

# National Association of Letter Carriers

## Branch 782

### E.A. Baker Union Update

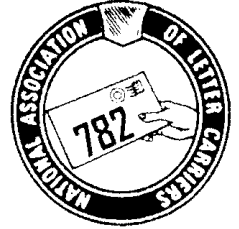


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MAY 2012

# Johnny on the Spot



As the debate over postal reform shifts to the House and heats up a few more degrees, this might be a good time to take a step back and look at a little history.

In many ways, history is repeating itself, and a look back may give us some sense of where things are headed (or not).

In 1975, the country was just coming out of a recession caused by the 1973-74 stock market crash and OPEC's decision to quadruple oil prices. As a result of the recession, mail volumes plummeted—and in 1974—the Postal Service incurred a \$2.3 billion deficit (almost \$10 billion in today's dollars). There were concerns that the volume might never return.

To address the deficit problem, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report in June of 1975 entitled "\$100 Million Could Be Saved Annually In Postal Operations in Rural America Without Affecting the Quality of Service." The controversial report recommended closing 12,000 small post offices that were operating at a loss. (Adjusted for inflation, \$100 million would come to about \$400 million today.)

It wasn't the first time rural post offices had come under assault. A few years earlier, when the Department of the Post Office was transformed into a corporate-type entity called the Postal Service, rural residents feared what would happen, and they persuaded the authors of the 1970 Postal Reorganization Act to include language in the bill that protected rural post offices. Hence this oft-quoted passage in Title 39 [section 101 (b)]:

"The Postal Service shall provide a maximum degree of effective and regular postal services to rural areas, communities, and small towns where post offices are not self-sustaining. No small post office shall be closed solely for operating at a deficit, it being the specific intent of the Congress that effective postal services shall be insured to residents of both urban and rural communities."

After the GAO issued its 1975 report, Congress began holding hearings about post office closings, and lawmakers on both sides of the aisle spoke up for the value of rural post offices. At the hearings, Republican House

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member Keith Sebelius of Kansas stated, “When a community loses its post office, it also loses its identity.” And Democrat Joe Evans of Tennessee told the House committee, “It is unconscionable to even consider the closing of these post offices.”

The protest against closing post offices fell on deaf ears at the Postal Service, however—and just a few weeks after the hearings—postal headquarters announced new guidelines making it easier to close small post offices. Claiming that rural carriers would provide better service than a post office, Postmaster General Benjamin Bailar shut down 200 post offices in three months and put another 600 “under scrutiny.”

On February 28, 1976, 44 members of Congress sued the Postal Service. Three senators and 41 House members charged that the post office closings were illegal “and a massive assault on the country’s small post offices.”

A few hours after the suit was filed, U.S. District Court Judge John Lewis Smith issued a restraining order barring further rural shutdowns. In March, Smith ruled that communities needed at least 90 days notice of a closing.

The ruling gave Congress time to act, and in September it passed the Postal Reorganization Act Amendments of 1976 (H.R.8603; P.L. 94-421) by an overwhelming majority, 267 to 113. While Democrats voted 213 to 45 in favor and Republicans opposed it, 68 to 52, those 52 Republicans made the bill a bipartisan success and showed that it wasn’t just Democrats who cared about protecting post offices.

In his official statement on signing the bill into law, President Gerald Ford said, “I am pleased by the responsible and effective bipartisan cooperation that was evident in the drafting and passage of this legislation.”

The bill put a moratorium on closing rural post offices until the following April, while a “blue ribbon commission” studied the broad range of problems confronting the Postal Service. The bill also put new restrictions on closing post offices, and it’s thanks to this legislation that the Postal Service must consider the effect of a closing on the community and employees as well as “whether the closing is consistent with the policy of the government that the Postal Service provide a maximum degree of effective postal service to rural areas.”

The PRA Amendments also gave communities the right to appeal a post office closing, a right that was quickly

exercised. From September 1976 to the end of 1979, the Postal Service tried to close 90 post offices, and 24 communities filed an appeal with the Postal Rate Commission. In every case, the PRC ruled in favor of the community and remanded the closing decision back to the Postal Service for further consideration. Only 33 of the post offices eventually closed.

The parallels with current events are almost too obvious to mention. The GAO continues to push for post office closings, and just a couple of weeks ago, it issued another report to Congress advocating closures to help deal with the deficit. As in 1975, closing thousands of small post offices would yield only very minimal savings.

Closing the 3,650 post offices in the Retail Access Optimization Initiative (RAOI), for example, would save \$100 or \$200 million (according to the PRC and Postal Service, respectively).

In 1975, the GAO said the closings would be justified “if the alternative mail service would be at least as good.” The new GAO report similarly endorses the Postal Service’s view that post offices can be replaced by “alternative access” to postal services — contract postal units, rural delivery, kiosks, and so on — even though the people served by post offices are not satisfied with these other options. Last July, the Postal Service revised its discontinuance procedures for closing post offices — shortening the process and making it easier to close post offices — just as the Postmaster General did in 1975. The shorter process didn’t make much difference because of the moratorium, but those new rules are now in place.

Another obvious historical parallel is that the general public — despite the Postal Service’s unsubstantiated claims that people are visiting the post office much less frequently — continues to feel invested in their post offices. Just as they did in 1976, people have spent the last year protesting the closings with letters to elected officials, rallies, letters to the editor, petitions, appeals, and speaking out at public hearings.

I guess history really does repeat itself. This is why it is so very important to have elected officials who will represent us fairly.

On this very subject, on Thursday May 10th, 2012 the House of Representatives voted for a 5% cut in postal and federal workers pay. Republican members of the House provided all 218 votes in favor of the measure, while 183 Democrats and 16 Republicans opposed it.

The 2012 Sequester Replacement Reconciliation Act, introduced by Budget Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI), would phase-in the five percent contribution increases to both the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) and the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) over five years. The bill requires FERS employees to contribute 5.8 percent of each paycheck toward the FERS basic annuity portion of their pensions and requires CSRS employees to contribute 12 percent, yet it does not increase employees' annuities or provide any additional benefits upon retirement.

The bill would also require new federal employees who are hired after 2012 with fewer than five years of previous federal service to immediately pay 5.8 percent to the FERS plan, with no phase-in.

In addition, the bill would eliminate the FERS Social Security supplement for new employees hired beginning in 2013, which is now paid to FERS employees who voluntarily retire before reaching age 62.

did in this month's newsletter, but I am sure that Basil will get them out as soon as possible.

I also want to make sure that I give a special shout-out to Annette Ortega. She is my wife. She is also a clerk at Bakersfield's South Station. She, side-by-side with many of our Branch 782 members, has spent many, many hours doing as much as possible to make this year's Food Drive a success. She is so special to me!!!

In line with that, I also thank each and every one of the unit Food Drive Coordinators. They put in countless hours and did much, more more than most people realize as they worked hard to organize all of the local efforts.

On a similar note, I want to thank Brundage Station Manager Jaz Brar for reminding me to thank South Station's clerk David Lomas and his wife, Sylvia. "Lomas Photos" has provided a great service to many of our units. They have taken station pictures which will be great momentos

in years to come. If anybody is interested, they can be reached at [www.lomas-photos.com](http://www.lomas-photos.com) or you can call them at this phone number: (661) 496-5468.

Finally, I offer my congratulations to Mabel Lyons. She has served our Branch as a Shop Steward for many years and she has decided to hang up her satchel. I know that everyone would wish a long and healthy retirement for her as she enters this new phase of her life. I don't think that she's going to miss the joy of delivering mail during the summer months...



On a brighter note, the 20th Annual NALC/USPS Food drive is happening as I write this article. Friday night we conducted a rally in front of the Stockdale station to highlight this special effort. Thank you to those who showed up and held signs advertising the event!

As I write this late Saturday afternoon, it seems to be that the "bags" have worked as I gathered more food than last year. Hope you all did the same. I don't think that there is going to be enough time to publish the results of how we

As you can tell, there has been a lot going on.

Come to the general meeting on May 22. We'll discuss the latest developments in many of the issues that face you and all of your fellow Letter Carriers.

Respectfully,

JOHN ORTEGA  
NALC Branch 782 Vice-President

**Basil,**

**I found this article very interesting from the *Sacramento Bee*. I thought I'd like to share it with membership:**

## **Viewpoint: Congress should stop meddling and let the Post Office run itself**

“ Stop blaming the United States Postal Service for how badly it's run; start first with the United States government.

The Postal Service is in crisis, fighting for its life. Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe wants to resume a cost-cutting plan that would shed \$22 billion from the agency's annual costs, now about \$75 billion, by 2015.

But each change, from post office closings to job cuts to eliminating Saturday delivery, requires congressional approval, and therein lies the problem.

The Postal Service Reorganization Act of 1970 was intended to transform the mail system from a dysfunctional dumping ground for political patronage into a self-sustaining, independent agency that would “run like a business.”

But Congress won't let it. Though the Postal Service runs entirely on customer revenue – no taxpayer dollars – it can't shutter money-losing post offices, needs permission for rate hikes, and since 1984, has wanted to end Saturday delivery and been denied by micromanaging lawmakers.

On Monday, a Postal Service moratorium on closing facilities will expire. But lawmakers, unable to finish legislation to revamp the struggling agency, want the moratorium extended.

Senators warned Donahoe in a letter last week of “considerable concern in the Senate” that resuming closures “will unnecessarily degrade the infrastructure which is one of the Postal Service's most important assets.”

Baloney. It's pure parochial, bring-home-the-bacon politics – lawmakers protecting wasteful postal centers in their districts just so they can get re-elected. I protect your job; you protect mine.

The biggest drain on the Postal Service, however, is the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act, or PAEA.

Passed by Congress in 2006, critics say PAEA forces the USPS to pay for their health and pension benefits 75 years in advance. In other words, pay billions in benefits for employees that haven't even been born yet, let alone hired.

But proponents argue that while the agency is meeting its retirement pension obligations – in fact, there's a surplus of up to \$75 billion, according to two independent analyses – it's not meeting its retiree health benefit obligation.

Prior to 2006, the retiree health care benefit was completely unfunded, according to Ali Ahmed, a spokesman for Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Vista. USPS only paid the Treasury as the Treasury paid a retiree's health care claim.

“That is not a sustainable model for an institution that is losing mail volume,” Ahmed tells me.

PAEA established a 10-year catch-up period in which the USPS makes pre-payments on the unfunded liabilities so that by 2017, it's covering both health and pension benefits for all employees retiring in that 10-year window, while at the same time positioning the agency to meet all future pension obligations.

It's like a mortgage payment: Eliminate your debt faster to pay on your principal sooner. The fear being, however, get it now because decreasing mail volume means less revenue to pay debt down the line, meaning that the government would have to pay that pension obligation – meaning you, the taxpayer.

Postal unions argue that PAEA requirements are wiping out profit margins, putting the Postal Service \$20 billion in the red despite having cut more than 110,000 jobs since the recession began.

A new bill, HR 1351, would undo the PAEA payment mandate, allowing USPS to use the annual \$5 billion in pension pre-payments to meet its financial obligations.

Over half the members of the House have co-sponsored HR 1351, yet critics claim Issa bottled it up in the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, which he chairs.

But Ahmed says the committee did vote and HR 1351 didn't pass. Somehow, something's wrong when a bill supported by half the House members is defeated in committee by a handful.

Instead, Issa is pushing his bill, HR 2309, purportedly filled with cost-saving measures to revitalize the Postal Service. Donahoe told Congress, “Practically everything in the bill, we are in support.”

Then why do we need a bill?

Issa's bill establishes a new board of federal appointees to oversee post office closures and other cost-cutting decisions. What, more government? The Postal Service can't do that itself?

Postal unions claim Issa's bill also denies the Postal Service access to that \$75 billion in excess contributions to its pension fund. Can it do that? Should the Postal Service rob from Peter to pay Paul?

Let that be their choice, and if they fail, run out of money and come to Washington with hat in hand, Washington should say, “No. You screwed up. Go away.”

I trust nobody in this scenario, but what's really wrong here is government's ham-handed mangling from all sides – lawmakers insisting on less government while continuing to saddle the Postal Service with further government encumbrance.

Stop meddling. Let the Postal Service run its operation as it sees fit, not as lawmakers see fit. And if the agency meets an untimely end, then let it come. At least we'll know whom to blame.”

DIANA CHAVEZ-HERRERA  
NALC Branch 782 Legislative Liaison

# Jerry Says...

As Congress looks for ways to “save” the Postal Service, we should all take to heart what we *all* can do to improve our performance.

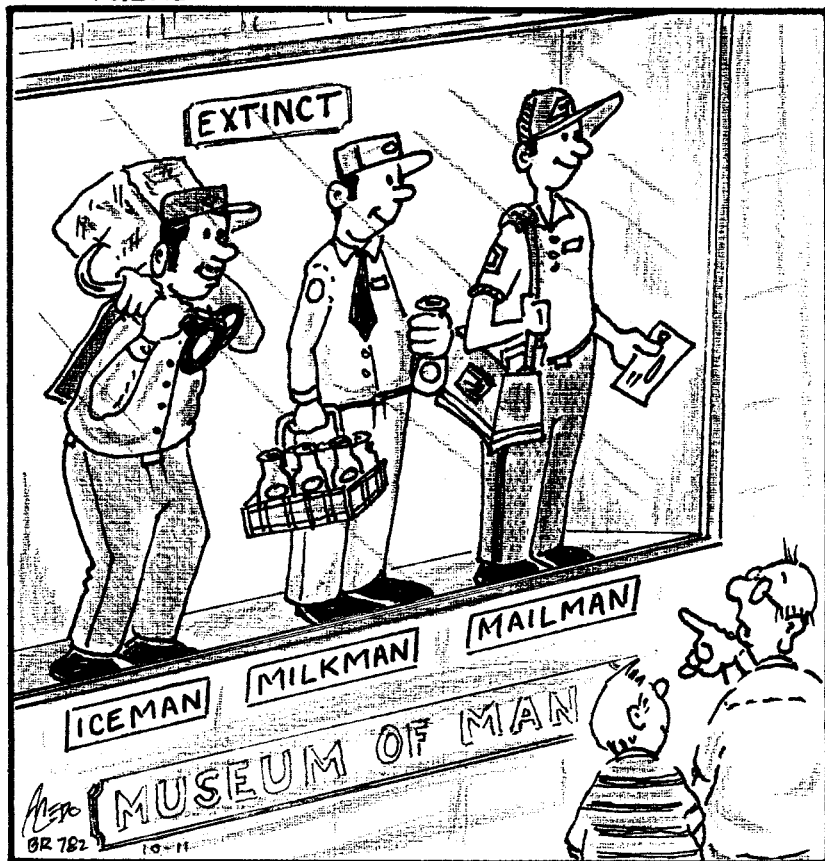
This comment isn't just directed at Letter Carriers—Clerks, Mail Handlers and even Supervisors need to focus on things which can really make the Postal Service do a better job.

Last Monday, we were getting another dispatch in a truck. Most of us had our mail up while others were pulling down. As the truck dropped off two wire cages, I noticed that each cage had about twenty bundles of pre-sort magazines.

First of all, in a small office like Wasco, we don't have a lot of room to put empty equipment. And, when they only pick equipment up on Saturday, two cages take up a whole lot more room than one!

Why couldn't the Mail Handlers consolidate those bundles into one piece of equipment? Or better yet, why not put them into an orange tub to ship to us? At least the orange tubs can be stacked so that they take less room.

## OUT THERE



Additionally, the wire cages are harder to move for the Clerks. They also make their jobs harder because they have to reach over the side and way down to the bottom to get the mail. Not only does this take time, it could probably lead to back problems. Then, the wire cages have to be pushed out to the back dock...which already has pallets of tubs, pallets of trays, and four APCs.

My point? Making the decision to use a better piece of equipment/less equipment to transport mail would make the operation more efficient. Being more efficient would save money...

Another issue: We get Priority Mail flats and letters which are thrown into the hampers. They have to be taken out of the hamper and thrown on a table to be passed out. This takes time. Seems to me that most of them can be worked more efficiently if they would initially be put into tubs. This would save time because the Carrier could work them more quickly at the case right out of the tub.

Faster = the possibility of making “percent to standard”. Carriers know that “percent to standard” is one thing that management looks at to see if you are being efficient. And, the emphasis on this is because the USPS is looking to save money.

The tail doesn't wag the dog. Letter Carriers don't make decisions on how operations work. Somebody, somewhere at a higher level has the responsibility and the duty to make changes to how things are done. Someone at the Plant, or in upper Management, needs to look at this and improve how we do what we do.

Congress is looking for examples to show how the USPS is not a viable organization. If Congress enacts rules which take away our control to make improvements, we're going to find our jobs on the chopping block.

Letter Carriers are the last in line to get mail for our customers. There are countless things that have to happen to get any one individual piece of mail from the mailing customer to the recipient. It is really amazing when you think about it. The USPS can take one letter dropped into a box in New York City and it can be delivered in Wasco, California in just a few short days at the cheapest rate of any industrialized country in the world.

Shouldn't somebody make sure that we improve on how we do things? Wasco can't be the only office in the entire USPS system that would be improved if someone made the decision to provide a more workable product to the workroom floor.

JERRY PATTERSON  
93280 Shop Steward

# Horrible or Dreadful... YOU Make the Call!

Last Monday morning I was lying in bed deciding whether to get up or not. It was a tad cool outside, a brisk wind blowing, and I could hear the birds' chirpings but it felt so good to just rest a bit longer before getting up. The wife had arisen earlier and I could smell the aroma of coffee she was brewing. But instead of getting up, I realized that I had nothing urgent to do so I decided to just roll over and get a little more well-deserved rest. In other words, a little more sleep.

Just then the phone started ringing and I presumed it was one of our daughters checking in on us, as they occasionally do at the beginning of the week. A moment later the wife opened the bedroom door and handed me the phone, saying in a low monotone voice that she believed it was a letter carrier and he seemed very troubled. I took the phone and thanked my wife, and without me saying a word, the carrier [let's call him Bill on the condition of anonymity] began talking so fast that I couldn't understand him. I said, wow Bill, calm down and start over, at the same time trying to clear the cobwebs from my head, because what I thought he had just said was very disturbing. I could hear Bill as he inhaled, then exhaled, and started talking very methodically.

Bill stated that they had just had a stand-up talk at his station, one of the largest stations in Austin, with the supervisor giving the stand-up talk and the station manager and postmaster standing by in support and to confirm what the supervisor was saying.

What I remember Bill saying is that the stand-up talk went something like this: *Your station is the first station to receive this talk and we will be making all the stations within the next few days, but at the beginning of the next pay period, mail will be delivered only five days a week, Monday through Friday, with no delivery on Saturdays. The regular carriers will carry their route all five days; the T/6's [NALC 2's] would be downgraded and utilized only as PT/F's, carrying all hand-offs; thereby eliminating all overtime, covering the regular carrier on annual leave, sick days and sometimes on uncovered routes.* I thought to myself that this could be devastating to Bill but realized Bill had twenty-five years of service and had nothing to worry about. Bill informed me that he still had two children in high school and one in college and that he needed all the overtime he could get to preserve his normal way of life. The questions started coming fast and furious: *Les, what can we do? What am I going to do? What is the Union going to do?* I informed Bill that I would call National Headquarters to see what was going on. About that time another call was coming in and I excused myself from Bill and went to the other call. Before I clicked over to the next caller, I knew exactly what the caller was calling about. Sure

enough, it was a T/6 [NALC 2] from the same station. Let's call him Jim, also on condition of anonymity; I stopped Jim when he started telling me about the stand-up talk. I informed Jim that I had already talked to Bill. Of course Jim was concerned about being used as a PT/F instead of a T/6 and not getting many work hours. Jim had a little over six years of service, had recently married and he and his wife had just purchased a new home and talked about starting a family. Then the questions started coming at breakneck speed, *what am I going to do? What am I going to tell my new bride? What is going to happen if I can't make my mortgage payments?* Jim also wanted to know if he could be terminated. I informed him probably not but he might be forced to resign [starved out] if he was not getting enough work hours. I also informed Jim that if layoffs occurred that they would probably start with the PT/F's first and if more layoffs were needed they would start with the carriers on the regular seniority roster, starting with the junior carrier [reverse seniority, if you will] and that with his 6 years of seniority he had in service that he might be able to hang on but I couldn't guarantee it. Sorry Jim, I have another call coming in but I will call Headquarters today and let you know something this afternoon. Goodbye. (*Nothing good [bye] about it* I heard Jim mutter)

Next caller, *good morning Les, I hope I'm not disturbing you this early in the morning but this is Marten, (you know- the anonymity thing), and we were just....., hold on Marten, do you work with Bill and Jim? Why yes, I do. Are you calling about the stand-up talk your station received this morning? Yes, I am, and I'm somewhat concerned about my job. I only have four years of service and although I'm fifth in line to make regular, I feel like I might be terminated as I was informed that the T/6's would be working the PT/F's hours and the PT/F's would get very few hours, if any hours at all.* I informed Marten because he had less than six years of service that he needed to get a copy of the National Agreement and refer to Article 6 -- No Layoffs or Reduction in Force. I wanted to tell Marten not to set his expectations too high but I couldn't bring myself to do such a cruel thing. We both knew that he was pretty much a goner though neither of us would acknowledge it.

*Wake up Pa pa, Pa pa, wake up.* It was Emerson, my five year old granddaughter, tugging on my arm. It was after 7:00 and her mother had dropped her off for the day. Oh my gosh, I was having this horrible dream; no, let's call it a dreadful nightmare.

I can't help it, but I have been thinking of this nightmare all day and I can't get the thought out of my mind. Just for the heck of it, I got the COLCPE list that was printed in the February Postal Record and also in the February Br. 181 Capital City Carrier newsletter to see if any of these three carriers [Bill, Jim and Marten, - the anonymity thing again] were listed as COLCPE contributors. Only a little over 27% of Br. 181 carriers are listed as COLCPE contributors, that's just a fraction better than one in four carriers, active and retired, who belong to COLCPE. Odds are pretty

*Continued on next page...*

good that one, two, or even all three, are not COLCPE members.

Is your job worth fighting for? What value do you put on your job? Is \$60, \$65, \$70, 000 dollars a year and in some cases even more, plus some of the best benefits you'll find anywhere, worth fighting for? Don't get me wrong, I believe every letter carrier earns every cent they receive. What would you do to save probably the best paying job of your life? Is asking just \$5.00 a pay period too much to help save your job? **IS IT?** Last year the COLCPE committee concentrated on retired carriers, sending each retiree that was not a COLCPE contributor an individual letter and COLCPE forms requesting they join. The returns were most gratifying. It is amazing that retired letter carriers think protecting their retirement is more important than active carriers think of saving their own job. (*Nearly half of the COLCPE members are retired letter carriers*) This year the COLCPE committee will be focusing on active letter carriers. Each active carrier that has not joined COLCPE has probably by now received the letter and form to join COLCPE. We sincerely hope that you think long and hard of the importance and what YOU can do to protect your job and benefits. Talk it over with your spouse and see if they think \$5.00 a pay period is too much to keep your job. They would probably agree to reimburse you for the \$5.00 just to keep the family benefits.

The committee was very careful to not send a letter requesting COLCPE to an already member, but you know strange things happen. So if you are already a COLCPE member and accidentally received one of these letters, we sincerely apologize for the error. We value our COLCPE members too much to slight you with an oversight.

If you have recently retired and received a COLCPE *Form for an Active Carrier*, we are also sorry for that blunder. We are not always notified when an active carrier retires. The COLCPE committee will be glad to send you a form to join COLCPE as a retired letter carrier. Just let us know.

Four names of COLCPE winners from the 2011 COLCPE contest were drawn at our Union meeting in March. Each of the four winners won a \$100. gift card from National Headquarters. The winners are Paul E. Albrecht [retired], Pete Cortez, Jr., [retired], John R. Gutierrez, East Austin Station and Ruben R. Villegas, Mockingbird Station. Sister Karen Hughes's name was drawn last month as one of ten members at the National level among thousands of COLCPE contributors Nationwide and she too won a \$100. gift card. We congratulate each of these winners and thank them very much for thinking enough about their jobs to contribute to COLCPE.

***Les Doss***

**COLCPE Coordinator**

This article is courtesy of the April 2012 *Capital City Carrier* published by Austin, Texas NALC Branch 181

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### **An Uncertain Future**

*By Shawn Boyd, Editor*

As this article goes to press, the Senate has failed to enact real changes to address the fundamental issues created through the pre-funding of retirees health benefits 75 years into the future-at a ridiculous rate. Leaders from both Houses of Congress and the President have no stomach for maintaining 6 Day Delivery. All this is in the works while we head to binding arbitration of our contract.

The Senators from Texas are no friends to the letter carrier and did not support us at all in trying to help SB 1789. After tons of calls from our members, we were shut out. I guess they feel that they can be that way because there has been no real opposition to a Republican Senator running in elections for over a decade. House races are largely the same. We have 1 ½ Representatives in the House that vote for us when we need them out of the entire DFW metroplex. This is a result of redistricting, yes the same stuff that had our legislators hiding out in neighboring states to keep from getting locked out in future elections. It may have seemed silly at the time but what was about to happen was catastrophic to Texas democracy. We now have political parties slicing up our state, which was very anti-worker to begin with, into geographic jigsaw puzzles that decide elections before they even happen. They are carving no pie.

The President is a little different. President Obama is a pro-labor president but not for us. His recommendations on 5 Day Delivery and silence on the pre-funding has destroyed any hope of letter carriers depending on him to stop a bad bill that comes from Congress. The President's love of *Twitter* and *Facebook* seems to mean he doesn't see our relevance as letter carriers and that's sad. He has much still to prove to postal employees that helped him get elected. Yet, Mitt Romney is much worse for the Postal Service and our country. A big business tycoon that spent his time dismantling jobs for profit will have no problem showing Unions the door in his administration. He turned his back on the Auto Industry from his own home state during their bailout, but has mentioned that corporations are people in speeches when voters question his big business stance. Why is the bailout of the big banks such a non-factor and good Union jobs a dirty word? Money is the key.

The NALC has its work cut out over the coming months, fighting wars (not battles) on two fronts. The arbitration of our contract which will be front and center for the next year and pushing Congress at the same time to save the USPS while the Postmaster General fiddles as Rome burns. With all of these bad situations, please continue to support this Union. They are fighting for your rights, pay, and benefits like no other Union in the nation does. When the NALC takes on problems, we don't stop because we are united and strong. In the coming days and weeks, support the NALC-I know many of you are active and doing so, but keep it up. We must ride out these storms-UNITED.

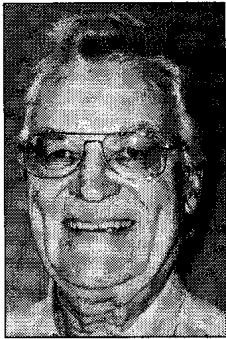
This article is courtesy of the April/May 2012 *Metro Letter Carrier* published by Dallas, Texas NALC Branch 132

## Democracy saved, two letters to editor, news through the internet

By Ivars Lauersons, Editor

*(At press time it was not certain whether the post office would actually suspend the closures of plants unless Congress acted.—Ed.)*

There is some good news for America and the upcoming election coming out of the post office. On March 8, 2012 postal management suspended their planned closing and consolidation of up to 250 mail processing plants until after the November elections. They were scheduled



to resume their planned closings in May when their agreement with Congress ended. There was no word whether the closing of rural post offices would continue.

Under the original schedule of closings, and the request by the post office to lengthen delivery standards for first class mail from overnight to at least two days, along with other delayed standards, there was a danger that voting by mail would result in large numbers of votes not being counted because the absentee ballots would arrive past the statutory arrival on election day. Your Uncle Phil, accustomed to mailing his ballot on a Saturday to arrive by Tuesday, would have his ballot arrive on Wednesday or Thursday.

### Absentee ballots

Voting by absentee ballot is a large percentage of votes cast. If an election is close, the absentee ballots can make the difference in the results since absentee voting does

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### There was a danger of large numbers of absentee ballots not being counted.

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not always follow the pattern of votes on election day. Both Republicans and Democrats rely on absentee ballots, so this is not a partisan issue. But the planned post office closings affect the time that people are accustomed to having their mail delivered. The planned, longer delivery standards are not guarantees of delivery time, and we know that any changes the post office implements result in a series of unforeseen problems which can cause further delay.

It is only partly tongue in cheek to say that democracy has been saved. This postponement of a very bad idea, and an obvious step towards eliminating one day of delivery, was probably forced by Congressional unhappiness with potential problems with the vote count in November. Further, members of the House of both parties were hearing from constituents whose small post offices in their districts were being threatened with closure. We hope that this suspension of closings lasts beyond November.

There is nothing our current postmaster, Patrick Donahoe, is saying that leads us to be optimistic however.

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### The elimination of overnight delivery standards is a very bad idea.

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There is a lot of persuasion to be done by the NALC and other postal employees to protect the long term future of the post office. Even our President is still going for the ill-advised five day delivery plan in his proposed budget.

### Write that letter

Meanwhile, NALC members, active and retired can inform the public through a variety of mechanisms, including LETTERS to the editor about facts. On March 8, 2012, national President Fred Rolando had a letter published in *The New York Times*. It is a useful summary of our arguments to save the post office. For those who missed the letter, here is what it said:

### TO THE EDITOR:

*"Reforming the Postal Service" (editorial, March 1) properly encourages Congress to address the agency's financial problems, but urges the wrong action.*

*Reducing service won't save the Postal Service but rather destroy it, by driving people away and lowering revenue. Ending Saturday delivery, for example, would cede 17 percent of service to save 2 percent of expenditures, while inconveniencing small businesses, the elderly, rural residents and others.*

*Further, it would jeopardize the Postal Service's ability to capitalize on the growing delivery of goods ordered online. Last month, when announcing a \$200 million operational profit delivering mail in the first quarter of the fiscal year 2012, the Postal Service cited its 7 percent rise in Internet-related shipping. The best day to deliver those packages: Saturday, when people are home.*

*Why did the agency simultaneously report \$3.3 billion in overall red ink? That raises the real problem, one unrelated to the mail.*

*The 2006 Congressional mandate that the Postal*

O P I N I O N

*Continued on next page...*



Continued on previous page...

Service prefund future retiree health benefits for the next 75 years, and do so within a decade, accounts for 90 percent of all red ink since the measure took effect, including more than \$3 billion last quarter alone.

Congress created that problem, and Congress can fix it. Then the Postal Service, which uses no taxpayer money, can focus on adapting to society's evolving needs while continuing to provide the industrial world's most affordable delivery service,

**FREDERIC ROLANDO**

President, National Association of Letter Carriers, Washington, March 2, 2012

#### **Making public aware of basic facts**

The letter hits at some important points that the public is not aware of. When I hear people talking about the post office, they assume the post office is tax-supported and any "bailout" would involve taxpayer money. The post office is mandated to break even, matching revenues with expenditures. Those who use the post office pay for the service, those who don't pay nothing. Another erroneous idea is that if one day of delivery is eliminated it would be Saturday. This is not explicitly stated in the proposals by the postal service.

#### **Another letter**

To make some of these points, I sent a letter to the *Vallejo Times-Herald*, which they published in August 2011. Here is the letter:

*Times-Herald*  
Vallejo, CA 94590

*Your editorial of August 20, 2011 regarding a possible 5-day delivery by the Postal Service as alleviating some of the current fiscal problems is misleading in implying that it is a taxpayer supported entity. You say that a bad alternative of the current situa-*

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### **The public should know that we're not broke, and that we're not tax-supported.**

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*tion is "a bloated, inefficient taxpayer-funded mail service." The Postal Service gets no tax support. It is self-supporting, funded by income from stamps and other services. Your editorial should be accurate in its facts. And reducing service to five days will not solve any current difficulties.*

*Part of the postal deficit is caused by a recent requirement by Congress to prepay \$5.5 billion dollars a year into its retiree health benefits fund. Besides no other agency having this requirement, it is part of the reason for current losses. If not for this*

*required annual payment, the Postal Service would have broken even during a four year period that extends into this recession. The four year payment requirement was \$21 billion, explaining the loss of \$20 billion. In addition, the GAO has found a long term postal overpayment to the federal pension fund of \$50 to \$75 billion. This can be returned to the postal service for current use by Congress with no impact on the federal deficit or taxpayers*

*The Postal Service, note "service" in the name, is mandated only to break even overall, not to make a profit or to pay any shareholders. It is designed to serve the American people in places large and small, in every area of the country, and every resident on a 6-day a week basis. The proposal to reduce service is not only unnecessary, it is also harmful.*

*If there is no Saturday delivery, your Saturday mail order medicine may not arrive until Monday or Tuesday, your Saturday DVD may not arrive until Monday or Tuesday, your Saturday business mail, including checks, may not arrive until Monday or Tuesday, your Saturday bills may not arrive on Monday or—let me stop while I'm ahead.*

*Sent by U.S. mail.*

*Very truly yours,*

*Ivars Lauersons,*

*Retired letter carrier*

#### **Information and the internet**

There is a lot of information available on the internet. A good source to start with is *NALC.org*, our national website. Letters, such as the above and others, are posted there. The NALC website is also a trove of information about facts we want to get before the public. If you join the E-activists network, you will be notified about breaking news on Congressional action that requires a fast response by email.

Our Branch 214 website—*nalcbayarea.com*—provides continual updates. Our Facebook page, through our intrepid Cathy Simonson, links to current articles throughout the country. And the source of all information postal is Branch 214 past president Roland Garshol, some of which is forwarded to our Facebook page, where his email links us to the follies and dangers of postal management. Originally this article was going to lead you through more of the internet pathways, but there is no space this time.

At press time, Senate Bill 1789 was scheduled to be debated on the floor the week of March 26. In a teleconference on Sunday, March 25, national president Fred Rolando urged e-activists to call their Senators and express opposition to major parts of the bill, such as permitting 5 day delivery. The debate was later postponed to a time after the Senate Easter recess. There is more work ahead for the NALC.

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## **O P I N I O N**

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This article is courtesy of the March/April 2012 *Voice* published by San Francisco, CA NALC Branch 214

# Minutes of the April 2012 General Meeting

The regular meeting of Branch 782 was called to order by President, Mike Towery at 7:00 p.m., on the 24th day of April, 2012 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. The stewards were present from Arvin, Avenal, Brundage, Camino Media, Downtown, Hillcrest, Lamont, Oildale, Shafter, South, Stockdale, Taft and Wasco. Also present was the Newsletter Editor Basil Zuniga; S.A.N.E. Fred Acedo; Webmaster Rick Plummer; Photographer Anita Holderman; Assistant Recording Secretary Mable Bullis; OWCP Representative Rick Gerdes; Legislative Representative Diana Herrera; and Frank Martinez of the Social and Recreation Committee. The Minutes of the March 27, 2012 meeting were read by Assistant Recording Secretary Mabel Bullis and were accepted with no additions or corrections.

**APPLICATION FOR NEW MEMBERS:** An application was received from Karen Van Ostrand.

**REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES:** Basil Zuniga reported that the newsletter folding was done relatively quickly by South Station. Next month will be East Bakersfield. Basil suggested that we combine East Bakersfield and Brundage. Basil discussed the web

## OUT THERE



version of the newsletter. He thanked Fred for the cartoons. Mike Towery thanked Rick and Basil for all their work on the web versions. Frank Martinez reported that there will be a Golf Tournament on May 6, contact Glenn Ryder. Contact Andrew Garcia regarding the Softball Tournament. There will be a 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament on June 24. There will be tickets for the Dodger vs. White Sox on June 16. Shari Sharpe reported that the Food Drive is May 12. The kickoff on May 7 at the Downtown Station. We received 90,000 bags courtesy of a branch in LA. Bags should be delivered on Thursday and the cards on Friday. She reported that last year 55,000 pounds of food was collected and it is the 20th year of the Food Drive.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** Mabel Bullis discussed the removal of the trees and repair of the sidewalk. She made a motion to transfer \$3165.00 from Rental Account to Building Account. A discussion was held. Jerry Patterson made a friendly amendment to increase the amount of the transfer to \$5000.00 to cover the cost of the trees and grinding of the old stumps. The amendment was accepted and the motion passed.

**GOOD OF THE ASSOCIATION:** Molly Biggar will present the 2012-2013 Budget at the May General Meeting and a vote on the Budget will be taken at the June Meeting. She also reported that there will be a Budget Meeting following the Steward Meeting on May 2. Diana Herrera reported on S-1789, the amendments that the NALC supported were defeated. She asked the members to call the toll free number 1-888-863-6103 to make sure their opposition to S-1789 is heard. Mike Towery discussed some of the amendments that have passed. He encouraged everyone to call or e-mail. The vote of the bill will be tomorrow, there is still time. Diana Herrera thanked the members who took the time to go to Fresno. Mike thanked Mabel Bullis for taking most of the group in her "tour van."

**FINANCIAL SECRETARY'S REPORT:** Anita Holderman reported that \$12,016.90 was collected for April.

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

Beginning Balance	\$77,613.56
Dues and Income	\$11,514.68
Interest Income	\$9.31
Total Balance	\$89,137.55
Expenses	\$11,397.00
Ending Balance	\$77,740.55

The MDA 50/50 Drawing was won by Mike Munoz.

The Drawing for \$150.00 would have been won by Teresa Garcia if she had been present.

There were 31 members present.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
KIM GERDES

# NON-MEMBER LIST APRIL 2012

AVENAL (93203) 100% UNION!!!	WASCO (93280) 100% UNION!!!	STOCKDALE (93309) J. Oh	EDWARDS AFB (93526) 100% UNION!!!
ARVIN (93209) 100% UNION!!!	DOWNTOWN (93301) D. Pearce J. Cruz	CAMINO MEDIA (93311/13) 100% UNION!!!	TEHACHAPI (93561) 100% UNION!!!
DELANO (93215) L. A. Campos C. V. Quebral	SOUTH STATION (93304) 100% UNION!!!	MOJAVE (93501) 100% UNION!!!	TRONA (93562) 100% UNION!!!
LAMONT (93241) 100% UNION!!!	EAST BAKERSFIELD (93305) 100% UNION!!!	CALIFORNIA CITY (93504) 100% UNION!!!	RIDGECREST (93555) B. J. Leroy L. M. Montano H. G. Blanco S. R. Pierce
McFARLAND (93250) 100% UNION!!!	HILLCREST (93306) A. White	BORON (93516) 100% UNION!!!	
SHAFTER (93263) L. M. New M. D. Voights	BRUNDAGE (93307) D. Kinglee	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>We are an "Open Shop".</b>  <b>MEMBERSHIP IS VOLUNTARY.</b>  <b>369 Letter Carriers are in the complement</b>  <b>assigned to cities represented by</b>  <b>our Branch. <u>ONLY 18 ARE NON-MEMBERS.</u></b>  <b>We are 94.3% organized!</b></p>	
TAFT (93268) M. R. Marin B. W. Krier K. J. Hughes	DOLE COURT (93308/12) S. Hancock D. Morris		

## MILITARY VETERANS' BENEFITS

Recently, a Carrier asked what kind of Veterans' benefits were available to older Veterans and their spouses. He stated that his Dad had served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War and was curious to know if there were any VA benefits that his Dad or Mom may qualify for.

After considering the question, I realized there must be thousands of older Veterans and their families who have not taken full advantage of the benefits they are entitled to because they either did not know or they did not think they could qualify for them. But, to dive a little deeper into this question, I realized that it's not just the older Veterans—it is ALL Veterans who need to know this!

We know that the VA provides a wide range of benefits and services for its Veterans (health care, education, home loans, and many more). They *also* provide a bevy of lesser-known benefits that were specifically created to help senior Veterans and their family members...as well as their survivors.

Well...in order for the older Veterans to be eligible, certain income and assets (in most cases) need to be below certain limits. *And*, the Veteran's discharge from the military must have been under conditions other than dishonorable.

So, what might be available?

**VETERANS' PENSIONS:** This is available to limited-income veterans who are 65 and older or who are totally disabled *and* who served at least 90 days of active military service with at least one day of service *during a period of war* (state-side or overseas).

**DEATH PENSIONS:** Available to low-income surviving spouses and the dependents of **wartime** Veterans whose death was *not* related to military service.

**AID AND ATTENDANCE:** This little known benefit can help the elderly Veterans and their spouses pay for in-home care, an assisted living facility or nursing home care and can pay up to \$1500 per month.

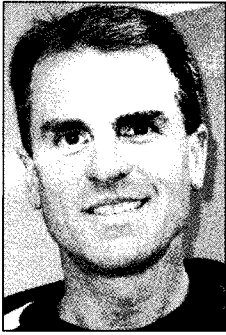
**BURIAL BENEFITS:** Regardless of income and assets, this benefit provides *all* Veterans, spouses *and* dependents a **FREE** burial at the national cemetery and a free grave marker. Funeral or cremation costs are not covered; but, *some* Veterans may qualify for a \$300 funeral allowance and \$300 for a plot if they choose to be buried in a private cemetery.

These are just a few examples of what may be available to our Veterans and their families. A good place to learn more about Veterans' benefits is the VA online site: "[www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov)" or at "[www.vba.va.gov](http://www.vba.va.gov)".

You can also contact your regional VA office or local Veterans organization where you can get personalized help and assistance with any claims.

For further information or any requests, feel free to contact Mark Leon, Eastside Station Steward at (716) 842-4752 or shoot an e-mail to [MrR2Leon@aol.com](mailto:MrR2Leon@aol.com).

This excellent article was courtesy of the May 2012 *Buzz* published by NALC Branch 3 in Buffalo, New York



# Overtime Equitability Tracking – A Flawed Process

By Ray Hill, Executive Vice-President

At the end of every calendar quarter (three months) I get a lot of questions from branch members regarding the equitability of overtime hours that were distributed amongst the Carriers on the Overtime Desired List (ODL) during the quarter that had just ended.

As I always tell the ODL carriers that I talk to, the system that we currently use for determining overtime equitability really is far from perfect and it is definitely unfair to some of the Carriers on the ODL. Here is how equitability is tracked during each calendar quarter. Management has a list of all of the Carriers on the ODL and they track **separately** how much overtime those ODL Carriers work each day throughout the quarter, both on their own assignment and off their own assignment. If a Carrier works two hours of overtime on their own assignment on a particular day then they are considered unavailable to work overtime off their own assignment that day and it is not considered an “overtime opportunity” lost by that ODL Carrier. However, the overtime that an ODL Carrier works on their own assignment is not tracked when determining equitability. Only the hours that the ODL Carriers work **off** their own assignments are tracked for determining equitability. At the end of the quarter all the hours worked off their assignment by the ODL Carriers are added up and then divided by the number of Carriers on the ODL to determine what the average number of hours worked by the ODL Carriers off their assignments was for the quarter.

At the end of every quarter, the Stewards of the Branch request a copy of the ODL tracking for the quarter that just ended. Then the Stewards verify the average number of overtime hours worked off of their assignments by the ODL Carriers during the quarter. The stewards separate those ODL Carriers that are at or above the average of overtime hours worked during the quarter from those ODL Carriers that are below the average number of overtime hours worked during the quarter. Then the Stewards determine if any of the Carriers “refused” any overtime during the quarter. For example, if Management asked an ODL Carrier to come in to work 8 hours on their Non-scheduled (N/S) day but the ODL carrier refused to do so, then 8 hours must be added to that Carrier’s total hours for the quarter. Bear in mind that only actual refusals are calculated in this manner; if Management calls an ODL Carrier on their day off and leaves a message on their answering machine while they are at the beach then that is not considered a refusal. They must actually talk to the ODL Carrier who must refuse their

offer of overtime for it to be considered a refusal that will then be added to the ODL Carrier’s total number of hours for the quarter.

Next the steward tries to find hours that can be paid to the ODL carriers that ended up below the average for the quarter. The carriers that were below the average are only entitled to be made whole up to the average. If the steward can find overtime hours that were worked on any day during the quarter by an ODL carrier that ended up above the quarterly average when a carrier that ended up below the quarterly average was available to work then the steward will ask that the below the average carrier be paid those hours that were worked by the carrier that ended up above the average.

In order to do this, the steward “backtracks” each day from the end of the quarter to the beginning of the quarter looking for days any carrier that ended up below the average was available to work overtime but a carrier above the average was given the overtime instead. The carriers that ended up below the average are entitled to be made whole, **up to the average only**, for any hours the steward can find where the above average carrier was given overtime work instead of an available below the average carrier. As the steward adds up hours to pay a carrier, up to the average only, the steward must also subtract the hours that they taking from the carrier that ended up above the average. Once the steward subtracts enough hours to bring the above average carrier to the average they can subtract no more hours from that carrier. This process continues until all of the hours worked by the above the average carriers have been redistributed to the below the average carriers.

However, this does not mean that every carrier will receive pay for every hour that they are below the average. The carrier must have been available to work the overtime on the day in question when a carrier above the average worked overtime instead of them.

To put all this boring verbiage in a nutshell: When evidence indicates those below the average were available and were not worked, yet ODL carriers above the average were worked, then those below the average will be made whole, up to the average, for those hours of overtime where they were available yet ODL carriers above the average were worked instead. Get it?

I wrote earlier in this article that the system is far from perfect and is definitely unfair to some of the carriers on the ODL. I also wrote earlier in the article, the overtime hours

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carried by an ODL carrier on their own assignment are not tracked when determining equitability. However, the time spent carrying overtime on their own assignment deems them to be "not available" for overtime on another assignment.

In many cases, the carrier that works a lot of overtime on their own assignment ends up with more **total** overtime hours for the quarter than the carrier that does not work much overtime on their own assignment. However, the carrier that does not work much overtime on their own assignment will usually end up with more "tracked" overtime than the carrier that does work a lot of overtime on their own assignment and consequently is often "not available" to carry overtime off of their assignment. What this means is that a carrier that worked **more total overtime** for the quarter (including the overtime hours worked on their own assignment) might end up getting paid from an overtime equitability grievance at the end of the quarter because they often end up below the average of tracked (off assignment) overtime hours for the quarter. I am of the correct opinion that the current manner in which we determine overtime equitability really is unfair due to this flaw that dictates that we only track off assignment OT hours. I strongly believe that overtime equitability should be calculated hour for hour and that it should not matter if the overtime an ODL carrier works during the quarter is on or off their own assignment. All overtime hours should be calculated and tracked when determining the average. After all, overtime hours are hours, right?

At the **NALC National Conventions** that take place biennially (every two years), the delegates vote on **Resolutions** submitted by various branches that are attempting to change or clarify existing contractual language.

In 1980, at the NALC's 52nd Biennial Convention, the delegates voted in favor of Resolution #3 regarding Overtime Equitability that resolved, in relevant part, "**overtime worked on a carrier's own route to be used to determine equitability**". In 1990 at the NALC's 57th Biennial Convention the delegates voted in favor of Resolution #46 that resolved that the parties should "**count all OT hours to determine equitability**".

Once the NALC Convention votes in favor of a Resolution to attempt to change or clarify contractual language the Resolution becomes an "**Official Position**" of the NALC. Our National Officers attempt to implement those "**Official Positions**" when bargaining our **National Agreement** (better known as our contract).

At the Branch 2902 meeting in January 2012, NALC's National Director of City Delivery, Lew Drass, was here to install the officers of the branch for our new terms of office.

During Lew's question and answer session at the meeting, I brought up the above written "**Official Positions**" taken by the Union and asked him if the overtime equitability topic ever came up during contract negotiations. Lew affirmed that it was the position of the NALC that overtime "hours are hours" and that it should not matter whether overtime is worked off the ODL Carrier's assignment or on the ODL Carrier's assignment, all hours should be tracked and counted when determining equitability.

Lew told us that it was the USPS that was resistant to the "hours are hours" approach to equitability and that it was the USPS that refused to agree to change the system during contract negotiations.

I was surprised to hear this but after thinking about it I realize that the Postal Service must fear that it would actually cost them more grievance money if we used the "hours are hours" approach to equitability. If that really is true, then it further underscores the fact that the current system of determining overtime equitability really is flawed and biased in favor of those carriers that work a lot of overtime on their own routes. I plan to investigate this theory (that "hours are hours" would cost the USPS more grievance payouts than the current system) as I look at overtime equitability grievances in the future.

However, having said all of this, until the overtime equitability provisions of the contract are changed, we are forced to live with and enforce the process as it now exists, meaning that it will remain far from perfect and definitely unfair to some carriers on the ODL.

This article is courtesy of the May - June 2012 *Mail Bag News* published by Chatsworth, CA NALC Branch 2902



# *This is your world. But, you may have never considered facts...*

## Postal employment and productivity



The USPS employs 685,000 career employees and 101,000 non-career staff, making it the second-largest employer in the United States (behind Wal-Mart). The Postal Service employs more workers on U.S. soil than General Motors, Ford and Chrysler combined.



The Postal Service's workforce is one of the few groups of federal workers with the right to bargain collectively for wages and conditions. As a result, the Postal Service pays middle-class wages—the average salary of postal employees is approximately \$48,000 annually—and provides virtually all its workers health insurance and pension coverage. Wages and benefits are generally comparable to those paid by FedEx and UPS.



Union membership is voluntary, but more than 80 percent of postal employees are organized, including 92 percent of city letter carriers—the best-organized open shop in America.



The modern Postal Service delivers 139 percent more mail to 89 percent more delivery points today with just 2.5 percent more work hours than it did in 1971 when it was created.



Postal labor productivity (output per hour) increased 50.1 percent between 1971, the year the Postal Service was created, and 2000—according to the latest data available from the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. (This data takes into account presorting and other work sharing by mailers.) According to USPS, labor productivity rose 1.7 percent in 2007, 0.3 percent in 2006 and 1.1 percent in 2005, raising the total productivity growth since postal reorganization to 50 percent.

## POSTAGE AND PRODUCTIVITY



The USPS maintains the most affordable postage in the world. A first-class stamp, which costs 41 cents in America, costs 75 cents in Japan, 49 cents in Germany and 71 cents in Britain. While in dollar terms stamps are cheaper in New Zealand, their cost is higher relative to hourly wages of workers there.



Overall postage rates—as measured by both the Producer Price Index and the Consumer Price Index—have increased less than consumer prices in general since the creation of the USPS in 1971. The stability in postage rates was achieved even as direct and indirect taxpayer subsidies have been eliminated—driving the real cost of mailing letters down 23 percent.



The price of a stamp (41 cents, up 412 percent since 1971) has increased much less than many other ordinary products and services. For example: a movie ticket (\$9, up 432 percent since 1971); natural gas to heat your home (\$11.40 per 1,000 cubic feet, up 844 percent since 1971); a copy of Time or Newsweek (\$3.95, up 690 percent since 1971).



Since December 1997, when the BLS started collecting the data, the delivery services component of the Consumer Price Index has increased 59.2% while the postage component of the CPI increased by just 19.2%.



Postal total factor productivity (TFP, which is output per combined unit of labor, capital and material input) has increased by 19 percent since 1972, averaging 0.5 percent per year. Recent BLS research on similar private sector industries—the transportation, utilities and communications (TUC) industries and service sector in general—found significantly lower annual TFP growth rates than those observed for the USPS.

## THE POSTAL BUSINESS



The Postal Service lies at the center of a trillion-dollar mailing industry, which includes companies that print and publish documents, periodicals and publications, mail order and electronic commerce outlets, and firms that transport mail and packages. Together these mail-related companies produce 8 percent of the gross domestic product and employ 9 million Americans. If it were a private company, the Postal Service would rank No. 21 on the Fortune 500 list of American business enterprises, with annual revenues of \$75 billion, placing it ahead of many well-known firms such as Merrill Lynch, Goldman Sachs, and Procter and Gamble..



The USPS has one of the most extensive retail networks in America with about 37,000 post offices and outlets. Each day more than 7 million Americans visit a post office and make transactions worth more than \$200 million. During the holiday season, the USPS takes in more than a half a billion dollars a day.



The USPS is financially independent of the rest of the federal government, generating all its own revenues with no subsidies from American taxpayers.



Taxpayer subsidies to the USPS were phased out between 1971, when they covered 23 percent of costs, and 1983. Today, an appropriation to the Postal Service proportional to that paid in 1971 would cost nearly \$16 billion annually. The USPS is authorized to receive compensation of \$460 million per year for operating unprofitable post offices, but has not requested or received this “public service” subsidy in more than 18 years. The direct savings to taxpayers: \$13 billion through 2007.



Prior to postal reorganization in 1970, the Treasury paid the cost of health insurance and unfunded pension benefits for retired postal employees. These costs have been transferred to the Postal Service through various laws and a series of Omnibus Budget and Reconciliation Acts (OBRA) in the 1980s and 1990s, saving the Treasury an additional \$85 billion since 1970.

## USPS MAIL VOLUME AND DELIVERY NETWORK



The U.S. Postal Service handles more than 40 percent of the world’s mail volume, five times more than the Japanese Post Office, the next largest carrier of letter mail.



In fiscal year 2007, the USPS sorted and delivered nearly 213 billion pieces of mail, about 703 million pieces a day.



The USPS delivers more items in one day than Federal Express does in a year and more items in one week than United Parcel Service does in a year.



The Postal Service delivers to 146 million businesses and households each day, six days per week. UPS delivers to 8 million addresses daily while FedEx serves even fewer.



The number of delivery points (households and businesses) served by the Postal Service grows by 5,900 every delivery day—some 1.8 million addresses a year.



Each letter carrier delivers more than 43 tons of mail per year, averaging more than 2,300 letters, cards, magazines and circulars per day on approximately 240,000 city and rural routes.



The Postal Service processes more than 44 million changes of address each year—as 17 percent of the nation’s population moves every year—and forwards mail free of charge. In 2007, 73 million changes of address were completed electronically.



The USPS operates the largest fleet of commercial vehicles in the country—some 212,000 vans and trucks.

Source: NALC Website

**Some people always want to share opinions about how all “government employees” are wasteful, inefficient and would never make it in the “real” world.**

**Here are the facts. Read them and understand them.**

**By the way, it was “government employees” who gathered data, analyzed information, provided the needed support and logistics, and who—finally—followed through with eliminating Osama Bin Laden... It wasn’t the folks at Walmart or UPS...**

# 2012 NALC HBP Info

At a glance...



NALC Health Benefit Plan	1-888-636-6252
*Hospital Pre-Certification	1-877-220-6252
Mental & Substance Precertification	1-877-468-1016
**Drug Prescription Retail	1-800-933-6252
CareMark Specialty Pharmacy	1-800-237-2767
Durable Medical Equipment	1-888-636-6252
<b>NURSE ASSISTANT (24/7)</b>	<b>1-877-220-6252</b>
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)	1-800-870-3470
<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
<b>Quest Lab Services (Bakersfield)</b>	<b>(661) 631-8520</b>
<b>LabCorp Lab Services</b>	<b>(661) 631-9258</b>

**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.**

OUT THERE

BY FRED ACEDO



**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**

*\* 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. MAIL ORDER PRESCRIPTIONS when NALC is primary: 60 day supply \$8 generic, \$43 name brand; 90 day supply \$12 generic, \$65 name brand; 90 day supply \$5 for NALCSELECT generics (certain drugs); 90 day supply \$7.99 NALCPREFERRED generic (certain drugs), **MEDICARE PROGRAM** (when Medicare is primary); Retail network pharmacy: you pay 10% of cost of generic, 20% of cost for name brand, **MEDICARE PRIMARY** (mail order); 60 day supply \$7 generic, \$37 name brand; 90 day supply \$10 generic \$55 name brand; 90 day supply \$4 for NALCSELECT generic (certain drugs); 90 day supply \$4 for NALCPREFERRED generic (certain drugs); NALCSENIOR generic antibiotics are available; FREE for a 30 day supply, when Medicare is primary (certain antibiotics only).

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

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



# *Basil, I have a couple of jokes for our newsletter... Some say: "Laughter lowers blood pressure." It just makes me wet my pants! Mark Ramirez, HBP Representative*

## GONE, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

A man is walking past a cemetery, and sees another gentleman kneeling at a grave site, crying out: "Oh, why did you have to die? You, of all people, why did you have to die!!!"

The man feels so bad, he stops, and says to the grieving man, "It pains me to hear you in such anguish. Who is buried here, that you mourn so?" The kneeling man looks up—and in a sobbing voice says—*"MY WIFE'S FIRST HUSBAND!!!"*

## THE PUB

I stopped into a local pub on Saturday night, to have a few beers.....

I noticed two "plus size" women by the bar. They both had strong accents, so I asked, "Hey, are you two ladies from Scotland?" One of them chirped, "It's WALES you friking idiot!"

So, I appoligized and said, "Sorry, are you two "Whales" from Scotland?"

That's, when the lights went out.....

## RELIGION AND HUMOR

The main course at the big civic dinner was baked ham with glazed sweet potatoes. Rabbi Cohen regretfully shook his head when the platter was passed to him. Father Kelly scolded playfully, "When are you going to forget that silly rule of yours, and eat ham like the rest of us?"

Without skipping a beat, Rabbi Cohen replied, "At your wedding reception, Father Kelly."

## JUST FUNNY

Question asked of Bob Uecker, actor, sportscaster, and former major leaguer: "How did you handle pressure as a player?"

Answer: "It was easy, I'd strike out, and put the pressure on the guy behind me."

## POLITICS

A candidate running for Congress hired two assistants: one to dig up the facts, and the other to bury them.

## HUMOR

Will Rogers said that all he needed for humor, was the Congressional Record. He said, "There's no trick to being humorous, when you have the whole United States government working for you."

## LAWS

Will Rogers also once said this: "Congressmen and fellows like me are alike in some ways, I guess. But when I make a joke, it's a joke. When they make a joke, it's the law."

## OUT THERE



# Food Drive

For those who do not know, East Bakersfield Station has merged with Brundage, so I guess we are now called East Brundage????? Well (as a DUO) we have outdone ourselves even more so for this year's Annual NALC Food Drive.

Ever since 2008, as a station, we have united for a great cause. It's been a great history with all the raffles, auctions, and bake sales that we have done to try and surpass the previous year of monetary donations. I am very pleased to say that, even with my maternity absence, my

station was on top of things and has yet ceased to amaze me.

Let me just begin to say, we can grub at East Brundage. We started back in November 2011 with Rosie Padilla's Enchiladas/Joe Dangler's Apple Cobbler; a Thanksgiving Bake sale; and continued almost up to the month of the food drive with a couple of breakfast plates from Juanita Sullivan, Rosie's Tamale Pie, Joe's Lasagna, Emma Castruita's Chili Verde plates, Fried Rice, Mary Breeding's Chili and Rice, Valentine's Bake sale, Coke Bottle Raffle and more.

This year, with all of the hard work that was put into making it happen, we have

collected an astounding \$2800 as a station to donate to this year's Food Drive, \$100 more from last year.

I tip my hat off to my wonderful station. I'm not sure who did what, but a huge *THANKS!* to everyone who cooked and baked and.....most of all.....to those who BOUGHT the food! You guys are AWE-SOME!!!!

Thanks to our Management team—Manager Jas Brar, and Supervisors: Crystal Southwood, Chris Jimenez, and Lana Lewis for letting us have our fun.

MABEL BULLIS  
93305 & 93306 East Brundage Bulldogs

## Before and during the 2012 Food Drive with our 93306 Letter Carriers...

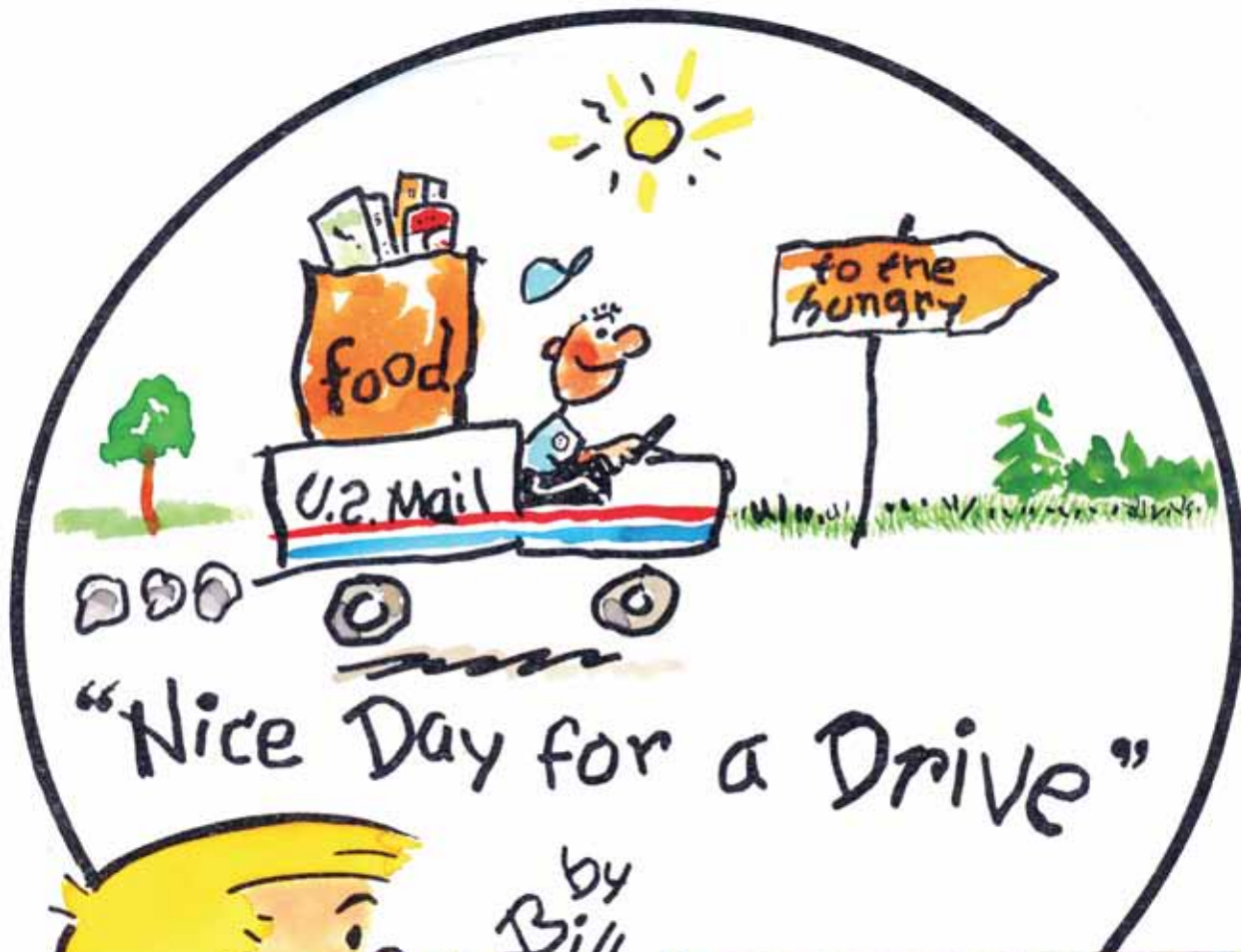


*Tune in next month! Learn details and see more pix!!!*



Pictures by Hillcrest Shop Steward Pam Smith

# How Did We Do? See next month's newsletter!!!



"Nice Day for a Drive"



In Memory of

Bill Keane

**SATURDAY  
MAY 12, 2012  
LETTER  
CARRIERS  
FOOD DRIVE**



**PUT YOUR NON-PERISHABLE DONATION IN A BAG BY YOUR MAILBOX.  
WE'LL DELIVER IT TO A LOCAL FOOD BANK.**



NATIONAL PARTNERS





Dale Hart and Frank Thomasy

*Dale Hart has long been a friend of all members of our NALC Branch 782!*



*It has been an honor to count Dale as a ferocious warrior on the behalf of all Letter Carriers. Whether you realize it or not, Dale is a man who has made a difference in **YOUR** life...*



FRIENDS TO ELECT BILL YOUNG, TOM YOUNG, DALE HART & LARRY BROWN  
TO N.A.L.C. NATIONAL OFFICE



- 1st PRIZE – 5 DAYS IN HAWAII FOR TWO (TRANSPORTATION & HOTEL)
- 2nd PRIZE – PORTABLE C.D. PLAYER
- 3rd PRIZE – 35 mm CAMERA
- 4th PRIZE – CORDLESS TELEPHONE

PLEASE SUPPORT AND VOTE  
THE SOMBROTTO-COMNERS TEAM

DRAWING ON NOVEMBER 19, 1994 – PRICE \$2.00 ea. or 6 for \$10.00  
FRIENDS OF BILL, TOM, DALE & LARRY-P.O. BOX 4441, SAN RAFAEL, CA 94913-4441

NATIONAL PRINTING COMPANY 510 N. FIFTH STREET SAN JOSE

No 1121



Dear NBA / Branch /  
State Presidents & Officers:

For those of you who may not have heard, our Former Director of City Delivery and NBA, Dale Hart, fell and broke his neck last week. Rosemarie talked with me yesterday and told me the fall caused Dale to be partially paralyzed. He underwent surgery a couple days ago to help improve his condition and Rosemarie told me it went well. But, they will not know anything for some time; and, there is a long road to recovery ahead for him.

This morning—prior to sending this out—I received a fwd email from Michele Ditchey who used to work at National HQ with Dale. Michele visited Dale yesterday and said, “He was ‘out of it.’” But, he did nod his head yes when she asked if he wanted her to sing some Jimmy Buffett songs to him.

Rosemarie told me that because Dale is in ICU he is not permitted to receive flowers, plants or any type of food. He can however receive cards and when they are received they are read to him.

We have been receiving lots of emails and calls on Dale’s progress since his injury. Dale is doing better and surprising the doctors with his progress and is now off the ventilator.

Rosemarie has set up a webpage with the CaringBridge.org network that will be used to keep everyone updated who wishes to not only follow Dale’s progress but also will allow you to leave him brief messages to keep his spirits up.

Here is the CaringBridge webpage where you can register—  
<http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/DaleHart>

Please keep Brother Dale in your hearts and your prayers. Also, please keep those cards coming as well to let Dale know you’re thinking of him. He appreciates hearing from everyone.

Cards can be sent to:

**INOVA Fairfax Hospital  
TICU Room 3  
3300 Gallows Road  
Falls Church, VA 22042**

**Or to his home at:  
5840 Cameron Run Terrace  
Apartment Number 303  
Alexandria, VA 22303**

In Unionism,

**JOHN BEAUMONT**  
President

California State Association of Letter Carriers



## from the editor-guy

There is a framed statement at my home. The words are pretty simple but the message is still very profound: “A good friend is hard to find, hard to lose and impossible to forget.”

Dale Hart is a man who fits that description pretty well. He is, in fact, really a friend to us all.

As I say this, I realize — that even if you have taken the time to read these words that happened to come out of my fingers on the keyboard — you might have no personal memory which kicks in when you hear the name Dale Hart.

It kind of reinforces that notion that each of us is “just passing through”. It also spurs me to attest to the fact that investing one’s “self” into improving the lives of people who you don’t even know is a very special endeavor.

I’m not sure why certain people seem to devote so much of their core energy and talents to becoming involved in something like union activism. Some may find rewards in assimilating what they need to learn to protect *just* themselves. Others seem to be involved for awhile and then kind of fade away. Others, devote themselves to becoming the best possible advocates...and then they go into management when they calculate the return-on-investment that they get from those thousands of hours they provide to being Letter Carrier advocates.

Dale Hart is a guy who was a PTF Letter Carrier in 1970 in Burlingame, CA and he “...thought that PTFs were getting the short end of the stick and made such a stink about it that the branch president gave me an ultimatum—either become a steward or shut up.” Hart recalled, “So, I became a steward.”

He soon became chief steward and president of Burlingame Branch 1767; and, when it merged with San Mateo Branch 1280, he became executive vice president of the merged Branch 1280. By 1976, Hart also was on the executive board of the California State Association, where he remained for a decade. He was first elected NBA in 1994 and then went on to become the National Director of City Delivery where he impacted all of our lives.

That’s the Dale Hart that I want to share. I hope that you take a moment to send him a card...

BASIL ZUNIGA

**Back by Popular Demand.....**

# Brundage Biggest Loser

**Starting May 1, 2012 – Ending August 1, 2012**

Well, people should realize what this competition is all about. Here is a little history: I started this several years ago, in 2009, to include as many Postal workers as possible to jump start a new, healthy, fit lifestyle. Unfortunately, personally, I have never been one of those “Biggest Losers” throughout the years but I am glad to say it has helped a few. However, I am proud to say that the one person that has stood out, so far, is Carrier Jeff Honor from Dole Court. Back in 2010 when we had the Brundage Biggest Loser, Couples Edition of 94 competitors, Jeff lost an amazing 70 pounds and has since kept it off! Who will be next?

This year started off late. I had a baby back in September; so, being on maternity leave, things didn’t get talked about until late March for this current competition. This time around, we have added spouses and their children as competitors. There are fifty-nine contestants for this year which is a total of \$1180. Each month there is a chance you can win \$20 by losing the most percentage for that month. After the 3rd month, the 1st place winner will win 75% = \$840 and the 2nd place winner will get the remainder of 25% = \$280. How sweet is that?

**at Brundage / East Bakersfield:**

John Ortega - Carrier  
Rosie Padilla - Carrier  
Enoch Moya - Carrier  
Celeste - Daughter of Carrier  
Beatriz Munoz - Carrier  
Yvonne Esquivel - Carrier  
Maria Gutierrez - Carrier  
Krystal Rodriguez - Daughter of Carrier  
Vicky Guerrero - Carrier  
Vanessa Halle - Clerk  
Kimmi Gardea - Rural Route  
Stacy Castillo - Clerk  
Juanita Sullivan - Clerk  
Ruben Gonzales - Carrier  
Jeff Harrington - Carrier  
Shurie Amick - Carrier  
Sonia Camacho - Rural Route  
Karen Mills - Carrier  
Mabel Bullis - Carrier

**at Stockdale Station:**

Tina Harbour - Carrier  
Donnie Eveland - Clerk  
Alma Marquez - Carri

Beatriz Rodriguez - Carrier  
Amy Paniccia - Carrier  
Amber Cordova - Carrier

**at Delano:**

Luis Campos - Carrier  
George Vaquera Jr. - 204-B  
Serina Ornelaz -  
Gracie Silva  
Kim Vaquera

**at Hillcrest Station:**

Alyce Nelson - Carrier  
Valerie Tweety - Carrier

**at Arvin Station:**

Jeri Jimenez - Carrier  
Linda Perkins - Rural Route

**at Dole Court:**

Paul Hernandez - Carrier  
Jennifer Hernandez - Carrier  
Art Mooney - Carrier

Laura Gordon - Carrier  
Diane Ryder - Carrier  
Glynn Ryder - Carrier  
Deborah Jones - Clerk  
Brenda Rhodes - Rural Route  
Priscilla Robertson- Rural Route  
Angie Garcia - Rural Route  
Tiffany Tillman - Rural Route  
Keisha Ewers - Rural Route  
Hermi Encinas - Carrier  
Laura Vega - Rural Route  
Jorge Guillen - Rural Route  
Teresa Ortega - Carrier  
Juanita Lopez - Rural Route  
Teresa Suarez - Carrier  
Mona Lisa Jano - Rural Route  
Melissa Hartsfield - Rural Route  
Teresa Garcia - Carrier  
Whitney Moreci- Rural Route  
Francisco Herrera - Rural Route

**at South Station:**

Andrew Garcia - Carrier

**at Camino Media:**

Lisa Wescott - Rural Route

Yes, this is a competition but this is also our health we are talking about. I have always stressed the meaning of losing weight the “healthy” and honest way. Battling your weight is a demon we all face from time to time and we try to win it whether it’s due to health reason or just feeling good about ourselves. It’s very hard to stay motivated and committed. We need all the help we can

get. So if this competition can help those who are really trying, I am up for doing this every year. Yes, MONEY is a good motivator but we also need more at times. Which is why I am happy to introduce.....

# Biggest Loser “BOOT CAMP”? What?? Yes!!!

It’s not the die hard camps that you hear about—well, not yet that is.

It is happening on Sundays @ 9am. However, the times may change as summer starts heating up. *Anyone* is welcome to come whether you are in the competition or not.

Our first meet was at the Riverwalk off of Stockdale and Buena Vista at the Amphitheater. We had 5 people show up. Not too bad for the 1st day. Tina Harbour from Stockdale with her daughter, Jillian; Stacy Castillo from Brundage; my sister, Kaesia. and myself.

We went “old school” and did jumping jacks, cotton-pickers, windmills, etc. We started with stretches, warm-ups, a run/brisk walk around the lake, cool-down and then ended with stretches. Everything is at your own pace. Remember, we all have been to the gym at one time or another,

and we all have been instructed to work out at your own risk.

Push yourself to YOUR own capabilities. I ended up being sore for 3 days.... should of stretched more, I guess.

This “Boot Camp” was created to help with that extra motivation that we need. If more people get involved, we can always change location, ie: the Bluffs (for the hills), Yokuts Park.... We can also change the times to accomodate everyone’s schedule. Come out and join us.

MABEL BULLIS  
East Brundage Bulldogs



Out tHeRe



Belive it or not, *YOU* need to take the message of this article to heart. What is that message?  
If *YOU* don't take a stand to protect your job, your income, and your future. no one else will...

**SCUTTLEBUTT**  
**DOUG ARNOLD, EDITOR**



I was going to skip writing this month but the more I read the more I think I have something to say. I'm not sure what it will take to get the message through. If you're reading my article or you've attended a meeting then you're probably not my intended audience because you have, and are, making the effort to stay informed and active in the union. So how do I, the other officers, and YOU get through to those that think that someone else will do it for them? That's an honest question. I'm open to suggestions, preferably before it's too late.

As Robin stated at the meeting there are (I'm not sure if it's still this many so excuse me if I'm factually incorrect at this point) roughly 12 bills affecting the Postal Service in the House and Senate. I'm trying to remember which congressman or senator campaigned on the promise to decimate the Postal Service, void collective bargaining agreements, reverse seniority rules, eliminate pensions, eliminate social security supplements for federal employees and layoff/fire 200,000 employees. I seem to recall the last election cycle being all about creating jobs. They have a damn funny way of doing it!

There are some members who have REALLY stepped up. Kelly listed them in her article so I won't repeat them. Thank them when you see them. I know that I have seen participation from people who I had not seen in the past and you know something? They specifically told me how much FUN they had doing it! Now I have a family just like you and I can't make it to EVERY event and I wouldn't expect you to either but is one a year too much to ask? During the rally at Congressman Manzullo's office I was very pleased with the turnout. I saw people I haven't seen in quite some time. I tried to get a few of you in the newsletter. We were marching side by side with BOSSES! If that doesn't tell you how important this stuff is then I guess nothing I say will help.

I neglected to follow my own advice last month and engaged someone in a private debate regarding the Postal Service. By the end of the conversation I was asked to transfer to Ohio and become their letter carrier. When you put a face to the argument people become less venomous. As it turned out, this person had 2 sisters that worked for the USPS as clerks and were concerned about being excessed, but still she chose to rip on the company that employed her family.

While going door to door in my neighborhood collecting petition signatures I had one man who yelled back to his wife and said "Hey, you wanna sign a petition to keep Saturday mail delivery?" She replied "Ahhh, who gives a shit?!" I immediately shouted out "I do! My kids have grown used to eating!" I left there with a signature. While out in front of the LPB gathering signatures I had a couple of people who told me they thought eliminating Saturday delivery was a good idea because if the company is losing money, cutbacks must be made. I said "I can explain to you why it's a bad idea if you're willing to listen." One man did, the other one got in his Mercedes Benz and drove away. Most people signed the petition those nights I was out there. Many wanted to talk about it. They wanted to know more.

Have you seen the video yet of Rep. Joe Walsh R-IL shouting down a constituent at a meet & greet? The constituent fought back and tried to correct him. Her name is Melissa Rakestraw and she is a Letter Carrier from Branch 825 in Oak Brook, IL. It was so satisfying to me to see her stand up for herself, me and you. She was calm, articulate and well educated on the subject which I think is a credit to her, her Branch, her Region and the NALC as a whole. Rep. Walsh, (who reportedly owes over \$100,000 in back child support) had an excuse for his attacks—He was hungry. You will be too if you don't start getting active.

This article is courtesy of the December 2011 *Branch 245 Newsletter* published by Rockford, IL NALC Branch 245





## Got survivor benefits? Part 1

**P**eriodically, we receive communications from active letter carriers who have been informed that if they die, their wife or family would receive nothing in terms of benefits. Most of the information is erroneous. My hope is that this information is not being given to our members as a scare tactic to get them to retire. Regardless of the reason, for this month and next, my articles will deal with survivor issues as they relate to the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) for an active employee or a retired annuitant. While both have benefits available, the benefits do differ in some aspects. This month we will deal with FERS employees.

The Federal Employees Retirement System can provide survivor benefits, with benefits offered depending on personal situations that exist at the time of death. FERS and Social Security survivor benefits can be paid under various conditions to current and former spouses and children. Surviving spouses must meet certain age and marriage length requirements to qualify for benefits. You also can elect benefits for a spouse you marry after retirement under FERS. Children's benefits are payable to each unmarried child:

- up to age 18;
- up to age 22 if a full-time student; or
- any age if the child became disabled before age 18.

Your Thrift Savings Plan account will be available to your designated survivors. More information about FERS survivor benefits (including court-ordered benefits for a former spouse) is available through pamphlets on OPM's website, [opm.gov](http://opm.gov).

Let's look at different scenarios and their effect on active, retired and former FERS employees.

**Scenario 1**—A FERS employee is currently on the rolls with 25 years of service. He dies and leaves a wife and no children. What are the survivor benefits available?

- **Basic employee death benefit**—adjusted annually for inflation. For 2011-2012, the amount is \$30,792.98, plus a lump-sum payment of the higher of half the deceased employee's annual basic salary or half of the deceased employee's high-three, plus any Social Security and Thrift Savings Plan survivor benefits that may be payable. *For this benefit to be payable, the deceased*

*employee must have completed 18 months of service and died while subject to FERS deductions.*

- **A monthly survivor benefit**—the employee must have 10 years or more of service and died while subject to FERS deductions. The spouse must have been married for nine months immediately prior to the employee's death. If death resulted from an accident, then employment and marriage requirements are waived.
- Survivor benefit is computed as if the employee retired optionally (with no age reductions on the date of death). In this case, a 25-year FERS annuity is reduced to 50 percent for the surviving spouse.

**Scenario 2**—The same employee, but with two children under age 18.

Children of deceased FERS employees are entitled to a child's annuity, minus any amount received from Social Security. This usually results in the benefit being eliminated, since Social Security entitlements are greater. Social Security benefits for children are paid until age 18. So, a full-time student would then have his or her child's annuity reinstated through OPM until age 22 if continuing in school.

**Scenario 3**—A FERS employee is not currently on the rolls, having left with 25 years' service. He dies at age 54. What is the retirement annuity/entitlement of his wife?

For a FERS employee who separated from service, the spouse would be entitled to a survivor benefit if the employee had at least 10 years of creditable service. Spouses who meet the marriage requirements will automatically receive survivor benefits, *unless* the marriage took place after the employee left the federal government. The survivor also may elect to receive the unexpended balance of the employee's FERS retirement account. *Children under the age of 18 would be entitled to Social Security benefits. Any benefit paid by OPM would be offset by the amount Social Security pays. This would usually result in no payment from OPM.*

**Scenario 4**—A FERS employee is not currently on the rolls but has not applied for deferred annuity.

This could be the case of an employee who, for whatever reason, left the service and has fewer than 10 years' service. This employee's spouse or survivor would be entitled only to the sum of money that the deceased had deposited into FERS, unless a refund was received prior to death. ☒

# Looking for a change of scenery? Here are some requests for a Mutual Exchange\*...

My name is Nicole Aranda and I am looking for a mutual exchange from Portland OR to Bakersfield CA or any of the surrounding areas (8/10). I am from the area and would like to move back due to family reasons.

The Rose City is very beautiful. There is a whole lot to do here...you're 30 minutes away from the waterfalls; an hour and-a-half from the beach and two hours away from Mt Hood. The scenery is absolutely breathtaking. You can never run out of places to eat! They even pump your gas! Don't want to drive? Ok. the transit system can take you just about anywhere you need to be or you can just walk to where you want to go.

If anyone is interested or has any questions please feel free to reach me by e-mail or phone. [chakacookie@gmail.com](mailto:chakacookie@gmail.com) or call me at this phone number: (503) 891-0375. Thank you!

---

## Want to work in Wenatchee, Washington?

Bob wants to do a Mutual Exchange and here is some info: There are 40 routes. My anniversary date is July 1994 and I am #15 of fifty Carriers. Look for the ad on Postalspot.com with pictures of the area. Wenatchee is a town of 60,000 on the Columbia River. We have cheap electric. Car registration is \$50 and there is no state tax.

My phone number is (509) 393-6474. You can call me or text me. Or, you can e-mail me at this address: [alaskabob@genext.net](mailto:alaskabob@genext.net). My mailing address is P.O. Box 373 in Wenatchee, WA 98807.

---

### If you are looking to initiate a Mutual Exchange with a Letter Carrier where you want to live, what can you do?\*

Place a "Mutual Exchange Ad" in the NALC monthly magazine—*The Postal Record*. To do this, you have to realize that there are certain rules.

The cost of Mutual Exchange ads is \$15 for up to 30 words and \$25 for 31-50 words per month.

Ads must be received by the 5th of the month preceding the month in which the ad will appear. Mail ad with check (payable to NALC) TO: Mutual Exchange Ads, *Postal Record*, 100 Indiana Avenue N.W., Washington, DC 20001-2144.

*\* Mutual exchanges must be approved by both postmasters involved. Seniority of Carriers involved shall be governed by Article 41. Sec 2e of the National Agreement. Carriers may not exchange assignments, since vacated positions must be posted for bids in accordance with local and national agreements.*

**\*\*Of course, if you are looking to move someplace else, respond to the ad and see if it will work out for you!**

Ads are published for NALC members only.

A Branch Officer or Steward must endorse the ad to certify membership. Ads without endorsements will be returned.

Include your name, address and Branch number. Ads must be received in the same format and wording as they will appear in the magazine. Begin each ad with your state abbreviation, city and seniority date.

Ads should be typed in upper/lower case (or, if this is not possible, printed clearly) on a full sheet of 8.5X11" paper. Make certain the numerals 0 and 1 can be distinguished from the letters O and l in e-mail addresses.



# Branch Officers

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*E.A. BAKER UNION UPDATE* is published monthly by Merged Branch 782 of the National Association of Letter Carriers, AFL-CIO.

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)	Darryl Holderman	(661) 332-9201
McFarland (93250)	Robert Campos	(661) 805-1034
Shafter (93263)	Norma Hamer	(661) 619-1465
Taft (93268)	Mike Meza	(805) 625-4541
Wasco (93280)	Jerry Patterson	(661) 699-2462
Downtown Station (93301)	Kim Gerdes	(661) 834-2059
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
Camino Media (93311/13)	Mike Meza	(805) 625-4541
Mojave (93501)	Vacant	
California City (93504)	Russell Day	(760) 373-8963
Boron (93516)	Paula Hogg	(760) 373-8963
Edwards AF Base (93526)	Larry Beem	(661) 949-2280
Tehachapi (93561)	Mary Morphis	(661) 822-6614
Trona (93562)	Lynnell Howell	(760) 371-1039
Ridgecrest (93555)	Lynnell Howell	(760) 371-1039

**Branch 782  
Website  
www.782nalc.com**

Rick Plummer, Webmaster



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FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

# General Meeting

**Tuesday**  
**May 22, 2012**  
**7:00 p.m.**

Branch 782 Office  
 2628 "F" Street  
 Bakersfield, California

# 2012 Food Drive



# We All Did Good!!!



These pictures by Anita Holderman



*This year's Food Drive "bumped" right up to the newsletter deadline. So, next month: The Details~*

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