

The Official Newsletter of NALC Branch 1439

The 1439'er



Capitol Concerns

Branch 1439 members were busy lobbying for Postal Reform in February-March, 2005. (Left) Jose Aguilar and Hector Meneses III study up on Postal Reform issues. (Below) Mark Lesch, Harold Kelso, Dennis Martin and Alex Case visit the U.S. Capitol after the lobbying sessions. (Below Left) Congresswoman Barbara Lee (CD-9) addresses letter carriers at a congressional breakfast. More coverage inside this newsletter.



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Ontario Downtown Station Alex Case
Ontario Plaza Station Jose Aguilar

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Rancho Cucamonga Corinne Giron
Ontario Main Office Joseph Vasquez

Branch Meetings

Branch meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month. The meeting location is the Rancho Cucamonga Senior Center, 9791 Arrow Route in Rancho Cucamonga, one block east of Archibald Avenue (just east of the Jack-in-the-Box shopping center). Meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. To submit items to the Branch meeting agenda prior to the meeting, please contact Secretary Mark Lesch at (760) 951-8201 or at the Ontario Downtown Station (909) 984-2937, or via email at mlesch@linkline.com

1439'er Information

The 1439'er is the official publication of the National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 1439, Ontario—Rancho Cucamonga, California. All members are invited to submit articles for publication. All articles must be typewritten and signed by the author, and must be submitted by the twentieth day of the month preceding publication. The editor reserves the right to edit, delete or reject an article for the good of the branch. To submit an article send it to the Branch post office box listed above, in care of Mark Lesch, Editor, or submit via email to mlesch@linkline.com

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Branch 1439 Affiliations

NALC Branch 1439 is affiliated with the Central Labor Council of San Bernardino—Riverside Counties, and the International Labor Communications Association (ILCA).

Useful World Wide Web Information

NALC National Web Site

<http://www.nalc.org/>

NALC Contract Administration Unit

<http://www.nalc.org/depart/cau/index.html>

NALC Health Benefit Plan

<http://www.nalc.org/depart/hbp/index.html>

Office Of Personnel Management

<http://www.opm.gov/>

OWCP San Francisco Region Office

<http://www.dol.gov/dol/esa/public/contacts/owcp/9sf.htm>

President's Report

The date in April 1st. I have been told by our big butted editor that this is the deadline for news articles. I hate this!

I don't hate it because of the time. I hate it because from April 2nd through April 4th, I will be attending the Committee of President's meeting in Las Vegas. I am writing a report one day before I find out what has happened for the past six months.

The one thing I can tell you is Jack Potter, USPS Postmaster General, opted out of the mutual route adjustment process and gave us two fingers, one vertically and the other horizontally. This is an old Indian trick, which means one is for you and I don't like your horse either.

What are we doing about it? I think we want to negotiate (See Tom's Tale). I will find out more in Vegas this weekend. If you want to get the latest information, you had better be at our next union meeting in April 12th.

I learned something new the other day. Last week at the Rancho Cucamonga Post Office, I had an argument with one of the carriers. The topic of disagreement was over how many languages we speak in this office. The carrier guessed six. I said, "You missed by a ton." We bet a beer on it, and I went around for a few days asking people how many languages they could speak. Many people were suspicious of my intentions at first, but once I explained it was just for a beer bet, they readily told me. Here is a brief list of employees and the languages they speak.

Tanya — Russian

Alan — French

Reid — German

Beck — Chinese (2 dialects)

George — Chinese (3 more dialects)

Christian — Filipino (Tagalog), (Main dialect plus many dialects from each island)

Lila — Samoan

Leonard — Greek

Phat — Vietnamese

Pronob — Indian (1 dialect)

Rick — Indian (2 more dialects)

Tom — Gaelic

Dean — Turettes

This is just a small sampling and does not cover most of the clerks, rural routes and supervisors (Pig-Latin).

But this does show us something. Just think how smart we really are! Just on our own workroom floor we can communicate with almost anyone in the world.

The only party we have a really hard time communicating with is management!

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Postal Reform — 2005

by Mark Lesch

From February 28 - March 3, 2005, Branch 1439 members Jose Aguilar, Alex Case, Harold Kelso, Mark Lesch, Dennis Martin, and Hector Meneses III visited Washington DC and walked the halls of Congress to work for meaningful Postal Reform. I will discuss our current efforts shortly, but for now I would like to talk about the work of previous brothers and sisters that got us to this point.

March Madness 1970

For those of you new to the Postal Service, you should know that letter carriers and other postal employees did not always enjoy the wages and benefits they have today. Indeed, during the 1950's and 60's, letter carriers were often required to work an extra job in order to make ends meet, often, letter carriers qualified for food stamps, welfare and other government handouts. Due to the brave actions of those carriers who defied management and risked their jobs to carry out the strike of 1970, Congress, which often had turned a deaf ear to the plight of letter carriers, was forced to enact legislation which eventually became the Postal Reform Act of 1971. Finally, letter carriers earned a decent wage and had a good benefit package.

Back to the Future

With history in mind, we went to DC this year to work for Postal Reform. The core ideas that we want to see in any Postal Reform legislation is the continuation of our collective bargaining rights and the idea of universal service at universal rates. Collec-

tive bargaining has worked well for both labor, management and postal customers. In the 34 years since the last Postal Reform, contracts have been settled without strikes or a stoppage of mail

our business and keep the Postal Service viable for many years to come, we lobbied for Postal Reform that includes not only the core issues listed above but also includes:

Why Mail Matters

The mailing industry creates for America:

- 9 million jobs
- \$900 billion in commerce

service. Mailers have benefited from improved service and stable postage rates, with increases limited to less than the Consumer Price Index. Taxpayers have saved tens of billions of dollars in eliminated subsidies. Letter carriers have maintained the purchasing power of their pay with wage increases that have closely tracked the rate of inflation. Universal service is a hallmark of the postal system and the public and the American economy have come to rely on it.

In 2005, it is obvious that the 34-year-old Postal Reform Act is in need of an overhaul. Electronic diversions, such as email and electronic bill paying, are slowly eroding the volume of our core product, first class mail. In order to increase

Pricing and Product Flexibility, the ability to adjust pricing more rapidly to adjust to changing market forces, and to have the ability to offer discounts to mailers during traditionally slow periods, like the summer months.

Releasing the Escrow Account, in 2003, Congress passed legislation that restructured how the Postal Service funds its payments to employee pension funds, saving the Postal Service billions of dollars it had previously been overpaying. The funds were placed in an escrow account which is the subject of debate. If the funds were released the Postal Service would not have to seek the proposed rate increase of 5 to 6 per-

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cent in 2006. Many in Congress would like to see the escrow funds released only with proper oversight to insure that they would be used to cover issues like health benefit obligations, rather than being used to fund bonuses for management.

During our visit to Washington DC, we, along with representatives from 11 other states, met with over 25% of the Congress. Were we successful? When we went to DC, only one California Congressperson, Representative Henry Waxman (CD 30), had co-signed the present Postal Reform legislation, H.R. 22. After we visited, sixteen other California Congresspeople found our arguments compelling enough to become active co-sponsors of H.R. 22. On the Senate side, Senator Susan Collins recently introduced a companion bill to H.R. 22, Senate Bill 662. Thankfully, S. 662 does not include any

language that would change collective bargaining that was sought previously by the Postal Board of Governors. NALC, along with a broad spectrum of mailers, competitors and other postal unions, will be watching the bills closely as they move through Congress. Support of the bills will depend on the final language presented, including any amendments that may be introduced or attached. We will keep you informed through this newsletter of current events. However, for the fastest updates, consider becoming an E-Activist. Sign up by visiting the NALC web site (www.nalc.org).

Our Legacy

The brave carriers from 1970 showed great fortitude and perseverance in getting the last great Postal Reform enacted. It is now our time to act for future generations of postal customers and employees. While nothing as drastic as a strike is needed, getting Postal Reform enacted this time around will still require a lot of hard work. I know that members of Branch 1439 are up to the challenge. ♦

Calendar of Upcoming Events

April 12, 2005 — Branch Meeting. Please note, this may be the last meeting at the Senior Center on Arrow Highway just east of Archibald Avenue. The current building has been sold and the Senior Center is moving to the Central Park area of Rancho (Milliken and Baseline). We will be moving with them. Look for a postcard in the mail when the change takes place.

April 28, 2005 — Workers Memorial Day, honor the memory of those thousands of workers who have perished on the job. For more information, visit <http://www.afl-cio.org/yourjobeconomy/safety/memorial/index.cfm>.

May 8, 2005 — Mothers Day. You wouldn't forget Mom, would you?

May 10, 2005 — Branch meeting. We will mail a postcard for a reminder including the location.

May 14, 2005 — 13th Annual NALC/USPS Food Drive. We are anticipating a record collection this year. Volunteers are needed to help move the food. Please contact the officer or steward in your unit.

May 20-22, 2005 — Officer and Steward Training in Pasadena, CA.

May 30, 2005 — Memorial Day Holiday.

The Muscular Dystrophy Association and NALC Branch 411 San Bernardino present ...

4th Annual NALC Branch 411 Golf Tournament to benefit

the Muscular Dystrophy Association

Sunday April 24, 2005	Entry Fee includes 18 holes
San Bernardino Golf Club	of golf, cart, dinner afterward
1494 South Waterman Ave	Contests for closest to the
San Bernardino, CA 92408	pin and longest drive
909-885-2414	Awards for winning teams
\$70.00	4 man scramble format

NALC Branch 1439 Members!

Branch 1439 active and retired members can golf for free or at a reduced rate. Interested? Here is how it works: Branch 1439 will sponsor two four-person teams, one from Ontario, one from Rancho. If only four golfers from each office apply, then all golf for free. If more than four apply, the breakdown for payment is as follows:

5 golfers — each pays \$14.00
6 golfers — each pays \$23.00
7 golfers — each pays \$30.00
8 golfers — each pays \$35.00

To apply to golf, please contact Branch Secretary Mark Lesch directly either at home (760)951-8201, the Ontario Downtown Station (909) 984-2937, via email at branch1439@linkline.com, or talk to me at the branch meeting on April 12, 2005. If leaving or

writing a message, please tell me your name and leave a contact number so I can verify your interest in playing.

Deadline to apply is April 13, 2005 at 9:00 p.m.

The offer to golf for free or a reduced rate is open to current or retired members of NALC Branch 1439 **ONLY!** Friends, family members and other postal employees are invited to play, but each will have to pay the full \$70.00 rate.

The San Bernardino Golf Club has a dress code. Collared shirts and soft spiked golf shoes only, please.

Monies raised will be used to benefit local families with members suffering from neuromuscular diseases.

Tom's Tale

I kicked the front door open. He laid on his back on the couch naked, with beer cans surrounding him. "You @#\$hole!" I said. He stretched and rolled his head over, and looked at me. "Don't tell me you lost another grievance," he yawned. I had a wadded up piece of paper in my hand and I headed for the refrigerator for two beers. I opened mine and tossed the other to him. He was lucky, and crossed his legs just in time.

He growled. I said, "Get you lazy golden retriever ass off of that couch and bite some supervisor." He rolled his beer can over to his dish, somehow got it open, and gave that famous "What now?" I started ...

Do you remember those thirty bozos who conducted the route inspections in Ontario? He nodded his head. Do you remember that I filed about 100 grievances against them for all the violations? He nodded. Do you remember that I sent every one of these grievances to the Dispute Resolution Team, who said that they were good, solid grievances? He took a big drink. Do you remember that former RAA Joan Hurst had looked at each grievance and certified them as good grievances, recommended for arbitration? Do you remember that I used to win about 95% of my grievances?

He just stared at me now. "And then what happened?" I asked. The dog started to laugh, and he laughed so hard that he fell off of the couch. I got pissed and went for another beer. When I returned, he choked out these words, "Don't tell me that you are now 0 for 70?"

I just stared at him. He gave me a con-

Braveheart

cerned look, and said, "If you were a prizefighter, they would not even let you in the ring." I headed out back to find someone more reasonable — like the cat. He followed me outside and we sat down on the diving board.

"Damn, that pool is green," I said. He nodded and said, "What's really pissing you off is you know you could not buy a grievance now a days." I showed the dog the crumpled up paper. I said, "Here is a list of the Postal Service's newest promotions. The clown who refused to name any of the route inspectors just got promoted from a Level 17 to a Level 23. That's above both of our local postmasters. The blond woman who would not give me her name just went from a Level 17 to the postmaster of La Verne (Level 22). The dog spit out some beer. "That is not all," I said.

I told him that everyone of the punk route inspectors were heroes in the eyes of management. The fact that each one of them was an outcast, leper, loser that no one wanted to work with, for that reason they were on a route inspection team didn't seem to matter. As far as management was concerned, the inspectors had kicked ass. We sat there for awhile.

Finally we went inside and turned on the TV. The movie "Braveheart" starring Mel

Gibson was just starting. While the dog went for more beer, I told him, "You are going to love this movie, but it will be even better with buttered popcorn. I made the popcorn and we sat back to watch the movie. If you have not seen this movie, don't read any farther.

The movie starts slow, until Mel's character's wife gets killed. Then it really starts rolling. Mel plays William Wallace, a common Scotsman who unites his people to fight against English rule. The dog thinks he is English because he is a Golden Retriever. Whatever!

The movie climaxes to a big battle scene. The English look unbeatable. Mel wants to fight, but the Scottish lords want to negotiate. Mel tells everyone that this is their big chance, starts a fight, and join the rank and file guys in the front lines.

As the English get ready to charge, the Scottish guys lift up their kilts and flash the English troops. The English troops are pissed, and fire some arrows. The Scottish guys turn around, lift up their kilts and moon the English.

I jumped off of the couch and yell, "Yes, that is my kind of leader!" The dog growls because he thinks he is English. The movie goes

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Contributing to COLCPE

A recent issue of the Postal Record had a listing of those member contributing to the Committee on Letter Carriers Political Education (COLCPE) I applaud those who took the time to contribute via PostalEase or through a one time contribution. However, out of 222 active and retired members, only 6 members are making a regular contribution. This number needs to improve, and Branch 1439 officers are going to make an effort to increase the numbers of members that donate. It's only your future at stake!

Fortunately, NALC has made it simple to do your part. The easiest way is to **contribute via PostalEase**. This way, an amount you specify is taken out of your paycheck every two weeks. You will have to know your USPS PIN

number in order to process your request.

"I already have two allotments, I cannot contribute through PostalEase." I have heard this often, but now there is a new way to **contribute via Electronic Fund Transfer**. NALC will deduct an amount you specify every month on the 1st of the month. A buck a week is all we ask!

Retirees, we have not forgotten about you! You can now **contribute directly from your annuity**, by either calling or writing to OPM, or you can sign up on the Internet.

Look in the very near future for more information on all three ways to contribute to COLCPE on Branch 1439's web site, www.nalcbranch1439.org.

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on, but I remember a Committee of President's meeting that I attended long ago.

At this meeting someone asked then NALC President Vincent Sombrotto if he was going to fight some dumb ass management order. Vince Sombrotto said, "Remember this — old men for advice, young men for war. If we are going to war, you could not have a better guy than me." I went to bed.

I suddenly was on the field of battle. There was a long line of rowdy-looking guys wearing kilts. As I got near I focused on the man in the middle. He had curly brown hair and glasses. I knew that it was Bill Young. As we

started to charge Bill turned around and started to lift his kilt ...

"AAAAHHHH!" I woke up in a cold sweat. The dog was sitting next to me. His hair stuck straight out. "What happened?" he asked. I could not talk.

The next morning, I thought of my dream. What did it mean? I am not sure. All I know is, if Bill Young ever decides to fight management

we have the perfect weapon. But, if no one wants to fight and only want to negotiate, then they better pray that I don't show up at our stewards training in May wearing a kilt!

18 & 8

Tom

P.S. It's my island! ♦