

JEROME J. KEATING BRANCH



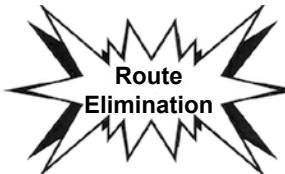
VOLUME 63 No 7

Official Publication of Branch Nine, NALC

September 2011

# Rip Van Carrier awakens after 14 years to the New Postal Service

## Summertime at Branch Nine



## “Same Stuff Different Millennium”

**SAVE AMERICA'S POSTAL SERVICE**

You can help to  
**“Tell The Truth”**  
pages 8 & 10

The NALC National Committee of Laws approved the following by-law submission which added language to Branch 9 By-Law:

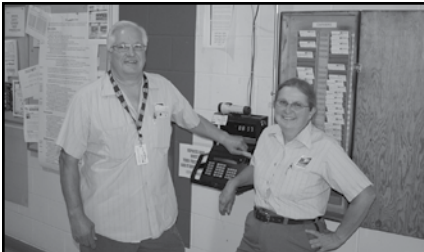
**Article V. Section 2. “Eligibility for payment of any delegate for the 2012 National Convention in Minneapolis will include attendance at 9 of 12 General Membership Meetings preceding said convention.”**

By-law was adopted by 2/3 majority vote of those present and voting at the April 26th General Membership Meeting.

Updated Cover page of an old Branch Nine News originally printed June/July 1997. Editor: Mike Zagaros



**Mike Thomas from Metro Hub retired on 08/30/11. Tom Taykalo (steward) on hand with congratulations.**



**Richard Gullings retired from Lost Lake on 08/30/11. Carol Garnto (steward) looks on.**



**Greg Frank (R- Chanhassen) makes the final clock ring. Larry Wenning (steward) witnesses.**



**Greg Watroba (W. Edina) retires with stewards, Bob Shelstad and Barb Lutz looking on.**

## From the Editors Desk

The gremlins were at it again. I identified Terry Hannum from Coon Rapids as Dan Hannum. Sorry 'bout that.



**Terry Hannum's (Ctr) last day at Coon Rapids, as witnessed by Stewards, Victor Boehmer and James Spencer.**



**Terry Oneill (Ctr) retired from Golden Valley on 08/31/11. Looking on are Stewards Bhanu Chemmangattumana and Mike Rasmussen.**



**Scott Zemple makes the final clock ring with Nokomis Steward, Jim Keenan.**

**In Memoriam**  
**Vernon Braaten**  
**Aldo Della Rocco**  
**Richard Balko**  
**Michael Stodola (Active)**

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The Branch Nine News is a monthly publication of NALC Branch 9, and is published in the interest of and for the members of NALC Branch 9. The opinions expressed by the writers are not necessarily those of the OFFICERS, or of NALC Branch 9. Articles MUST be submitted to the editor by the 2nd Friday of the month, and must be signed. The Editorial Staff reserves the right to edit or refuse to print articles which are derogatory in nature. Any official NALC organization may reproduce our articles provided appropriate credit is given.

# President's Report

**To Tell the Truth** was the name of a game show when I was growing up. The show began with three people in the shadows all claiming to be the same person. The goal of the game was to correctly identify the real person from the imposters. We are having our own version of "To Tell the Truth" going on this year. It was the theme of Branch 9's presence at this year's State Fair. It will also be what we will be doing over the next few weeks and months as we fight back against errors, misinformation, half-truths and outright lies that are being spread about the problems of the Postal Service and its employees. The goal will be to identify who is telling the truth and who are the imposters making stuff up whether it is about politics & legislation, route adjustments or contract negotiations. At the end of the day it is the letter carrier who will be standing up telling the truth.

**State Fair** (Telling the Truth, Part I) It seems that lately, everywhere you turn, someone is saying something about the Postal Service. Normally that would be a good thing because the issues surrounding the USPS have been mostly ignored by those in Congress and the public. The problem is that there is a constant misrepresentation of the facts. It is so pervasive that many of our members are calling and asking what is going on. At the State Fair, the public was asking many of the same questions at our kiosk such as: "Are you bankrupt?" No, the Postal Service is not bankrupt. "How come you are losing so much money, is it because the employees are paid too much?" No, the problem is the congressionally mandated pre-funding for future retiree health

benefits. "Are you asking for a tax payer bailout?" No, we have not received tax funds in over 30 years. In fact, we are only asking for access the Postal Service's own funds. "What Funds?" The 55 to 80 Billion Dollars in overpayments to the postal employee's pension funds and the 40 Billion Dollars that is in the pre-funding account for future retiree health benefits. Almost always the conversation would end with the question "How come I haven't heard about this on the news?" The unfortunate answer is that it takes longer than a 30 second sound bite would allow to answer these questions. But when we did tell the truth and ask for their support over 1800 people completed postcards to their congressional representatives letting them know that they support continuing 6-day delivery and urging them to support HR1351 by returning the overpayments to the pension funds back to the Postal Service and allow them to use these funds to save itself and ensure financial stability for the future. All it took was a little time and a truthful conversation. A special thanks to the members who volunteered their time at the State Fair to "tell the truth."

**Save America's Postal Service –** September 27<sup>th</sup> Rally (Telling the Truth, Part II)

By the time you read this we should be making the final preparations for the "Save America's Postal Service Rally" on September 27<sup>th</sup>. This rally is something truly unique. On this day, city letter carriers, postal workers, mail handlers and rural letter carriers, along with our friends and supporters will be gathering at the offices of all 435 members of congress to tell the truth. Letting



**Mike Zagaros**

the public know what the real issue facing the Postal Service is: **lack of Congressional action.** Just as we did at the State Fair, when we put the truth out there and take the time to explain what is really going on, Americans are on our side. But everyone needs to get involved. It takes a lot of voices to get beyond the reach of our detractors such as Representatives Issa and Ross and others who wish to dismantle the Postal Service and do away with good middle class jobs. Those are our jobs they are talking about. There is only one question, will you be there?

**Reviewing the Route Adjustments** (Telling the Truth, Part III)

As I said last month, the route adjustments that were implemented, by JARAP or FSS, fell into one of three categories. They were either good, bad or just plain ugly. The FSS units are now starting to come up on their 60 day reviews and as they reach them the FSS Agreement calls for a review. We believe that there are routes that need to be adjusted. Locally we have agreed that a Branch 9 representative will meet with a management rep to determine the current value of the routes. If they are able to come to an agreement on

**Continued on page 9**

# Branch 9 Retiree Golf Tournament Shamrock Golf Course



*The Retiree Golf Tournament was held on August 16th and we had 27 people in attendance. I hope that everyone had a good time, I know I did. I'd like to give a special thanks to Dan Molitor for setting everything up and taking charge. Also thanks to Julie Waldemar for taking pictures and all of the help she gave me.*

*See you all again next year!*

*Cheryl Stately*



# Executive Vice President's Report

## The New Management

As all of you are aware by now, management has taken the monitoring of carriers to a whole new level. It seems that the way we have done our jobs for all these years is now considered a time wasting practice or a failure to follow instructions and discipline has been almost always sure to follow. Carriers are now getting handed Letters of Warning for missing a single scan or not making a DOIS projected leave time. The stance taken by management has been that if a carrier cannot fulfill the instructions given by the supervisor that morning there is no acceptable reason a carrier can use as a defense and discipline is required. Management has the right to give us instructions and we are required to follow them unless they are against the law or they put our personal safety at risk.

The issue of not following instructions that sometimes leads carriers to be disciplined is when the instructions concerning service to our customers does not make any sense to us. Service has fallen by the wayside and been replaced with the mandatory requirement to succeed with the projected numbers management has come up with for these routes and all other goals are a distant second. Letter carriers have always put service first and made sure that all the questions raised by our patrons were answered and have gone out of their way to make sure letters and packages got delivered promptly even when it requires more time than management would like us to take on our daily route. Now

numbers are king and they rule all. We, as carriers, will have to adapt regardless of our concerns or beliefs that were part of this job before.

What should we, as carriers, do now? First of all, follow the instructions of the supervisor, scan every mailbox that has an MSP label, scan every package that has a scan label and let the scanner tell you if it is a scannable package or not. Make sure you make the leave time the supervisor tells you to. When the leave time comes and you have not finished casing your mail for the day and you have to start pulling down your route to make the leave time, find your supervisor inform them by help slip (Form 3996) then ask them what you are to do? Either finish casing the mail and not make leave time or curtail the mail. If your instructions are to curtail then fill out a curtailment slip (Form 1571) and proceed to make your instructed leave time. If management wants they can curtail any mail whether it be bulk bypass flats, buckets of flats, even FSS or DPS, this is their mail and their routes.

When I was a JIT trainer years ago I always assured new employees that if management wasn't talking to you, you were doing a great job. Now management is talking to every carrier so I have changed it to assuring each employee that just because we can not make management's numbers this does not mean it's our fault.

## Retirement

It is the one word letter carrier's talk about and set their sights on with



**Darrell Maus**

joyous anticipation like the word Annual also would bring. It seems like our days are now filled with less joyous words like overtime, pivot, DOIS, and the phrase "sorry I have no help for you you're on your own". There have been many articles written to explain what to do to get ready for retirement and how long before the actual day you should have these certain things done. This article is to inform the "Retirees" what they have to do the days after their "last punch" day.

Article II, Section 1 of the Branch 9 By-laws states, "It is necessary to have filled out an 1187 to join the Branch. A form 1189 (Dues Check Off Provision) must be signed by all retiring members within Branch 9 who wish to retain their membership in said organization and health benefits program." So every carrier who signed an 1187 to join the union is a member and that's known, but when you retire to continue to be a "retired" member you must resign-up with an 1189 form. In the days after your "last punch" (ah great words right) you will receive from the office of the NALC Financial Secretary a letter and within it will be a form 1189 to fill out and return. In addition, you will also receive from the Branch 9 Director

**VP Article continued page 8**

# Branch 9 Picnic Aquatore Park



*Theresa Oelrich and Cheryl Stately took charge of the registration table.*



*Barbecued pork and barbecued chicken, roasted corn on the cob and all the side dish fixings were catered with perfection.*

## Organized activities for young and old



*Cribbage tournament*



*Talking about the good times.*



*T-shirt painting was a huge hit with budding artists.*



*Demonstrations by the Blaine Fire and Police departments were very popular.*



*Jim Nelson's daughter did most of the face painting, but Branch 9 Executive Vice President Darrell Maus gave Jim his "Elvis" sideburns.*



*Baseball game was a hit with kids of all ages.*



*Every child was a winner at the duck pond.*



*The water balloon toss between adults and kids was lots of fun for all. The photo above right, shows moment of impact.*



*Sack races, three-legged races, and adults and kids races had everyone participating in the fun.*



*"Simon Says" was loads of fun for even the smallest of kids, and nobody emcees this event better than Branch 9 President, Mike Zagaros.*

*Pat Rottach (Lake Street) and union pride*

**Thanks to all the volunteers for making this a great picnic**



**Background:** A congressional mandate is killing the U.S. Postal Service. A 2006 postal reform law requires the USPS to pre-fund 75 years' worth of future retiree health benefits within just 10 years. At the behest of the Office of Personnel Management and the Government Accountability Office, and to make the law appear not to cost the government money (i.e., to be "revenue neutral"), Congress included in the law that destructive pre-funding mandate.

No other federal agency or private enterprise is forced to pre-fund similar benefits like this, especially on such an aggressive schedule. This postal-only mandate costs the USPS \$5.5 billion per year. It accounts for 100 percent of the Postal Service's \$20 billion in losses over the past four years. It also accounts for 100 percent of the rise in the Postal Service's debt in recent years.

Without the mandate, the USPS would have been profitable over the past four years, and rather than having to use up its \$15 billion line of credit from the U.S. Treasury to cover the pre-funding obligation, the Postal Service would have had significant borrowing authority to ride out the bad economy it now faces. The \$47 billion the Postal Service has deposited so far into its retiree health benefit fund over the past four years instead could have been spent on operating costs. The Postal Service and its employees don't want a taxpayer bailout. We have not received any taxpayer funds in nearly 30 years. What we do want is the freedom to use our own surplus pension funds to pay down the pre-funding obligation. But this can only happen if Congress changes the current law.

reprinted from NALC Website

***VP article continued from page 5***

of Retirees a similar letter with the same 1189 form enclosed. One of these forms must be completed, signed and returned to continue to retain your NALC membership.

Article II, Section 2 of the Branch 9 By-laws goes on to explain the dues amount for Retired Members and it varies from \$9.00 to \$24.00 yearly depending on when you retired for the members retiring prior to December 31, 1996. But the By-law states "Members retiring after December 31, 1996 shall pay, per annum, an amount equal to two hours City Grade 1, Step D letter carrier's salary at the time of their retirement." Currently that rate is \$4.11 a month.

It is very important for new retirees to get their 1189 filled out and returned to the Branch 9 office (2408 Central Avenue NE, Minneapolis, MN 55418) immediately after receiving it. If after a time period the form is not received you will be dropped from the Membership Roster and will no longer have membership in the NALC. If you lose your membership you will also lose your health benefits if you are in the NALC Health Plan. Once your Union Membership and Federal Health Benefits are gone you cannot get them back.

So after that "last punch" day look for these 2 letters coming to you and don't just shrug them off, because they are very important to you and your future and furthermore the Retired Members of this Union are very important to the NALC.

Darrell Maus



### **Presidents article continued from page 3**

the value the routes will be adjusted as needed. The regular carrier will be consulted and given the opportunity to give their input about their route. If they are unable to reach an agreement on the value the FSS Agreement calls for a regular 6 day count and inspection. If 6 day counts and inspections are to be used, the Branch will provide training on the process. At this time we have not agreed whether or not both can be used in a particular unit however we are beginning the review process. Special thanks to Lisa O'Neill who has agreed to serve as Branch 9's rep for the FSS review and adjustment process.

For those units that were adjusted under the JARAP process. The JARAP Agreement allows either the union or management to request a review within 120 days of the adjustments. If you have any questions about what to do regarding an overburdened route please contact your steward or the Branch Office.

### **Contract Negotiations** (Telling the Truth, Part IV)

On August 18<sup>th</sup> the National Leadership of the NALC met with the Postal Service to officially open negotiations. There was the ceremonial picture for the media showing NALC President Fred Rolando and PMG Patrick Donahoe shaking hands. This scene has become routine and has been repeated for each set of negotiations. But there is nothing routine about these negotiations. One merely needed to read the front page article in last months Branch Nine News to see that nothing is routine. The PMG appears more interested in negotiating with Congress than they are with the NALC but

only time will tell. In his opening statement President Rolando put the Service on notice regarding their pre-negotiations actions "We are disappointed, disturbed and insulted by this misguided assault on the employees and this institution, and we will do everything in our power to block this attempt to destroy the Postal Service..."

After the opening ceremony the negotiating teams broke up into smaller committees for discussion and debate on a variety of issues. As more information becomes available there will be a variety of sources of information available to the members of Branch 9: e-Activists receive emails directly from NALC Headquarters ; in addition there is the Branch 9 Webpage at [www.branch9nalc.com](http://www.branch9nalc.com) finally there is the **Branch 9 Facebook page** and the new **Branch 9 page on Twitter**. Stay connected, stay informed, challenge the misinformation, half-truths and outright lies that are out there and tell the truth.

## **Postal Workers: The Last Union**

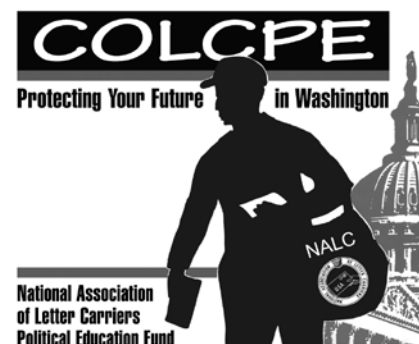
**by: Allison Kilkenny,  
Truthout | News Analysis**

The Postal Service, which is older than the Constitution itself, stands at a precipice. If this great institution, which provides one of the oldest, most reliable services in the country, is permitted to fall and Congress kills its great union, then truly no collective bargaining rights, no worker contract, no union will be safe within the United States.

As the USPS spirals toward default, the historically uncontroversial mail service system has suddenly become a hot-button issue. It's an

unlikely organization to inspire such hysteria. The Postal Service isn't paid for by taxpayer dollars, but rather fully funded by the sale of stamps...consider what else you can buy for \$0.44.

Perhaps it was its booming history that first drew Congress' attention to the Postal Service in 2006 when it passed the Postal Accountability Enhancement Act (PAEA), which mandated that the Postal Service would have to fully fund retiree health benefits for future retirees. That's right. Congress was demanding universal health care coverage. The act meant that every September 30th, the USPS had to cough up \$5.5 billion to the Treasury for the pre-funding of future retirees' health benefits, meaning the Postal Service pays for employees 75 years into the future. The USPS is funding the retirement packages of people who haven't even been born yet. H.R. 1351, the United States Postal Service Pension Obligation Recalculation and Restoration Act of 2011, is a piece of legislation sponsored by Massachusetts Congressman Stephen Lynch.





### ***It's Not Just Politics Anymore***

**Politics** (from Greek *πολιτικός*, "of, for, or relating to citizens"), is a process by which groups of people make collective decisions. The term is generally applied to the art or science of running governmental or state affairs. It also refers to behavior within civil governments. However, politics can be observed in other group interactions, including corporate, academic, and religious institutions. It consists of "social relations involving authority or power"[1] and refers to the regulation of public affairs within a political unit,[2] and to the methods and tactics used to formulate and apply policy. From Wikipedia

Carriers, like the rest of our population, have different reactions when the word "politics" enters the conversation. The reactions are many and varied but I would venture to say, the vast majority of people avoid talking on the subject. Often times, carriers find it easier to talk of sports or family rather than risk a difference of opinion on politics. The current state of affairs at the United States Postal Service warrants a change in this behavior. No longer can we assume

that "business as usual" will prevail. The reality is that we must talk about the politics that surround the Postal Service and how change can be effected by our actions.

When I read the definition of "politics", I was immediately struck by the first sentence, "a process by which groups of people make collective decisions." Not

unlike what the Union stands for and promotes. Too many are the attacks on labor in our country with the sites now set on postal employees in particular. There are those who would take away our right to Collective Bargaining, slash our wages, cut our benefits, close post offices that serve American citizens and close plant facilities that help make the USPS the most efficient mail delivery organization in the world. All this would be done under the guise of cutting the USPS short term losses but the reality would be very different. The reality is, it would be the beginning of the end of the USPS. As carriers, we need to be a group that makes the collective decision to make our voices heard and our actions proactive for self and organization.

We need to lend our voices to the public discussion of the Postal Service. Carriers need to make sure that our family, friends and legislators hear the true facts surrounding the economic status of the USPS. They need to know how the Postal "crisis"

can be corrected at no cost to the taxpayer. Carriers need to tell everyone about the valuable, economical and lest we forget, public service the USPS provides to every citizen and business. The benefit to the US economy by the mailing industry must be preserved. It can be done.

Letter carriers must face the reality of our situation and overcome their discomfort with "politics". As citizens, it is time to exercise our freedoms and responsibility for democracy. As Union members, it is time to exercise our responsibility to fight for the benefits that were hard won by our predecessors. We must lend our voices, our talents and our actions to the "politics" of saving the USPS.

On Tuesday, September 27, carriers will have the opportunity to rally at the office of their congressional representative. This nationwide NALC organized event is an opportunity for carriers to inform the public and tell congress to fix the Postal Service crisis by supporting and passing HR 1351. Carriers can support and further their own preservation in two other simple ways. First, each and every one of us should be contributing to COLCPE through direct deposit. If you don't already contribute, make it a priority to start doing so today. Second, carriers should sign up for e-Activist through the NALC website ([www.NALC.org](http://www.NALC.org)). By supplying your email address, you will be sent E-Activist emails that will help you stay informed and current on the changing Postal environment as well as the issues surrounding organized labor. If you have questions, contact the Branch office at 612-781-9858. Please don't let "politics" stop you from saving your Post Office!

**by Lisa O'Neill  
Branch 9 Treasurer  
MSALC Vice President**

Open to all Branch 9 members, friends and family

# Fourth Annual Bingo/Karaoke Night Sunday, October 9, 2011 5:00 PM

Crystal VFW Post 494  
5222 56th Avenue North  
Crystal, MN



Tickets are \$5 in advance; \$6 at the door  
Admission price includes:  
*Early bird food (while it lasts)*

**Bingo Cards & Packages Sold Separately**

*All Proceeds Benefit  
MDA*



The Twin Cities Postal Headquarters

Minneapolis  
2220 Lyndale Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55405  
612-377-0011

USA  
Union preferred

St. Paul  
935 N. Dale Street  
St. Paul, MN 55103  
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2408 Central Avenue NE  
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## Branch Nine Calendar

### October 2 - 5

Minnesota State Convention  
Brainerd, Minnesota

### \*Thursday October 6\*

Northside Retiree's Breakfast  
9:30AM  
Elsie's  
729 Marshall St. NE, Minneapolis

### Sunday, October 9

Bingo / Karaoke  
5:00PM  
Crystal VFW Post 494  
5222 56th Ave. North  
Crystal, MN

### October 11

Southside Retiree Breakfast  
9:00AM  
Fred Babcock VFW  
6715 Lakeshore Drive, Richfield

### \*Tuesday, October 11\*

Stewards Meeting  
7:00PM  
Golden Valley VFW Post 7051  
7775 Medicine Lake Rd  
Golden Valley

### October 25

Nokomis Retiree Breakfast  
9:00AM  
Fred Babcock VFW  
6715 Lakeshore Drive, Richfield

### \*Tuesday, October 25\*

General Membership Meeting  
7:00PM  
Golden Valley VFW Post 7051  
7775 Medicine Lake Rd  
Golden Valley

### November 1

Northside Retiree's Breakfast  
9:30AM  
Elsie's  
729 Marshall St. NE, Minneapolis

### November 8

Southside Retiree Breakfast  
9:00AM  
Fred Babcock VFW  
6715 Lakeshore Drive, Richfield

### \*Tuesday, November 8\*

Stewards Meeting  
7:00PM  
Golden Valley VFW Post 7051  
7775 Medicine Lake Rd  
Golden Valley

### November 22

Nokomis Retiree Breakfast  
9:00AM  
Fred Babcock VFW  
6715 Lakeshore Drive, Richfield

### Tuesday, November 22

General Membership Meeting  
7:00PM  
Golden Valley VFW Post 7051  
7775 Medicine Lake Rd  
Golden Valley