



THE VOICE



OF THE GOLDEN GATE LETTER CARRIERS

BRANCH #214

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS, AFL-CIO

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Award-winning newspaper

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CHALLENGE TO INJURED CARRIERS AND UNION

Phase two of NRP

By Bill Thornton, Vice President

The Postal Service has been providing work/limited duty job offers for over 20 years to employees with many levels of disability and now is abruptly pulling the rug out from under them, disrupting their lives. Essentially, The National Reassessment Process (NRP) is an attempt by the Postal Service to reinterpret their responsibilities under federal law and the national agreement.

The responsibility **To Make Every Effort** to provide work is ebbing, reinterpreted as providing only "necessary work". The Postal Service is also unilaterally making distinctions between people who have reached Maximum Medical Improvement (MMI) before or after the date of injury as a criterion for providing work. This is a real kick in the face to people who may have devoted years to the organization. And they know they are doing wrong.

The ultimate insult to all of us may be the reference to the presence of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) in the process. At the time the Postal Service gives carriers a CA-2A, a CA-7 and telling them they are washing their hands of them, reference is made to the final meeting and the presence of the OIG to remind the employee of The

and union and personal responses and intends to offer the classes before the end of the year.

Injured carriers in the San Francisco District probably remember *The Wellness Coordinator* visiting their post office/station to talk to them, look at their medical limitations and job offers, etc.

This was the first phase of the *National Reassessment Process* or *NRP*.

There has been a series of articles over the years in NALC publications about this as well as other information about the rights of injured employees.

The Districts that encompass Branch 214 are not on the current schedule for implementation but certainly will be scheduled for 2008.

Practical considerations and don't panic

For most injured carriers who can perform so called core carrier duties there is reason to have only moderate concern.

The pilot NRP in San Diego did not result in any massive displacement of carriers.

Keep your medical documentation up to date, including proper and complete CA-17s.

Some carriers have had cases closed for so-called lack of medical activity. If you don't go to the doctor at least every 4 months your case may be closed by the Department of Labor. You can get it reopened by filing a CA-2A but avoid the hassle by going to the doctor at least every 90 days. Some people have had problems keeping a doctor after they have reached maximum medical improvement but at that point you can change doctors. Many doctors do not want to handle OWCP cases but there are some who specialize in such cases.

Warnings to carriers about being careful as to not

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Branch 214 has sent out inquiries to injured carriers.

Violence and Behavior in the Workplace Memo. When reading this, the only thought I honestly had was F... You. They have reached a new low.

Additionally, and tragically, the NALC/APWU conflict over whether carrier limited duty jobs should be clerk bid positions has not been adjudicated.

Branch 214 has sent out inquiries to injured carriers soliciting interest in classes/meetings to discuss the issues

Branch 214 notes

Contract ratified. A new five-year contract was ratified by a mail ballot of active members 104,346 to 11,895. Retroactive pay adjustments will be made as soon as possible. Transitional employess will replace casuals.

* * *

Late news: At the annual Branch 214 dinner/dance two prestigious awards were presented. **Charles Gonzales**, San Leandro Main, was named “**Steward of the Year:**” **Karen Eshabarr**, Marina station, San Francisco, was named “**Unionist of the Year.**” More details in the next issue.

T.V. 214 Schedule

SAN FRANCISCO, AT&T Cable Channel 29:
Every third Sunday of the month at 7:00 p.m.
October 21, 2007, November 18, 2007,
December 16, 2007

Branch Officers

Lili Beaumont **President**
 Ray Fong **Executive Vice-President**
 Bill Thornton **Vice-President**
 Cherry Vargas **Secretary-Treasurer**
 Juan Dominguez **Field Director**
 Carol Maggio **Assistant Secretary-Treasurer**
 Leonard Cruz **Sergeant-at-Arms**
 Franklin Woo **NALC Health Benefits**
 Karen Schuler **Safety and Health**
 Cathy Simonson **EEO Officer**
 Mike Callahan **MBA representative**
 Kim Truong **Director of Organization**
 June Buccat **Trustee**
 Kathleen McConnell **Trustee**
 Sheila Gardner **Trustee**

Voice Staff

Ivars Lauersons **Editor**
 Gerry Lee **Graphics**

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GOLDEN GATE BRANCH
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 WEB page: <http://www.nalc214.org>
 Office hours: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday



Website as of 9/18/07

Preview of NALC Bay Area website. This is a website that will be focusing on Bay Area NALC issues and as a resource for unionists looking for information (such as handbooks, manuals, arbitration decisions, etc). The website is a work in progress and will be continuously updated with information that union members will find useful (i.e., forms such as CA-1’s, CA-2’s, links to Department of Labor, Office of Personnel, etc.). We welcome suggestions on how to improve the site, and/or include more information on particular issues union members want information on. Also, the site has a discussion board where members can leave posts for other people to view and/or respond back to. The address is www.nalcbayarea.com – check it out and give us some feedback. **Welcome new stewards: Ruth Mattes**, Station P, and **June Yap**, San Rafael Mission.

* * *

Techno-assistant Cherry Vargas, Branch 214 secretary treasurer worked unstintingly on this issue of **The Voice**, providing input on formatting, e-mail, and overcoming computer glitches.

Marina Steward Karen Eshabarr once more worked the thankless job of associate editor contributing in research, phone calls, and fact-checking.

* * *

Twenty members of Branch 214, (twenty four, if you include the family members), showed up on Sunday July 22, 2007 between the hours of 8:00-10:00 AM at the Woodfin Suites and Hotel in Emeryville, CA across the bay from San Francisco **to join a picket line**. It was a very feisty bunch out on the line. We woke up many guests who were staying at the hotel. Besides getting mooned by one of the guest and getting “flipped” off by someone claiming to be a teamster’s representative, it was a good show of force and **support for the workers**. They were very appreciative of our support and energy. I would like to thank those members who gave up their Sunday morning to join the line. We hope to schedule another Sunday event and hopefully we can encourage other members to join us.

Customer Connect

Saving our own company

By Lili Beaumont, President

Now that the contract has been ratified, the union moves forward to implement the new provisions of our contract. Among them is a written commitment to advocate the joint program called "Customer Connect in which city letter carriers use their access and special relationships with customers to encourage increased use of Postal Service products and services" (MOU Re: Customer Connect).

The union acknowledges that the Postal Service's existence is doomed if we, as letter carrier employees, don't move to capture revenue opportunities from those customers who frequently conduct business mailings with FedEx, UPS, DHL, and other companies that compete with the Postal Service. If mail volume continues to decline it means that the company is not earning money. This eventually means the company will have to downsize or, if unable to adjust to the decline in revenue, our company may die.

Having to generate new business

Those of us who were hired into the Postal Service fifteen years ago and before never had to worry about revenue generation for the Postal Service. There was enough mail to go around. However, since then, and within the last five years, the Postal Service has lost approximately two billion pieces of first class mail per year. Despite this revenue loss, we still have the Express Mail and Parcel Post markets available for revenue generation. Our company has the potential to grow and flourish in these two arenas but we, as letter carriers who daily interact with our customers, need to advertise to them the different services the Postal Service has to offer. And that is what Customer Connect is all about.

Talk about postal service products

When delivering your route you notice that your customer uses UPS or FedEx to move items, ask that customer "Have you looked at the Postal Service's products?" Once you have prompted interest in our company's services, then you provide that customer with a "lead card" to complete and you bring the lead card back to your supervisor.

Learning online

www.USPS.com is a good resource for letter carriers to educate themselves on the type of services the postal service has to offer its customers. As letter carriers, we need to do what we can to grow our business (the Postal

Service) via Customer Connect. Include Customer Connect in your daily delivery duties. Please help our company make money if you want to see it stay through your retirement.

Assembly Joint Resolution No.27

Adopted 9/11/2007

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 27—Relative to the United States Postal Service.

This measure would urge the United States Postal Service to discontinue the practice of contracting out mail delivery services.

WHEREAS, Letter carriers of the United States Postal Service provide mail delivery service to over 144 million homes and businesses across the nation; and

WHEREAS, The United States Postal Service increasingly promotes the contracting out of mail delivery services as a key business strategy of its core function; and

WHEREAS, In the last five years the United States Postal Service has contracted out 3.5 million deliveries nationwide, replacing workers who earned living wages and benefits with low-wage contract jobs without benefits; and

WHEREAS, By contracting out letter carrier positions, the United States Postal Service is bypassing the hiring process that ensures that only qualified people handle America's mail; and

WHEREAS, The contracting out of mail delivery services limits the ability of the United States Postal Service to prevent, investigate, and prosecute mail theft, mail fraud, and other illegal issues of the mail; and

WHEREAS, The protection of our mail delivery services is a vital component of our national security; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature urges the United States Postal Service to discontinue the practice of contracting out mail delivery services; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the Majority Leader of the Senate, to the Minority Leader of the Senate, to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States, and the United States Postmaster.

Introduced by Assembly Member Solorio

Sponsored by:

California State Association of Letter Carriers

National Association of Letter Carriers

California Labor Federation

California School Employees Association

NALC Health Benefit Plan in 2008

It is part of our great union

By Franklin H. Woo, NALC Health Benefit Plan Rep.

If you are currently not a member of the NALC Health Benefit Plan (NALC HBP), please accept my invitation to consider looking at us during the coming Open Season beginning sometime in November 2007. You may want to compare us with any of the other Plans. You may be quite surprised at what is in "your plan." The NALC HBP was designed especially for our union members. The NALC HBP's mission is to provide our union members accessibility to quality medical care while maintaining a comprehensive benefit package. The NALC HBP pride itself on offering excellent benefits with affordable premiums. And why not support the NALC HBP? It is part of our great union. Right? Take the time and give us a try for 2008.



NALC Health Benefit Plan is:

- Union owned
- Union operated
- Not-for-profit plan

Would you like some specific reasons for giving the NALC HBP a try in 2008?

Employee contribution rates effective in January 2008 for active letter carriers and annuitants in the NALC Health Benefit Plan (**with reductions from the current 2007 rate in parentheses**) are:

	Self-Only	Self & Family
Active Carriers (biweekly)	\$ 32.61 (-\$6.19)	\$ 54.54 (-\$ 6.31)
Annuitants (monthly)	\$127.40 (\$12.18)	\$247.00 (-\$10.77)

Facts about FEHB (Federal Employees Health Benefits) and the NALC Health Benefit Plan

- No pre-existing condition limitation. The NALC HBP will not refuse to cover the treatment of a condition you

The NALC plan is non-profit designed especially for our members.

had before you enrolled in this plan solely because you had the condition before you enrolled.

- Types of coverage available for you and your family. Self Only is for you alone. Self and Family is for you, your spouse and unmarried dependent children under age 22, including any foster children or stepchildren for

which your employing or retirement office authorizes coverage. Under certain circumstances, you may also continue coverage for a disabled child 22 years of age or older who is incapable of self-support.

- The NALC HBP is a fee-for service (FFS) plan. You can choose your own physicians, hospitals, and other health care providers ... unless it was an emergency situation.
- The NALC HBP will reimburse you or your provider for your covered services, usually based on a percentage of the amount the NALC HBP allow. The type and extent of covered services, and the amount that the NALC HBP allow, may be different from other plans. Always refer to the NALC HBP brochure as your official guide to the Plan's benefits.

You can choose your doctors and hospitals even if they're not on the preferred provider list.

- The NALC HBP have a Preferred Provider Organization (PPO). The NALC HBP fee-for service plan offers services through a PPO. When you use its PPO providers, you will receive covered services at reduced cost. Coventry Health Care (formerly known as First Health) is solely responsible for the selection of PPO providers in your area. Call 1-800-622-6252 for the names of PPO providers. The NALC HBP recommends that you call the PPO provider you select before each visit and verify that they continue to participate in the Coventry Health Care network.
- The non-PPO benefits are the standard benefits of the NALC HBP. PPO benefits apply only when you use a PPO provider. Provider networks may be more extensive in some areas than in others. The NALC HBP cannot guarantee the availability of every specialty in all areas. If no PPO provider is available, or you do not use a PPO provider, the standard non-PPO benefits apply.
- When you use a PPO provider or facility, the NALC HBP allowance is the negotiated rate for that service. You are not responsible for charges above the negotiated amount. Non-PPO facilities and providers do not have special arrangements with the NALC HBP. Their payment is based on their allowance for covered services. You may be responsible for amounts over the allowance. The NALC HBP obtains discounts from some non-PPO providers. When the NALC HBP obtain discounts through negotiations with providers (PPO and non-PPO), it will share the savings with you.

Save by using PPO providers

With the NALC HBP you always have a choice when selecting a hospital or medical provider! When you use a

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Woo (continued from page 4)

PPO hospital or provider, you receive:

1. Excellent health care with lower out-of-pocket cost to you.
2. Pre-screened hospitals and health care providers.
3. A nationwide network of over 4,300 hospitals and over 572,000 urgent care centers, physicians, specialists, laboratories, radiology and ambulatory centers.
4. 45 Adult National Transplant Facilities and 19 Pediatric Transplant Facilities that are selected for their specialty and excellence.

Over-the-counter medications

The NALC HBP offers the CaremarkDirect Program to all members. This program allows you to purchase over-the-counter (OTC) medications, as well as non-covered prescription drugs through the Caremark mail service pharmacy. CaremarkDirect provides you with safe, convenient access to non-covered prescriptions and certain OTC drugs and products. Call 1-800-933-NALC, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for a complete listing of available medications and their cost.

CarePatterns – improving your quality of life

CarePatterns is a total health program designed to help individuals living with a chronic condition take better control of their health. It is designed to assist its participants in interacting with their doctor and other health care providers and help take the guesswork and uncertainty out of personal health-care management. CarePatterns

Our plan provides quality medical care with affordable premiums.

programs include managed care for diabetes, heart failure, asthma, coronary artery disease, peptic ulcer disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Call 1-800-933-NALC for information and professional guidance.

We're there when you need us!

The Network provider for Mental Health and Substance Abuse (MHSA) benefits is United Behavioral Health (UBH).

They provide a diverse network of licensed and certified professionals nationwide through 67,000 providers and 3,300 facilities. You will receive quality care and benefits when you use UBH network providers. To get pre-authorization of mental health and substance abuse benefits, call United Behavioral Health at 1-877-468-1016, 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week.

You, the NALC HBP and Medicare

When you are enrolled in Medicare and the NALC HBP, it couldn't be better! Services and supplies are gen-

erally paid in full between Medicare and the NALC HBP. When Medicare applies their calendar year deductible and coinsurance to services provided by Part A or Part B, the NALC HBP pays 100% of the balance. This results in no out-of-pocket costs to you!

The NALC HBP makes it even easier for you with its Crossover Program. When you are enrolled to Medicare (Parts A, B or both), your claims come to the NALC HBP

You'll be getting information on the plan in the mail.

automatically once Medicare pays. No claims to file. What could be easier!

24-Hour Nurse Line!

You may call a registered nurse at 1-800-622-NALC (6252) 24 hours a day, seven days a week to discuss your health concerns and treatment options. This service is provided by the PPO - Coventry HealthCare. Their professional nursing staff will refer patients to appropriate levels of care and help in locating network providers.

Before this upcoming Open Season, you will be receiving your 2008 NALC Health Benefit Plan packet in the mail for review. For the sake of yourself / family, give it a good look. At the least, review the summary on the NALC HBP! For any questions, please contact the NALC HBP directly at 1-888-636-6252 between 8:00 A.M. 3:30 P.M. (EST). Or, you may of course leave me a "voice message" at 415-362-0214 or 1-800-4BR-0214 (ext. 43).

Remember, with the NALC HBP, you will always have the freedom ... the freedom to select your own doctors, hospitals, and other important medical providers to take care of your medical needs and that of your family members when you need it the most ... when you are ill or injured!

Here's hoping that you will be part of the NALC HBP family for 2008!

Branch 214 Meetings

Branch meetings, 7:00 P.M.

October 3, 2007	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
November 7, 2007	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
December 5, 2007	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF

Steward meetings, 4:30 P.M.

October 3, 2007	2310 Mason Street, 3rd Floor
November 7, 2007	2310 Mason Street, 3rd Floor
December 5, 2007	2310 Mason Street, 3rd Floor

Retiree social meeting, 12:30 P.M.

October 1, 2007	740 Del Monte Ave., South SF
December 3, 2007	740 Del Monte Ave., South SF
February 4, 2008	740 Del Monte Ave., South SF

Letter

July 30, 2007

Winifred Groux
District Manager
1300 Evans Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94124

Pacific Carrier Annex (PCA) is detrimental to my health and I am anxiously seeking refuge from the toxic atmosphere that exists here. I am afraid for my life and wellbeing and also for the lives and wellbeing of the 130 or so people that work at PCA.

There is an unacceptable level of stress at PCA and there is no excuse for the continual harassment, intimidation, threats, and bullying that takes place here on a daily basis.

I have done everything within my power to improve our situation and to foster an environment of dignity, respect and fairness. But unfortunately I have been unsuccessful.

We have had every kind of ritualistic expression of concern through the initiation of investigations, studies, and "interventions" and the situation has only gotten worse.

You are fully aware that we had several years of intervention from the USPS/NALC Peace Team and that when they left; the surveys showed that the situation was worse than ever. And I'm sure that you are also aware that the Peace Team recommended removing station manager Denton, but that was never done.

The employees at PCA have requested the assistance of our congressional representatives, but so far the situation has only gotten worse. PCA employees including myself are at a loss of what else can be done to stop the abuse.

I was a letter carrier at Royal Oak, Michigan in 1991 when one of my co-workers, Tom McIlvane killed five people (including himself) and injured many more. The current conditions at Pacific Carrier Annex are comparable to the repressive conditions that existed at Royal Oak prior to the horrible events of November 14, 1991:

- The constant degrading treatment of subordinates
- Threats of firing or discipline for not getting done on time
- Attempts by management to control everything; right down to the most insignificant minutiae
- An increase in discipline for minor (or fabricated) offenses
- Disregard for the rules as they apply to management
- Targeting employees for dismissal
- The installation of a security code system for entering the building, which was done in Royal Oak immediately preceding the shooting.

- Individual employees being told to let the supervisor know before they go to the bathroom, which was also done in Royal Oak prior to the shooting.

The situations seem too alike to be coincidental. I feel as if I am reliving a terrible nightmare. I have been unable to convince anyone with the power to change things that we could be on the verge of yet another needless tragedy.

In the past my coworkers and I have enjoyed working at San Francisco's Pacific Carrier Annex. Even when the work was difficult we felt a sense of pride in our work and knew that we were appreciated. When I go to work now, I encounter miserable employees (including supervisors) that express trepidation, dread and fear. The atmosphere is thick with anger and resentment. Conflicts escalate easily due to the mistrust and bitterness that has been allowed to fester for many years.

The Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace states (in part):

... "Every employee at every level of the Postal Service should be treated at all times with dignity, respect and fairness. The need for the USPS to serve the public efficiently and productively, and the need for all employees to be committed to giving a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, does not justify actions that are abusive or intolerant. "Making the numbers" is not an excuse for the abuse of anyone... Those whose unacceptable behavior continues will be removed from their positions."

Sincerely,

Audrey A. Davis
San Francisco Letter Carrier

cc: Postmaster General; John Potter, San Francisco Postmaster; Noemi Luna, Labor Relations Specialist; Mitchell Hicks, NALC President; Bill Young, NALC National Business Agent; Manny Peralta, NALC Local Branch 214 President; Lili Beaumont, PCA Shop Steward; Steve McAffree, House Speaker; Nancy Pelosi, Congressman; Tom Lantos

Editor's note:

The Pacific Carrier Annex (PCA) has had serious problems for a number of years. Here are three perspectives on recent events. Audrey Davis lists problems, Bill Thornton has some updates more recently than July 30, and Ruth Mattes speaks about one of the three stations in PCA.

Something different

Problems and attempted solutions

By Bill Thornton, Vice President

The brouhaha at a major Branch 214 station continues. Yeah it's PCA! Is a given that several supervisors should not be supervising human beings and that the managers above them either condone or encourage their behavior.

The response by the union has included massive amounts of energy and efforts. Despite these efforts the situation remains bad. Recent interviews of carriers by the local union and the business agent's office have indicated some improvement in conditions.

There have been responses to the abuse by some that go outside the normal union/management framework and this has gathered some attention from people with the power to possibly affect some real change.



If this change comes, all the better. Branch 214 has historically supported rank and file efforts to institute changes.

But criticisms of the union aside, and whether the situation has risen to the danger level as some of the hyperbole indicates, however the situation can be improved would be preferable to the current conditions.

If this can be affected by picket lines or some other form of action, even outside the framework of the union, the results are what's important. Certainly the efforts that have come outside the normal union dispute processes have helped.

What seems to be lost is that responses to the Postal Service numbers driven mentality and constant argu-

What cannot be debated is that there are carriers who have fought the good fight.

ments over workloads are often not of the grand response that seems to be called for by some. Somehow, it is no surprise that endless peace teams, etc. have not resulted in significant change. The union can be immediately effective in certain areas such as overtime violations, etc. but less so when getting into the area of Article 3, management rights, and responsibility to management as applied to the treatment of employees with dignity and respect

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Trying times

Another toxic supervisor in Station P

By Ruth Mattes, Shop Steward, Station P

Recently, I was asked by several people to be a shop steward for our embattled Station P. My first reaction was, "I don't think so." They told me, at least, to give it some thought. Later, I did give it some thought, and decided, "Why not?" No one else would want more work and stress on top of everything else. But, I said to myself, that if I too declined to help and just turned an apathetic eye to the bad (and getting worse) situation, like some other people, then the union is doomed. A union does not mean one entity: in fact, the dictionary defines union as: "a group of people united for some special purpose." Our union is Branch 214, and our purpose is to stand strong together against the abusive management.



"These are the times that try men's souls," to quote Thomas Paine, a Revolutionary War hero, and indeed, it has come to be. Pacific Carrier Annex (PCA) management has enjoyed a field day with the carriers in Station P, because we had no shop steward for several years. They had "carte blanche" to do whatever they liked (to be more and more abusive) and there was no one readily available to stop them.

New supervisor, new harassment

It is not a mere coincidence that the abuse, harassment, and stress have escalated since the arrival of a new supervisor who replaced Jacquelyn Smith when she retired in April of this year. This new supervisor lost no time in going "gung ho" over our station. She was a carrier, but was barely able to pass the testing process for supervisor training. She was given a bad rating during her training by the former supervisor, because she was confrontational and had a bad attitude. Unfortunately, she brought

Our branch stands together against abusive management.

all these good qualities with her when she came to Station P, and brought a big chip on her shoulder to boot. It did not take her very long to learn how to give out letters of discipline. However, the letters she writes are virtually undecipherable and appear to be written in the English

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Thornton (continued from page 7)

and with the Violence in the Workplace Memo.

Management continually raises the it's not harassment, we're just giving carriers instructions argument.

The Memo on Violence has become a bad joke. The accused carrier is put out on a 16.7. emergency suspension. The homunculus (little man) remains in the supervisory position, garnering massive pay hours, presumably for berating carriers when they call in from the street for instructions and other examples of how not to run a company.

At the same time, by implication, there is an implicit idea that the Branch has mishandled the situation. This can be reasonably debated.

What cannot be debated is that there are carriers who have fought the good fight, calling in from the street despite any management threats, real or implied.

PCA Carriers have stood up to the supervisor/homunculus. 5 minutes with a steward, EEOs, a feeling of solidarity, even if not widespread. It is many times a mechanized response, passive-aggressive, using the rules against the abusive management.

Have you hugged your steward today?

The union strives for excellence in the grievance procedure and it is long uncertain process. While understanding that there are different levels of activities by stewards in different places, the union is striving to increase the quality of representation.

The stewards struggle as individuals with specific skills and temperaments.

Nobody comes from Harvard Law School that I know of and there are various skills and contributions.

I was kind of taken aback by the lack of respect that was shown at a recent union meeting towards those who have put themselves on the line, albeit imperfectly as human beings.

And there are stewards, often criticized, who have never deserted the fight, carrying routes every day with the attendant need to watch their own backs, while at the same time showing up every day for steward duties. Lesser people would have quit long ago, what with the insults that they must not only take from management but some carriers. It is glamorous and I will grant sometimes effective to say that the sky is falling but there are nitty gritty struggles that go on every day and they're mostly not glamorous.

"... they stand on a wall, and they say 'nothing is going to hurt you ..., not on my watch'."

They are there today, punching in, ready to request union time to defend letter carrier rights. And they will be there tomorrow.

Mattes (continued from page 7)

language, however very badly. Suffice it to say the new supervisor wasted no time to whip everyone into shape. She initiated "new rules:"

1. No overtime is allowed on one's own route, and that goes without saying to those carriers who are on the Overtime Desired List. (The only overtime they get is doing extra assignments). Well, duh, we carriers have not been given overtime on our own routes for years. So what else is new?
2. Mail pre-cased the night before does not count on the route when the regular carrier asks for time to deliver it the next day.
3. Certain carriers were instructed by the new supervisor to leave at 9:30 a.m. (regardless of what the old leaving time is on your route or how much mail you have).

The new supervisor initiated new rules.

Most carriers come in at 7:30 a.m. However, the supervisor overlooks the fact that the last mail pick-up from the hot case is 9:00 a.m. (according to the flow chart).

If a carrier goes to pick up the mail from the hot case prior to 9:00 a.m. (in order to make the 9:30 a.m. leaving time), he/she is told to go into the office to be disciplined – "failure to follow instructions and not following the flow chart."

4. A carrier is not allowed to move the mail that has been stacked on the ledge of a carrier's case every day—no matter how cluttered it is or if it is so high that you cannot see the labels on the bottom row of the route.
5. The supervisor has designated herself the job of observing the carriers while they are casing mail. She stands by the carrier's case and makes notations on her clipboard. If she deems it necessary, or if she does not like the way a carrier is casing his/her mail, she takes the carrier into the office (for more of her instructions on how to do it properly). At times, the supervisor goes above and beyond her duties and goes to inform the station manager of her "findings" about the carriers to make herself feel more important, and to ingratiate herself to the boss. Of course, the station manager is her mentor and trainer and gives this new supervisor her total support, authority, and approval in all her endeavors.

With this new toxic supervisor in our midst, Station P should undergo some de-contamination and fumigation (if only to be able to breathe a little easier and not let the built-up stress and hostility make all of us sicker than we already are.)

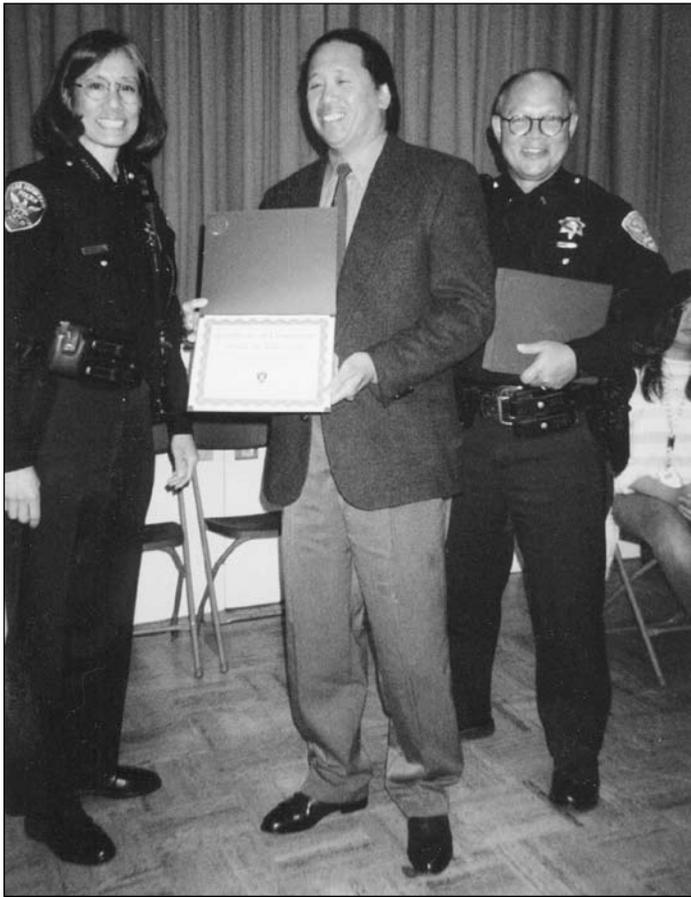


Photo by Sasmyrn Mabalatan



Photo courtesy of Rich De Leon

Carrier Rich De Leon at the time clock for his last punch. Rich retired on March 30, 2007 from Golden Gate Station.

Presidio carrier David Mabalatan receiving diploma at Community Police Academy Class #19 from San Francisco Police Chief Heather Fong, left, and Captain Richard Corriea, Director of Training.



Photo by Ray Fong

Marina carriers bottom row, left to right, Sandra Wesley, Edwina Wu, Maria Cruz, Joyce Kung; top row, Su Lin Chan, Tina Lee, Ivars Lauersons, Karen Eshabarr, Ping Zhu, and Nancy Gee. Ivars retired on April 30, 2007. (Inset, last punch photo of Ivars Lauersons by Joyce Kung.)



Essential knowledge

The five musts

By Ivars Lauersons, Editor

This is not an article about the new contract. It is about how you can resist being hassled by management on a daily basis. Variations on this theme have been written about many times. Management comes at you on a daily basis trying to get more work out of you beyond what is safe, and beyond what is possible. Convert this pushing at you into your strength. The more they push the more you have available to get back at them.

This is the principle used in **aikido**, a martial arts method about a hundred years old, derived from the more familiar judo, which uses only the opponents moves or strengths, and converts them into an active defense. The more aggressive the move is, the more it can be used against the initiator. More on this later.



Contract approved

The new contract will be overwhelmingly approved because it has a good economic package. (At press time the contract was approved by the membership.) It answers the question that most carriers are concerned about-- How much?—very well. In addition, there is a lump sum payment of retroactive COLA for active carriers, and a retroactive pay increase of 1.4% above the old contract.

There are other positives in the contract, and if I had a vote, I would have voted to approve it. But what came through most loudly in any contract was the amount of the pay raise. The fact that the COLA was also retained this time made the pay raise so much sweeter.

Limits on DOIS

Once the lump sum bonus is received, and the retroactive pay raise calculated, the reality of conditions on the workroom floor will once again sink in. The new contract promises some limitations about how DOIS is to be used, and this should provide some relief about the daily harassment on the workroom floor. As anybody who has recently been a carrier can attest, this has been a time of relentless pressure from management to squeeze more work from everyone. This has been true in Marina Station in San Francisco, in Branch 214, and throughout the country, as shown in the Branch Items section in the "Postal Record," and in numerous articles in local branch papers, including three in this issue.

Management has thrown everything at us that head-

quarters has deemed will increase efficiency, hoping some of it will stick to the wall. From DOIS says, "You are undertime," in the morning to the 5 or 6 o'clock windows in the evening, and the "carrier commitment" and other pressure in the office, and when you call in is all designed to make you run and produce more. Management is the opponent, not the partner it sometimes pretends to be.

All carriers resent being told they are not doing their job, which is what the above pressure amounts to. Yet some carriers are able to survive the pressure with greater aplomb than others. We all get mad, but how do we fight back? In fact can we fight back within existing rules? Yes, we can fight back.

Back to 1978

When I came into the post office in 1978 there was pressure, and there were rules, and there were nasty supervisors. A new carrier was taken into the group by older carriers who explained how the system worked. The number one rule that was implied and did not have to be stated explicitly, was that carriers stuck together. We were us, and management was they.

The number two rule was to go by the book. If you went by the book, that is followed the rules that the post office itself said we had to follow, you could not get into

Use your opponent's strengths and convert them to an active defense.

trouble. You don't have to know all the rules; there are thousands in all the manuals. But you should know a few basic ones that will get you through the office hours and out to the street.

A shop steward can tell you how many times the average carrier needs to be reminded of what seems basic knowledge. **So here are five active defensive moves you must know, and use, to make your day easier.**

1. The flow chart. There is a sequence of activities to be followed at your route that will take you from the time you punch in to leaving time, the time you punch out to the street. There are many variations per route and station, but none of them say "DOIS estimate," or "carrier commitment," or "must case 4 feet per hour." The first time something relevant comes up is when you estimate that you will be unable to complete your route in eight hours, due to volume of mail, or a one hour stand-up on the new scanners. In San Francisco this is one and a half hours before the scheduled leaving time, and worked out at Marina Station at just after the morning break. Vice President Ray Fong has developed a checklist for carriers to use. An example follows. **A final version is being developed.**

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2. **The 3996.** This is a form notifying management that, in your estimate, you will be unable to complete the route in eight hours, and you are asking for instructions. In San Francisco management is obligated to reply to you within an hour of leaving time, or about half an hour later, whether they authorize the overtime, tell you to curtail a certain amount of mail, or provide auxiliary help. You're asking what do I do, and they're telling you. You can, and probably should, request a copy of management's answer on the 3996. Note that you are not obligated to explain why you did not meet the DOIS standards, why you didn't case four feet per hour, or why you did not live up to your "carrier commitment," if you actually gave an early estimate based on incomplete data.
3. **The curtailment slip or 1571.** If you are told to curtail, do so by noting the color code of the remaining mail. Any dispute about the amount of mail, estimated in feet, should be easy to resolve; remember you are putting down your count, which may not agree with management's count. (See Beaumont, voice, on the curtailment slip being your friend.) Request and keep a copy of the completed 1571.
4. **Leaving time.** Each route will have different leaving time on the flow chart or in prominent place at the route. This is the time by which you must leave to allow enough time on the street to finish in eight hours. There are a couple of things to remember beyond the time itself. If you put up the mail yourself into a clean case, there is no problem, unless maybe a relay driver did not show up on a foot route. But if somebody worked your case prior to your morning arrival, and you have three door to doors and six feet extra flats, you may request extra time on the street to deliver the extra mail. If, following instructions, you put up the mail, but were unable to pull down by leaving time, fill out a modified/revised 3996, outlining why you can't finish in eight hours. You should insist on the 3996, (and keep a copy, as above.) You may be told to call in from the street. That is not a proper response from management. Follow instructions, but you have a right to fill out that revised 3996 prior to leaving for the street and get a proper answer.
5. **Calling in from the street.** Your final must know is about when to call in from the street. A number of unexpected things can happen after you leave the station which will affect the time you have to spend on the street. The relays may be late, the bus may be late, there may have been an accident, your vehicle may break down. You should call as soon as you know there will be a delay but each station will have either a specific time to call by or a maximum late time. You also may

have to call if you were authorized overtime, but realize on the street that you cannot finish in the time authorized. This time is set so that management, in theory, has time to get that overtime guy before he punches out for eight hours, and send him out to help you.

There are three instructions that management can give you and three only.

- A. **We're sending someone out to help you.** You may have to talk detail about what blocks are involved and where to get the mail for your help. Your obligation is to get back within eight hours, or the authorized overtime window. Upon you return, fill out a 3996 for the record and to protect yourself if there is later any question as to what was agreed to.
- B. **Do what you can,** but get back within eight hours, or nine, or by a certain time, and leave mail in a relay box on foot routes or bring back any mail you cannot deliver. The time is the important thing; it's an authorization to curtail mail. Sometimes you get conflicting orders such as, "I'm authorizing 30 minutes, but I want you to finish delivering the mail." In this case the last order is the operative one. When you bring back mail to the station, fill out 1571 curtailment slip. Also fill out a 3996 for your protection. See above.
- C. **Finish delivering the mail.** This has been interpreted by arbitrators as the carrier being allowed to take as long as is needed. In other words, instructions like deliver all the mail and finish in 9 hours are not proper. One final note, if you use a pay phone, (that's the place Clark Kent used when it was also enclosed by a phone booth to change into the Superman costume) you're entitled to be reimbursed for the call. If you use your cell phone (emergency use only, according to San Francisco directives) you would have a record that you called, although not what was said.

Be aware that management is using new information to track your street time, and to check on how much mail is to be delivered. They will ask you how much time is left and check their 3999 to see if it conforms with your route. If you have delivered your route out of order, the information may not match. It is obviously important to deliver your route in order and to be accurate and honest in describing why you need extra time.

One final note, when you fill out that 3996 after you come back, seek out a supervisor to sign it. This kind of paperwork is essential for your job protection.

Remember though, no matter how carefully you follow the rules, our ultimate strength comes from carriers sticking together and protecting each other. That means that when you stand up for yourself when you are abused, you know that you are protected by dozens of carriers around you. And it means that you are willing to stand up for a fellow carrier who is being abused.

Cancer awareness

October: a month to think pink



By Carol Ann Maggio, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. It is also the birth month of the founder of Girl Scouts USA, Juliette Gordon Low who died in 1927 of breast cancer. A good reminder for all women is to schedule a yearly checkup in their birth month and don't forget to schedule that mammogram for a breast check. Breast cancer death rates are down because of earlier diagnoses and improved treatments. Yet specialists say they continue to see way too many women for the first time who have gone beyond the earliest stages of breast cancer. That's a real problem



because when the disease is caught before it spreads to the lymph nodes, the five-year survival rate is over 95%.

I was diagnosed with breast cancer less than a month ago. I had my yearly mammogram on June 4 and then left for our 25th anniversary trip on June 6, returning June 20. I came home to a letter that said there were

suspicious findings on my mammogram and to please call right away for a recheck appointment. Scary. On June 26 I had another mammogram and the radiologist said that they would like to do a needle biopsy on my left breast saying that there were "calcifications". I had no lump, no other symptoms. At that time, they handed me a pamphlet required to be given out by the state of California. It covered everything from the needle biopsy to mastectomy, but it also stated that if a mastectomy was required, that under California State Law, even HMO's must provide you with breast reconstruction. On 7/2 I had a needle biopsy with my left breast stuck in that squishy x-ray machine for two hours. They took many samples and I bruised, but the radiologist called me the next day and said that they believed that they did not get the calcifications they were looking for, but that all the tissue that came out was benign and that they were going to refer me to my surgeon for a surgical biopsy to be sure.

Biopsy

Still bruised from the needle biopsy, on 7/17 I had a surgical biopsy. The surgeon had told me that 80% of the time these calcifications were benign. So the surgeon removed a small piece of breast tissue and sent it to pathology. On 7/20 he called to let me know that, I was in the 20% of women where they find breast cancer, but I

was lucky, it was early and it was a non-invasive cancer, it was in place in the milk duct and was not affecting my lymph nodes. It is Duct Carcinoma in Situ or DCIS. Because the sample of tissue did not have "clear margins" which is an area where they can detect no cancer in the surrounding tissue, they would have to remove a larger portion in another surgery. I would not have to have chemotherapy as the lymph nodes were not involved, but radiation and/or hormone therapy were a possibility, and maybe not either. This sounded okay.

Uncertainty

Not fully recovered from the first surgery, on 7/31 the surgeon removed a larger portion sent it to the pathologist. On 8/3 the surgeon called and gave me that grim news that they once again did not get "clear margins" because all the minute calcifications were like paint splotches. The surgeon could go in again, but we could end up with the same results and that I would be a good candidate for a mastectomy and immediate reconstruction. Okay, time to read up more on this. Some good books were recommended by the doctor: "Be a Survivor: Your Guide to Breast Cancer Treatment" by Vladimir Lange and "Dr. Susan Love's Breast Book". I then had an appointment with a plastic surgeon and a class on breast reconstruction.

Options

Here's where things are interesting. Did you know that they have 5 different kinds of reconstruction? There are saline implants, and four others where tissue is removed from other parts of your body, the tummy, the abdomen, the back and under the arm area, and the hip/butt area. Okay, I had lots to spare in all those areas and it seemed like if I had to do this, this might work. Well, the tissue operations were 5 to 12 hours and those spare areas and high blood pressure prevented me from having the longer operations. The plastic surgeon was very nice and told me that they would do something to fix my other breast to make it "even" with my reconstructed one. On 9/4 they will do a mastectomy and immediate reconstruction where they will put in a temporary saline implant under the muscle and fill it every one to two weeks with additional saline until it is about the size of my right breast. Somewhere between two and four months later, the temporary will be taken out and the permanent implant will be placed in. At that time, they will "fix" my other breast. Somewhere between 9 months and a year from the mastectomy, they will do another procedure and recreate a nipple and tattoo an areola on. My 30 year old step-son, he who has tattoos covering both his arms, got a kick out of that one.

Support

I have gotten a lot of support from friends and family
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and I thank them dearly, but this is a struggle with any woman. Your mind seems to go somewhere far, far away trying to deal with everything and in a very short period of time. You feel pushed into making decisions fast because you don't want to leave anything to chance and die. If left untreated, this cancer can leave the milk duct, get into lymph nodes and travel through your body. Mammography is the only way to detect DCIS cancer and it is being found earlier and earlier with more mammograms being done on women each year. I can't tell you how important it is that you do your breast self exams monthly and get that mammogram as recommended by your doctor.

However, there is more than one kind of breast cancer. You have just heard my story, now here is another. We have been taught by the public service announcements and the medical community that if you find a lump on your breast you should go to the doctor immediately. Inflammatory breast cancer (IBC) grows in sheets or nests and can diffuse throughout the breast with no palpable mass. The cancer cells clog the lymphatic system just below the skin and involve the lymph nodes. What is inflammatory breast cancer? It is an advanced and accelerated form of breast cancer unusually not detected by mammograms or ultrasounds. It requires immediate aggressive treatment with chemotherapy prior to surgery and is treated differently than more common types of breast cancer. African Americans (10.1%) have a higher incidence of IBC than do Caucasians (6.2%) and other ethnic groups (5.1%).

Some women who have inflammatory breast cancer remain undiagnosed for long periods. The symptoms are similar to mastitis, a breast infection and some doctors will not recognize IBC and will prescribe antibiotics. If the response to antibiotics is not apparent after one week, a biopsy should be performed or a referral to a breast specialist is warranted. There can be increased breast density which should be compared to prior mammograms.

Other symptoms include: Swelling, usually sudden, sometime a cup size of a few days; itching; pink, red, or dark colored area sometimes with texture similar to the skin or an orange; ridges and thickened areas of the skin; what appears to be a bruise that does not go away; nipple retraction; nipple discharge, may or may not be bloody; breast is warm to the touch; breast pain (from a constant ache to stabbing pains); change in color and texture of the areola.

Do not be afraid to read up on breast cancer now. The odds are against us, since 1 in 8 women will develop breast cancer. Educate yourselves – it may save your life.

(At press time: Carol reports that her operation was successful, and she is recuperating at home.)

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exceeding your medical limitations on or **off the job** remain applicable.

America may remain as the greatest country in the world but the justice system's inclination to go after the little guy remains. Be careful.

To the dishonor of the Postal Service, regulations involving this were slipshod and then the hammer was dropped suddenly.

Right to bid or work bid position

If you are injured and can perform the core duties of the position you can bid on a carrier position. The Postal Service will send you a letter saying that you must provide medical documentation that you can perform all the duties required by the position within 6 months. If after

Keep your medical documents up to date.

6 months and you still unable to perform all the duties of that position you will be given another 6 months. If at the end of that period you cannot perform the duties of that position you will be removed from the position.

Carriers who already have bid positions should reevaluate with their doctor their limitations and whether they can be liberalized to perform more of the so-called core carrier duties.

These are major/practical responses to the NRP. Major issues surrounding the Postal Service's abrogation of their responsibilities as per *make every effort* to provide injured carriers work have not been adjudicated.

At the end of the process, the Postal Service may provide some employees with a CA-2A and a CA-7 and they will end up on OWCP rolls. These carriers will be contacted by (Office of Workers Compensation) OWCP/DOL (Department of Labor) and be required to participate in a Vocational Rehabilitation program.

Alternatives to consider: retirement, disability retirement or other government jobs.

Included will be evaluation of work skills and possible placement in training programs. OWCP will then instruct the employee to look for work in the private sector.

There are implications in these processes that not only deal with wages but also benefits.

Wage Earning Capacity and the employee now being part of the new employer's health benefit plans, retirement systems and 401k/thrift savings, is one example.

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For carriers who are totally unable to perform carrier duties and/or with severe physical limitations, exercising their various rights under the grievance procedure, EEO, MSPB are a must.

But realistically, some may want to consider other alternatives:

Retirement: If you are getting close and can see the light at the end of the tunnel. You can utilize your avenues of redress while waiting to exit what has for many become unfortunately a hellhole.

Disability Retirement: If you are not close to regular retirement you will have to initiate the process over the Shared Services line. It will take about six months and require medical documentation of your conditions.

Other government jobs: The US government is a vast bureaucracy with constantly changing job opportunities. To finish your carriers in the US government is probably preferable for most. This is particularly true in the easy transferability of benefits including retirement programs-

CSRS or FERS, Health Benefits, Thrift Savings Plan, etc.

Other: Then excuse me for bringing up this alternative. Not being totally politically correct, it can be suggested you apply for management. Oops! What is often referred to in some union circles as the dark side but not from this source. A person's main responsibility is to themselves and their family. And anyway who cares what anybody thinks. Even if you end up as a carrier supervisor, you couldn't do any worse than some of the current cast of characters. There are supervisors, while having to toe the line of the numbers driven Postal Service upper management, have retained their sense of humanity. They are the strong ones. The weak ones harass people they see as weaker. The problem is in the institution but it is also within us.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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Leonard T. De Jesus (San Rafael)

Edward Castro Enerio (San Leandro)

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Luis A. Guidos (Bayview)

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RECENT UNION FAMILY EVENTS

On August 19, 2007 about 150 members and family enjoyed a picnic and visit to Six Flags, Discovery Kingdom, Vallejo, CA. Director of Organization Kim Truong, seen seated at right in photo with saluting kids, set up the event. Also, another family enjoyed the picnic. Arnold Jones, Corte Madera steward, was a co-organizer of the event. Photos by Ron Caluag



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On September 11, 2007 about 30 members and family of Branch 214 went to AT&T Park on union night to see the Giants defeat the first-place Arizona Diamondbacks 2-1. Event organizer, Field Director Juan Dominguez, enjoys the game with daughter Christina, a postal clerk and APWU member. Photos by Ivars Lauersons