

National Association of Letter Carriers

Branch 782

E.A. Baker Union Update



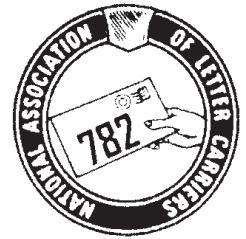
ARVIN
CALIFORNIA CITY
McFARLAND
TAFT

AVENAL
DELANO
MOJAVE
TEHACHAPI

BAKERSFIELD
EDWARDS AFB
RIDGECREST
TRONA

BORON
LAMONT
SHAFTER
WASCO

CHARTERED FEBRUARY 25, 1901



SPECIAL EDITION

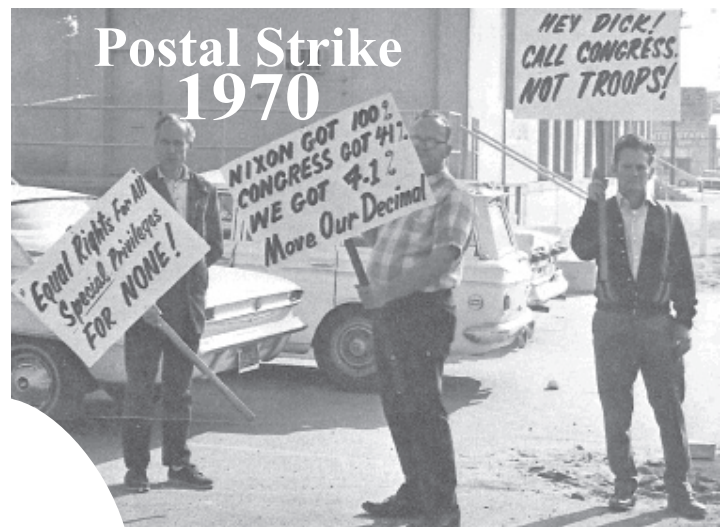
DECEMBER 2018

“In 1956, the *Postal Record* reported that ‘the average American family’ earned \$5,520 a year before taxes in 1955 while the average Letter Carrier earned \$4,400 — \$1,120 a year less. In 1957, *U. S. News and World Report* reported that while the wages of workers in private industry had increased between \$20 and \$36 a week in the previous five years, Letter Carriers’ wages had increased by a mere \$5.50. By 1960, Letter Carriers were having serious financial difficulties. Many worked two jobs to support their families, and their wives often were forced to work to supplement Carriers’ meager income.

A substantial number of Letter Carriers could not even qualify for an FHA loan to buy a home.”

The above discontinuous sentences are excerpts from Carriers in a Common Cause — A History of Letter Carriers

It is right — and it is proper — that we do remember and honor those who have gone before us...



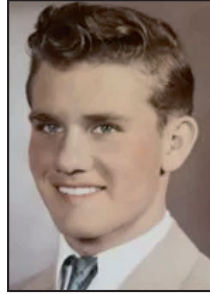
(l-r) Unknown, Bruce King and Wes Johnson walk the walk!

Otis Wesley Johnson

September 1, 1930 — November 18, 2018

— In Memorium —

Otis Wesley Johnson Sept. 1, 1930 - Nov. 18, 2018



On November 18th, Dad raised one more fist in the air for victory and decided his job here was done. ***IT WAS A JOB WELL DONE!!!***

Otis “Wes” was born in Roaring Springs, Texas, to Myrtle and Otis Karo Johnson. Shortly after Myrtle died during childbirth, Otis, at the age of 9, migrated to California with his father, two uncles, and four siblings, Vivian, Verna, Thomas “TJ,” and Lee traveling in a modified Model T Ford truck in the midst of the Dust Bowl. The trip took months as they had to work along the way to fund the trip and survive. What an adventure it must have been! After arriving in California, they found work in the fields from Bakersfield to Oregon and lived in tents, boxcars, or whatever shelter they could find.

At the age of 20, after spending much of his childhood working and getting a minimum amount of schooling, he volunteered to serve his country in the U.S. Army from 1951-1954. He fought on the front line in Korea. At the end of that tour of duty, he served as a military prison guard in Georgia.

Shortly after his service ended, he began what would be a 34-year career with the U.S. Postal Service.

In 1957 he met a beautiful young woman named Billie Jean in a café in Shafter, CA. They married, settled in Bakersfield, and had five children: Jeannine, Wesley, Deanna, Calleen, and Eric.

Wes (also known as “Slick” to family and friends), enjoyed camping, fishing, golfing, woodworking, and Friday night poker. He was a Little League

Baseball coach and diehard Dodgers fan. But, most of all, he was Dad and “Papa” and believed nothing was more important than family and keeping them together.

He gave his all to raise the kids — *not without some resistance* — and spent many of his thirty-two years of retirement traveling to the Pacific Northwest and overseas to be with them.

Dad’s family has now blossomed and he has been blessed with fourteen grandchildren, seventeen great-grandchildren, and many more that know him as “Papa”.

A life well lived. We love you, Papa!

A Celebration of Life service and reception was held at Greenlawn Southwest, 2739 Panama Lane, on December 10th at 1:30 p.m.

Prior to the Greenlawn Southwest service, there was also a Military Honors Funeral Ceremony at the National Cemetery on East Bear Mountain Boulevard and Highway 58 at 10:45 a.m., for those who were able to attend.

Source — <https://www.greenlawnmortuary-andcemetery.com/obituaries/Otis-Johnson-7/>

Information in an obituary is a short journey through the life of the individual who is being remembered. Readers may find out things they might not have known. On the other hand, stories from family and friends can do a lot to flesh out the story of a life. Wes was more than a brother, son, father, coach, Letter Carrier or Military Veteran...

Eulogy Presented at Greenlawn Southwest on December 10, 2018

“On behalf of the Johnson Family, we thank you all for coming to celebrate the wonderful life of an amazing man — Otis Wesley Johnson.

Dad was the strength and bond that kept our family together till the last of his 88 years. He was a patriot who fought in the Korean War to defend freedom and liberty for the US and our allies.

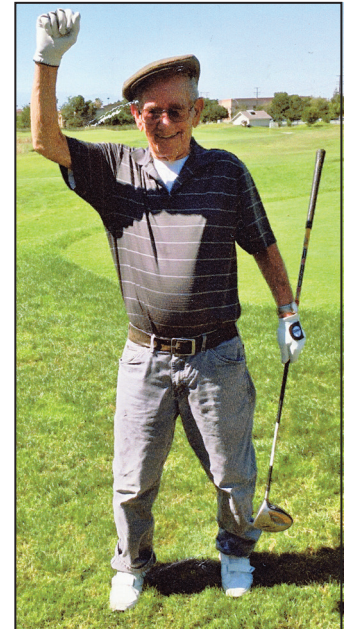
As Dad would have told you if you cared to listen: He was tough as a boot — and just a little bit taller.

He could whip a circular saw in a three-round fight.

Most of all, DAD WAS A FAMILY MAN!

He spent his entire working life and retirement finding ways to be with his family and keeping them together.

He was FIERCELY competitive! Just ask anyone who played golf, poker, or pool with him. If there was gonna be a winner, he was competing for it!



Wes, victorious!! With arm raised!

He loved pictures. (As you may be able to tell.) It seems everywhere he went there was someone with a camera...or he gave them his camera.



He had a bit of a temper, but was quick to recover. He would look at you with that wry grin, laugh at himself and then keep on going...

He was a teacher, a coach, a mentor — and an understanding ear when you needed him.

He found a way to connect and have special memories with every one of his kids, grand kids and great-grand kids. He was ALWAYS teaching and guiding all along the way...

He was there for everyone who needed him. He always had whatever you needed whether it was advice or a lawn mower carburetor.

Here's The Story of His Life -

Otis Wesley Johnson was born in Roaring Springs, Texas on 1 September 1930 and — according to the info on his birth certificate — he was a “legitimate” baby.

For most of the 30s, Dad and his family lived in a modified fuel station in Bivens, Texas and later in a cabin outside of town on a farm. Otis Sr. (Grandpa) worked in a cotton gin. There were always chickens around wherever his family lived. Dad went to elementary school and helped work on the farm as soon as he was big enough. Being a “little fella”, he started out with the easy things. He picked bugs off potatoes, herded chickens back into the pen and fetched eggs.

In 1939, Dad traveled to California in the midst of the great depression and the Dust Bowl years with Grandpa, two uncles, his two brothers, TJ and Lee, and sisters Vivian and Verna in a modified Model T-truck. The kids rode on the running boards many times during the trip. The trip took several months as the family had to work their way out to California.

Grandpa drove the whole way because he did not trust the brothers to keep the car on the road with the kids on the running boards. On the last day of the trip, they went off the road while traveling down the long, winding Grapevine down into the San Joaquin Valley. Nobody was hurt, but the boys did not let him forget it.

Eventually, they stopped at a farm between Shafter and Bakersfield where Grandpa saw a farmer in a field and asked for work. The farmer gave him a job, some bedding and emptied out an old box car on the farm. The Johnsons lived in the box car for over a year before moving to a farming tent city near Shafter. Soon after, Dad met his life-long best friend, Fred Mitchell.

Next came the 40s...

In the early 40s, the Johnson family worked on farms and moved from the tent city to a cabin near Smith's corner between Shafter and Bakersfield. Dad went to high school and worked on the farms...mostly he worked on the farms as the family moved around working mainly cotton and potatoes between Bakersfield and Malin, Oregon.

There must have been a heat wave or a shortage of clothing during these years, because Dad rarely had a shirt on. All that hard work made him a fit, good looking young man and — for some reason — there were plenty of pictures to show it.

“Slick”, as he became known, worked in the field each day with family until they made their daily allotment of potatoes, usually 500-600 pounds. As soon as they met their quota, Slick, Fred and his brothers (T.J. and Lee) high-tailed it out of there to go hunting, fishing and girl-chasing. In the late Forties, Dad landed a job as a “Mobile Gas” service station manager in Shafter from January 1950 until January 1951.

The 1950s: Dad's Young Adult Years...

Dad joined the army in January 1951. He enlisted along with his brother T.J. They both served during the Korean War. Dad served in Korea and T.J. served in mainland Japan. The brothers spent R/R (Rest & Recuperation) time together every chance they had. During their R/R they even found part-time work as Geisha girls in Sasebo Japan. (You have to see pictures to get it.)

Military Honors Eulogy Presented at the Bakersfield National Cemetery on December 10, 2018 by youngest son, USAFR SMSgt Eric Johnson

On behalf of the Johnson family I want to thank you all for coming today to celebrate Dad's life and honoring his service to our country.

Dad joined the military in January 1951 along with his brother T. J. After boot camp Dad was sent to the front lines and T. J. was sent to Japan to be a supply clerk. Dad said T. J. always had a way with finding the good jobs!

Like most of his generation, Dad did not talk much about his time at war. But, over the years, we were able to get a bit out of him.

He spent much of his time in Korea on the frontlines defending a ridgeline near what is now the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea (also known as the 38th parallel).



(l-r) Private 2nd Class (E-2) O.W. Johnson, J.L. Collins and a buddy back when they were young, in the Army and away from home for the very first time.



Occasionally he went out on short patrols, but mostly he defended the ridgeline battling through the nightly attacks when the out-gunned enemy felt they had the advantage.

He spoke of long freezing nights with mortar rounds hitting the trees above him and shrapnel landing on him and drawing blood. He joked about how he could have technically received a Purple Heart medal — but never felt right even considering it. Each day, following the attacks, they would recover the fallen.

After a year on the front line, Dad was reassigned back to the states as a military prison guard at Camp Gordon, Georgia. He actually spoke of this job with a smile. He said most of the inmates were good guys who just got in a little trouble. He became friends with many of them. This duty lasted for a little over a year and then Dad was honorably discharged and he returned to home to Shafter.



Although he rarely spoke of it, Dad was proud of his service and he kept many of his military items to include his original service dress uniform you see here. Dad was a patriot who fought for the freedoms we enjoy today and I am honored to be able to follow in his footsteps and serve.

Again, thank you all for joining us in honoring his service.

What was the Battle for Heartbreak Ridge about?

The Battle of Heartbreak Ridge was a month-long campaign in the Korean War, lasting from the 13th of September until the 15th of October, 1951. The site of the battle was a seven-mile-long (11-kilometer) stretch of land over three sharp peaks, separated by steep valleys.

The area is slightly north of today's Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) at the 38th Parallel that separated the two countries on the Korean Peninsula.

United Nations (UN) troops had driven back the North Koreans and Chinese from Bloody Ridge a mile to the south, and the Communists had entrenched themselves at Heartbreak Ridge to slow their advance.

The entire offensive in the area had been initiated by the United Nations in an effort to disenfranchise the Communists of this important staging area for their attacks on South Korea.

MAKEUP OF THE FORCES

Communist North Korea had Chinese support on the ground for its attack on South Korea. To repel the attack, the United Nations had sent a force consisting chiefly of American and French troops, supported by nearby South Korean, Dutch,

and Filipino forces. Major General Clovis Byers, commander of the United States X Corps, and the 2nd Infantry Division commander Brigadier General Thomas Shazo led the US forces. M4 Shermans from the 72nd Tank Battalion were called into play as well to bolster the infantry's efforts.

On the Communist side, the North Korean 6th, 12th, and 13th Divisions, and the Chinese CCF 204th Division led by Wenfang Luo, were under the ultimate command of Wen Niansheng of the Chinese 68th Army.

DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGHTING

The Communists had set up a formidable network of trenches on Heartbreak Ridge. This made it an even harder objective to assault from the steep inclines that led to the crests on the ridge line. Troop assaults were confined to twilight and nighttime, as the Americans were supported by aerial bombing as well as dense artillery and tank fire, which would commence in the morning and last all throughout the daytime hours.

For weeks, the battle often seesawed between the opposing forces. One side would

often capture a crest from the other, but only after suffering high casualties and depleting their ammunition. An inevitable counterattack would always follow, dislodging them, and the cycle would repeat itself.

Desperate hand-to-hand battles punctuated the culmination of every assault.

The American deployment of armor to actively support troop operations served as the turning point.

OUTCOMES

After two weeks of stalemate, the Americans determined that a lasting victory lay in destroying the resupply depots in the Mundung-ni Valley just west of Heartbreak Ridge. Anticipating this, the Chinese sent reinforcements to that very location.

On the 11th of October, 30 M4 Shermans of the 72nd Tank Battalion, under the cover of air support and artillery barrages, raced across the valley. By coincidence, the Chinese 610th Regiment of the 204th Division was caught in the open, and was decimated.

The following day, a larger armored force continued the relentless attack. Over the next two weeks, the Shermans overran all the supply

depots, cutting off the Communist troops on Heartbreak Ridge. American and French forces finally eliminated all resistance in the hills through direct troop assaults by 13 October.

Although the Americans and French suffered heavy casualties totaling over 3,700 men, the North Korean and Chinese forces lost an even more astronomical number of soldiers, in excess of 25,000.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND LEGACY

Heartbreak Ridge was never again lost to enemy action after this decisive battle. Subsequent Communist assaults were bloody but unsuccessful and, although the United Nations' forces lost tens of thousands of troops, they did so without relinquishing the high ground.

That the U.N. was willing to endure such terrible casualties

for this objective demonstrated to the Communists that they would not win the war through brute force or intimidation. Furthermore, deprived of prime territory needed for their assaults on South Korea, the Communists realized that their dreams of unifying Korea under Communism was likely to become a lost cause. This convinced both sides to return to the armistice table.

Source — <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/battle-of-heartbreak-ridge-korean-war.html>

The Fight for “The Ridge”

by Bill Wilson (an excerpt)

Bill Wilson served as a sergeant first class with Company I, 23rd Regiment, 2nd Division, United States Army, in the Korean War from Aug. 22, 1950 to Aug. 22, 1952

“... I have eliminated some of the gruesome parts, but it still makes you feel glad that you were not there. Real war is not frivolous...”

One of the dominant aspects of daily life for an infantryman — seldom brought to anyone's attention in discussions, writings, or films — is the smell of death, of rotting flesh. This is the most repulsive, nauseating, and sickening of odors.

About two or three feet from the edge of our hole was a dead North Korean who I would judge to have been there a week or ten days, but it was hard to tell with the very hot late summer weather that we had been having. There were other bodies all around us, and the mountain top reeked with the odor of death, but none were so close or so ripe as this one, and the aura of him night and day was almost more than we could bear. We had reached the point of desperation that led us to using our empty C ration cans to scoop dirt from the bottom or sides of our hole to try to bury him. We never got the job done. When we went down to the Regimental CP a week or so later, I noticed that the smell was still with me. My clothes and skin had absorbed the stench.

The artillery attacks against us were at irregular intervals and happened once or twice a day, mostly in daylight. The Koreans used the age-old system of a rolling barrage. They started at the bottom of our ridge and kept elevating after

each fusillade to walk the barrage up to our line and over us. We could hear it coming, feel it hit, and hear it go. All we could do was hunker down in the bottom of the hole and hold our breath.

Often these barrages were successful in that rounds hit close enough to a foxhole to cause casualties, and on occasion, a hole would take a direct hit.

The worst attack that we ever had to endure, however, was from our own guns. A 155-mm battery shelled us late one afternoon, causing several casualties and two or three KIAs in the small portion of the line that I could see. My buddy, Babe, and I scrambled out of our hole after the barrage and ran to the hole next to us. A round had blown the hole in on top of the guys, but they were not seriously hurt. In the next hole, one of the GIs was standing up with a shocked look on his face, holding the barrel of his M1, but the wood stock had been completely torn away. Further down, a hole had been completely blown in and no one was to be seen, so we started digging and uncovered one occupant, scratched up but alive. One man was missing, and further down the line there were bodies. Artillery was a daily fact of life almost every day that we were on the hill...”

Source — http://www.accesskansas.org/kskoreanwar/stories/story_wilson2.html

After returning from his service in the mid-50s, the Johnson boys — Dad, T.J. and Lee — found work with the post office in Downey, California. Soon after they all transferred to the post office in Bakersfield.

Dad, Fred Mitchell and his brothers made enough money during the mid-1950s to buy cars and motorcycles, and then spent time together fixing them up and racing them. Also, during the mid-50s, Dad became a youth pastor in Uncle Hootie's and Aunt Verna's church. On the first night he spoke, four became saved.

The most important event of the 50s occurred when Dad met Billy Jean (Mom) in 1957! Mom was working at the café at Smith's corner. Dad and Fred Mitchell were at the bar attached to the café and came over for a bite to eat. Dad asked her to dance to the 1956 Johnny Cash song "I Walk the Line" minutes after they met. Dad and Mom were married a year later and the Fifties ended with the birth of their first child, Jeannine.

The 60s: Raising Babies Decade.....

The 60s brought the addition of four more children: Wesley Dean October 1960, Deanna October 1964, Calleen January 1966, and Eric October 1967. Much of the Sixties were spent raising babies...

When Dad wasn't working a part-time job at the sheds, doing lawn care or air conditioning repair with his brother T.J., he took the family to the beach as often as possible and held regular barbecues bringing family



and friends together at the house on Palm Street.



A young Wes Johnson — quite the golfer and quite the competitor— ready to raise that right arm in victory again!!!



This picture was extracted from a March 20, 1968 picture of employees at the Bakersfield Annex on California Avenue: (l-r) Letter Carriers Joe Gonzalez, Wes Johnson, Spike Berna, Jim Tillet and Pete Colbert.

During the early 60s, Dad began his favorite hobbies: golf, poker and hunting with his brother-in-law, Earl.

Many of the hunting trips consisted of Mom driving the car down back-country roads while Dad and Uncle Earl hung out of the window with loaded guns! Apparently it worked. During one of the trips, Dad bagged the trophy Buck that hung on his wall for Decades.

With the help of Mom (as the bookkeeper and organizer), Dad started a Golf group with several friends and coworkers. They organized and held several large golf tournaments complete with prize money and trophies.



See the ball and divot dance off that club?

The Sixties also brought in a new fad called “The Twist”! Dad and Mom made regular trips to the dance hall to do “The Twist” with family and friends, even winning a dance competition or two.

Poker nights also began in the 60s. Friends would come over Friday or Saturday night with snacks and beer and play through the evening. They always stopped at bedtime and kissed the Johnson kids goodnight.



(l-r) Frank Thomasy, “Gordo” Alvarez and Rudy Aros during a Branch 782 MDA Tournament



“Gordo” Alvarez



Unknown and Wes



Yes. Wes and a goose (actually two of them)

The 70s: Family First and the Teenager Years...

Early in the Seventies, Dad and Mom realized they needed to go their own way. But as a testament to their character and love for their family, they set aside their differences and remained the best of friends. Almost immediately, the annual trips to see Mom and the northwest family began. Dad took us kids — and even some of our neighborhood friends — to see the family in the northwest. Dad spent the rest of the Seventies raising teenagers, coaching baseball, fixing cars (that his teenagers wrecked) and continuing the annual summer vacation trips to northwest.



Portion of a July 27, 1972 group picture with Joe Santa Cruz and Wes Johnson at the Bakersfield California Avenue Annex

Coaching baseball was a family affair. Dad was the manager (Coach), Wesley Jr. the Assistant Coach and the girls, Deanna and Calleen helped out keeping score and order in the dugout while Eric and the neighbor buddies played ball. As a manager he won the league championship twice, coached the All Star team...and may have led the league in ejections! One of his most treasured accomplishments while coaching was the fact that he made sure every player got the same amount of playing time, win or lose no matter the skill level.

Years of unfair work conditions and wages led to the unprecedented work stoppage against the U.S. government by postal workers in 1970

“... In 1954, Congress responded to NALC’s call for economic justice.

Congress passed a more realistic and fairer postal pay bill by landslide majorities—352-29 in the House and 69-4 in the Senate. The bill, however, stopped dead in its tracks in the summer of 1954, for Eisenhower, just as Calvin Coolidge had done in 1924, vetoed the pay bill.

One year later, on May 9, 1955, the president vetoed another pay raise for postal workers. Finally, in June 1955, a pay bill was signed into law—**letter carriers’ first pay increase in four years.**

Three months later, *The Postal Record* reported that “the average American family” earned \$5,520 a year before taxes in 1955 while the average letter carrier earned \$4,400—\$1,120 a year less. Yet, the 1956 Republican platform stated: “Good times in America have reached a breadth and depth never known by any nation.”

On August 1, 1957, letter carriers tried the unusual in their fight for better pay. The method: prayer. Tens of thousands of letter carriers throughout the nation paused from their daily tasks to pray for a salary increase. In hundreds of cities, clergymen appeared at the local post office early in the morning to conduct a short service.

In spite of this dramatic act of faith, PMG Summerfield and Eisenhower were unmoved. Another postal pay bill, approved by Congress, was vetoed by Eisenhower in September 1957. And not only did Eisenhower veto it, but he resorted to the pocket veto technique to kill it—waiting until members of Congress had gone home before announcing his veto decision.

At the same time, *U. S. News and World Report* reported that while the wages of workers in private industry had increased between \$20 and \$36 a week in the previous five years, letter carriers’ wages had increased by a mere \$5.50.

Summerfield tried to push a reclassification and salary plan through Congress.

The plan would have raised letter carriers’ wages an average of \$100 a year — **although some carriers would only have received \$10** — while raising some supervisors’ salaries by as much as \$5,000. The NALC was outraged at Summerfield’s insulting offer of such a pittance to carriers, who had not received a pay increase in three years.

Dissatisfaction welled up in the ranks of carriers. Although Eisenhower signed into law a pay raise on May 27, 1959, it did little to quell the mounting resentment.

By 1960, letter carriers were having serious financial difficulties. Many carriers worked two jobs to support their families, and their wives often were forced to work to supplement carriers’ meager income. A substantial number of letter carriers could not even qualify for an FHA loan to buy a home.

Congress responded by passing a pay bill in June. But Eisenhower, in his last year as president, vetoed the legislation. On July 1, 1960, Congress overwhelmingly overrode the veto — one of only two of the 169 Eisenhower vetoes to be overridden in eight years.

In early February 1970, (President) Nixon deferred a wage increase scheduled for July 1.

1970 A Strike Is Called

New York was the center of the drama, for the city itself had been a cauldron of social unrest, with protests against the Vietnam War, urban race riots, strikes by teachers, transportation and sanitation workers dominating the news for several years.

The NALC Branch 36 vote on March 17, 1970 at the Manhattan Center dragged on until around 10:30 p.m. Some 30

minutes later, the results were announced to the members: 1,555—yes; 1,055—no. NALC’s largest local had chosen by a 3-to-2 margin to strike against the U.S. Government regardless of whether the national union joined the strike.

And then the wildfire swept the nation: Branch 34, Boston, Massachusetts; Branch 157, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Branch 1, Detroit, Michigan; Branch 40, Cleveland, Ohio; Branch 84, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Branch 214, San Francisco, California; Branch 9, Minneapolis and Branch 28, St. Paul, Minnesota; Branch 47, Denver, Colorado; Branch 11, Chicago, Illinois. In large and small communities alike, from coast to coast, letter carriers and postal clerks walked off their jobs, joined the picket line, and dug in for the duration. By March 23 the strikers numbered over 200,000 strong.

By April 2, the parties reached an agreement they believed would satisfy the demands of the carriers and clerks who, at great personal risk, had defied both the federal government and their national leaders.

The ‘Memorandum of Agreement’ expressed the postal unions’ and the Department’s accord in four basic areas: pay increases totaling 14 percent — 6 percent retroactive to December 27, 1969, and another 8 percent effective whenever a postal reform bill was enacted; support for the establishment of an independent postal authority; collective bargaining over wages, hours and working conditions with unresolved issues to be settled through final and binding arbitration; and “compression” of the time required for postal workers to reach the top step of their grade level from 21 years to eight.

Congress quickly approved the 6 percent retroactive pay increase, and this became law on April 15.”

These discontinuous sentences are excerpts from Carriers in a Common Cause — A History of Letter Carriers. They are a short summary of events that Wes Johnson and others lived through.

Backdrop to the Letter Carrier world 1950s – 1970s

Old Clyde (the boat) was discovered in the Seventies. After a long summer (of patching, sanding, and painting), the maiden voyage of *Old Clyde* took place at Lake Buena Vista.

With much excitement the shiny metallic classic pulled out of the dock with a right turn of the wheel and the boat took a left turn. (Yes, a **LEFT** turn!!) And another and another and another... The 360s continued for several minutes while Dad trouble-shot the two apparent steering system flaws — locked steering and reverse steering. After several expletives, much laughter and sweat (It was Hot!!!), *Clyde* was on his way with reverse steering none the less.

Old Clyde made several trips to the northwest during the late 70s and early 80s bringing much joy and a little frustration. There was the long exhausting row back to shore at Black Canyon Dam. Then, there was the trip to Lake Isabella that was interrupted by high winds and a red flag evacuation order. It might have been a dangerous trip back to shore if not for the nice slow tow the Sheriff gave us. Lastly, there was the trip to CJ Strike Reservoir. Dad and the girls had a great time catching all those large trout. Too bad they forgot to tie the basket off to the boat before Dad threw it overboard.



(l-r) Unknown, Rudy Aros and Louis Ochoa enjoying poker night together at the Johnson home on Sandra Drive



(l-r) Raul “FuFu” Alonzo, Louis Ochoa, Rudy Aros, Unknown, Pete Colbert, Ron Carlon, Bill McCoy, Wes Johnson

The “boys and ladies” continued to play poker throughout the Seventies which now included the “Little Pain in the Ass Eric” tagging along!

The Seventies ended with the addition of the first three of the fourteen Grand-Children

The 80s: Dad’s Empty Nest Years and Retirement..

The empty nest era began in the 80s brought on by the marriage of all the kids. Dad’s family now had the addition of several wonderful son and daughter in-laws! With all the kids now married and out on their own, the summer trips turned to year-round trips around the country and sometimes overseas visiting the kids, family and friends!



(l-r) Raul Hererra, Louis Ochoa and Wes Johnson

The 80s also brought ten more grand children and a new role in Papa’s life — ***Babysitter***.

In spite of his tough exterior Papa was a softy. The grand-babies loved spending time with him doing everything he loved to do: fishing, working on lawn mowers, drawing, playing host for the poker nights and of course digging into the cookie jar every chance they got. Whatever it was he had them doing the grandchildren were always laughing and learning all along the way.

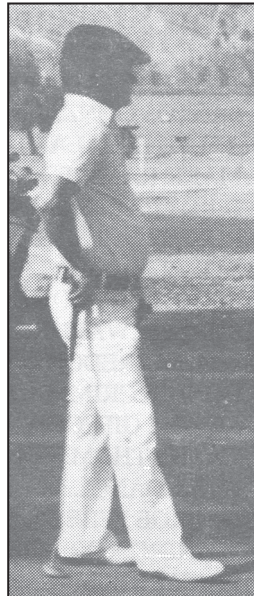
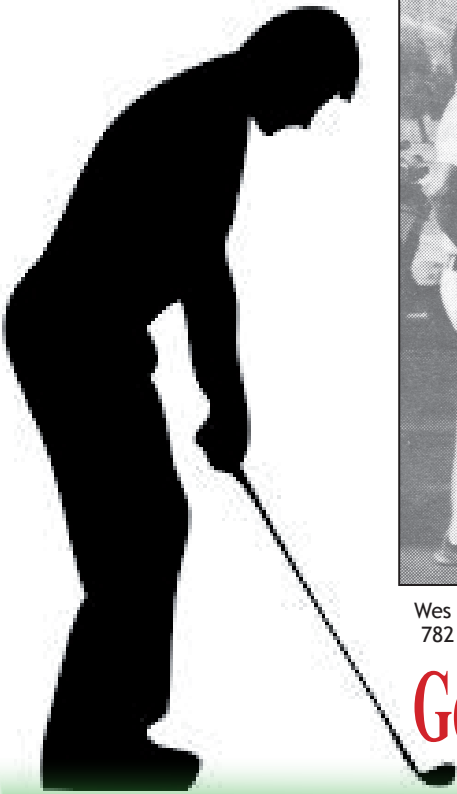
1208 Sandra Drive

At one time, Basil Zuniga was the Regular Carrier on Route 427 and delivered to the Johnson home at this address. He was on that assignment for some twenty-three years from 1981 — 2004 before bidding off. Apparently, it was also home base for a whole lot of poker games!



Wes and old Army buddy J.L. Collins (see picture on page 5) at the house on Sandra

A few more pictures shared by the Johnson Family for use in this Memorial Tribute



Wes at an NALC Branch 782 MDA Golf Tourney



Rudy Aros showing great form at the tee



Another Day. Another Course. Picture by Wes Johnson shows Rudy Aros and "Gordo" Alvarez

**Golf, Poker, Fishing, Travelling, Woodworking,
and a whole heck of lot of life goin' on!!**

In the Nineteen Eighties, Dad took up the hobby of wood-working. During the wood-working years, he displayed his little known but significant talent as an artist. He made rocking horses and cribs for the grand kids, Christmas decorations, and a host of useful and creative knick-knacks such as patio benches, school desks and everyone's favorite — themed toilet paper holders.

The Eighties marked the pinnacle of his golfing career when he scored an "Ace" (hole in one) on the second hole, a 125 yard par 3, at Kern River Golf Course on May 6, 1984 with Eric, Al and Ray looking on. Fishing and poker continued throughout the Eighties along with routine trips to see the kids and family in the northwest.

The Nineteen Eighties brought the much deserved reward of retirement from many years in the USPS.

After 34 years, Wes Retired on July 31, 1988!!!



Slamming that paper time card and joining Last Punch Bunch!



Ruben Fabela presents Retirement Award



Ramon Herrera and Wes and the food!



Clerk Danny Chavez and Wes



Wes casing mail on Route 421 on his last day. (Please note: See the volume in the case? These were the pre-DPS days. Letter Carriers cased every single letter. Flats were thrown into in a horizontal flat case and had to be worked differently than they are now in the vertical flat case. Flats were "routed" and even "streeted" for newbies. If you are an old-timer, you remember this. Also, in this picture, Wes has almost two feet on the ledge he still has to case...) It was a different world back then kinda sorta.



You'd almost think that the day he retired made West pretty happy...



(L-R) In the picture to the left) Unknown, Henry Garcia, Frank Diaz, Unknown, Wes Johnson, Rick Cartier, Ramon Herrera and Frank Thomasy enjoy the food at the retirement potluck for Wes at the Bakersfield South Main Station at 1300 S Street by the Annex.

**Wes Johnson
joins the
“Last Punch Bunch”
on July 31, 1988
at Bakersfield’s
South Main Station
1300 S Street**



These pictures were taken by then-Shop Steward Margaret Romero. The day that Wes retired, all of the 93304 Carriers were working at a unit that was referred to as the “Cotton Club” next door to the Annex.

The 90s: The Lawn Mower Man...

The early Nineties brought the return to Bakersfield three of his children — with 7 grand-babies in tow — giving him plenty of opportunity to exercise “Papa Sitter” duties. The close proximity of most of the kids led to more time for his new found hobby as a part-time job Lawn Mower Man. Papa found great pleasure and good money scouring yard sales, swap meets and the newspaper locating trimmers and edgers to fix up and sell. The cuts, bruises and frustrations with knuckle-head customers were all worth it leading to a nice supplement to his retirement, along with claimed golf and poker winnings that he swore were his!

The Nineties brought more grand-children and the first of 17 Great Grandchildren. The Papa Sitter duties continued now with a seasoned veteran on the job. His heart got bigger and softer with the addition of every great grandchild. Going to Papa’s was always an added treat due to the abundance of sweets and pop.

Poker and Golf saw a significant increase during the nineties now occurring 2-3 times a week. *The now heavily competitive and (sometimes heated) hobbies were tracked with ledgers and little black books.* In spite of all of the competition, fun and laughter still dominated the days and nights.

The 2000s: The RV Years...

Papa led the way to a decade of fishing, camping, water skiing and motorcycle riding with the purchase of an RV in the early 2000s. Soon after, his kids jumped in and the serious RV’ing began. Many trips to the dunes, lakes and rivers ensued, including the yearly salmon fishing trip to northern California. Twenty to thirty pound salmon became a regular occurrence... at least for Papa!

The 2000s also brought several grand-baby weddings, more great grand-babies and lots of joy and more Papa Sitting! Poker and Golf continued, albeit with a little less frequency, taking a back seat to grand-babies, great grand-babies and RV vacations.

The most memorable trip of the 2000s was the Trinity Lake family reunion. The non-stop rain dampened everything including the fire wood. But, “The Rain” was no match for a veteran camper like Papa, who knew all the tricks of the trade. One way or another, the grand-babies were gonna have a fire for marshmallows. All it took

was a little carburetor fluid, a small explosion and the temporary loss of eyebrows... But, Papa came through. He was Dad and “Papa” and he believed nothing was more important than family!!

The 2010s: His Final Years...

The 2010s began with the marriage of a grandchild and the addition of another great grandchild and more Papa sitting. The 2010s also brought the first two family college graduates as well as Papa’s first college course: **Beer Pong 101** — and true to his competitive nature, he got an A!

The summer of 2010 brought a Fathers Day trip to Pebble Beach for a weekend at the U.S. Open. Over the next few years Papa closed up the Lawn Mower Man shop and passed the poker playing torch to the ‘youngins’. He was saving his energy for fishing and golf.

In 2015, Papa rounded everyone up for one last family reunion at Lake Almanor; continuing his commitment of keeping the family together. Papa was the life of the reunion, cracking jokes and passing round the Honey Jack. Later in 2015, Papa (with the help of Calleen and Nathan) made another trip overseas to see Eric and Virginia in the United Kingdom. The trip included castle tours and overnight stays, pub crawls, golfing in England and Scotland and culminated with three days at St. Andrews and the British Open.

For three days, the five of us sat at the Home of Golf in awe of the surroundings pulling for Dad’s favorite, Jordan Spieth. Two holes in front of the leader, another American Zack Johnson. Jordan came to the 18th green one shot down needing a birdie to tie and hope for a playoff. Less than 10 yards away, we watched as Jordan hit his approach shot. He punched a short lob wedge to front of the green. It landed on the infamous ridge on the front of the green, no more than an inch from rolling right down to the hole. Instead, it rolled back down in to the “Valley of Death”. Dad, in his true competitive nature looked at Eric and said, “I’m ready to go”. Upon hearing this, daughter-in-law Virginia, now a big fan of live golf, looked at Eric and said, “We Aint @#\$\$%& leaving!” After the trip, Dad began to slow a bit more. Calleen and her husband, Nathan, were now becoming full-time care givers. With the help of his wonderful, loving and caring daughter and her amazing husband, Dad maintained the strength to play golf once or twice a month right up until last year at the age of 87. Although the last year was tough on Dad, he kept his sense of humor, especially during his weekly shave and shower dates with Nathan.

He also kept his competitive nature. He stayed up until the wee hours to watch his Dodgers *almost* win the World Series for the second year in a row. Well, he almost did. He went to bed when he was convinced the “knuckle head coach” had blown it again.

Just a few days later — on November 18 — Dad decided his job here was done...

For 88 years he placed family first. He was a warm helping hand to all that needed it. He practiced what he preached: “Any job worth doing is worth doing right!” ***And, it shows in his family!*** Right to the end he maintained the will and strength to hold the hand and love each family member until the last one visited.

Although we mourn the loss of our father, grandfather, and great grandfather, we take comfort in knowing he is in a better place now. We smile with pride for having him bless us with his guidance, wisdom and unwavering love. We celebrate a life well lived and our lives so enriched by having him.

Thank you, Dad, for everything! We love you!

Please join us in Dad’s tradition of raising his right hand in victory!!”



**Bakersfield National Cemetery
December 10, 2018**



(l-r) Extracted from a 93304 Station group picture from the mid-1980s: Letter Carriers Basil Zuniga, Ray Brady, Paul McCarthy and Wes Johnson at Stockdale Station.

"The MAN"
 I'm for the MAN that
 when in TROUBLE does
 ALL that he CAN
 That puts up A fight
 To streighen things out
 AND MAKE them go right.
 He thought at the time
 out of the Valley
 he would never climb
 He slid and is still
 going STRONG in spite
 of the Troubles that
 happen Along
 I say for his comfort
 when matters seem
 bad Tomorrow he will
 smile At the Troubles
 he's had

Wes Johnson



Information in an obituary is a short journey through the life of the individual who is being remembered. Readers find out things they might not have known. Even Johnson family members were surprised to discover the poem written by Wes! You, too??