



THE VOICE



OF THE GOLDEN GATE LETTER CARRIERS

BRANCH #214

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS, AFL-CIO

September/October 2006

Award-winning newspaper

Vol. XXXVI, No. 5

100 PERCENT



100% union membership celebration at Embarcadero Postal Center, EPC North after surviving the route inspections.

Photo by Cherry Vargas

Photo by Ray Fong

Carriers at San Leandro South celebrate 100% union membership.



Branch 214 notes

Daly City PTF carrier, seniority 7/28/03, **interested in mutual transfer** to San Leandro. Contact **Yan Pian Zhu** at (510) 351-2580 or (415) 378-4174.

Mutual trade wanted: Corte Madera carrier, seniority date 1988, seeks a trade with a San Francisco carrier. Contact **Steve Domingo** at (415) 999-7707, or your shop steward.

* * *

This issue of *The Voice* had the able help of **Steve McCaffree**, filling in for the vacant Associate Editor position. Any errors in this issue were made by the Editor.

* * *

Our classic cartoonist, **Gerry Lee**, once again had a cartoon appear in another branch paper. This time the cartoon on supervisors erasing overtime on the computer was reprinted on the front page of the August issue of "The Seventy-Niner," Branch 79, Seattle, Washington.

Branch Officers

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 Ray Fong..... Executive Vice-President
 Bill Thornton..... Vice-President
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GOLDEN GATE BRANCH

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W L C A

WESTERN LABOR COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION

NALC Food Drive — May 8, 2004



Artwork by Ed Cuadra

The award-winning cartoon by Ed Cuadra

Voice cartoonist wins award

Ed Cuadra, Station 'J' letter carrier, and long-time contributor the *The Voice*, tied for second place for "Best Cartoon or Photo" at the 2004-2006 Branch Publications Awards at the 65th Biennial Convention in Las Vegas.

The award was for his work on the 2004 NALC food drive entitled, "For I was hungry and you gave me food."

The inscribed plaque was presented to Ed at a ceremony at his station by Branch 214 President Lili Beaumont.

Ed Cuadra is also a winner of numerous awards from the Western Labor Communications Association. Our congratulations.

T.V. 214 Schedule

SAN FRANCISCO, AT&T Cable Channel 29:

Every third Sunday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

October 15, 2006, November 19, 2006

December 17, 2006

Relief can be had

Special Route Inspection

By Lili Beaumont, President

Special route inspections can be conducted between the first week in September through May 31st (excluding the month of December). The fall months September, October, and November are probably the best months to request a special route inspection because historically the overall mail volume increases during this time of the year with election mail, Christmas catalogs, and fall holiday mailings. So a carrier who qualifies for a special route inspection could capitalize more on the increase in mail volume during this time than any other time during the year. In August 1991 national arbitrator Britton ruled that "employee-initiated special route inspections must be completed within four weeks of the request for a route that qualifies even if the inspection has to be conducted during the months of June, July, or August". So how does one qualify for a special route inspection anyway?



The six week qualifier

Article 41.3.S of our contract (the National Agreement) requires that management conduct route inspections in accordance with the Methods Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services. Special route inspections are governed by the provisions of the M-39 section 270, and are conducted in the same manner as a formal route count of inspection where the regular carrier counts the mail and records all office activities on PS Form 1838-C, except for one day when a route examiner will count the mail and walk with that carrier through the entire delivery portion of the route. More specifically, section 271g describes the qualifying criteria for a special route inspection as follows: *"If over any 6 consecutive week period (where work performance is otherwise satisfactory) a route shows over 30 minutes of overtime or auxiliary assistance on each of 3 days or more in each week during this period, the regular carrier assigned to such route shall, upon request, receive a special mail count and inspection to be completed within 4 weeks of the request. The month of December must be excluded from consideration when determining a 6 consecutive week period. However, if a period of overtime and/or auxiliary assistance begins in November and continues into January, then January is considered as a consecutive period even though December is omitted. A new 6 consecutive week*

period is not begun". Section 271h goes on to say *"Mail shall not be curtailed for the sole purpose of avoiding the need for special mail counts and inspections."*

Regular carrier only

Only the regular carrier (the carrier whose bid assignment is the overburdened route) may make a request for a special route inspection. The T-6 or a carrier who has opted on the route, or the union, may not make the request. Once a route qualifies and the regular carrier requests a special route inspection, management cannot

A special route inspection is conducted the same way as a regular 6-day count.

avoid it by unilaterally providing relief, or making an adjustment (like a hand-off or router help). Also, management cannot avoid conducting the special route inspection by attempting to point out performance deficiencies (also known as "time-wasting work habits" or "inefficient work practices") after the carrier has submitted the request for a special route inspection. Performance deficiencies can be a reason for denying a special route inspection request if reasonable efforts to improve performance to a satisfactory level have failed, and the reasons have been documented and discussed with the carrier during the six consecutive week qualifying period, not after. Also, "poor case labels", "poor work methods", or "no route examiners available", are not acceptable management excuses for not conducting the special route inspection within the four-week time period.

PS Form 3996s (request for overtime or auxiliary assistance) and PS Form 1571s (request to curtail mail otherwise known as a "curtailment slip") are very important documents used to determine whether or not a route qualifies for a special route inspection. As mentioned before in previous articles, management has great tendency to "lose" these documents especially for a route where the carrier has requested a special route inspection. That is why our union officers have advised over and over again that carriers should take the time to complete these two forms, complete them properly, and keep copies of all of them. This way, the union can refer to a carrier's copies in case management claims that they have "lost" the paperwork.

If you can't do it in eight

Many carriers argue every day with management over how much overtime they need to complete their routes. Many carriers curtail mail every day in order to complete their routes within eight hours. If you are one of these carriers, most likely your route is out of adjustment and

(continued on page 8)



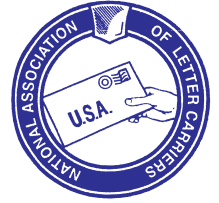
GOLDEN GATE BRANCH 214

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS, AFL-CIO

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OFFICIAL REQUEST FOR A SPECIAL ROUTE INSPECTION

I feel that I qualify for a special route inspection under the provisions of part 271g (et al) of the Methods Handbook M-39, as modified by various Memorandums of Understanding between the USPS and the NALC dated after July 20, 1978.

Therefore, I am hereby requesting a Special Route Inspection be completed on my route within four (4) weeks of this request. Furthermore, I request that my route be permanently adjusted to eight (8) hours daily work within the time frame cited in the appropriate manuals memoranda.

Route number _____ Date _____

Name _____ Signature _____
(please print)

City _____ Station _____

RECEIVED: Supervisor or manager

Name _____ Signature _____
(please print supervisor/manager's name)

Date request received _____ Date inspection to begin _____

Please give copy to: Steward, union office, requesting carrier

Be street wise

Street jams and scams

By Ray Fong, Executive Vice President

In a recent meeting with the San Francisco District Manager and her staff it was conveyed to the union that the San Francisco District has the second worst street efficiency scores in the nation. "What does this mean?" It means that San Francisco management will be doing more street supervision tactics like "point-to-point" observations, safety observations (filling out PS Form 4584s – Observation of Driving Practices), and possibly one-day walks (filling out PS Form 3999s). Our members should be prepared to be micromanaged regarding their work habits on the street.

Point-to-point means management observes you at one point of your route. They check the time when they first saw you and move on to check another carrier. Then they come back to see you at another point on your route. They notate the time elapsed between points and cross reference this information with your MSP scans and your case labels. Management may also use data collected over a period of time from MSP scans to allege that you are expanding your street time. Remember, MSP scans alone cannot be used to measure office or street work performance. Also, MSP data may not constitute the sole basis for disciplinary action. If management is using MSP data in the previously described manner, ask to see your shop steward to initiate a grievance investigation. Management has even resorted to bringing in additional managers and supervisors (as many as three additional) to assist the existing management team to micromanage the carriers in the office and street.

Street observation

Management will be doing more street safety observations as well. They will document your driving practices on an "Observation of Driving Practices" form and your work practices on an "Observation of Work Practices" form. If you are observed working unsafely, chances are you will be written up with discipline for an "unsafe act". Every carrier should make a conscientious effort to work safely. This means, fasten your seatbelt, turn off the vehicle engine whenever you leave it, engage your parking brake and curb your wheels, use your wheel block on hills, close your door when the vehicle is moving, secure your vehicle, carry your dog spray on your person or satchel and have it readily available in case of attack, use your satchel (foot and park and loop routes), push, don't pull, lift properly, do not finger mail when crossing the street or walking up/down stairs; when conditions are

unsafe, use handrails, use/case up dangerous dog cards where appropriate, secure your mail (especially your accountables) and the list goes on. Carriers should also be conscious of uneven pavement, potholes and dogs on leashes. Chances are, if you accidentally step wrong, fall and hurt yourself or if a dog on a leash suddenly bites you, management will move to discipline you for an unsafe act, citing inattentiveness. The postal service's motto is "Safety First". So take the time to apply it and go with the program and make safety a priority.

One day walk

Management has a right to do one-day walks with carriers on their entire routes to complete a PS Form 3999 as long as they notify the carrier before he/she moves their clock ring function to the street code. Unlike the week of route count and inspection, management has a right to

Be prepared to be micromanaged on the street.

give carrier instructions during a one-day walk. They will also make notes on their observations of the carrier while he/she is delivering the route. The carrier, on the other hand, has a right to review the results of the one-day walk and to know what management intends to do with the data collected. Be aware that sometimes management will use this data to alter DOIS and subsequently make minor route adjustments based on the data collected, or set new expectations for the carrier who was walked. It is the union's position that this is a violation of the contract and you should immediately ask to see your shop steward if this is being done. We advise you that if management conducts a one day walk, consult with their shop steward and jointly ask to see the data collected (copy of the completed PS Form 3999), in addition to any other associated notes and/or comments made. If you believe that management improperly made inaccurate or erroneous remarks, ask your steward to initiate a grievance to mount a challenge to what was notated by management. In addition, get in writing as to what management plans to do with that data.

You can see the results and comments

All management street supervision must be conducted above board and in a professional manner. Management should announce to you that they are there observing you and the purpose of their visit. Management cannot spy or use covert techniques. If they see you doing something unsafe management must bring the safety issue to your attention immediately so you can correct it. Management does have a right to give instructions during street supervision but you as the carrier have a right to file a grievance on those instructions if you believe they are inappropriate.

(continued on page 8)

Watch your back

Showing injured carriers the door

By Bill Thornton, Vice President

The *National Reassignment Pilot Program* has come to San Francisco and soon in Novato. The program is being tested in New York and the Pacific Area prior to national implementation. The program began in San Diego in October 2005, where medical reassessments were done on 300 letter carriers, clerks, etc.

The purpose of the program is to take injured workers off the Postal Service Payroll and dumping them on OWCP, where they are then trained for jobs outside the Postal Service.



The savings to the Postal Service, and at the same time the threat to injured employees, lies in the savings that are gained because the Postal Service no longer has to pay various benefits: retirement, TSP contributions, health insurance, life insurance, etc. Only the differences in pay that the employee was making in the Postal Service job and the job outside have to be equalized.

The Postal Service has asserted that all regulations will be followed, including compliance with the Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA), the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), the Employee Labor Relations Manual (ELM), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 etc.

Under the Rehabilitation Act 1973 5CFR Section 353.301, before employees can be moved to the private sector there must be attempts to provide work within the commuting area.

Branch 214's first experience with this has been at 180 Napoleon, probably chosen as the first site because of the large number of injured employees, etc.

Postal Service commitment to follow rules and regulations has already been compromised. The first step was for the Postal Service coordinator to scrutinize employee medical limitations, CA-17s, existing job offers, etc. Management has a right to do this. But typical of the current administration they immediately ignored some regulations.

A bad start-management plays doctor

20CFR10.516 is the controlling legal authority in the matter of procedures relating to job offers.

Employee compensation benefits can only be terminated by OWCP after it finds the job suitable. This is only done after the Postal Service notifies OWCP that the

employee does not accept a job offer. OWCP then notifies the employee if they find the job suitable according to medical limitations. Employees have up to 30 days before their benefits are terminated.

At 180 Napoleon carriers are given job offers and told that they must sign on the spot.

Management tells employees that their medical restrictions are not recognized and they must perform full duties. This is in violation of rules and regulations that are part of Federal Law, as well as handbooks and manuals that are part of the contract. Management must follow these regulations, including Article 14 that requires management to maintain a safe workplace.

Postal Record article

Particularly informative and a perspective is given in Ron Watson's November 2005 "Postal Record" article, *Outplacement developments*. He writes: "...the Postal Service has no authority to outplace any employee. Only OWCP has such authority."

Another important reference in these regards is found in a Watson May 2006, "Postal Record" article, *Rehabilitation job offers*: The Postal Service has legal (as in 5 CFR 353 *Code of Federal Regulations*) and contractual responsibility (as in 546.14 ELM *Employee Labor Relations Manual*) to make very effort to find modified work for compensably injured employees. 546 ELM references a *pecking order* and management's responsibility to minimize adverse impact on injured employees by keeping them within *craft, tour and facility*. Watson cites Arbitrator Bernstein as indicating management's continuing and ongoing responsibility, and contradicts the notion that management has the right to wash its hands of an injured employee.

In reference to Postal Service responsibility towards injured employees, Mr. Watson cites an August 19, 2006 letter from Postal Service management to National NALC President Young. It indicated management compliance with 546 ELM, Rehabilitation Act, etc. to make every effort to provide limited duty, even when the employee's medical restrictions do not allow him/her to perform street duties, and less that 8 hours limited duty work is available.

Other protections

Employees have various protections in different arenas, including the grievance/arbitration procedure, EEO, *Equal Employment Opportunity*, primarily in conjunction with *The Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, and MSPB, *The Merit Systems Protection Board*, under entitlements found in 5 CFR 353.

Injured Postal Service employees were shown the door in San Diego in February 2006, told to hand in badges and clean out lockers and given CA-7s *Claims for Continuing Compensation*.

(continued on page 7)

Thornton (continued from page 6)

While this is a part of the sad history of this program there is a basic simple lesson here. If the Postal Service does not provide an employee with a compensable on the job injury with work, then that employee is entitled to compensation by OWCP. If you have an accepted OWCP claim, and management does not provide you work, you are entitled to be paid by OWCP the same as if you were disabled and unable to work. Except in the case of no work provided, you must indicate so on the CA-7s and on the Leave Slip 3971, checking LWOP, and writing OWCP/Compensation.

CA-7: You fill out 1 through 7-a to c providing the employee with instructions. Management is to complete Sections 8 through 15. The form must be forwarded to OWCP in **5 days**. Management has this responsibility, and the failures are chronic in this regard. 545.82 of the ELM, as well as the Code of Federal Regulations. If a breakdown of hours is required because of intermittent periods of disability, a breakdown on CA-7A is required. Here's where we run into big difficulties. A Step B Decision of San Francisco expounded on the respective responsibilities of the employee and the management: "Every two weeks during the time when ...is requesting compensation, he is to complete sections 1 to 7 and submit to the supervisor. Upon receipt of a properly completed CA-7 from the employee, management is to complete its part (Sections 8 through 15) and forward the form to OWCP in 5 working days. The sections the employee is required to fill out do not ask for a daily breakdown of the hours. It is management's part of the form, which...it completes after the receipt of the form...that requires this information... Once an employee submits to management a CA-7 with Section 1 through 7 completed, the responsibility falls upon management to complete the rest of the form, including Section 9 which requires a daily breakdown, and submit the form to the Department of Labor."

If you are shown the door anyway

In the scenario that the injured carrier is not provided work where a CA-1 was filed, check continuation of pay on the CA-1, and don't allow management to get you to take SL instead of COP. Indicate, *did not provide work*, on the paperwork.

In either case, before you are *shown the door*, get at the minimum your guaranteed 5 minutes with a steward, and file a grievance on management not providing work, and the violation of their various legal and contractual responsibilities in these regards. Adequate time on the clock should be subsequently arranged for the carrier and steward. It also becomes documentation that you were indeed *not provided work*.

While there are many management responsibilities in this regard and avenues of redress for employees whose rights are violated, there are also some safeguards that employees may utilize themselves. As we have seen in the initial atrocities at 180 Napoleon, it is important to have clear up to date medicals and CA-17s that are filled out properly.

Carriers that can perform/return to some/all carrier duties are encouraged to do so if medically practicable. Sometimes employees make insulting remarks about injured carriers. I am assuming that none of us have medical degrees that qualify us to make these decisions. The decisions concerning carriers with on the job injuries including work limitations are between the employee, the doctor and OWCP.

The same previous warnings hold true in regards to not violating your medical restrictions on or off the clock. While all this is coming down there is no reason to believe that the Office of Inspector General, Postal Inspectors, etc. are not out doing what they do.

Continuing rights

At this point it is worthwhile to indicate that it is proper for an injured employee to go to doctor and therapy appointments, etc. during work hours. This requires the use of Form 3971 and indicating on the form that compensation is being used.

Employees should stay away from using their own leave when they should be using either COP or Compensation, as the case may be. Many times injured employees use sick leave instead of choosing LWOP, and wait for the Department of Labor to pay them, and then later "buy back" the leave after the DOL pays them. This complicates the process, necessitating further paperwork when the buy back is done. It also is chancy. The Postal Service does not allow employees to buy back leave unless it was used before the claim was adjudicated.

For purposes of payment of the treating physician there is Form CA-16-"Authorization for Examination and/or Treatment". Management should provide you with the CA-16 within (4) hours.

ELM 545.21 indicates management responsibility to provide this form and also indicates the responsibility to inform injured employee of right to choose own doctor. These requirement are also in 20CFR 10.300, the Code of Federal Regulations that is the basis for Postal Service compliance with OWCP regulations under 540 ELM, etc.

Other manuals that cover these subjects are also CA-810 Injury Compensation for Federal Employees and Handbook EL-505.

For further information on these and other union issues go on NALC.org.

There are also other useful sites with information on the *Pilot Program* that you can search for on the internet.

Fong (continued from page 5)

Management street supervision should be non-confrontational with the carrier(s). Any alleged bad work habits recognized by management should be shared with the carrier(s) privately the next day. If you are called into the office the next day, ask management for the reason for your visit. Management should be up front with you and disclose to

Ask for a steward; the right is not automatic.

you the nature of the visit. If management is vague with you, insist on union representation. Ask if the results of the office visit can lead to disciplinary action? If the answer is yes, you have a right to have your steward present. If management instructs you to go into the office and refuses to provide you with a steward, you must go into the office as instructed, but are under no obligation to answer any questions until such time a steward has been provided to you. Please remember, the right to a steward is not automatic. A carrier has to invoke their "Weingarten Rights". If management tells you that they want to administer an official discussion, then under these circumstances, the contract does not give you a right to one.

For those of you who have attended our route protection classes or have recently experienced the six-day count and route inspection process, apply what you have learned from those experiences and work every day as if you are going through a day of inspection with a route examiner following you. It is management's intent to capture all time in which carriers are not engaged in some form of work. In addition, if you are caught not working within the rules as prescribed by the M-41 handbook (which is in every route book at every carrier case) when you should be, expect to be called into the office for a "day in court interview" followed by some form of disci-



Photo by Cherry Vargas

Steve McCaffree assisting in the production of this issue of *The Voice*.

plinary action. Don't be intimidated. Management can't touch you if you work safely, consistently, and by the book in the office and on the street. And now is a more critical time than ever to do this!

The super police

Finally, word has it that the Office of Inspector General (this is a different group from the Postal Inspectors) has been out in our area conducting investigations. They are looking for employees who are finished with their route, taking extended lunches and or breaks, deviating from your route, conducting personal business on the clock, claiming overtime when work is completed, etc. Remember, these are the "super" police; their investigations may last for months before they sweep in and call you into the office to interrogate you. Please call the union office immediately and don't sign anything until such time you have consulted with us. Again, a word to the wise, work safely, consistently, and by the book in the office and on the street and you can be one of the "untouchables". Don't let management and/or the "super police" scam and jam you!

Beaumont (continued from page 3)

probably considered over eight hours long.

The only way you can possibly remedy this daily problem with management is by asserting your right to have an eight-hour assignment and submitting to your supervisor a request for a special route inspection. It is quite easy to do: 1) you fill out the form on page 4 of this *Voice* issue; 2) you give it to your supervisor; 3) you have them sign it that they received it; 4) ask and get a copy of your signed request; 5) give a copy to your shop steward or your union officer; 6) wait four (4) weeks for management to grant your request or reject it within that timeframe; 7) contact your shop steward or the union office once management responds to your request (especially if they reject your request); 8) contact your shop steward or the union office if the four weeks pass by and your management did not respond at all to your request for a special route inspection.

If you run into problems with management in accomplishing steps one through eight above, promptly contact your shop steward or the union office to intervene for you. The union will do its best to make sure management follows through on your request for a special route inspection. Every carrier has a contractual right to have an eight-hour assignment. If management is going to argue with you and push you, you should push back and apply your rights.

(Footnote: sections of this article were taken from the *JCAM* pages 41-26 & 41-27)

Vote 2006

Fight back to protect California's working families

By John Beaumont

President, California State Association of Letter Carriers

The November General Election is just a few weeks away. While the rest of our country is fighting hard to change Congress and stop the current slide of anti-worker attacks in favor of big business, we in California have a different agenda. We are fighting to change the leadership, or lack thereof, in our own state.

Corporate America is pulling every punch to help a B-rated movie actor retain his position as governor of the largest state in the nation. We know labor will be outspent 40 to 1 in California but if we can work together to expand our field campaign, we can make a difference.

As you are aware, the governor has been signing every bill he can get his hands on to try to show California's voters that he is a moderate. The ones he signs are the same exact bills he vetoed just last year. This is the same person who personally pushed a 70 million dollar special election last November that was designed to directly attack our states' firefighters, police officers, nurses,

teachers, as well as every other city and state employee. Brothers and Sisters, Arnold is still driving the same Hummer; it just has a new paint job.

California's workers should never forget that it was just two years ago that this governor went out of his way to go to the swing state of Ohio to help re-elect President George Bush.

California voters have an alternative for governor this November in supporting State Treasurer Phil Angelides. Phil Angelides is committed to supporting union health care benefits and expanding it to other workers. Treasurer

Phil Angelides sued Enron, Worldcom, and other corporate criminals to recover worker pension losses. He also fought to restore full funding for our K-12 education. While Arnold has tarnished worker's rights in California, Phil Angelides has built a record for working people. Help return California back to the Golden State we once were on November 7th and support NALC endorsed candidate Phil Angelides for Governor.



Photo by Carol Maggio

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Clara M. Eastman (San Rafael)

Kareem J. Watts (San Rafael)

Jack Y. Hong (EPC)

Gricelda Manzo (San Leandro)

Barry Wong (PCA)

Jane Frances Jones (San Leandro)

Minqiao Xie (San Leandro)

Carmen Yu (PCA)

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Beyond the schoolyard

Dealing with bullies

By Juliette Chen, Golden Gate Station

We don't hear much about bullies beyond the schoolyard, and yet bullies are all around us. As adults, we're too deep in denial and too embarrassed to admit that we're being picked on. As mail carriers, we work in a system that actively recruits dysfunctional personalities who, invariably, become bullies once they assume a position of authority.

The trap of the immigrant work ethic

In the Bay Area we have a lot of ethnic diversity in both the workforce and in lower management. Most immigrants, whether legal or illegal, are willing to work more for less pay and tolerate unfavorable conditions and employers take full advantage of this tendency. The typical immigrant is also burdened with an unhealthy respect for authority, which translates into a greater tolerance for abuse from management, even when there are laws in place to prevent such abuses. Oft times, when an immigrant joins management, he or she comes equipped with a Third-World, sweatshop-style of abusive management. Since routine intimidation and abuse will squeeze more work out of workers, upper management is in the habit of rewarding and promoting the most abusive managers and supervisors. So what if there are postal killings every now and then? Those risks are cynically amortized as part of running the business. I'm sure the big bosses think the savings wrung from stiffing the workforce are worth the loss of a few paltry lives due to cyclical eruptions of homicide.

Dangerous fairy tales

Are you familiar with *The Story of Ferdinand*? This classic children's story, written by Munro Leaf and illustrated by Robert Lawson, is about a young bull in Spain who just wants to be left alone in his pasture to smell the

Routine abuse will squeeze more work out of carriers.

flowers. Unfortunately, he is picked for the bullring and is forced to fight. Like most carriers, I feel an affinity to Ferdinand; we just want to be left alone to do our job. We feel that, if we hold up our end of the bargain, management is supposed to leave us alone. A lot of worker resentment stems from the fact that management is not honoring their part of the agreement. If we are good

workers, why are we being harried and harassed on a daily basis? Mail delivery is a straight-forward job, how did it become so hellishly complicated? Why would you have to be able to argue like a trial lawyer, have a degree in abnormal psychology, and be an adept at the rites of exorcism, in order to deliver the mail?

Recycling trash

The quality of our work life is directly related to the kind of supervisors and managers who are running our station. Bad managers and lousy supervisors are like bad

You must stand up for yourself every day to respond to bullies.

pennies; they keep turning up in new places. The worst of them seem to be protected like some kind of endangered species by upper management. These natural-born cretins are given chance after chance to screw up one station after another. We never seem to be able to get rid of them.

(continued on page 11)



The author in a "before" picture.

Photo courtesy Juliette Chen



Photo courtesy Juliette Chen

Losing hair due to stress.

Chen (continued from page 10)

It just goes to show that in postal management, you can be a complete moron and still go far—it all depends on who's your daddy, or mommy, in higher management.

So is there nothing we can do to counter these bullies and sadists in our midst? As immigrant workers, should we say, "Let the union fight for me." The hard truth is that your station may have the best shop steward in the world, but if you're not willing to stand up for yourself every day, then the strongest union in the world can't help you. A union is the sum of its parts, and if those parts are weak, then the union will fail. Your union is only as strong as you are.

My year as a skinhead

Before I joined the Post Office, I learned the hard way about bullies. At a previous job, I was so badly bullied by a co-worker that all my hair fell out. I tried hard to appease my tormentor, but the harder I tried, the worse she treated me. I had such low self-esteem that I used to think, "She's right to hate me. There must be something wrong with me."

Paradoxically, when I lost my hair, I grew a backbone. I learned from my experience that in any kind of abusive relationship, the abuser and the victim exist in a twisted symbiosis. A bully without a target cannot be a bully. In my case, I gave my bully power over me by ceding to her my self-respect and dignity. The bully and the victim are mirror images of each other; they are both motivated by insecurity. So the more you give in to a bully, the stronger the bully will become.

If you do choose to fight back, remember that there is a price, as there is for every action and decision we make. By making a habit of giving in to bullies, you may pay a price in ill health and an unhappy home life, as I did. During my appeasement phase, not only did I lose all my hair but I also developed insomnia, hypertension, and became forgetful. I was not a happy camper. But by fighting back,

will you be jeopardizing your job, your mortgage, your children's education? If you think the risks are too great, then by all means allow your bully to walk all over you. In my case, I think life isn't worth living without self-respect and dignity. Self-abasement is too high a price to pay for any job. If I lose my job, I guess I can always return to my journalism roots and write that investigative book on why postal management is the morally vacuous, soul-sucking, self-serving, homicide-inspiring, navel-gazing, incorrigibly corrupt, terminally inept, hopelessly lobotomized, chronically spineless, titanic ship of cro-magnon fools that it is.

By the way, during the civil war in Spain, *The Story of Ferdinand* was considered such a seditious story that it was banned. Hitler ordered the book burned, and even in America, the book was attacked for its perceived sympathy for fascism, anarchism, and communism. It all goes to show how the innate insecurity within every bully can mutate into full-blown paranoia in a dictator. Every dicta-

When I lost my hair to bullying I grew a backbone.

tor—Pol Pot, Hitler, Stalin, Mao started out as a local bully. Maybe they started out by kicking the dog, beating up classmates, brutalizing an underling. But they became monsters because the people around them allowed them to. Bullies grow stronger by feeding on your self-respect, dignity and will power. By starving your local bully, you can put a stop to the daily intimidation and harassment. What is your motivation? Don't do it for the Union, or for Labor Solidarity; do it for perfectly selfish reasons for an improvement in your emotional and physical health, for a happier work and home life. Do yourself a favor by standing up and fighting back. You'll thank yourself.

Branch 214 Meetings

Branch meetings, 7:00 P.M.

October 4, 2006	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
November 1, 2006	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
December 6, 2006	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF

Steward meetings, 6:00 P.M.

October 4, 2006	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
November 1, 2006	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
December 6, 2006	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF

Retiree social meeting, 12:30 P.M.

October 2, 2006	740 Del Monte Ave., South SF
December 4, 2006	740 Del Monte Ave., South SF
February 5, 2007	740 Del Monte Ave., South SF

The other Las Vegas

How much money are we getting?

By Ivars Lauersons, Editor

When a contract is signed and presented to the carriers the first question usually asked is "How much are we getting?" The dollar amount in your paycheck overrides everything else in most carriers', including my, judgment if it's a good or bad contract.

At a national convention of the union, such as the one we just had at Las Vegas in mid-August, this is usually also a major topic. But there was little buzz about pay. Instead, the concern was about DOIS, conditions on the workroom floor, understaffing and postal reform in Congress. We have all seen the reduction in mail volume, and the reduction in jobs as the post office confronts the challenges of the computer age. This was reflected in a general anxiety about jobs.

Postal reform, or not

When President Bill Young addressed the convention on the first day he said that the conditions on the floor are as important to him as the pay we get. In negotiations for a new national agreement he will keep that in mind. He also reminded us about the postal reform legislation in Congress.

The first unknown in contract negotiations is the health of our negotiation partner and this is dependent on whether postal reform passes in this session of Congress. For the first time both the Senate and the House have passed postal reform, but prior to the two houses negotiating the differences, the White House has interjected itself with conditions that may make the whole reform unacceptable to our union. (This is an ongoing matter as of this **Voice** deadline, and a decision may have been made by the time this issue reaches you. Those of us on the E-activist network have been told to look for last minute changes. When the final reform package is passed or rejected, look for an analysis of the issues involved in national union publications.)

The short version of what may go wrong in Congress involves putting cap on flexible price increases, putting the cost of military pensions on the post office, and putting conditions on what arbitrators have to consider if a national agreement can't be reached. The added costs

to the post office would come at the expense of wages of postal employees, and that is why our national union, and our political action committee, is following events closely.

Working at the convention

The national convention can be an intense working experience for a delegate. If the convention is held in St. Louis, or Portland, Oregon, the carriers in my station will have no trouble believing that there is serious work involved. But hold the convention in Honolulu, or Las Vegas, the last two conventions, and they are thought of as paid vacations for the delegates.

Consider instead the schedule of one delegate. Monday, workshop on publications 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. Main convention from 10 to 2 or 3 p.m. Workshop 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. on challenges to the post office in the 21st century. There were workshops before and after the general session each day except the last Friday. Each delegate was assigned sessions particular to their specialty, say safety, or the general information needed by all stewards.

On Tuesday morning there was a session on legislative and political action concerning postal reform and the election in November. In the afternoon there was a workshop on grievance processing and the "burden of proof" portion. Many of the workshops are now available online at the national webpage, NALC.org in the format they were presented at the convention workshops.

The Wednesday morning workshop was on City Delivery, and included presentations on about seven different topics by full time national officers. This session is also online. Because of so many things thrown at you so early, with

only coffee and pastries to keep you alert, this delegate went to a repeat session the following morning, although nothing had been scheduled. On Wednesday afternoon there was a TSP, thrift plan, workshop.

Thursday morning and afternoon, and Friday morning concentrated on many of the specialty workshops such as, MDA, COLCPE, the Gimme Five campaign, Customer Connect and safety.

On Friday this delegate attended the safety workshop which dealt with an innovative approach to actually trying to make the workplace safer, and with resulting fewer accidents. An innovative approach was to have supervisors go through vehicle safety training, as well as the carriers.

The work was so intense that a vision of Star Trek characters reading **The Voice** seemed almost real. See you in Boston at the next national convention.



*Star Trek crew beamed down to read **The Voice**.*

Photo by Ensign Lauersons

West Nile virus and...

Do you know the signs of heat exhaustion?

Karen Schuler, Safety and Health Officer

It's been a really hot summer here in the Bay Area. Here are a few ways to avoid heat related problems. Wear a hat, drink plenty of water. Some of the signs of potential trouble include headaches, dizziness, lightheadedness, weakness, irritability, confusion, fainting, pale, clammy skin. If this should happen, you need to act immediately. Find shade, drink water, loosen clothing, fan yourself, or use a mist to cool down. If you're on your route, you should notify your supervisor immediately. Heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke.

West Nile virus

Along with the heat, this summer has spurred a jump in West Nile virus. West Nile season usually peaks in August and does not end until November. West Nile has been found in the Bay Area. In September 20, 2006 it was announced at the Marina Station in San Francisco that the virus had been found in near-by Presidio, and that carriers should take precautions. The virus replicates more quickly at higher temperatures, and mosquitoes breed too. Only about one in five infected actually people get sick. One in 150 infected people will develop severe symptoms.

Nationally, 581 cases were reported to the Center for Disease Control as of August 22.

To date, thirty-five have been reported in California, mostly in southern California. Most individuals infected will not experience any illness. The elderly and those with lowered immune systems are more susceptible to serious illness. One of the ways to protect yourself when outdoors is to wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants. Also apply insect repellent containing DEET. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes. Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property. Contact your local mosquito and vector control agency if there is a significant mosquito problem where you live or work.

Remember these tips for the next hot season.

Karen Schuler (right), Sheila Gardner, and Leonard Cruz on the convention floor during the national convention in Las Vegas.



Photo by Martha Raup

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high and the best solution is to hire more casuals. The Area is happy with the numbers but the year's Plan budget numbers overall shows not enough savings. Now we have to send a busload of vacation-wary auditors down to the stations for more cost-efficiency control.

Headquarters gets the final numbers and it notices how well all the stations are doing with fewer employees. Therefore, it's time to issue a new "Area Route Reduction Opportunity" schedule...in Sesame Street language...Big

The first lie starts with the daily volume count.

Bird is coming back to eliminate more routes and Elmo is adding more street time to everybody!

Al Capone and discrepancies

Management numbers are so filled with deceit that even Al Capone's trusted accountants would find it very hard to cover so many levels of discrepancies. Yet, these are the numbers with which management judges how efficient the Postal Service is, and how they reward themselves on a job well done.

The daily count of mail

Let's start with the daily volume count. Only during route check week does the volume reflect actual mail pieces; the rest of the year it is all done by estimation. The DPS mail volume is counted by pieces, but how many times have the carriers received other route's mail and told the supervisor of the mistake? Instead, the carrier just gives the mail to the correct route or places the mail in the hot case, and the supervisor does not increase/decrease the daily DPS volume for each route.

Another problem is the 3M mail count. How many times have carriers fixed the missequenced mail in the office, vehicle, or relay box before starting the loop. Management wants to know how proficient the DPS machines are, but the carriers correct inefficient DPS mistakes for the sake of customer service. Did you ever see the supervisors count every parcel or SPR, count the mail retrieved from the hot case, count the daily mark-ups and UBBM each day? The answer would be no, but management always emphasizes managing work hours to workload. How can they judge us carriers when the figures they input are so bogus?

Our street efficiency calculated

The next deceit figure comes when management divides carrier street hours by possible deliveries to get the "Deliveries Per Hour" numbers. San Francisco Dis-

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Mar (continued from page 13)

strict carriers are not working in the city of Standardville, where every street is configured the same and every mailbox is located at the same corner. We have steps to climb, gates to open, hills, walkways, alleys, mail slots, gangs of boxes, businesses, parking problems, accountable mail, parcels, and sometimes having to chat with customers every ten minutes. Ex-Postal Public Affairs Azeezaly Jaffer, "Setting The Record Straight," would reiterate that those basic numbers have a 50 percent plus or minus to variance. It seems strange that every district has their own PR, the proverbial Perception Redefinition, people. Therefore, management is lying and deceiving the public with their imaginary numbers too!

The so-called neutral audit

A postal audit is another example of management lies and deceptions. The audit should be the means for upper management to catch real office deficiencies and make real corrections. Postal protocol requires informing the office or station ahead of time on what date they will be there. This enables the office or station to move out all the late mail, reroute the standard mail, staff the office, and have the whole operation running smoothly. Does this remind you of a route inspection routine? A majority of these audits never find out how lower management harasses, intimidates, and belittles the employees on a daily basis.

Last year

Another management lie and deceit is the infamous SPLY, Same Period Last Year. All current and present numbers will be judged by SPLY. Upper management goals are to obtain numbers below last year's numbers; this means achieving "total efficiency indicators." In carrier terms it is "garbage in, garbage out!" The numbers

This year volume is down and everyone is a year older.

will be lies and deceptions, since we carriers work in reality while management lives in an imaginary Postalland.

Since last year the mail volume has decreased, the number of career craft employees has decreased, and the USPS added 1.8 million delivery points. The West Coast experienced more abnormally heavy rainfall this year. Many carriers have retired, transferred, or quit and their positions or routes were never replaced or assigned. The procedures for handling sequenced third bundle have changed.

One year older

The major difference between last year and this year is that we are all one year older. People don't like to men-

tion aging for we are forever young. The eyesight is not that sharp, the shoulder ligaments are wearing down, the tendons of the ankle weaken, the ball of the foot stings from the pounding, and the fingertips are losing their sensitivity. We are not completely slowing down overnight but we are gradually slowing down. Then how can some offices or stations be achieving minus numbers without the numbers being manipulated?

Window of operations

Carriers were told of the "window of operation," where all carriers should be back in the office by 1700. Last year it was the standard for carriers but this year in March Deputy Postmaster General Pat Donahue of the 24-hour clock changed all carriers back to 1800. Too many areas are so short-staffed they cannot comply with the 1700, and this being one of management accomplishments for

Postal protocol says auditors have to say when they are coming.

the "Pay-for-Performance" bonus, 1800 makes more sense. Someone forgot to tell former Pacific Area Vice President Al Iniguez. In his May 2006 article of "Pacific Area Update" he still used 1700. It could be just an honest mistake that he forgot daylight saving time started on April 2, 2006. If we carriers make that kind of mistake it could result in disciplinary action, but it's management right to misinform the carriers. Honestly, he is smarter than the average bear, for he knows that carriers have a tendency to spite supervisors back by 1700 time by returning at 1717. But management would still get their back by 1800 bonus.

Starting, much later, time

The question of starting time: With more mail arriving at the stations as DPS it shortens the office time needed to case mail. Carriers were given later reporting times ranging from 0700 to 0900. Management adjusts with earlier starting time for carriers on the ODL on Monday-Tuesday-Wednesday. And carriers themselves adjust for their personal convenience. The problem is that AM SOP, the carrier flow chart and MSP scan times were based on the route reference regular starting time and leaving time. If the carrier started one hour earlier, does all the preferential mail arrive an hour early too? If a carrier on a walking route started earlier, does the relay driver arrive an hour early too? If a carrier double-cased, do both the routes have all the day's mail, including standard mail, cased up too? Management has the right to manage, but we as carriers have the right to be consistent. All that

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inconsistent data that we carriers accumulated for management came back to bite us in the last route check.

How to follow the first class test letter

The postal voodoo doctors would be earning their malpractice insurance because in July 2006, Government Accounting Office (GAO) issued a discouraging report on the Postal Service delivery performance standards. First class mail is the main component in the measurement and the results are tied into management pay-for-performance bonus, which tends to lead to...lies & deceptions!

The whole concept is based on a survey by an independent company. They drop a first-class letter into one of a city's three remaining blue collection boxes and utilize the letter as a measuring stick to see how long it took to get to its correct destination. All supervisors, wannabe supervisors, and smack rear-ender are instructed to be on the lookout and given a pocket-size cheat card with an exact replica photograph of the letter to identify the test mailing. Once a letter has been sighted and confirmed, the next step is to find the hidden special Bat Phone to call Headquarters. Then a swarm of carrier pigeons is released to avoid any form of collusion with a note..."The letter is coming! The letter is coming!" All stations would be on "White Alert," watching for those white envelopes by insuring that all collection boxes are collected and dispatched out the same day. All daily preferential mail is delivered each day even if triple penalty time is needed. All late dispatched mail that would normally be taken for a ride this week has all available management personally inspect each piece of mail to insure that the test letter is not among that mail. If one were found, the first available breathing letter carrier would deliver it that day. This is the EXEC...Extremely Foolish Concept.

The GAO found that largest mail volume-standard mail-has no delivery performance standards because the Postal Service claims technological limitations, limited mailer participation, data quality and costs. The GAO forgot to ask the one group of individuals who really knows what's going on in the Postal Service...letter carriers! Standard mail, by postal definition of delivery standards, is 3 to 10 days, based on the number of postal zones the mail must traverse. In reality the definition is... whenever!

GAO should ask the carriers. If there is a shortage of staffing, what type of mail gets curtailed day after day? How many times has a carrier delivered sales ads after the sale? How many times are product coupons delivered with an expired date? How many times does a store catalog with required delivery dates get to the carrier route past the required date? How many times are carriers are

delivering monthly or weekly magazines or newspapers (with publishers are using the standard rates) two or more consecutive issues at one time? How many times during election periods have carriers delivered political mail after the election? How many times have customers approached the carrier to ask why they received shareholder's reports and proxy voting cards after the company board meeting?

Carriers blamed

The carriers are the ones that take the burden of the blame for these late deliveries, since the last person the customer sees are the letter carriers. Postal employees cannot alert the mailers because it would violate the Postal Code of Conduct. Strangely, whom are they protecting when covering up for these managerial and operational mistakes. Sadly, management forgot the meaning

"Standard mail" is untraceable in performance standards.

of "service" and equally, who they are serving. To put it in the nutshell... Management should read what they have printed on the back of their pay stub. The main reason Headquarters does not allow standard mail to be traceable is because during route inspection the carriers would know where they are hiding the mail

A dream sequence

An ancient wisdom legend claims that a person with a guilty conscience will have many restless nights. I know a person who has been lying for years, but the bond of friendship makes it hard to admit it's a sin. But after too many lies we parted ways. I doubt the person has a hard time sleeping at night for his deeds. But I endured many sleepless nights of pondering why the person would resort to lying. These days lying has become passé and nobody gives it a second thought. I have been lying to myself for years...Management does care about its employees; carriers do care about their customers; happiness does equate to overtime and dreams do come true.

Therefore, just as in the movie, we as carriers must all stick our heads out the window and yell out loud to the world..."I am not going to take it anymore!" There would be no more lies, no more deals, no more illegal shortcuts, no more running, no more complaining, no more backstabbing, no more small talk, no more malingering, no more clueless supervisors, and no more teacher's dirty looks. All that would remain are safe, consistent and professional letter carriers.

Why are you barking, Toto? What is this orange sign on the road..."MUNCHKINS BEWARE! DREAMERS NOT ALLOWED IN THE LAND OF OZ."



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Honoring our retirees



Photo by Herb Mitchell

This year's annual dinner honored a large group of retirees. From left, John Bolts, Fred Nacion, Robert Godwin, Carroll Bazen, Daniel SooHoo, Richard Becker, Samuel Toatley, Wally Woo (white shirt), Paul Cheng, Henry Quach, Roland Dong, non-retiree, President Lili Beaumont, Norman Lew, Kenny Lee, and in front row, from left, Ola Smith, Aida Campo, and Kathy McConnell.

Lies and deceptions! Part deux

By Myron Mar, City letter carrier trainer

(This is part two of two parts. In part one Myron Mar discussed the ways that letter carriers take shortcuts and are rewarded with longer routes. In this part, he examines the way managers manipulate statistics and how the cus-

tomers are the ultimate losers.)

The circle of lying data starts with the supervisor's count of the daily mail volume in the morning. He/she can overestimate or underestimate, since the number is rounded to the nearest linear foot. A foot of mail in the postal world is about 227 letter pieces or 115 flat pieces, but the supervisor didn't notice that half the letter tray was postcards or a tub contained single sheet flyers.

The volume is entered into the computer and based on the route reference volume, which was derived from the latest route check, which inherited false data since the week of inspection had no mail, plus any additions to the route were based on another carrier's data. Then DOIS, a self-infected virus, would barf out that the carrier is one hour undertime and must pivot on another route for one hour and a half. But wait, the computer has a plus or minus variable switch with which the supervisor would give the brown-noser a minus, the complainer a plus, and the middle-of-the-road carrier the benefit of the mood.

Suspect numbers and more suspect numbers

The manager gets the final data, and the numbers are over the "Same Period Last Year" (SPLY) and out comes the postal calculator for "Deliveries Per Hour," which seems too low. Therefore, they must cut the regular carrier to 8 hours day, curtail the standard mail, hide the periodicals under a pile of circulars, reroute the SPR's to the plant, and increase the PTF's hours until nightfall.

The District noticed the numbers are still .00001% too

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DPS

By Ron Ramirez, Steiner Station

Don't lick it, don't stick it, don't sniff it,
don't smell it, don't taste it, don't case it,
don't thumb it, don't fuse it, don't eat it,
don't play with it, don't sit on it,
don't stand on it, don't kick it, don't look at it,
don't read it, don't spill on it,
don't bleed on it, don't cry on it, don't smile at it,
don't yell at it, don't talk to it, don't rub it,
don't touch it, don't put it right side up,
don't kiss it, don't drop it, don't fix it,
don't lose it, don't sell it, don't sort it, don't hide it,
don't shuffle it, don't think about it,
and for God's sake, don't misdeliver it.

The End