



THE VOICE

OF THE GOLDEN GATE LETTER CARRIERS

BRANCH #214

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS, AFL-CIO



September/October 2002

Award-winning newspaper

Vol. XXXII, No. 5

NALC MEETS IN PHILADELPHIA



Branch 214's Carol Maggio, in her position as Credentials Committee Chair, spoke to the convention to announce the final delegate tally of 7,711. To her right on the podium is National President Vince Sombrotto.

The main entrance to the Philadelphia Convention center, site of this year's NALC convention.

For full report on
Convention
see pages 14
and 15



Photos by Ivars Lauersons

BRANCH 214 NOTES

The editors thank **Lynda Beigel** for her help and input on this issue. See also her **poem on the back page**.

Associate Editor Juliette Chen's article, "Life under the jackboot", was **reprinted** in Branch 290's *The Beast of Burden* in its May/June 2002 issue.

Raymond Guan, **San Anselmo PTF** carrier, is looking for a mutual **trade/transfer to San Francisco**. If you are an interested San Francisco PTF carrier, please call him at (415) 587-9880.

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Ivars Lauersons	Editor
Phil Vosburg, Juliette Chen	Associate Editors
Gerry Lee	Cartoons and Graphics

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Voice wins awards

The Voice won two awards at the 2002 NALC National Convention held in Philadelphia. It won second place in the General Excellence category for large branches in the 2000-2002 Branch Publication Competition Awards. An article entitled "Just DOIS" by Roland Garshol, former Branch 214 president, won an honorable mention in the category of Best News or Feature Story. "Just DOIS" won on the strengths of its clever headline and informative, witty content.

The Voice was praised for its layout. The judges considered it "lively, interesting...clean, clear and concise". For that, the Editor and Associate Editors would like to thank DC Typography, and especially Frank Brayton, for their excellent work and intelligent input. The paper was also lauded for being a "crisp and readable" publication that is "not afraid to include different points of view". The judges also liked the way the "intelligence and the interests of readers are respected in the way that issues are addressed, including problems with management decisions".



Photo by Ivars Lauersons

President Tony Gallardo addresses the convention delegates from a floor microphone, arguing for one of the branch-introduced resolutions.

T.V. 214 Schedule

SAN FRANCISCO, AT&T Cable Channel 29:
Every third Sunday of the month at 7:00 p.m.
Oct. 20, 2002, Nov. 17, 2002, Dec. 15, 2002

Kickstarting

The reluctant steward

By Juliette Chen, Associate Editor

My postal life has taken a few odd turns in recent months. And I lay the blame for it squarely at Ray Fong's door. There I was, sitting in the union hall one day, minding my own business, when Ray bounded in. *Uh-oh*, I thought to myself as I eyed him warily, he's looking for recruits for some crusade or other. This time, however, his suggestion stunned me: Ray wanted me to attend a three-day union leadership school in Los Angeles, co-sponsored by APALA (Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO) and the UCLA Labor Center. After the initial shock subsided, I was tickled; the idea of me as



a potential leader of any kind, let alone a union leader, was very funny. I have always been a fence-sitting, commitment-phobic outsider. Nonetheless, Ray was offering me an opportunity to find out if he was right and I was wrong.

Back to school

On May 30, I found myself on a flight to L.A. My travelling companion and fellow student was Art Ubungen, a battle-hardened shop steward from EPC. At UCLA, we were joined by 22 members from 15 different unions, representing a broad spectrum of industries and union experience. Some of them were fresh from organizing their workplaces, and the rest of us were caught up in their excitement and enthusiasm. We were also pumped up by our teachers and guest speakers. The teaching fellows were young but very experienced union organizers, who led thought-provoking workshops. Our teachers and some of our fellow students fit my ideas of leadership: they were outspoken, committed, charismatic, with the ability to motivate and inspire crowds. But the ones who intrigued me were the quiet ones, who never spoke up unless prompted, and yet some of them were veteran unionists who had successfully organized their fellow workers. Is there a place in the union for quiet, shy people like me? I was beginning to think so.

Promises, promises

The upshot of it? I went to the leadership school a cynic, and came away a convert three days later. By the last day, I was doing the union clap, pumping my fist in the air at regular intervals, and making all kinds of sweeping promises in class: *Yes, I will attend my first union meeting! And yes, I will sign up for steward train-*

ing! Yes! Yes! Yes! My classmates cheered me on. It was all most gratifying.

The elation lasted for a while even after my return to the Bay Area. Then the fumes evaporated, the effects wore off. I woke up one morning, stone cold and sober, and realized, to my horror, that I was now the only steward at my station.

The stew boils over

I was paralyzed by the prospect of my new responsibilities. My husband took to calling me The Stew,

**I realized, to my horror, that
I was the only steward at my
station.**

because I was simmering with so much anxiety and doubts. How could I take on more responsibilities when I already felt overwhelmed by existing ones? I had one of the toughest routes in the station—how could I summon up the energy to deal with other people's problems? Where would I find time to read, let alone memorize, the J-Cam and the narcolepsy-inducing contract? I spent most of my life avoiding confrontation, so why would I want to come between angry, aggrieved people? I have no business being a shop steward.

When I finally returned to a semblance of sense, I tried to put things in perspective. What was my motive in becoming a shop steward? I wanted to learn more about my rights as a carrier, and as a staff member of **The Voice**, I felt that I needed to be more tuned into current issues that were affecting the union. What did I fear the most? I fear my own ignorance, and disappointing those who come to me for help.

Some assembly required

As a new steward, I will be making mistakes, but I will also be learning from them. As a novice, I will be picking my battles with care—a little skirmish here, a little guerilla action there. No Waterloos. Perhaps management will take advantage of my inexperience, but as my uncle the Vietcong revolutionary could tell them, underestimating your opponent is one of the worst mistakes you can make in a war. But are we at war? I don't like the idea of making enemies and usually I would go out of my way to give people—whether in management or labor—the benefit of the doubt, so you'd have to be a back-stabbing, scum-sucking worm for me to dislike you. Perhaps I'm naive, but I will treat management and fellow carriers with respect and honor, and I will expect the same in return. I do, however, have a knee-jerk reaction towards rudeness. Unwarranted, unprovoked rudeness accompanied by direct orders will definitely activate my launch sequence.

Voicing my conscience

One unionist's thoughts about Election 2002

By Mike McAdoo, Parkside Station

This essay is but one of a plethora of articles to appear in the most diversified of Unionist publications: **The Voice**. I wish to express my appreciation to the officers, many of whom I have disagreed with on matters of public policy, as well as many of my fellow union members, many of whom have encouraged me to be the resident curmudgeon over the past decade. These opinions are those of a unionist who is exercising not only the right of independent expression but also one who feels that he must speak out.



Democrats gone radical

It is my belief that in this era of national soul searching, organized labor, both in the hierarchy and in the ranks, should divorce itself from the grasp of the radicalism which has taken the heart and soul of the Democratic Party. The Clinton

cadre has taken the reins of a party which had a cross-section of individuals such as Senator Al Gore Sr., who was the right hand for oil corporations and mining interests in the Senate during the 1950s and 1960s, and who was very supportive of the defense budgets which helped to create a massive defense establishment in the Volunteer State (as Tennessee is known). Gore Sr. also voted against the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1968 Fair Housing Act (which George Bush, a Republican freshman Congressman from Houston, Texas, voted for and supported).

Organized labor should divorce itself from the radicalism of the Democratic Party.

Included in the Democratic cross-section was Senator Henry Jackson of Washington who was a supporter of the civil rights acts of the 1950s and 1960s. The vote cost George Bush the 1970 Senatorial race in Texas to a Democrat who not only opposed the civil rights laws of the 1960s but ran as the Vice-Presidential candidate for the Democrats on the 1988 ticket with Governor Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts. Senator Gore Sr., the father of the inventor of the Internet, was defeated in 1970 by a

Republican Congressman named William Brock who voted for the 1964 Civil Rights Act. It should be mentioned as well that Senator William Fulbright of Arkansas, for whom the only President in US history to be dismissed from practicing before the US Supreme Court worked, voted against every civil right act of the 1950s and 1960s.

Support a Republican Congress and Senate

The path I recommend is to render, especially in this

Enron and other similar scandals had their roots in the Clinton years.

upcoming general election, support for a Republican Congress and Senate. Support for investment by the private sector as proposed by President Bush could come about by cuts in the capital gains taxes and reduction or elimination of the double taxation of dividends from corporate earnings would make available needed capital to create growth in the economy and in the creation of jobs. The Democrats have offered little except hype about Enron, which has ceased since it came out that the seeds of the Enron scandals and other similar scandals had their roots in the Clinton years when, according to TIME magazine, the Clinton 1996 campaign received record contributions from Enron which, since it engaged in interstate

The Republicans have appointed a more balanced Judiciary.

commerce, was more subject to Federal regulation than businesses which only engaged in business in the Lone Star State. For those of you who believe that Hillary Rodham Clinton as Attorney of Record in Whitewater did not know what was going on with respect to Whitewater, the Lone Star State is Texas.

The importance of a balanced judiciary

Also, it should be taken into account that the Republicans have appointed a more balanced Judiciary. The Democrats seem intent on doing to the Federal Judiciary what Jerry Brown, the former "Governor Moonbeam" of the Golden State, did to that State's Judiciary when he appointed Rose Bird as Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court. Unlike the Golden State Judges, Federal Judges are in for life and are not subject to reconfirmation. The confirmation of sound, balanced Judges is and will continue to be prevented by a Senate led by the Democrats. Unionists should be well aware of this

(continued on page 5)



Senator John Edwards, Democrat, North Carolina, speaks to the convention, mentioning, among other things, that his mother had delivered mail.

works and, frankly, those radicals who dominate the Democratic Senatorial and House Caucuses would jeopardize our defense establishment as they are, in this unionist's view, trying to jeopardize our national economy just to get power.

I realize my views are not in line with the hierarchy of the unions. I do believe, however, that my views are representative of the rank and file. It follows that if effective change must

come from within the union movement for the benefit of the union movement and the nation in which unionists and those they love live, said change must come from the rank and file exercising their independence from the radicalism which has been the stigma of the Democratic Party of the Clintons. Please weigh these thoughts of a fellow unionist of conscience when you vote on Tuesday, November 5, 2002.

McAdoo (continued from page 4)

because where they work, where they live, where their children go for education, what kind of education those kids receive, as well as the fairness of the rule of law in the society in which unionists and their families live will be affected by the Federal Judicial Nominations. Balance leads to fair decisions. Rose Bird-like appointments lead to polarization, discontent and loss of respect for the rule of law, which is the sinew that binds our social fabric.

Survival depends on robust military

Finally, I want to address a matter of great concern to me. I believe that, in this post-9/11 world, our survival as a nation depends on a sound and robust military. There is just no sense in denying this axiom. Nations aligned with this notion defeated not only Asian and European fascism but also overcame the most oppressive force of the twentieth century, ie., communism. Not only is US survival at

**Radicals who dominate
Democratic caucuses would
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establishment.**

stake, but civilization as well. The Military was viewed with scorn by the Democrats during the 90s, much to the detriment of our national security. There was a massive exodus from the officer and enlisted corps due to attempts to transform the armed services into social experimentation laboratories, resulting in the disillusion of many of those who not only won the War but those midlevel personnel who won Desert Storm. Revitalization in the

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Postal X-Files

Route inspections

By Audrey Davis, Sunset

The average person doesn't realize what a letter carrier job entails. Most people see the "mailman," strolling down the street, enjoying the sunshine, getting good exercise and handing out a couple of letters here and there. They just see the mail that is placed in their mail box and aren't aware that letter carriers deliver thousands of pieces of mail to hundreds of addresses everyday.

No such thing as a lazy letter carrier

I've heard friends of mine say things like, "my mailman delivers our mail at 6 o'clock at night, he just brings it whenever he feels like it." One movie scene depicted letter carriers playing darts in the office instead of sorting mail. The images of letter carriers sitting around waiting for their fat government checks are the farthest thing from the truth.

The truth is out there

Letter carrier duties are timed down to the minute. The United States Postal Service has several manuals that detail every movement that we are allowed or expected to make. During the route inspections management records the letter carrier's every movement with stopwatch precision. Every piece of mail is counted and letter carriers are expected to sort 18 letters every minute or 1,080 letters every hour.

The M-41 (City Delivery Carriers Duties and Responsibilities manual) instructs letter carriers on how to sort

Every minute of the carrier's day is recorded and scrutinized.

the mail: "Pick up a solid handful of mail with the left hand. Read the address only. Recall the correct separation on your case. As letter is pushed fully into separation, position eyes on next letter and push next letter forward with left thumb. The right hand then returns to pick up this letter for placing into the proper separation. Follow the same procedure in the distribution of each letter until the process becomes automatic." Letter carrier duties are broken down to the smallest detail and carriers are observed to make sure they are working like well-oiled machines.

Every single minute of the letter carrier's day is recorded and scrutinized. At the end of the route examination process, the letter carrier's route is set. After that, if the

letter carrier cannot finish all of the duties within the eight-hour day, he or she must "justify" the need for assistance or overtime. Having to "haggle" over assistance on a daily basis is probably the most frustrating part of a letter carrier's job.

Most letter carriers agree with our union contract, which states, "A fair day's work, for a fair day's pay." But how do letter carriers get a fair route check?

Route inspections coming soon

Route exams are scheduled for several stations in our local area. This can be a very tense time in the stations. Since management can't require letter carriers to perform some new task on the day of the exam, they drag all the

Management is handing carriers the tools to create a fairer route exam.

old rules out of the closet and dust them off during the months preceding the inspections.

The carriers understandably resent the hypocrisy of

(continued on page 7)



Photo: Branch 214 archives

A newly minted carrier relative tests out an existing mail cart.



Photos courtesy Terri Wong

In New York City, the carts have large pouches on the side and the relay boxes are individually decorated.

Davis (continued from page 6)

management suddenly enforcing rules that haven't mattered for years. But it would be a mistake to ignore those rules and continue to cut corners just because it's easier. Many times, we worry about what is easier today or right now and forget that sometimes sacrificing now will make things better in the future.

The information that is gathered on the day of the route inspection is not all that management considers when

**Take whatever time it takes
to do the job professionally.**

they finally adjust the routes. They also look at your "demonstrated performance," which is how much time it took you to deliver the route in the past.

**Don't cut corners — you are helping management
add on to your route**

Many times carriers do things like drive their own vehicle instead of catching the bus or they skip their breaks or other duties because they don't want to argue with the supervisor about how much time they need to finish the route. That is where management will trap you. Management tells carriers way before the route inspections start to obey all of the rules and so if you are skipping duties, then it simply appears as if you can do the route in a shorter amount of time. When it comes time to adjust the route, your "demonstrated performance" will

show that you "slowed down" on inspection day and they will extend your route to the speed that you can go when you are skipping breaks and other duties.

Following every rule is the key to a better route

Management is handing carriers the tools to create a fairer route exam. Follow every detail of every rule and take ALL of the time that it really takes to do your assignment. The best tool is to record all of your duties down to the smallest seemingly insignificant detail. Many carriers might see this as "cheating," but far from it. Management has volumes of handbooks and manuals that dictate every aspect of our jobs and legally they can hold every employee to those duties. Cheating is when supervisors harass and brow beat carriers into cutting corners, especially skipping breaks in order to finish within eight hours when they have more than eight hours of work.

Be professional

Disregard how angry the supervisors get at you right now if you cannot finish on time. The supervisors want you to rush through your route. Someone in upper management will be getting a bonus if you skip enough lunches. Take whatever time it actually takes to do the job professionally. Otherwise, you will pay for the next ten years or so with an overburdened route. You can either fight over the time now and for the next few months or you can fight over getting assistance/overtime for the next decade.

Believe it or not.



Photos by Ivars Lauersons

Postmaster-General Jack Potter, right, presented Vince Sombrotto with a special award, as Executive Vice-president Bill Young, left, looks on.



Delegates paying attention to convention business.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Peter Les Holden
Guillermo Kuhl

List of delegates National Convention Philadelphia 2002

Baugh	Valencia	Maggio	Carol
Beaumont	John	McCaffree	Stephen
Becker	Richard	McConnell	Kathleen
Bryant	Carl	Mindrup	Mark
Buencamino	Lili	Mitchell	Herbert
Burton	Spence	O'Donnell	William
Callahan	Michael	Palattao	Val
Dominguez	Juan	Raup	Martha
Fong	Ray	Romero	Luis
Gallardo	Tony	Simonson	Kathy
Gerigk	Lawrence	Sobalvarro	Eduardo
Griggs	Donald	Soo Hoo	Dan
Jones	Arnold	Taylor	Andrew
Lauersons	Ivars	Tercero	Jerome
Leonardo	Norma	Thornton	William
Lopez	Efre	Tse	Francis
Mabalatan	David	Urtaga	Dennis
MacGlaun	Dempsey	Welsh	David
Mackler	Dennis	Young	George



Photo by Ivars Lauersons

Part of the Branch 214 delegation to the national convention. Workshops and other convention business kept delegates on the run. For a list of all the delegates, see elsewhere in this issue.

Delegates at work.



Photos by Ivars Lauersons

Yankees, go home

Oppose US military intervention and repression of labor in the Philippines

By Dave Welsh, Retiree

Ten years ago the Philippine government, facing strong pressure from the people, voted to close down the huge US military bases in that country. Clark Air Base and Subic Bay Naval Station, then the largest American bases in the world outside the United States, were returned to Philippine sovereignty in 1992.

Now the Pentagon is back in the Philippines, sending thousands of US troops, including combat soldiers, supposedly to suppress a small bandit group, but in reality as a way of re-establishing a permanent US military presence in the Philippines and Southeast Asia, as part of the Bush Administration's global war drive.



The new US military intervention has given a "green light" to repressive forces, emboldening them to attack the resurgent labor movement and people's movement in the Philippines. For example:

- The brutal police attacks on a strike of Nestle workers in June 2002.
- New anti-labor legislation restricting the right to strike, accompanied by violent attacks on striking or demonstrating workers, with the aim of keeping wages low.
- The assassination of 23 precinct leaders of the Bayan Muna (People First) Party, a working people's party with close ties to the labor movement that had an impressive showing in the last elections for Congress.
- Government branding of labor unions as "terrorists"—both unions in the public sector like the Post Office, and in private industry—for fighting for wage increases just to catch up with the cost of living.

Anti-labor measures

Especially since the re-introduction of US troops, the Arroyo government has been emboldened to push through other unpopular, anti-worker measures including stepping up privatization of state enterprises, contracting out thousands of jobs, and caving in to corporate globalization.

On democracy

By Bob Yragui, Retiree

What do you say about a democracy that can be bought and sold?

When is it taught in our schools, how we buy and sell our birthright?

Is it just a fiction to claim we have a Bill of Rights, then it's put out of mind & sight?

What do we mean by "one person one vote"?

So now we've reached the place where we must pay for votes. So now we count our democracy with C-notes?

Now, does it mean more money means more "democracy" (bought and paid for) for me, and to hell with thee?

We can and must affirm our democratic heritage by frequent yearly commitment.

It seems to me that democracy is hard to uphold, especially if it means you must be honest and abide by its rules and laws.

I know I'll do that, but I'm not so sure... should I trust you?

Why don't we all reject this Democracy as a buy-and-sell commodity?

Let us swear an oath to uphold Democracy and let the world know we WILL affirm our birthright and demand our leaders also uphold it, without "filthy lucre" to grease the skids. For our path is now firmly pointed to corruption and the death of our country as we know it, drowning in a greenback flood. For these well-upholstered well-fed parasites who extol greed and acquisition, who tell us this is "free speech", are also accomplished distorters, if not outright liars. They are the carriers of the disease of corruption.

We can and must affirm our democratic heritage by a frequent yearly commitment and swearing in to an oath to uphold Democracy as a birthright of our citizenship.

That's why all of labor should join in solidarity with the Filipino workers and oppose US military intervention in the Philippines, as well as the intensified attacks on labor unions and assassinations of pro-labor political leaders that have accompanied the US military buildup. A good start would be to demand that the Bush Administration withdraw all US troops and bases from the Philippines.

Letter:

Dear Sister Chen,

I'm just dropping a line to compliment you on your well-written "Troublemakers, Inc" article. I've been enjoying your column for a number of months, but sadly enough, this one seemed to eloquently capture the frustration and futility felt by many, I suspect, of us workplace dreamers. I hope to find some space in our newsletter "The Pioneer" some upcoming month to share your thoughts with our members, but can make no promises.

I once used the cream rises vs. pond scum floats concept at a meeting with union leaders and got some quizzical looks. I laughed to see it in print!

"If you can't have fun at work, where can you have fun?" used to be my daily rallying cry to my coworkers to not get too worked up over the stupidity. So carry on with all the joy you can muster. Remember, we're spiritual beings and not machines.

Sincerely and fraternally,

Steve Erceg

Vice President, Pioneer Branch 2, Milwaukee, WI

Branch 214 Meetings

Branch meetings, 7:00 P.M.

October 2, 2002	Union Hall
November 6, 2002	214 12th St., S.F.
December 4, 2002	

Steward meetings, 5:30 P.M.

October 2, 2002	Union Hall
November 6, 2002	214 12th St., S.F.
December 4, 2002	

Retiree social meeting, 12:30 P.M.

October 7, 2002	Knights of Columbus Hall
December 2, 2002	38th and Taraval, S.F.
February 3, 2003	

IN MEMORIAM

Phil Smith, son of retiree Ben Smith



Photos by Ivars Lauersons

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Old enough to be

Reminiscing

(Part two of a series)

By Spence F. Burton, Past President Branch 214

In part one, I covered my early NALC history in Cedarhurst, New York. After resigning my position to move to the West Coast, I packed up all of my belongings from my apartment in Hempstead, attached a large U-Haul trailer to my 1968 Dodge Charger, and heeded the old call of "Go West Young Man!" I arrived in the beautiful "City by the Bay" on June 1, 1970, to begin my new life!

San Francisco "Open your Golden Gate!"

This was not my first time to San Francisco. I had been visiting here since 1961. My mother worked for American Airlines, and on several occasions I would fly from NY to San Francisco for the weekend to visit my Aunt Peggy, my cousin Dolores and their families. Back then it cost me \$8 to fly First Class each way, being fed a meal of Maine Lobster or filet mignon in style! That all changed when I turned 21, and lost my "free flight" privileges. I've only flown first Class once since those days, but I will never forget those early days!

Actually, when I arrived in the San Francisco Bay Area, I first lived with my cousins in Daly City, which is a "foggy" suburb just south of San Francisco. They let me live in their basement for quite a while, as I tried to find a "better" job with a future. Finding a job wasn't easy for a newcomer to the Bay Area. I started out working for two different Security Guard Agencies, but decided to



I could barely see through the barrel of the pistol.

quit after I got a short-term assignment working in the basement of the Sheraton Palace Hotel at night. The guard I replaced at 10 PM gave me the "official" revolver assigned to the hotel. I had never used a pistol before, except for a CO2 air pistol, and I figured I better "check out" this gun first. So, I removed all the bullets, held the barrel up to the light and could barely see through it. It didn't look like it had ever been cleaned; and if I ever did have to fire it, the pistol would probably have exploded in

my face. That was my last day at the Sheraton!

Back to the Post Office

After a few months it became apparent to me that my best course of action was to apply to get "reinstated" as a carrier in the San Francisco Post Office. Back then you had up to one year to apply for reinstatement without having to take the written test all over again. Soon after I applied, I was called for an interview. My former Postmaster in Cedarhurst had written a glowing recommendation letter to the San Francisco Postmaster, Lim P. Lee. I was told to report for duty at the West Portal Post Office (at that time all the Carriers worked at 317 W. Portal

"Big Jim" was absolutely the worst caser of mail I ever encountered.

Ave.) the following week. I asked if I would be getting any "refresher" or updated training, and they told me a T-6 at West Portal would give me training for a week.

When I showed up at West Portal, I was assigned to the T-6 who was fondly known as "Big Jim." He quickly found out that I had already carried mail for almost 2 years back east, and he concluded that I already knew everything I needed to know. So the first day I went with him to the street to deliver, I observed him deliver the first swing. When we got to the first relay box (foot routes back then), he said "well you should know enough by now, so just 'follow the mail' and I'll see you back at the office at 2:15." I figured what the heck, I could do it, all I had to do was not get lost. What I found out shortly thereafter was that "Big Jim" was the absolute "worst" caser of mail I have ever encountered in the Postal Service. It seemed that instead of placing letters in the exact separation they belonged in, he would just make sure that the letter was somewhere on the same "row" where it belonged. I literally had to finger through each bundle of letters, 6-8 inches thick, prior to delivering the first house! You had to finger 20 houses in advance! This went on for the whole week, and I always wondered where "Big Jim" went while I was delivering the mail. A few years later I found out, he worked two jobs, 8 hours as a carrier then another 8 hours for United Airlines. Sometimes the shifts would overlap, but that is a different story.

Signed up for union

I signed up in the union my first day, after being approached by the steward. We were a 100% union station back then! Shortly thereafter I started attending union meetings out on Taraval Street. We didn't have much of a union office back then, just a back office on

(continued on page 13)



Photo by John Jekabson, Branch 1111

Former President Richard Becker (left), Voice Editor Ivars Lauersons, and former President Spence Burton at the convention.

Burton (continued from page 12)

Geary Street near what is currently Golden Gate Station. There were no full time officers. Don Hackett was President and Ron Tyeskey was Vice-President. Some of the other officers were: John Susleck, Ralph Selleck, Randy Wong, Nolan Thrailkill and Lou Preciado. They were all dedicated to improving the lot of San Francisco letter carriers.

There still were routes in downtown San Francisco that delivered mail twice a day, and the first three Christmas seasons I worked in San Francisco, we delivered mail twice a day as Christmas approached. The regular carrier delivered the routes and a PTF or the T6 would do the second delivery. The regular carrier always had to be out on his/her route each day to see his customers during the holiday season. I wonder why?

The day I became regular, I was the successful bidder on a T-6 position in the old Stonestown station. Less than six months later, the West Portal carriers were moved to the Napoleon Street facility, along with a few other sta-

**Some downtown routes still
delivered mail twice a day.**

tions. The old neighborhood post offices were too small to handle the increased mail volume and the routes that were always being added. There was no money to rent new workspace in the neighborhoods, so someone decided to rent this big old warehouse on Napoleon Street. To this day it still looks almost the same way it looked back

then, a cavernous airplane hanger like facility, which had seen better days. Boy was I lucky to bid out BEFORE the move!

Good bosses

Victor Mendelsohn, Bob Saurin and eventually Jim Burrell became my new bosses. Two out of the three of them were the best ones I have had in San Francisco. Victor Mendelshon would often say: "One hand washes the

**This supervisor even told
carriers they were doing a good
job.**

other," and he applied that belief to his daily running of the Stonestown Post Office. It served him, the customers and his employees well! He never abused his employees, and always had time to listen to any of them. He would even tell carriers that they were doing or did a "good job!" I became an alternate steward. Before I knew it, I married Cathy, the "girl next door," and I was a "career" carrier all over again. I knew this time I would stay till retirement.

Little did I know that soon I would become even more involved in Branch 214, and the NALC. "Times they were a changing!" Democracy in our local union was soon to explode. A full time officer with real office space was on the horizon for Golden Gate Branch 214. "One man one vote" became the battle cry at NALC Conventions. Local and National "Rank-n-File" committees seemed to pop-up overnight. Ah, but I'm getting ahead of myself. Till next time....

A report from the Convention

Speaking up for your interests

By Lili Buencamino, Executive Vice President

The 63rd biennial national convention in Philadelphia went smoothly. As usual, the most important portions, and therefore purpose, of the convention remained the discussions and subsequent voting of resolutions submitted by the branches and state associations nationwide after being passed at the respective union meetings and state conventions. These resolutions are separated into categories—general, national agreement, retirement, and legislative.

If approved by the convention delegates, “General”



resolutions direct the NALC to take an official position on an issue that may not necessarily pertain to letter carrier issues but to unionism as a whole. “National Agreement” resolutions are issues that specifically pertain to letter carrier rights and would be brought to the bargaining table during the next national contract negotiations. “Retirement” res-

olutions are those issues that affect our retirement. If approved at the convention, these resolutions would either be brought to the bargaining table like the national agreement resolutions or be taken to Congress to be made into legislation exactly like legislative resolutions.

The nail that sticks out...

At this convention, the most controversial resolutions submitted seemed to be mostly from our branch. These bred the most contentious debates. Among the branch 214 resolutions were (1) to support lifting the sanctions against Haiti by endorsing “Let Haiti Live!”, (2) to endorse a policy that prohibits the confederate flag from flying over any public building nationwide, (3) to

**The most controversial
resolutions submitted were
mostly from our branch.**

demand “that Mumia Abu Jamal be granted a new trial so that the suppressed evidence can be heard and he can have the opportunity to prove his innocence and walk free”, (4) to include the term “sexual orientation” into article 2 section 1 of the National Agreement, and (5)

locality pay (which was also endorsed by other branches nationwide). Most of these resolutions were submitted and presented by Dave Welsh. All of them were disapproved by the delegates. The “Free Mumia” resolution did not fare well at all. It could have been because Mr. Jamal was accused of killing a Philadelphia police officer. After all, we were in Philadelphia for this convention. This probably was not the convention to hope for an approval of this resolution. The “confederate flag” resolution yielded the closest vote. It actually needed a teller vote to determine its outcome. The “locality pay” issue was resoundingly defeated again. It was disapproved by the delegates 4-to-1.

Resolutions that pass

National Agreement resolutions passed at our last state convention and therefore submitted by our state association included (1) displaying the NALC logo in all postal facility lobbies and doors recognizing the NALC as the bargaining agent for letter carriers, (2) negotiating with management to require that ODL carriers be utilized to 12 hours before requiring non-ODL carriers to work over-

**First-class and bulk rate mail
volumes are down by at least
20% nationwide.**

time on their own routes (changing the “letter carrier paragraph” and the national agreement article 8.5, and (3) to pay carriers serving on military duty wages matched to what they would earn had they been working as carriers minus what they are paid by the government. The convention delegates approved these resolutions, therefore they shall be included on the bargaining table at the next national contract negotiations.

The retirement resolutions presented and approved were (1) for the NALC to introduce legislation to Congress “allowing FERS postal employees to receive some form of compensation for unused sick leave upon their retirement”, and (2) for the NALC to work on implementing legislative and contractual means to make the following changes to the retirement benefit formulas for carriers:

- a) CSRS carriers shall receive 2.5% of the “high-3” average total gross income multiplied by years of service.
- b) FERS carriers shall receive 1.5% of the “high-3” average of total gross income multiplied by years of service as well as the additional TSP and social security benefits.
- c) Carriers shall be eligible for retirement with benefits

(continued on page 13)

Buencamino (continued from page 14)

upon reaching 50 years of age with 25 years of service, 55 years of age with 20 years of service, or 60 years of age with 5 years of service.

The impact of 9/11 and anthrax

Among other events which took place in between the resolutions included honoring those branches that achieved outstanding marks in collecting food at the last

**The postal service is resilient
and historically has bounced
back from financial woes.**

food drive, percentage of organized membership, muscular dystrophy donations, and COLCPE donations. Then we were showered with speakers from the House of Representatives to the President of Australia's Electrical and Plumbing Union who flew 30 hours just to speak at our convention. We even attentively endured the presentation of an NALC-hired economist who spoke on the mail volume trend and the repercussions of 9/11 to the Postal Service. He told us that mail volume—both first class and bulk rate—are at an all-time low. First class mail volume generates income that takes care of the overhead cost. Bulk mail volume generates revenue. Historically, when first class mail volume was low, bulk mail volume was up which would balance the revenue-overhead cost ratio. After 9/11 and the anthrax incidents, the postal service took a big hit because a lot of people stopped using the mail as a means to communicate. Additionally, the economy is not doing that great so companies are not advertising as much. In fact, traditionally, the mail volume picks up right before school starts. As of the national convention in mid-August, this had not yet happened.

According to the speaker, this trend after 9/11 and the anthrax incidents shows that in 2002 both first-class and bulk rate mail volumes are down by at least 20% nationwide. However, the economist did inform us that the postal service is resilient and historically has bounced back from financial woes during low volume times. But although the postal service is not in danger of "going out of business", these times are different from past times so the "bouncing back" may be a slow process and take a long time. This may be due in part because in the past the postal service had no competitors. Now it competes with UPS, Fed-Ex, and the Internet. In fact, more and more companies are affording their patrons an option to conduct business on the Internet. More and more of our patrons are choosing UPS or Fed-Ex to send overnight items or parcels.

Standing up to management

All of this impacts our mail volume which explains management's massive assertions of "undertime" and pivoting. It's basically management's strategy to squeeze the carriers because they think in doing so they are saving the postal service money. After the "undertime" and pivoting data is collected, you can bet the next step in their money-saving plot will be to eliminate routes by doing minor adjustments. Pretty soon, your route and that "x"-hour split you have been doing in eight hours without your lunch and/or breaks will become one assignment and eventually someone in your station may have their route absorbed into other routes. Then when the mail volume picks up again, everyone will have overburdened routes but management will maintain that they are still eight hours and another fight will begin the other way.

**It's management's strategy to
squeeze the carriers to save
money for the postal service.**

How do you avoid this? Don't be afraid of management. Work by the book. Follow the rules. Apply your contractual rights. Come to the union meetings to learn the rules or talk to your shop stewards about your rights. The union office offers training and station meetings but hasn't heard from anyone interested in having any. Remember, you, me, him, her—we are the union. If all of us stick together in dealing with management's "squeeze the carrier" strategy we shall prevail, but if we are divided, management will get their way because their tactic is to divide and conquer the workforce.



Photo by Mars Lauersons

Delegates at work.

GOLDEN GATE BRANCH NO. 214
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS, AFL-CIO
214 12th STREET
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94103

583

Address service requested

A Non-Profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
San Francisco, Calif.
Permit No. 10302

The Segway Blues

By Lynda Beigel, Retiree

I cannot say how long you'll stay
Atop the wheels of your Segway,
Especially among the bicycles on 19th Avenue each day,
Or up and down the stepped hillsides
Of Pacific Heights with pedigreed
dog-pies.

Just remember to keep the mail safe
By riding it into the lobby;
Just remember to befriend the
children
By sharing with them this new
hobby.

I cannot wait until they come,
(Even the scanner isn't this dumb).
Oh, won't it be sweet,
When the dogs chase the Segway
down the street!

Neither rain nor sleet nor snow nor
dead of night
Can deter this sidewalk wonder on
its brakeless flight.
Yes, I cannot say how long you'll
stay

Atop the wheels of your Segway!
(I only regret that I really retired before they let me test this toy,
Perhaps I could soon be rehired, in order to share the racing joy.)



Cartoon by ACECO, Branch 782, Bakersfield, CA

*(Ed Note: The Segway scooter
was tested in San Francisco
in July and August 2002.)*