

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



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JANUARY 2011

at the



Mike:

Being your Branch President does not make me immune from having to deal with a variety of personal issues.

Let me begin my message on a personal note.

I would like to thank everyone for the overwhelming support that I received when my Mother passed away on January 7th. I feel very blessed and fortunate to have such a caring Postal and Union family to rely on.

Seeing many of you at the funeral service gave me a great sense of comfort and was a source of strength. Many, many uniformed Letter Carriers drove to Greenlawn to pay their respects. In addition to the Bakersfield Postmaster, I also saw and spoke with many Postmasters from other cities where our members work. Some of our members took time out from whatever they were doing on their days off to be there; retired members were in attendance; and, I also saw many USPS managers and supervisors.

It was, once again, a reminder that all of us are here for such a relatively short and brief time. We need to appreciate those we care about and love.

I appreciate all of you.

Continued on next page...

*NALC National Officer Secretary - Treasurer
Jane E. Broendel will be the Installing Officer
for Branch 782 at our January General Meeting.
Come enjoy the evening and the catered meal!*

Congratulations to Michael "Mickey" Cameron of the Bakersfield Post Office! He is the latest Branch 782 member to join the ranks of the Retirees! Mickey has seen many changes since he began in his postal career as a "temporary indefinite Carrier" in 1966.

You would be hard pressed to find a more dedicated and professional Carrier. I wish him all the best in his retirement and will miss seeing him at the Downtown Station.

With the New Year may come many challenges for Letter Carriers and the NALC. 2011 will, undoubtedly, be a pivotal year for the Postal Service and for each and every Letter Carrier.

Flat sorting machines are being deployed across the country. This will lead to additional route adjustments using COR. Excessing of Letter Carriers (up to radius of 900 miles) is a very real possibility. The National Agreement between the USPS and the NALC expires in November and contract negotiations begin this Summer. Declining mail volume means declining revenue for the USPS. The \$5.5 billion payment to pre-fund retiree health benefits has to be dealt with by an unfriendly Congress this year. Then, there is still talk of going to a 5-day delivery.

I am confident that all of the NALC national officers are ready and able to meet the challenges. And, I am also confident that they will be ready to seize the opportunities that will arise...

At this month's General Meeting, we will be honored to have two special guests. NALC National Secretary-Treasurer Jane Broendel will be here to install Branch 782 Officers for the new term. Jane was the very first female NALC resident Officer and brings a tremen-

dous amount of energy and expertise to her work on our behalf.

I also look forward to having John Beaumont in attendance. As the President of the California State Association of Letter Carriers, John will give us the latest updates on current legislative issues affecting all Letter Carriers.

Most of all, I look forward to seeing many of you at this month's meeting!!

Each month we typically have almost 10% of our active duty members in attendance at the monthly meeting. Many Branches wish that they could have this kind of participation. It would be great to have even more of you show up this month than normally do. Come join in the business of *your* Branch 782 and enjoy the catered meal which will be provided!

MIKE TOWERY
Branch 782 President

OUT THERE



Minutes of the December 2010 General Meeting

The regular meeting of Branch 782 was called to order by Vice-President Darryl Holderman at 7:00 p.m. on the 21st day of Decmeber 2010 at the Branch office. The flag salute was led by Sargeant-at-Arms Jerry Patterson. All members of the Executive Board were present except President Mike Towery who was called away on an emergency. Present was the Newsletter Editor Basil Zuniga; Webmaster Rick Plummer; OWCP Representative Rick Gerdes; Assistant Treasurer Debbie Guillet; Legislative Representative Diana Chavez; Photographer Anita Holderman and Emma Gonzalez of the Social and Recreation Committee. The Stewards were present from Arvin, Avenal, Brundage, Camino Media, Downtown, East Bakersfield, Hillcrest, Lamont, Oildale, Shafter, South, Stockdale, Taft and Wasco. The Minutes of the November 23, 2010 meeting were accepted with no additions or corrections.

REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES: Teresa Ortega reproted that there is nothing to report regarding the picnic. Basil Zuniga reported that Steward Pam Smith did an amazing job of getting members to the newsletter folding and stapling. They were finished at 7:30. Next month will be Brundage Station's turn.

GOOD OF THE ASSOCIATION: Treasurer Molly Biggar reported that she had an audit with the State Compensation Insurance Fund. There was only a nine cent difference in their figures and hers. She reported that it has been 15 years since our last audit. Basil Zuniga asked HALC HBP Representative Mark Ramirez to discuss Catastrophic Medical Coverage. Catastrophic Coverage covers any major medical illness or surgery. NALC HBP has no lifetime cap. Mark Ramirez also reminded members to look at the NALC Health Benefit Plan. It almost mirrors Blue Cross/Blue Shield.

FINANCIAL SECRETARY'S REPORT: Anita Holderman reported that \$11,430.24 was collected for the month of December.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Molly Biggar reported:

Beginning Balance	\$68,328.94
Dues and Income	\$12,463.40
Interest Income	\$8.90
Total Balance	\$80,801.23
Expenses	\$11,476.16
Ending Balance	\$69,325.07

The 50/50 Drawing was won by John Ortega/Annette Meza.

The Drawing for \$500 would have been won by Robert Guerrero if he had been present.

There were thirty-seven members present.

The meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

KIM GERDES
Branch 782 Recording Secretary

Membership Meeting Drawing—\$500!!

NON-MEMBER LIST AUGUST 2010

DOWNTOWN STATION
D. Pearce
J. Cruz

SOUTH STATION
100% Union!!!

EAST BAKERSFIELD
100% Union!!!

HILLCREST
100% Union!!!

BRUNDAGE
D. Kinglee

DOLE COURT
S. Hancock

STOCKDALE
A. White
J. Oh
G. S. Saran

CAMINO MEDIA
F. Medina, Jr.

ARVIN
100% Union!!!

AVENAL
S. R. Bejarano
BORON
V. L. Johnson

CALIFORNIA CITY
100% Union!!!

DELANO
C.V. Quebral
L.A. Campos

EDWARDS
100% Union!!!

LAMONT
100% Union!!!

McFARLAND
100% Union!!!

MOJAVE
100% Union!!!

RIDGECREST
S. R. Pierce
H.G. Blanco
L.M. Montano
V. P. Chea
T. P. Garcia

SHAFTER
I. M. New
M. D. Voights

TAFT
B. W. Krier
K.J. Hughes

TEHACHAPI
V. I. Johnson

TRONA
S. L. Walent
B.R. Dame

WASCO
100% Union!!!



Basil, 389 of the 412 employees are NALC members—a total of 94.4%!
KIM GERDES, Branch 782 Recording Secretary

“Mickey” Cameron’s Finally Had Enough!!

If you look at the seniority list for Bakersfield Carriers, you see that Mickey Cameron’s seniority date is 8-23-69. That is a long time!!!!

But—as Paul Harvey used to say on his radio show— “Now, for the rest of the story...”



Less than a year out of high school, Mickey had a problem. He had a new 1966 Cutlass 442 that he had to pay for. (If that car doesn’t ring a bell, you didn’t have “a need for speed” in that era.) He saw an advertisement for a job at the Post Office, and—with some 350 others—showed up for “The Test”.

Michael “Mickey” Cameron actually began his career as a Letter Carrier on **8-20-66**. He spent three years as a “Sub” and says that the Post Office didn’t mark his official seniority until the day that he made Regular in 1969. (But, he’s really glad that his actual time was computed from 1966. More on that later.)

Through the years, he’s seen many new employees walk through the door. He’s heard many complain about how they hate being “at the bottom of the totem pole” and how rough things are for them. Well, like everybody else he also had to pay his dues. But, things were different when he started out than they are now.

Today, when people are hired, they go through “training” to do the job of delivery mail.

This is what Mickie’s training consisted of: As Mickie walked in the door. Supervisor Ruben Ford greeted him, shook his hand, and then walked him over to a Carrier named Bill Quinlan. (Does this name ring a bell with some of you other old-timers???) Ruben told Mickie to watch Bill Quinlan case his mail. Ruben

came back in about ten minutes and asked Mickie, “What do you think?” Mickie told him that it didn’t look too hard. Mickie remembers that Ruben smiled (like a shark) and then threw him on a route that he cased until all the mail was in the case. He then went out to deliver in a part of the city that he’d never even seen. It was a long first day: 10 1/2 hours...

Back then, there was no overtime pay. It was *all* straight pay...at \$2.64 an hour.

Think about this: No Overtime. (And—this is interesting—from *the first day that Mickey walked in the door*—he **NEVER** worked less than an 8 hour day.) But, Mickey said *that* was because he showed them that he wanted to work and there was more than enough to do back then.

THIS is what Mickey’s Post Office work life was like: Mickey would deliver mail eight hours. (And, think about your own day at work. Deliver your assignment all day. What do you do then? Go home?)

Well, Mickie would have a short “break” to take a nap (often on

a “bed” made of Post Office delivery sacks) after he had delivered mail all day—and then he would work eight *more* hours doing “clerk work”.

What was his life as a Sub like?

He would sometimes get a phone call at 11:00 p.m. He would be told to show up at work at 2:00 a.m. so that he could drive a two-ton truck out to the airport to get the mail off the plane that would fly in. And, Mickey would be there.

Other “old-timers” might also remember “**Train 7**”. This is the train that would come into Bakersfield with mail and Mickie and others would be sent out to unload whatever was in the cars. As the junior guy, Mickie would be sent deep into the car to start tossing out the mail sacks. Mickie remembers that it was miserable! He would be in the very back of the metal, non-insulated train car. No windows. No fresh air. In the hottest time of the Summer it would be over one hundred and fifty degrees in that car.

And, Mickie would just keep chuckin’ those sacks full of mail...

The first building that Mickey walked into that first day in 1966 was the old PO Annex on California Avenue. It was a cavernous,

OUT THERE





cold-in-the-winter, stifling-in-the-summer, dark old Douglas aviation plant.

Carriers assigned to that building delivered to 93301, 93304 and 93309. Also, all of the mail was processed there and Mickey remembers when they started to move in Letter Sorting Machines (LSMs). Before the machines, all mail was worked in hand cases by the clerks.

As a Sub, he never had to travel to other stations, there was more than enough for him to do working in the building where the mail for three zones came from.

Mickey says that he only had one “customer” problem in his career.

He bid Route 407 when he made Regular in 1969. He was delivering mail to a gang box at 4th Street and N. He recalls that he “sensed” something. As he looked down, in a brief portion of a second he noticed someone’s shoe right by his right shoe. If you can visualize what it looks like when a baseball batter is getting ready to swing a bat and the foot starts to shift—that is what Mickey “sensed”.

Mickey’s instincts kicked in and he immediately reacted by starting to “duck”.

There *actually* was a guy standing there by Mickey *and* he had a 2 X 4 that he was swinging at Mickey’s head!!!

Although it was a glancing blow, it was enough to cause enough damage

for Mickey to start bleeding. Mickey ran up to the closest house. Providentially the owner of the house had seen what was happening and opened up the door for Mickey to come in the house. His assailant beat on the house for a while until he got tired and left.

That day, Mickey took the mail back to the station. He didn’t deliver his route for two weeks. He doesn’t know who did deliver. He just knows that *he* didn’t.

Eventually, his assailant was released from jail. Mickey—by that time—had gone back to Route 407. He saw his attacker on the street and he looked like he was getting ready for Round II. Mickey took the mail back and told his supervisor that he wasn’t going to go back. Mickey was then awarded Route 115.

Eventually, Mickey then went on to bid Route 106 which was an all-business Route. It was a very heavy volume Route. In time, Mickey bid onto Route 108. He was on that assignment for about 24 years.

Mickey also remembers the different vehicles that he had over the course of his career. He drove the old 3/4 tons that you now see on the street as ice cream trucks. He drove Cushman scooters. He didn’t like the ones with the canvas doors. They could get really cold!

He even chucked because the Post Office, to save money, gave him a contract to deliver mail out of his Cutlass 442. He earned \$50 a month and gas cost twenty-nine cents a gallon. Wasn’t a bad deal at all for him and he appreciated the money.

Mostly, Mickey drove a jeep to deliver mail. He only had one jeep that he used from 1979. He “retired” that jeep after fighting to keep from getting one of the then-new LLVs. In fact, Mickey was the last person in Bakersfield to have a 1/4 ton jeep!

Despite the fact that it took Mickey a long time to have to adjust to driving the LLV, he does admit that parking is so much easier with power steering.

Even though the Downtown Station is where Mickey retired from, it was never intended to be a delivery unit. The building used to house the Post Office top brass. The manager’s office used to belong to Postmaster John Loustalot and all of his predecessors.

Addressing another change from the Post Office where he began, Mickey remembers when Linda King walked in the door to begin a career as a Carrier. She was the first female hired for the job. As he retires, he knows that almost half of the Carriers are women.

Mickey remembers the days when shirts and pants had to be ironed and starched and shoes had to be shined. Carriers would get demerits if they didn’t keep their uniforms looking good. For years, he couldn’t ever see himself wearing work shorts. Eventually, he changed his mind and—in a typical Mickey Cameron fashion—once he started wearing shorts, he wore them all year long...even when the cold weather hit.

In Mickey’s opinion, what was the best thing the USPS ever did? That was easy: *They banned smoking*. Carriers used to have small metal ashtrays that were clipped to the front of the case ledges. Carriers smoked the entire time that they were casing mail. It would get pretty hazy and was miserable for non-smokers.

There is a lot of advice that Mickey can offer. He’s not sure if anyone wants to listen to him. But, he would encourage everyone to make sure that they only use their sick leave when they are actually sick. Additionally, he wants everyone to know that they can have a *real* impact on their lives if they carry over the maximum amount of annual leave that is allowed.

Oh, if you choose to work more than 41 years 11 months, there *is* something else... This has something to do with the amount that you put into your retirement account and what happens to it after you hit that magic “41 & 11”...

2011 NALC HBP Info

At a glance...



NALC Health Benefit Plan	1-888-636-6252
*Hospital Pre-Certification	1-877-220-6252
Mental & Substance Precertification	1-877-468-1016
**Drug Prescription Retail	1-800-933-6252
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)	1-877-521-0244
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
PostalEase Human Resources USPS	1-877-477-3273
Quest Lab Services	(661) 631-8520
LabCorp Lab Services	(661) 631-9258

NALC Health Benefit Plan
20547 Waverly Court
Ashburn, Virginia 20149

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

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

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

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

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

Some Websites for You...

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

* *Failure to pre-certify will result in a \$500 reduction in benefits paid by our Plan. MUST notify the Plan prior to hospital admission with doctor name and dates.*

** NALC Drug Prescription Program is **MANDATORY** generic (unless specified by your doctor, at additional cost to member). Preferred retail pharmacy 1st and 2nd fills, you pay 20% of cost of generic/30% of name brand. MAIL ORDER PRESCRIPTIONS when NALC is primary: 60 day supply \$8 generic, \$43 name brand; 90 day supply \$12 generic, \$65 name brand; 90 day supply \$5 for NALCSELECT generics (certain drugs); 90 day supply \$7.99 NALCPREFERRED generic (certain drugs), **MEDICARE PROGRAM** (when Medicare is primary); Retail network pharmacy: you pay 10% of cost of generic, 20% of cost for name brand, MEDICARE PRIMARY (mail order); 60 day supply \$7 generic, \$37 name brand; 90 day supply \$10 generic \$55 name brand; 90 day supply \$4 for NALCSELECT generic (certain drugs); 90 day supply \$4 for NALCPREFERRED generic (certain drugs); NALCSENIOR generic antibiotics are available; FREE for a 30 day supply, when Medicare is primary (certain antibiotics only).

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

Mark Ramirez
(661) 834-5011
YOUR NALC Branch 782
Health Benefits Representative

And, Additional HBP info...

www.Liveandworkwell.com—parenting center/legal assistant/elder resources/college search/finance and budget, and much, much more! Use access code 877-468-1016. Available 24/7!

Healthy Rewards Program. Just log on to www.nalc.org under “Departments”. Click on Health Benefit Plan and, on the left side of this page, click on “Healthy Rewards Member Discounts”. Start saving money!

And—WWW.BENFEDS.COM for dental/vision plans for Federal employees. Or, call 1-877-889-5680 to save even more money... (Open Season for Dental & Vision is November and December of each year.)

Peace of Mind

by Orlando Gonzalez, Editor
NALC Branch 36, New York, NY

ALL employees of the United States Postal Service should be aware of and—*more importantly*—utilize all of the benefits that come with the job.

Unfortunately, I recently found that many employees have not updated their Beneficiary Forms. I understand that this topic is not a popular one but we must understand that when we are not around anymore to provide and protect our loved ones, we want to leave them as comfortable as possible. I will be bold and say we work too hard to have our last wishes challenged in court or left in limbo because we didn't take a few simple steps to see to it that this would not happen. ***Make sure your will and last wishes are complete and valid!!***

I am going to share three ***TRUE*** examples with you that totally shocked and saddened me.

1) Employee passed away: When the USPS found his beneficiary, she had passed away 10 years before.

2) Employee passed away: Was married early in his career. Divorced. Re-married, and raised a family with 2nd wife. Never changed his Beneficiary Forms. And, everything went to his first wife.

3) Employee passed away: Never signed his Beneficiary Forms at all. Family is left with all kinds of legal battles.

These are only a few of the mistakes that can totally be avoided. The grieving process will be difficult enough for those we leave behind.

This responsibility lies solely upon you.

Take a few moments to *really* consider how important this really is. I discussed this with your Branch Officers and they allowed me to try to get the information out because none of us want to hear stories like this ever again...

The ***FIRST*** step is for you not to procrastinate. Promise yourself that you are going to do this. ***THEN DO IT!!!***

The whole process will be easier than you think. Keep focused on who you're doing this for and you will realize that if you can work to maintain your job and your family, you should take the time to secure their future...in the event that you are no longer with them.

I will keep this as short and simple as I can.

For those of you with some computer knowledge, you can access the forms you will need from work at: <http://lite-blue.usps.gov> or from home at: <http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdfill/sf2808.pdf>. Follow prompts and it is very user friendly. You can also call the HR Shared Service Center at 1-877-477-3273 and choose Option 5. After the necessary forms are completed, make

a copy for yourself and send them (Certified) to the following address: HRSSC, COMPENSATION/BENEFITS, P.O. BOX 970400, GREENSBORO, NC 27497-0400.

The last way to get this done that I will discuss is what I chose to do. I actually found a ***LIVE PERSON*** you can call for help!!!

I know that some of us (old school) still need that knowledgeable voice on the other side of the phone. The person I found is very polite and patient, incredibly professional and extremely knowledgeable. Her name and title is: Wilma Rivera, Human Resources Generalist. She works with the Local Services office for the USPS which is located in J.A.F. Her contact info is 1-212-330-3671—or Wilma.Rivera@USPS.GOV.

In speaking with her, she seemed very eager to help anyone who needed it. Thank you, in advance, Ms. Rivera!

Well, there you have it, Brothers and Sisters! Hopefully, this will give you everything you need to give your loved ones the most precious gift of all this holiday season: ***PEACE OF MIND!***

This article is courtesy of the December 2010 *New York Letter Carriers's Outlook* published by New York City, NY NALC Branch 36

Out tHeRe

by Fred Acedo, S.A.N.E.*

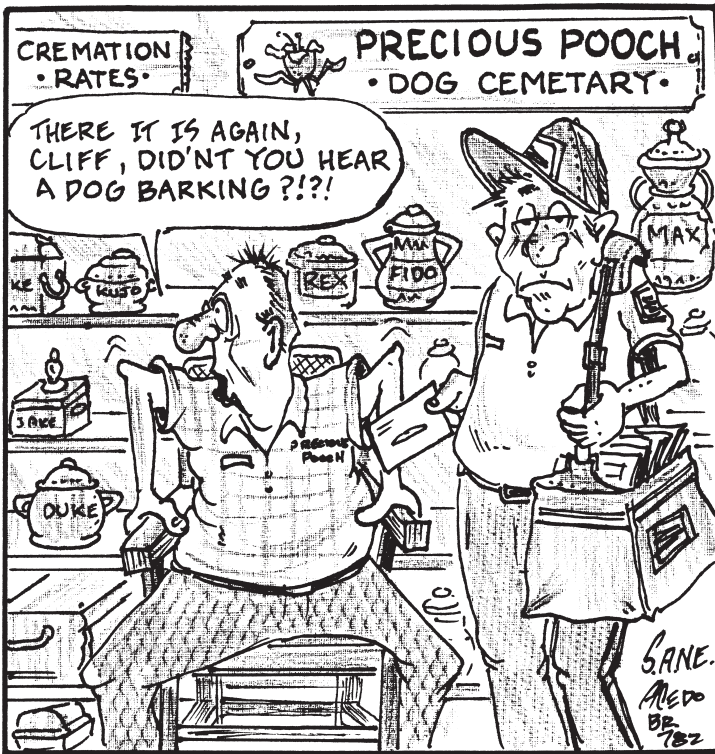
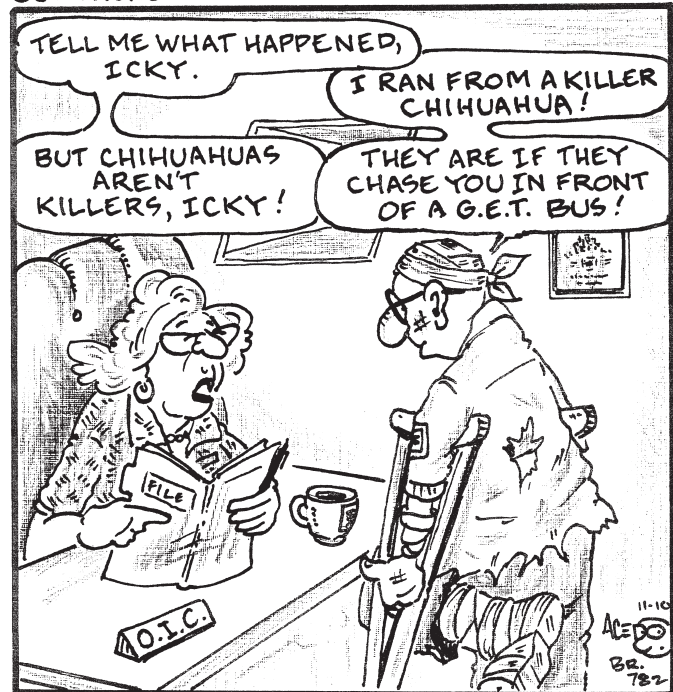
OUT THERE



OUT THERE



OUT THERE



If you have a suggestion for a cartoon, let Fred know. But, you never know what you're going to get...

Fred Acedo, NALC Branch 782
 *Special Assistant Newsletter Editor
 P.O. Box 6532
 Bakersfield, California 93386-6532

Where:

Southwest Lanes

3610 Wible Rd.
Bakersfield, CA 93309
661.834.2695

When:

February 20, 2010

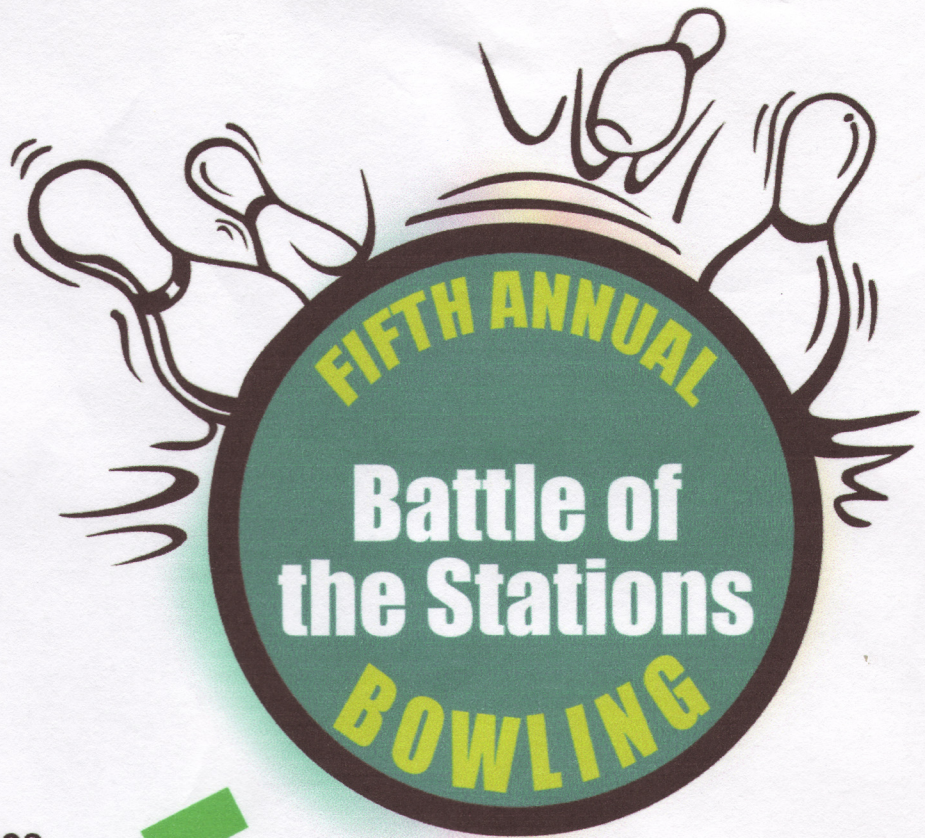
Sunday • 11:30am - 3 pm
(Check-in 10:30 am)

Cost:

\$80.00 per team

(20.00 per person)

Includes 3 games and shoes.



Get your shoes, get your back stretched and your competitiveness spirit ready. Join our Fifth Annual Bowling Extravaganza. Team up with your co-workers at your station and get a shot at having bragging rights on what station truly has the best employees. Remember to pick a name for your team! You will need a 4-person team. (men, women, mixed). The team must consist of postal employees, with at least 3 of your team members from your station to qualify for the championship. Retired employees welcomed.

Deadline: February 6th. I will need teams who want to participate on sending the money, check, money order and the names of each player to me by this date to reserve the lanes. I only have so many lanes reserved.

First to pay, first to play - Last year 3 teams were turned away!

PAST WINNERS

2007 Stockdale Fab4
2008 Dole Ct. BowlFrogs
2009 EB Kentucky St. Kids
2010 EB Kentucky St. Kids

music provided by



Contact:
Ralph Ramirez

For more info: 827-8025 after 4 pm
Send everything to 2408 March Ave, 93313

From Jerry's Pen

A Tribute to My Friend: Les Armstrong

This is just about the hardest article that I've ever written.

In my twenty-nine years of service, I've only experienced the deaths of two friends who were Letter Carriers. The first time I went through this was when Herb Barclay passed away when he was coming to work. He was my trainer when I first started out.

Now, I find that I am faced with writing about someone that I worked with for sixteen years in Shafter before I transferred to Wasco. I am really going to miss my friend, Les Armstrong.

Les Armstrong was a prankster. But—when it came to work—he always did his job. He did what needed to be done and did it the way it was supposed to be done!

I have so many memories of times with Les!

Many times after work, a few of us would go to Spencer's and have iced tea and talk. Each of us would take a turn paying for the drinks. Those were good times.

Les loved being with his wife, Pam. The two of them did everything together. Really! And, while the both of them loved to travel, mostly they just loved being together.

When you would see Les and Pam anywhere, each always had a smile. Les seemed to cherish his life with Pam.

Les once talked about his time in Vietnam when he was in the Army. He was seriously wounded by shrapnel. In addition to a hand injury, he had a life-threatening head injury. Surgeons in Da Nang had to put a metal plate in his skull. One doctor told Les that he's seen head wounds this serious before...but never on anyone who had survived.

People would always mistake me for Les, or him for me. Even my kids (when they were younger) would see him and yell out, "Hi, Daddy!" This was one way that I felt very close to him. Our friendship developed to the point where, after a few years, he became "Uncle Les".

During Halloween, Les would dress up and scare the trick-or-treat kids. I think *that* gave him so much enjoyment even though he and Pam never had children.

Les would sometimes drive to Bakersfield from Shafter to learn how the Union worked. After I left Shafter when I transferred to Wasco, Les became Shop Steward. Eventually, he had a health problem and he took off a year on sick leave before he finally retired.

Les finally left the job in 2006 when he found out that he had thyroid cancer. After his retirement, Les and Pam did do some travelling, but now Pam was "at the wheel". Les stayed cheerful.

Every now and then, Les and Pam would come to Wasco and go to Perko's for brunch. They would see me on the route and would stop for a few minutes to talk about how he was doing and what new travels they had planned.

When I would go to Shafter, I would stop by to see "Old Man" Kino Gonzalez, "The Kid" George Villavazo, and—of course—Les. This last year, I didn't get to Shafter as much as I wanted. Wasco lost our PTF, Steve Carter, when he transferred to Portland, Oregon. We were all working six days a week when someone was on vacation. I wish I could have gotten to Shafter...

On December 26, I got a text from Shafter Shop Steward Norma Hamer. I learned Les had passed away. He had finally lost that final fight to the cancer.

I lost a friend, but he's not forgotten. He was a brave man who served his country by fighting for it and by delivering the mail. He is a postal family member who is gone but stays alive in my heart.

JERRY PATTERSON
Wasco Shop Steward

A footnote from Basil, the Editor-guy...

One of the best things on my route is that I get to deliver to the Valley Plaza Mall. A lot of people shop there, and I get the chance to see folks that I normally wouldn't run into. And, when I ran into Les and Pam Armstrong in November, they were just headed out the door of the food court. It was a nice chance to say hello.

Les looked happy and we talked a little about life. Pam seemed just as happy as always to be "hanging out" with Les.

At the visitation in the funeral parlor I was told something. A few short weeks after I saw him, Les began to feel weak. It got progressively worse and the doctor informed him that it was his cancer. I also got a chance to speak with one of his sisters (Les was "the baby" of ten children). She provided some fascinating context to the life that Les had led and the importance that family played.

Additionally, she shared this image: If we picture life as a journey, dying is like boarding a cruise ship. There are people who wave goodbye to us as we leave. There are a whole lot more people on the other end who are waiting to greet us!

That thought was comforting to her and to me.



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Branch 782 Office
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*Mickey Cameron's
adventure as a Letter
Carrier started on August
20, 1966. After more than
forty-four years, he
decided that he wanted to
try out some new things.*

More on pages 4 - 5.



FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

Out there



*National Officer Secretary - Treasurer
Jane E. Broendel will be the Installing
Officer for Branch 782 at our General
Meeting in January. Come enjoy the
evening and the catered meal!*