

National Association of Letter Carriers

Branch 782

E.A. Baker Union Update



ARVIN
CALIFORNIA CITY
McFARLAND
TAFT

AVENAL
DELANO
MOJAVE
TEHACHAPI

BAKERSFIELD
EDWARDS AFB
RIDGECREST
TRONA

BORON
LAMONT
SHAFTER
WASCO

CHARTERED FEBRUARY 25, 1901



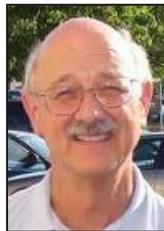
NUMBER 1

Web Version

JANUARY 2015

at the

Mike:



**Fresno's Branch 231
President Richard
Najera shared an
insightful message for
their January 2015
Postman's View.
In the article, he
shares some very
interesting points...**

"It's the beginning of the year 2015. Normally we wish each other a Happy New Year and make resolutions that are moderately easy to keep. But most of us are just happy to have the previous year recede slowly in the rear the view mirror and look to better times in this one.

Last year was rough, and in particular, nearly everyone felt the Christmas period was about the worst it has been in many years, if not ever. The amount of hours everyone worked, in both properly staffed and certainly understaffed offices was outrageous. This was largely due to the number of parcels the USPS delivered (or rather expected to deliver) from the day after Thanksgiving through Christmas Day — which was nearly 500 million pieces.

That's up 12 percent overall from the year before and this figure played a significant role in the decisions the USPS made to go seven day delivery, affecting both its career and noncareer complement by increasing the number of days and hours worked each week. Sunday delivery was already operating for CCAs, **but the addition of full time regulars making package deliveries was surely a sign that the USPS needed more staffing to get the job done.**

Here are a few more facts that defined this holiday delivery season: On two Sundays this year, December 7th and 14th respectively, the Service delivered 3.2 million and 4.6 million packages compared to 900,000 and 3 million last year around the same time. Mondays were even more telling; on December 15th the Service set a new record for itself when it delivered 27.9 million pieces — then the following Monday, December 22nd, it broke that record by making 28.2 million deliveries, which is the most deliveries the Postal Service had made on a single day during its entire 237 year history!

And here is one last thing to consider, although parcel delivery has been up all along last year the American public is still being told that the USPS is losing money rather than showing a gain in the hundreds of millions

Continued on next page...

of dollars once adjusted without that onerous, and very unnecessary prefunding requirement.

“Business is good, but not good enough for the ol’ USPS” is what John and Jane Q Public hear from the mass media.

So what does this all mean? Why did I throw these tidbits of information out for everyone to read?

Well, the first reason is obvious, parcel delivery is up. ***And it is up significantly.*** It’s not a bad thing to have your business getting more of a share in the e-commerce world.

Although no one should expect that Amazon.com alone will save the Service, or that the current relationship we have with them will last forever (it likely won’t), it is obvious that the package delivery part of the USPS is the only thing left, as far as traditional delivery goes at least, to offset the gradual and seemingly inevitable decline of first class mail volume.

The second reason is to show that despite these gains in parcel volume, the Service is still being portrayed as insolvent. That is: “cash-strapped”, “on the verge of bankruptcy”, “in the red”, etc.

I am not going to go into the so-called “manufactured crisis” that is the 2006 prefunding requirement that takes billions upon billions from the Service each year. We’ve talked about that before and it’s not going to go away (or be adjusted fairly), until Congress decides to do something about it. The law has to change.

It isn’t anything the USPS has to do with... well, other than to stop having its chief officer and spokesperson, the Postmaster General, roll over at each and every Congressional hearing or other high level meeting, asking for ways to cut service and therefore cut costs, rather than speak out against the real reasons the Service loses money hand over fist.

IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE WHAT OUR NEXT POSTMASTER GENERAL WILL DO. In the face of the next Congress, I expect that it will matter quite a bit what her central message will be. After all, this new Congress will very much be receptive to the ideas of postal privatization as well as the slashing of postal worker benefits and rights. And so, in my opinion, we can also forget about getting the Legislature to stop the prefunding payments.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, are issues having to do with the conditions of the workplace. Noth-

ing of what I wrote beforehand should cause postal employees to be taken for granted. It’s great to have more business, more parcel volume, and in general, more work to do. The alternative is less, which means people — many who desire to work — are going to be staying home.

When I mentioned the Christmas Period, it was because that time frame stood out most. I received quite a few calls and a number of texts from Carriers (and not just CCAs) complaining about the number of hours they were working, or for not having a day off since Thanksgiving. One CCA had said the last day off he’d had was “a distant memory, somewhere around Halloween!” And several Carriers complained about being “treated like dogs”.

Let’s address the days and hours first. To be blunt, contractually (and yes, legally) under certain circumstances, for which the December Period presents these, the USPS can compel its workforce to be present for, and to perform their duties, for all seven days of the week and, as necessary, for up to their maximum workhour limit; the latter for which, again, the December Period removes such limitations on the regular full time workforce.

Full time Carriers are often less familiar with this due to the twelve and sixty hour limitations and the penalty overtime provisions that exist during the year; and, Sunday work is generally seen as for clerks getting ready for the coming week. So, for Regulars, this type of schedule will cease; for CCAs and the remaining PTFs we have, the likelihood of it continuing is assured, once more, due to the increase in parcel volume and its delivery.

But this is where common sense should dictate some management decisions on how such a schedule can be maintained without driving the employees into the unnecessary and potentially dangerous condition of fatigue working seven days a week, even at eight hours a day.

Fatigue will cause a person to function at less than what they normally would and can also lead to accidents due to the inevitable decrease in mental and physical states.

It would, therefore, be prudent to offer a rotating schedule, with voluntary and mandatory provisions, for CCAs when it comes to Sunday delivery or holiday work performed on the holiday itself.

Unfortunately, as these provisions were not written into the arbitrated Das Award, there is no contractual requirement for it to be done this way and so we rely on the same people who seem to think using budget based on less than SPLY (Same Period Last Year for data comparisons) is going to work for this year.

I've said it many times before, people aren't machines. It is my belief that not only should such an accommodation be made on the schedules, but management should also thank its employees for all the work they do getting the parcels out for delivery, inside and outside of the December Period.

So, increased parcel volume is great, but treating your employees right while they get the packages delivered, is even better. Here is where better staffing and better managing will make all the difference. Let's look to the new year and better leadership for these to become a reality! I want to congratulate all the PTFs and CCAs who were promoted to Regular status this past year. For many, this was a long-awaited event. For those few of you left from the old TE class who are, or may start feeling "left out", please continue to be patient. More conversions to full time Career status opportunities will come the first part of this new year."



Jeannie Absher joins the "Last Punch Bunch"!!

As I close, let me offer my personal congratulations to Jeannie Absher! She retired from the Postal Service after 36 ½ years carrying mail.

Jeannie was one the first female Carriers at the 93308 Minner Station (now known as the "Buck Owens Station" where

there are no longer Carriers). Almost all of her Letter Carrier career—except for a brief time at the Hillcrest station— was in Oildale where the delivery unit is now known as Dole Court.

When she started, there were some of the old timers who didn't think female Carriers could do the job. *Well, she proved them wrong!!* I think anyone who knows her would agree that she was *truly* an awesome Carrier. She

would come to work on time, carry her route with very little assistance and took care of her customers.

She was the type of Carrier who really did not need a supervisor telling her what to do.

Nothing was done for her when she retired. But, she had requested that she walk out the door that way.

And, now?

I know for a fact that she *IS* enjoying her retirement! And *ALL* of us wish her the best!!!

Another Christmas season is behind us and it was reported that the U.S. Postal Service exceeded its holiday delivery projections for the season, delivering approximately 524 million packages in December — ***AN 18 PERCENT INCREASE OVER LAST YEAR!*** And on December 22nd alone, the Postal Service delivered more than 28 million packages. ***This marked the most packages delivered IN A SINGLE DAY in the organization's history.*** The package delivery record was set while also delivering approximately 463 million pieces of mail.

In contrast to Fresno or other areas, most of the sixteen cities in our Branch had enough help with the CCA Carriers to handle the increase in packages. Particularly in Bakersfield, it seemed to be overall one of the smoothest run Christmas seasons. ***ALL*** the Regular Carriers and the CCA Carriers deserve credit and recognition for making it a successful season!



MIKE TOWERY

Johnny on the Spot



Customer Connect program, where Letter Carriers use their personal connections to solicit new business in person. Besides, a Government Accountability Office report found that cluster boxes were so unpopular that less than 0.8 percent of business door-delivery customers last year opted to make the switch. (The report found the percentage was even lower for residences: 0.1 percent.)

Note: Although the resolution has not been assigned a number yet, Rep. Davis, Joyce and King already have begun collecting co-sponsors.

The 114th Congress was sworn in on and Reps. Sam Graves (R-MO) and Gerry Connolly (D-VA) wasted no time in renewing their commitment to preserving six-day mail delivery by quickly introducing H.Res. 12. One of the first pieces of legislation introduced in this session of Congress, H.Res. 12 is identical to previous sessions' resolutions that called on Congress and the Postal Service to take all appropriate steps to continue six-day mail delivery. The current resolution already has 45 co-sponsors. The last version, introduced early in the 113th Congress (2013-2014), wound up with 228 co-sponsors from both political parties.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

NALC: Door-to-door delivery resolution reintroduced in House

Reps. Susan Davis (D-CA), David Joyce (R-OH) and Peter King (R-NY) are reintroducing their door-delivery resolution for the 114th Congress, calling on the House and Senate to “take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of door delivery for all business and residential customers.”

The resolution will be identical to H.Res. 711, which was introduced last August during the 113th Congress and which ended up with 75 sponsors from both parties. In the 113th Congress, proposals to cut mail services such as door delivery were common.

The NALC and our allies in Congress and among postal stakeholders have been instrumental in the so-far successful fight against these and other service cuts that—if implemented—would be detrimental to postal customers, especially to senior citizens (who rely on prescription medications being delivered to their door) and to disabled customers.

For businesses, eliminating door delivery would undercut the success of the

“We are encouraged to see our friends in Congress once again take up the fight to maintain Saturday mail delivery service,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “We hope that the rest of the members of the House and Senate see any attempts to eliminate this or any other postal service for what they truly are: short-sighted excuses for failing to address an onerous pre-funding mandate that perpetuates a cut-cut-cut mentality.”

“Maintaining six-day mail delivery service meets the demands of American households and businesses,” Rolando said. “We applaud Congressmen Graves and Connolly for leading the effort to preserve this service.”

As you can see, it is in Letter Carriers' best interest to have friends on Capitol Hill. With a new Postmaster General set to take charge we will have to wait and see if she comes in with new ideas to grow the business or follow the same path to destruction as her predecessor did.

Respectfully,

JOHN ORTEGA
NALC Branch 782 Vice-President

**Could
YOU
Really
Win
\$500?**

Each and EVERY month, Branch 782 sponsors a drawing to encourage *YOU* to come to our Meeting*. There was no winner in December.

AND THE POINT IS?

YOU really do have a chance to win the \$500!! **Yup!** Be there...

*The fine print: **TO WIN THE MONEY YOU HAVE TO BE PRESENT ON JANUARY 27 AT THE MEETING WHEN THE NAMES ARE DRAWN. HMMMM, \$500...**

The morning routine



**Brian
Renfro**

ment's Daily Workload Projections" section of the 2011 *NALC Letter Carrier Resource Guide*. This guide is available in the "Workroom Floor Issues" section on the City Delivery page of the NALC website at nalc.org/workplace-issues/city-delivery/workroom-floor-issues.

"Don't lose your cool. While this process can be frustrating, you will do nothing to help yourself by becoming angry."

1. Verbally inform your manager. Sections 131.41 and 131.42 of *Handbook M-41* require you to orally inform your manager when you believe that you cannot carry all the mail distributed to your route in eight hours or within your normal schedule.

2. Request PS Form 3996. Section 122.33 of *Handbook M-39* requires the manager to provide you with a PS Form 3996 when you request it. No matter what your manager says to you, say the words, "I am requesting a 3996," and explain the reasons for your request. If you are denied the form, immediately ask to see your shop steward.

3. Fill out the form completely. It is important that you fill out the form completely. In the reason for the request box, write down why you believe you cannot complete your assignment in eight hours. Fully explain the reasons for your request. General comments, such as "heavy volume" or "route overburdened" do not suffice in this section.

Managers sometimes will tell you that you don't need the

requested overtime or auxiliary assistance because of what DOIS projects for your route. Multiple national-level settlements (e.g., M-01664 and M-01769) have held that these time projections are not the sole determinant of your daily workload. Nothing can replace the opinion of the professional letter carrier. Simply provide your best estimate and the reasons why and move on to Step 4.

4. Keep your cool. Don't lose your cool. While this process can be frustrating, you will do nothing to help yourself by becoming angry. If your manager denies your request for overtime or assistance, tell him or her that you will do your best. Politely ask what you should do if you are not able to deliver all the mail and are not able to return to the office when they want you back.

5. Don't argue. There is no reason to argue with your manager at this point. The best thing you can do is tell your manager that you will do your best and ask for a copy of your 3996. Section 122.33 of *Handbook M-39* requires managers to provide you with a copy if you request it.

Finish your office work and go to the street. All you have to do is your best. Work professionally. Never compromise your safety or skip breaks or lunches to make it back to the office by a certain time.

6. Don't make decisions. Letter carriers get paid to deliver mail. Managers get paid to make decisions. If you realize that you will not be able to deliver all the mail and make it back to the office by the time the manager approved, you should do everything you can to put any further decisions in the manager's hands.

The best way to handle this situation is to call your supervisor per local instructions. If you have no local instructions, try calling about two hours before the time you are scheduled (approved on PS Form 3996) to be back. Let your supervisor know where you are and how long you think it will take you to finish. Ask whether they want you to bring the mail back or finish the route. Follow whatever instructions your supervisor or manager gives you.

If the supervisor or manager refuses to tell you what to do with the rest of the mail, or if you can't finish your assigned duties in the amount of time initially specified by your supervisor, you should return to the office in the allotted time and ask for further instructions. Follow whatever instructions your supervisor or manager gives you.

Thanks for your hard work and dedication during the holiday season. You made it a success. I wish you and your family a happy New Year.

from the
editor-guy

For **YOU**: NALC membership means that a *Postal Record* is delivered to your home of record. This article—page 36 of the January 2015 issue—is just one example of information which is provided to each and every one of you *each and every month*. Read the articles? Hmmm....

Minutes of the December 2014 General Meeting

The regular meeting of Branch 782 was called to order by President, Mike Towery at 7:00 p.m. on the 16th day of December, 2014 at the Branch office, Bakersfield. The flag salute was led by Sgt. at Arms, Jerry Patterson. All members of the Executive Board were present. The Stewards were present from Arvin, Avenal, Brundage, Camino Media, Delano, Downtown, Hillcrest, Lamont, Oildale, Shafter, South, Stockdale and Taft. Also present was the Newsletter Editor, Basil Zuniga; SANE, Fred Acedo; Webmaster, Rick Plummer; Photographer, Anita Holderman; Asst. Treasurer, Debbie Guillet; OWCP Rep., Rick Gerdes and Frank Martinez of the Social and Recreation Committee. The Minutes of the November 25, 2014 meeting were read and accepted with no additions or corrections.

REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES: Teresa Ortega had nothing to report for the picnic committee. Basil Zuniga reported that last month was Dole Court's turn, he appreciated all the help. Next month will be Stockdale. Basil thanked Mike Towery for the information on the Carrier from North Carolina. Frank Martinez did not attend the meeting of the Social and Recreation Committee; he did report that there are still tickets available for CALM, contact Emma or Lisa for tickets. Molly Biggar reported that one Acedo cartoon book was sold, there are 1196 book remaining.

GOOD OF THE ASSOCIATION: Mike Towery reported that 6 CCA's will be promoted to Regular and two Carriers will transfer in. He reported that there are only 3 PTF's in the Branch. One each in McFarland, Shafter and Edwards.

IMPROVEMENT OF THE ASSOCIATION: Mike Towery informed the members that Jeanie Absher from Dole Court will be retiring. He presented her with a check from the Branch. Mike requested a moment of silence in memory of retired member Lonnie Neal.

FINANCIAL SECRETARY'S REPORT: Anita Holderman reported that \$6,276.73 was collected for the month.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Molly Biggar reported

Beginning Balance	\$53,845.73
Dues and Income	\$11,964.13
Total Balance	\$65,809.86
Total Expenses	\$6,562.57
Ending Balance	\$59,247.29

The MDA 50/50 Drawing was won by Hermie Encinas.

The drawing for \$500.00 would have been won by Ralph Crawford if he had been present.

There were 39 members present.

The meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

KIM GERDES
NALC Branch 782 Recording Secretary

Non-Member List October 2014*



Downtown Station
S. Kirby
J. Cruz
D. Zuniga

South Station
100% UNION!!!

Brundage/E. Bakersfield
D. Kinglee

Hillcrest
100% UNION!!!

Dole Court
D. Morris
S. Hancock

Stockdale
J. Oh
M. Martinez

Camino Media
P.S. Dhillon
C. Rodriguez

Arvin
100% UNION!!!

Avenal
J.A. McColloch

California City
S. T. Ivory

Delano
L.A. Campos
C.V. Quebral
D. Barreto

Lamont
100% UNION!!!

Ridgecrest
S. P. Pierce
G.D. Weaver
N.S. Travers
B. Leroy

Shafter
M. D. Voights
L. M. New

Taft
A. Veach
B. M. Krier
K. J. Hughes

Tehachapi
B.C. DenBeemen
C.E. Rosales

Trona
100% UNION!!!

Wasco
100% UNION!!!

*CCA names are
in italics.

OUT THERE



Have an Idea for Fred?*

OUT THERE



OUT THERE



Fred Acedo
Br. 782 S.A.N.E.
P.O. Box 6532
Bakersfield, CA
93386-6532

**But, you never know what you might get...*

2015 NALC HBP Info

At a glance...



NALC Health Benefit Plan	1-888-636-6252
*Hospital Pre-Certification	1-877-220-6252
Mental & Substance Precertification	1-877-468-1016
**Drug Prescription Retail	1-800-933-6252
CVS/CareMark Specialty Pharmacy	1-800-237-2767
Durable Medical Equipment	1-888-636-6252
NURSE ASSISTANT (24/7)	1-877-220-6252
CVS/CareMark Pharmacist	1-888-636-6252
Enhanced Eldercare Services (24/7)	1-877-468-1016
CIGNA PPO Dr's & Facilities	1-877-220-6252
CIGNA Organ Transplant Approval	1-800-668-9682
Quit Power (Smoking Cessation)	1-877-521-0244
CIGNA Health Rewards (Discounts)	1-800-558-9443
CIGNA Dental Discount Program	1-877-521-0244
Disease Management Program	1-800-227-3728
OPM Retirement Info Center	1-888-767-6738
Federal Information Center	1-800-333-4636
Social Security Administration Info	1-800-772-1213
PostalEase Human Resources USPS	1-877-477-3273
Quest Lab Services (Bakersfield)	(661) 631-8520
LabCorp Lab Services	(661) 631-9258
Shared Services (Retirees Info!!!)	1-877-477-3273

NALC Health Benefit Plan
20547 Waverly Court
Ashburn, Virginia 20149

NALC Prescription Drug Program
P.O. Box 94467
Palatine, Illinois 60094-4467

NALC Drug Prescription "Claims" Program
P.O. Box 521926
Phoenix, Arizona 85072-2192

Optimum Health Behavioral Solutions
P.O. Box 30755
Salt Lake City, Utah 84130-0755
Questions: 1-877-468-1016

NALC Consumer Driven Health Plan and Value Option
P.O. Box 18223
Chattanooga, TN 37422-7223
Phone: 1-855-511-1893

Preferred Provider (PPO)
Cost: \$20.00 Co-pay per office visit

(PPO) Deductible: \$300 Individual,
\$600 Self & Family—Per Calendar Year

CVS Pharmacy

Immunizations covered: (PPO you pay nothing)
 Whooping Cough, Hepatitis A, B, Herpes Zoster
 (Shingles), HPV Vaccine, Influenza (Flu) Vac-
 cine, Viricetta (Chicken Pox) Vaccine, Tetanus &
 Pneumonia

* *Failure to pre-certify for in-patient hospitalization will result in a \$500 reduction in benefits paid by our Plan. **YOU MUST** notify the Plan prior to undergoing radiology/imaging with doctor name and dates. Call: 1-877-220-6252.*

** NALC Drug Prescription Program is **MANDATORY** generic (unless specified by your doctor, at additional cost to member). Preferred retail pharmacy 1st and 2nd fills, you pay 20% of cost of generic/30% of name brand/45% non-formulary. MAIL ORDER/ CVS PRESCRIPTIONS (when NALC is primary): 60 day supply \$8 generic, \$43 name brand, \$58 non-formulary; 90 day supply \$12 generic, \$65 name brand, \$80 non-formulary; **MEDICARE PROGRAM** (when Medicare is primary) Retail network pharmacy: you pay 10% of cost of generic, 20% of formulary, 30% non-formulary. **MEDICARE PRIMARY** (mail order); 60 day supply \$7 generic, \$37 formulary, \$52 non-formulary; 90 day supply \$10 generic, \$55 formulary, \$70 non-formulary; 90 day supply \$4 for NALCSELECT generic (certain drugs); 90 day supply \$4 for NALCPREFERRED generic (certain drugs); NALCSENIOR generic antibiotics are available **FREE** for a 30 day supply, when Medicare is primary (certain antibiotics only).

MAIL ORDER SPECIALTY DRUGS (Bio-Tech drugs—**VERY EXPENSIVE**): *Your* cost for a 30 day supply is \$150; 60 day supply is \$250; and, 90 day supply is \$350. Some drugs (e.g. bio-tech asthma, diabetes, organ rejection, etc.) require prior approval before dispensing. You **MUST** call the Plan 1-800-237-2767.

Our PPO doctors and facilities—through (OPA Network) CIGNA—save us and the Plan thousands of dollars and it is top notch care at a discount rate. You don't lose anything. You are saving money for the best care!!! For example: *CIGNA Weight Loss Program (877) 220-6252

Mark Ramirez, NALC Branch 782 HBP Rep.
(661) 398-6075

CCA Information Section

NALC Consumer Driven Health Plan
 and Value Option Plan

P.O. Box 182223
 Chattanooga, TN 37422-7223
 1-855-511-1183

HR Shared Service—HRSHAREDSERVICES@GSA.GOV

Check out this PPO: Sendas Northwest Urgent Care
3409 Calloway Suite 101 Bakersfield, California 93312
Phone: (661) 587-2500

Sendas Southwest Urgent Care
9450 Ming Avenue, Bakersfield, California 93309
Phone: (661) 587-2500

Hours: M-F 8:00 am - 9:00 pm; Sat & Sun 8:00 am - 8:00 pm

*Acupuncture!! Must be a state licensed or certified accu-
 puncturist. Chiropractic! State licensed chiropractor or D.O.*

Health Prescription: Humor from Mark!

Basil..... Jewish humor...
I LOVE THIS STUFF!!!!!!

NEWSLETTER WORTHY!!!!!!..... Mark

You may or may not remember old-time Jewish comedians: Shecky Green, Red Buttons, Totie Fields, Milton Berle, Henny Youngman, and many others... Perhaps you may have only heard of them, or took a leak next to one of them in the Clubhouse men's room. I — for one — miss their kind of humor. Not a single "F"-bomb in any of their routines...

* A car hit an elderly Jewish man. The paramedic asks, "Are you comfortable?" The man says, "I make a good living."

* I just got back from a pleasure trip. I took my mother-in-law to the airport.

* I've been in love with the same woman for 49 years. If my wife finds out, she'll kill me!

* Someone stole all my credit cards, but I won't be reporting it. The thief spends less than my wife did.

* We always hold hands. If I let go, she shops.

* My wife and I went to a hotel where we got a waterbed. My wife calls it the Dead Sea.

* My wife and I revisited the hotel where we spent our wedding night. This time I was the one who stayed in the bathroom and cried.

* My Wife was at the beauty shop for two hours. That was only for the estimate. Eventually, she got a mudpack and looked great for two days. Then the mud fell off...

* The Doctor called Mrs. Cohen saying, "Mrs. Cohen, your check came back." She replied, "So did my arthritis!"

* **Doctor:** "You'll live to be 60." **Patient:** "I AM 60!"
Doctor: "See! What did I tell you?"

* **Patient:** "I have a ringing in my ears."
Doctor: "Don't answer!"

* A drunk was in front of a judge. The judge says, "You've been brought here for drinking." The drunk says, "Okay, let's get started!"

* Why do Jewish divorces cost so much? They're worth it!

* Why do Jewish men die before their wives? They want to.

*The Harvard School of Medicine did a study of why Jewish women like Chinese food so much. The study revealed that the reason for this is because "Won Ton" spelled backward is "Not Now".

*There is a big controversy on the Jewish view of when life begins. In Jewish tradition, the fetus is not considered viable until it graduates from law school.

Q: Why don't Jewish mothers drink?

A: Alcohol interferes with their suffering.

Q: Why do Jewish mothers make great parole officers?

A: They never let anyone finish a sentence.

*A man called his mother in Florida. "Mom, how are you?" "Not too good," said the mother. "I've been very weak." The son asked, "Why are you so weak?" She said, "Because I haven't eaten in 38 days." The son said, "That's terrible! Why haven't you eaten in 38 days?" The mother answered, "Because, I didn't want my mouth to be full in case you should call."

*A Jewish man said that when he was growing up, they always had two choices for dinner — Take It or Leave It.

*A Jewish boy comes home from school and tells his mother he has a part in the play. She asks, "What part is it?" The boy says, "I play he part of the Jewish husband." The mother scowls and says, "Go back and tell the teacher you want a speaking part."

Q: How many Jewish mothers does it take to change a light bulb?

A: (Sigh) "Don't bother. I'll sit in the dark. I don't want to be a nuisance to anybody."

* A Jewish mother gives her son a blue shirt and a brown shirt for his birthday. On the next visit, he wears the brown one. The mother says, "What's the matter already? Didn't you like the blue one?"

* Did you hear about the bum who walked up to a Jewish mother on the street and said, "Lady, I haven't eaten in three days." "Force yourself," she replied.

Q: What's the difference between a Rottweiler and a Jewish mother?

A: Eventually, the Rottweiler lets go.

Q: Why are Jewish men circumcised?

A: **BECAUSE JEWISH WOMEN DON'T LIKE ANYTHING THAT ISN'T 20% OFF.**

A Focus on Our Future: CCA Brache Hayes.....

Brache started on his path as a City Carrier Assistant on May 5, 2014. He has no family in “the business”. When asking Brache how or why he became a Carrier, he stated that he once had a mail Carrier that made the job look “chill”, nice casual job cruising the streets. He laughs looking back thinking he actually got “suckered” PAYING \$75 for the packet of information to get the preview of the test for the Postal Service. He was then sent to Visalia to take the computer test. Four months later, he was called in for an interview.



Brache’s mind has since changed from the first thought of this job being a “nice casual job cruising the streets” real quick. He first got hired and started out in Wasco for one week and then he was moved to Delano. He worked 5-6 months straight but luckily only 6 days a week. (haha luckily) He commuted back and forth to Delano, working mostly walking routes. This is his first job outdoors but it doesn’t phase him due to his time out in the hot weather as a football player. He was then transferred to the Downtown Station in November. He liked the people at the other stations but he wanted to be closer to family and not have to commute daily.

Brache knows that being a Carrier is a good job and, mostly, it’s mental. He sees older people doing it but when you do it yourself, it’s a lot harder than it looks. This job has given him a better financial future. It is a great jump start, especially getting prepared for a new baby boy in April. He is grateful for this job and the opportunities that come with it due to the fact that this will be his first baby. This job has undoubtedly changed his life. Brache is very proud to be able to have moved out, get a place of his own for the first time and to be able to take care of his family all on his own.

Brache has had to deal with irate customers here and there. He says most of the complaints were not about him but about the previous day’s Carriers who have done something “wrong” in the customers opinion. He says to be aware of dogs and your surroundings. He once had an incident where the customers dog got out of the gate but he was faster than the dog and got to safety. He says “bring on the ghetto”, meaning he would

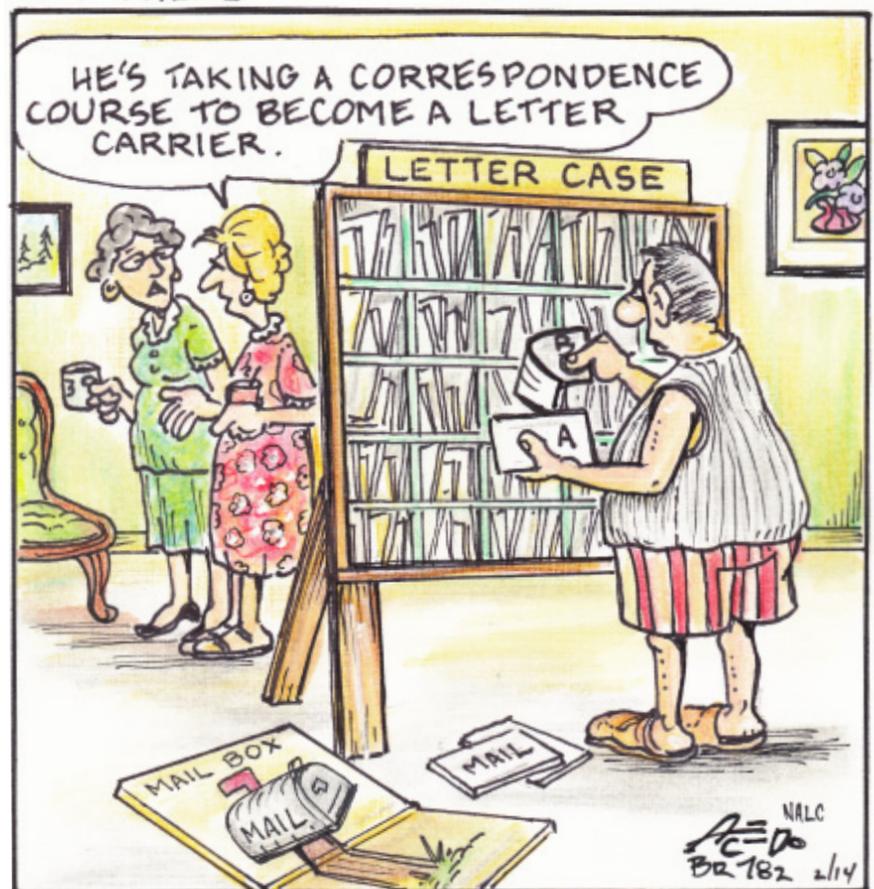
rather be in the ghetto carrying mail any day. After recently doing Sunday delivery for the first time, Brache doesn’t really want to work on Sundays, but he has a positive outlook on it as “it is EXTRA MONEY” and it is a “chill” day of work because Carriers don’t have to deal with every day mail and are given step-by-step directions.

Brache says, “Being low on the totem pole, you have to deal with the crappy stuff; but, at the end of the day, look back and see that you have made some good money.”

He sums up his approach to work with, “You can’t complain about making good, honest money. Push yourself. It’s a mental thing. Motivate yourself. Love your job and be grateful. At times it can be stressful and overwhelming but—honestly—“what else would I be doing???” Being a couch potato OR worse!”

MABEL BULLIS
East Brundage

OUT THERE





from the editor-guy

Each month, we receive numerous NALC newsletters from all over the country. So many of them contain articles which I think might be of interest to Branch 782 members. I can't afford to reprint all of them. But, here in YOUR web version, are some that you may find of interest.

Let me start you out with something from the Buffalo, NY Branch 3 Buzz which was published in December 2014. Frank Attea walked "The Walk" and he now talks the talk...

I WAS THERE

One of this year's themes at the 2014 National Convention in Philadelphia, was to honor those who participated in the historical Strike of 1970. Delegates who participated in the Strike were given a pin with the slogan "I WAS THERE". During that segment of the Convention to honor those who were there, President Rolando asked all delegates who had participated to stand and be honored. Both Bob Connors and I from Branch 3 stood with other delegates throughout the country. Of course, our ranks certainly have thinned over the years.

Carriers don't realize, that the wages and benefits they enjoy today are a result of the strike by the NALC in 1970, and that strike was done with great risk to its officers and members. Loss of job and possible arrest were real. However, the reasons to strike were justified. Low wages and tough working conditions were prevalent. Pay increase had to be passed in Congress and signed into law by the President. One or more two cent per hour increases were possible, if it were not vetoed by the President. And vetoes happened often. As to working conditions in 1963: I started as a Career Substitute Carrier at \$2.05 per hour. Substitutes were scheduled to work 13 days of a 14-day pay period. One week of the pay period included collections. Six days included a 5-hour night collection after a day of delivering at a station. And one 5-hour Sunday collection starting at 1 PM.

A typical day went something like this: report to GPO SUB pool at 6 AM for an assignment to a station. (*Did not have to report to GPO if a station asked you to return the next day*). During your week of collections, deliver mail at a station until 3 PM, leave station to report to Post Office Garage for 4 PM collections. (*Travel to garage was off the clock*). The day would end at 9 PM after you returned to unload the collected mail. During bad driving conditions in the winter months, your return could be much later. The second week of the pay period was for 6 days only delivering at a station (*unless you were called to do a collection*). 140 to 150 hour pay periods were common for the Substitute Carrier, all at STRAIGHT TIME. Regulars did get overtime, however other than the Christmas Season, overtime needed in their route was always auxiliary and by a Substitute Carrier at STRAIGHT TIME.

So you can see, Collective Bargaining Rights the Union won as a result of the 1970 STRIKE greatly increased your Wages and Benefits. For this reason I'm proud that "I WAS THERE".

However, what troubles me today is the fact that all gains by our Union in collective bargaining over the years can be lost in legislation. Carriers should be aware of the continued efforts by the Postmaster General and some in Congress to dismantle the Postal Service and discontinue the collective bargaining rights.

We can prevent this by supporting our friends in Congress and the Senate through our COLCPE Contributions. Although RETIRED, I am a GIVE ME 5 contributor.

ACTIVE LETTER CARRIERS YOUR BATTLE TODAY IS IN LEGISLATION. HOW CAN YOU AFFORD NOT TO BE A GIVE ME 5 CONTRIBUTOR? CONTRIBUTE AND PROTECT YOUR JOB.

~ Frank J. Attea, Retired Niagara Square

The Retirement Blues

by Carl Owen

"I WANNA RETIRE! Sound familiar? I probably say it about a hundred times a day. But for the longest time I never knew how much I was going to receive and if I opted to retire would it be too soon or too little or much later than I wanted? So taking the bull by the horns (and listening to some sound advice from co-workers), I started to gather the information.

First, it surprised me how many carriers under FERS are not aware that if you retire before you turn 62, you are eligible for a social security supplement. This is not a gift, it's part of the FERS system. To estimate the amount, you need two things. First an estimate from Social Security of how much you'll draw at that age and the formula to figure out the percentage of that figure the Postal Service pays out.

To get the estimate on how much Social Security you'll draw, you need to access the Social Security Administration web site where you'll establish a

personal account that will provide you with 'how much'. Then you use the formula of dividing your years of service by forty. I'll have 29 years in when I retire so 29 divided by 40 comes out to about 75%. My social security is estimated to be \$1,600 at 62 so 75% of \$1,600 is \$1,200. You are eligible for this only until you turn 62, then you must apply for your social security and get the full amount, a 25% raise.

Now go to Lite Blue on the Postal Service web site and in the HR Section you'll find the eRetire Section and you can request an annuity estimate. Put in the date you plan on retiring and by the next working day you'll have an estimate of your pension. Mine, with survivor's benefits will be approximately \$1,250 a month.

Finally, your Thrift Savings Account. I expect to have just a shade under \$300,000 dollars. The TSP site has a built in calculator that gives you multiple options on how much a month you want to withdraw or how long or how much interest you expect your TSP to draw while drawing it down. I plugged in drawing \$1,500 a month while the account made 4% interest. After 25 years (age 85 for me) the calculator estimates that I should still have slightly over \$100,000 dollars left in the account.

For the longest time I was under the impression that you had to withdraw your money from Thrift Savings upon retirement and find somewhere to invest it. I was wrong. You can keep it in TSP and several articles by well-respected financial experts highly praise the Thrift Savings Plan as outperforming 90% of the private investment firms and having the rock bottom lowest operating cost. That means more of your money stays in your pocket and not some hotshot Wall Street shark's bank account.

Those three sources of income will be approximately \$3,950 each month. My monthly net income is \$2,025 working full time. I will also benefit from a pension from the Army Reserves that starts when I turn 60 next September, plus I'm eligible for full military health care (Tricare).

Knowledge is a powerful tool. With the stress and anxiety of new postal operations and uncertainties of the future it's time we start educating ourselves about the benefits we've earned. So come next November, this beat up, wore out old letter carrier is heading home to be a full time Grandpa.

Article courtesy of the Oklahoma City, OK *Sooner Script* published by NALC Branch 458 in December 2014

Do You Drive an LLV?

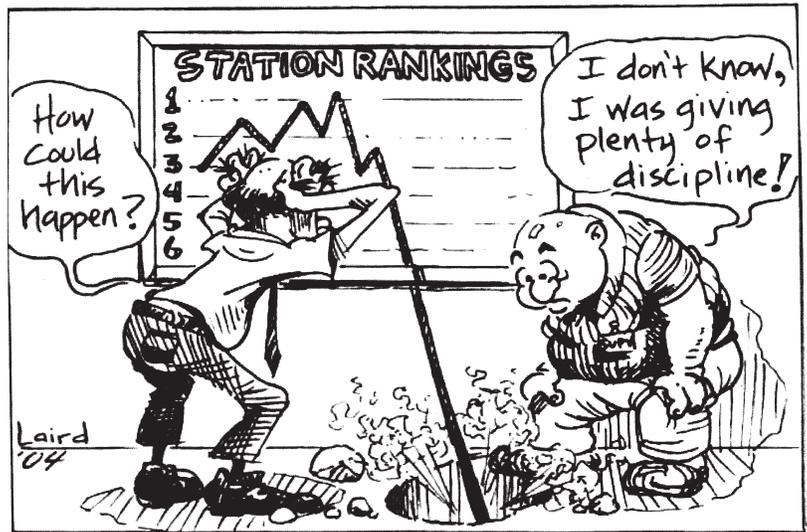
The LLV postal vehicles are now 20 - 27 years old. They were manufactured between 1987 and 1994 at an initial cost of \$11,651 each. LLVs make up 75% of the delivery fleet. The USPS has been unable to identify any U.S. manufacturer of right-hand drive vehicles that meet its operational requirements. Custom built vehicles (such as the LLV and the FFV) are more costly than using a commercially available vehicle with modifications to fit the needs of the Service.

The USPS OIG issued a report indicating that commercial vehicles—with some customization—would be the best option. Now, the USPS is exploring the option of keeping the body of the LLV and replacing the chassis and drive train. USPS recently posted a notice on the Federal Business Opportunities website. It is asking for interested manufacturers to submit proposals for a replacement chassis/drive train for the LLV. Some of the required specifications are fuel economy better than the LLV, USPS estimated 9 MPG and the service life should be 20+ years.

Article excerpt courtesy of the Rockville, MD *UNITY* published by NALC Branch 3825 in Fall 2014

It is such a special thing that we have a cartoonist who has been a Letter Carrier. Fred Acedo produces so many different insights about what our lives! Like you, I *TRULY appreciate all of the work that he shares with all of us every month!!!*

Here is one example of a cartoon (which originally appeared in the Rockville, Maryland NALC Branch 3825 *UNITY* in Fall 2014) that you may, also, enjoy.



The Vice President's Message by Jerry Fitzsimmons

Why is the Letter Carrier the Most Trusted Government Employee?

I want to tell you a story about something that happened on my route about 16 years ago. It illustrates why our customers think so highly of their letter carriers (most of them anyway).

It was just another day on the route. I had been the regular on that route for about 10 years at that point and knew most of my customers. It was a park and loop route in an upper middle class neighborhood out of Parkrose Station.

I was about half way through the route and had just filled my satchel with the next loop. As I stepped out of the vehicle I noticed an unfamiliar vehicle parked on the street a few car lengths ahead of where I was parked. I also noticed there was a young man sitting in the car smoking a cigarette. I also noticed that below his window there were 3 or four fresh cigarette butts. So I figured that he had been there awhile and had been smoking the whole time. I also noticed that he had a small star tattoo on his left hand. I said hi as I walked by, but the young man said nothing.

When I returned to my vehicle he was still there and it just didn't feel right, so I wrote down the license number and the make of the car, on a slip of paper and put it on the dashboard of my vehicle. Then I kinda forgot about it.

A few days later when I was walking the same loop, I walked up to a porch where the owner was sitting in a lawn chair. I said hello and asked how he was doing. He

said he was doing fine and thanked me for delivering his mail. As I turned to leave he said he was waiting for the police to show up because his house had been burglarized. He said he had been gone for a couple of days and when he returned he found a window broken and many items missing. I expressed my sorrow about that to him and continued down the street.

Then I remembered the vehicle that was parked on the street a few days prior and I went back and told the customer about it and retrieved the license # I had written down. I gave it to the customer and about an hour later a police officer pulled up to me and asked me about what I had seen the day I wrote down the license number. I explained what I saw and when I told him about the star tattoo, he smiled and thanked me for my information.

A few days later the customer was again sitting in the lawn chair on his porch. He said he had been waiting for me because he wanted to thank me for all that I had done. I explained that I really had not done that much, but he said because of what I had done he had recovered all the stolen items from his house and the burglars were in jail.

He told me that the license # I had written down and the star tattoo that I noticed took

the police right to the door of the burglars and they found all the customer's stolen items, along with a lot more stolen items, in his garage.

As letter carriers, we are trusted by our customers to deliver their mail; But we also see any changes in the neighborhood merely because we walk or drive through the route everyday and changes are very obvious. Just the action of writing down a license number of an unfamiliar car parked on my route with someone sitting in it, was enough to put a criminal in jail and recover the customers stolen items. The Postal Service did not know I had done this, but the customers on my route did and many of them thanked me for my actions.

This is just one reason our customers think so highly of us. Almost every carrier has at least one story to tell about going the extra mile for their customers. So I ask all of you to keep your eyes open, know your surroundings and note any unusual things on your route. It takes no extra time and you may just become a hero to your customers.

And as always I ask that you always remember and never forget to WORK SMART, WORK SAFE so you too can RETIRE HEALTHY! ■

Article courtesy of the Portland, Oregon *B-Mike* published by NALC Branch 82 in November 2014

USPS Plans to Save The Service? Change Delivery Standards of Course!

Bill Lister, President Branch 343, St Louis MO
Tip of the Editor's Hat to Branch 343 *Mound City Carrier*

Barring intervention from Congress or the Senate, the USPS plans to change the delivery standards for first-class mail beginning in January of 2015. This coincides with their plan to close 82 more processing centers, including the ones in Cape Girardeau and Springfield, Missouri. That will leave two plants left in the state, one in Kansas City and one in St. Louis with Columbia being used to a lesser degree. With all the mail from Cape being processed in St. Louis beginning in April, the plant here will need extra time to process the mail. The USPS says "we got that covered, because the delivery standards are changing here on January 5, 2015.

Outgoing mail will continue to be picked up by letter carriers and dispatched to the plant every evening. Whatever mail is processed by 6 a.m. will be sorted by machine, with DPS being run at noon and dispatched to the stations and branches by 11 p.m. That means all of our routes' mail will be at the case by 6 a.m. and ready for that day's delivery. Mail that doesn't make it by 6 a.m. or is held back will be run the next day at 6 a.m. with no worry about a delay, because we no longer have those pesky overnight standards for first class. This will not just cause the further erosion of first-class mail volume, but Donahoe may actually get his wish and be able to eliminate it entirely. Who is going to spend 50 cents for a first-class letter that will be treated and processed as standard or bulk mail and with no guarantee on when it will be delivered.

Our parcel business increased by 24 percent last year and that trend is expected to continue, especially this holiday season where it has been predicted that we will deliver 470 million parcels. That's up 50 million from last year and nearly 200 million more than Fed Ex will deliver. We still have over 100 million to go before we can contend with UPS, but it becomes easy to see that our leaders have embraced the parcel business as our saving grace and all but given up on first-class letter mail. The problem with this line of thought is we are now in direct competition with UPS and Fed Ex that we also have contracts with to use air space and to deliver some of their parcels. It was not reported if any of the parcels we deliver for them were counted in those numbers and no one has ever actually viewed the contracts we have with our competitors, therefore, this could help save us for the future, or it could result in another Donahoe postal boondoggle that pushes us to privatization. The question then becomes, can we continue to deliver EDDM and sequenced mail to every home

in the country while also delivering a large number of parcels, every day?

Will first-class mail disappear if we change the standards or will our competitors at some point try to just take us out? They are private companies that have been in the parcel business for many years, so are they going to let us take their business or will they fight us for that business? Our leaders have not answered those questions yet, and if they do I'm fairly certain they will say, we need to go to five-day delivery.

Considering Donahoe's track record, I would not be surprised if the results of his new plan ended with an even more severe drop in mail volume, the destruction of our delivery network and a failure to attain an increase in our parcel business. A new leader (Sen. Ron Johnson, Wis.) on the Senate Committee that reviews postal affairs, who has made it very clear that he does not like federal employees, could make for another rough year in 2015. Please write your congressman and senator asking them to keep current delivery standards the same and to keep all plants and processing centers open after the first of the year.

The Gateway District has come up with their own plan to prepare for the increase in our parcel business. They implemented their plan at Chouteau on October 27 by taking half of the 22 routes' casing equipment out of the building. Eleven carriers now start at 6 a.m. on the remaining eleven cases. They case and pull down their mail and before they leave for the street they flip their case labels over for the 11 second-shift carriers that now start at 8 a.m. All mail on the left side of the case is for the first-shift carrier and on the right sits all the second-shift carriers' mail. You may wonder how the case dividers line up, or perhaps how the vacants are marked. Well, they have that all figured out.

There are dividers for every cell, even if the label is eight cells wide for a business, and vacants, hold orders etc. are marked with green and blue dots on the labels. Will overtime be equitable and what happens if the dispatch truck is late? I suppose after the first of the year that won't matter since all our mail will be there by midnight and we shall see about the OT. Will it work? As I've been saying, you can make anything work in one smaller office. Just wait till this is rolled out to five or 10 offices. That's when we will see just how well this plan works. Right now the smart money is on not at all. More! Later!

Article courtesy of the Wichita Falls, Texas *Red River Carrier* published by NALC Branch 1227 in January 2015

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS FOR CCA's

Carrier(s) on more than one occasion have experienced standing around waiting for management to find them a vehicle! Management has opted to having the CCAs use their own personal vehicles to deliver the mail. This is not a violation of the contract.

77). **May CCAs enter into City Carrier Transportation (Driveout) Agreements, as defined in Article 41.4 of the National Agreement?**

No, Article 41.4 does not apply to CCAs. However, the Memorandum of Understanding, Re: Use of Privately Owned Vehicles applies to CCAs. In circumstances where the postmaster or station manager determines that use of a personal vehicle is necessary for business purposes, a CCA may voluntarily elect to use his/her vehicle. Such agreement must be made through PS Form 8048, Commercial Emergency Vehicle Hire, with the daily rate for vehicle use mutually agreed to by the postmaster or station manager and the employee. The postmaster or station manager must then forward the completed form to the servicing Vehicle Maintenance Facility manager.

22). **Do CCAs receive Night Differential or Sunday Premium?**

CCAs receive Night Differential as defined in Article 8. 7 of the National Agreement.

CCAs do not receive Sunday Premium.

64). **Will CCAs be allowed to opt on (hold Down) vacant duty assignments?**

Yes, after April 10, 2013.

CCAs may place their name on the posted bid. If there is more than one route to bid on at the time of posting; CCAs can place their bid(s) by placing a #1 by their first choice #2 by their second choice and so on.

It would be beneficial for CCAs to opt on open assignments. This will allow the CCA to be on one route for the duration of that opt. The CCA will report at the scheduled reporting time of that assignment (route). By being on one route everyday will allow the CCA to get familiarized with the route(s).

67). **Can a CCA be taken off an opt (hold-down) in order to provide a part-time flexible employee assigned to the same work location with 40 hours of straight-time work over the course of a service week (Article 7. Section 1.C)?**

Yes, a CCA may be "bumped" from an opt if necessary to provide 40 hours of straight-time work over the course of a service week to part-time flexible letter carriers assigned to the same work location. In this situation the opt is not terminated. Rather, the CCA is temporarily taken off the assignment as necessary on a day-to-day basis.

68. **What is the pecking order for awarding hold-down assignments?**

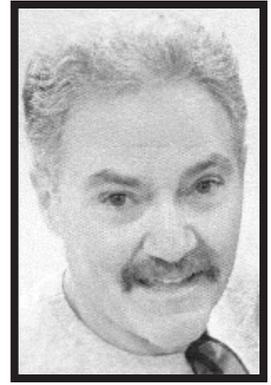
Hold-down assignments are awarded to eligible career letter carriers by highest to lowest seniority first and then to eligible CCAs by highest to lowest relative standing in the installation.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” – James Baldwin

HOUSTON LETTER CARRIER - December 2014

Over The Shoulder



Jeff Sabbag

Time To Go

The first sign that it is time to retire hits everyone differently. For me, that notice came on a bitter Tuesday night during a frigid January. The evening wind was blowing stronger than the edicts that howl out of Postal Headquarters in Washington. With a mercury reading lower than a postal employee's morale, never mind a three dog night, this was a four dogger if ever there was one! This epiphany did not hit me on an icy street in the middle of a long loop with the weight of the satchel tugging at my shoulder robbing my already less than lanky frame of valuable inches. But, rather, on my way home one evening as I ran a few errands.

After clocking out that long ago day, I decided to stop at a restaurant for a quick dinner. As my cooking skills leave a bit to be desired, it seemed a good choice. I like to tell people that "I can cook a meal, I just can't eat it." Let's put it this way, to borrow a line from the late Rodney Dangerfield, "At my house I pray AFTER I eat." Pulling into the parking lot, still bundled in my postal layers, I steeled myself as I opened the car door to brave the walk toward the entrance. Half the distance across the snow covered lot, from the corner of my eye, I noticed a young woman approximately 20 years of age exiting her vehicle with the same goal as mine, the waiting warmth on the other side of the door. There was one very clear difference between us, outer clothing. While I was bundled from head to toe, this young lady wore nothing more than jeans and a tee shirt. I remember thinking to myself that, apparently, hypothermia was now in vogue. I also wondered why in the world wasn't she racing to the door to escape this apocalyptic weather? I didn't have long to wait for my answer...as the young lady stopped to hold the door open for me. Instantly, I thought to myself how badly am I moving that someone with so much bare skin exposed is waiting to hold the door open for me? Immediately, I said to her..."oh no, ladies first." Undeterred, the would be "doorman" with arms turning as blue as my uniform coat and cheeks the crimson color ER Doctors warn against, smiled and said "Please, after you, I insist." Realizing chivalry was not going to win out over shivering, I put an end to the duel at the door and thanked her for her gesture of kindness.

Inside the door, with the blow to my manhood still reeling in my head, I was very grateful that the friendly hostess at the door only asked me the standard question "table or booth?" The meal was served almost as fast as the evening's indignity had been and I was soon in line at the register to pay. However, I was about to get one more blow when the cashier rang up my bill giving me the 10%

senior citizen discount, no questions asked!! Barely past the half century mark at this time, and after witnessing the two elderly people in front of me who were clearly octogenarians being forced to produce both a driver's license and Medicare card while submitting to a DNA swab just to prove they qualified for the discount that was readily given to me without any questions being asked. To say I was a bit taken aback after I was green lighted so easily would be an understatement.

Moving towards the car, I imagined Willard Scott reading my name with the birthday centurions the next morning. Was it too late to begin moisturizing my dry, wind burned face, I wondered? I had one final stop to make before I could put an end to the bizarre night, a quick stop at the corner drugstore for a few essentials to tackle the next work day. Aleve, knee brace and a half gallon of Ben Gay.....you know, the basics! Looking back now, I should have known I wasn't going to be able to just pay and leave, not on this day, no not by a long shot. Oh the paying part went fine. Unfortunately, simply bagging the items wasn't in the cards. The next thing I knew, the clerk was on the PA system calling the stock boy to the front counter with the words "gentleman needs assistance to his car." My patience finally at an end with the repeated slights during this evening, I shouted "Good Lord, how frail do I look?" The ashen faced clerk replied "Well, we've had the store's defibrillator at the ready since you walked in the front door." Not about to let another good Samaritan risk freezing to death trying to help me traverse the parking lot, I refused the stock boy's assistance...after all, I didn't want to end up on the defendant's end of a culpable homicide charge. Now, with every eye fixed my way, I grabbed the register receipt to make my exit. Shuffling towards the door, dragging three feet of store coupons, I overheard fellow customers placing wagers on how far I would make it before collapsing (the smart money was on the shampoo aisle, with the over and under being the battery display). Determined to beat the spread, I forged onward bowed and somewhat broken.

Once I was home, I tried to forget the repeated jabs to my ego and convince myself the events of the evening must have had something to do with the full moon or some new pre-April Fool's joke ritual. Finding a measure of solace, I dosed off to start anew in the morning....counting all the black sheep in my family serves as a great sleep aide.

Regrettably, that distant day soon proved not to be an anomaly, but rather a steady pattern of signs that my in-

tended goal of staying at the post office until I maxed out my service time would have to change. Between the constant aches and pains (the quote from T.S. Eliot is correct...."Time the healer eventually becomes Time the Destroyer."), and the continual route adjustments, C.O.R. , J.R.A.P., and the latest acronym to be used, C.R.A.P.at last a program one can truly believe!! I began to realize that retirement was looking better and better and that it was definitely time to go!

The retirement signs are there for everyone and the decision is up to the individual. Health issues, finances and family matters are all factors when making this life changing decision. But, trust me when I say making this decision to go only changes one's life for the better. A fellow retiree accurately described retirement as having the total freedom to do what you want every day. Please do not mistake my words for gloating, but, I love retirement so much that I tell people "If someone tells you that they are happier than me, make them pee into a Dixie cup because they must be on something illegal." Even one as long winded as me would not have the stamina to sing of retirement's multiple advantages.

Oh sure, the aches and pains follow one past the exit sign, but they are just not as noticeable. One's stress level fades as fast as the last time card swipe. The many house hold **chores that had to be done either before or after work**, now become the day's project, or not, if you don't want. I often think of Eastpointe retiree, Art Simon's response whenever his wife asked his plans for the day? Art replies ..."nothing." Art's wife tells him that is what he did yesterday....he answers back...."yeah, I know, but I didn't finish!" Ah, as they say in Tuscany....."il dolce far niente".....the sweetness of doing nothing!

Money is usually the major factor in determining one's exodus, let's face it, work at the post office is not a hobby for anyone! I'll be honest, when I read of the large C.O.L.A. increase two months ago, I thought how nice it would be to be earning this increased wage. Then I turned a page and read the next two articles in my Front Line publication and proclaimed aloud "boy, am I glad I'm out of there!!!" Sure, more money is nice, but no matter be it a monthly pension check or a bi-weekly pay stub, the sum is never large enough. I'm reminded of a story I read many years ago which went something like this...a rich business man held a party at his stately mansion and he was boasting to all in ear shot of the day's huge earnings he had accumulated and his growing wealth. In attendance that evening were famed authors Norman Mailer and Joseph Heller. Upon hearing the CEO'S boastful claim, Mr. Mailer turned to his longtime friend and told the Catch 22 author that the business man had made more money in that single day than Joseph had earned in all the many years that he had received royalties from his Catch 22 novel. To this statement, the author replied, "Yes, but I have something he'll

never have." Norman inquired "what's that?" Mr. Heller smiled and simply said "Enough."

Money is no doubt a consideration when one is making their retirement plan. However, so is peace of mind, and the most precious commodity of all, that being time. Let's be honest, one can always get more money whether it be by legal means or otherwise....just ask one of my four incarcerated cousins. One more and we could have had the Jackson Five, instead of the Folsom Four! Time grows more valuable with each passing year. Precious time spent with family and friends outweighs a few more dollars in the bank any day. A bad movie or a good book both beat a work day every day.....with the added bonus being that no matter how many pages are turned there is never a scan point. Travel, be in near or far, is a lot better when you know the destination isn't going to be a park point and a long loop!

For years, Mike Sheridan, has coined the phrase "Going over the wall" to describe anyone lucky enough to retire. Believe me, the view from this side of the wall is beautiful!! I pray everyone holding this page is one day able to reach this promised land! Thanks to this great union, retirees like me, are able to enjoy the fruits of their labor. Sadly, fewer and fewer employees in our country are able to lay claim to a decent retirement package. As those of us fortunate enough to have made the climb over the wall, we have an obligation to make sure the ladder remains propped up for others to follow. After all, it was the diligence of those that proceeded us that built the rungs we used to scale our way "up and over" to retirement! With the freedom retirement affords us, we can lend a hand to assist the branch and our officers in the seemingly never-ending struggles that are constantly being waged. While we retirees are unencumbered with the daily pressures of a work day at the post office, the negativity that imbues the postal service did not end with our departure, and, regrettably, the pressures still do rain down on our brothers and sisters daily. For them, these constant battles continue.

At the recent retirement night party, it was very uplifting for me to see the stage filled with so many new retirees. The record number of carriers that had decided to find out for themselves the joy of...."the sweetness of doing nothing" gives hope to all active members that the summit is attainable and, that one day, it can and WILL happen for them! As all employees eventually find out, the last day at the post office is the first day of the BEST of your life!!!!

from the
editor-guy

If you can "hang in there", some day **YOU** may think about retirement. This article is courtesy of the Center Line, Michigan NALC Branch 4374 *Front Lines* which was published in December 2014.

Thank you, Jeff. I think I'm just about there...

The Beatings Will Continue Until Morale Improves

-Chris Daniels-

Three or four months ago the Renton Highlands Station decided we needed to be straightened out, or have our butts tanned. So our manager moved to the Main Office, a supervisor from the Main Office and a manager from another Installation were planted in our station. We ended up taking one step forward to better working conditions and being treated like a human being. They came in initially with guns blazing and ready for a fight, but things calmed down eventually as we all got to know each other.

Prior to the change in management, the Highlands seemed to always be at the bottom of the totem pole as far as performance goes, which the carriers were reminded about whenever management got the chance. No need to give employees praise, big or small, because we apparently never did anything to deserve praise. I guess management thought if you are beaten enough you will love to come to work, you will perform to their high standards, (DOIS) and you will follow instructions, whether they make sense or not, follow rules whether or not they are actual rules. What they didn't realize is that we are human beings not dogs performing for a treat. Most dogs are treated better than Postal Employees.

Anyway, for the few months with new management, the morale went up, grievances came down some due to management being more reasonable and trying to follow the contract. After all, the contract was negotiated and agreed upon by both the Postal Service and the NALC. Prior management thought it was okay to make up their own rules and regulations, and just plain violate the contract to suit themselves.

New management gave praise on occasions for a job well done, whether for MSP scans, parcel scans, or just plain getting the job done on a heavy day or a day we were down many routes for various reasons. The Highlands finally raised themselves higher on the totem pole which was something to be proud of. You see, we have always been the step child out of the Renton Installation due to the Main Office having better management to work with. I'll bet you can guess what happened while our manager worked at the Main Office. The grievances skyrocketed and the morale went downhill fast. Needless to say, good things have to end eventually, and they did. The Main Office got their sane supervisor back and we got our insane manager back, because after all we were finally "straightened out."

I don't know where we are on the totem pole now, but I'm pretty sure we are near underground. Supervisors are being micro managed as well as the carriers. They always have been though. Carriers are being called into the office for a discussion due to routing parcels even though they

are on street time, the mail is being counted before the clerks are done sorting them to each route, parcels are being scanned as attempted by management even though they have not left the office because the "clock needs to be stopped." Management even told a few carriers to bring swings back due to darkness and the lateness. They were not delivered until the following day, and in one case, two days later, because it was brought back on a Saturday. Oh yes, that happened three times in a week! Have you ever heard we don't deliver mail in the dark? CCAs are worked like dogs with no day off. When they become ill and call in sick they are being hauled into the office for a discussion regarding their attendance following their return to work. I guess CCAs are not allowed to be sick. After all, the Postal Service doesn't want them to earn sick leave now do they?

December is even more fun to work at the Renton Highlands. Renton has had a long standing (15 to 16 years) past practice of being allowed to wear holiday sweatshirts with our station name on them for the month of December. Last year our manager wanted to put a stop to that past practice. She hounded the postmaster at that time to make us stop. He informed me he needed to do something just to get the manager off his back about the issue so he finally caved and allowed us to wear our sweatshirts for the week before Christmas only. This year, 14 days before Christmas an eager search for offenders spotted wearing their holiday sweatshirts commenced, and our butts were tanned for it, me included. Some of you members know me and some don't, but the ones that know me won't be surprised to hear, I called the manager a scrooge on the workroom floor. I heard she didn't like it but I made my point. The issue was brought up during our Labor Management Meeting the day after the incident and low and behold, our manager was thrilled to hear that our Acting Postmaster will not allow us to wear our holiday sweatshirts either, But we can wear Santa hats. Oh goody! I forgot to mention, the acting postmaster plans to stop us from our past practice of 30 years or so, from taking a 15 minute break to a 10 minute break beginning in January. I can't forget the quick standup we had this week informing us we had missed around 30 parcels scans for an office of 50 some routes and at Christmas time. Yea, and Merry Christmas to you too. We work our A\$\$'s off all year long, and December is no exception. In fact, with no penalty overtime in December, they work all of us like dogs. No need to call in enough help to get the parcels delivered, we can work 12 hours now. Needless to say we have now gone from one step forward to two steps back in the Renton Highlands. Guess we should be used to it, we have been there for years.

Article courtesy of the Seattle, Washington *Seventy-Niner* published by NALC Branch 79 in January 2015



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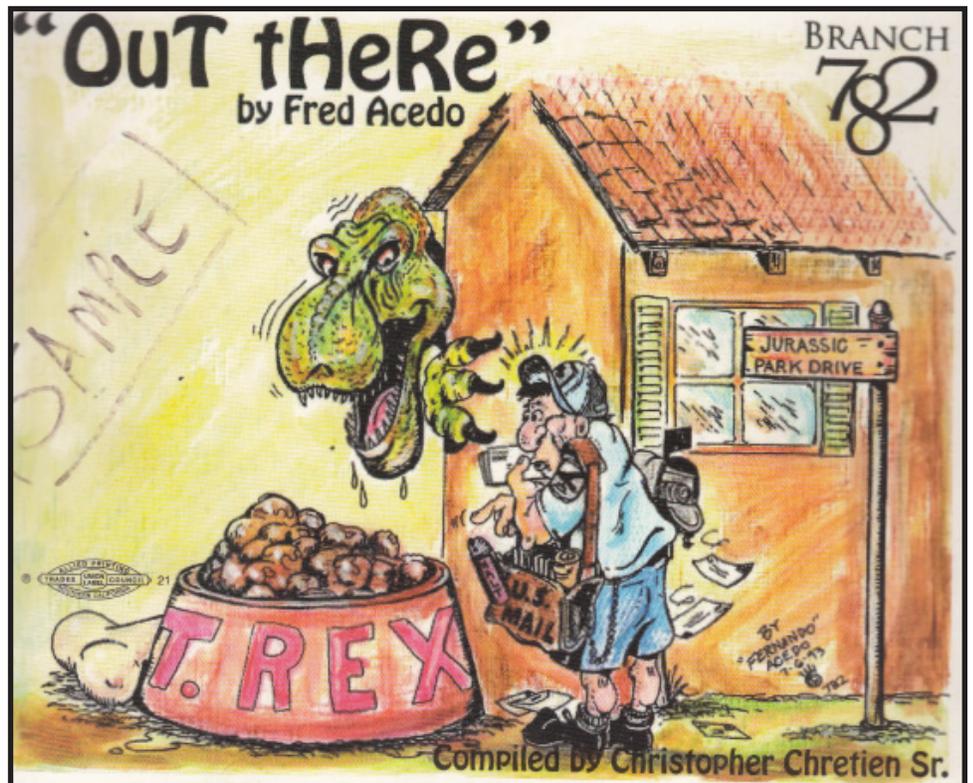
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