

# National Association of Letter Carriers

## Branch 782

### E.A. Baker Union Update



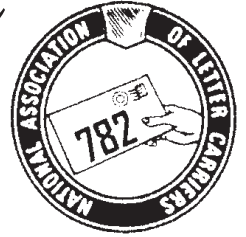
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EDWARDS AFB  
RIDGECREST  
TRONA

BORON  
LAMONT  
SHAFTER  
WASCO

**CHARTERED FEBRUARY 25, 1901**



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MARCH 2016



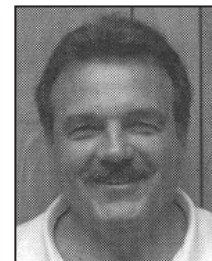
# We had a CCA Meeting on February 10, 2016....

*Continued on page 5*



# Contract Talks

by Lawrence Kania  
NALC Branch 3 President



Last month, three of the major postal unions traveled different avenues regarding contract negotiations. On February 11th, the National Rural Letter Carriers Association entered into a tentative agreement. The new agreement covers 3 years with contractual wage increases of 1.2%, 1.3% and 1.3% each year. The COLA's will also remain in effect. The agreement establishes a new non career workforce known as Assistant Rural Carriers. ARCs may only perform Saturday, Sunday, and holiday duties. They must apply for any desired RCA positions and may not automatically convert to an RCA vacancy.

On February 17th, the American Postal Worker's President Mark Dimondstein opened the APWU's interest arbitration case in an impassioned presentation to the interest arbitration panel. It should be noted that he clearly indicated that he is not interested in another concessionary contract negotiated by his predecessor which saved the USPS approximately 4 billion dollars. Most importantly he reiterated that his members are clearly opposed to the establishment of the third tier workforce demanded by the USPS. In closing he stated to the arbitration panel: "Management's drastic and regressive economic proposals demanding a new round of severe concessions, the elimination of the COLA, creation of a new lower third tier of career employee with reduced benefits amounting to a four tier wage system, higher percentages of non-career employees and less job security, are not only unwarranted by any legitimate measure, but are an insult. And they exacerbate the problem of vast income inequality."

Just a few days later, on February 19th, The National Association of Letter carriers opened their formal negotiations with the USPS in the Vincent Sombrotto building. In his opening statement President Orlando laid the groundwork for what our union hopes to achieve during negotiations:

**"The men and women letter carriers of the United States Postal Service have earned a reasonable increase in their wages and protection of their health insurance and other basic terms and conditions of employment. This will not be a concessionary agreement. We should not waste our valuable time, energy and resources, or yours, in pursuit of that which will not be.**

**Elements of our collective-bargaining agreements that have stood the test of time should not be tampered with. COLAs, no lay-offs clauses and contracting-out provisions are not Holy Scripture, but to letter carriers they are close. We would be well advised to approach those existing provisions with great respect and caution."**

President Rolando also discussed the problem of the turnover rate of our non-career workforce (CCA's). This was on the heels of a report which stated that the attrition rate of non-career employees doubled last fiscal year to 40%. Of all the crafts involved the CCA's had the highest attrition rate of almost 54%. Simply stated, one half of all CCA's either resigned or is separated within 1 year. These numbers clearly place our union in a strong position when attempting to negotiate better wages and benefits for our CCA's. It is also encouraging to see that the leadership of the APWU appears to have the same vision as our leadership.

The last time the major unions negotiated a contract the Postal Service was in serious financial trouble. The USPS was calling for the elimination of Saturday delivery and planning on closing plants. We were also constantly being attacked by members of Congress calling for our extinction. Luckily things have changed to the positive.

For the third straight year the USPS showed an operating profit for the first fiscal quarter. This year they made a 1.3 billion dollar profit for the first fiscal quarter. The increase profits are directly attributed to the increase of almost 16% in the parcel business due to online purchases. Overall our negotiating position has been strengthened by the increases in business and profits.

For the last few months local management has been using a new program that monitors a carriers street time. The program is very simple. It calculates the total number of pieces of mail delivered on your last 3999 and expects you to meet that street time every time you have the same volume. If you have a lower volume it mysteriously calculates a saving in street time which is filled by assigning downtime.

Presently there is NO program that can dictate either office time or street time. Management uses these programs to coerce carriers to work faster. They show you a piece of paper that says you have a half hour of under time. If you don't do it you can get in trouble. First of all it has been established that one 3999 does not establish ANY demonstrated performance. Especially when the 99 was done in summer. The program does NOT calculate parcel time, walking or weather conditions. Our contract states that a route should be 8 hours based on YOUR performance and not what some computer states, so don't let management turn you into a robot. Work at your pace and not a machines pace.

Article courtesy of the Buffalo, New York NALC Branch 3 BUZZ published in March 2016.

# Parties, Bathrooms and Bomb Threats....

by Mark Seitz, President  
NALC Branch 92

Even though the Union is there to help its fellow members on the workroom floor against management through the grievance procedure, it occasionally has to go to outside sources to accomplish what it needs to get done.

We have routinely had to file charges against the USPS with the National Labor Relations Board on things as simple as information requests or steward time to process grievances.

Management will routinely get slaps on the wrist and be told not to do it again. This isn't a strong enough punishment as far as I'm concerned.

We actually had to go to court last summer on a case in Portland. We ended up winning the case, and we are awaiting what will happen next. There are already multiple postings by management in Portland in which they agree they did what they weren't supposed to do.

In another example, in the South Portland zone (Southern Maine P & DC located in Scarborough) the manager of the plant decided that he was going to clean the men's bathroom/locker room during the time the Carriers were in the building — thus closing off access.

Even though there are six bathrooms at the facilities, the Carriers only have access to two of them. This left one bathroom stall for potentially 60+ Carriers to use. The Carriers are only in the building for

approximately two hours each morning. Why would you pick that time to close and clean the bathroom?

The supervisor and Postmaster were in agreement when the union approached them about the issue. Unfortunately it was in the hands of the Plant Manager, who decided that he would have them cleaned whenever he wanted them cleaned, and would not listen to reason.

There is one small problem with this, OSHA regulates the safety and health of all employees. OSHA has regulations that require a certain number of bathrooms to be available to employees while they are working. One stall was not enough so the union quietly made an official complaint. Two weeks later, OSHA was at the facility meeting with management and all the unions to discuss what was going on.

It was quickly determined that management was in violation. *A tour of the facility was also done by OSHA to see if there were other violations as well.* The management safety team seemed to be shaking their heads in disbelief as to why the bathroom times were not just changed! (No kidding. Good idea. Wish we had thought of that!!)

Magically, the times have been changed and the USPS is now in compliance. But, it just goes to show the stubbornness of some management employees.

Remember, there are many other avenues the union and our members can utilize instead of the grievance process, such as EEO and EAP.

On that note, please remember that FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act) is your friend. If you are going to be out for some time due to an injury or family member's injury, *please cover your absences.*

There are DOL forms as well as the NALC forms to use. Management has been known and is currently trying to discipline carriers for absences whether you have a doctor's note or not. If you have FMLA, they cannot do this at all.

If you are being disciplined, please ask to see your Steward immediately. If there is no Steward in your office, call me.

There was a recent bomb threat in the Portland office. We do not believe management followed protocol, as well as their own handbooks and manuals. The Stewards are investigating as well as taking statements so that we can be sure the health and safety of our members come first. A grievance will be forthcoming. It was a scary moment and a lot of our members, and myself as well, were pretty pissed off.

In fact, (when I heard that management didn't call the police and was just searching the building themselves) after calling

the inspectors, I took it upon myself to call the Portland police. They promptly showed up to do a search of the building aided by their bomb sniffing canine friend.

I did hear afterwards that there were a number of bomb threats made to the Northern New England district, but that doesn't mean one couldn't have been real. We are not happy with Management's attitude towards it all and are proceeding in the best way we can: the grievance process.

Please be careful out there as there has been a rise in all accidents, especially vehicle accidents.

Take your time, don't rush or go fast. It is not a race. Take the extra time to look both ways, try to avoid backing up! NEVER pull into people's driveways where you have to back up. NEVER drive backwards if you missed an RFD box. Get out and walk back if needed.

**YOUR SAFETY IS UP TO YOU!** Don't leave it in someone else's hands!

Article courtesy of the Portland, ME January/February 2016 NALC Branch 92 *Carrier's Corner.*





# Minutes of the February 2016 General Meeting

The regular meeting of Branch 782 was called to order by President Mike Towery at 7:00 p.m. on the 23rd day of February, 2016. The flag salute was led by Sgt. at Arms, Jerry Patterson. All members of the Executive Board were present. The stewards were present from Arvin, Avenal, Brundage, Camino Media, Delano, Downtown, East Bakersfield, Edwards, Hillcrest, Lamont, McFarland, Oildale, Shafter, South, Stockdale and Taft. Also present was Newsletter Editor, Basil Zuniga; Webmaster, Rick Plummer; Photographer, Anita Holderman; Assistant Treasurer, Debbie Guillet; Assistant Recording Secretary, Norma Hamer and Frank Martinez of the Social and Recreation Committee. The minutes of the January 26, 2016 meeting were read and accepted with the corrections that the website is 782nalc.com.

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP:** Applications were received from Daniel Villa, Mojave; Juan Chavez, Delano; Andrew Hennessee, Stockdale; Julissa Candela, Wasco; Percy Portillo, Downtown; Max Hawksley, Brundage; Dean Looker, Dole Ct.; Sam Audilett, Hillcrest; Jason Dooley, Wasco and Ashley Veach, Taft.

## REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMIT- OUT THERE



**TEES:** Basil Zuniga discussed the web version of the Newsletter and information on the web version that is important to all members. Mike Towery reported that Basil and his family folded the newsletter to help cut costs. We are trying to keep costs down until the new fiscal year begins in July. Mike informed members that two postal inspectors showed up at a carrier's home to interview her. She was given the Garrity warning which means that you can be disciplined or prosecuted, but that your answers are voluntary and you can end the interview at any time. The inspectors asked to record the interview. Mark Ramirez shared that the Health Benefit Plan is asking the members to complete Health Risk Assessment. It can be found on the NALC Health Benefit Plan website, upon completion you will be given a confirmation number and you can choose from three gifts. Frank Martinez of the Social and Recreation Committee had nothing new to report. Mike Towery asked if any member present was interested in being on the Social and Recreation Committee, Paul Greenfield volunteered. Kim Gerdes reported that there are 936 books remaining. Molly Biggar reported that the balance on the Food Drive cards is \$237.00. Norma Hamer reminded everyone that the Food Drive is coming up and that there will be a Food Drive meeting on March 10th.

**GOOD OF THE ASSOCIATION:** Mike Towery reported that Sierra Costal has had a fatality. A carrier was hit from behind, was not wearing a seatbelt, was thrown from the vehicle and died. If management catches you with no seatbelt or going through intersections with the door open, they will put you off work, with no pay. We had a carrier put off work today. If you value your job, DO IT SAFELY. Anita Holderman reminded everyone that you are being paid to do a job and to do it safely; no one wants to tell your family that you are not coming home.

Mike Towery reported that we have 20 non members (6 CCA's and 14 career carriers). Pam Smith reported that it is very important that we get members in Congress and even the President in office that support letter carrier issues. The Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF) is how we can donate money to help get those who are favorable to our issues elected. Some of the money will be donated to candidates, the cap is \$5000.00. Most of the money donated goes to pay carriers who have been released to work on campaigns. She reminded everyone that carriers cannot discuss these issues on the workroom floor or while in uniform. Any active carrier who violates the Hatch Act can be fired. Mike reminded members that they cannot even have yard signs or run for any partisan positions.

**IMPROVEMENT OF THE ASSOCIATION:** Mike reported the 21 day residual positions came down today. It looks like 4 CCA's will be promoted within 3 pay periods. He reported that the National Contract negotiations started yesterday. It takes 3 months to negotiate a contract. He reported that two of the cases set for Arbitration were settled at pre-Arb. One has been brought back to work after 14 months. The other was a limited duty carrier who will received back pay for 2 ½ years. Stockdale carrier Brenda Wench donated a pencil drawing of a mailbox to the branch.





The NALC National Food Drive is the outgrowth of a tradition of community service exhibited repeatedly by members of the Letter Carriers union over the years. These Carriers—who go into neighborhoods in every town six days a week—have always been involved when something needed to be done, whether it be collecting funds for a charity like the Muscular Dystrophy Association, watching over the elderly through the Carrier Alert program, assisting the American Red Cross during time of disaster, or rescuing victims of fires, crime, and other mishaps.

For many years, a number of Branches had collected food for the needy as part of their community service effort.

A national, coordinated effort by the NALC to help fight hunger in America grew out of discussions in 1991 by a number of leaders at the time, including NALC President Vincent R. Sombrotto, AFL-CIO Community Services Director Joseph Velasquez and Postmaster General Anthony Frank. A pilot Drive was held in 10 cities in October of 1991 and it proved so successful that work began immediately on making it a nationwide effort.

A revamped Drive was organized for May 15, 1993 (the second Saturday in May) with a goal of having at least one NALC Branch in each of the 50 states participating. The result was astounding! More than 11 million pounds of food was collected—*then a one-day record in the United States*—involving more than 220 NALC Branches.

*In 2015 the NALC collected almost 71 million pounds of food in one day!*



**FINANCIAL SECRETARY'S REPORT:** Anita Holderman reported that \$12,963.11 was collected for January 2016 and \$13,264.75 was collected for February

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

|                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Beginning Balance | \$42,945.50 |
| Dues and Income   | \$13,845.36 |
| Total Balance     | \$56,790.86 |
| Expenses          | \$ 9,598.86 |
| Ending Balance    | \$47,192.00 |

Wilder who donated her winning to the Food Drive cards. (\$21.50/\$21.50)

The Drawing for \$300 would have been won by Mike Zaragoza who was not present. There were 42 members and 3 guests present.

The meeting adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

KIM GERDES

NALC Branch 782 Recording Secretary

The 50/50 Drawing for the Food Drive cards was won by Dicie

## Non-Member List February 2016\*

|  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Brundage/East Bakersfield</b><br>I. Valdez<br>V. Guerrero | <b>Camino Media</b><br><i>C. Rodriguez</i> | <b>Delano</b><br>C.V. Quebral<br>D. Barreto<br><i>O. Maya</i> | <b>Taft</b><br>B. M. Krier<br>K. J. Hughes         |
| <b>Hillcrest</b><br><b>100% UNION!!!</b>                     | <b>Arvin</b><br><b>100% UNION!!!</b>       | <b>Lamont</b><br><b>100% UNION!!!</b>                         | <b>Tehachapi</b><br>B. C. Den Beeman<br>C. Rosales |
| <b>Downtown Station</b><br>S. Kirby<br>J. Cruz<br>D. Zuniga  | <b>Dole Court</b><br>D. Morris             | <b>Ridgecrest</b><br>G.D. Schatz                              | <b>Trona</b><br><b>100% UNION!!!</b>               |
| <b>South Station</b><br>M. Andresen                          | <b>Stockdale</b><br>J. Oh<br>M. Martinez   | <b>California City</b><br><b>100% UNION!!!</b>                | <b>Wasco</b><br><b>100% UNION!!!</b>               |
|  |  | <b>Shafter</b><br>M. D. Voights<br>L. M. New                  |  |

\*CCA names are in Italics There are 22 non-members.

# We had a CCA Meeting on February 10, 2016



*Pictures courtesy of NALC Branch 782 Photographer Anita Holderman!*

## CCAs, Know Your Rights!

by Bradley Hieb, Shop Steward  
NALC Branch 231  
(and former CCA!)

The CCA position is the first time the non career workforce at the Postal Service has been given many Rights! This month I am going to go over the timeline of when *YOU* are able to exercise these Rights.

When you are hired you are put on probation. The length of the probation is either 90 work days or 120 calendar days, which ever comes first.

Once a CCA becomes a member of the NALC, they are eligible to participate in the Retirement Savings Plan for CCAs.

This is an extremely important benefit that you need to make sure that you take advantage of!!!

If you participate in the Retirement Savings Plan for CCAs, you can transfer *your* accumulated money into the Thrift Savings Plan (which is the retirement program that the Postal Service matches your contributions up to 5%) when you make Regular.

After 60 calendar days you are eligible to Opt on a route.

What does "Opt on a route" mean?

If there is a vacant route in your office (someone is on vacation or long-term sick leave), you can "opt" on that route. When you are opted on a route you take on all the responsibilities and schedule of that route (like the start time, casing, delivering and also the scheduled day off).

But, you might not get the day off if you are scheduled to come in beforehand.

An Opt must have a duration of at least five days

and is held until the Regular on the route comes back.

As a CCA, this is the best way to guarantee you get at least 8 hours a day and gives you more stability working the same route and not being bounced around.

Once your probation is over, you are granted access to the grievance process as well as Weingarten Rights.

### "OuT tHeRe"





## OUT THERE



The grievance process is how the NALC deals with management when they violate the National Agreement and it's also used to combat discipline.

“Weingarten Rights” are the Right to have a Shop Steward present for questioning

you are eligible for FMLA Leave (Family and Medical Leave Act).

To be eligible you also must have worked 1,250 work hours during the 12 month period before the Leave. Most CCAs have that fulfilled in about 20 weeks.

that could be used to issue discipline. If a supervisor or manager or even postmaster wants to ask you questions, be sure to ask, “Can this lead to discipline?”

If they say, “Yes”, ask for your Shop Steward.

Another benefit of passing probation is the uniform allowance. Currently the allowance is \$420 a year.

After you have completed one full term,

FMLA is used if you or a dependent of yours has health condition that will cause you to be out of work for more than 3 days Unlike sick leave and annual leave, FMLA leave is not paid leave, it is there to secure you have a job when you come back.

After your first term you are also eligible for health benefits, which I won't go in depth on; just say the Postal Service makes a bi-weekly contribution to the total premium.

Lastly, once you have a year under your belt and/or make regular, you no longer have to serve another probation!

I hope this article was informative for all the newer CCAs and maybe even some that have been around for a while. If you have any questions about what was discussed or anything else for that matter give me a call (559) 281-8887 I will be happy to help.

Article courtesy of the Fresno, California March 2016 NALC Branch 231 *Postman's View*. Thanks, again, Editor Gary Bottoms!!!

# An Overview: CCA Health Benefit Options

To qualify for the Federal Health Benefits Program, CCA's must first have completed **one full year (365) days of current continuous employment** — including breaks of five days or less — regardless of when the five-day break occurs.

THREE options are currently available:

1. CCA's reappointed to another 360-day term after serving an initial 360-day term may choose *any* available plan in the FEHB program. CCA's must pay the TOTAL cost of the plan. There is NO Postal Service contribution toward the premium.

2. CCA's are provided with the option of participating in the USPS Non-career Health Care Plan. CCA's who select this plan receive a bi-weekly contribution of \$125 from the Postal Service toward their health insurance premium. “Self and Family” coverage is also available

but the Postal Service contribution remains \$125 regardless of whether you elect “Self-Only” or “Self and Family” coverage.

3. CCA's who want “Self and Family” coverage may select with the “NALC Consumer Driven Plan” or the “NALC Value Option Plan”. A CCA who selects “Self and Family” coverage in one of these NALC Health Benefit Plans will receive the \$125 bi-weekly Postal Service contribution towards the premium.

If you have any further questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,

LIZ DOW-RUBIO  
NALC Branch 504 Health Benefits Representative  
(505) 480-2530

Article courtesy of *El Sol* published by NALC Branch 504 in their March & April 2016 issue.

# 2016 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        |
| Prescription Drug Program                   | 1-800-933-6252        |
| CVS/Caremark Specialty Pharmacy             | 1-800-237-2767        |
| Durable Medical Equipment                   | 1-888-636-6252        |
| <b>"24/7 Nurse Hotline"</b>                 | <b>1-877-220-6252</b> |
| CVS/CareMark Pharmacist                     | 1-888-636-6252        |
| Solutions for Caregivers (24/7)             | 1-877-468-1016        |
| CIGNA PPO Locator Line                      | 1-877-220-6252        |
| CIGNA Organ Transplant Approval             | 1-800-668-9682        |
| Quit for Life (Tobacco Cessation)           | 1-866-784-8454        |
| CIGNA Health Rewards (Discounts)            | 1-800-558-9443        |
| <b>CIGNA Plus (Dental Discount)</b>         | <b>1-877-521-0244</b> |
| Disease Management Program                  | 1-800-227-3728        |
| OPM Retirement Info Center                  | 1-888-767-6738        |
| Federal Information Center                  | 1-800-333-4636        |
| Social Security Administration Info         | 1-800-772-1213        |
| PostalEase Human Resources USPS             | 1-877-477-3273        |
| Quest Lab Services (Bakersfield)            | (661) 631-8520        |
| LabCorp Lab Services Bakersfield            | (661) 631-9258        |
| <b>Shared Services Option 5 live person</b> | <b>1-877-477-3273</b> |

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

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

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

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

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

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

**PPO Deductible: Per Calendar Year**  
**\$300 "Individual"**  
**\$600 "Self & Family" or "Self Plus One"**

Many immunizations are Free (Adult/Child) when administered at a PPO pharmacy/facility. Some will require a prescription from the Doctor.

### URGENT CARE

**Sendas Urgent Care:** 9450 Ming Ave., Bakersfield (661) 587-2500  
 M-S 8 a.m. - 9 p.m. Saturday/Sunday 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.  
 ASK FOR OTHER LOCATIONS

**Accelerated Urgent Care:** 9710 Brimhall, (661) 829-6747  
 9500 Stockdale Hwy, (661) 735-3943 8 a.m. - 9:30 p.m. daily  
 ASK FOR OTHER LOCATIONS

Our PPO doctors and facilities—through (OAP Network) CIGNA—save us and the Plan thousands of dollars and it is top notch care at a discount rate. You don't lose anything. You are saving money for the best care!!!

**MARK RAMIREZ**  
**NALC Branch 782 Health Benefit Plan Representative**  
**(661) 398-6075**

### OUT THERE



"This is a summary of some of the features of the NALC Health Benefit Plan High Option. Detailed information on the benefits for the 2016 NALC Health Benefit Plan can be found in the official brochure (RI 71-009). All benefits are subject to the definitions, limitations, and exclusions set forth in the official brochure."



# MEDICARE PART B??

## To our NALC members who are retired and nearing the age of 65:

You should be receiving information about Medicare about three months prior to your 65th birthday. I would urge you to read, and ASK QUESTIONS about purchasing Medicare Part B. Be aware that if you choose not to enroll, there is a very, **VERY** substantial monetary late enrollment penalty that you will be charged for the months past your enrollment window!

Everybody has their own individual situation. For me, Medicare Part A is free. (Medicare A is free if you have paid into Social Security for the necessary number of quarters.) I enrolled in Medicare Part B three months prior to my 65th birthday, and it will cost me \$122.00 per month.

### *Why is Medicare B important?*

If you have the NALC Health Benefit Plan (NALC HBP) medical insurance *AND* you have Medicare Parts A & B, Medicare is billed first and the NALC HBP is the secondary payer. Your “out-of-pocket” will be minimal.

For our NALC HBP members: When a member enrolls in Medicare, it is recommended that they contact the Plan at 1-888-636-6252 and notify them that you will be enrolled in Medicare on a specific date. This will streamline the process of coordinating benefits between Medicare and the NALC HBP.

There is also Medicare Part D which is Drug prescriptions. But, our NALC Health Benefit Plan has an EXCELLENT drug prescription program, so — in most cases — Part D is NOT needed.

Again, everybody’s situation is a little different, but I hope you will ASK QUESTIONS when you are eligible for Medicare for yourself and spouse. You can call Medicare at 1-800-633-4227 for answers. There is also information available at your local Social Security office.

For free helpful publications, go to PUBLICATIONS.USA.GOV on the internet or call 1-719-295-2675 to request a FREE Consumer Information Catalog. There is also a free publication entitled “Medicare & You” which is printed each new year.

I hope this is helpful information.

***REMEMBER, IT DOESN'T HURT TO ASK...  
KNOWLEDGE IS GOOD!!!***

MARK RAMIREZ

NALC Branch 782 Health Benefit Plan Representative

# Health Prescription: Humor from Mark Ramirez!

## WHAT'S THE WORST AGE?

“Sixty is the worst age to be,” said the 60 year old man. “You always feel like you have to pee, and most of the time you stand there and nothing comes out.”

“Ah, that’s nothing,” said the 70 year old. “When you’re seventy, you don’t have bowel movements any more. You take laxatives, eat bran, sit on the toilet all day and nothing comes out!”

“Actually,” said the 80 year old, “eighty is the worst age of all.”

“Do you have trouble peeing, too?” asked the 60 year old.

“No, I pee every morning at 6:00. I pee like a race-horse on a flat rock — no problem at all.”

“So, do you have a problem with your bowel movement?” asked the 70 year old.

“No, I have one every morning at 6:30.”

Exasperated, the 60 year-old said, “You pee every morning at 6:00 and crap every morning at 6:30. So what’s so bad about being 80?”

“I don’t wake up until 7:00.”

# President's Message

by Dave Barbuzzi, President  
NALC Branch 25

The most recent headache that is being reported to the branch office by the rank and file Letter Carriers deals with "Informed Visibility".

This is the program whereby Letter Carriers are now tasked with doing the work to determine the "operational efficiency" of the Postal Service that used to be contracted out to private companies.

That's a fancy way of saying that your scanner talks to you and tells you to scan a number of mail pieces at a particular address or from a particular collection box.

According to the literature on this program, the scanner should not alert a Letter Carrier if said Carrier is traveling more than 5 mph. Also, the literature says that no Letter Carrier that has a hearing impairment should be disciplined for missing the test address because they didn't hear the alert or feel the vibration of the scanner.

Finally, and this is the one that concerns me most: the number of alerts that a Carrier receives is configurable by management.

Currently, according to the literature that I have seen, the maximum number of times that a Carrier route can be selected for sampling is 5 times per day, 25 times per week, and 300 times per quarter. When it comes to collection boxes, 30-40 collection boxes are targeted per day per district.

Let's think about the 5 times per day aspect of the sampling. Fifteen seems to be the magic number of mail pieces that Carriers are being asked to scan at each location. Let's say in a perfect world that each location actually has fifteen mail pieces with the proper barcodes.

How long does that take? Have you figured out where I'm going with this?

If you complain to your boss about this increase in demand on your time, you'll most likely be met with the response, "You get paid to do your job, so do it."

Well, we all do indeed get paid to do our jobs. However, what if you are not on the overtime list and you WERE going to have an 8 hour day and then, low and behold, you get 5 sampling requests for 15 pieces of mail each...

There's no way that you could have known about that when you were determining that you didn't need to complete a 3996 in the morning.

Now, you're stuck working overtime and you don't want to.

If that happens to you, you should notify management from the street that you are not able to complete your duties in 8 hours and that you require assistance. Then, when you return from the road you should complete a 3996 to document why you were not able to complete your duties in eight hours.

We should, however, do everything in our power to make this program succeed. Now more than ever.

Last week, NALC opened negotiations with the Postal Service on a new National Agreement. Our current agreement expires in May. This program demonstrates precisely why Letter Carriers deserve more.

The Service is saving money by not paying an outside firm to conduct this testing. We want some of that money, plain and simple.

The postal service saved money by not having to pay a boat load of supervisors a

ton of money to conduct mail counts and inspections. We got our routes, now we want our money.

Our NALC national officers know what they are doing. (Again: Our NALC national officers know what they are doing.)

OUT THERE



The NRLCA (National Rural Letter Carriers' Association) has a tentative agreement with the postal service that is for 3 years. It includes pay raises each year and preserves the COLA.

As far as I'm concerned, that's a good START for the NALC.

If you read the opening remarks that President Rolando made at the bargaining table, it is clear that our negotiating team believes that we have a unique value that is not matched by the other crafts and we should be compensated commensurate with that value.

Finally, as I stated above, the National Agreement expires in May. Whenever a new agreement is negotiated or arbitrated, a period of local implementation follows. If you want something addressed in your local, form a committee and contact the office.

Article courtesy of the Tewksbury, MA March 2016 Mass Northeast Merged Branch 25 Wake Up!



## Clip and Save

### Management's Instructions on How to Order Uniform Allowance Cards

- Go to the Blue Page, Human Resources
- Select Human Resources "Home"
- Go to "Quick Links"- "Uniform Program"
- Select Career Employees
- Select Uniform Allowance Request Interactive Worksheet
- Supervisor or Postmaster can now submit an email request to HRSSC
- HRSSC will then send a written notification to the employee verifying the request, including the amount of the allowance
- HRSSC will also send a written notification to Citibank authorizing your uniform allowance card to be issued.

#### \*\*\*NOTE\*\*\*

There is also a training video located on the same page for your supervisor to learn how to order your uniform card! This training should be used as a remedy requested in any grievances involving uniform allowance issues.

Information courtesy of the Center Line, Michigan NALC Branch 4374 February 2016 *Front Lines*

# New Vehicles are in the pipeline...

by Don Martin, Steward  
NALC Branch 122

Well, the new vehicles are on their way! This new vehicle is called the "Ram Promaster". By the looks of the picture, these vehicles look very big. They are a 1.5 ton vehicle — bigger than a LLV, but smaller than a 2 ton. They will also be taller than a UV by fifteen inches. So, they are just over 17 ft. long, as well as just over 8 ft. tall. They will be front wheel drive.

Yes, we will be getting USPS training. It will consist of 45 minutes of vehicle familiarization. Then there will be a controlled driving skill course, lasting one hour and thirty minutes. It will consist of in-line backing, alley dock backing for both sides, and parallel parking. Each employee must complete each station within the recommended time. There will be emphasis on backing with mirrors and the assistance of the backing camera.

Then the driving on the street training that will last one hour and fifteen minutes. This will consist of the following; lane changes, left turn, right turn, in lane handling, parking and backing. So total training will be three hours and 30 minutes.

Now, the vehicles will not come all at one time. These vehicles are to replace all of the Caravans at first; but, rest assured, we will all get one of the vehicles eventually.

Be safe out there!

Article courtesy of the Lansing, MI  
Branch 122 *Highlights* published in Jan/Feb 2016



# Bidding? How Does That Work?

by Ron Gast, Executive Vice-President  
NALC Branch 14

Here in the Louisville Installation, a route posting comes out every 4 weeks.

It lists all available routes for bid by full time city Letter Carriers. This posting opens on a Tuesday and is posted for 10 calendar days with the closing coming at 11:59 pm on the following Thursday (unless Thursday is a holiday and then it closes on Friday evening).

The requirement and rules governing the posting are covered in Article(s) 41.1.B and 30.B.22 (**Local Agreement**). It would be wonderful if there were never any problems or concerns with this posting, but being that Shared Services is the overall manager, there are occasionally some issues to deal with.

Unfortunately, many of the problems arising out of the route posting occur due to City Carriers simply not following the rules or doing their due diligence. The first example is one that occurs much more often than it should when a City Carrier on light or limited duty bids on an assignment.

Not to give the wrong impression, there is nothing wrong with light or limited duty Carriers bidding on assignments — as long as it is accomplished in accordance with the rules.

On April 20, 2008 a Memorandum of Understanding was made between the NALC and the Postal Service providing procedures where a City Carrier as a result of an illness or injury is temporarily unable to work all of the duties of an assignment may bid.

Listed on the cover page of the posting is the following requirement:

**“If you bid and are currently on light or limited duty or are receiving COP or compensation, sick leave, annual leave or LWOP in lieu of sick leave you must provide medical certification *BY THE CLOSE OF THE POSTING*. This certi-**

**fication should indicate that you will be able to perform the duties of the bid-for position within six (6) months of the bid. This medical certification should be submitted in a separate sealed envelope addressed to the USPS Medical Unit.”**

Simply stated, if you are on light or limited duty and cannot perform the duties of the assignment, you must submit medical certification stating that you will be able to do the assignment within six (6) months or you will not be awarded the assignment.

This certification is due prior to the closing of the posting, and not one day later.

This unfortunately has happened many times lately. And, because the documentation was not submitted on time, the Carrier does not get the assignment.

Don't let this happen to you! Ensure that you provide the documentation well in advance of the closing. You must also keep in mind that if you are unable to perform

the duties of the assignment in six (6) months, you are given an additional six (6) months (with medical certification); furthermore, if still unable to perform the assignment at the end of that period, the assignment will be vacated leaving you as an unassigned Carrier

Please ensure that you get medical certification that you will be able to perform the assignment within that period.

The other issue that occurs even more frequently is when a bidding Carrier does not investigate the assignment prior to bidding and the closing of the posting.

Example: Route is listed as Curblin Motorized (mounted) on the posting and a Carrier bids on it. As the senior bidder, that person is awarded the assignment. They then find out that the assignment is Park and Loop (walking) and want to rescind their bid. Unfortunately, once the posting closes on Thursday evening, it is too late to rescind the bid, and now you must assume the assignment on the effective date.

Non Scheduled days are another example, where the posting lists the assignment as having Sunday and Wednesday as NS days, but it is actually Sunday and Friday. Again, once the posting has closed, it is too late to change the awarding.

This often causes Carriers to get very upset and invariably seem to feel that the

OUT THERE





fault is that of the Branch and/or the Postal Service...as opposed to the Carrier themselves.

Please don't make these mistakes! Ensure that you check out any assignment *before* placing your bid. The posting should be placed somewhere in your office on the Tuesday of the opening and remain posted until the following Thursday, 10 days later.

If you are unsure of where this posting is located, ask your Steward or Supervisor. Additionally, take the time to physically check out the assignment by going to the station and asking questions to ensure that you know what you are getting into.

Do not wait till the last day to place your bid as you may have issues with doing this to include technical difficulties. You may place your bid telephonically or on liteblue, but paper bids are no longer allowed in the Louisville Installation unless both of the other methods are unavailable. You must have your login credentials (password) to bid and there have also been instances where Carriers tried to get this at the last moment and were unable to.

One other contractual issue to consider is in Article 12.3. This states that a Carrier may be a successful bidder no more than seven (7) times during the life of the contract unless: the job is higher level (T-6 position/swing), due to elimination of a Carriers position or if the assignment is closer to the Carriers place of residence.

This means that you can bid as many times as you wish, but you can only be the successful bidder seven times unless you are bidding on a swing or bidding closer to home.

The current Contract began in 2011 and continues until May 2016 or until a new Contract is ratified.

To summarize, if you wish to bid on vacant assignments, they are posted every

**Just in case you think that bidding problems only occur in Louisville, KY... this was the lead item in the Branch 782 February 2002 newsletter. Frank Thomasy and Mike Towery were working this back then, too!**

# National Association of Letter Carriers

## Branch 782

### E.A. Baker Union Update



ARVIN  
DELANO  
RIDGECREST

AVENAL  
EDWARDS AFB  
SHAFTER  
TRONA

BAKERSFIELD  
LAMONT  
TAFT  
WASCO

BORON  
MOJAVE  
TEHACHAPI



CHARTERED FEBRUARY 25, 1901

VOLUME LXXV NUMBER II

FEBRUARY 2002

# Frankly Speaking

Recently, a carrier in Bakersfield bid on a vacant full time carrier assignment.

The carrier bid on the assignment via "phone bid".

When the successful bidder for that vacant assignment was posted, the carrier noticed that junior carrier was awarded the bid. The carrier notified Vice-President Mike Towery who investigated the carrier's claim.

Vice-President Towery contacted personnel and he was told that the bid was never received.

When Vice-President Towery talked to the carrier, he discovered the carrier did not get the bid confirmation number. If the carrier had the confirmation number, it would have been easy to trace his bid. Because the carrier did not have a confirmation number and personnel said they never received the bid, there was nothing to support the carrier's bid claim.

Phone bidding has been an option for several years. I would suggest that anyone utilizing the phone bidding process contact personnel and discuss how to make a phone bid.



*Continued on next page...*

4th Tuesday and close 10 days later on Thursday.

Ensure that you investigate the details of the assignment before placing your bid. If you have any restrictions that could keep you from performing the assignment, obtain required medical certification and submit it to the proper office well in advance of the closing date of the posting.

If you do not have your required login

credentials, get with your Steward or Supervisor for assistance before you need it.

If you follow these simple requirements, you will be able to bid on any assignment that is posted, and if you are the senior bidder, you will be awarded the assignment.

Article courtesy of the Louisville, Kentucky NALC Branch 14 Newsletter published in January 2016

# COMPENSATION: Worker's Comp, etc.



by Jeanne Larch, NALC Branch 4374

There are many facets to the Workers' Compensation process that are challenging to anyone trying to navigate the whole system. The most daunting part is the deluge of paperwork that it takes to keep up with your claim. You cannot rely totally on your doctor's office, the post office you work at, or the postal service itself to manage your claim and communicate with OWCP on your behalf. There will be certain parts that can be taken care of by management and other parts that must be the USPS's responsibility, however the largest job is yours, the claimant. Here are some of the responsibilities you have.

You must file an injury claim form, a CA-1 for a traumatic injury, or a CA-2 for an occupational disease claim. Do it as soon as possible when injured out on the route or in the office you work at, or if your doctor tells you that your condition is related to your work duties.

Obtain the proper paperwork when you go to your choice of doctors. If you have a traumatic injury, you need a CA-16 for the first visit to be paid by OWCP. This form will have a diagnosis listed and will be the first medical in your injury file.

Begin a medical file for your injury. It is up to you to move the paperwork and get it to the right places when needed. You can request copies of your chart notes from every visit to your doctor. The chart notes now are very thorough in most cases, they have a complete and current review of your injury. It is important to be current with your medical information especially at the beginning of the injury. Keep copies and ask for copies at each visit. Obtain an absence note for work that shows how long you will be off and the date of your next appointment.

The basic medical report to get an approved claim must contain a diagnosed condition, disease or illness and a relationship to the work event or duties. Your doctor has to write a report with this type of medical reasoning, the more detailed explanation of both the injury event and the medical condition the more likely for approval. Your doctor must know your work duties and be able to relate these activities in the medical report. Many times chart notes are inclusive of this information, but often OWCP will ask for additional information in the first letter you get from your claims examiner. A copy of this letter should be given to your doctor and a description of your work duties. Request help from your doctor with this medical report.

Do not be disturbed by a letter from the US Department

of Labor, OWCP. Most injury claims need additional medical information or information to develop the claim. Several facts concerning a claim have to be resolved before it can be approved, and that information can always be provided by either you or your doctor.

A great relationship with a doctor is key to getting the proper medical information. Unfortunately many of us do not have a doctor that we can depend on to feel responsible enough to assist with the requests from workers' compensation concerning our job injury. Your primary care doctor can be the bridge from the beginning of the claim to the need for a specialist. Your primary care doctor knows you the best and can diagnose and relate your injury to your job and then refer you to a specialist if you have an ongoing condition or occupational disease. This is the difficult part, but you have to compel your doctor to be responsible to you and your health. Your doctor must write the medical reports that are needed and required to get an approved claim. Many doctors are not motivated to help; but if appealed to in a realistic and rational way they can usually see that it is part of their responsibility to you.

The Department of Labor has a website to assist with physician selection. These doctors are already enrolled as OWCP providers, and you can search by name, city, zip code or specialty. Website <http://owcp.dol.acs-inc.com/portal/main.do>

## OUT THERE



Information courtesy of the Center Line, Michigan NALC Branch 4374 February 2016 *Front Lines*



# President's Report

by David Miller  
Branch 458 President

"OuT tHeRe"



On February 5th, several Officers of Branch 458 along with NALC representatives from several other locals from around the state, attended a training over the GPS capabilities of the scanners being used by Letter Carriers on our routes. I must tell you that what we learned was very troubling.

I've always counseled Letter Carriers that we should expect to be seen on our routes at all times. Whether it be by management covertly spying (which is technically prohibited), customer's having surveillance cameras watching us or someone calling in about something they observe a Carrier doing, every move we make on the street should be treated as if someone is watching. **GPS takes this observance of EACH Carrier to an entirely new level.**

The GPS capability on the scanner initiates as soon as the Carrier initiates the scanner after removing it from the cradle.

The Carrier Route Summary available

from the Delivery Management System (DMS) on the computer also imports clock rings and extracts information from the Delivery Operations Information System (DOIS).

DOIS is management's daily management software they use to tell Carriers, "You have downtime today, here's a split."

The Summary will show the current location of all Carriers on the street within the zone with the scanner "pinging" to 3 satellites about every minute. Those pings are viewed on a "Breadcrumb video," wherein **an observer can watch where the Carrier is about every 60 seconds during their day.** This data is available for review for up to 30 days.

While they aren't observing every Carrier every day, they *are* watching certain Carriers on a repetitive basis and there are certain things that will "flag" a Carrier for observation. Those things can include: leaving the line of travel for extended

periods of time, Carriers taking a no-lunch, Carriers who are consistently not making management's workload expectations and Carriers remaining idle on their route for more than a few minutes at a time. Additionally, you need to know this: There have been several Carriers throughout the state that have been issued Notices of Removal for their actions as of mid-February. More will come.

How do we defeat this? It's pretty simple - we don't. We have no aim to defeat it. UPS and FedEx have had this software for years. It's become the shipping industry standard.

Currently, customers who are registered for Product Tracking Services are notified via email or text message when their package leaves the facility for delivery. If the package has a signature requirement, they can electronically sign for their package online and waive the requirement at the time of delivery. They can also designate specific delivery instructions for pack-

ages that will communicate to the Carrier via the electronic messaging app on the scanner. Soon, they will be able to receive images of their package pre-delivery so they know what it looks like.

This technology is here to stay and it's only going to become more refined. Currently, the Oklahoma District staffs two full-time positions that monitor Carriers every day. We also know that they have been deployed to the streets to personally observe Carriers — without announcing their presence — in order to verify when Carriers are not performing their assigned duties.

Be smart. Do the job they give you, don't waste time, work at your own pace and take your assigned breaks, lunch and additional comfort stops. There is nothing that can be done to a Carrier who does their job correctly. We need to all be professional in our jobs and set an example for all to see.

On another note, at the February Branch Meeting the membership voted to authorize a committee that was appointed by me to research whether or not purchasing a car for the Branch would be more fiscally responsible than continuing to pay mileage for all of the trips our officers and Formal Step A designees are required to take in order to represent our members throughout Oklahoma.

The motion also gave authority to the committee to make a purchase (if it was deemed to be the best decision) up to \$25,000.

After a thorough review of all the trips taken over the last 18 months, it was determined that the Branch would save money by purchasing a car.

After reviewing online car inventories, on February 16 Ken Mayfield and Steve Riggs made an offer on a car at Smicklas Chevrolet. That offer was rejected. They then made an offer on a car at Bob Howard Chevrolet. That offer was accepted. As a result, Branch 458 now owns a 2015 Chevrolet Malibu.

Article courtesy of the Oklahoma City, OK  
NALC Branch 458 *Sooner Script*  
published in March 2016

# Not for 'nuthin,' but it is what it is, and that's what she said



by Tracy Rosell  
Branch 2128 Shop Steward

**A**t times I find working for the Postal Service is almost like becoming a walking, talking advocate of "cliches".

*"It is what it is." "Actions speak louder than words." "Drinking the Kool Aid." "Read between the lines."*

## "OuT tHeRe"



The definition of a cliché is: an expression that is so overused that it loses its original meaning or effect of the phrase. When we say them, do we mean them? And, when we do hear them, do they have an effect on our actions?

These clichés are heard daily in our workplace; yet, I am pretty sure most Carriers do not know what they mean. For example, *"Drink the Kool Aid"* refers to a cult in the late 70's run by Jim Jones.

He called a "white night" meeting in which he convinced his entire following to drink a mixture of poison mixed with Flavor Aid to make a political statement. (Just in case you were wondering, the flavor of choice was grape.)

Some clichés need to be understood and applied to ensure that a

strong union can result in a prosperous membership. *Don't worry, I will not be showing up to work with a gallon of grape Kool Aid...*

*"A house built on sand, will eventually sink."*

Yes, we have heard this one many times. But, like any other cliché, we don't hear it. Our intentions are to be a strong Branch,

But, (Oh No, here we go again!) *"The road to Hell is paved with good intentions."*

Just like building a house we cannot skip the steps needed in securing a solid ground. I believe we must start from the ground up.

For a human to survive, we need three staples, food, water and shelter. Without those three simple needs, we would perish. To enhance a human's life, we could add things like exercise and meditation to result in not just surviving, but strengthening ones life.

As a union member I do not just want to survive, I want to prosper! I want to become stronger! I want support, diversity

and reinforcement. How do we do this?

*"Behind every great man there's a great woman."* (Or vice versa of course!!) When I walk in the door to begin my tour, I feel strong and empowered. *"I am lion hear me roar."*

Why?

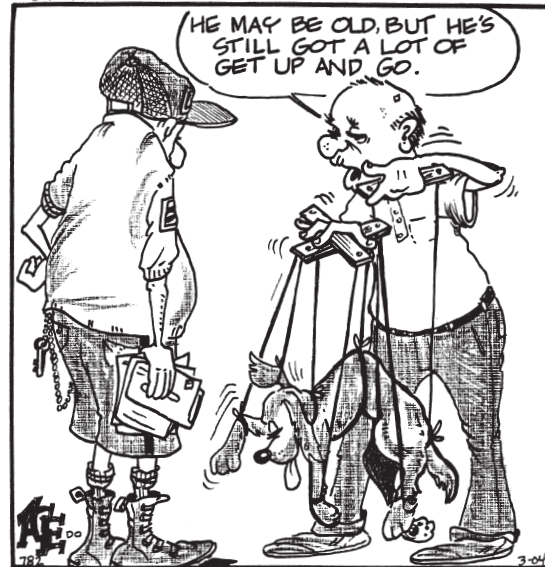
Very simple, just like food, water or shelter. If I know my union, (brace yourself for another one), *"...has my back"*, I can go to work strong, educated, resilient and with conviction.

I, at times, lose this strength but never directly after leaving a union meeting.

It saddens me when I see some of my peers feeling alone and, (cover your ears), *"thrown to the wolves"*.

But, guess what? And I want you to think about this next "Diarrhea: of clichés: *"YOU GET WHAT YOU GIVE"*. Some may say, "Meetings are boring. I don't have the time. I can't be bothered." But, I am here to tell you, if you want to start and end your tour feeling

## OUT THERE





empowered as I do, this is your answer: **“KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!”**

When I look around the room at the pathetically low turnout at our union meetings, I could get bummed.

However, even though I only see the same 20 or so fellow workers, I know **WITHOUT A DOUBT** that, if I needed anyone of them, I could just give a wink and a nod and they would be fighting for me, regardless of whether our personalities mesh.

Ultimately as silly as it sounds, when I walk in to begin my tour, I may look like I am alone, but you don't see what I see — that group of people behind me ready to fight. I can't imagine having to show up alone in the environment that we are faced with today.

Why would you want to (yup, here's another one) **“short change yourself”**?

Oh that's right; I forgot the overused excuses that are used when people tell that they aren't coming to the union meeting. Well, I am **ALMOST** sorry to say, “I don't want to hear any more excuses.” Truly, I don't have time, why bother?

If you are surprised that a small, local Branch meeting can make someone feel this way, you would be amazed at what attending a National Convention does to a person's psyche.

That amount of activists and peers who have my back can't even fit in the parking lot of our post office! *That* is real empowerment!!!

I was ready to take on all things wrong in the world, a

kind of high that is better than any addict's drug of choice.

**“At the end of the day”**, why any Carrier denies themselves this kind of power, I will never understand.

But, management knows what they can do to keep us from being empowered...

**“Divide and conquer.”**

The lack of ability for a group of people to not be able to get along is dispiriting.

I have worked in Lakehurst for twenty-two years and have seen many transitions occur. But, the one thing that seems to always remain the same in Lakehurst is the lack of union support from its members and the inner office fighting.

It is **NOT** a requirement as a strong union member to be best friends with the Carrier next to you. We are — *to say the least* — a diverse group of people. **“In my book”**, that is a positive attribute.

Abraham Lincoln is believed to be one of the greatest and most beloved Presidents of all time. Interestingly enough, he is known for surrounding himself with people who did not agree with his values and who would give him **“a run for his money”**.

He wrote “For every one of my entrepreneurial ventures, I consult with experts in the field who are more than happy to share their expertise with me given that we have built strong relationships, and I do the same for them whenever I can. These valuable advisors are so important to my success because they tell me how it is, even if it isn't what I want to hear.” (Abraham Lincoln)

OUT THERE



How easy is it for us to surround ourselves with **“Yes Men”** who don't challenge us? How unproductive is it to write off someone as, “hated,” instead of trying to understand why or where the information is coming from? How catastrophic is it to not see someone's potential due to not understanding their ways. I am just as guilty of this as the next guy in **“taking the easy road”**.

My challenge to Lakehurst employees, Branch 2128 members and to every single NALC member in the United States — including officers — is this: **Be a foundation for the house that is being built.**

Please, NALC President Fred Rolando! Support all of your Business Agents, who in turn will strengthen all of your Branch Presidents who should — at all costs — back up and defend all of the Stewards who will ensure that each and every member is protected and strong!

Consequently, to maintain this house, the membership must do the same by supporting your Stewards, and up the ladder we go all the way to President Rolando.

Embrace that we are all not (I swear I am almost done) **“made from the same mold”**.

Accept the differences in abilities, job performance, route sizes, opinions, personalities of each other and support each other regardless!

I would like to thank Editor Al Kloza for his last quarter's article, one full of support, reassurance and the cold hard truth of what I need to work on to ensure a happier membership. Just like Lincoln, sometimes hard to hear, yet true and warranted.

If anyone was counting, I have successfully used 20 cliches while hopefully not **“Beating a dead horse”**. (Make that 21 unless you find more...)

This article is courtesy of the Winter 2016 Toms River, New Jersey NALC Branch 2128 *Union Vision*. Thank you to Al and Tracy!!!

from the  
**editor-guy:**

Recently, I got a text from Dennis Crenshaw who is assigned to Route 405.

“A man who lived on Marc A. Mitscher Ct. passed away and the services are tomorrow. I didn’t realize until his widow told me that he retired from South Station in 1988. Thought you might want to know.”



Ray Brady (flanked by Basil Zuniga and Paul McCarthy) is shown in a portion of a picture of 93304 Carriers circa 1980’s.

I’m glad that Dennis contacted me and that I was able to get in touch with a few other folks.

***In Memorium***  
**Ray Everett Brady, Jr.**  
April 16, 1935 — February 16, 2016

when Ray was laid to rest.

As I explained to Ray’s widow, Berlene, I always feel bad when a Letter Carrier “leaves” and their passing is not noted. (This refers to a “passage”

through an event like retirement or if someone actually passes away.)

Ray’s graveside services were conducted with a special decorum — military honors.

Because of those honors, I learned something about Ray Brady that I’d never known:

He was a military veteran who had served time in both the U.S. Navy *and* in the United States Air Force!



In this picture by Berlene, Ray checks integrity of a *Playboy* magazine. You are an “old timer” if you delivered out of a vehicle like this...

The next day, both Frank Thomasy and I were in attendance at Greenlawn Memorial Park Southwest

It caused me to reflect on a few things that I want to share.

Like everyone else who has

ever worn a Letter Carrier uniform, I walked into this job with a focus on trying to dowhatever I needed to do to keep the job.

I didn’t spend a lot of time talking to people around me or in trying to learn about them or their history. I just tried to get through that day and go home in one piece.

Does that make sense to anyone else but me?

As I type this (and look at the picture of Paul, Ray and me), I have to grin and wonder. Just what *did* Ray think about me? I had a beard...a pony tail...and (despite the fact that I’d done almost six years in the U.S. Coast Guard) probably didn’t look like I would have anything in common with him

After speaking with Ray’s widow, Berlene, I decided that I wanted to share a little about Ray’s life to show you that he probably had a lot in common with each one of us.

As I begin, let me point out something: Ray and Berlene married on April, 21, 1955 and would have been married 61 years this coming April!

Ray Brady graduated from Arvin High School in 1953 and enrolled at Bakersfield College.

Ray enlisted in the Navy in 1956 and was assigned for two years to a destroyer stationed out of Japan. During those two years, Ray never came home but he and Berlene wrote many, many letters. (Maybe why that’s why he became a Letter Carrier!)

Many of Ray’s letters kept referring to his being homesick... and Berlene knew that he was really missing her! During those two years, Berlene lived in Arvin with Ray’s Mom and Dad (who Berlene referred to as “Mr. Brady”)

After his discharge, Ray went to work for the Railroad for about two years. Berlene knew that he wasn’t a Brakeman, but with the kind of a job he had, he was often out “on the road”; and — with the way things were back then — Ray was allowed to have Berlene join him. She would be with him for many of the two or three week job-related trips that he took. Those were good days.

Ray had really enjoyed his time in the military and decided to enlist in the USAF in 1958.

Part of the reason that he joined the Air Force was that they had “accompanied tours”. That meant that Berlene could be with him wherever he might be stationed. He was stationed for four years at Larson AFB near Moses Lake, WA where he worked as an electrician and as a photographer. Ray was a good photographer, but so was Berlene. She took a picture of him during his time in the Air Force that was his father’s favorite picture of Ray. (The Kern County Associated Veterans enlarged that picture and placed it on an easel at Ray’s graveside military honors services.)

Berlene shared that Ray was a little “different”. She felt that he was “just a kid” in so many ways.

For example, while in the Air Force, he came home from work one Saturday afternoon and told her that he had gotten





Ray Brady and Paul Alexander posing for a group picture in the late 1960s at the Annex.

her a job on the base and that she was going to start work on Tuesday. At the time, she didn't know how to drive and he had to teach her before she started working. The Air Force enlistment lasted four years and he was offered \$1000 to re-enlist but decided that he wanted to come back to California. That was around 1962.

After being in the Air Force, Ray returned to work at the Railroad for awhile.

Ray started with the Post Office 1966 and Berlene shared a few postal memories.

Ray didn't like fast food. As a result, Berlene would take his lunch to him out on the street EVERY day when he was out delivering or he would come home for lunch. One day, when he was working close to home, Ray showed up with two female postal employees and told Berlene that they were there to have lunch, too. He really liked the way that Berlene cooked!

Even after he retired, as they would pass a fast food place, Berlene would suggest that they stop and get a hamburger. He would always tell her, "Your food is way better than that stuff!"

He liked being with Berlene. Although she came "with a family" (and quite a large one at that), he didn't necessarily get along with them. He would sometimes tell her that he was glad that they were finally gone after they left.

Berlene's baby sister was a particular challenge for him. One day, Ray told

her, "Rhonda, I'll just leave you alone. You leave me alone and we'll get along just fine." And? After that, they got along just fine.

Ray was never one for socializing. He tended to be a one-woman man and didn't seem to find a need to do much with anybody else. They did go to church and Ray had one minister who came by the house pretty consistently on a weekly basis in the last few years of his life. Ray liked him a lot.

Ray was a good worker. He told her that one postal supervisor told him, "If I had five other guys like you, things would be great here!" That made him feel good.

But then, the Post Office started changing. Service started going downhill. He felt that workers were being harrassed.

And Ray just didn't want to be a part of it anymore.

Berlene shared, "Eventually, Ray got to the

point where he just hated working at the Post Office." (This was during the Walt Hamm and John Smith era...)

He started trying to figure out how he might be able to leave. After twenty years as a Letter Carrier, he retired on June 13, 1986.

Ray then worked at Sears for about three years and even worked at an In-N-Out to keep busy. (He might not have liked fast food, but he didn't mind working at a fast food place!)

During many of those years working at the Post Office, they lived at in a small two bedroom home at 2709 Lum. In the late 1970's Ray started talking about wanting to move. They bought a brand new house in April 1981 on a street called Marc A. Mitscher. (Some of the other streets in their neighborhood are William Halsey, Chester W. Nimitz, Harry E. Yarnell. If you know anything about

WWII, these names might ring a bell...) At that time, everything was new in the neighborhood: streets, trees, houses, and even the dirt lots looked new!

Berlene didn't really want to move from Lum because it was close to everything. The new house was big (four bedrooms). It was going to require a whole lot more work to keep up with *and* (as she put it), "The new house was out in the country." In fact, she was so upset that she told Ray, "You can get that new house if you want, but I'm not going to help you move anything. If you want help you can get my sisters to help you." And I didn't lift a finger. My sisters did everything." Ray and Berlene eventually had a housewarming in September 1981 and she still has the candle that Basil Zuniga made them for a gift.

*Continued on next page...*

### "Out there"





Supervisor Henry Garcia congratulates Ray Brady when he retires on June 13, 1986 as Clerk Danny Chavez looks on. There is a not-so-funny story which Berlene tells about how this one handshake came about...

Berlene was #2 of eleven children *and she only had four brothers*. Raised in rural Arkansas, her father taught all of his girls how to do the work that needed to be done. She plowed fields with a horse, learned how to swing a hammer, and how to fix anything that needed fixing. She carried that work ethic with her when the family moved to California where he met Ray.

Although Ray was able to work on things, over the course of their 61 year marriage he generally tended to let Berlene mow the lawn, do the yardwork, and fix any broken appliances.

She attributes this to the way that he was raised. They came from different worlds. He had some education. She only went to school through the first grade.

She feels that she had a lot more common sense than Ray did, and she used that common sense to make their relationship work.

Although I didn't get a chance to ask Ray to confirm this, Berlene told me that — through the years — different people would ask her, "What did you ever see in Ray?" She would reply, "Ray is just crazy about

me!" *THAT* was "The Secret" to what made their relationship work so well for so long!

And, another thing: Berlene is feisty and she doesn't believe in pampering herself. She's always been a hard worker! Here's one example.

Ray loved oranges. But, he would just take one orange off the tree (which *she* had planted

instead of him...) and eat it. He never thought about picking any of the other oranges.

That's just the way that he was.

Last year, when she was 82 years old, she noticed that the tree was loaded with oranges. So, she got up on the ladder.

As she recalls, "I fell off that ladder and lay on the ground for a little while to see if I'd hurt anything. When I decided nothing was broken, I just got back up on the ladder to finish."

*She wound up falling off the ladder four times but she got all of those oranges picked!*

Berlene also shared something else as we were finishing up our visit. It points to the way that the best laid plans that *WE* have may not happen...

The last few years of Ray's life were no picnic.

Ray was diagnosed seven years ago with Alzheimers and she saw him go through so much of a decline. Even though he was still with her, in many ways he wasn't.

Berlene is emphatic that Alzheimers is a terrible disease because it robbed her of Ray. She feels very strongly that much more needs to be done to find a cure!!

**(Editor-guy Note:** On October 22, 2016, more than 600 communities nationwide will "Walk to End Alzheimer's®".

It is the world's largest event to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer's care, support and research. This event calls on participants of all ages and abilities to reclaim the future for millions! Think about it.)

# Frankly Speaking

*Do you read obituaries?  
Or, have you heard about the passing of a Postal employee that you used to work with?*

Frank Thomasy has volunteered to be the contact person to notify NALC Branch 782 members when retired/former/active duty Letter Carriers pass away.

If you want to be notified of a service or a memorial for a someone who has passed, send your e-mail address to Frank at: [pr782nalc@att.net](mailto:pr782nalc@att.net). He can also be contacted at the following phone number: (661) 398-1741.

When Frank is notified of a service — or reads an obituary — he will send out e-mails with as much information as he has to everyone he has on his list.



## What to do in case of active carrier's death

1. Notify employee's immediate supervisor.
2. Notify postmaster.
3. Notify personnel section (if any).
4. Contact the following for accounts or benefits:
  - a. The local NALC union office;
  - b. If veteran, the veterans' Administration local office;
  - c. Local bank or postal credit union;
  - d. Social Security Administration local office;
  - e. Insurance companies for policies on life (if NALC Mutual Benefit Association, write 100 Indiana Ave., N.W., Room 510, Washington, DC 20001-2144 or call 202-638-4318; if Federal Employees Group Life Insurance, contact local personnel office); hospitalization (if NALC Health Benefit Plan, write 20547 Waverly Court, Ashburn, VA 22093 or call 703-729-4677); house; and automobile;
  - f. Internal Revenue Service local office;
  - g. U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Employee Service and Records Center, Boyers, PA 16017 or the NALC retirement office, 100 Indiana Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20001-2144. You can phone the NALC retirement office toll-free at 800-424-5186 on Monday, Wednesday, or Thursday, 10 a.m.-12 noon and 2-4 p.m. (Eastern time).
5. Change name on all important papers to survivor's name.
6. Notify station superintendent (or supervisor) or postmaster of the time and place of memorial services.
7. Have mortuary officials obtain enough certified death certificates for your needs. They can advise how many.
8. Give immediate supervisor locker keys and badge.
9. Fill out these forms (available in some post offices from personnel section or postmaster): SF 2800—application for death benefit; SF 1153—claim of designated beneficiary for unpaid compensation; SF 1155—claim for unpaid compensation, no designated beneficiary; FE 6—claim for benefits, Federal Employees Group Life Insurance.
10. Check with USFS personnel section or postmaster for annuity for yourself and any minor children.
11. If previous marriage, have divorce papers. If present marriage, have marriage license.
12. Contact the station's personnel office about your potential eligibility for Annuity Protection Plan payments.

## What to do in case of retired carrier's death

1. Notify Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Retirement Programs, Employee Service and Records Center, Boyers, PA 16017. In your letter include: full name of deceased; exact date of birth; exact date of death; CSA claim number, address, relationship and signature of person entitled to survivor benefits.
2. For quicker action, notify NALC's Director of Retired Members, 100 Indiana Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20001-2144, or call toll-free 800-424-5186 Monday, Wednesday, or Thursday, 10 am.-noon and 2-4 p.m. (Eastern time). NALC will alert OPM so that survivor benefits will commence as quickly as possible, and will send you Forms SF 2800—application for death benefit, survivor annuity and FE 6—claim for benefits, Federal Employees Group Life Insurance. Remember that survivor annuities are not paid automatically. You must apply to OPM to receive benefits.
3. Return any uncashed checks to the address on the accompanying Treasury Department envelope. If payments are made directly to a financial institution, notify it of the retiree's date of death and request any future checks be returned to the Treasury Department.
4. Contact the following for accounts or benefits:
  - a. The local NALC union office;
  - b. If veteran, the Veterans' Administration local office and the commanding officer of local military installation;
  - c. Local bank or other financial institutions;
  - d. Social Security Administration local office;
  - e. Insurance companies for policies on life (if NALC Mutual Benefit Association, write 100 Indiana Ave., N.W. Room 510, Washington, DC 20001-2144 or call 202-638-4318); hospitalization (if NALC Health Benefit Plan, write 20547 Waverly Court, Ashburn, VA 22093 or call 703-729-4677); house; and automobile;
  - f. Internal Revenue Service local office.
5. Change name on all important papers to survivor's name.
6. Have mortuary officials obtain enough certified death certificates for your needs. They can advise how many.
7. Gather miscellaneous necessary papers such as birth certificate, marriage license, divorce decree, death certificates of deceased children or spouses or other documents establishing identity of relationship of survivor.

**NOTE: If spouse of retired carrier dies, call NALC retirement office to obtain the forms to: restore annuity to full amount switch health coverage from family to self (unless dependent children); change beneficiary of government life insurance.**

**KEEP THIS PAGE WITH YOUR IMPORTANT PAPERS**



from

# Kim Gerdes

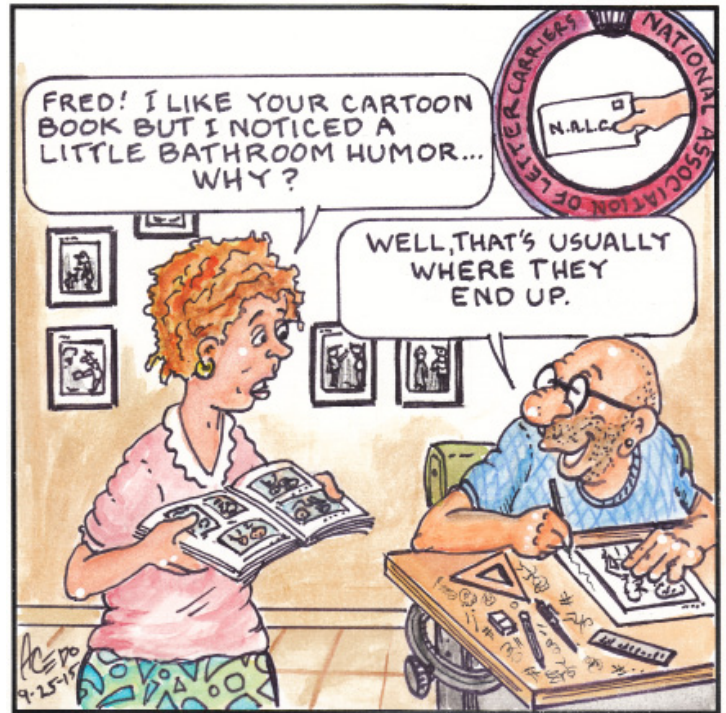
## Recording Secretary

We hope you consider ordering a Fred Acedo **Out tHeRe** cartoon book!!

Over 130 pages of cartoons featuring our Letter Carrier world can now be yours for an amazingly low cost!!

To make life simple, request as many copies as you want by clipping the form at the bottom of the page and returning it & payment via USPS mail to Branch 782.

### "OuT tHeRe"



You can also order by contacting me via e-mail at "krgerdes91@hotmail.com". Or, you can call me at the phone number on the bottom of this page. The book and projected shipping costs are provided below. You can even share *your* work life with family and friends with this book as a Christmas gift...

Finally, I want to present you with an up-to-now unpublished example of Fred's work. Enjoy!

Dear Kim Gerdes, NALC Branch 782 Recording Secretary

Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ **Out tHeRe** book (s)! I know people who will love them!

Name and address for shipping: \_\_\_\_\_

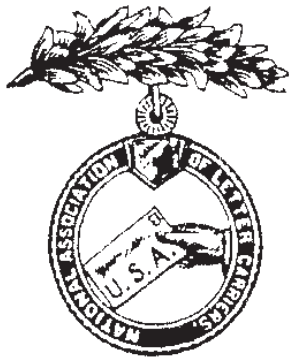


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The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writer and are not necessarily those of the publication staff or of the Officers of the Branch.

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.

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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).

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Rick Plummer, Webmaster



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# General Meeting Tuesday March 22, 2016 7:00 p.m.

Branch 782 Office  
 2628 "F" Street  
 Bakersfield, California

## FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

# Out there

*These four cartoons were originally published in the February 2016 web version of our newsletter. Wanted to share them with you, now.*



Each and EVERY month, Branch 782 sponsors a drawing to encourage YOU to come to our Meeting\*. There was no winner in February 2016!!!  
**Now, YOU could win \$350!!!**

If no one wins in March, it will go up by \$50 each month until there is a winner — or until it hits the max limit of \$500.

\*The fine print: TO WIN THE MONEY YOU HAVE TO BE PRESENT WHEN YOUR NAME IS DRAWN!



Curious about this picture?  
 Check out the info  
 on page 11...