

# National Association of Letter Carriers

## Branch 782

### E.A. Baker Union Update



ARVIN  
DELANO  
MOJAVE

TEHACHAPI

AVENAL  
EDWARDS AFB  
RIDGECREST

TRONA

BAKERSFIELD  
LAMONT  
SHAFTER

BORON  
McFARLAND  
TAFT

WASCO



VOLUME LXXXI NUMBER 3

MARCH 2009

for

# Mike:



In last month's intro to his article, Mike wrote that "Each month, I fully intend to write an article.

Things always come up..."

Things do...

Mike's wife, Diane, realized that she needed to go to the store to buy some milk. Normally, Mike would have gone along to drive the car and to bag and carry the groceries. This time, he didn't make the trip.

As she was driving through an intersection, a tow truck came barrelling through the same intersection and "T-boned" her on the passenger side. The impact slammed her into a car going in her direction through the same intersection in the left lane. The weight and inertia of the tow truck compressed the entire right side of the car right into her. At the same time, the impact with the vehicle on her left forced that side of her car to also compress.

A friend of the family drove through the intersection shortly after the accident and recognized the car. She phoned Diane's mother. His mother-in-law called Mike. When he arrived at the scene, it was a horrendous scene. But, he was relieved to find that Diane was alive. She had to be cut out of the vehicle and was transported to the hospital. But she was alive.

As Mike said, "When I saw the car, I didn't see how anyone could have survived."

As could be expected, Mike has been practically living at the hospital. After a stay in the Intensive Care Unit, Diane was transferred to the Direct Observation Unit for a short time. As of Sunday March 15, she is in a regular room. She had to deal with a ruptured spleen, bruised heart, and other ailments which would be expected in an accident of this magnitude. However, more importantly, she is on the mend!

Our thoughts and prayers go out to him. He thanks everyone for all of the phone calls and expressions of care and concern.

# Excessing and Withholding?

by Don Lyerly, President NALC Branch 2072

We have heard a lot about “excessing” and “withholding” over the last year or so. I am going to try to explain these terms so everyone understands what we are experiencing. Article 12 of our National Agreement contains the provisions for excessing and withholding. The excessing provisions of Article 12 are “intended to protect career employees by providing a mechanism for reducing the number of career employees faster than is possible through normal attrition.”

So—in layman’s terms—if there are going to be more employees than jobs, excessing needs to occur. Management needs to find jobs for these “excess” employees so that they will be gainfully employed.

So where do they go? Article 12.4.A states, “...dislocation and inconvenience to employees in the regular work force shall be kept to a minimum.” There is a certain pecking order that management must follow: First, management must move (or “excess”) employees to another craft in the same installation. (Editor note: In general, substitute the word “city” when you come across the word “installation”.) If that does not resolve the problem, then management must excess employees to the same craft in another installation. Finally, management may then seek to excess employees to another craft in another installation.

Okay. So now we understand how an employee can be moved from one craft to another. But what job will they do when they get there? That is where “withholding” comes in. Management has an obligation to its employees. That obligation is to “anticipate dislocations which might occur and to withhold full-time vacancies” for those employees who were excessed out of their jobs. Therefore, management has an obligation to withhold “residual positions” for these employees.

What is a “residual position”? I’m glad you asked!

A residual position, also known as a “residual vacancy”, is a full-time position which has been placed for bid, and has had no successful bidders. If an office is under withholding, that position is then held in anticipation of excessed employees being moved in. (Of course, if the office is not under withholding, the senior PTF is usually converted to Regular and placed into that position.)

**“What is a “residual position”? I’m glad you asked!”**

That is one of the consequences of being under withholding: PTFs do not advance to Regular when there is a residual vacancy. Another consequence is that the withheld position is no longer available for bid once it has been posted with no successful bidders. On the other hand, PTFs would then have the opportunity to “hold-down” that assignment for the duration of the vacancy—which could be a very long time.

As with any rule, there are a few exceptions. Management may not withhold Carrier Technician positions in anticipation of excessing employees from another craft. The reason? When employees are excessed into another craft, they must meet the minimum qualifications for the position. The minimum qualification standards for Carrier Technician positions include one year of experience as a City Carrier. Clerks cannot meet the minimum experience requirements for Carrier Technician positions except when former Letter Carriers will be excessed back into the Letter Carrier craft. Another exception is that Letter Carrier positions cannot be withheld in anticipation of excessing employees from lower level positions (lower than Level 6).

Hopefully, everyone now has a better understanding of the excessing and withholding provisions of our Contract. These provisions are not new; they have been in place for many, many years. They have never been utilized as often, or on such a widespread basis as they are now.

Rest assured that the NALC has knowledgeable people policing these provisions of the Contract to protect your Rights.



This article is courtesy of the March 2009 Branch 2072 Fort Myers, FL *Southwest Florida News & Views*

\*\*\*\*\*ATTENTION ALL STATIONS\*\*\*\*\*

Last year, we had a GREAT turn out for our Annual NALC FOOD DRIVE!!!! Thank you to Teresa Garcia, our Branch 782 Food Drive Coordinator! Thank you Mike Towery and Postmaster Jim Broulliard and everyone else!!

I'm sure we all would like another awesome year. Especially now that the economy is the way it is, there are greater needs for people more than before.

Brundage Station had a competition against East Bakersfield Station on which station could generate the most pounds of food. Brundage Station had a HUGE win sending our Station Manager, Mike Bettes, and Supervisor Crystal Southwood to the streets delivering mail for the day.

This year, I would like to ask any other Stations to join us again in making this year's Food Drive another success!

I've asked Brundage Station Manager Mike Bettes to talk to his fellow managers to jump on board.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS  
**Stamp Out Hunger**  
FOOD DRIVE

Any ideas, thoughts, opinions, etc. on how we can come together for this great cause by having a friendly competition is welcomed.

Thoughts have already circulated about if the winning Station's Manager and Supervisor could do a "Car Wash"... Just think, you could tell all your customers, and all your neighbors, and all your family and friends...

Let me know what you would want your Manager/Supervisor to do for you. Hmm... Now, now! Be nice!

MABEL BULLIS  
93307 Brundage Station  
NALC Shop Steward

# Minutes of the February 2009 General Meeting

The regular meeting of Branch 782 was called to order by President Mike Towery at 7:30 p.m. on the 24th day of February 2009, at the Branch office in Bakersfield. The flag salute was led by Sargeant-At-Arms Jerry Patterson. The Minutes of the January 27, 2009 meeting were accepted as read with no additions or corrections.

All member of the Executive Board were present. Stewards were present from 01, 04, 06, 08, 09, Camino Media, Arvin, Delano, Lamont, Shafter and Wasco. Also present was Newsletter Editor Basil Zuniga; Assistant Editor Jason Munoz; Webmaster Rick Plummer; OWCP Representative Rick Gerdes; and, Danny Blair of the Labor/Management Safety and Health Committee.

**REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES:** Basil Zuniga reported that Camino Media folded last month so, next month will be Downtown Station's turn. He suggested the possibility of the AO's having a turn to fold and staple. He further reported that Assistant Editor, Jason Munoz, handled the folding last month. Jason said that it all, "Went well, with lots of people here."

**GOOD OF THE ASSOCIATION:** Basil Zuniga reported that he and Diana Chavez attended the funeral of Freddie Valdez in Mendota, CA. Also in attendance at the funeral were CSALC President John Beaumont, and National Business Agent Manny Peralta. Each Steward reported on how the route adjustments were coming at their station.

**IMPROVEMENT OF THE ASSOCIATION:** Molly Biggar reported that some changes need to be made on the Budget. She will present the exact changes at the next meeting.

**FINANCIAL SECRETARY'S REPORT:** Anita Holderman reported that \$13,950.02 was collected for the month of February.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Molly Biggar reported —

Beginning Balance	\$59,278.15
Dues Income	\$12,417.46
Interest Income	\$ 16.37
Total Balance	\$73,208.98
Expenses	\$17,273.79
Ending Balance	\$55,935.19

The 50/50 MDA drawing was won by Ramon "Primo" Herrera.

## DOWNTOWN STATION

Dale Pearce  
Javier Cruz

## SOUTH STATION

*100% Union!!!*

## EAST BAKERSFIELD

*100% Union!!!*

## HILLCREST

M. M. Henry

## BRUNDAGE

David Kinglee

## DOLE COURT

Susan Webb  
Alice Schultz

## STOCKDALE

Ron Huston  
G.S. Saran

## NON-MEMBER LIST February 2009

### CAMINO MEDIA

F. Medina, Jr.

### ARVIN

*100% Union!!!*

### AVENAL

J. T. Howery

### BORON

*100% Union!!!*

### CALIFORNIA CITY

*100% Union!!!*

### DELANO

C. V. Quebral

### EDWARDS

*100% Union!!!*

### LAMONT

*100% Union!!!*

### McFARLAND

B. A. Ibarra

### MOJAVE

*100% Union!!!*

### RIDGECREST

S. R. Pierce  
H. G. Blanco  
A. M. Connell  
T. K. Miller  
R. M. Nokes

### SHAFTER

L. M. New  
M. D. Voights

### TAFT

B. W. Krier  
K. J. Hughes

### TEHACHAPI

V. L. Johnson

### TRONA

S. L. Walent  
B. R. Dame  
K. K. Treat

### WASCO

*100% Union!!!*

*94% of all Letter Carriers in our cities are NALC members (429 out of 456)!!!*

The Drawing for \$450.00 would have been won by Corinne Schroeder who was NOT present.

There were 36 members present.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Gerdes  
NALC Branch 782 Recording Secretary

**March 2009  
Meeting Drawing  
will be for**

**\$500**

*You have to be present to win...*

OUT THERE



S.A.N.E. - SPECIAL ASSISTANT NEWSLETTER EDITOR 8-04

## HARRINGTON'S CORNER

### Battle of the Stations Bowling Act III

I didn't get these pictures to Basil until after he had finished the newsletter but I wanted to make sure that I shared them and my close from last month...

I would like to thank everyone who came out. I hope that everyone had fun. I did get back a couple of white cards with suggestions and comments for next year's tournament. If you didn't get a chance to fill out the white card, you can visit our branch web page ([782nalc.com](http://782nalc.com)) and e-mail me under the "Harrington's Corner" link. Pictures of all three years will also be added to that link. Hope to see everyone again next year!

JEFF HARRINGTON



*Just Another Day in Paradise!*

# Western States Lobby Trip



Branch 782's John Ortega addresses an issue with a Congressional Staffer as CSALC District Representative Eric Ellis looks on.

I am writing this article having just returned from my first NALC Lobby trip on behalf of Branch 782. It was held in Washington D.C. March 9th thru March 12th, 2009.

I would like to start off by first thanking you the membership for allowing this to happen. Mike Towery likes to tell me that I am rubbing elbows with the big shots now ( I also am participating in the NALC Leadership Academy). I guess he's right. But, what I would like everyone to know is that these "big shots" (our national officers) are not much different than you and I. They are very friendly and easily approachable and they are very focused on *all*



NALC President Bill Young poses with Branch 782 members Pam Smith, John Ortega and Diana Chavez.

of the key issues that are of importance to each and every Letter Carrier of this great nation. ***Together we are all Carriers in a Common Cause!!***

The trip started off with a training class on how to do this thing called "lobbying" on Monday morning. President Young started it off by speaking to the attendees. He told us of an attempt by the OPM to sneak in a clause that would raise the percentage of health premiums paid by the letter carrier from the 19% we pay currently to 28%. *This rise in percentage would equal approximately \$1000.00 more dollars we would have to pay per year out of our pockets for our health benefit coverage.* As usual, our leadership acted swiftly and President Young informed us that this attempt was defeated within three days after a call to the White House.

The purpose of this lobby trip was to garner support for HR 22 in the House and Senate. HR 22 is a bipartisan Bill which would allow the Postal Service to pay Retiree Health Benefit premiums from an existing retirement fund and would ease the financial burden the Service currently faces. HR 22 would still allow for the pre-funding of retiree health premiums that the Postal Reform Act of 2006 requires (*even though no other government agency or private sector company are required to do so*).

Tuesday and Wednesday were both days spent on Capitol Hill meeting with members of Congress, or their staff, and telling them our position on HR 22. Unfortunately, not every member of Congress that my group met with was labor friendly; but, we still gave it our best to try to get their support for this vital piece of legislation.

On Thursday, we attended a Congressional breakfast. There were at least ten members of Congress who came and spoke to us. It



Prior to a visit with a member of Congress, Branch 782 members Pam Smith, Diana Chavez and John Ortega caucus with members of Fresno, California Branch 231: Vice President Santos Garcia, Legislative Liaison Eric Ellis and EEO Representative Jesse Dominguez.

was at this event that I realized that we—the NALC—are a force to be reckoned with on Capitol Hill! As of Thursday morning, 150 members of Congress had signed on as co-sponsors of HR 22. If you want to learn more about HR 22 you can find information about it on the NALC Website. [www.nalc.org](http://www.nalc.org).

JOHN ORTEGA  
93309 Shop Steward

*(Thanks for the pictures go to our National Business Agent Manny Peralta.)*

# A Little Bit from the Present and a Tribute to our Past...

On March 9th Pam Smith, John Ortega and myself in an event in Washington, DC to lobby on your behalf. Our focus was on H.R. 22. It is a b-ipartisan bill introduced by Reps. McHUGH (R-NY) and Davis (D-IL) and would allow the USPS to prefund it's future health care obligations on a more realistic schedule. Currently, the Postal Service must prefund 80% of it's future Retiree health benefit cost by the year 2016 at the cost of at least \$5.5 billion annually on top of the \$2-3 billion per year. The bill would allow the Postal Service pay a more reasonable and affordable schedule and be allowed to take the monies from the current Retiree's Health Benefit fund which holds \$32 billion.

H.R. 22 is essential for a viable Postal Service. As the volume of mail declines, the Postal Service is in a major financial crisis which could possibly mean job layoffs and yearly rate increases. Rate increases mean lower volume once again and are not good for the customer and merchants. H.R. 22 is not a bail out but is another way for financial relief for the USPS.

As we attended, there were 114 co-sponsors for the bill prior to our trip. As we left, there were 150 co-sponsors. This meant we did a great job; but, we still need help from everyone. I am asking that all union Brothers and Sisters contact Congressman Kevin McCarthy's office and express your concerns and have him co-sponsor this H.R. 22 bill. It could be important to the survival of the Postal Service.

Now, I wish to pay tribute in a farewell to someone who worked tirelessly for all of you.

Recently, I attended a funeral of a longtime union brother from neighboring Branch 231 in Fresno. Brother Freddy Valdez had been our California State Association District 4 Officer. He served the San Joaquin Valley.

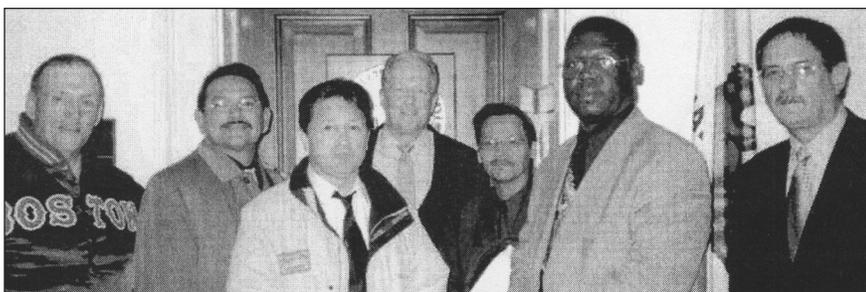
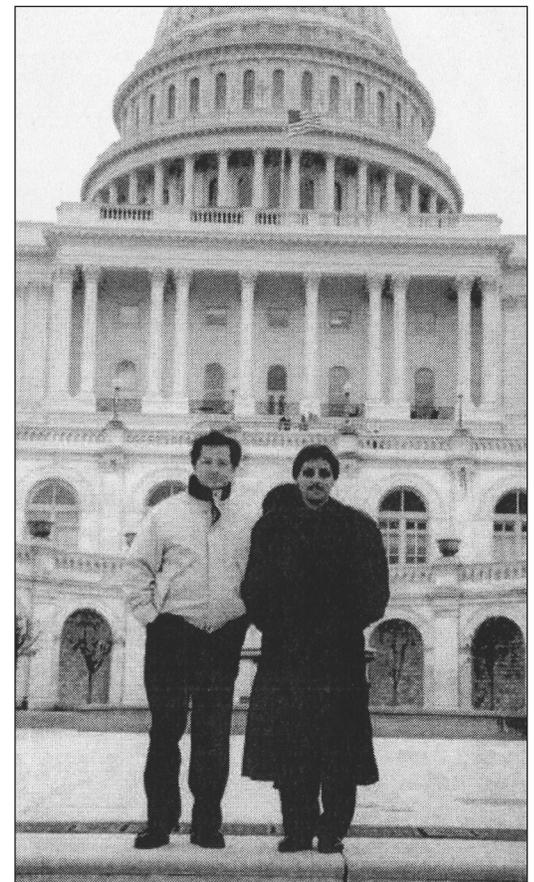
I met Freddy almost twenty years ago. He was a great mentor to those of us who were interested in getting politically involved. He was very committed as a unionist and legislatively, he believed whole-heartedly in being a union activist.

I remember Freddy mostly because we both lobbied in Washington, DC together. Each time we would be proud to represent our union brothers and sisters on issues that were important to all of us.

Freddy would have been fifty-four years old this year if he had survived a double lung transplant. I know Freddy loved life and lived it to his fullest.

We lost a great person and he will be well missed by all who knew him and even by those who did not. There was a sense of "Someone is missing!" when we were in Washington, but I think we made him proud. Farewell, Brother Freddy!!!!

DIANA CHAVEZ  
Legislative Liaison



Pictures clockwise from top right: Visalia Branch 866's Walter Johnson and Freddie Valdez lobby in Washington in 2003; Fresno Branch 231 lobbyists Jessie Dominguez and Freddie in front of the Capitol Building in Washington D.C. in 2005; and, in the last picture, (l-r) Don Hastings, Santos Garcia and Jessie Dominguez from Fresno stand with Mike Berry from Central California Coast Branch 52, Freddie Valdez, Walter Johnson from Visalia Branch 866, and—joining the group to meet with this Congressman—was then-National Business Agent Dale Hart. This last picture was probably taken in 2003.

# COLCPE — *It Delivers!!*

In the twilight of the Bush Administration, President Bush sent a message to the men and women represented by the National Association of Letter Carriers. His message was a simple note in the budget passed on to his successor. His message spoke volumes of how he felt about unions and the working men and women that they represent.

His outgoing attack was to make **you** pay 28% of your health benefits premiums. His decision totally ignored the fact that you and I work under a collective bargaining agreement which must be honored and not displaced by the wants of an anti-labor President.

How about that! If the proposal had gone through, *each and every one of us would pay an additional \$1,000 in health benefits costs out of our own pocket.*

A simple phone call to a friendly administration took care of that.

On Monday March 9, 2009, NALC President Young addressed those of us who were privileged to go to Washington, D.C. to lobby Congress on your behalf.

During President Young's address he shared the following: "The Obama administration will not pursue a proposal to raise postal employees' benefit contributions in the 2010 budget." Vice-President Joseph Biden confirmed the action when he met with President Young at the AFL-CIO Executive Council meeting in Miami.

Bill Young told us that it is a pleasure to work with a friendly administration for a change, and that he looks forward to working with the new administration to find ways to strengthen the Postal Service in the face of the current economic crisis.

As your Branch 782 COLCPE (Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education) co-ordinator, I ask you to note that your jobs and benefits are on the line each and every day.

We currently have a labor friendly President, Senate and Congress, but that can all slip away in one election. Your COLCPE funds go to elect friends in Congress, and release union members to work on campaigns of those we support. The COLCPE "Gimme 5 Campaign" requests that you donate only \$5.00 per pay period. That amount is only one eighth of the additional \$1,000 that you would have paid in health benefits premiums.

COLCPE is job and benefits insurance. Sign up now!

PAM SMITH  
COLCPE Corrdinator  
NALC Branch 782



# RETIREES!

4 easy ways to start your allotment!

# Contribute to COLCPE directly from your ANNUITY

**R**etired NALC members have the option of making voluntary COLCPE contributions directly from their monthly CSRS or FERS annuities, a convenient way to make regular donations to the political action fund similar to the

payroll system available to active carriers. The amount you decide to contribute will come out of your annuity *each month*.

Choose a method below. **Before you begin**, you'll need your **CSA retirement claim number**.

**Phone:** Call the NALC Retirement Office at 202-662-2877 anytime, or toll-free at 800-424-5186 Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10 a.m. to noon and from 2 to 4 p.m. (ET).

**Coupon:** Detach and complete the coupon below and mail it to NALC Headquarters.

**Mail:** Send a letter to Office of Personnel Management, Retirement Operations Center, Boyers, PA 16017. Be sure to include your CSA number, the amount you want to contribute monthly, and the organization name: National Association of Letter Carriers—COLCPE.

### Internet:

- Go to [www.serviceline.opm.gov](http://www.serviceline.opm.gov)
- Enter your CSA number, beginning with the letter A and ending with a zero. SAMPLE: **A22222220**
- Enter your PIN (Personal Identification Number). If you don't know it, click *Using Services Online* for help in getting one.
- Once you've entered your CSA number and PIN, click *Log In*.
- On the next page, click *Allotments to Organizations*.
- Click *START*.
- Select *Natl Assn of Letter Carriers - COLCPE*.
- Enter the amount of your *monthly* contribution
- Click *SAVE*.
- On the next page click *YES* (if correct), then print the next page for your records.

## For Retired Members

I wish to contribute to COLCPE, the political action fund of the National Association of Letter Carriers.  
I understand the Office of Personnel Management will withhold the amount below from my *monthly* annuity payments.

Mail completed coupon to: NALC Retirement Department, Attention: COLCPE, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_ Branch: \_\_\_\_\_

CSA or Social Security number: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to contribute *monthly*:

\$25     \$20     \$15     \$10     \$5     Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

By making a contribution to the Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education, you are doing so voluntarily with the understanding that it is not a condition of membership in the National Association of Letter Carriers nor a part of union dues. You may refuse to contribute without reprisal.

COLCPE will use the money it receives to contribute to candidates for federal office and undertake other political spending as permitted by law. Your selection shall remain in full force and effect until canceled through the Office of Personnel Management. **Contributions to COLCPE are not deductible for federal income tax purposes.**

# 2009 NALC HBP Info

NALC Health Benefit Plan	1-888-636-6252
*Hospital Pre-Certification	1-877-220-6252
*** Mental & Substance Precert.	1-877-468-1016
Drug Prescription Retail	1-800-933-6252
CareMark Hearing Impaired	1-800-238-1217
*** CareMark Specialty Pharmacy	1-800-237-2767
*** Durable Medical Eqpt.	1-888-636-6252
CareMark Specialty Pharmacy	1-800-237-2767
Durable Medical Equipment	1-888-636-6252
Nurse Assistant (24/7)	1-877-220-6252
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 Transplant Approval	1-800-668-9682
Quest Diagnostics (Lab Services)	1-877-220-6252
Quit Power (Smoking Cessation)	1-877-784-8797
CIGNA Health Rewards (Discounts)	1-800-870-3470
CIGNA Dental Discount Program	1-877-521-0244
**** Disease Management Program	1-800-227-3728
MEDICARE Managed Care Plan	1-800-633-4277
OPM Retirement Info Center	1-888-767-6738
Federal Information Center	1-800-688-9889
Social Security Administration Info	1-800-772-1213

\* Failure to pre-certify will result in a \$500 reduction in benefits paid by the Plan. Must notify the Plan prior to hospital admission with doctor name and dates. \*\* Mail order drug prescription program long term (maintenance drugs) 60 day supply: \$8 generic, \$24 name brand; 90 day supply: \$12 generic, \$35 name brand. Retail Pharmacy, you pay 25% . MEDICARE 60 day supply: \$7 generic, \$20 name brand; 90 day supply: \$10 generic, \$30 name brand. Network Retail Pharmacy you pay 15% of the cost of the prescription. Prior approval required for some drugs. Must call the Plan. \*\*\* **Prior Approval Required.** \*\*\*\* Asthma and Diabetis.

**Preferred Provider (PPO)**  
**Cost: \$15.00**  
**Co-pay per office visit**

**Preferred Provider (PPO)**  
**Deductible**  
**\$250 Individual**  
**\$500 Self & Family**  
**Per Calendar Year**



**Branch 782**  
**Health Benefit**  
**Representative**



**Mark**  
**Ramirez**  
 (661) 834-5011

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

**NALC Drug Prescription Program**  
 "Claims"  
 P.O. Box 521926  
 Phoenix, AZ 85012-2192

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

**NALC Health Benefit Plan**  
**20547 Waverly Court**  
**Ashburn, VA 20149**

## Contact Information

Center for Disease Control	<a href="http://www.cdc.gov">http://www.cdc.gov</a>
National Library of Medicine	<a href="http://www.nlm.nih.gov">http://www.nlm.nih.gov</a>
American Public Health Assoc.	<a href="http://www.alpha.org">http://www.alpha.org</a>
American Cancer Society	<a href="http://www.cancer.org">http://www.cancer.org</a>
American Heart Association	<a href="http://www.americanheart.org">http://www.americanheart.org</a>
American Lung Association	<a href="http://www.lunusa.org">http://www.lunusa.org</a>
Diabetes Foundation	<a href="http://www.diabetis.org">http://www.diabetis.org</a>
Muscular Dystrophy Association	<a href="http://www.mdausa.org">http://www.mdausa.org</a>
JAMA Asthma Information Center	<a href="http://www.ama.assn.org/special/asthma">http://www.ama.assn.org/special/asthma</a>
Your Personal Health Record	<a href="http://www.nalc.org/depart/hbp">http://www.nalc.org/depart/hbp</a>
National Patient Safety	<a href="http://www.npsf.org">http://www.npsf.org</a>

# 4 CHICKS ON THE LOOSE!!

I took up an offer of a get-away a few weeks ago. A day trip with Tatia, Darlene and Jacquie to wine country! (I hadn't seen Darlene in years. It was good to catch up with her.)

I'm not much of a drinker, so I figured... Tasting? I can do *that!*

It was early in the morning and it was raining. I'm sure glad I wasn't driving. Jacquie volunteered. Bless her heart!!!! Hwy 166 is hair-raising to drive in the best of conditions. We arrived in Solvang a few hours later and in one piece. (God kept us safe.)

The four of us had made reservations with a Wine Tour Co. and we were set to visit four different wineries and have lunch at one of our stops.

Turns out we would see some of the locations from the movie "Sideways"...

Each winery had it's own charm. Kalyra Winery had a rustic feel to it. A small place, but it accomodated the group of 10 that we were part of. Firestone Winery was a larger place. The dark wood of the bar and the brass of the bar stools made this place look fancy. Here is where we had lunch. *Very Good*. Fess Parker's Winery and LaFond Winery were the other two places where we stopped.



As we were in the bus going from point "a" to "b", (or maybe it was "c" to "d"), I kind of hinted to the girls that this adventure could become an article for the newsletter. They each gave me a few or so words in their own words.

## CHARDONNAY, MERLOT, OR BURGUNDY - YOU CHOOSE!

Anita, Tatia, Jackie, and I went to taste the grapes... (Wine Tasting)

With our palates at the ready, we took on the challenge! I was there to taste the different wines; what I got was a lesson on how the grapes are processed and the different tastes.

Some grapes are picked at night to help preserve their freshness. Some are picked in the daylight to help with fermentation. Some wines are preserved in oak vats to give them a rich oak taste, while others are preserved in metal vats. The richness and difference of taste in the wines helped me realize that the wine is more than just a grape.

DARLENE ARCHIE  
Camino Media

## MOMS IN WINE COUNTRY.

We are Letter Carriers.

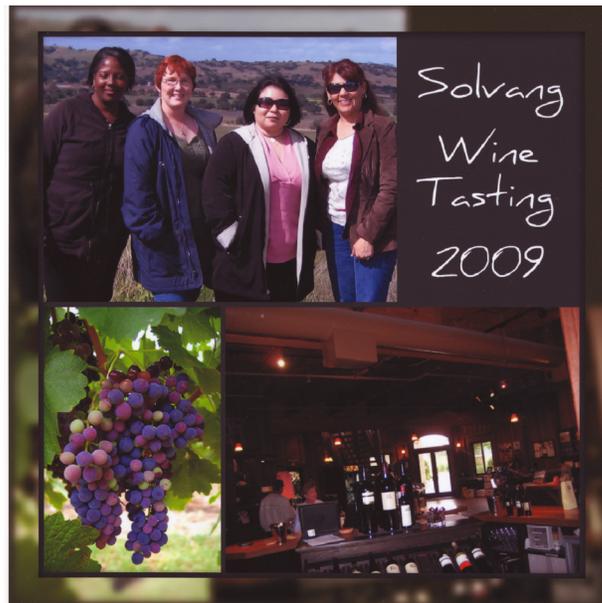
We are wives.

We are moms.

**AND SOMETIMES...**

**WE NEED A BREAK!**

*(from everything!)*



*Continued on next page...*

We do just that about 3 or 4 times a year.

SO... this time we decided to try a wine tour: Paso Robles...Solvang...??? Well it didn't really matter where—as long as it was close enough to make it a “daytrip”.

We booked the tour for wineries in the Santa Ynez Valley. Then we got into Jacqueline's car and drove three hours to Solvang. The tour bus picked us up at our designated location at 10:30 am. One of the groups on the bus was interested in the “Sideways Tour” and we agreed happily. I mean, “Hey! No Work...No Kids...No Husband...just friends and wine!!!” I couldn't complain.



The driver chose four wineries that were featured and used in the production of the movie “Sideways”. The first was Kalyra (kal-eye-ra). It was a small tasting room with a gift shop off to one end and a wood deck outside. *Great wine!!* (Especially the dessert wines! YUM!) The atmosphere was casual and cozy.

Next, we went to Firestone. This was a very nice place. I dare to call it “classy”. There were picnic areas outside with beautiful views of the countryside. Too bad it was too cold for our picnic lunch, so we had lunch in a special tasting room for club members. Then, afterwards, a tour.

Fess Parker's Winery is beautiful. After tasting the wines, we had time to lounge around the fireplace and shop. I found the best barbecue sauce! LaFond Winery was our fourth stop. We found lavender fields on the way and we stopped to buy some. The view from LaFond was breathtaking!

#### OUT THERE



OK, I said four wineries, right? Well, we actually had time to squeeze in one more...

“Sort This Out Cellars” was not located in the countryside or surrounded by fields of grapes as you might expect. This one was just like walking into a small storefront. Inside was a small bar to one side, sales to the other, and—in the back...a lounge area set up to look like a mini-casino. The wines have really cool names too, like: “Parley”, “The Rat Pack”, “Ante Up Syrah”, “Even Money Merlot”, and “Suited Sangiovese Rosato”. *(That last one is just fun to say.)*

Alright! I admit we had a **GREAT** time in spite of the rainy drive to and from on Route 166. It's always nice to get away, but it is great fun to grab some friends and make it a long “daytrip”.

TATIA BOONE  
Route 420  
93304 South Station

## *“Untitled” yet refined with a hint of oak, berries and...*

It's early in the morning. Tatia Boone, Darlene Archie, and Anita Holderman are chatting it up in my car. Through the laughter floating in the car all I can think is: *“WHAT IN THE HECK AM I DOING HERE!?!?!?!?!?!?”*

### OUT THERE



More accurately, I'm thinking: *“What in the world possessed me to drive (white knuckled) on HWY 166 in the middle of the pouring rain?”*

Wine. Of course.

We four got it into our heads to get out of town and go wine tasting. So we headed down for a guided wine tour in Santa Barbara County. Needless to say, it was a lot of fun!

We ended up in a group of about ten people, and we visited five different wineries. Each had its own charm and taste.

After a day of sipping numerous wines with names like Gewurztraminer and Sangiovese Rosato we were ready to head home. All of us had bottles of wine and souvenir wine glasses in tow.

As we headed home, me driving (still white knuckled) on HWY 166—*this time in the pouring rain at night*—we realized we had found out something important about ourselves that day: We're *not* friends of red wine.

JACQUIE BROWN  
South Station Route 419

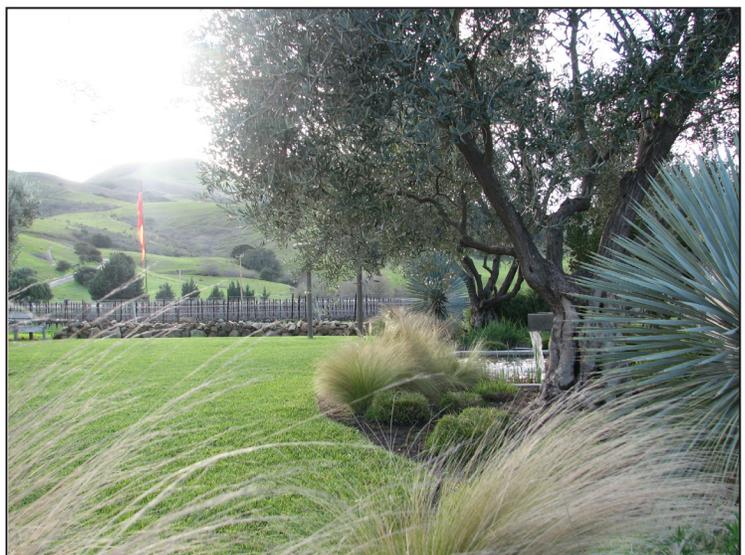
## *And, now, to put the cork in the bottle...*

Thank you Jacquie, Darlene and Tatia for your own words!

And—just for the record— Jacquie quit tasting long before our trip back home.

It sure was nice to “Get out of Dodge” and enjoy time with my friends!

ANITA HOLDERMAN  
South Station Route 416,  
Branch 782 Financial Secretary  
and wine-taster...



# *We Had a Great Time!*

# BRUNDAGE BULLDOGS "BIGGEST LOSER" COMPETITION

Remember MR. SLIM TRIM??????  
Mr. SLIM TRIM will represent how much weight that we lose as a Station.

This is our second Month Update Recap: There are 23 competitors and there will only be a 1st and 2nd place winner. The pot has reached \$720. First place winner receives 75% (\$540.00) and Second place winner receives 25% (\$180.00).

Here are the names of the competitors: Mabel Bullis, Mike Bettes, Crystal Southwood, Juanita Sullivan, Cashus Cooper, Lisa Wescott, Emma Gonzales, Mary Breeding, Rosie Padilla, Kim Williams, Yvonne Esquivel, Beatriz Munoz, Ruben Gonzales, Enoch Moya, Darlene Haskins, Inderdeep Gill, Vicki Guerrero, Jennifer Shumway, Ruby Torres, Raul Lopez, Kimmie Gardea, Carmen Castillo, and our very own, Bakersfield Postmaster, Jim Broulliard

In January alone, we lost a total of 152 pounds as a station!

This month was a little bit slower. (We had some set backs. Some competitors did the opposite and gained weight instead of losing.) But, that's okay, because we *have* still **ADDED** another 58 pounds to Mr. Slim! (That weight is equivalent to an adult who's 5'10" healthy and a little bit more chunky...)

## OUT THERE



## OUT THERE



This totals *his* weight gain to 210 pounds! **WOW!!!!!!**

We've named our goal "Mr. Slim Trim" and we're trying to fatten him up real good. Just like "The Biggest Loser" show emphasizes that weight loss can be done at home (the natural, old fashioned way of working out hard and eating right), we too are also doing that on the honor system. No miracle pills or crazy schemes, just hard work and discipline.

*At this point in our competition: Darlene Haskins is in the lead now with a 9.9% loss; Rosie Padilla is now at a 8.5% loss; and—Mabel Bullis has achieved an 8.3% loss. Wait a minute... that's me! Hmmm, I'm in 3rd place????????? There is no 3rd place winner... Hmmm!*

Keep up the good work, Bulldogs!

MABEL BULLIS  
93307  
Brundage Station Shop Steward

# Retiring with FERS

I thought some of you in FERS might be interested in my recent experiences retiring with FERS. I retired on October 31, 2008. I called and ordered the retirement packet in July. I realize now I should have contacted OPM sooner than I did. Everything takes so much TIME!! Here is almost March (that's five months since I retired) and OPM is still making adjustments to my monthly amount.

After I called in July, it took about ten days to receive the packet. Then, I called to schedule the phone interview. Because they're so busy, I couldn't schedule it until the first week in September. My phone interview was about seven weeks before my retirement date and that wasn't enough time for OPM to figure everything out. The amount they estimated I would get was subject to lots of things.

For instance, I had about fifteen months time from working at the IRS thirty years ago. I had elected to withdraw my retirement withholding when I quit. So, the IRS time wouldn't be counted unless I elected to buy it back. I asked about this in the phone interview and was told I wouldn't want to buy it back and that it would cost too much. **THIS WAS WRONG INFORMATION!**

In January, I received a letter from OPM saying that I could elect to buy the fifteen months back for \$435—and in return, I would receive about 120 dollars a month more.

What a bargain! If I had followed through and asked for that information to be sent when I had my phone interview, maybe it would have been added into my annuity by now. Hopefully, it will be adjusted by May.

Because I retired at age 60 with over twenty years, I also get the Special Supplement until I'm eligible for Social Security at age 62. It took OPM three months after my retirement date to figure out how much I would be getting and send me an adjustment for past months. It wasn't until February 1, 2009 that I started getting the Special Supplement. I did get paid an adjustment, but I had to wait three months for it.

The bottom line is this: I retired without knowing *exactly* what my FERS annuity would be, and I'm still waiting for all the

adjustments to be processed. Plus, I had to wait over three months past my retirement date to find out the Special Supplement amount and start receiving it. On the bright side, I'm getting *more* money than I expected. But, I've had to wait a long time for OPM to get it all straightened out.

Having to wait for the money didn't really cause me any hardships. But, it's hard to be already retired and not know exactly how much you'll be getting.

Some people might not want to or be able to wait that long to start receiving their full retirement. For those of you planning to retire with FERS, you might want to start your paperwork sooner than I did. Knowing what I know now, I would advise you to start *at least six months prior to the date you want to retire.*

## OUT THERE



JUDY BETTENCOURT

Retiree

Fresno Downtown Station Collections

Article courtesy of the  
March 2009 Fresno, California  
Branch 231 Postman's View

from the  
**editor-guy**

Recently, I received an e-mail from a Branch Retiree. He was a little frustrated about something. I have to admit that I was, too. I would like to share his message with anybody who takes the time to do more than just look at Fred Acedo's cartoons...

**"I served over 22 years in the P.O, and 8 in the Army. I started my Postal career June of 1984 in San Diego. After 6 mos being a PTF and a couple of bids, I was awarded a route in the 92121 zip, a route I carried for 16 years!. I did a transfer to Bakersfield in April of 2000 losing all my seniority and starting all over again. I was retired under disability on May 5, 2007.**

**No 'Last Punch' pictures, no mention in your news letter of my retirement...nothing! How many others have been ignored?**

**Joe Valdez  
(Formerly of the) Downtown Station"**

Let's see, that's almost two years. Long time. I'm sorry that we didn't do anything then. But, it raises two separate issues for me: 1) I need to have people provide me with information or pictures when we have Letter Carriers retire. I am sad when people just fade away. I wish I had someone who would tell me if someone is going to retire. That way I can do something. (As you may have noticed I had something in the February newsletter about Phil Krause who retired in December...but it was only pictures because I didn't have any article to go with it). I also wish that people at each of our units in all of our towns would somehow take it upon themselves to send me something. They don't.

I did get an e-mail from Joe's wife, Theresa. In it she shares that: "Joe is working at Lowe's and is hoping to quit a year from June if not before, But you know him he likes to work. Tell everyone hi for us. Hope to be able to come to California soon We haven't seen our daughter for two years."

Ironically, I also got another e-mail from another Branch Retiree about her husband who has recently become a retired Letter Carrier. It made me think that maybe we can do better in the future.

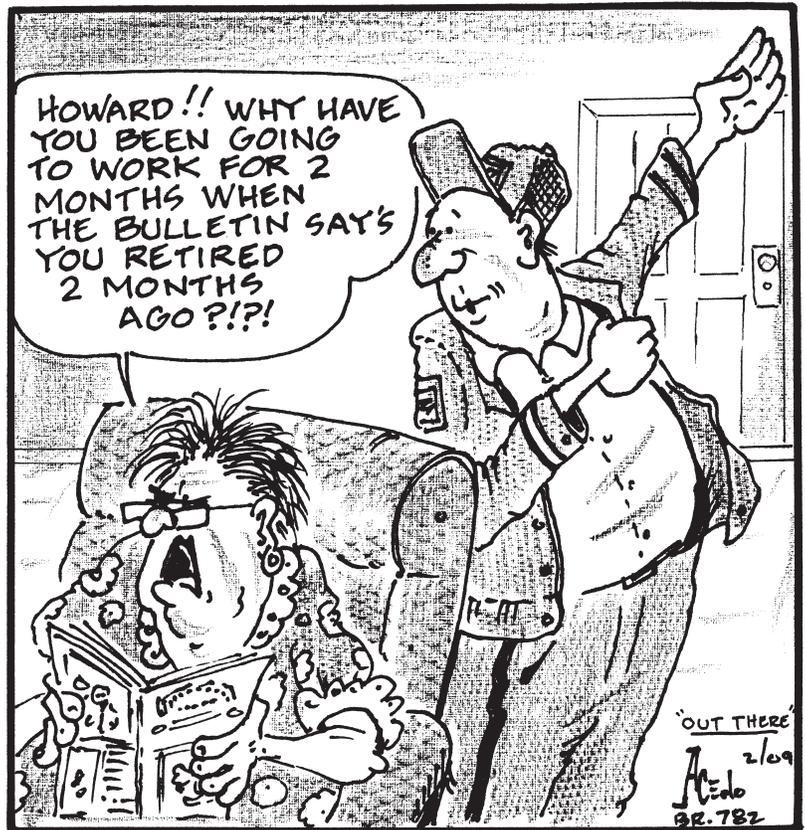
**"Hey there Basil ... How have you been? I just wanted to let you know how very pleased I was with this past month's newsletter. Patrick was so glad to retire, and the tributes to all of our retirees that were in the newsletter were soooooo good !!! I will be saving it for him to look upon again when he is well into his retirement. Thank you so much !!!**

**PS: Would you by any chance have a jpeg (or some such) image of the photo you used for Patrick? I don't have any of him in his uniform.**

**Silver Farr"**

Now to a second issue that I want to present to you.

Branch Financial Secretary Anita Holderman recently initiated a special Retiree Project. I'm going to use a big chunk of your newsletter this month to present the information to all of you.



# National Association of Letter Carriers

OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS COME, GREETING FROM **BRANCH 782**

ARVIN	BAKERSFIELD	TAFT	MOJAVE
AVENAL	BORON	TEHACHAPI	TRONA
EDWARDS AFB	LAMONT	DELANO	WASCO
SHAFTER	McFARLAND	RIDGECREST	

Chartered February 25, 1901 ■ Affiliated with AFL-CIO



To the Honorable Retiree of Branch 782:

This letter is written for a very special purpose. I need your help to do something. But first, let me share something with you. Branch 782 Editor-guy Basil Zuniga has wanted to do this project for a long time. Well...we decided it's time!

The idea was birthed when Basil read a "Letter to the Editor" which appeared in the New Mexico State Association of Letter Carriers *El Boletin* in Spring 2003. The author is Letter Carrier Jeff Worthington from Albuquerque, NM Branch 504. Why don't you read the letter, too?

"Maybe this has happened to you. While out on our routes or just walking around in our uniforms, we meet someone who says, 'I'm a retired Carrier' or 'I spent x amount of years with the Post Office.' If you're like me, you'll listen and acknowledge their accomplishments of being retired and say, 'I only have x amount of years until I join you.' This recently happened to me.

Louis Piteo spent 35 years as a Letter Carrier. He was a member of Branch 36, NALC and served at Woodlawn PO, NYC. He was also one of the brave Letter Carriers who went out on strike in the early 70's to improve the livelihood of our craft.

His wealth of knowledge and experiences during his career amazed me. He would talk about when he and 'Vince' (Yes, *that* Vince Sombrotto) were just 'young pups' and dealing with Union issues and working conditions. He would always end his story by saying, 'You's Carriers got it a lot easier today.' You know.....he was right.

I would sit with him and update him on the improvements and changes in our craft. I would also complain about how supervision hinders Carriers from improving customer service. Louis would add, 'Some things never change.'

Boy, was he right again!

*Continued on next page...*

I told him about our Union, where the Union hall was, and when we had our meetings. I told him when I had some time, we'd go down there. There was just one problem: Louis died.

I called the Union office to ask about what we do for those Carriers who come to New Mexico to retire and don't belong to our Branch. Really, we don't know who they are or how many there might be.

No Letter Carrier should die and their accomplishments go unheard! I elected to represent the USPS and the NALC at his funeral. I found a U.S. flag and acted as a one-man honor guard at his services. I got a chance to explain to those at the funeral how Louis's actions revolutionized improvements in our profession. If I didn't do it, no one was there to do it.

I'll end this story by stating, 'Let's not have another Letter Carrier go to their grave without their story being told!' Give those retirees the number to the Union office, invite them to the Branch, tell them that we have a person who is a liaison for our retirees. Tell them we still care!"

With that said, here's the part when I tell you what kind of help I need from you.

I have attached a questionnaire which asks you to record information about you and your own personal history in the Post Office. Too often, people only remember the last unit that someone worked at or have forgotten some of the interesting stories or circumstances that existed when you were an active duty Letter Carrier. Additionally, it would be good to share what your life is like "after retirement".

I would like to have this information on file for two reasons: 1) this kind of biographical information serves as a good article for our newsletter which could be used in different ways.

Reason 2): Too often, when a Letter Carrier passes away, the survivors will share information in an obituary which indicates merely that a person worked for the Post Office for x number of years. *A career encompasses more than just being somewhere for x number of years...*

Take this opportunity to record information about your life as a Letter Carrier. ***Tell your story yourself!!!***

Please return the filled out Retiree Biographical Information packet to me at the Branch 782 office.

In Solidarity,



ANITA HOLDERMAN  
Branch 782 Financial Secretary

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The questionnaire attached to the letter asks each Retiree to respond with answers to a variety of questions like: year you began your Postal career; the year you retired; number of years as a Letter Carrier; number of years as an NALC member; military service? which branch? how long?; who were some of the "old timers" when you started out? list of units where you worked during your career; and, etc.



Connie White and a younger Paul Shaw\*



Floyd LeMoine

“Customer Connect”. Provide the best possible service to *all* of our customers!!! Ask Retirees. They know the importance... Your future depends on this.

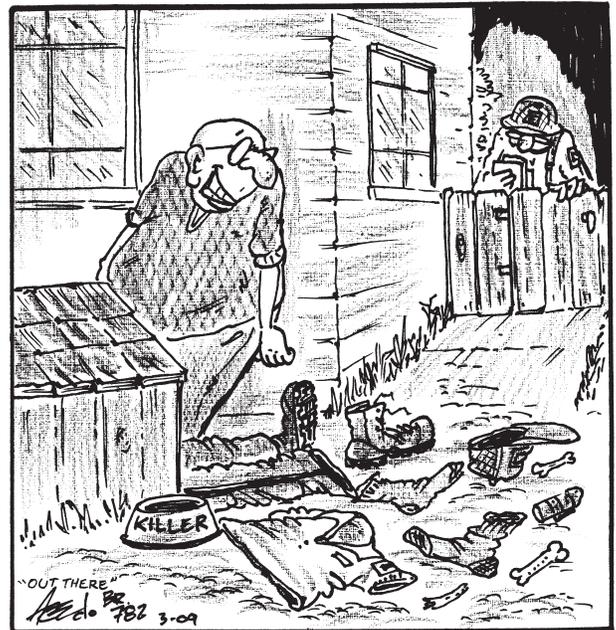
BASIL ZUNIGA  
Branch 782 Editor-guy

To this point, there have been a number of interesting comments and pictures which have been shared. Wes Johnson remembers a young, hairy “Mountain Man” Basil Zuniga when Basil made Regular and was assigned to 93304. Bill Diffie recalled, “The starter on my LLV wouldn’t disengage and it started smoking. I disconnected the battery cable. I was told that I was crossing craft and should not have done it. I told them that next time I’d let it burn up the truck.”



Tehachapi’s Roxane Sasa before she retired.

Anyway, I hope that this is the most successful project that has ever been conducted by Branch 782! I would urge each of you to think about the legacy that you will leave. You do this job one day at a time. It’s kind of like doing housework. You clean it up, turn around and they bring you more to take care of. *And this is a positive thing!* Think about this when someone comes in to talk to you about the importance of things like



BORED WITH RETIREMENT...ICKY FINDS A WAY TO HAVE FUN WITH HIS OLD POSTAL UNIFORMS.



Bill Diffie, backing up the jeep, gets ready to hit the street. What year??

\* Paul Show will retire in May 2009...his career began on July 3,1965. He feels bad—he was going for fifty years!!!!



Stockdale Station’s Nelson Pena and Linda Combs smile as they join the “Last Punch Bunch”!

Thank you to  
Stockdale  
Shop Steward,  
John Ortega, for  
making the time to  
provide these pictures!  
Nelson and Linda join a very  
special group of  
individuals—  
NALC Branch 782 Retirees!!

# Confessions of a Former Station Manager—Part 3

by Guy Nohrenberg, PTF Carrier  
Simi Valley, California Branch 2802

Oh how management loves to capitalize on drama! I know. I was there. Every time we could put the fear of Postal Extinction into the employees, we were required to give a standup doing just that. “If we only save 10 minutes per route” “If we just reduce overtime” “If we If we If we...”

And where is all that targeted? The Letter Carriers, of course.

Now, we’re seeing something different. Low mail volume. A nation teetering on the biggest recession in recorded history. We’re moving from Capitalism to Democratic-Socialism as the government slowly acquires banks and corporations in the midst of their rescues. People are stuffing money into mattresses and the banks in Switzerland refuse to release information on the richest Americans finding tax shelters in them.

This is very different. Very new.. Or is it?

Are you old enough to remember Carvin Marvin Runyon? Are you old enough to remember delivering mail from a Jeep? Do you recall the original purpose of the mailbox flag? Were you around when the National Guard was called in to deliver the mail in the 70’s? Remember when 18 and 8 really meant 18 and 8? How about routing flats? I remember. Some of you do as well. Remind the others. Help the younger carriers. Tell your stories. Help them to understand. If your age hasn’t resulted in increased wisdom however, put your headphones back on and remain quiet.

We’ve been through a great deal before. In each case, the Postal Service has weathered these changes and some very difficult times. In each case, the Letter Carrier is out on the street saying hello to the communities and by our very presence, things might just be ok after all. The very sight of you out there with your customers confirms normality.

So what do we do this time? What is our role in this latest crisis? What stories will we tell those that come after us? Will we earn our title once again? United States Postal Letter Carrier. It is a proud title indeed. Nobody knows your day better than you; the conflicts, the pain and the sorrows. It is your day, every day. This time, however, I’m here with you. So what can a former Station Manager say? What can I say now in this position that I could not say under my former title? Here’s the list of 10 things we can do to make things better. This Is what I can say:

1. Stay completely informed. People will ask you about everything on the street. You know that. They ask me. My name isn’t Potter, but I get asked about what they’re doing in DC about 5 day workweeks, postage rates, and the economy. Remember, any answers you give MUST be factual and verifiable. You will be quoted around dinner tables and likely even to your boss.

2. Exemplify your craft. Keep looking good. You Rook Mahvelous! As one entertainer would say. Keep your uniform neat and clean. You are not looking good for your boss. He may be a slob with little to no understanding of your craft or route. He likely comments, often, “When I was a carrier...” back in the covered wagon days. You want to look good for public support and personal pride. Not for your boss. His belly is writing checks his heart can’t cash! As that bottom button pops, that’s him.. not you.

3. BE VERY SAFE AT ALL TIMES! This is not cliché. If the public loses trust in you driving the streets, they will not support your line of employment. It’s that simple.

4. Put forth a FAIR DAYS WORK! This couples with being safe. Do you have runners in your office? You know... LLV denters? Carriers that attack more mailboxes and crush more misdelivered mail in a day than you’ve seen in a lifetime? Runners used to be my favorite type of carrier. Yep. I used to love them as a manager! They could accomplish ANYTHING. I never did ask how. I admit... I didn’t want to know. A manager’s goal is to look good through the efforts of his carriers. That’s all that matters in most cases. Do you have turtles in your office? Those are just as bad. Carriers who milk it out of anger or frustration. They cause much havoc and unnecessary burden. Just work safe and do a Fair Days Work.

5.. Know your contract. If you read the contract for 15 minutes each night after your 30 minutes of reading the Bible, you will know more than your boss, surely, and perhaps enough to assist your stewards who volunteer their headaches for your well being. You cannot refer to it if you cannot quote it.

6. Work with Integrity. Yes. No cheating on anything. Management will be looking to cull out Letter Carriers like Cops in a Speedtrap. They get points for firing carriers and are seen to be effective through the removal of carriers. This is my greatest Managerial Sin. I knew the contract and would spend more

time disciplining carriers, moving them closer to the door, than motivating them and trying to understand their day.

7. Ensure Management works with Integrity. Get copies of EVERY 3996! Get copies of every 1571 Cut Slip! Ensure your union is checking that they report hours correctly, Return Times, Timekeeping, Delayed Mail. This is my number 1 frustration in this organization: a few Managers will engage in criminal falsification to attain elevated status and obtain unearned raises and bonuses. Keep them honest and report them every time you get that gut feeling. Our national numbers are affected by every change in how they measure mail or determine hours. It must be honest. A man once told me, "Guy, what they're doing is like giving false symptoms to a doctor; the doctor will work on these wrong symptoms while the patient gets sicker." Keep them honest!

8. Don't panic. No matter how a manager or supervisor acts, YOU KEEP YOUR COOL. I used to tell my supervisors that they aren't allowed to panic until I do.. and I don't panic.. That still holds true and should for you too. We've seen this all before. We've been billions of dollars in the red in this organization and we've pulled through. America needs us and always will!

9. Bring in revenue. I don't care if you don't like the program, no matter what they call it, Customer Connect or Toothless Fred's Billboard for Belching Baloney Bonuses. Win over your customers and bring in new business. Who cares where the credit goes, we've always needed the work. Back when we were not caring at all about parcel volume, I thought it was silly. Now that the managers do care about parcel volume, we think it's smart. We should ALWAYS bring in business of ALL KINDS. Maybe not those little stuffed bears, but you know what I mean.

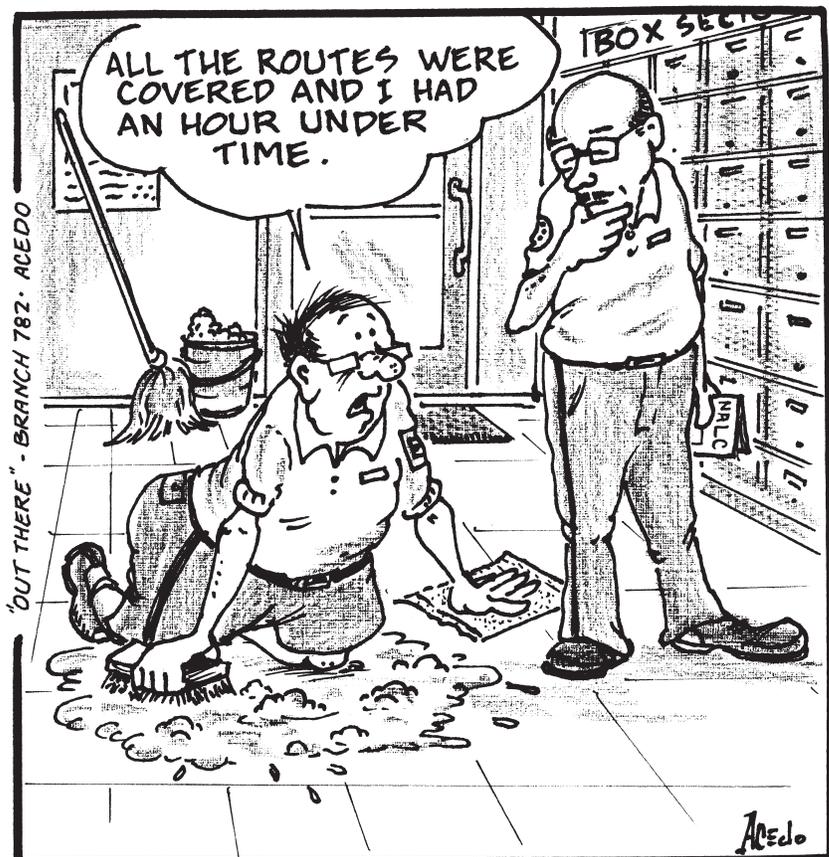
10. Lastly, conduct yourselves as if your whole family were watching you at work. I know there are some "Zoo" offices and some silent Mausoleum offices. We should immediately start bringing in tours of kids. No kid should go through the school system without learning the mail system and bringing their parents. This is a huge failing of management. Kids need to be able to do more than text messaging. We need them to understand and use the most valuable hard copy messaging and delivery service in the free world! Talk to your managers and have them canvass the schools. Bring in the future!

I could not say any of that as a Manager. Why? Nobody'd believe me! Think of it like this: You may be smarter than your manager. If you

are, then help the dolt with your intelligence. He needs all the help he can get. Here's an example: Did you use the USPS Preliminary Financial Report? SPLY means (Same Period Last Year). Plan is a made up goal. The % Var are the percentage of variances. Last year we would have been in the black if we didn't have to contribute to the retirement preload. This year, thus far, our mail volume is short—overall, 1 of every 10 feet of mail. (remember there's growth in the United States). City Delivery Salaries are up .4% to last year. Total Salaries and Benefits are down 1 percent. Total operating expenses are down 1 percent. So what's outta whack? Rural Carrier Equipment Maintenance Allowance is OVER 22.8%. All Other Personnel Related Expenses are OVER 53%. Information Technology is OVER this quarter 137.5% to last year. Total Operating Revenue is DOWN -7.6%.

What does that tell you and I? They're taking this opportunity to spend lots of money on technology and hide it in a tough year. We need School Tours, and New Customers. Work Fair. Be Safe. The same as the numbers have always told us. Don't let anyone panic you. Read the "Good Book" and the Contract. This too shall pass. Feel free to email me at [tindad@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tindad@sbcglobal.net). Do a Google search of my name for more information. I'll help you in any way I can. We'll make it through all this together!

Be Well!



## from the editor-guy

Freddie Valdez died last month. Freddie was a Letter Carrier. I got an e-mail with details of the funeral—services were scheduled in Mendota about thirty miles west of Fresno. This is where Freddie lived.

I remember feeling frustrated because I was scheduled to work and I contacted Fresno Branch Vice-President Santos Garcia to tell him that it would be really difficult for me to attend. I told him that I would have liked to be there to say a final farewell to Freddie.

Diana Chavez called to say that she really wanted to go, too. But she didn't want to drive alone. With Mike Towery's help, and thanks to the intervention of Bakersfield Postmaster Jim Broulliard, I was able to be there.

I can think of only a handful of people in our Branch who knew Freddie. There is no way that I can give you a complete picture of who he was or what he did; but, let me try to do something in the context of this month's newsletter...

Freddie met me a little over twenty years ago. It was at a California State Convention. Over the course of time, I would talk with him at state and national conventions. He was also active in the political arena and would represent Fresno Branch 231 when meeting with many different elected officials to address issues important to all Letter Carriers. He was also a member of a contingent of NALC members who would travel to lobby Congress. I also got to spend time with him, there.

There is a labyrinth of tunnels that traverse the area underneath "The Hill". Freddie—having been there before was my times—was my first guide. I remember telling him, "Freddie, if it wasn't for you I'd be stuck down here forever." He laughed quietly.

Freddie would have enjoyed seeing the information in this month's newsletter about the Western States Lobby Trip. When he first began, it was merely a group of Carriers from California. He was part of what has made this effort so successful. He would probably laugh quietly at this last statement and not take any credit.

I also think that Freddie would have liked seeing the report on "4 Chicks on the Loose". He liked getting to know people and was pretty good at always asking me how my family was doing. He was a dad and was always proud to share how his daughter was doing. He would laugh as I shared my own adventure as a father. Of course, through the years the number of kids that I would tell him about would increase. And, he would give a quiet laugh about that, too.

I think of one reason that Freddie would have enjoyed reading about "4 Chicks on the Loose". He believed that people who worked together should socialize together because it created bonds of memory and of friendship. Laughing with others was something that Freddie understood very well.

He knew that there was more to life than what he did as a Letter Carrier. His family played a big part in why he was so involved in his community. He was a member of the School Board in Mendota for many, many years. He approached

that role with the same enthusiasm and commitment that he did everything else that he did. Countless hours of meetings to improve the lives of the children was augmented by many more meetings with elected officials. And, again, he would find himself in Washington, DC lobbying for them as well.

People who rose to speak at Freddie's funeral shared their sadness at his passing. But, they also said many things with a hint of a smile. And, Freddie would have had a quiet laugh as they shared.

When Freddie would have read the two articles written by Mabel Bullis he would really have smiled. He knew how much can be accomplished by people working together. The Food Drive was something which was important to him because he knew the impact it could have on people who are struggling.

He probably would have had more than a quiet laugh as he read about the "Brundage Bulldogs Biggest Loser Competition".

In all the years that I knew Freddie, he was never a big, imposing kind of a guy. He was quiet. Spoke quietly. Laughed quietly. Diana Chavez told me that he told her once, "Diana, I used to be buff!" She just rolled her eyes with a, "Yeah, right!"

Entering the church for the funeral, we came across some posterboards with many pictures of Freddie at various times of his life. There—right in front of God and country—was a picture of Freddie in a junior college football uniform...wearing the number 78. That is a number for a lineman. These are big guys! And, there was another picture of him without a shirt. Guess what? He *was* buff!

He was probably quietly laughing as Diana and I saw the picture.

Freddie would have enjoyed Freddie Acedo's cartoons this month. They would have made him laugh maybe a little less quietly.

There was one thing that I don't think he ever laughed about. Freddie had cystic fibrosis.

Over the course of the years that disease became more and more debilitating. He used to drive all over to attend NALC meetings. He would encourage everyone to become politically active to protect our Rights and Benefits. In the earliest NALC Lobby Trips to Washington that I attended, Freddie would walk everywhere. At the last Lobby Trip I attended with him, Freddie was forced to take taxis. He no longer had the physical stamina or lungs to be able to get around as easily. He wearied very quickly, yet he would always find the strength to rise, climb those steps and walk those halls.

When he would talk about his difficulties, there was never a hint of self-pity or fear. He merely would shrug his shoulders and tell me about what the doctors were planning to do. Ultimately, the only hope that they offered was a lung transplant.

After waiting for a suitable donor, Freddie had a double lung transplant. There were complications that he dealt with. He eventually wound up in a hospital in San Francisco. (Ironically, his Branch President, Ken Nunn, was there having a brain aneurysm clamped off. Ken wanted to visit him, but couldn't.)

I felt the need to share a little about Freddie this month.

Freddie would probably wonder what the fuss was all about. And, he would laugh quietly.

BASIL ZUNIGA



# Branch Officers

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