

# 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



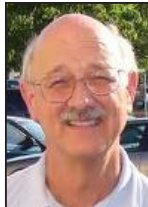
**CHARTERED FEBRUARY 25, 1891**

VOLUME LXXXIV NUMBER 7

JULY 2013

at the

# Mike:



*This excellent guest article is courtesy of NALC Branch 2555 in East Lansing, MI.*

## Victory or Reprieve?

Before we pat ourselves on the back too hard for saving Saturday delivery, we should note that PMG Donahoe has **NOT** given up on the issue.

And? He is still backed by a lot of powerful people with a lot of money to spend 'convincing' Congress.

Now is not the time to relax our efforts. Instead, we need to ask ourselves, "What will be the opposition's next move?"

To some, it may seem strange to view the PMG as "an opponent to the survival of the post office". But, clearly, that is what he has revealed himself to be. And we need to be just as clear in articulating our own message to Congress:

**1) It's not e-mail, e-commerce, or e-anything. It's the 2006 pre-funding mandate!** We keep screaming this basic fact so why don't they hear? A massive roadblock is that the USPS is a "cash cow". Prefunding payments count as federal funds in the budget. Ironically, USPS is therefore subsidizing government...something GOPers claim they hate.

**2) Our retirees are just fine, thank you!** Our retiree system is massively overfunded. \$44 billion is in the fund generating interest. It is 100% funded compared to 42% of all federal pensions and 80% of Fortune 500 companies.

**3) Privatization is not the answer!** We have already privatized everything that can be economically. We pay \$12 billion a year to contractors who sort mail, transport mail by air and ground and advertise. One question that has never been answered by those who preach privatization is how can a private company make a profit serving rural areas?

The USPS needs to diversify! We need the freedom and flexibility to sell other than postal products. Japan and Germany even allow their POs to double as banks with great success.

This abridged article is courtesy of the May-June 2013 NALC Branch 2555 *Spartan Views*.

# Johnny on the Spot



## LEADERSHIP

Elijah Cummings (D-MD) has provided a draft of his approach to postal legislative reform. Finally an approach to grow the business as opposed to shrinking it! You can clearly see the NALC's fingerprints all over this draft. *THAT'S* the power of COLCPE. These are the following key points:

- The USPS will appoint a Chief Innovation Officer
- Procedures will be put in place to ensure he does the job
- The costs and revenues from innovative services shall be reported and reviewed.
- The USPS may provide nonpostal services using its current resources including "technology" and "other resources" subject to a public interest test.
- All market dominant services must cover attributable costs and make a contribution to overhead recovery. (No underwater products.)
- The PRC should revisit the cap and see if something better results from placing the cap over the aggregate of market dominant services rather than by class.
- USPS gains authority to ship wine and beer.
- Flat rate media/book rates are repealed.

- All postal board and regulatory commission travel expenses are to be reported and audited.
- USPS may compensate up to six very senior executives up to an amount of no more than \$199,700.
- USPS may compensate other officers and executives no more than \$178,700
- No fringes paid to senior executives may exceed that which is provided to postal supervisors and managers.
- No bonuses are to be paid if the USPS can't meet long-term solvency and budget balancing requirements.
- There are several provisions designed to safeguard employees in the event there is a need to downsize personnel or consolidate or close facilities.
- First year FERS excess to be used to pay down postal borrowing.
- Subsequent FERS excesses to be used to pay against other postal obligations.
- Pre-funding to be reamortized to accomplish an 80% satisfaction of obligation by September 30, 2053.
- USPS must report on projected workforce needs based on actual and reasonably anticipated workload requirements.
- USPS may introduce new classes of mail.
- Products covered by the monopoly must take into account "due regard" to private sector entities providing or using such services.

I may not know what every item listed means but I do know that our National Officers are looking out for what's best for Letter Carriers *and* for the citizens of this great country! This is Leadership I am proud to follow!!

The NALC will partner in a campaign to reinstate banking services. Postal banks got a big boost at their conference when James Sauber, the chief of staff of the National Association of Letter Carriers, announced that both the NALC and the American Postal Workers Union will partner with PBI in a campaign to reinstate simple checking and savings accounts in post offices.

The U.S. Postal Service offered simple affordable banking services used by many working class people from 1911 to 1967 until the system was dismantled. "In the 1940s, 4.2 million Americans had accounts at the post office," Sauber said. The U.S. postal workers are intrigued not only by postal banks' potential to offer social inclusion—28% of Americans don't have full access to banking services—but also by the revenue generated that supports the postal system as a whole.

"Don't dismantle this institution—reinvent it!" Sauber said. But, we need to grow the business mentality from current USPS management. A complete 180 degree change from questionable "leadership" at L'Enfant Plaza...

JOHN ORTEGA  
NALC Branch 782 Vice-President



I  
WANT  
MY  
STEWARD!

Sometimes, it's not  
Management that  
drives stewards  
crazy...

# HOW TO HARASS YOUR STEWARD

1. Go to the supervisor and make deals, but don't tell your steward anything about it. When the deal doesn't go your way, ask the shop steward to fix it.
2. Go to your steward with a problem. Call the supervisor all sorts of names and accuse him of insanity. Then when the steward takes the problem to the supervisor and the supervisor gets angry, pretend you don't know anything about it. Tell the supervisor that he's a fine person, and that the shop steward is the crazy one.
3. Don't read newsletters or bulletin boards and don't go to union meetings. Expect your steward to tell you everything that can affect you. Lose information you've been given and ask for second copies. Never vote in elections, just complain about the outcomes.
4. Don't tell the steward anything. Expect him/her to know without being told when the contract is being violated and when you're dissatisfied. If you do tell them, make sure it's too late to file a grievance.
5. You can talk to the steward on the clock, but don't do this. Call them at home or on their day off. That way, you won't be a "troublemaker" for management.

6. Don't obtain requested copies of doctor's notes, signed statements or anything else needed to process your grievance. When the grievance loses, then you can blame the steward.

7. Don't worry about your steward's feelings. If you're in a bad mood, say whatever you want - indulge yourself. If the steward gets angry, threaten to quit the union. After all, stewards are paid to take abuse.

Seriously, variations on the above have happened to most stewards, and they are more discouraging than any abuse from management.

Your steward is your main connections with the union, and even if your relationship is difficult, protect the position. If you enable your steward to do a good job for everyone - you'll be helping yourself. Tear him or her down, and you tear down the contract and your own defense.

Stewards aren't perfect, and they don't claim to be. But there's only a handful of people in this world trying to make a difference - and your steward is one of them.

Original article by Judith Eadson

This page originally appeared in the Volume 32 #2 Summer 2013 NALC Branch 3825 Unity published in Rockville, MD




# The Beast of Burden



Issue 3-13

NALC Branch 290

May Jun 2013

 **THE ROAD TO A SUCCESSFUL POSTAL CAREER IS NOT STRAIGHT .....THERE ARE CURVES CALLED UNEXPECTED CHANGES, A REST STOP CALLED FAMILY, SPEED BUMPS CALLED SUPERVISORS, AND RED LIGHTS CALLED REGULATIONS. YOU WILL HAVE FLAT TIRES CALLED DISCIPLINE BUT IF YOU HAVE A SPARE CALLED A CONTRACT, AN ENGINE CALLED UNION, AND A DRIVER CALLED A SHOP STEWARD, YOU WILL MAKE IT TO A PLACE CALLED RETIREMENT.**



# Next Time Dear District Manager, Just Send Us a Card or a Case of Water

District Manager Julie Gosdin  
United States Postal Service  
4025 W. Reno  
Oklahoma City, Ok, 73125

Dear Ms. Gosdin:

I am enclosing a copy of an article I am sending to our local union publication – The Sooner Script. I send you this article and this letter to inform you that while you may think things are settled for the Moore office after our recent tragedy, nothing could be further from the truth. The facilities are inadequate, the pressure to keep our hours the same as when we're operating in Moore insane and our discontent with management deep.

We had been led to believe that when you and Postmaster Bryant arrived 18 days after the event, we would have an opportunity to talk to you about our concerns. Obviously we were misinformed. It only served to harden our belief that management had little care about us or our facilities.

Management has taken great steps to curtail what you believe is excessive overtime on our part. You have not given us any time to take care of our personal needs. All of us have lost personal items in the storm. Most lost vehicles and some lost homes, yet our needs are ignored and only the containing of operations costs are of prime importance to management.

Hours, hours, hours. It's the prime topic of conversation from our station manager and carrier supervisor and we feel that this focus comes solely from higher level management. Every other issue we face is of no importance to you or other senior managers. We craft employees aren't stupid. When the only thing we're punished for is the numbers of hours we use then it's not hard to discern that everything else is of small concern to our bosses.

So the next time a catastrophe hits Moore please do us a favor. Send a card, a case of water. We'll take care of the rest.

Sincerely,

**Carl Owen, III**  
Letter Carrier  
Moore, Ok

cc: David Miller, Roger Bledsoe, Fred Rolando,  
Patrick Donahoe

You may not have heard but on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May a tornado struck Moore (again). The first person I was able to establish contact with was our Branch President David Miller. It was he who informed me that our alternate assembly was now the airport facility instead of the rural station on Santa Fe and 4<sup>th</sup> St., didn't hear a peep from management.

David also drove to the site in his truck and had the foresight to bring a bicycle with him once the road ran out. He contacted several carriers amongst the ruins of their homes checking on their well-being offering sympathy and hope. Management was AWOL!

Then on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June we had visitors at our new home away from home. Oklahoma City Postmaster James Bryant and Oklahoma District Manager Julie Gosdin dropped by to tell us how well the citizens of Moore thought of us. They had a few desultory words of praise for us, themselves, then quickly left. Frankly showing up 18 days after the event sent a clear message to us: we're expendable.

Dear Postmaster and District Manager we already what our customers think of us, every one of us has been greeted warmly and thanked profusely by our patrons, many times over. Waiting 18 days to check on our welfare shows how little you think of us however.

Since our station was destroyed we had to find a suitable facility to service our customers from. Unfortunately the search criteria consisted of only the barest minimum needs. We have been shoe horned into a facility 12 and ½ miles from our former location. Yup, they put us in another city in another county to serve our community. The only needs met by this relocation were those of management to find the quickest, cheapest solution to the problem. That is a burden to our city and our worker is of no concern to the postal service.

This event brought numerous issues to the surface. First, why was management so slow and indifferent to the personal problems of its craft employees? Second, why don't we have an operational plan to deal with the sudden closure of a post office? Surely the number we have lost nationwide from tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, fires and earthquakes should have taught us a number of valuable lessons and provided a playbook for future catastrophes? Apparently we reinvent the wheel after each and every one.

We should have had a senior management representative assigned as liaison to coordinate our move. We had Virgil Cosmo who got the minimum equipment necessary over to the AMF for a couple of days then he left. It should be someone with enough stature to make managers think twice about not cooperating and smart enough to know what to do. And they need to be there for weeks or months until the entire event is settled.

Finally, after the move and a few weeks we're back to fighting over the idiotic computer program that assigns downtime. Somehow the fact that the current methods are modeled on a station that doesn't exist doesn't seem to matter to the computer. We have 29 routes and the drive time has increased at least 30 minutes to each. That's a total increase of 14 and ½ hours a day. How much extra help has been assigned to us? None!

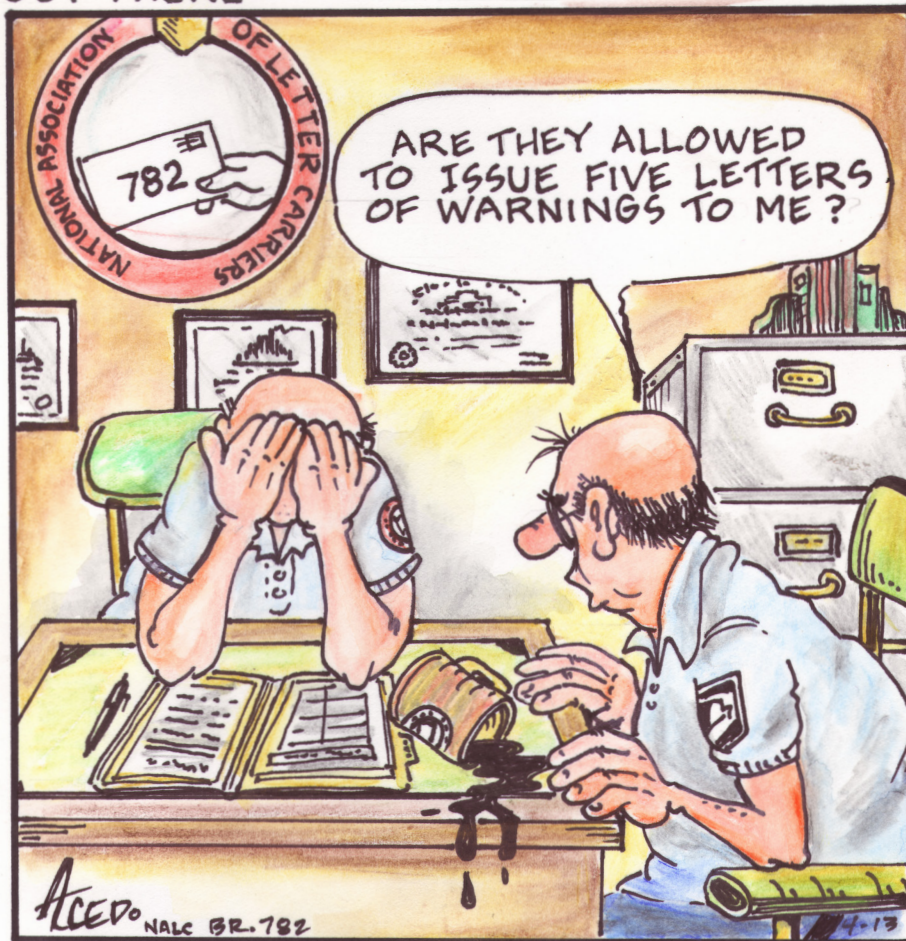
The shallow show of appreciation expressed by our senior managers rings hollow when you consider they have forced all carriers into 6 day weeks by suspending all days off and forcing own assignment and no overtime carriers into working overtime off their assignments, with no relief in sight. Praising us for the long hours we work is a little like praising convicts for serving life without the chance of parole.

Article courtesy of the July 2013 issue of *The Sooner Script* published by NALC Branch 458 in Oklahoma City, OK.

# Minutes of the June 2013 General Meeting

The regular meeting of Branch 782 was called to order by President Mike Towery at 7:00 p.m. on the 25th day of June, 2013 at the branch office, Bakersfield. The flag salute was led by Sargeant-at-Arms Darryl Holderman. All members of the Executive Board were present except Trustee Lucinda Martinez. Stewards were present from Arvin, Avenal, Brundage, Downtown, Lamont, Oildale, Shafter, South and Wasco. Also present was the Newsletter Editor Basil Zuniga; S.A.N.E. Fred Acedo; Webmaster Rick Plummer; Photographer Anita Holderman; Assistant Secretary Mabel Bullis and Frank Martinez of the Social and Recreation Committee. The minutes of the May 20, 2013 meeting were read by Assistant Recording Secretary Mabel Bullis and were accepted.

## OUT THERE



**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP:** Applications were received from Vanessa De Luna and Amber Johnson.

**REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES:** Teresa Ortega reported that Jastro Park has been reserved for October 13, 2013. Basil Zuniga reported that there were very few members from Dole Ct. present. He thanked Assistant Newsletter Editor Juan Rodriguez and his family for all their work. He also reported that the newsletter needs to have the new "Smart" barcodes. He will try to make the changes with as low a cost as possible. The web version has articles about CCA's; the Postal Service seems to be harsher on them than on the TE's. They are letting them go and hiring new ones. Frank Martinez reported that they have not had any meetings of the Social and Recreation Committee recently. Andrew Garcia thanked the Social and Recreation Committee for supporting the Softball Tournament. He reported that Dole Ct. won the tournament. Mable Bullis reported that 2 books were sold this month, with 1234 remaining.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** Molly Biggar passed out copies of the 2013-2014 Budget. She reviewed the budget with the members. A motion to accept the budget was made by Norma Hamer. Seconded by Jerry Patterson and the motion passed.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Mike Towery reported that Lucinda Martinez resigned as Trustee effective July 1, and was appointed Assistant Treasurer. Darryl Holderman has been appointed Trustee, Jerry Patterson has been appointed Sargeant-at-Arms and Joanne Layton was appointed Steward in Wasco. There will be an Audit on July 10 and a Budget meeting on July 17th. The Steward meeting has been changed to July 10th. John Ortega read a proposed By-Laws change: "Whereas any Shop Steward that retires and still wants to be Shop Steward he/she will get an additional \$10.00 pay for time spent on fact finding and any grievance that needs to be filed and \$10.00 for paperwork to review off the clock." Mike Towery appointed John Ortega, Mabel Bullis, Mark Ramirez and Mike Meza to the By-Law Committee. Mike Towery asked for a moment of silence for retired member Frank Tesh who passed away recently.

**GOOD OF THE ASSOCIATION:** Mike Towery reported that there is new training paperwork for OJI's to complete for the CCA's. The Stewards are also supposed to sign off on the training and a copy is to be sent to the Business Agent. OJI's and Stewards should not sign the form unless they are sure all the training was complete.

**FINANCIAL SECRETARY'S REPORT:** Anita Holderman reported that \$17,324.38 was collected for May and \$6418.76 for June.

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

Beginning Income	\$72,006.22
Dues and Income	\$11,321.13
Interest Income	\$ 6.22
Total Balance	\$83,333.57
Total Expenses	\$10,859.39
Ending Balance	\$72,474.18

if he had been present.

There were 32 members present.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35.

Respectfully Submitted,

KIM GERDES

NALC Branch 782 Recording Secretary

The 50/50 Drawing was won by Danny Blair.

The Drawing for \$500.00 would have been won by Paul Salazar

## NON-MEMBER LIST JUNE 2013

*If we all don't stick together now, there's going to be no one left to blame... We ALL should be Carriers in a Common Cause. Really? YES!!*

**AVENAL (93203)**

B. Howard

**BRUNDAGE (93307)**

D. Kinglee

**ARVIN (93209)**

**100% UNION!!!**

**DOLE COURT (93308/12)**

Sharon Hancock

Dana Morris

Oscar Salazar

**DELANO (93215)**

L. A. Campos

C. V. Quebral

E. C. De La Torre

**STOCKDALE (93309)**

J. Oh

S. G. Flippin

M. R. Martinez

**LAMONT (93241)**

**100% UNION!!!**

**CAMINO MEDIA (93311/13)**

**100% UNION!!!**

**SHAFTER (93263)**

L. M. New

M. D. Voights

**MOJAVE (93501)**

**100% UNION!!!**

**CALIFORNIA CITY (93504)**

S.T. Ivory

**TAFT (93268)**

B. W. Krier

K. J. Hughes

T. D. Bullard

A. M. Rodriguez

A. R. Veach

**BORON (93516)**

J. L. Wiggs

**EDWARDS AFB (93526)**

**100% UNION!!!**

**WASCO (93280)**

V. L. Sipe

**TEHACHAPI (93561)**

N. G. Rodriguez

R. H. Sadorra

**DOWNTOWN (93301)**

S. Kirby

J. Cruz

**TRONA (93562)**

E. W. Christiansen

**SOUTH STATION  
(93304)**

D. Hurtado

**RIDGECREST (93555)**

B. J. Leroy

H. G. Blanco

S. R. Pierce

C. Briede Newton

C. Celaya

**EAST BAKERSFIELD  
(93305)**

**100% UNION!!!**

**HILLCREST (93306)**

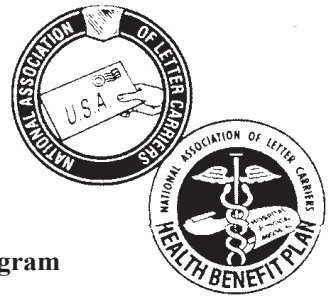
E. Chavez



**We are an "Open Shop".  
MEMBERSHIP IS VOLUNTARY.  
366 Letter Carriers are in  
the complement assigned to cities  
represented by our Branch.  
33 ARE NON-MEMBERS.  
We are 90.16% organized!**

# 2013 NALC HBP Info

## At a glance...



NALC Health Benefit Plan	1-888-636-6252
*Hospital Pre-Certification	1-877-220-6252
Mental & Substance Precertification	1-877-468-1016
**Drug Prescription Retail	1-800-933-6252
CVS/CareMark Specialty Pharmacy	1-800-237-2767
Durable Medical Equipment	1-888-636-6252
<b>NURSE ASSISTANT (24/7)</b>	<b>1-877-220-6252</b>
CVS/CareMark Pharmacist	1-888-636-6252
Enhanced Eldercare Services (24/7)	1-877-468-1016
CIGNA PPO Dr's & Facilities	1-877-220-6252
CIGNA Transplant Approval	1-800-668-9682
Quit Power (Smoking Cessation)	1-877-521-0244
CIGNA Health Rewards (Discounts)	1-800-558-9443
<b>CIGNA Dental Discount Program</b>	<b>1-877-521-0244</b>
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 (Bakersfield)	(661) 631-8520
LabCorp Lab Services	(661) 631-9258
Shared Services (Retirees Info!!!)	(661) 477-3273

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

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

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

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

**"Non"-Medicare Claims Submit to CIGNA**  
**(Payor I.D. 62308) or mail to**  
**P.O. Box 18804, Chatanooga, TN 37422-8004.**

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

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

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

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

**Mark Ramirez, NALC Branch 782 HBP Rep.**  
**(661) 834-5011**

**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	<a href="http://www.cdc.gov">http://www.cdc.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://americanheart.org">http://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>
<b>YOUR Personal Health Record</b>	<a href="http://www.nalc.org/depart.hbp">http://www.nalc.org/depart.hbp</a>
Asthma Information Center	<a href="http://www.ama.assn.org/special/asthma">http://www.ama.assn.org/special/asthma</a>

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

**Check out this PPO: Sendas Northwest Urgent Care**  
**3409 Calloway Suite 101**  
**Bakersfield, California 93312**  
**Phone: (661) 587-2500**  
**Hours: M-F 8:00 am - 9:00 pm; Sat & Sun 9:00 am - 7:00 pm**





# It's Time to Move On to the Next Chapter of My Life

I started with the Postal Service June 24, 1985. It was over 100 degrees for over 30 days straight. I remember going home crying to my husband that I couldn't do it. He would just say, "It's going to get easier." Well, twenty-eight years later, it hasn't gotten any easier...but I guess I've gotten used to it.

After passing probation, I went straight to being a Regular

Carrier. At that time, the post office was hiring Carriers left and right to keep up with the growth of Bakersfield. I started on Auxiliary Route 1101 and stayed on it for a year and a half. My husband and I even bought our first house in Campus Park (the area I was delivering in). When 1101 went up for bid, I didn't get it but got my second choice (Route 909) instead.

I wasn't used to a walking route. Carrying a satchel was too much for my neck and shoulders. That was in 1988 when I was pregnant with my daughter, Nikki. (In fact, there were five of us Carriers pregnant at the same time. Everyone said, "There must be something in the water!") The station allowed me to work light duty in the box section because of my history of miscarrying. I worked with Barbara Brindle and I loved the box section. After my daughter was born, I went back to carrying.

## OUT THERE



Route 928 went up for bid and I got it; but, I didn't deliver that route too long before I successfully bid Route 938.

I liked 938 even though everyone else hated it even though it consisted of White Lane from Stine Road to Wible Road. I delivered 938 for almost two years through rain, freezing winters, and sweltering summers. But, I stuck with it even through a second pregnancy and then birth of my son, Miles, in 1990.

Twenty-four years later, while still on route 938, I've decided that it's time to move on to the next chapter of my life—full of a different kind of hard work: being a grandma.

I will truly miss Route 938. But the heat? I won't miss that!

So, good-bye to all of my co-workers and friends at Stockdale Station!

SHEILA RICHERT  
June 28, 2013

## OUT THERE



# from the editor-guy

Each month, on your behalf, I look over many newsletters which are published by NALC Branches from all over the country. Want to know what I see?

## Find the Supervisor

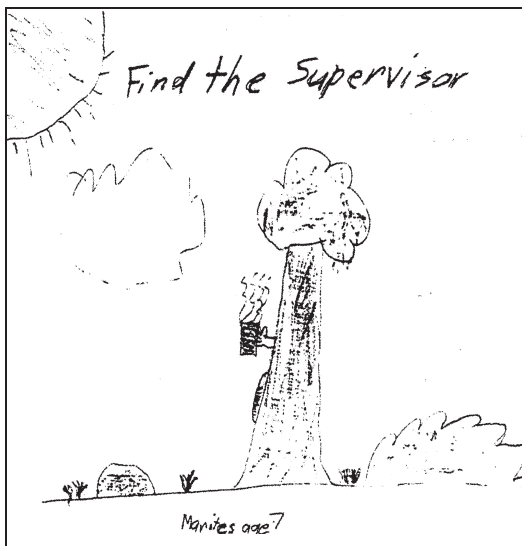
From small beginnings good things grow.

Fourteen years ago I was complaining to my wife about there being a fat, coffee drinking supervisor hiding behind every tree, not realizing little ears were listening. Then, my seven year old daughter, who adored the old “find Waldo” books, showed me a drawing she had made (yes, of course I kept it all these years). I showed it to Editor Dave Caszatt who thought it funny and Marites was ecstatic when he published it in the newsletter. [See the much faded version below.]

She never lost her interest in the arts and is now a senior in Communications Arts at MSU and has recently landed her first “real job” at a local radio station.

It *may* not take a village to grow a child but it certainly takes *many* good and kindly encouragements to make one blossom. Thank you.

M.W.



Personally, I found this article fascinating on a number of different levels.

I am a father. In fact, eight times my wife has blessed me with the chance to fill my quiver. And, as I have stated in the past, I (in a somewhat caustic attempt at humor) have said I still quiver with the magnitude of the responsibility that parenthood brings. But parenthood also brings rewards...

M.W. wrote this article about an incident which occurred at a time when his daughter was seven years old and he shared her artistic perception of what she experienced as a cartoon. What a special thing!

Because most of my children have now achieved “adulthood”—whatever *that* means—I find that I really appreciate M.W.’s sharing about the “process” of being a parent *AT ONE SPECIFIC POINT* in life. A memory of one event is only part of a continuity that exists well past that point and probably into a future which will exist long after we are gone. Wow...

I find some consolation in that.

By the same token, I was also struck by something else which appeared in the Oklahoma City July 2013 Branch 458 *Sooner Script*.

### ***Branch 458 Tornado Relief Fund***

Branch 458 has set up a fund to come to the aid of our members affected by the tornadoes that struck the metro area in May. If you would like to make a donation you may send your donation to Branch 458 NALC Tornado Relief Fund, 221 S. Eagle Lane, Oklahoma City, Ok., 73128-4209. If you have any questions concerning a donation, call the Branch Office at: (405) 789-2220 or by fax (405) 789-2427. Our email address is: [nalcokc458@coxinet.net](mailto:nalcokc458@coxinet.net).

### ***Branch 458 Uniform Program***

Thanks to generous donations from branches across the nation, we now have uniforms in all sizes at the Union Hall. If you are in need of uniforms you can come by the Branch Office during Office Hours 8:30am – 5:00pm. If you lost any or all of your uniforms during the tornadoes, please come by the Branch Office and select the items you may need. We would ask that you ***PLEASE CALL AHEAD TO MAKE SURE THAT THERE WILL BE SOMEONE IN THE OFFICE BEFORE YOU COME!***

You may have heard this phrase: “There—but for the grace of God, go I.”

In the “news cycle”, disasters come and go. When the media thrill of dealing with whatever calamitous natural/man-made/gruesome incidents strike, there is always something else happening that will whet the appetite of the readers/viewers. Wait a few days and something else will come along that will pull at your heart strings...

Reality? Not really. The reality is that normal people deal with consequences to their world well into the future. Once the news trucks, cam-

eras, and reporters move on to the next event, reality takes place. And, a new “normal” kicks in.

In the part of California where we work, we don’t deal with those annual typhoons, hurricanes, cyclones, floods, blizzards, etc. But...

And this is one of those big butts...

The probability that a major earthquake is going to happen is almost a certainty. Sooner or later, there *IS* going to be one of those “Big Ones” that is going to hand *us* a changed reality. And, when that happens, *WE* are going to be the ones on the receiving end of assistance with mundane things like uniform shirts, pants, shoes and belts!

As I write this, I want to make sure to direct your attention to the information on page 3 of this newsletter. You can form your own opinion. But, the perspective painted in this narrative is a reality faced by folks—*JUST LIKE YOU*—who find themselves having to deal with a major life altering event and find that they are having to fight the the folks who run the company that they work for. What a drag!!! **REALLY!!!!**



In line with that, I want to share an excerpt from an article which originally appeared in the excellent publication of the Volume 13 Issue 6 Phoenix-Glendale-Buckey-Kingman, Arizona *NALC Branch 576 Carrier*:

## Mentorship Vs Sinking Ship

Lyn Liberty, Branch 576 President

“We have got to find a way to help our new CCAs survive in order to succeed!

Last month, I asked each Steward to let us know when a CCA was either terminated or quit. We were trying to discover why they are dropping from the rolls almost as fast as they are hired.

I also asked input as to how we can slow down the revolving door. After a few brainstorming sessions with other Branches suffering the same fate an idea emerged: The idea of trying a “Mentor” Program.

A “Mentor” would be someone who is willing to take the initiative to walk up to our new CCAs and ask some rather simple questions such as, “How are you doing?” “Can I help you understand things a little better?” “Do you just need to vent for a moment?”

With very little effort on our part, we have the ability to save a new Carrier from self-destruction or being pushed into actions that can lead to termination.

If you’ve been a Carrier for more than 10 years, think back to what it was like to be a brand-new Carrier... Remember when we had three extensive days of hands-on training *before* we ever stepped into the Post Office?

Remember when we actually knew accountable item procedures *before* we found one in our relay mail standing at the customer’s door on a park-and-loop thinking, “Now what do I do with *this*????”

How about when it was ok to walk over to another case and ask a veteran, “How do I do this?” or when it was ok to look up the new person on the street to give them a hand?

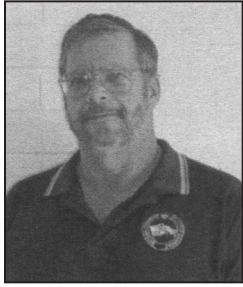
Now, with micro-management at an all-time high—to the point of ridiculous—we would be “hung out to dry” for moving even slightly off our route to lend that helping hand.

I am asking for a couple of Carriers in each station to step up and say, ‘I will help.’

The Steward in each unit is already an advocate for any new hire by virtue of their title.

I’m asking for volunteers to be team support. If you, or someone you know, is willing to be a part of the Branch 576 Mentor Program, please contact me at the Union Hall or by phone.”

BASIL ZUNIGA  
NALC Branch 782 Editor-guy



## Vice-President's Report—Phil Dufek, NALC Branch 576

### Street Times – PTFs

Regular carriers returning from a well deserved vacation frequently experience subtle harassment from supervisors.

This is especially the case

when CCAs or PTFs have been doing their route in the regular's absence. Remarks are like: "too bad (name) isn't on your route, when they did it they always had time to complete an hour relay as well." This form of harassment is unacceptable and should be grieved under Management's failure to provide an atmosphere of dignity and mutual respect (M-39 115.4). Honestly, most managers are only concerned with getting the mail delivered, reducing sick leave (frequently recording LWOP) and having all carrier's off the street by 6pm (regardless of what the last scheduled dispatch is). As dedicated and conscientious letter carriers, it's our duty to provide professional service to customers.

Professional SERVICE includes route maintenance like following up on COAs, forwarding good mail, holding mail for customers moving out, updating labels in apartment boxes & verifying residency with apartment complex management, and completing Special Notice Cards. All of these TAKE TIME. Duties most CCAs and PTFs do not perform when opting a route or delivering a relay.

In fact, when returning from vacation and calling in for overtime, remember to inform the supervisor the need for overtime is compounded by the fact you have to clean up the route from others who delivered it while you were gone. (Especially true when you find vacant boxes stuffed with mail.) ALL carriers have a responsibility and obligation to ensure mail is delivered to the correct recipient.

When dealing with harassment (in addition to the grievance) it helps to recall that the provisions require **the route be adjusted to the regular and NOT to someone else's times.**

Want Proof? Only **the regular carrier** assigned to the route can request a special inspection under M-39 271g. Only the regular's times are included during the 8 week analysis and the week of inspection. Non-regular such as the Carrier Tech, are omitted from consideration.'

Additionally, time spent by another carrier assisting the regular IS factored in during evaluation. Herein is one reason why it's critical that if another carrier assists on your route, that time be credited to your route (whether in the office or on the street). Ultimately, **the route IS ADJUSTED to the regular and the regular is NOT required to adjust to the Route.**

Remember too what motivates us may be different. For most, it's about taking care of customers and Service. For others the motivation may be an underlying threat of losing their job and being unable to provide for their family (especially true with those in probation). Many probationary CCAs skip breaks, forego lunch and deliver as quickly as possible under the illusion they will be found valuable by management and retained.

In reality, taking care of customers and providing the best service we can, helps insure there will be a US Postal Service tomorrow.

Final Note: DOIS (M-01444) does not set the time you are to leave the office and only a piece count of the mail determines if you made standards and then, ONLY on that particular day. Further, Management is REQUIRED to give you a day's notification of an office count (M-39 141.2) and, DOIS (or calculations) cannot set the time you are to return from the street because there is NO street standard (M-01769) apart from performing your duties safely. If Management treats you with disrespect, makes snide or inappropriate comments, interrogates you on why it took you so long to deliver your route, ask to see your steward.

Knowledge is Power- pass it along.

Phillip Dufek  
Vice President

Article courtesy of the July 2013 issue of *The Carrier* published by NALC Branch 576 in Glendale, AZ.



# What's the Worst that Can Happen?

When my children were younger and something happened that they were “afraid” to tell me about, I came up with a game we used to play, “What’s the worst thing that can happen if you tell me the truth?”

My youngest had trouble keeping track of his house key. Most of the time it was found buried under something in his messy bedroom, or I found it in the dryer when his jeans came out. Once it was discovered in his brother’s trumpet case. I still haven’t figured that one out. But, once, after I found the ladder propped up outside the kitchen window where he had broken into the house after school, (he was never really good at being sneaky) he told me he had misplaced his key once again. We searched everywhere, to no avail, me using everyone’s favorite mom-ism, “you’re lucky your head is attached to your body or you’d probably lose that, too!” Eventually, he either tired of the sham or of my ranting, and told me that he had the key when he left the house in the morning and had lost it somewhere at school. Thanks Kid; there’s two hours of my life I’ll never get back. We solved the problem with two new keys, one for him to lose again and a spare hidden behind the lawnmower in the shed for when he did.

I hear from carriers all the time that they skip their lunch or breaks, they take unsafe shortcuts, they rush unnecessarily, all because they don’t want to have a conversation with their supervisor when they don’t believe they can complete their route (and any assigned under-time) in eight hours. Really? What’s the worst that can happen? In one station I was told that if a carrier fills out a 3996, they can expect a supervisor to come out on the street to observe them. Yep, sounds about right. How awful is that? You’re on your route, you’re doing your job, what’s the worst that can happen? Well, the supervisor might make some dumbass comment about what you’ve been doing all day. It happens. So what? One stupid remark should not be enough to intimidate any adult and we’re all adults here, right? Well, then I hear, “I don’t want to have a target on my back. They’ll just come looking for me to do something else wrong.” What’s the worst that can happen? You’ll have to do your job very carefully, follow all the rules. Do a complete vehicle check every morning. Stay within the speed limit when you drive. Hold all the handrails on your walking cuts; put your vehicle in neutral at every stop on your mounted route. Take a full 30 minutes for lunch, from the time you leave your line of travel until you return to your line of travel. Check every piece of mail for accuracy before you deliver it. Deviate to insure that Express Mail is delivered before noon. Roll your windows up, curb your wheels and lock your door at every dismount stop. Check your hold orders and check your forward orders for accuracy. Take all the stickers and tags from your empty equipment. NEVER, ever case your FSS. Obey all driving and parking laws; come to a com-

plete stop at every stop sign and red light even in low traffic neighborhoods. Identify accountable mail on your 3849 in the office and finish writing it up on the street. Scan everything with a barcode. Ring the customer’s doorbell when you deliver a parcel and wait for someone to answer. Hydrate. Listen to your body; when you gotta go, go, and go to a clean, safe public restroom. Cull your outgoing mail carefully, pull out the Netflix, watch for test mail pieces and anonymous mail. Write up dog warning cards for problem dogs and case them every day. Work safely.

Now that you’re following all the rules, what’s the worst that can happen? Well, let’s pretend for a second that some supervisor decides to write you up for expanding your street time. What’s the worst that can happen? In discipline cases, management has the burden of PROVING their case. It isn’t proof if they say that it took you longer today than it did on any random day in the past. Proof means that they have to be able to show that you were doing something wrong and since you’re following THEIR rules, there can never be proof of wrongdoing. The discipline must be thrown out.

Additionally, when carriers religiously fill out 3996s when they cannot complete their duties in their allotted time, the union is successful in Article 8 grievances. If carriers take more under-time than they know they can complete without informing management, the postal service can rely on the “rule of reason” and win that argument. The rule of reason states that a carrier can be compelled to work overtime if the amount of auxiliary assistance needed would cause an undue financial burden on the service; if you were given 45 minutes of under-time and can only complete 30 minutes of it, and to send another carrier to help you would entail that carrier traveling 5 minutes in either direction, they would likely be successful in arguing the rule of reason. They would be paying the other carrier 25 minutes rather than you 15. On the other hand, if they were informed before you left the office and you completed a 3996, there is no excuse for them in the grievance procedure. The rule of reason does not apply when they are aware ahead of time.

The worst that can happen here is that your paycheck is a little bit smaller but you get to spend more time off the clock, doing the things that YOU want to do. Your job isn’t to make your supervisor happy. Leave that to the Prozac. Your job is to deliver mail, safely, accurately, professionally and to give service to your customers. What’s the worst that can happen?

~ In Unity and Solidarity,  
Susan Lewis, Executive Vice President

Article courtesy of the July 2013 issue of *The Buzz*  
published by NALC Branch 3 in Buffalo, NY.

# Six Dog Breeds that Mailmen Must Avoid

by Mel Carriere

There is a song by a long forgotten singer Edie Brickell that says, "Philosophy is the talk on a cereal box, Religion is the smile on a dog." I have spent untold sleepless hours puzzling over these words, but after 20 years of carrying mail and seeing the smug canine smiles on dogs as they contemplate dining upon my softer portions, I think I understand the lyrics now. Religion to the canine set consists of eating letter carriers, and that is why they sometimes smile when they see us passing by, simple as that. Of course, dogs no longer smile at me anymore. I'm too old and stringy.

May 19-25th is Dog Bite Prevention Week, and in honor of this festive occasion commemorating our furry friends I have created a small, Letterman style list of dog breeds that have given me problems throughout the years. If you carry mail I am sure your list is different in some places, but I hope you enjoy my personal anecdotes about these dogs that continue to be the source of nightmares for me. All of the stories are true, by the way. Well, perhaps they might be embellished a little for dramatic effect but for the most part they are of uncanny accuracy. When it comes to dogs and their relentless pursuit of the men and women in blue, truth is indeed stranger than fiction!

## Number 6 Most Misbehaving Mutt - German Shepherd

I have mixed feelings about the German Shepherd. They are as fickle and unpredictable as people. The one outstanding feature that German Shepherds have is that most of them will not bark stupidly and without a purpose, once they understand that your intentions are not contrary to the directives of management, meaning the owner. To elaborate upon this point, there was once a house on my route where a seemingly vicious German Shepherd

would patrol the fence line like the goose-stepping Gestapo that flowed through his veins. I was very wary of this toothed Teutonic Titan, so much so that when the gate to the house was left open one day, leaving the dog free to devour me, I immediately began to make my peace with my creator. I figured I was as good as munched. To my surprise, the dog came right out to the fence line, barking angrily, and then stopped in his tracks. He was smart enough to know that the fence line was the limit of his territory and had been trained not to proceed beyond it. The mail gods smiled favorably upon me that day, deferring my munching to an as yet unspecified day of reckoning. Hearing the boisterous barking, the owner came out and introduced me to the dog, who accepted me as harmless from that point on. After that I could even go into the yard and deliver parcels to the door. The ferocious monster would even tolerate an appreciative pat on the head for abstaining from digesting me.

I must point out that not all German Shepherds are as merciful as that one was. When that particular shepherd died the owner bought another, and the newcomer was not aware of the truce that had existed between his breed and I in the past. Instead of letting me welcome him with a friendly scratching behind the ears, the newcomer would escape from the yard and chase me down the block, his fangs dripping with saliva from the thought of a delicious repast. Let this serve as a lesson to you that it is not wise to assume that every member of a particular breed behaves the same. As among people, there is always a small, deviant percentage of the population that cannot conform to the rules of polite society, and this is no different among our furry friends!

## Number 5 Most Misbehaving Mutt - The Saint Bernard

I'll keep this one brief, because I have had only a single encounter with one of these drooling flea bags from the depths of hell. While approaching the door of a house at the end of a cul de sac one of these rabid, slobbering demons came bursting through the screen, rushing to-

ward me with homicidal intentions, its sagging jowls foaming over with the same saliva that it intended to digest me with. I don't remember the details of how I escaped, but once again my date with canine digestion was delayed to a more propitious hour.

Even though this incident did not occur on my own route, I put the house on dog hold and the owners were forced to move the box out to the curb. That box remains there to this date, some 12 to 13 years later, standing as a monument to the eminent fanged death that awaited me there in the slaving jaws of that Saint Bernard. Carriers, be aware that if you see a mailbox out by the curb on a street in which most of them are by the door, it is a warning that something wicked lies within that residence. Approach at your own peril.

## Number 4 Most Misbehaving Mongrel - The Chihuahua

I'll give you this opportunity to go ahead and release your laughter before I discuss the very serious side effects of coming into contact with these small packages of furry dynamite. The fact is, the miniscule size of these diminutive doggies often causes your friendly local letter carrier to commit the grave error of not giving them their due respect and a sufficiently wide berth. I once saw a movie where a pack of tiny dinosaurs was in the process of breakfasting upon some careless scientist, and every time I think about it I wonder what would happen if ravaging packs of Chihuahuas were set loose upon the world. The effects upon humanity would be similarly devastating, I think.

I'll recount an incident in which I was surrounded by a small wolf pack of these skittering little paws with teeth. Although no longer common in the wild, packs of Chihuahuas still remember their wolf pack heritage and will stalk and surround their prey in wolf style. I had to fight my way through a vicious pack of three of them that had me blocked off on all sides, making escape practically impossible. In the

*Continued on page 15...*

*Continued from page 14...*

meantime the owner stood there doing what he could to suppress his laughter and only called the dogs off as they were lunging in for the kill. I was able to limp back safely to my LLV, not wounded too much except for my pride as I marveled over my narrow escape.

### Number 3 ~Most Misbehaving Mutt Miniature Doberman Pinscher

I suppose that Postal-issued pepper spray is effective as protection against dogs if applied properly, but sometimes a good old size thirteen gets the point across to even the most stubborn of man eating hounds. I once kicked a field goal with a Miniature Pinscher that crawled beneath the fence in its yard and tried to take me unawares. I really did not intend to kick the poor beast, it was purely self-preservation, instinctive behavior on my part, but I have to admit feeling a certain perverse satisfaction as the canine football rose up several feet in the air before landing painfully and then skulking back to the yard it came from - having repented of its sins. Equally satisfying was the reaction of the Cox Cable repairman who was watching me from down the street; shouting out that it was "F!%#ing Awesome!" to quote. Letter Carriers are not the only working men/women in our society who suffer from the depredations of deranged Dobermans!

Mini Dobermans attempt to emulate their full size brethren in the volume of their ferocity, but often fall short in their ability to carry out the threat. They are notorious skulkers, and will retreat back to the safety of their Mailman-bone strewn lairs if confronted. All the same, they are masters of the rear attack and it behooves a letter carrier to have his/her feet battle ready at all times!

### Number 2 Most Misbehaving Mutt - The Pit Bull

In spite of the horror stories surrounding this breed, I have only had one potentially deadly encounter with this savage race of crazed, mailman-flesh

craving mongrels. The good thing about pit bulls is that they bark stupidly at everyone and everything that passes by, from the six foot plus letter carrier to the lowly ant creeping by on the sidewalk. Therefore, in most cases the mailman is aware of where this dog is at all times, but not always! When dealing with doggies, I cannot stress enough that there is always a dangerous exception to every rule!

I almost became a deceased exception to this rule, and would only be a note in an obituary today if not for the benevolent intercession of the mail gods. Several years ago when I had stopped to deliver a parcel to a house, a raging pit bull rushed out from nowhere and charged me as if it was Pamplona and I was a drunken spectator rushing down the street to avoid getting gored. Because I was only delivering a package and had no previous knowledge of the presence of this buffed up canine I was not carrying my satchel, much less my dog spray. Even if I had one or the other in the hand they would have been useless, because the dog surprised me so thoroughly that there was absolutely no time to react.

On this occasion there wasn't even time to pray, so I swiftly began considering which portion of my anatomy was the most useless, so that I could offer it up first as a sacrifice. I knew I was going to get mauled, it was only a question of which part of me would be eaten first. Since I have rather large feet I was thinking that I could probably lose about half of one and still function, so I was on my way to extending my grotesquely large left foot outward when the dog suddenly veered off to my right and disappeared. I stood there for a moment stupefied, wondering why I had been spared the vicious fangs of death, before I leaped back in my LLV and drove out of there quickly. Perhaps the pit bull had been deterred by the unappetizing odor of the extremity I had offered it, or maybe he had a lunch date already that he was saving room for. At any rate I lived to tell the tale.

Of course, being the meticulous, by the book letter carrier that I am, I put the house's mail on hold. A few days later

the homeowner came in to sign the dog letter, but he was puzzled by the breed identification I had put on the dog letter.

"I don't have a pit bull," the owner claimed. "I have a Chihuahua."

"Your Chihuahua is on steroids," I told him. He signed the paper anyway and walked away scratching his head. Several days later it came to light that a hoodlum friend of the homeowner's son had been at the house with his pit bull that day, which solved the mystery of the Guinness Record Breaking Monster Chihuahua.

### Number 1 Most Misbehaving Mutt The Cocker Spaniel

Up until now, the only dog that has been able to sample a bite of my tasty Mailman flesh has been the Cocker Spaniel. This is why I have given this breed the prestigious position of Number One on my list of the Most Misbehaving Mongrels. I was about four months into my Postal Service career when one of these shaggy yappers snuck up from behind and took a bite out of my back leg. To add insult to injury the dog owners apparently did not have homeowners insurance and I received no monetary remuneration for the only dog bite that was ever successfully inflicted upon me.

In my experience, the Cocker Spaniel is a nervous, disagreeable little pooch. My sister had one that tried to take a piece out of my hand when I attempted to pet it. The Internet is chock full of cute pictures of this breed, but if there was a way to genetically equip them with a built-in muzzle, yours truly would be one happy letter carrier. I hope you enjoyed my evaluation of the six dog breeds that I consider the most threatening to the sanctity of mailman flesh. For this Dog Bite Prevention week in particular, and for every week that you are swinging a satchel, make sure you keep your dog spray on you at all times, and keep your foot in the ready position!

# WHAT IS IT WORTH?

Robert Keys, TE/CCA Liaison—Portland, Oregon NALC Branch 82

I am filled with venom, these days, my fellow TEs. I stare at the rubble that is a hope of some life and cannot help but feel abandoned. The promise was the pay cut, not the benefits. The promise is the same rotten carrot we held throughout the arbitration process.

“Wait your turn!” is the chorus, but how long? Should they have us starve? Should they have us in WIC lines, or more accurately, our work-widowed spouses, as they grind another 60-hour week out of us? The gears of arbitration are too antiquated to service our needs in the time required to keep us alive. TEs turned CCAs are going to starve from debt waiting for satisfaction.

Summer under time will strip our coffers bare and starve us out. I see the people at the off ramps holding signs and I wonder, “How close am I?” too close.

When is the last time you have been to the doctor? What will you do if you or someone in your family gets sick, before January 2014? My brothers and sisters I have been here a long time, patient, but enough is enough. Now is the time for we, as a group, to make our stand. Now is the time for we the weary, we the over worked, we the future of this organization to take action. Now is time to break the stick and throw the carrot.

The USPS has taken first years, now wages and is at your door threatening the ability to put food on the table. The arbitration award cut our pay, but added the requirement that the USPS give us health care benefits. We are career track employees. We are no longer “contract” employees. We have full union protection and we must not let management forget that. They can no longer hold the threat of not “re-upping” our contract over our heads. Management is used to dangling the carrot then beating us with the stick. But binding arbitration is just that, BINDING. That means that the USPS has to honor the award.

Nevertheless, and true to form, they are already trying to weasel out of the requirement to fill the vacant routes with us, the carriers hired to fill them!

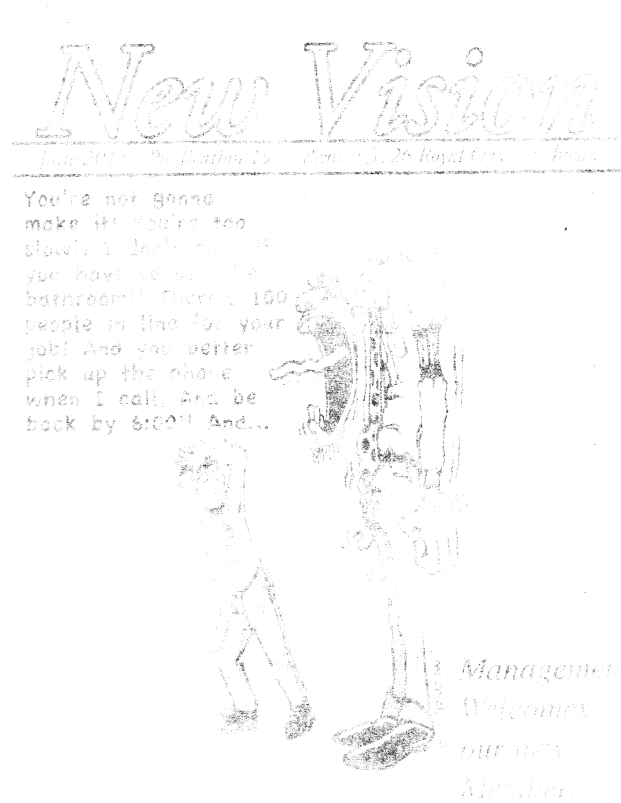
We must act and this is what I am proposing:

- 1) Opt the vacant routes at your station and then be the good carrier every customer deserves! Each one of us comes in contact with our customers, they share and connect to us we are their carrier. The only group that gives us appreciation and value are our customers. If the opt sheet is not posted properly or if management try's to break your opt, grieve it!
- 2) Work with your steward to make sure management does their job right. Ask questions and get to know the contract. An educated, union workforce assures work

place democracy!

3) Get to union meeting when ever possible. This is difficult to do considering the hours we are working. But the officers and stewards work for us. Get to know them and learn from them.

If you have been here as long as I have you know you are more than qualified to be a regular carrier with a regular route. Management must convert us to regular status per the arbitration award. But it may be up to us and the union to





# BEST DAY TO RETIRE...

It would be useful if some recent retired carriers had written what they had to go through with their retirement so the rest of us could plan. I will relate what I have researched, which may be common knowledge for most. Each person should do his/her own research.

## **\* Treatment of unused annual leave at the time of retirement.**

All retiring employees are paid in a lump sum payment for any unused annual leave hours on the day of their retirement. The lump sum payment will be directly deposited into the same bank account that the employee's paychecks are directly deposited in. Most agencies directly deposit the lump sum annual payment within two to six weeks of the employee's retirement date. Many retiring employees use their lump sum annual leave payment to pay their bills until they receive their first full annuity check. The deposit of the first full annuity check could take as long as three to eight months after the employee's retirement date.

An employee must be in "employee status" for the entire last pay period of work in order to accrue the full amount of annual leave and sick leave hours for that last pay period. An employee who retires before the end of a pay period (for us that would be the second Friday of a pay period) will not accrue any annual leave and sick leave hours for the last pay period the employee worked.

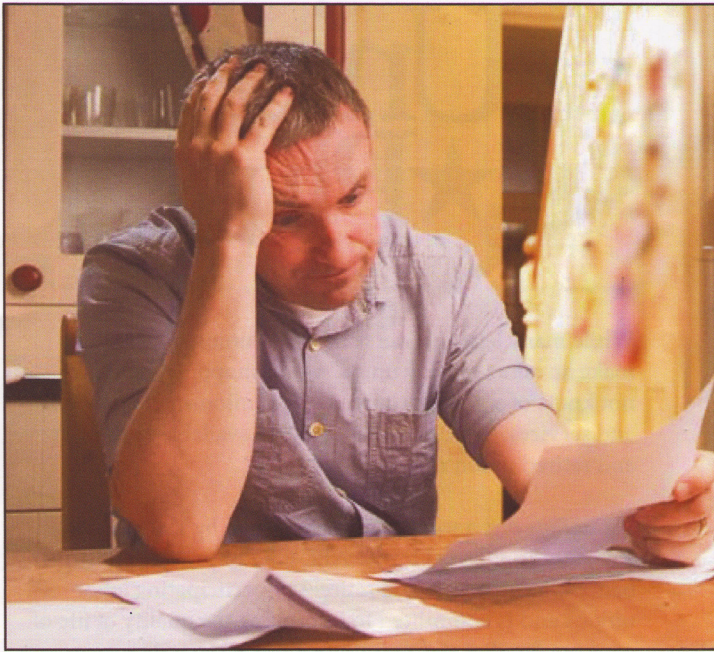
## **• Treatment of unused sick leave at the time of retirement.**

Prior to a law change effective Oct. 28, 2009, only retiring CSRS/CSRS Offset employees were eligible to add any unused sick leave hours to their service time for the sole purpose of calculating their CSRS annuities. Note that unused sick leave cannot be used for retirement eligibility purposes; however, unused sick leave is used only for CSRS or FERS annuity computation purposes. Before Oct. 28, 2009, FERS employees did not receive credit for unused sick leave. As a result, FERS employees who retired before Oct. 28, 2009 forfeited all of their unused sick leave hours as of the day of their retirement. But the law changed effective Oct. 28, 2009 with Congress deciding to "phase-in" the unused sick leave hours benefit for FERS employees. In particular, those FERS employees who retire before Jan. 1, 2014 get credit for 50 percent of their unused sick leave hours as of the day of their retirement. FERS employees who retire on Jan. 1, 2014 or later will get credit for 100 percent of their unused sick leave hours on the day of their retirement (like CSRS/CSRS Offset employees).

## **\* For FERS retirement. CSRS and CSRS Offset employees may have slightly different rules.**

No matter which day in the month a FERS employee retires, the employee's retirement becomes effective the first day of the following month. The first annuity check will then be dated the first day of the following month. For example, if a FERS-covered employee retires June 11, then the retirement becomes effective July 1 and the first annuity check will be dated Aug. 1. As for myself, I retire on May 31, my retirement becomes effective the next day, and my first annuity check will be dated July 1 (which will be for the month of June). I will also have received the full amount of annual leave and sick leave hours for that last pay period which ended on May 31 as stated above.

Bottom line; no matter what day you retire, it is going to be a good day!



# When a Letter Carrier Dies

This page was reprinted from the Volume 32 #2 Summer 2013 issue of *Unity* published by NALC Branch 3825 in Rockville, Maryland.

It is not a topic often talked about, let alone planned for. Yet, when the moment does come upon us that a letter carrier dies, taking care of all the details may seem an undoable task. The NALC publishes the following on what to do:

## When a retired letter carrier dies:

1. Notify the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) toll-free at 1-888-767-6738, or, for quicker action, call 202-393-4695 during business hours, or call toll-free 800-424-5186 only on Monday, Wednesday or Thursday, 10-noon or 2-4 p.m. EST. The NALC will alert OPM so that survivor benefits will commence as quickly as possible, and will send you the application for death benefits under the retirement system, and the claim for death benefits under the Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance program.
2. Return any uncashed annuity checks to the address on the accompanying Treasury Department envelope. If payments are being deposited through Electronic Funds Transfer directly to a bank or other financial institution, contact them with the retiree's date of death and advise them to return any future payments to the Treasury Department.
3. Obtain enough death certificates for your needs from the mortuary.
4. Notify the retired carrier's NALC Branch.
5. If the retiree was a veteran, notify the Veteran's Administration local office and/or the commanding officer of the local military installation.
6. Notify the retiree's bank or other financial institutions.
7. Call the local office of Social Security Administration or toll-free 800-772-1213. Notify insurance companies (life, health, auto, home, etc.).
8. If the retiree had a policy with NALC's Mutual Benefit Association, write to: 100 Indiana Ave NW, Room 510, Washington, DC 20011 or call 202-638-4318. If the retiree belonged to the NALC Health Benefit Plan, write: 20547 Waverly Ct., Ashburn, VA 20149 or call 888-636-6252. (Note: Health benefit coverage for a surviving spouse and dependent children continues automatically if retiree had family coverage at time of death and if a monthly survivor annuity is payable.)
9. To start, stop or change monthly federal or state income tax withholding or request a duplicate 1099R, call 1-888-767-6738. You will need

the retiree's CSA number and the last four digits of the Social Security Number.

10. If the retiree participated in the Thrift Savings Plan, contact, for Death Benefits Claim (only), the Thrift line at 1-877-968-3778.

## When an active letter carrier dies:

1. Notify the employee's immediate supervisor, postmaster and personnel section (if any). Give the supervisor the letter carrier's locker keys and badge as well as information on the time and place of memorial services. Check with USPS Human Resources Shared Service Center (HRSSC) at 1-877-477-3273 for benefits for spouse and any dependent children.
2. Fill our forms (obtain from USPS personnel section or postmaster): application for death benefits under retirement system; claim for unpaid compensation; claim for FEGLI death benefits. You should notify HRSSC by calling 1-877-477-3273.
3. Notify the Thrift Savings Plan for Death Benefits Claims (only): Fax number 703-592-0170. The mailing address is: TSP Death benefits, Processing Unit, Fairfax Post Office, DEDIS-P.O. Box 4450, Fairfax, VA 22038-9998. You can also call the Thrift line at 1-877-968-3778.
4. Notify the carrier's NALC Branch.
5. If a veteran, notify the Veteran's Administration local office or call toll-free 800-827-1000.
6. Notify banks and other financial institutions.
7. Call the local office of the Social Security Administration or toll-free 800-772-1213.
8. Notify insurance companies (life, health, auto, home, etc.). If the carrier had policy with NALC's Mutual Benefit Association, write to: 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Room 510, Washington, DC 20001 or call 202-638-4318 or toll-free at 800-424-5184. If the carrier was enrolled in the NALC Health Benefit Plan, write: 20547 Waverly Ct., Ashburn, VA 20149 or call toll-free at 888-636-6252. (Note: Health benefit coverage for a surviving spouse and dependent children continue automatically if carrier had family coverage at time of death and if a monthly annuity is payable.)
9. Have mortuary officials obtain enough death certificates for your needs.

**A MILE IN MY SHOES:****The Good 'Ole Days**

By Verle Craven, CSALC Secretary

**The good 'ole days:** There is a tendency, as one grows older, to glorify the past, vilify the present and cast serious doubts on the future: this I know. I also admit that I am no longer on the workroom floor so my information is not first hand and may be biased. Still, I hear things. Trying my best to keep that in mind, I offer the following: service in this Postal Service has been and is continuing to deteriorate.

This deterioration became most obvious to me when the first bit of mechanization, the centralized markup system, was introduced in the late '70s. Before that, carriers did their own markups. There was a "nixie" clerk whose job it was to check all the "return to sender" mail and verify the reason. If a carrier marked a no such number or addressee unknown in error, the nixie clerk would be at your case informing you of that fact and demanding an explanation as to why that piece of mail was not deliverable. There was no such indicium as "undeliverable as addressed unable to forward"; there was accountability.

Then computer generated case labels were introduced: carriers were not instructed as to the reason for change, but were only told that these labels must be installed as is and not cut, added to or subtracted from. This resulted and, I'm told, still results in uncorrected errors in line of travel and incorrect numbering; and so service suffers – more loss of accountability; more deterioration of service.

The result of loss of accountability is, stacks of "mystery mail" that has accumulated over time on many routes. In all fairness, a contributing factor is the current attitude of supervision that rushes carriers out of the office before the job is finished. This brings us to the real culprit in deterioration of service: management. They're in charge; they gotta' take the

rap. But let's be real: letter carriers are the ultimate caretakers of their patron's written communications. Our mind set should be that we are charged with the proper disposition of every piece of mail every day. If we don't own that responsibility, anyone can do our job and do it for a lot less.

This brings us back to the good 'ole days. When I was a rookie there were many old timers who taught me the importance of my job and helped me do it right, in fact they saw to it that I did the job right: they mentored me. In today's world of get in, get out, and rush rush rush, I doubt there is much of that going on. In fact my sources tell me that they have been told not to help the new CCAs. I have also been told of supervisors and managers bringing CCAs to tears on the floor by haranguing them about performance. I have to say that in my considerable experience I have met very few supervisors or managers who had any notion of how to properly train and motivate employees.

There is no one to reverse this degradation of service and job satisfaction but the old timers (five years plus) on the floor. Starting with your own route, never leave undocumented mail left at your route at the end of the day. If your labels need attention report it and document the request every day until it's fixed. Never let fellow employees get abused on the workroom floor without reporting it to the Shop Steward. Do everything in your power to assist new hires understand the right way to do the job.

It's time for all letter carriers to toughen up and use the considerable tools made available to you. You have the Contract and manuals to support your efforts to see that the job gets the attention and respect it deserves. You have Shop Stewards and Full Time Officers to enforce those tools.

The deterioration of the Postal Service may be the fault of management, but it's up to us to reverse the damage. I know you can make that difference. I did when I was on the workroom floor, and if I can do it, anyone can.

Article courtesy of the July 2013 issue of *The Branch 1111 News* published by NALC Branch 1111 in Oakland, CA.

## Penalties for not Signing up for Medicare?

You have three months before your 65th birthday and three months after your 65th birthday to sign up for Medicare. If you miss this time frame, you will get another five chances during the annual general enrollment period of January through March 31. *If you wait until this time frame, your coverage will not begin until July of that year.*

Here is where they get you: For **each** 12-month period of eligibility—but inaction on your part—your part B premium (which is about \$104 a month for those with an income of \$85,000 or less in the prior tax year) grows by **10%**. If, after five years, you still haven't signed up, you will face **an ANNUAL 50% increase on your monthly payment FOR AS LONG AS YOU LIVE...**

Medicare Part A is the hospital insurance. This can help you pay for medically necessary inpatient hospital care and inpatient care in a skilled nursing facility, home health care, and hospice care. You do not have to pay a premium on this

Medicare Part B is the Medical Insurance. This helps pay for your doctor's services and supplies that are not covered by the hospital insurance.

Covered doctor's services include: surgical services, diagnostic services, and x-rays that are part of your treatment; medical supplies furnished in a doctor's office; services of the office nurse; and drugs that are administered as part of your treatment and cannot be self-administered.

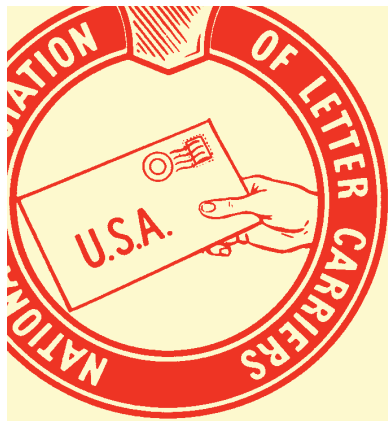
Medicare Part B can also cover certain other services such as ambulance transportation; artificial limbs and eyes; and, chiropractor's treatment for subluxation of the spine.

But, keep in mind that the whole cost may not be covered. There *is* a deductible due, but—in most cases—80% of the cost is covered.

The enrollee will be responsible for the difference. Therefore, it may be in the best interest of the enrollees to carry another health insurance to cover the difference... such as the NALC Health Benefit Plan.

JOHN RUBIO, Retiree  
NALC Branch 504

Article courtesy of the July & August 2013 issue of *El Sol* published by NALC Branch 405 in Albuquerque, NM.



# Active letter carriers: Contribute to **COLCPE** using PostalEASE

online.....

Carriers can also go online to use PostalEASE. With PostalEASE, carriers can contribute directly from their paychecks every pay period. Through PostalEASE you can designate COLCPE as one of your three payroll "allotments"

- 1** Be sure you know your 8-digit Employee ID Number (on your paystub) and your 4-digit USPS Personal Identification Number (PIN). If you cannot remember your PIN, call PostalEASE at 1-877-4PS-EASE (1-877-477-3273), select "1", enter your Employee ID Number, and select "2" to have your PIN mailed to you.
- 2** Create your own *Account Number* by inserting in the spaces at right the first seven digits of the ID number that appears above your name on the back cover of your *Postal Record*.
- 3** Now you are ready to go online to [liteblue.usps.gov](http://liteblue.usps.gov)

#### YOUR 17-DIGIT ACCOUNT NUMBER:

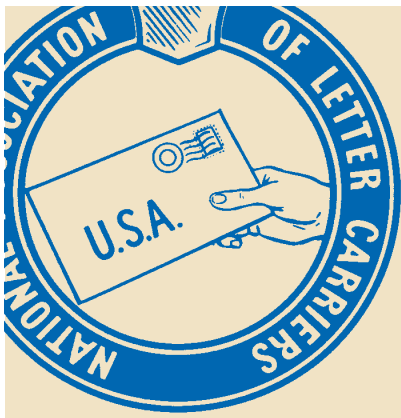
----- 0 0 3 4 9 5 2 5 3 5  
(First 7 digits of ID number on Postal Record label)

\*\*\*\*\*AUTO\*\* 5-DIGIT 54321  
XXXXXXXXXX89 LC 9876 W13 08  
JOHN CARRIER  
1234 MAIN STREET  
ANYWHERE, US 54321-9999

- Enter Employee ID and PIN and click "log on"
- Click on "Postal Ease"
- Click on "I agree"
- Enter Employee ID and PIN again and log in
- Click on "Allotments/Payroll NTB"
- Click on "Continue"
- Click on "Allotments"
- Enter the 9-digit Financial Institution Routing Number: **0 6 4 0 0 0 1 7**
- Enter your 17-digit Account Number from above
- Enter Account type as "checking"
- Enter amount of your contribution
- Click on "validate"
- Click on "submit"
- Click "print page" to see and print your confirmation number for your records

Contribute on the web at  
[liteblue.usps.gov](http://liteblue.usps.gov)

By making a COLCPE allotment through PostalEASE, you are doing so voluntarily with the understanding that your monthly contribution is not a condition of membership in the National Association of Letter Carriers or of employment by the Postal Service, nor is it a part of union dues. You may refuse to contribute without any 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 cancelled through the PostalEASE system. Only NALC members, NALC executive and administrative staff, and their immediate household family members may contribute to COLCPE. Contributions to COLCPE are not deductible for federal income tax purposes.



Contribute  
to **COLCPE**  
monthly from your bank account via  
**Electronic Fund Transfer**

Every month on the 1st of the month,  
COLCPE will automatically (and without a  
fee) deduct from your bank account the  
amount you choose to contribute.

Please fill out and mail this coupon  
with a voided check to:  
**NALC-COLCPE**  
100 Indiana Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20001-2144

I hereby authorize my bank to deduct from my checking account **monthly** the sum of:

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

and forward that amount to NALC's Committee on Letter Carriers Political Education (COLCPE).

I make this authorization voluntarily and may revoke it at any time by notifying the NALC COLCPE Committee in writing.

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

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

Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_ **OR** Postal Record number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

**Attach a voided check here:**

By making a COLCPE Electronic Fund Transfer authorization, you are doing so voluntarily with the understanding that your monthly contribution is not a condition of membership in the National Association of Letter Carriers or of employment by the Postal Service, nor is it a part of union dues. The guideline amounts listed above are merely suggestions, and you may contribute more, less or nothing at all without advantage, disadvantage or reprisal. COLCPE will use the money it receives to contribute to candidates for federal office and undertake other political spending as permitted by law. Only NALC members, NALC executive and administrative staff, and their immediate household family members may contribute to COLCPE. Contributions to COLCPE are not deductible for federal income tax purposes.

# VETERANS CORNER AUGUST 2013

## Veterans' and Service Connected Disability Compensation

If you served in the United States Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, or Navy and you were honorably discharged, you are eligible for veteran's benefits. Now if you have a disability as a result of your dedicated service, regardless if you are working or not, you can still apply for disability compensation.

### **So what is a service connected disability?**

To answer this question in its simplest terms: A service connected disability is an injury or illness that has occurred while you were on active duty. Yet, there are other situations where an injury or illness that was pre-existing might have been aggravated while you servicing on active duty. The key to this statement is that the injury or illness must have happened while serving on active duty.

Now if you think you might meet this criteria you should contact the United States Veterans Administration, your local Veterans Advocates (state or county), and begin the process by filing a claim. Take nothing for granted!

Remember...any injury or illness that may have originated from your honorable service to our country may have an impact on your ability to earn a future living not only for yourself, but also your family.

According to the United States Veterans Administration, many veterans and spouses are missing out on some earned entitlements and benefits.

### **Are all my injuries and illnesses that occurred while on active duty count toward a service connecting disability?**

Unfortunately no. When you file a claim you should list all injuries and illnesses that occurred or were aggravated while you were on active duty. The Veterans Administration will determine which injuries and illnesses are considered service connected disabilities.

### **What does the term "in the line of duty" actually mean?**

Specifically, any injury or illness that occurred or was aggravated during the time when you were on active duty is "in the line of duty". Often many Veterans believe or are confused with this term and fail to seek compensation.

As an example: If you sustained an injury or illness let's say from an automobile accident or while playing sports while you were on active duty...then you are "in the line of duty."

However, and there is always a however, any injury or illness that may have resulted from misconduct from alcohol, drugs, or illegal activities will not be considered "in the line of duty".

### **How long do I need to serve on active duty prior to filing a claim for service connected disability?**

There is no time limit! A service connected disability may occur at any time while on active duty.

### **Does it matter if I did not service on active duty during a period of war?**

No. You can still file a service connected disability claim.

### **Does the type of discharge I received from the military matter?**

Absolutely yes. To be eligible for veteran's benefits and programs your discharge or release must be under conditions other than dishonorable. Although the Veterans Administration does not describe the character of your military discharge in the same way as the military, they will look at the character of service listed in 'box 24' of your DD Form 214 to determine if you were discharge under conditions other than honorable.

You will always be eligible if your discharge is Honorable and you might be eligible if your service is listed as 'Discharge under Honorable Conditions or General Discharge'.

Discharge Under Other Than Honorable, Undesirable, Bad Conduct, or Dishonorable discharges are generally disqualifying factors.

### **How much compensation can I receive for my service connected disability?**

That all depends. After filing your claim and the Veterans Affairs makes a favorable decision, your disability rating can be anywhere from 0% to 100%.

### **Does the disability rating assigned to my service connected disability specifically apply to my medical condition and the circumstances surrounding my condition?**

Unfortunately no. The rating system is designed to compensate you in relationship to the impact that your service connected disability has on the diminished wage earning capacity of an average veteran.

(Source: United States Department of Veterans Affairs  
<http://www.va.gov>)

Thank you again from the NALC, Branch 3, and all of our members for your great personal sacrifice, vigilance and commitment to ensuring the security of our homeland and the preservation and promotion of freedom and justice for all people.

For further information or requests feel free to contact Mark S. Leon, 716-631-3940, e-mail [MrR2Leon@aol.com](mailto:MrR2Leon@aol.com) or Branch 3 716-631-3940, e-mail [NALCB3@aol.com](mailto:NALCB3@aol.com)



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The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writer and are not necessarily those of the publication staff or of the Officers of the Branch.

The information contained in this publication is true and complete to our best knowledge. All recommendations, on equipment and procedures are made without guarantees on the part of the authors or of the organization. Because the quality of equipment, services and methods are beyond our control, the organization and its publication authors disclaim all liability incurred in connection with use of this information.

Information in this publication may not be used for illegal purposes.

We invite all members to contribute articles for publication. Copy, if possible, should be double-spaced (but doesn't have to be) but **MUST** be signed by the contributor.

The Editor retains the right to edit, delete, or reject the article for the good of the Branch (and even this is subject to persuasion).

In the hope that material contained herein may be of benefit to the goals of the National Association of Letter Carriers, permission is hereby granted to other NALC Branches to copy or use material and/or cartoons promulgated in this publication with our best wishes...but remember to cite/give us some credit.

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Delano (93215)	Gracie Silva	(661) 325-5526
Lamont (93241)	Mike Munoz	(661) 304-5516
McFarland (93250)	Bonnie Whitbey	(661) 302-7354
Shafter (93263)	Norma Hamer	(661) 619-1465
Taft (93268)	Mike Meza	(805) 625-4541
Wasco (93280)	Jerry Patterson	(661) 699-2462
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South Station (93304)	Darryl Holderman	(661) 487-5353
South Station Alternate	Judy Kiyoshi	(661) 817-5529
East Bakersfield (93305)	Paul Salazar	(661) 327-7637
Hillcrest Station (93306)	Pam Smith	(661) 979-5854
Brundage Station (93307)	John Ortega	(661) 809-8140
Dole Court (93308)	Mike Towery	(661) 331-9171
Dole Court (93308)	Shari Sharpe	(661) 364-5544
Stockdale Station (93309)	Randy Courson	(661) 345-0256
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Mojave (93501)	Vacant	
California City (93504)	Russell Day	(760) 373-8963
Boron (93516)	Paula Hogg	(760) 373-8963
Edwards AF Base (93526)	Vacant	
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**Rick Plummer, Webmaster**



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(661) 325-5526

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Permit Number 32

## General Meeting

**Tuesday**  
**July 23, 2013**  
**7:00 p.m.**

Branch 782 Office  
2628 "F" Street  
Bakersfield, California

**FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED**

# \$500?

*YOU have a  
chance to  
win!*

*So, what do  
YOU  
have to  
do???*

*Attend the  
Branch 782  
meeting on  
July 23...*

OUT THERE



Don't forget to check out the web version of this newsletter! More is better... Go to [WWW.782NALC.COM](http://WWW.782NALC.COM)