



VOLUME 64 No 2

Official Publication of Branch Nine, NALC

March 2012

Past...Present...Future...

Past: Postal employees were subject to the whims of Congress for any pay raises and compensation, with no recourse. Postal employees, fed up with empty promises by management, voted to strike, and on March 21, 1970, letter carriers nationwide walked off the job in the only successful strike against the U.S. Government.

Present: Carriers in the last 42 years have benefited from the gutsy show of solidarity by those postal employees. We have binding arbitration, no-layoff clause, negotiated contracts, health benefits, and a decent living wage.

Future?:

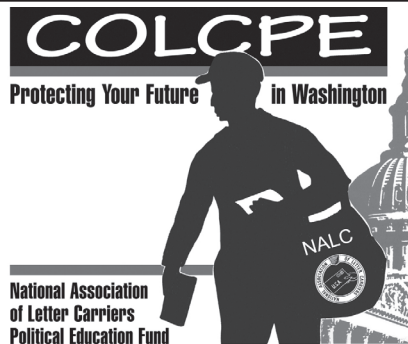
Option A. Become active in letter carrier issues, become a part of the E-Activist Network and respond to fast track manuevers by those who would dismantle our institution, or at the very least contribute to COLCPE

Option B. Do nothing and be subjected to the whims of Congress for any pay raises and compesation with no hope of recourse.

Which future do you want for you and your family?

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

More options and simple signup instructions on page 9



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By-Laws submitted by the February 28th General Membership Meeting will be acted upon at the April 24th General Membership Meeting.

Golden Valley VFW, 7775 Medicine Lake Rd, Golden Valley





Retiree Steve Bostrom (Coon Rapids) with Steward, Victor Boehmer



Retiree, Don Virden (Lake Street) with Steward, Tim Bergstrom



Paul Vetsch (center) relaxing into retirement with some of his Burnsville co-workers.

From the Editor's Desk



MDA Raffle Winners:

JoAnn Gilbaugh (Lowry)...
Palm Springs Condo Vacation

Dolly Greenleaf (BC)...\$1,000.

On January, 20th, USPS management declared an impasse in negotiations with the NALC.

NOW WHAT?

According to the USPS Fact Sheet: "Federal mediator is appointed by Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FCMS), unless both parties waive mediation. If no agreement is reached with the mediator, or if both parties waive mediation, the contract goes to impasse."

An impasse is defined by law as the point at which further discussions would be futile.

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President's Report

Just because someone calls it a duck ...

We've all heard the adage that if it looks like a duck and walks like a duck and talks like a duck then it must be a duck. But what if it isn't a duck or an 8 hour route or postal reform or properly staffed unit or should be added to the constitution?

With the advent of FSS implementation this past summer, the carriers at Golden Valley, Lost Lake, Thomas Burnett, Burnsville, West Edina and Coon Rapids have been left dealing with routes that management originally maintained were or nearly were to being in proper adjustment or 8 hours, NOT. (To be fair, even management has agreed that some of the routes are out of adjustment.) The problem is that, with the exception of Lost Lake, we have been unable to come close to an agreement as to what the values of the routes are. That brings us to 6 day count and inspections. By the time you read this, Golden Valley and Thomas Burnett will have had their inspections and are waiting for the analysis and adjustments to see what will happen. Waiting to see what the new value of these routes will be. Will they really be 8 hour routes? Maybe, depending on the day and volume it may be an 8 hour route or not. That's the problem with a letter carrier's route. It is not consistently anything other, than inconsistent. During the inspections the co-leaders argue about whether or not this should be allowed or that should be disallowed in order to properly adjust a route. In the other units, supervisors will be showing carriers their DOIS projections

telling them that they have undertime based on the JARAP adjustment. Just because someone says it's so does not mean that it is. Our contract still gives that carrier the right to say what he/she believes and asks for instructions. Our contract still gives that carrier the right to have a route adjusted to be as close to 8 hours as possible. But like any right it must be exercised to have meaning and effect and doing what is necessary to get the benefits of that right.

The same is true on the political front. As each day passes the rhetoric about what to do about the Postal Service rises and falls. It seems that the "capitol hill gang" doesn't have the staying power to address the issues at hand. There is little discussion as each side prepares their next move. Unfortunately there are more than just 2 sides to this discussion. The problem is that most have no idea about how this place runs or should run. The same battle over 6 day delivery, plant closings and changing delivery standards continues. They are even using the same words, the same arguments that they used before and they still aren't convincing people. So we are in a holding pattern. Are they reforming anything or destroying it? Will anything really happen with this political football or will the "gang" wait until it's too late and keep quacking about reform.

Nearly every day, someone calls the office and asks "what's with the forced overtime and the lack of help?" We continue to see a shrinking career workforce in Minneapolis as more carriers retire and TE's are again not being brought back in a timely manner. Depending on



Mike Zagaros

who is speaking it could be because out-state areas are hurting worse than we are; or we haven't earned additional TE's; or we are just trying to right size the workplace due to the declining mail volume. Can you hear the quacking? Staffing is strictly the province of management. They have repeatedly refused to discuss how that staffing is distributed with us. What we do know is that the results of short staffing have usually been contract violations. Will these violations be resolved at the station or needlessly kicked up? It would be more beneficial to look for ways to avoid the violations in the first place. Just because someone from on high looking at a computer screen has determined that we haven't earned any more TE's or can keep the ones we have doesn't make it so. Based on the numbers in the workhour budget City Delivery, the only thing that is being exceeded is overtime and penalty overtime. I believe that comes from short or incorrect staffing and that can't be corrected by anyone but management.

In the months ahead there will be a lot of discussion about the proposed amendments to the Minnesota Constitution that may be on the ballot this fall. These amendments

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Above and Beyond

At Branch 9's January General Membership Meeting, three of our own were honored for their actions in 2011. They were recognized as having gone above and beyond the call of duty as letter carriers in serving the public.



Ron Peterson (Brklyn Center)

On September 7th a little boy had gotten on the wrong school bus to go home. The kindergartener was lost and did not speak English. FT Carrier Ron Peterson was carrying overtime on a different route when he noticed the boy hiding behind a fence. He had been crying and appeared frightened. Ron parked his vehicle and the boy came over to him. Despite the language barrier, Ron was able to calm the boy down. He found the boy's name and home phone number in his backpack, contacted the boy's parents and ended up speaking with a police officer who was at the house. The boy was the subject of an "AMBER" alert, was miles from his home and had been missing for several hours. Thanks to Ron's attentiveness and actions, the boy was returned safely to his family. Ron then returned to his duties. Ron was nominated by his Steward Ken Jambois.



Terry Anderson (Lowry)

On a cold Saturday in November, FT Carrier Terry Anderson was delivering his route when he heard gun shots and saw several people walking towards him. After they passed him, Terry noticed a man lying in the street. He ran up and found an older man who was conscious but confused and bleeding. Terry moved the man out of the street to the boulevard and asked a neighbor to call 911. Believing that the man had been shot in the neck, Terry used his scarf as a bandage and applied pressure to the wound. He placed his satchel under the man's head and used his jacket to keep the man warm until the ambulance and the EMTs arrived. When the police arrived, Terry helped them find the shell casings. Afterwards, Terry put on a sweatshirt and finished his route. He then returned to his station, picked up a "pivot" and delivered it. Terry did all this during a snowstorm and freezing temperatures. Terry was nominated by his Steward's Don Grunnes and Pete Wilson.



John Elofson (Eastside)

In October, PTF Carrier John Elofson was delivering mail when he noticed a woman walking slowly around a house and then leaving. Soon afterward, he looked across the street at the same house and noticed a fire on the front porch. He hurried over and began trying to extinguish the fire by stomping on it. The noise alerted the homeowner who came out with a garden hose and put the fire out. Were it not for John's attention and quick response the fire would have spread rapidly. After the fire was extinguished John continued on with his duties. John was nominated by his Steward Samantha Hartwig.

These three carriers exemplify what it means to be the eyes and ears of the community. We call them heroes and congratulate them for going "*above and beyond the call of duty.*" They just said that they were doing their jobs and they were glad they were there to help. Each of them finished their day the same way, delivering the mail and keeping an eye on the community.

There has been much discussion in Congress about eliminating door to door delivery and eliminating mail delivery on Saturdays. Were that to happen, these carriers would not have been there to make a difference in peoples lives.

Branch 9 President, Mike Zagaros

Executive Vice President's Report

CHANGES

FSS, excessing, retreat rights, formal inspections, we could go on and on with all the current new changes. It seems that with all the changes in a carrier's daily and personal lives it seems that all we are doing is going in circles. For change to really work there has to be changes in the way we operate in our daily routine at work and also in our mindset about things. We as human beings have a naturally built in resistance to any change in our daily routine. We simply don't like it and will resist and fight against it simply because it is change. Sometimes we resist change at work because we don't think it makes sense or just because it's different. Carrier's responses to these changes in their daily routine are often "that's the way I have always done this" or "that's not the way I was trained to do this".

Whether management is concentrating on office time, street time, working "safely" or working to the projections of DOIS there seems to be new changes coming at us all the time. Time and time again it has been proven that not all change is good. The problems begin with a change that is often projected to accomplish a certain target or goal and the workforce realizes that this is not achievable from the start. It is then amplified with a poor plan of activation. Management will make changes and often times carriers will turn a deaf ear to that change because we know that this change or that change won't work or will take more time. It has been shown time and time again that the regular

carrier on a certain assignment or route is the one that truly knows how a certain route can be delivered most efficiently and timely.

Carriers by nature are individualistic. We spend most of our time during the day alone and without supervision. On the street, carriers think and do for themselves usually as we see fit. That is part of the mindset of a carrier. Therefore, it should come as no great shock that there might be some resistance to changing instructions by

...unless it is an illegal act or threat to your direct safety (life or limb) you are expected to do what you're told and grieve it later.

management about how we should do things. Unfortunately, it doesn't matter whether the instruction is coming from a new 204B, from downtown or the latest message from Postal Service Headquarters, carriers are expected to follow the instructions of their supervisors and managers. It doesn't matter whether you are being told to leave for the street at a certain time, or curtail mail, or what line of travel you should use, or how they want you to do some part of your job. It doesn't matter if we think the instruction doesn't make sense or that it may take longer to do the job, follow the instruction. The instruction can even be in direct conflict with the National Agreement, the important thing to remember is that unless it is an illegal act or threat to your direct safety (life or limb) you are expected to do what



Darrell Maus

you're told and grieve it later. Resist the urge to argue because that action could escalate and that may put you at risk for some sort of corrective or disciplinary action.

When management is seeking to take disciplinary action, they bear the burden to prove that the carrier did what they are charged with. If management has instructed a carrier to do something and they do not do what they are told, there can and more than likely will be some type of disciplinary action to follow. As craft employees, letter carriers are paid by the hour. Regardless of how long it takes or what instructions are given. We are not in charge of the routes we are given to carry. Management is. We do not have the ability to independently determine how we do our jobs. Management does. It is their responsibility to get the mail out. They determine the method and the means of how carriers are supposed to do their jobs. We need to change our habits and mindset of the past and follow the instructions we are given. In the absence of clear instructions, we need to seek clarification and guidance from management. It is their job not only to instruct carriers but also insure the instructions are understood and able to be achieved. It is not our job to

Continued on page 9



Julie Waldemar (NALC Health Benefits Rep.)

NALC Health Benefit Plan

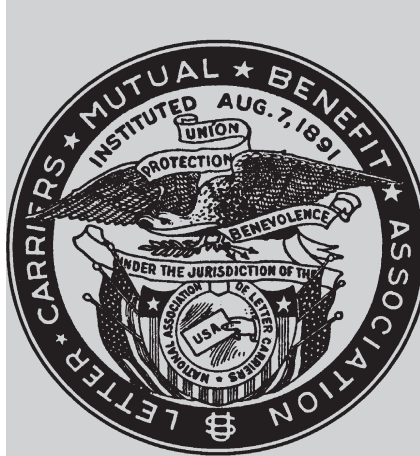
As Branch 9's HBR I am encouraging our current members to learn more about all the benefits available to our members.

First: Register (log in) when you go to the website because that's how you get to all the information available to you as a member.

Second: Filling out the Health Risk Assessment could save you a \$20 copayment (or two \$20 copayments). A free Health Risk Assessment (HRA) will be available on the Personal Health Record tab on our website's homepage. The HRA is an online tool that analyzes your health related responses and gives you a personalized plan to achieve your specific health goals. Your HRA profile provides you information to put you on a path to good physical and mental health. Your personal health information is stored on a secure database. Once you complete the HRA in 2012, the Plan will waive one \$20 copayment (when the Plan is the primary payor) for the next in-network medical office visit or consultation incurred in the same calendar year that the HRA is completed. The Plan will waive two \$20 office visit copayments annually (when the Plan is the primary payor) for a Self and Family enrollment when at least two family members complete an HRA.

Go to the NALC.org website – click on Departments/Health Benefit Plan – click on 2012 Health Risk Assessment Feature...

Julie



NALC's best kept secret! U.S. Letter Carriers Mutual Benefit Association

From its earliest year ... the NALC pioneered programs for mutual support and welfare to complement its struggles for improved working conditions. The union established the Mutual Benefit Association at its 1891 convention in Detroit. The MBA offered life and other kinds of insurance to help protect letter carriers and their families.

Today ... MBA continues to record strong year after strong year. Total assets continue to increase over previous years by millions of dollars, and surplus increases by hundreds of thousands. Despite the stock market decline, MBA was continuing to outperform other life insurance companies, just as it had done for more than 100 years. These insurance plans offered by the MBA are designed to give NALC members and their families the best possible protection for the lowest cost.

Membership Qualifications:

Section 1. An applicant for admission to membership in the MBA

must be a letter carrier or other nonsupervisory employee of the Postal Career Service who is a member in good standing of the NALC, or the spouse, child, grandchild or great grandchild of a member of the NALC. Employees of the NALC and its subsidiaries, their spouse and children are also eligible applicants for membership in the MBA.

Section 2. Each applicant for membership shall make application on the form provided for that purpose and, subject to the nonmedical limits in effect, be examined by some competent practicing physician.

Section 3. Should any applicant be rejected by the Chief Medical Examiner, he/she shall not be proposed or admitted within six months thereafter.

MBA Insurance Programs
NALC Accidental Death - Group Insurance Coverage
MBA Whole Life Insurance
 paid up at age 90
 paid up at age 65
 paid up in 20 years
MBA Term Life Insurance
10 year Renewable and Convertible
MBA Universal Insurance
Independence – Single Payment
Hospital Plus
Maturity Income

FOR MORE INFORMATION

—Go to NALC website at NALC.org under Departments/Mutual Benefit Assn

—Contact your local NALC branch office

—Call MBA toll-free at (800) 424-5184, Tuesday and Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Eastern Time

—Call MBA at (202) 638-4318: Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 3:30p.m. Eastern Time

How Unused Sick Leave Affects your Annuity

**Credit: Reg Jones, Columnist
for the Federal Times
May 2, 2011**

There seems to be a lot of confusion about what part unused sick leave plays in your annuity. The short answer is: The more you have, the bigger its role.

Before we get into the details of how sick leave can enhance your retirement benefit, let me clear up two common misunderstandings: First, sick leave can't be added to your service time to make you eligible to retire. Second, it can't be used in determining the amount of the Special Retirement Supplement (SRS) available to some Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) retirees. The SRS is based on actual years and full months of FERS service.

Assuming you have met the age and service requirements to retire, you'll get credit in your annuity computation for every year and full month of actual service. Any hours of actual service that don't add up to a full month will be combined with any hour of unused sick leave, and the total converted to additional months of service credit.

Here's how that's done. Because annuities are paid on a monthly basis, a year is divided into 12 equal parts. The end results are 12) 30-day months and a 360 day year. The number of hours in a work year, 2,087 is divided by 360 to count an annuity day as 5.797 + hours and a month as 174 hours.

There are differences in the way an unused sick leave credit is applied under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and FERS. Retiring

CSRS employees get full credit. Retiring FERS employees are entitled only to a half credit until 2014 and full credit thereafter. Until the passage of Public Law 111-84 in 2009, FERS retirees weren't entitled to any unused sick leave credit. When an annuity has both FERS and CSRS components, the FERS component is increased only by the amount of sick leave earned under FERS. Any sick leave balance attributable to CSRS service is added separately.

Here are examples based on a 55 year old employee with 30 years of service and 1,460 hours of unused sick leave whose high-three, or average salary over three consecutive years of highest pay, is \$80,000.

Under CSRS: Based on actual service, the initial annuity is \$45,000 ($0.015 \times \$80,000 \times 5$ years, plus $0.0175 \times \$80,000 \times 5$ years, plus $0.02 \times \$80,000 \times 20$ years). Unused sick leave hours add eight months of credit totaling 1,391 hours, with 69 hour left over and dropped. The final CSRS annuity is \$46,072 ($0.015 \times \$80,000 \times 5$ years, plus $0.0175 \times \$80,000 \times 5$ years, plus $0.02 \times \$80,000 \times 20.67$ years).

Under FERS before 2014, where the employee has 20 years under FERS and 10 years under CSRS (of the 1,460 unused sick leave hours, 1,100 were under FERS): Based on actual service, the initial FERS component of the annuity is \$16,000 ($0.01 \times \$80,000 \times 20$ years). Half credit for the 1,100 unused sick leave hours adds 550 hours to the annuity service credit or three months — 522 hours with 28 hours left over and dropped. The final FERS annuity is \$16,200 ($0.01 \times$

$\$80,000 \times 20.25$ years).

The initial CSRS component of the annuity is \$13,000 ($0.015 \times \$80,000 \times 5$ years, plus $0.0175 \times \$80,000 \times 5$ years). Credit for the remaining 360 unused sick leave hours adds two months of service credit — 348 hours with 12 hours left over and dropped. The final CSRS annuity is \$13,267 ($\$13,000 + .02 \times \$80,000 \times 0.167$ year). The total FERS/CSRS annuity is \$29,467.

Under the same FERS/CSRS scenario in 2014 or later: Full credit for the 1,100 unused FERS sick leave hours adds six months to the service credit — 1,044 hours with 56 hours left over and dropped. The FERS annuity component grows to \$16,400 ($0.01 \times \$80,000 \times 20.50$ years). With the \$13,267 CSRS component, the final FERS/CSRS annuity is \$29,667.

The Cross River Hockey Battle

Br 9 vs. Br 28

SUNDAY, MAY 20, 2012

5:20PM TO 6:50PM

**SCHWAN'S SUPER RINK
NATIONAL SPORTS CENTER
1700 105TH AVE. N.E.
BLAINE**

**FREE ADMISSION
NO TICKETS OR
RESERVATIONS NEEDED**

**Bring your family and friends
to the stands and cheer for
us to beat our cross river
rivals!**

Thanks from Wisconsin

Dear Branch 9,

Thank you, dear brothers and sisters for the generous hospitality you extended to me at your January General Membership Meeting. It was wonderful to meet all of you. There is nothing quite like spending time with NALC family. I loved talking with so many of you and am looking forward to many great times ahead filled with learning and laughter.

I want to take this opportunity to personally thank all of you who joined the rally in Madison last March. As we all know, the rights of the working class are under attack in Wisconsin and literally everywhere in this great nation. Who would have known when all of this started, that a year later, we would have collected over 1 million signatures to "Recall Walker" in 60 short days? Nearly 2 million when you include the Lt. Governor and four prominent Senators.

As a Wisconsin letter carrier, it was my pleasure to head out with recall

petitions only to be flipped off, yelled at, swore at and told where to go and how to get there. What I want all of you to know is, on the days that were emotionally trying, I was comforted, strengthened, and motivated by knowing my brothers and sisters across the nation were standing behind me. Remembering all of you standing alongside us at the State Capital, helped to bring a smile at every jab and gesture. You may not have been able to be there physically, but you were definitely there in spirit. Thank you for your support and encouragement. It really does mean the world to those of us on the front lines.

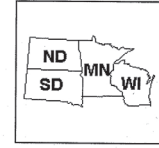
Tell me what democracy looks like!

This is what democracy looks like!

Grateful for the Solidarity of my dear Brothers and Sisters.

**Belinda Schweitzer
Branch 822,
Appleton, Wisconsin**

33rd Annual NALC Region 7



Regional Training Seminar

**April 30 – May 4
2012**

**Holiday Inn Metrodome
Minneapolis, MN**

Monday and Tuesday.
Advanced Leadership Training
(25 person limit)
Intermediate Steward Training
Basic Steward's Training
8AM - 5PM

Wednesday
Group Seminar
8AM - 5PM

Thursday
8:30AM - 5:30PM
Mock Arbitration

Friday
8:30AM - Noon
MDA/Food Drive/EAP
/Customer Connect
RAP Session and graduation
****All participants must pay a meals and breaks fee, based on the selected attendance option****

All week \$198.78
Mon. & Tues. \$74.10
Wed.- Fri. \$124.68
No Registration Fee
Registration Forms may be picked up at Steward or General Membership Meetings

Registration Forms must be to the Region 7 Office by April 23, 2012

Above and Beyond Award Winners



L to R. Steward Don Grunnes (Lowry), Terry Anderson (Lowry), Steward Ken Jambois (Brklyn Center), Steward Pete Wilson (Lowry), Ron Peterson (Brklyn Center), Steward Samantha Hartwig (Eastside), John Elofson (Eastside).

Convention Volunteers Needed

The 2012 National Convention is the week of July 23 through July 27. I have been asked to coordinate volunteers for the convention in Minneapolis. As the host of this year's convention we are going to need a number of people to work at the convention. Specifically we will need people to work the following committees:

Transportation Committee (chaired by Bob Baird) needs 8 - 10 volunteers to assist in transporting National officers, staff and guest speakers the week before, during and also for several days after the convention ends. Members on the Transportation Committee should be familiar with the downtown area.

Sergeants at Arms (chaired by Jim Nelson) needs 18 volunteers to assist with limited security, crowd control, checking delegate credentials, directing "traffic" to get people to and from classes etc., and getting/having all of the information available for the delegates during all official convention activities including the Welcome Reception.

If you are not representing Branch 9 as a National delegate we will need to know as soon as possible in order to make arrangements if you need time off.

Once these positions are filled, committee members will be given more specified details on their duties.

These positions must be filled by March 25, 2012. Please contact the Branch at 612.781.9858 to volunteer.

As we get closer to the convention we will need a number of additional volunteers for a variety of tasks. I will be giving updates on the volunteer needs in future issues.

Thank you.
Barb Watczak
Trustee

*VP article continued from
page 5*

make this stuff work when it won't.

The National Agreement requires us to provide a fair day's work for a fair day's pay but there is nothing in there that makes it our responsibility to make their projections work. It is our job to work safely; to walk and drive the vehicles the way they tell us; to follow the work rules that have been negotiated and to work productively all at the same time. We must not allow productivity to compromise our safety. Carriers need to follow the instructions of management, work safely in accordance with the work rules and when in doubt ask for clarification.

If there is still doubt request to see your steward.

Darrell

COLCPE SIGNUP CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

1. Be sure you know your 8-digit Employee ID Number (on your paystub) and your 4-digit USPS Personal Identification Number (PIN).

If you cannot remember your PIN, call PostalEASE at 1-877-4PS-EASE (1-877-477-3273), select "1", enter your Employee ID Number, and select "2" to have your PIN mailed to you.

2. Create your own Account Number by inserting in the spaces at right the first seven digits of the ID number that appears above your name on the back cover of your

Postal Record.

**Now you are ready to go online to
liteblue.usps.gov**

Enter Employee ID and PIN and click "log on"

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

Stewards' Corner

The Backbone of a successful grievance...*The Interview*

A carrier in your office has approached you and said he has just been told to report to the supervisor's office for an interview. He believes that the interview could lead to discipline. What do you do? First off, you've caught a break. Most grievants when asked to report for an investigative interview, think they can talk their way out of it. Therefore, at that critical first step, they don't ask for Union representation. But since you have the opportunity to be part of the interview with the grievant, take full advantage of your rights.

Pre-interview Meeting

Ask for the time for a pre-interview meeting with the grievant. Your pre-interview with the grievant should be private, just you and the grievant. Weingarten gives that right. If management refuses you time, make that a part of your due process arguments in the grievance file. The pre-interview will give you time to understand what the management interview is likely to be about. It will also give you time to strategize and clarify what the grievant should and should not say during the interview. As it turns out, the pre-disciplinary interview concerned attendance, and management has now issued the grievant a Notice of Removal (NOR) for Irregular Attendance. So where do you start?

General Rules

Let's start with an overview of some general rules. Number one is listening. The key to a good interview is listening to what a person has to say. The best way to get to the facts is by being a good listener. Be relaxed when you do your interviews. A grievant who is facing discipline is already upset, so you need to dif-

fuse that to the extent that you can. Control your feelings. Do not get caught up in the emotions that are already there. As you discuss the various issues, keep notes of the important things that are discussed. This should include a list of any additional potential witnesses. Show the grievant that you are interested and want to get all the information out. Ask open-ended questions that allow the witness to clarify and fill

The key to a good interview is listening to what a person has to say.

in the facts. When you ask yes or no questions, often that is all you will get in return. For example, if you simply ask the grievant if they abused their sick leave, they will say no. How has that helped you? Obviously it hasn't. If however you ask what medical problems they have, you are likely to get a lot more information. It is also good to periodically repeat answers back to the witness to insure that what you have written down accurately reflects the witness statements.

Always Supportive

During the interview, it's okay to be supportive, but don't make promises you may not be able to keep. If they ask you if you will be able to get their job back? Don't tell them you will, better to tell them you will do everything you can to get them back to work. And if they ask you a question to which you don't know the answer, tell them you will find out and get back to them. Don't guess

and give them bad information. Back to the interview. Use the NOR as your roadmap to start. Ask about the cited dates in the NOR and why the grievant used the sick leave, emergency annual and/or was AWOL. Ask if there was an underlying medical condition that could allow for an FMLA defense, or a drug or alcohol problem that could lead to an EAP defense. The bottom line, once you engage a witness in an interview, let the conversation be natural while at the same time you direct the conversation to elicit the information and answers you need. Don't, however, miss opportunities when surprises occur to follow up those leads for additional information. The information you gather from the grievant will lead to your next interviews. This is also your opportunity to ask the grievant to provide you with documentation that he should have.

Interview the Supervisor

Your next likely interview will be the supervisor that issued the discipline. Article 17, Section 3 states in relevant part, "and shall have the right to interview the aggrieved employee(s), supervisors, and witnesses during working hours." So you have the right to interview supervisors. Take advantage of that right. The issuing supervisor should be questioned about what information they consulted, why they issued the discipline, who they obtained concurrence from, and what documentation they shared with the concurring official. This interview should be followed up with an interview of the concurring official. Determine what documentation the concurring official was provided and what rationale was used in

concurring. Again, let the answers to your questions lead you to follow up questions. Once you have completed your interview with the supervisor, you should immediately attempt to interview the concurring official to see if that story matches the one given to you by the immediate supervisor. Your interviews should continue as the facts lead you. For example, if you find that the grievant had a serious medical condition and that he had requested FMLA protected leave and it was denied, you may want to interview the FMLA Coordinator.

Your interview should always follow where the facts lead.

Based on reasonableness, you should be able to interview the FMLA Coordinator at his/her office. "Reasonableness" means, for example, if the FMLA Coordinator works in close proximity to your office, you should get a face to face meeting. If, however, the FMLA Coordinator works in a distant location, a telephone interview would be appropriate.

Other Witnesses

There are other potential witnesses you may need to interview. Sometimes clarification of medical information from the grievant's physician or nurse is needed. In most cases the grievant will have to provide you with a release. Without that the doctor is not likely to speak to you. These are simply examples of how a typical case might go. As already stated, let the information you have developed from your early interviews lead you. And don't be surprised if you have to interview a witness more than one time. The grievant especially will require an

additional interview after more facts have been developed and additional questions naturally flow from the information you have gathered.

Contract Cases

Contract cases are not significantly different when interviewing witnesses. Start with the grievant and work from there. Supervisor interviews are often even more important in contract cases than in discipline cases. Supervisors often have the kind of knowledge that may be critical. For example, in a simple Article 8 bypass case, the supervisor will normally know why certain individuals were worked while others weren't. The supervisor will know a lot concerning the scheduling of employees. A person skilled at interviewing witnesses may turn a poor case into a good case just by the information obtained from managers.

Often we do not interview supervisors in the grievance procedure and that allows them time to formulate their position.

Good interviews are the backbone of any grievance. Without solid information, the best case will wither and die on the vine.

Credit: NALC Activist November, 2009

President's article continued from page 3

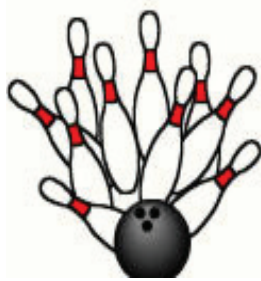
as they are being discussed cover a variety of topic from marriage and elections to taxes and unions. I know that some believe that the Branch should not get involved in these issues because they don't involve the Postal Service. I disagree; these amendments as they are being discussed can and will have an impact on the lives of our members, their friends and families. As Election Day approaches, we need to look at and be informed about the people and issues that can have an impact on our lives. On Election Day, when we enter the voting booth let's make sure that we are informed about the people and issues that are on the ballot. We began at the February Steward's Board Meeting with a presentation and discussion about a "right to work" initiative that may be on the ballot and the impact of such an amendment. The packaging or wording of these amendments can sometimes make it difficult to understand what it really is about. We need to educate and decide for ourselves whether it's a duck and not because someone else said so.



Branch 9

MDA Bowl-a-thon

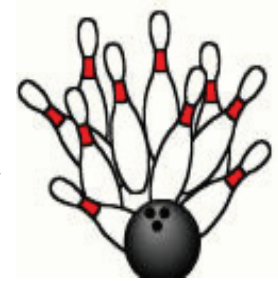
Saturday, April 14, 2012



LOCATION

Park Tavern

3401 Louisiana Avenue South
St. Louis Park, MN 55426



TIME

7:00 - 9:30PM

20 lanes of bowling (all teams bowl at same time)

Teams of 4 - 6 - MAIL your **teams with names** to:

Branch 9

2408 Central Avenue NE
Minneapolis, MN 55418

2 games, shoe rental, pizza and cash bar

\$50 per bowler minimum collected for MDA

Silent and live auctions

Games for the kids

Contest for best gift basket - winning station will receive
a free breakfast

Deadline for registration is Wednesday, April 4th

FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED

Branch 9's Annual Red and Gold Retiree Banquet Sunday, May 6, 2012 Ramada Plaza, Minneapolis 1330 Industrial Boulevard, Minneapolis, MN



Menu

Mixed Green salad

Pasta Salad

Grilled Flank Steak

Forest Mushroom demi-glace

Chicken Breast with Lingonberry

Hash-n-white Cheddar Potatoes

Wild Rice Blend

Fresh Seasoned Vegetables

Assorted Rolls and Butter

Fruit Pies and Tortes

Fruit Trays and Cake



Registration Noon - 1:30
Social Hour 12:30 - 1:30
Lunch 1:30 - 3:30

Retirees the \$12.00/per person registration fee is refundable upon arrival. Cost for active members is \$18 and cost for stewards is \$9.

***Reservations must be returned to the
Branch Office no later than
Monday, April 30.***

For more than 50 years Branch 9 has honored its retirees with the Red & Gold Banquet. Please join us for a day of good time and fellowship, as we say thank you to those who have come before us. Active members are also welcome to join in the festivities.

Name: _____

Name of your Guest: _____

<input type="checkbox"/> Retired	<input type="checkbox"/> I would like a ride to the Banquet	Return by April 30 to: Branch 9, NALC 2408 Central Avenue NE Minneapolis 55418
<input type="checkbox"/> Active	<input type="checkbox"/> I am willing to give someone a ride (Call Cheryl Stately 763.232.4870)	

Amount enclosed _____

**J. Wesley Woods - \$1,000
Scholarship Application Form**

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

High School _____

Member parent's name _____

Work unit _____

School to attend (if known) _____

**Jerome J. Keating/Austin B. Carlson
\$2,000 Scholarship Application Form**

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

High School _____

Member parent's name _____

Work unit _____

School to attend (if known) _____

**Walter E. Couillard/
Eugene P. McNulty
\$2,000 Scholarship Application Form**

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

High School _____

Member parent's name _____

Work unit _____

School to attend (if known) _____

**High School Seniors:
Submit scholarship applications to
Branch 9 by May 22, 2012**

Every spring, Branch 9 awards three scholarships to graduating seniors: the J. Wesley Woods Scholarship (\$1,000); the Jerome J. Keating/Austin B. Carlson Scholarship (\$2,000); and the Walter E. Couillard/Eugene P. McNulty Scholarship (\$2,000). These awards have made it easier for many students to begin their post-secondary education while honoring the sacrifices and contributions of important Branch 9 Leaders.

The following rules apply to all three scholarships:

- A. Any senior graduating from high school and is a dependent of a Branch 9 member is eligible for these scholarships.
- B. The scholarships may be used for any accredited trade school, vocational/technical institute, community college, or university.
- C. Three names will be drawn for each scholarship. The first name picked will be the winner, then first and second runner-up respectively. The winners of any drawing will not be eligible for the other drawings.
- D. The application for the drawings will run in the March and April issues of the Branch Nine News. The drawing will be held at the May General Membership Meeting. The applications shall contain the following information:

- 1. The applicant's name, address, and home phone number.
 - 2. The name of the applicant's parent or guardian who is a member of Branch 9.
 - 3. The intended school of choice, if known.
- E. Payment to the winners will be made after they have enrolled and can show proof of payment towards their tuition.

Members with dependents who graduate from high school this spring and who plan to attend an accredited education institution next fall, should complete the applications and return them to the Branch Office by May 22 or bring them to that night's meeting. All three forms should be submitted as there are three separate drawings for each scholarship.

Adult Learners Scholarship

Leonard A. Larson/ Barry J. Weiner Scholarship

Adult Learners:

**Submit scholarship
application to Branch 9
by May 22, 2012**

**Leonard A. Larson/
Barry J. Weiner
Adult Learner Scholarship
Application Form**

Name _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Active or Retired _____

Work unit _____

Two (2) \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded.

The following rules apply to the two scholarships:

A. Any member active or retired in good standing of Branch 9 is eligible for one of the two scholarships.

B. The scholarships may be used for any accredited trade school, vocational/technical institute, community college, or university. The Adult Learner Scholarships may also be used for any community, county or state adult educational program.

C. One name will be drawn for each scholarship. The first name picked will be the winner. The winners of any drawing will not be eligible for the other drawings.

D. The application for the drawings will run in the March and April issues of the Branch Nine News. The drawing will be held at the May General Membership Meeting. The applications shall contain the following information:

1. The applicant's name, address, and home phone number.
2. Whether active or retired.

E. Payment to the winners will be made after they have enrolled and can show proof of payment towards their tuition.

F. Benefits under the Adult Learner Scholarships expire one year from date of drawing.

Members who plan to attend an accredited education institution should complete the application and return it to the Branch Office by May 22, or bring it to that night's meeting.

**UNIFORMS
UNLIMITED**

The Twin Cities Postal Headquarters

**USA
Union preferred**

Minneapolis
2220 Lyndale Avenue South
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St. Paul
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St. Paul, MN 55103
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Branch Nine News
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Minneapolis, MN 55418-3712

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Branch Nine Calendar

March 27

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

Tuesday, March 27

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

April 3

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

April 10

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

April 10

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

April 24

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

April 14

MDA Bowl-A-Thon
Park Tavern
7 - 9:30PM
3401 Louisiana Ave. S.
St. Louis Park

Tuesday, April 24

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

*****By-Laws Voted on*****

April 30 - May 4

NBA Region 7 Training
Holiday Inn Metrodome
1500 Washington, Ave. S.
Minneapolis

May 1

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

May 1

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

May 6

Red & Gold Retiree Banquet
1330 Industrial Blvd, Minneapolis
Registration: Noon - 1:30PM
Lunch 1:30 - 3:30PM

May 12

NALC FOOD DRIVE