process.

### Logic and reason

It has been, and still remains, my belief that when presented with the logical and undisputed facts that most people will put personal feelings and ego aside, and "Do

### When presented with logical and undisputed facts ...

the right thing". There are, however, exceptions to each and every rule and this one has its own as well. This fact has become all too clear in my recent dealings with Postmaster Evelina Ramirez and MCS Eric Ross and their staff of front-line managers of delivery and collections. Let me use the attempted transfer of a former San Leandro carrier as an example of the illogical and pound-foolish behavior of which I am speaking of.

### An example of a transfer

This past August I received a phone call from a San Leandro carrier who had recently transferred to the Rancho Cordova office in the Sacramento area. He indicated to me that he was very unhappy with the decision to switch offices, and asked if there was anything that I could do to help him return to San Leandro. After doing a bit of research, I found a provision in an Article 12 memo that allows for carriers who have made transfers such as his to return. I called him back and informed him that there was, however, a catch. The Postmaster at the office that he was returning to must agree to his return, and upon his return he would be the junior PTF. If the Postmaster in the office that he was returning to should agree to his return, then the Postmaster at the office that he had transferred to would have no choice but to release him. He understood and was more than willing to make this sacrifice to return to San Leandro. "Don't ask me why," he said.

### Speaking to postmaster

I informed him that I would speak with the Postmaster

and attempt to secure his return. I scheduled an appointment with Ms. Ramirez and briefly outlined the contractual provision which would allow for his return, and the

### ... most people will put personal feelings aside.

benefits that could be attained by securing his return. The carrier in question has about five years of experience, has a 9-ton license, and knew several of the routes in our office. I also explained to Ms. Ramirez that since San Leandro had been approved to hire 9 new PTFs that this would be a great opportunity for San Leandro to be able to have a PTF that was already trained, freeing up the OJIs to concentrate on other new hires that were in need of their attention.

This would be a perfect opportunity for San Leandro to save time and money, not to mention the feather in her cap when she informed her new boss Ms. Casey, MPOO for San Leandro, that she would only need eight new PTFs because of his return. Ms. Ramirez seemed a bit disinterested in my rationale and said that she would get back to me after she had given the issue some thought. This I found a bit strange as the advantages of bringing

### One of the new hires has already quit.

this individual back would make for a seamless transition that would greatly outweigh any disadvantage.

### A no-brainer decision

In essence, it was a "no-brainer." After about a week had passed, and having not received any response from Ms. Ramirez, I again scheduled an appointment to speak with her. At this meeting, Ms. Ramirez informed me that because a form-50 had already been processed, she had

### San Leandro would be getting a fully trained PTF.

decided not to allow the carrier to return. Ms. Ramirez cited the cost of processing the form-50 as her main reason for her decision.

Since her decision not to allow this valuable employee to return to San Leandro, three of the nine new hires have arrived at the San Leandro post office and one has already quit; another career employee and myself have been brought in at 5:30 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. respectively to transport mail to and from Estudillo and south station in LLVs on overtime doing a job that was normally done by

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Self-destruction

## A sickness in the post office

By Ivars Lauersons, Editor

Why don't we just hang a sign in the post office windows, "We want your business! But not too much business." We would say that if you pay for express mail, we guarantee a timely delivery. Because if we don't deliver, we have to refund your money. But "delivery confirmation," priority mail, dated sales flats. We'll deliver them whenever we get around to it.



If the post office ever goes out of business, it will not be solely because of outside competition, and political pressure. It will be due in large part to our short-sighted management at all levels.

The post office exists to deliver mail. If it does not fulfill this basic function, then it fails. According to management, the post office exists to create pretty figures on paper. The postal customer, an individual, or more likely now, a business, that pays to have their mail delivered in a timely manner, becomes secondary to the wrapped-in-itself management, which looks at overtime hours used, and the science-fiction of DOIS, as measuring results.

Call it old-fashioned thinking, but if mail is not delivered for several weeks to cut down on overtime, this is not

**Gonzalez** (continued from page 6)

the very employee that she would not allow to return, and management has asked for any employee in our office to volunteer to be trained to operate the 9-ton truck.

### Overtime blamed on carriers

The Bay Valley District has set expectations of 9% or less overtime for each of its associate offices, yet San Leandro is at 14% or probably more. One has to wonder how such mismanagement and counterproductive decision-making can be tolerated in light of the ever increas-

### Managers blame the carriers for their shortcomings

ing costs that they produce. At the last Labor/Management meeting, MCS Eric Ross expressed his displeasure at carriers who were in his words "...giving only 50%". He also stated that carriers did not carry "undertime" because they did not want to. I countered that every carrier that I have observed was doing the best that they

a properly functioning post office.

Call me idealistic, but if this delay is discovered by middle management, heads should roll. That should be the proper response by post office management. It is not.

Call me disgusted, when I see dated sale items kept undistributed, and delivered long after the sale is over.

These are not aberrations, but appear to be part of a deliberate policy that includes top and middle managers. Reporting delayed mail within the chain of command is useless. Reporting it around the chain of command also produces no results.

**Will writing about it make any difference? I hope so.**

When we worked in the post office, until very recently, when the mail became heavy, we worked long hours. And we had pride in our job. And we got the mail moved.

Now the attitude from management is to keep the work hours down even if the mail can't be delivered. From anecdotal evidence, it seems this delayed mail is not even being reported.

### A wrapped-in-itself management using the science fiction of DOIS.

Particularly disgusting is that all this is happening after another feel-good training session about how we must all work together to save the post office. "The union is our partner," we were told by a management representative.

Yes, and the check is in the mail.

For the record, I work at Marina station in San Francisco. The acting manager is Glorvies DeGuzman. The San Francisco postmaster is Noemí Luna.

could, and that it was not an unwillingness to do the "undertime", but rather an inability based upon all of the added duties heaped upon carriers over the years such as delivery confirmation, certified, insured, registered, and express mail that all must be scanned and inputted by the carriers. This is complicated by some of these items being mixed into the DPS, a fact that management refuses to acknowledge as a legitimate cause that eats into the carriers' street time.

Rather than acknowledge their own managerial shortcomings, they prefer to play the blame game, and point the finger directly at the backbone of the postal service, the craft employee. As stated earlier, one would think that when presented with the undisputed and logical facts, that most people would put personal feeling and ego aside and "do the right thing". This is, unfortunately, not the case with this management team, who prefer to cut off their nose to spite their face rather than take the union's advice. With each shameful example it becomes increasingly clear to this steward that Mr. Ross and Mrs. Ramirez are, simply put, penny-wise and pound-foolish.

On-line mysteries explained

## Zingledude, the Netter

By Arnold Jones, Shop Steward, Corte Madera

Fourteen years ago I became a shop steward. I had only been in the post office for one year. Boy, did I have a lot of problems. There were too many regulations. I was having problems figuring out what regulation to use. Then my young son said, check the Web. So I did. And I found a carrier named Martin Spielman. And when I had a problem, I would check with him.

At that time it wasn't well known that there was a movement to bring the NALC ([www.nalc.org](http://www.nalc.org)) into the computer age. Eventually the movement was called the NETTERS. It has grown. There used to be a chat called NALC which had chats on Sundays just for carriers. Now it is called "postal workers." There is also a chat on Tuesday. There are also message boards, all of which are accessible via AOL Keyword: POSTAL WORKERS.



The official "Netters" website is a source of information for stewards and members and was organized by another net aficionado, Gary Mills (<http://www.rollanet.org/~gary/>). No matter what problem you may have you can find the answer there. Or if you just want to know what is going on in the rest of the post offices, this is the place. You can even find pictures of some of the members and some help with grievances.

If you are at home and have a problem and need an answer for work the next day then you would use POSTAL BYTES (<http://lists.rollanet.org/mailman/listinfo/postal-bytes>). Postal Bytes is an e-mail site. On

**No matter what the problem,  
you can find the answer on the  
web.**

this site you will get information about postal issues and political topics. You will learn what is going on with the other post offices. For example, two piece cases: Did you know that it is already being used in some states?

Other postal e-mail sites include Postal talk (<http://www.nlci.com/users/frobozz/nalc/talk.html>) and US mail ([us\\_mail-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:us_mail-subscribe@yahoo.com)) and Keyword POSTAL WORKERS. Extension site for non-AOLers (<http://groups.aol.com/nalcapwuetc>)

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## POSTAL BYTES

What do we talk about in cyberspace? At the request of the Editor, I've selected some examples from postal bytes and postal chat.

- *How can he be a 204B and an NALC Officer?*  
This was a question that was asked on postal bytes. This is someone asking information on a 204B
- *I need some help finding out about a possible 204B coming out of St. Paul. Reason being he is a local NALC officer now. I need someone to help me that is out of St. Paul but I have no connections.*
- *Can someone figure this one out for me? A PTF was on annual leave last week for his PT bid. So last Saturday he had 8 hours AL charged to him. This week, starting Monday he was scheduled for 8 hours a day, every day, through Friday. So if he works Friday he will be on overtime. If he doesn't work will he get paid for 48 hours at the straight time rate? Or what?*

Let me start by saying that's a really good question.

You say that Friday would have been all OT. This can only be true if the PTF worked 8 hours on Sunday. Is this the case? Because if he didn't work on Sunday, then he only will have worked 32 hours at the end of Thursday.

If you are counting the 8 hours of AL this past Saturday as part of the 40 hours, it doesn't work that way.

So my answer is held in abeyance awaiting a response to yet another question: Will the PTF actually have WORKED 40 hours this week prior to Friday?

- *Does anyone on this list have experience as to the seniority rights of a carrier holding the VOMA job when that job is abolished? I heard today that all the VOMA jobs in our district are going to be extinct in two weeks.*

## POSTAL CHAT

Here is a sample of what is talked about in POSTAL CHAT. I have deleted the names. (Editor's note: I have left misspellings and terms that are part of the Internet culture.)

whats with the new two case system?

he he he

There's a difference

oh is that what it is zip?

huh what 2 case system?

yeah waht you Tallinn bout ?

3 case?

2

nation wide were supposed to go back to two case no wing cases

what is it ?? LOL

oh geeze.. are they going to cut the routes?

single cell?

They got rid of one of my wing cases and have me pitching to as range of numbers for my aptments

ha ha

I just put in a request for a wing case

I had 12 and a half trays of mail crammed into those two cases the other day

I can see the on the job injurys going up too trying to jam mail that need three cells into one

you got to be kidding miser

and I mean real trays.. I still have the plastic ones not kidding

Actually I have a three piece setup that they created while I was on vacation

for my route that's a lot.. there are guys next to me that do it a couple times a week

The po stop getting 4 sided trays

I am having a hell of a time with my hand.. it hurts when the case is jammed..

see

can you say carpal tunnel miser?

Above is what goes on in the chat room. There are two chat rooms, one on Sunday and one on Tuesday. The conversation goes from postal to personal to sports to convention. It is a very good place to meet postal carriers in other states and to learn what is going on.

*For the members*

## Second time service

By Jerome Tercero, Secretary-Treasurer

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the President of Branch 214, Tony Gallardo, for appointing me Secretary-Treasurer of this great local. It is an awesome responsibility as well as a rewarding challenge at this stage of my career. I have served Branch 214 in various capacities over the past 33 years and welcome the challenge of being Secretary-Treasurer for the second time.

As Secretary-Treasurer, I am responsible for the membership, dues, and all income, as well as representational duties. It is the membership records at this time which are keeping me rather busy here at our offices at 2310 Mason.

### Tell us of address changes so you can receive all the union communication.

We must keep our records as accurate as possible. This entails the cooperation of the membership to inform us of any changes of address, telephone, email addresses, etc. We are in constant communication with the NALC national office to ensure that the membership receives all the communications of the national and local union. So, if you have moved and are not receiving the **The Postal Record** or **The Voice**, please contact us at the Union office.

Another responsibility of the office is to collect dues from the members. This is, of course, accomplished through dues withholding each pay period. As this is our main source of revenue, it is very important that we collect this revenue. Unfortunately, members do have occasion to be in a non-pay status.

There are various reasons for members who find themselves without pay. Generally, this is due to the fact that they do not have any leave and therefore no income. The

**Jones** (continued from page 8)

**What I am saying is that if you want to know what is going on and need some help then you should reach out and touch someone on the Internet.**

A few years back I placed an article in **The Voice** asking if anyone would like to have a chat session for our branch. Well, if there is anyone out there who thinks that this is a good idea, let me know. After all, communication is the best teacher in this society. If you are interested, e-mail me at zingledude@aol.com subject:chat.

by-laws as well as the Constitution of the NALC address this issue and allow members up to 90 days to keep their membership in good standing. If they are still not working and find themselves in this situation the membership may by 2/3 majority excuse the remittance of dues for any member who declares an emergency.

But for those members who are not working and receiving OWCP benefits, they must continue to keep

### If you are in a non-paying status your dues may be excused.

their membership in good standing. The Secretary-Treasurer is sending bills for dues in arrears to accomplish this. It is especially important for those members who have the NALC Health Plan or Mutual Benefits.

Remember, your dues are our main source of income and we need your support and cooperation in keeping this great union moving forward to represent letter carriers! I look forward to meeting all of you as I travel through the land of Branch 214. So, if you have a minute, come by and say Hey!



PEACE



## In Memoriam

Hong Yee (retiree)  
Louis Preciado (retiree, former HBR)

# Branch picnic at Marine World, Vallejo October 17, 2004

*Photos by Arnold Jones and Herb Mitchell*



Facing four more years

## Post-election blues

By Bill Thornton, Vice-President

A depressing day after the election. Reports that many people are experiencing increased anger, fear and frustration over the election results. Clinical depression.

You would think that people, especially unionists, would consider job issues, health care, social security, etc. as primary, but the election indicated that many have

### **Bush is an errand boy for the neo-conservatives who don't give one hoot about moral values.**

other priorities. Former Clinton advisor James Carville was wrong. (He said "It's the economy, stupid.") Exit polls indicated some disturbing facts: 37% of Union households voted for George W. Bush. Ouch! 42% of the 18-29 age group voted for Bush.

#### **Cultural war**

78% of the Bush voters said, "Moral values are the most important issue." "Cultural war"? Depends on how you define culture and war. But there are definitely dis-

crepancies in the views of people who are natural economic/political allies.

There may be some hope in the increasing public realization that Bush is an errand boy, the draft-dodging/DUI

### **Anger, fear and frustration over the election results.**

claiming to be born-again frat boy carrying the water for the neo-conservatives who are making policy. These people (also Vietnam-era draft dodgers, almost to the man) don't give one hoot about moral values, Christian or otherwise. Feel a little better already.

#### **The Uncivil War goes on**

Serious soul-searching will certainly go on about the future direction of progressive movements and the Democratic Party and how to deal with the blue/red divisions.

On a more positive note, Branch members journeyed to Reno to help get out the vote in crucial Nevada. Participants reported a rewarding experience. On Veterans Day, Branch members joined hotel workers' picket lines in San Francisco, supporting the locked-out workers. It's the struggle.

And now for something *not* completely different: San Leandro Management has inflicted their #1 problem supervisor on San Leandro South Station. It's a cheap way to improve San Leandro Main's climate survey score: creative accountability.

**Jeopardy question:  
Compassionate conservative**



**Answer: What is an oxy moron?**

Juliette Chen, Branch 214

**2005**

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**National Association of Letter Carriers, AFL-CIO**  
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 Legend: U = Union Meetings \$ = Pay Day H = Holidays  
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**January**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1-H R
2	3 G	4 BL	5-U Y	6 BR	7 O	8 O
9	10 R	11 G	12 BL	13 Y	14-\$ BR	15 BR
16	17-H O	18 R	19 G	20 BL	21 Y	22 Y
23	24-BR	25 O	26 R	27 G	28-\$	29 BL
30	31-Y					

**April**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1 O	2 O
3	4-R R	5 G	6-U BL	7 Y	8-\$ BR	9 BR
10	11 O	12 R	13 G	14 BL	15 Y	16 Y
17	18 BR	19 O	20 R	21 G	22-\$	23 BL
24	25 Y	26 BR	27 O	28 R	29 G	30 G

**July**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1-\$ BR	2 BR
3	4-H O	5 R	6-U G	7 BL	8 Y	9 Y
10	11 BR	12 O	13 R	14 G	15-\$	16 BL
17	18 Y	19 BR	20 O	21 R	22 G	23 G
24	25 BL	26 Y	27 BR	28 O	29-\$	30 R
31						

**October**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1 Y
2	3-R BR	4 O	5-U R	6 G	7-\$	8 BL
9	10-H Y	11 BR	12 O	13 R	14 G	15 G
16	17 BL	18 Y	19 BR	20 O	21-\$	22 R
23	24-G	25 BL	26 Y	27 BR	28 O	29 O
30	31-R					

**February**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1 BR	2-U O	3 R	4 G	5 G
6	7-R BL	8 Y	9 BR	10 O	11-\$	12 R
13	14 G	15 BL	16 Y	17 BR	18 O	19 O
20	21-H R	22 G	23 BL	24 Y	25-\$	26 BR
27	28 O					

**May**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2 BL	3 Y	4-U BR	5 O	6-\$	7 R
8	9 G	10 BL	11 Y	12 BR	13 O	14 O
15	16 R	17 G	18 BL	19 Y	20-\$	21 BR
22	23 O	24 R	25 G	26 BL	27 Y	28 Y
29	30-H BR	31 O				

**August**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1-R G	2 BL	3-U Y	4 BR	5 O	6 O
7	8 R	9 G	10 BL	11 Y	12-\$	13 BR
14	15 O	16 R	17 G	18 BL	19 Y	20 Y
21	22 BR	23 O	24 R	25 G	26-\$	27 BL
28	29 Y	30 BR	31 O			

**November**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1 G	2-U BL	3 Y	4-\$	5 BR
6	7 O	8 R	9 G	10 BL	11-H	12 Y
13	14 BR	15 O	16 R	17 G	18-\$	19 BL
20	21 Y	22 BR	23 O	24-H	25 G	26 G
27	28 BL	29 Y	30 BR			

**March**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1 R	2-U G	3 BL	4 Y	5 Y
6	7 BR	8 O	9 R	10 G	11-\$	12 BL
13	14 Y	15 BR	16 O	17 R	18 G	19 G
20	21 BL	22 Y	23 BR	24 O	25-\$	26 R
27	28 G	29 BL	30 Y	31 BR		

**June**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1-U R	2 G	3-\$	4 BL
5	6-R Y	7 BR	8 O	9 R	10 G	11 G
12	13 BL	14 Y	15 BR	16 O	17-\$	18 R
19	20 G	21 BL	22 Y	23 BR	24 O	25 O
26	27 R	28 G	29 BL	30 Y		

**September**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1 R	2 G	3 G
4	5-H BL	6 Y	7-U BR	8 O	9-\$	10 R
11	12 G	13 BL	14 Y	15 BR	16 O	17 O
18	19 R	20 G	21 BL	22 Y	23-\$	24 BR
25	26 O	27 R	28 G	29 BL	30 Y	

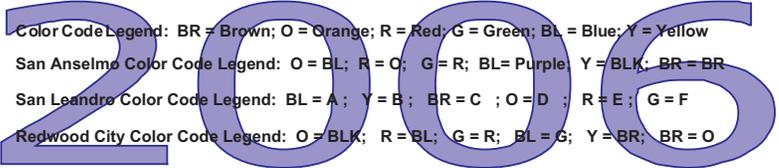
**December**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1 O	2-\$	3 R
4	5-R G	6 BL	7-U Y	8 BR	9 O	10 O
11	12 R	13 G	14 BL	15 Y	16-\$	17 BR
18	19 O	20 R	21 G	22 BL	23 Y	24 Y
25	26-H BR	27 O	28 R	29 G	30-\$	31 BL

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						1 G
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30						

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22	23 Y	24 BR	25 O	26 R	27 G	28 G
29	30 BL	31 Y				

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5	6-R BR	7 O	8 R	9 G	10-\$ BL	11 BL
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19	20-H BR	21 Y	22 BR	23 O	24-\$ R	25 R
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Exercise your right

## The importance of every vote

By Eddie Reyna, Shop Steward, Station "P"

I write this on the much-anticipated election night and as expected, there is a record turnout by voters. I would like to emphasize the exercising of one's right to choose and select a candidate. Much like the last presidential election held four years ago, *every vote counts!* It seems when significant concerns or change are in order, many will come out in droves to be counted. Having voted since the age of 18, I believe that *if you don't vote, don't complain!* Regardless of the outcome, many of those who voted will have a sense of participation in their civic duty.



### Our own elections

Our branch elections are no different; when the time comes to elect or re-elect a branch president, branch officer or station steward, that's the time to be counted and have a say. Being a member in good standing, you have every right to vote and choose the candidate who best represents your union. As our last branch election showed, every vote counts. Yes, this is a bit premature with our next branch election still a year away, but I felt compelled to write on this subject while everyone's attention is on the current election filled with important measures and propositions that could affect us all.

### Choose the best

So when the time comes to vote for any election, look over your candidates and decide whether he/she is the best candidate for the job. Ask yourself if the incumbents are doing the job. Ask: "Am I pleased with the work the incumbent is doing? Am I treated with respect when I speak with him/her? Is he/she truly helping me with my concerns? Or is it time for change?" Most importantly, if you are unsure of his/her work as a union officer or stew-

### Our officers are elected by us.

ard, check with those who have worked with them to better get an idea of whom you are voting for. Keep in mind, *if you don't vote, don't complain about who is elected.*

Another option is if you feel you can do the job as branch president, branch officer or shop steward, step forward and get involved. Our branch can use the much-needed help in enforcing the contract. The ability to read, write and comprehend is essential, which would give you

the edge on management because they are unable to do any of the above, or so it seems. Also, how does the saying go, sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me. The steward has long been and will continue to be called names and criticized by the clueless.

### If you don't vote, then don't complain.

I have been called a spy, lazy, mean, the guy who does nothing but walks around, troublemaker, easy money, crybaby, a rat, rude, complainer and worse, a supervisor. I have even been criticized for the way I walk. Being a shop steward will certainly draw attention; so expect to be ridiculed.

Recently, a group of gutless non-members had the audacity to write to our National Business Agent to ask that I be removed as shop steward for the reasons mentioned above. I would like to make crystal-clear that non-members do not decide for the paying members who shall be steward.

Losing sight of what the union has done nationally and continues to do for us all and the fight for the rights of the employee, is selfish. Credit for time earned working, lunch time and break time, which many are deprived of, continue to be of concern.

### Not fun and games

Nothing, absolutely nothing, about being a shop steward is fun and games. However, I believe every station must have and should have an active steward. Imagine for a moment that stewards take this duty/responsibility for

### You can always run for shop steward.

next to nothing and subject themselves to management's abusive treatment in the course of enforcing the contract. So if there are any potential Stewards out there, and I know there are, step up and become a steward or an alternate steward. Simply contact the union office. And if you're a non-member reading this, join and support the union.

Being a steward turned out to be more than I bargained for, but I can honestly say that I am here to stay and will not abandon or let the membership down, I would like to add that I have no regrets in becoming a steward.

Carrier Linda Name, a member of the Pacific Carrier Annex, has served four years in the military and was to be relieved of her duties and planned to get married when she was informed that her time in the military was extended and that she was going to be deployed to Iraq. We here at the Pacific Carrier Annex wish her and the rest of the troops the very best and look forward to having her return home soon!

*If you must leave*

## Working toward retirement...

By Daniel SooHoo, Part-Time Regular, PM Collection

Greetings! To all members of Branch 214 who have been reading and following my quest toward retirement, I want to say "Thank you" for your comments to make "Working toward retirement" a subject we can talk about and strive forward, as we put in the time of service with the Postal Service. A lot of changes have been added to the retirement package since I was first hired by the old Post Office. Starting with the Post Office strike of 1970 that introduced postal reforms to the level-six pay status, postal employees must be well-informed and have a retirement plan in place before retiring.



### **Straight from the retirement seminar**

On Oct. 2, the Human Resources Unit gave an informative seminar at San Francisco P&DC located at 1300 Evans Avenue. I was glad to see many members of Branch 214 attending the seminar. The speakers spoke about FERS/Survivor Benefits, Life Insurance Benefits/High Three, Eligibility and Health Benefits. Other topics that were also covered: State and Federal Withholding; Thrift Savings Plan Option After Retirement; Post 56 Military Service-Military Buy Back; Government Pension Offset & Windfall Elimination Provision; plus

Sick Leave and Annual Leave Balance. Many questions were asked by the attendees of different crafts and management employees.

### **Sick leave usage**

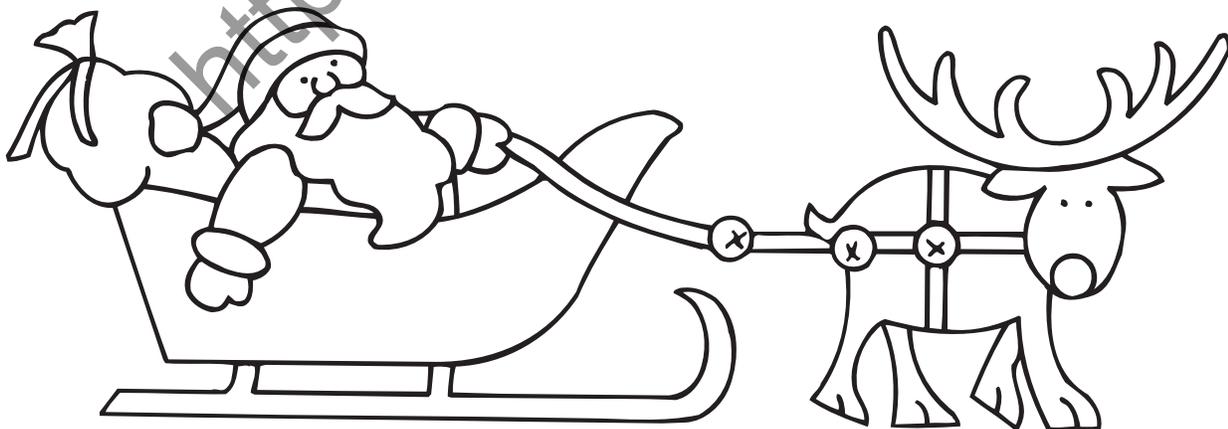
The topic of sick leave caught my attention. As most CSRS employees know, any unused sick leave balance is

### **I learned many facts from the post office retirement seminar.**

credited to the service time. For example, if a CSRS employee has actual service time of thirty-one (31) years, two (2) months, and twelve (12) days plus unused sick leave balance of eight (8) months and sixteen (16) days, the total time is thirty-one (31) years and ten (10) months. The total days is dropped because the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) doesn't compute days. Now for the eye-opening fact, FERS employees do not receive any credit of unused sick leave balance toward the total time. In other words, your total time of service is the total time.

### **FERS employees get no credit for unused sick leave when they retire.**

If I were to write the information that was given at the seminar, I would fill every page of a single issue of **The Voice**. And if you, the reader, have questions, I am willing to answer your questions on a one-to-one basis. Yes! I don't mind helping you work toward a common goal: Working toward retirement. 'Til the next article...!





## Letter:

### Editor:

I am dismayed by Juliette Chen's **Voice** columns this year. She has bad-mouthed coworkers, said the union is too good at defending carriers, and called for giving management a freer hand to fire employees ("New year resolutions," Jan/Feb 2004). Her last column declares that dogs are smarter than people, that our current "ignorant, selfish and brutish" generation was "spoiled by liberal coddling," and that all people are racists ("The Scarecrow and the Tin Man," May/Jun/Jul 2004). And she doesn't like conservatives either.

Her narrow historical perspective is totally devoid of the Civil Rights movement, the anti-war movement of the 1960s or even how these social movements interconnect and extend through generations with the labor movement, or how people sacrificed their lives to make the world a better place for others. A social critic without a sense of class structure or social justice can only make vague, misdirected pronouncements. You can't tell how a car runs by complaining about its paint job.

What's her point? Her style of hate speech has long been a weapon used to direct people away from worker issues. I am not sure what target audience Ms. Chen expects to find in a union newspaper or where she expects her acid-reflux commentary will lead her readers, but it doesn't seem to be toward union solidarity.

Ms. Chen's reactionary screeds may make her feel intellectually superior for a moment (she gets worked up enough to write another one every issue). She would feel better about herself and others by working on her compassion skills. We are all imperfect individuals. That's what makes us human. Unionism is about the betterment of all, not the degradation of others.

People suck, in Juliette's opinion. What is she going to do to make them better? Complain?

*Bob Miller  
Branch 214*

### Juliette Chen replies:



*Dear Mr. Miller,*

Ah! There's nothing like the prospect of a good reactionary screed to get me out of bed on a dark and cold morning. You have accused me of so many things, I'm not quite sure where to start. Let me address some of your major concerns:

First off, our branch officers and shop stewards do an excellent job of defending our members; I'd be the last person to argue with that. The point I was trying to make in my article ("New year resolutions", Jan/Feb 2004) was: you can get away with many violations in the Post Office if you know how to work the system, and that includes using the union to get you off the hook. How is this not a "worker issue"?

I also made the point quite clearly in the same article that postal management is quick to punish good workers but inept at disciplining bad workers. And yes, I think the very small number of workers who are chronically lazy and disruptive should be fired. The union's standard argument is that the worst workers serve as a buffer for the good workers. So if we eliminate the chronic offenders, the reasoning goes, then postal management will move up the food chain and start going after the good workers. Ahem, sorry to dip my little fly in your ointment, but management has already started doing that: they are skipping over the chronic offenders (because they are too much trouble to bother with) and are going after the good workers. The union stance makes as much sense as if I were to say that I like seeing homeless people and welfare recipients because they make me feel like a millionaire.

I don't subscribe to the outdated Marxist notion that labor is as pure as driven snow and all management is evil. In our diverse society, one of the worst things you can do is to look the other way just because a wrong-doer shares your skin color, language, religion, culture, sexual orientation, politics, or in our case, does the same job. Are you suggesting that certain people, because they share our status, should be protected from criticism? Is this what you meant by "union solidarity"? I'm calling for accountability and fairness for all, regardless of class or status. Are these not American traits? Or are they just alien baggage brought to these shores by a FOB?

As for your charge of "hate speech", let me figure this one out: rap lyrics that routinely encourage the killing of cops and the degradation of women are protected under Free Speech, and ditto for pornographers like Hustler publisher Larry Flynt, but my call for more accountability is considered "hate speech"? You need to go back to the dictionary for that one, Mr. Miller.

*(continued on page 17)*

**Chen** (continued from page 16)

For you to accuse me of being “a social critic without a sense of class structure or social justice” is ironic because it is the pervasive social injustice of this country that fuels much of my rage. All the blatant racism and injustice that provoked the Civil Rights movement have merely gone underground and mutated into more subtle forms. Racists no longer come conveniently garbed in a white hood, but most of us behave as if they do. Nowadays, racism and injustice come in many colors and guises, and percolate through all levels of society. No single class of people has a monopoly on virtue, but that doesn't stop many of them from behaving as if they do.

Contrary to your accusation, I do not think that most “people suck”, although I do belong to a class of hard-working, law-abiding, tax-paying people, otherwise known in this country as suckers; we're the anemic mystery meat sandwiched between blood-suckers at the top and parasites at the bottom.

While we're on the topic of suction, my 16-year-old niece recently startled me by blurting out, “My generation sucks!” while she was in the process of canvassing my vote for John Kerry. There you have it: an unsolicited and unprompted indictment from an intelligent teenager (and a Kerry supporter, no less) on her “selfish, ignorant, brutish” peers. (Some of whom, by the way, invaded the home of my blind neighbor and robbed him two weeks ago. This was after they had systematically robbed all the elderly neighbors in the last six months. And yet, at city council meetings, youth advocates yammer on endlessly about “youth empowerment”. Our youths are already armed to the teeth—how much more empowerment do they need? How about some “youth disarmament”? That would get my vote.)

Regarding my much-lamented lack of compassion, I don't practice knee-jerk, blanket compassion; I look at people as individuals, rather than as a vehicle to make me feel morally superior. I feel sorry for the single mother working two jobs to support her family but I tend not to waste any compassion on slackers. Also, I can't help but notice that the same people who are always calling for more compassion can be particularly vicious when someone doesn't agree with them. As our new Democratic star, Illinois Senator Barack Obama, said, “...all of us can disagree without being disagreeable.”

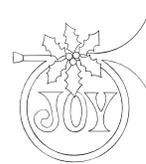
You also accused me of not liking conservatives. Gee, is that considered a character flaw now? Seriously, I have nothing against liberals and conservatives, as such. I do, however, distrust simplistic people who vote for and/or implement policy based on emotion/faith/ideology/propaganda. Unfortunately, there're plenty of those around in all political camps.

If I were *really* insecure, I could answer all your criticisms by saying:

- a) You're a sexist who can't tolerate independent women; or
- b) You're a bigot who can't celebrate the diversity of my opinions; or
- c) You prefer new immigrants to be mute, grateful, and know their place.

But frankly, I think it's hardly fair to make these assumptions about you based solely on your race, gender and one colicky letter—just as I think that many of your charges against me fall wide of the mark. Nevertheless, I would defend your right to criticize me, if not with my life, then certainly with whatever vigor I can muster under current circumstances. Even if we do not agree on some issues, I'm confident that we can find common ground on others.

*P.S.* After this election year, I can safely say that my dog *is* smarter than a lot of people. Heck, I know he's smarter than me; I'm the one working my tail off to support his Snausage addiction.



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(510) 799-5440  
1-800-200-8616

**Miller** (continued from page 3)

cers who supported buying the Mason building were voted out of office by a slate of officers who want to get out of the building. The teachers' union, not wanting to sink any more money into a building with so many shortcomings and which could never fill the needs of its membership, are opposed to making any improvements and instead want to put the building on the market and sell it.

#### **Renovations to be costly**

In the Spring of this year the cost of renovations for the Mason Street building was estimated to be about \$1.4 million, a third of which would be Branch 214's obligation. In other words, if renovations go forward, our membership's debt would increase by something close to a half million dollars. And that was the estimate six months ago.

For the last six-month budget, President Gallardo set aside thousands of dollars to pursue legal actions against the teachers' union. So much for Branch 214's reputation in the labor community. Meanwhile, the teachers' union is unwilling to budge from its position of selling the building. Our branch, judging from lack of news from the officers, hasn't been able to find anyone willing to buy out the teachers.

#### **Buying down mortgage**

There are other problems with the building. Large amounts of our General Fund have been spent in order to buy down the mortgage. That's good long-term financial strategy if the only business our branch was concerned with was paying off the mortgage, but it means that in the short run the branch is dangerously low on reserves.

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### **The new teachers' union leadership wants out.**

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When our last office secretary resigned, she was not replaced. That means that the work she did, the filing, phone messaging, all the secretarial work, is done by officers and volunteers. That means even less time for officers to be out in the field visiting the members, answering shop stewards' questions and standing up face-to-face with hostile management. And it means you are probably going to get an answering machine instead of a human being when you need help from the union.

The purchase of the building has been the biggest use of funds in Branch 214's 110-year-history. The cost of renovations would be the second biggest expenditure. Still, until the issue was raised from the floor at a branch meeting in 2003 the financing of the building wasn't even included in the check of the books. That was because the building costs flow through a joint corporation (with the teachers' union) that owns the building and is, as President Gallardo explained it, his responsibility and not the

Budget Committee's. Still, Gallardo has given the membership only the vaguest information about how the money is spent. Heads spin trying to follow the branch's explanation of how the money keeps moving from account to account. Even though the union has had plans for renovation (according to the Assistant Secretary-Treasurer, one bathroom will be removed for yet another office), no tentative diagram of the work planned has been presented to a branch meeting or published in **The Voice** or in any way disseminated to the general membership. No presentation of the \$1.4 million estimate for repairs has been revealed to the general membership.

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### **Let's sell, and move to a more convenient location.**

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**We are stuck with a big costly mess and the officers would rather not talk about it. That's the problem.**

#### **Here's the solution:**

1. Arrange with the teachers' union to sell the building. One branch trustee told me that the building was a "goldmine" because property value is skyrocketing in the Wharf area. If that's the case we should be able to break even or even profit from the sale of the building. In hindsight, the Mason Street building was a bad idea in a bad location. Don't waste our dues on a long legal battle. Don't increase our debt with extensive building repairs and renovations. Stop throwing good money after bad.
2. With the money from the sale of the Mason Street property, find a more appropriately-sized building in a neighborhood with more street parking. For almost the entire history of Branch 214 the monthly meetings have been held at rented halls. Recently, we have met at the Longshoremen's Hall. That and many other locations in branch territory would be fine for meetings. As long as there's enough space for smaller after-work meetings or training sessions at the new offices, owning a hall that would be unoccupied most of the time is unnecessary and extravagant in the Bay Area.

The purchase of the building has not made the branch better. There has been a precipitous decline in representation that is at least partly due to our resources being swallowed up by the Mason Street building. What strengthens the branch is this: frequent officer visits to carriers where they work; a strong, well-trained corps of shop stewards backed up by strong officer support; quick, positive resolutions to grievances; a deeper feeling of solidarity and an abiding understanding of the importance of our union and of organized labor in making our lives better.

The purchase of the Mason property was a big mistake. Let's correct it and get back to the things that have made Branch 214 the great branch it has been.

**Gallardo** (continued from page 3)

and stability in our Union. These arguments won the day.

#### **Membership input in the selection of the building**

Brother Miller claims that the selection of this building was made by the Branch Officers without any input by the rest of the membership about this selection.

The fact is that the Executive Board was authorized by the members to make the choice of this building. The E-Board is a committee that is directly chosen by the members, and was specifically empowered by the members to make this choice. Valuable membership input was solicited and very well received by the E-Board. The process was long and thorough. As a result we made the right choice.

The reason the Branch empowered the Executive Board with making this choice was that we had lost

### **The landlord wanted to renew the lease—at 10 times the price.**

opportunities to make offers on buildings, because they would typically become available and then purchased by someone else, between Branch meetings. It was simply too impractical in a fluid real estate market like the one in San Francisco to watch these rare finds, dug up by diligent time consuming research, get purchased by someone else, before we could bring the matter before the branch for a vote.

#### **Joint ownership**

The Branch voted to allow Branch 214 to consider joint ownership. Again, the arguments in favor of joint ownership won a clear majority at that branch meeting. Thus, we were specifically authorized to enter into this partnership for some very important and sound reasons. This partnership will eventually result in our owning (jointly) a meeting hall that we otherwise could not have afforded. When it is done, we will not need to rent halls, thereby saving money, and we will be able to rent our hall to others, thereby making more money for the Branch. This argument made sense at the time of our vote, which is why the members voted in favor of it. The argument still makes sense to day.

Brother Miller claims that we purchased a building that was in need of extensive repairs including the roof.

In fact, there were no problems with the building when we purchased it. There is nothing wrong with the roof. We moved in just fine. However, because we wish to renovate, we will need to abide by the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as stricter fire codes wherever the renovations are made. The last time there was permitted work on this building these laws were not in place. As for

the roof, if and when we renovate the fourth floor, the floor plan would need to be changed on the south side, because that side has steps and changes in grade that do not conform to ADA rules. Because of the way the walls, floors and ceilings are connected, the roof on the south side only would have to be rebuilt. The roof is sound. There is no urgent need to fix it aside from the fact that we want to build our meeting hall on the second floor, and

### **The renovations are not required. They are desired.**

would need to relocate to proper offices on the fourth floor that would conform to ADA rules.

The renovations are not required. They are desired. When the renovations are completed, we will have a meeting hall. The offices we currently occupy are fully functional and legal. The roof does not leak.

#### **Parking**

Brother Miller claims that there is only enough parking for the full time officers at this site. In fact, we currently control 5 parking spaces, and 3 neighborhood use permits. One of our officers also has a handicapped parking permit. This gives us a total of 9 parking slots, 5 in the building and 4 on the street. There are 5 full time officers and one half time officer. Even if all Officers were in, we still have 3 guest parking spots. It simply is not true that there is only enough parking for the full time officers.

Your Officers have worked hard in their negotiations for meeting hall space, to make sure that when you go to a Branch Meeting, or a Steward's meeting, your parking is free. Our current contract with the Longshoremen ensures free on site parking for our members at our meetings.

San Francisco is very tight on parking. Nevertheless, your Executive Board made the best decision for you. If you come to the Union Hall today, and call ahead, chances are very good that you will be able to park in

### **Parking for visitors can be arranged using our five spaces in the building.**

your parking lot for free. This is a vastly improved situation from the one we had at our old 12th Street location.

When our meeting hall is finished, we will have a suitable parking arrangement at any one of the many parking facilities in the nearby area.

#### **The teachers do want out**

It is true that the current administration of the United Educators of San Francisco (UESF) is in opposition to going forward with the proposed renovations to the build-

(continued on page 20)

**Gallardo** (continued from page 19)

ing. This is why we still don't have our meeting hall. However, the previous administration of the UESF signed binding agreements committing their organization to these renovations. We had these understandings and agreements in place before we decided to go forward with the purchase of this building.

The fact is that the current administration of the UESF has refused to honor the binding agreements of their pre-

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**The current administration of United Educators disapproves of going forward with the renovations.**

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decessors. Our articles of incorporation, by-laws and lease agreements all stipulate that disagreements such as these need to be arbitrated. Yet the current administration of the UESF has refused to go through the process of picking a neutral party to arbitrate our differences. These actions by the UESF have left them vulnerable to litigation.

If I were the vindictive and litigious anti-union bad guy that Brother Miller alleges, I would have filed a lawsuit a year ago, over these issues. As it stands, the Branch has indeed set aside money for legal fees. This is a fiscally responsible move on our part, since we have no way of knowing what further violations our partners are capable of, and we must make plans to protect the legal and fiscal interests of Branch 214. The Branch has taken no legal action against another Union, and I hope that we are never forced to do so.

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**We would be liable for \$400,000, not the half-million mentioned.**

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We have invited the UESF to help find another partner for us in the building. They have yet to take us up on this offer. They would like to sell the building outright, but NALC Branch 214 currently has more equity than they do in the building, since our assessment allows us to pay down much more of the principle on the Mortgage than theirs does. Thus, the longer we hold on to this property, the more money we make on it. It would be fiscally irresponsible of us to sell.

While it is true that the renovations will be costly, Mr. Miller's figures are inflated. The lowest bid that we got on the renovations was \$1,106,075. Under our binding agreement with the UESF, the Branch would be liable for about \$400,000, and not the half a million that he claims. The Union intends to take out a loan to be amortized over

30 years to cover these costs. Thanks to the very wise investment decisions made by our E-Board, the combination of the mortgage and renovation loan payments will still be less than what we would have had to pay for rent in today's market.

Brother Miller claims in his article that large amounts of our General Fund have been spent in order to buy down the mortgage. The 6-month budgets that the Branch passes twice a year, and the check of the books which the Branch approves every 6 months clearly show that *no amount of the general fund whatsoever has yet been spent in order to buy down the mortgage*. The mortgage is only being bought down using the 3-dollar per carrier per pay period assessment. The payments are \$13,500 per month. This innovative front-loaded loan ensures that when the assessment is over, the mortgage payments, which will then come from the general fund, will be less than what we were paying in rent at 214 12th Street when we left. Our mortgage payments starting April of 2005 will be \$2,274.45 per month. Our rent at 214 12th Street

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**No money from the general fund has been spent on the mortgage.**

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back in 2002 was \$2,700 a month. How many people do you know are paying \$425.55 less a month for housing than they were in 2002?

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**Office secretary vs. the branch building; another false assertion**

The office secretary issue is completely separate from the Building. The assessment that we all voted for specifically forbids any building assessment money from being used for anything other than the building. The general fund was unchanged by the building assessment. The number of letter carriers employed by the Postal Service has been reduced by attrition, due to the lack of hiring by the Postal Service to replace the many carriers that are retiring. This has had a fiscal impact on the Branch. In response we chose not to reduce the number of representational officers. Cuts had to be made elsewhere, so we eliminated the office secretary position. Thus we are maintaining the level of representation that the carriers deserve. This was a wise fiscal choice that has absolutely nothing to do with the building

There are just as many Branch Officers that go out in the field visiting members, answering shop stewards' questions and standing face to face with hostile management. However, the number and complexity of the issues continue to rise. All of our Branch Officers are excellent at getting back to stewards with answers to their questions. We all very much want to spend more time on sta-

(continued on page 21)

**Gallardo** (continued from page 20)

tion visits going case to case and confronting hostile managers. The Building is not in any way keeping us from doing this.

Brother Miller would have us believe that the costs of the building are not included in the check of the books. He alleges that I, as the President of the Branch, have taken it upon myself as the Financial Officer of the Building Corporation, to hide the building costs that flow through a joint corporation.

This is incorrect. Item 4 in the budget is "Building/Office Expense". Item 5 in the Budget is

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**We chose to keep all our full-time officers and eliminate a full-time secretary position.**

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"Building Corporation Expenses". It is true that the bills for the Building Corporation are paid by me and not by the Assistant Secretary Treasurer. This would include PG&E, Water, Garbage, etc., but not the mortgage. This is because the By-laws of the Building Corporation ensure that the President of Branch 214 is also the Chief Financial Officer of the Building. But when I pay the bills, I bill the Branch for their portion of the Bills. This in turn does appear in the budget under item 5 "Building Corporation". The Assistant Secretary Treasurer pays the Branch's portion to the Building Corporation, and that amount is accountable to the Trustees when they check the books.

The Building Fund is not under my control. The Building Fund is where your \$3.00 per pay period assessment goes. The assessment passed by the Branch mandates that this money *not* be placed in the General Fund and that this money *only* be used for the Building. The mortgage of \$13,500 per month is collected directly from the Building Fund, and is deducted by United Labor Bank to make this payment. The Bank generates a monthly statement that confirms this payment. The Bank also generates a monthly statement showing the current balance of the Building Fund. Both these statements are sent to the Branch Secretary Treasurer. These are Branch funds but not "General Fund". They are reviewed and approved by the Trustees during the 6 month check of the books. Nothing is hidden.

I am sorry if Brother Miller's head spins whenever I explain the way these financial transactions work. However, it is necessary and proper for these funds to follow these precise and well-defined paths. These systems are in place to protect the investment of the members. They in no way hide funds or reduce accountability. In fact the exact opposite is true.

**The mystery of the missing bathroom is explained**

Brother Miller expresses concern that one bathroom will have to be removed to make room for yet another office. This assertion is false and has no basis in fact. The fourth floor currently has only one bathroom. We have gone through many possible bathroom configurations in many tentative floor plans for the Building. New building codes concerning sex specific bathrooms mandate that if or when renovations are made, one more bathroom needs to be added somewhere in the building.

Our latest plans call for that extra bathroom to be added to the second floor. This is because we anticipate more people will be concentrated on that floor during meetings, and we felt that this is where that extra bathroom would be most useful. If we added the extra bathroom to the fourth floor, then we would *lose* one office for that floor. We are not planning to take away a bathroom to make room for an extra office as Brother Miller alleges.

Brother Miller also alleges that no tentative diagram of the work planned has been presented to a Branch meeting or published in the Voice.

Branch 214 has several complete sets of diagrams for proposed building renovations. All of these plans are ten-

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**The Building Fund is where the temporary allotment money goes.**

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tative, as we have yet to have approval from the UESF for any of these renovations to move forward. Bringing these plans to a Branch Meeting would be premature, as none of these proposed renovations are likely to be approved by our partners anytime soon. Publishing any or all of these tentative plans in **The Voice** would be cost prohibitive. The plans consist of 50 pages, each page being 3 feet

(continued on page 22)

**Branch 214 Meetings**

**Branch meetings, 7:00 P.M.**

December 1, 2004	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
January 5, 2005	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
February 2, 2005	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF

**Steward meetings, 6:00 P.M.**

December 1, 2004	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
January 5, 2005	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
February 2, 2005	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF

**Retiree social meeting, 12:30 P.M.**

December 6, 2004	740 Del Monte Ave., South SF
February 7, 2005	740 Del Monte Ave., South SF
April 4, 2005	740 Del Monte Ave., South SF

**Gallardo** (continued from page 21)

long by 2 feet wide. A manual the size of a medium sized telephone book also accompanies each set of plans.

Any concerned member is free to contact me if they have specific concerns about any aspect of these tentative plans. However, the plans are detailed and very technical. I don't know that the plans would be that useful or interesting to anyone other than an engineer or a contractor. Once again, we are not trying to hide anything. We are merely being practical and fiscally responsible about how much relevant information to disseminate.

We have not presented the Branch with the cost of the renovations because that bridge has yet to be crossed. The Branch has approved a total debt of \$800,000 and I am sure that our total indebtedness for the Building and its renovations shall never exceed this figure. When our partners at the UESF are ready to shoulder their contractual responsibilities, a report to the Branch will be timely presented.

Brother Miller concludes that we are stuck with a big costly mess, and that the officers would rather not talk about it.

As I have pointed out in the rest of this article, nothing could be further from the truth. We are doing very well, and are quite willing to talk about our building.

To solve the alleged problem, Brother Miller proposes that we sell the building. I disagree. While property values are rising, we have owned the building for less than 2

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**A sale after two years, and another purchase, would wipe away any profits.**

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years. While it is entirely possible that we could make a profit on the building, the costs associated with the sale of a building, the purchase of a new building, renovations to the new building, closing costs and moving costs would piss away our profits. Real estate is a long-term investment. We are sure to make a lot more money for the Branch in the long run if we just stay where we are.

Also, there is no way that we can afford to have a meeting hall on our own. To sell now would mean that we are permanently giving up the possibility of conducting our Branch meetings in our own building. If we stay here, we will be ready and able to deal either with a new UESF administration or another Union if we find one willing to buy the UESF out. Either way, we now own enough space for a meeting hall, which we should never give up. Also, we are making money, not losing money, while we wait. We have nothing to lose by staying, and everything to lose by selling out.

As for Brother Miller's obsession with the lack of parking, let me say that street parking is a big challenge in

every neighborhood in San Francisco. Our solution of available parking within our building, combined with negotiable contract possibilities in many nearby lots (including Safeway and Trader Joe's less than a block away) is the best possible solution to parking in the city.

I don't disagree with Mr. Miller on frequent officer visits, strong well-trained shop stewards, strong officer backup, quick resolutions to grievances, a deeper feeling of solidarity, and an abiding understanding of the importance of our union and organized labor in making our lives better.

However, these goals also require a sound financial base. The purchase of this building has given us real equi-

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**Our equity is currently over \$500,000.**

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ty that is currently worth more than \$500,000. This will only increase in time. These assets will only make our Union that much stronger in the future and that much more capable of reaching the goals that Bob Miller and I both share.

This can't be seen as an "either/or" argument. We can't give up financial security for short-term gain. Rather, with financial security, we will be better able to achieve and maintain all of these shared goals in the long term, and in perpetuity to the benefit of not only ourselves, but also future generations of letter carriers.

I called Brother Miller and invited him to meet with me to go over his issues on the building. I offered to answer any of his questions and to help him correct his article so that it would be based on the facts. I made it clear to him that there would be no need for my rebuttal if his article were accurate. Despite my appeals Brother Miller refused to consider meeting with me, or correcting his article. He insisted that his article be published without changes.

Again, I apologize for putting you the reader through this double diatribe, Bob and Tony show. But in all fairness to all the people that have worked so hard on behalf of the Branch to make this building possible, I could not let all of those false allegations go unchallenged.

Peace to all, and Happy Holidays.



## Approved Budget— October 1, 2004 – March 31, 2005

Expense	Spent 04/01/04 - 09/30/04	Projected 10/01/04 - 03/31/05
<b>1. SALARIES, LOST TIME</b>		
President's Salary (CSRS)	26,359.00	26,860.00
Executive Vice President's Salary (FERS)	25,829.00	26,325.00
Vice President's Salary (CSRS)	26,893.00	27,400.00
Secretary-Treasurer's Salary (CSRS)	27,265.00	27,400.00
Field Director Salary (CSRS)	26,893.00	27,400.00
Asst. Secretary-Treasurer's Salary (CSRS)	12,151.00	12,405.00
Health Benefits Representative Salary	1,041.00	1,060.00
Lost Time and Services (excl. Voice, Ed)	12,681.00	15,185.00
Leave Reimbursement	522.00	525.00
Officer's Leave Fund (30% of potential liability)	14,500.00	500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>171,134.00</b>	<b>16,060.00</b>
<b>2. PT OFFICERS &amp; STEWARD SALARY; EXPENSES</b>		
Shop Steward Salary	29,868.00	29,730.00
Sgt/Arms, MBA, EEO, S&H, Trustees, Dir of Org (8)	4,683.00	4,760.00
President's Expenses	1,165.00	1,320.00
Executive Vice President's Expenses	882.00	1,320.00
Vice President's Expenses	1,193.00	1,320.00
Secretary-Treasurer's Expenses	844.00	1,320.00
Field Director Expenses	988.00	1,320.00
Asst. S/T Expenses	550.00	660.00
Misc. Expenses (Other Officers & Stewards)	482.00	500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>40,665.00</b>	<b>42,250.00</b>
<b>3. TAXES &amp; OFFICERS BENEFITS</b>		
Officers Benefits	37,357.00	37,600.00
Payroll Taxes/City Taxes	18,257.00	20,000.00
Property Taxes	4,711.00	4,800.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>60,325.00</b>	<b>62,400.00</b>
<b>4. BUILDING / OFFICE EXPENSE</b>		
Architect - Tenant Improvements	—	9,000.00
Building Maintenance & Repair	1,425.00	2,500.00
Hall Rental/RWC Office	1,950.00	2,100.00
Janitorial Service Office	1,950.00	4,450.00
Secretary-Treasurer's Office Expense Acct.	6,800.00	—
Office Utilities (Phone)	3,965.00	4,000.00
Printing	4,722.00	2,500.00
Insurance (OWCP/Bus. Liability/Bonding)	1,198.00	1,200.00
Insurance (Representational Liability)	—	8,000.00
Maintenance (Security/Service Contracts/ Serv-Maint)	7,756.00	5,000.00
Computer Expenses	4,823.00	4,000.00
Office Supplies/Equipment/Office Expense	5,640.00	11,000.00
Payroll Services	1,989.00	2,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>42,298.00</b>	<b>55,750.00</b>
<b>5. BUILDING CORPORATION</b>		
BC Architect - Base Building	—	—
BC Pre-Construction Costs	—	—
BC Elevator	704.00	705.00
BC Garbage	209.00	210.00
BC Insurance	—	3,665.00
BC Janitorial	1,196.00	1,200.00
BC Office Expense	3.70	25.00
BC Professional Fees	428.00	1,200.00
BC Serv Maintenance	1,384.00	1,500.00
BC Utilities (PG&E/Water/Elevator/Phone)	5,433.00	5,500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,357.70</b>	<b>14,005.00</b>

<b>6. FEES &amp; DUES</b>		
Professional Fees	657.00	5,000.00
Affiliate Dues	5,282.00	5,285.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,939.00</b>	<b>10,285.00</b>
<b>7. CONVENTION &amp; CONFERENCES</b>		
Convention Fund	17,000.00	25,700.00
Seminars & Conferences (HBR/DC Lobby Trip)	426.00	4,550.00
Committee of President's Meeting/ National Rap Session	801.00	1,500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,294.00</b>	<b>18,750.00</b>
<b>8. EDUCATION</b>		
Training, Seminars, Stewards Breakfast	10,655.00	15,000.00
Other: Books, Materials, NALC Supplies	680.00	500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,335.00</b>	<b>15,500.00</b>
<b>9. COMMUNICATIONS</b>		
Voice: Lost Time	2,489.00	2,500.00
Expenses	11,857.00	12,000.00
TV 214	1,200.00	1,560.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,546.00</b>	<b>16,060.00</b>
<b>10. ENTERTAINMENT &amp; SPORTS</b>		
Good of the Order/Other Refreshments	2,061.00	2,500.00
Annual Dinner	2,193.00	3,000.00
Recreation/Picnic	2,000.00	2,000.00
Holiday Party	—	1,200.00
Stewards Breakfast (previously in Education Budget)	—	3,500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,974.00</b>	<b>12,200.00</b>
<b>11. REPRESENTATIONAL EXPENSES</b>		
Representational Expenses	—	500.00
Contract / Picket Action / Legislative Action	—	1,500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>2,000.00</b>
<b>12. OTHER</b>		
Retirement and Other Gifts	3,465.00	3,500.00
New Member Services	500.00	1,895.00
Elections	7,045.00	—
Food Drive	—	250.00
100% Union Celebration (\$4.00 per person)	—	250.00
Miscellaneous	467.00	500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,477.00</b>	<b>6,395.00</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>393,267.70</b>	<b>433,655.00</b>

### Projected Income

	# of Members	Per Member	Projected Income
Active Members (7 pay periods @ 15.67)	2,035	\$109.69	\$223,219
Active Members (6 pay periods @ 16.90)	2,035	\$101.40	\$206,349
Retired Members	350	\$ 2.25	\$ 788
Interest Income			\$ 300
Miscellaneous Income			\$ 3,000
<b>Projected Income Total</b>			<b>\$433,656</b>
TOTAL PROJECTED INCOME:			\$433,656
Total Projected Expenses			\$(433,655)
<b>Projected Surplus</b>			<b>\$ 1</b>



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NALC Health Benefit Plan

## Benefits remain high

By Franklin Woo, NALC HBR

All Branch 214 members not currently enrolled in the NALC Health Benefit Plan will have an opportunity to join the Plan for 2005 during Open Season, which will run from November 8 through December 13, 2004. For any health plan changes or enrollment, one would need to call PostalEASE at 1-877-477-3273 or at 1-800-222-2415 and listen and follow the automated instructions carefully.

We all know about the soaring medical costs these days and how they are affecting our pocketbooks. Active and retired letter carriers can be proud that their union's health plan—the NALC Health Benefit Plan—will retain all of the same high level of benefits for enrollees in 2005, while continuing to offer rates competitive with others in the Federal Employees Health Benefits program (FEHB).



Administered and operated by the Union, the NALC Health Benefit Plan provides active letter carriers, annuitants, and other postal employees with top-quality benefits that include medical services provided by doctors, in-patient and out-patient hospital services, emergency treatment, mental health and substance abuse treatment and NALC's prescription drug program.

Employee contribution rates effective in January 2005 for active letter carriers and annuitants in the NALC Health Benefit Plan are:

	<b>Self Only</b>	<b>Self &amp; Family</b>
Active Carriers (biweekly)	\$34.65	\$52.65
Annuitants (monthly)	\$126.34	\$230.75

Why should you join the NALC Health Benefit Plan? It's quite simple—this is YOUR Plan. The Plan has been there for letter carriers for 50+ years and will continue to serve you in the years to come. But there are a couple of additional reasons why letter carriers should join the Plan—**SERVICE AND CHOICE**.

**Service** is represented by the employees, staff and officers of the NALC Health Benefit Plan who are dedicated to serving you promptly and accurately. The department

is backed up by many others in the Plan's Asburn, VA office—medical, legal, actuarial and other professionals—experienced people who know how and where to obtain information on new surgical procedures, new medications, methods of treatment and other facts necessary to assist the staff in serving YOU!

### This plan is administered and operated by our own union.

**Choice** means freedom to select the provider that fits the needs of the member, especially when a serious medical condition is at hand. With more and more HMOs raising premiums, squeezing their benefits or dropping out of the FEHB program completely, the opportunity to make your own choice of provider should become a major factor in selecting a health plan. So, by joining the NALC Health Benefit Plan for 2005 during this upcoming Open Season, you will always have a team that works for and with you to protect YOUR health care interests!

### It provides service to you, and choice of a doctor.

So, consider supporting the NALC Health Benefit Plan for 2005. It's only reasonable to do so! During this coming Open Season, give the NALC Health Benefit Plan a try! Hope to see all your names in my 2005 HBP membership list.

Questions? For immediate assistance, contact the Plan's Asburn office toll-free at 1-888-636-6252 and ask to speak with a Customer Service Rep (CSR), from 8:00 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. (EST). Or, you may leave me a voice mail message at 1-800-4BR-0214 or 415-362-0214.



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