

JEROME J. KEATING- BRANCH



# BRANCH NINE NEWS

"AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL"

1964

VOLUME 62 No 10

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December 2010



## *Seasons Greetings!*

from

**Branch 9  
Officers &  
Executive  
Board**

**Pam Donato**

**Mike Zagaros**

**Jeremy Rothstein**

**Darrell Maus**

**Melia Derrick**

**Chuck Glover**

**Jim Nelson**

**Barb Wateczak**

**Mike Smith**

**Samantha Hartwig**

**Cheryl Stately**

**Julie Waldemar**

### \*\*\*\*\*Meeting Change Notification\*\*\*\*\*

January 11th Steward Board and January 25th General Membership meetings  
will be held at the

**Golden Valley VFW Post 7051  
7775 Medicine Lake Rd  
Golden Valley, MN 55427**

## Last Punch Bunch



*Bill Knotz makes his final clock ring at the Diamond Lake station*

## The Twelve Days Of Christmas

(As you've never heard it told)

*author anonymous*

**Dec. 25**

My dearest darling Edward,

What a wonderful surprise has greeted me! That sweet partridge, in that lovely little pear-tree; what an enchanting, romantic, poetic present! Bless you, and thank you.

Your deeply loving, Emily

**Dec. 26**

Beloved Edward,

The two turtle-doves arrived this morning, and are cooing away in

the pear-tree as I write. I'm so touched and grateful!

With undying love, as always,  
Emily

**Dec. 27**

My darling Edward,

You do think of the most original presents! Whomever would think of sending anyone three French hens? Do they really come all the way from France? It's a pity we don't have a chicken coop, but I expect we'll find one. Anyway, thank you so much; they're lovely.

Your devoted, Emily

**Dec. 28**

Dearest Edward,

What a surprise! Four calling birds arrived this morning. They are very sweet, even if they do call rather loudly—they make using the telephone all most impossible, but I expect they'll calm down when they get used to their new home. Anyway, I'm very grateful, of course I am.

Love from Emily

**Dec. 29**

The mailman has just delivered five of the most beautiful gold rings, one for each finger, and they all fit perfectly! This is really a lovely present! Lovelier, by the way, then birds, which do take rather a lot of looking after. The four that arrived yesterday are still making a terrible row, and I'm afraid none of us got much sleep last night. Mother says she wants to use the rings to "wring" their necks. Mother has such a sense of humor. This time she's only joking, I think, but I do know what she means. Still, I love the rings.

Bless you, Emily  
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# President's Report

## END OF YEAR REPORT

Traditionally, the December article for the Branch 9 President has been a year in review report. I will briefly report on our work and Branch 9's business for 2010.

## ROUTE STRUCTURE

The NALC and USPS continued to jointly evaluate and adjust letter carrier assignments through nationally negotiated processes. The most recent JARAP agreement allowed the parties to select stations they wanted to evaluate, leaving them the option to not do any adjustments. This was a welcome caveat, as in previous agreements, all assignments had been scrambled up in adjustments twice in one year. After a lot of work and thousands of hours of extensive reviews (and a lot of maneuvering by management) of the 17 zip codes that were selected to evaluate, management decided to walk away from almost all of them without any adjustments (except zone 30 in Brooklyn Center). Each new joint route adjustment agreement improves the process by which assignments are evaluated and then adjusted. However, so often the best intentions of those agreements are foiled by a few who seek only a predetermined outcome and serve a personal or corporate agenda, irregardless of what reality truly is. Barring a few assignments in each station, the route structure that exists in Branch 9 stations is fairly accurate. The major problem is POOR STAFFING!

## STAFFING

Staffing of letter carriers is the worst it has ever been in my career. In Minneapolis alone, we have over 45 assignments that both the USPS and the NALC have agreed exist

with no regular carrier assigned. Over the past 15 years, the USPS has decided to shed its Regular Relief (RR) positions (nearly 100 FT positions). Where we once had 120+ Part Time Flexibles, we currently have 33. And we have approximately 63 T.E.'s. Clearly, there are not enough carriers to case and carry all of the mail and parcels in normal circumstances. Throw in the increased volume of mail this time of year, along with the early and extreme winter conditions, and you've got a bad situation for everyone involved. I am told that Minneapolis has been approved for hiring 30 more T.E.'s, which will be helpful sometime in April or May... but will do nothing for what ails us now. While there are complications for hiring, such as nation wide limits for T.E. hiring and with holding notices, trust me when I say that the current understaffing scenario has less to do with any of those complexities and more to do with a USPS strategy of trying to force us to work to their DOIS expectations. The NALC, both locally and nationally, has a strong desire to be efficient and successful in our business. But our experience every day, both inside our stations and with the actual customer on the street, tells us that the level of understaffing we now have is NOT at all productive. Unfortunately, service suffers, safety is sacrificed and morale plummets.

## REVENUE

Customer Connect is still the best game in town. I know that letter carriers are the best sales staff in all of the USPS. But it is also very clear that staffing and number pushing at the station level has resulted in a morale deficit that is



**Pam Donato**  
Branch 9 President

hard to overcome with gimmicks and rhetoric. The truth is that new revenue is a huge component of a new generation of USPS. Branch 9 has been and will continue to be an eager and hardworking partner in obtaining new and increased revenue streams. We know that letter carriers are the best suited to fish in those "streams". We are suggesting however that the "captain" of our boat get us some better bait, like maybe better staffing, to back up the SERVICE that we're selling! We must put our best foot forward and help to build up our customer base despite the challenges in front of us, no matter who is responsible for those challenges. Until each and every letter carrier has submitted a lead that results in a sale, collectively we have not done all that we can to secure our own future. End of story. This is on us.

## POLITICS

We have had some successes and some set backs. Our efforts in helping to set the record straight regarding the importance of the USPS to all of our customers has been instrumental in positioning us for the fight ahead. Branch 9 and the NALC took to pushing legislation such as House Resolution 173 and seeking to support continuing 6 day

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# I DON'T NEGOTIATE

*Article from The Red River Carrier;*

*NALC Branch 1227*

*Wichita Falls, Texas*

Every morning the supervisor would come around and ask for our 3996's. At each case the supervisor would stop and, after an extended discussion, he would give each carrier instructions and move on. We called this "negotiating" the 3996. This happened at pretty much every case. Except mine. I don't negotiate.

When I said this to my buddies, they thought I was nuts. They assumed that I was taking some sort of hard line stance, which is a sure way to face constant troubles. (Either that or I was BSing them.) Nothing could be further from the truth. I followed a crazier path. After all, I'm a good employee – I do what I'm told, no matter how much it costs the company. So, I put my best estimate on the 3996, and just did what I was told to do.

## **I didn't argue**

Notice that I didn't say that I did what the supervisor wanted. I did what I was told to do. I didn't argue. I certainly didn't negotiate. The 3996 is an estimate not a contract. There was no need to negotiate. I asked for clear instructions, and did whatever I was told to do, in a safe professional manner. I avoided getting drawn into their game. This drove the supervisors' nuts. When they first experienced this, they would get in my face and try every sort of intimidation tactic. They wanted me to work through my bread or lunch, but they couldn't say that. They needed me to negotiate so they could trick me into unpaid overtime.

## **The trick to surviving**

They would show me all sorts of numbers; they would compare me with other carriers. They would threaten to follow me. They would threaten to fool with the amount of overtime I was getting. They would threaten to not let me go when I had something to do after work. They tried everything. But I knew the trick to surviving. The trick is to not care about their threats, and to do your job in a safe professional manner.

First of all, if a supervisor threatens you, inform your shop steward as soon as possible. The shop steward probably can't do anything about it in the short run, but the steward will need the information if the threat is part of a pattern or if the supervisor tries to follow through on his threat later. Second, make a personal note. Record the date, time, and the working as close as you can remember it. But beyond that, you need to figure out, in advance, how you'll respond to any threat or intimidation tactic.

## **Inform your shop steward**

If they give you extra overtime that you don't want, or if they deny you overtime when you should be getting it, inform your shop steward. If your supervisor does anything that violates your rights, inform your shop steward. And always do as instructed, in a safe professional manner. If they tell you your T-6 (or some other carrier) can deliver the same route or section in less time, suggest that the other carrier must be truly superior, and deserves an award. (We'll just assume the other carrier is delivering in a safe professional manner.) Not enough carriers get awards.

## **You'll just bore them to death.**

If they threaten you with closer observation or with following you on the street, then let them. After all, if you are doing your job in a safe professional manner, then you'll just bore them to death.

## **The job takes as long as it takes**

If they try to shower you with numbers that (supposedly) indicate that you can do the job in half the time, inform your supervisor (politely) that you don't understand the numbers they are presenting, but clearly the numbers don't cover everything since you've been working hard all day (under supervision), in a safe professional manner. If you have put a good estimate on your 3996, then you have given your supervisor your best professional effort. No amount of discussion or negotiation is going to change the facts. In the final analysis, the job takes as long as it takes. I used to ask, "that's my estimate – what do you want me to do?" But be fair. If the supervisor can tell you how to do the work in less time (safely and professionally), modify your estimate to incorporate his suggestion.

## **A hassle to "call in"**

Usually, the last tactic they'll try is to tell you to "call in." Your supervisor is aware of how much hassle this is, and hoping that you will buckle under rather than go through that hassle. Don't argue. If you do your job in a safe professional manner, then either you get paid for the hassle, or the supervisor ends up with it. Follow a few simple rules:

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# Executive Vice President's Report

## Which is Greater?

Numbers can tell us many things. They can be used as identifiers such as an employee identification number or a telephone number. The number 9 is the number used to identify the city letter carriers who have chosen to belong to the NALC in Minneapolis area. We are called the Jerome J. Keating Branch 9 of the NALC but most people know us as Branch 9. Numbers are sometimes used as quantifiers used to describe size such as 3 or 78. These numbers quantify the amount of active members we have in our in our smallest office, Mound (3 members) and our largest office, Brooklyn Center with (78 members). Branch 9 has 1339 active members working at 41 offices under the direction of 11 Postmasters and 735 retired members. Everywhere we look around someone uses a number to describe us. But, we are so much more than a number, it doesn't matter whether it is 9 or 2174 the most important number for us is not even a number it's the word "us."

Unions have always been and continue to be about the members the "us." The people who have chosen to belong and act in concert with each other for the betterment of all. In 1889, 60 letter carriers first gathered to establish the National Association of Letter Carriers with four basic tenants "fraternity, fidelity, benevolence and unity. As we prepare to enter into a new year, we need to ask ourselves are we still working towards these objectives, especially the unity part? More importantly, can we afford not to? The power of "us" enables us to

overcome our challenges.

The challenges we face come from all sides. Some are from our competitors; some are from those who want to see "us" disappear entirely. There are even some from within the Postal Service making what I believe are shortsighted number driven decisions that are based more on some formula rather than reality. Whether it is the one about reducing the number of days of delivery that would somehow promote the Postal Service. To the fallacy of DOIS as the Postal Service's version of the HAL9000 from a "2001 A Space Odyssey." How many of you have seen the following scenario played out on the workroom floor? A supervisor carrying a clipboard approaches a carrier at their case. "How are you going to be?" the supervisor says. "Oh I don't know," is the response from the carrier. "Well according to DOIS you are (fill in the blank) minutes under..." The battle lines have needlessly been drawn and the gauntlet thrown. Why, because of a number or a series of numbers says so. Some say that these are the carriers own numbers or demonstrated performance from a day in the past that they can predict how much time is needed today. That may be the case or it may not be due to the intangibles of a letter carrier's route. But, if we allow a computer to make decisions that we know are wrong who is at fault? The National Parties have agreed that DOIS is only a tool, it does not determine how much time is needed on a given day. The contract still allows



**Mike Zagaros**  
**Branch 9 Vice President**

"us" the carriers to make an estimate of what we believe it will take to deliver the route. It also allows "us" to request assistance or overtime where we believe it is needed. Yet everyday there are carriers that think that they are out there alone and not sure of how or what to use to help themselves. They are letting the numbers be greater than the power of "us."

Now that the elections are over, we need to look around and survey the landscape. It does not matter whom you voted for in November, because that is ancient history. It is what it is. The job for all of us is to look at the challenges facing us. Our purpose as members of this union remains to do collectively what we cannot do individually.

As 2011 approaches, the jobs of letter carriers continue to be under attack. The House of Representatives is set to change hands and we need to continue to pay attention to the rhetoric coming out of Washington. We need to be aware that many have determined that public employees have too much. Too much in benefits, salary, pensions and work rules. That all of these things are at risk as this is the last year of our contract. If we stay unified, with

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# NALC History in the Making

## In the beginning...

The first federal workers to organize were skilled craftsmen working in Navy shipyards and in the U.S. Government Printing Office. But the postal workers were the first federal employees to join a union in great numbers, and among postal workers, the letter carriers were the first craft to form their own union.

...Letter carriers and their union, the National Association of Letter Carriers, have from the very beginning coped with a special employer, the United States Government. Many Americans believe that government workers owe their employer--- ultimately the public--- a degree of loyalty and obedience far beyond that owed by other workers. Government workers who agitate and especially those who strike are viewed as acting immorally if not illegally. As a result, letter carriers have sometimes been reluctant to antagonize either the public or the government by engaging in what might be considered extreme or radical behavior.

...Recognizing the public's views, the NALC has constantly juggled its members' aspirations against the forces of public and governmental reaction. ...Today, as a direct result of the illegal but unquestionably justifiable strike of 1970, collective bargaining has given the NALC a "second front" in their age-old struggle to improve letter carrier

wages, benefits and working conditions.

...From its very beginning, the union exhibited a great unity of purpose and method, generally avoiding the factional struggles that often divide organizations.



This remarkable cohesiveness has been in part due

to the nature of the letter carrier's job: all workers labored in the same craft and performed the same work.

But what contributed mightily to their unity and solidarity from the very beginning was that carriers, although delivering mail in communities scattered across the United States, shared a common employer, the Post Office Department. In contrast, in late 19th century when the NALC was founded, industry was barely national in scope, and most workers organized locally to fight localized struggles. Consequently, unlike the NALC, many of the national unions were national in name only.

Letter carriers have also always been proud to serve the American people. NALC President James C. Keller expressed this sentiment well in the early 1900's: "We hold that he [the letter carrier] is not a messenger boy, but he is an intelligent part and parcel of the social and industrial organization of this land of ours." ...The NALC, like other trade unions, is rooted in the workplace. So this is a history of letter carriers who worked to live--- and of unionists who lived for their common ideals.

**Next month: The early days of letter carriers in our republic.**

*Exerpts from: Carriers in a Common Cause. A History of letter carriers and the NALC.*

## This Month in History

### Ten Years Ago in Branch 9 (December 2000)

Branch 9 election results.  
Executive Vice President:  
Pam Donato  
Sgt. At Arms: Jerry Keating  
Trustees: Cathy Fealy,  
Karin LeBak,  
Ron St.Clair

Five tier/one bundle system started earlier this year.

ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) is in its infancy.

Postal management advises NALC of its intention to place bar codes at various intervals along carrier routes.

Executive Vice President Charlie Peasha retires.

### Twenty Years Ago in Branch 9: (December, 1990)

Paul Wellstone is elected to U.S. Senate.

Contract proposal by USPS; No wage increase, lump sum payments, two-tier wage system, 80% cut in COLA payments; unlimited and unrestricted use of casual workforce.

Ron Lawrence will become treasurer of 9PAL next month.

National Business Agent:  
Gene McNulty

# TE Meeting

On a Thursday night at the Crystal Lake VFW, over 51 TE's, Stewards, and concerned letter carriers met at 6:30PM to give feedback to Branch 9 Officers on their day to day struggles. First and foremost was the general feeling that "you don't have our backs." TE carriers felt they weren't represented equally. Examples cited were that some TE carriers had over a one week break in service and no one contacted them, or checked on their status. They also felt there was poor communication between TE's, Stewards and Branch 9 officers.

FSS and the nationwide restructuring of routes are major concerns of TE's who are constantly in limbo regarding their job security. Pam stated that listening to the frustration and station problems of TE's was the focus of this special meeting. Pam and Mike were aware of what was happening to these carriers, given the usual late start times and irregular schedules. Pam challenged station stewards to keep better tabs on the TE breaks in service, and keep them in the loop on Branch 9 business.

Regular Carriers also need to keep in mind that TE's may be just a paycheck or two away from losing their homes. They depend on their paychecks to make ends meet. The last thing any TE needs is to be razed about longevity in the Post Office, or being too eager to work long hours.



Regular, PTF, and TE carriers expressed concerns at the well attended special meeting



Pam Donato (Branch 9 President) answering questions from carriers present.



Loren McNellis (Steward, Columbia Heights) and Sonam Sangpo (TE, Anoka)



Connie Beissel (Steward, Burnsville) and Cameron Brass (TE, Burnsville)

*continued from page 2*

**Dec. 30**

Dear Edward,

Whatever I expected to find when I opened the front door this morning, it certainly wasn't six socking great geese laying eggs all over the porch. Frankly, I rather hoped that you had stopped sending me birds. We have no room for them, and they've already ruined the croquet lawn. I know you mean well, but let's call a halt to it, shall we?

Love, Emily

**Dec. 31**

Edward,

I thought I said **NO MORE BIRDS!** This morning I woke up to find no less than seven swans, all trying to get into our tiny goldfish pond. I'd rather not think about what's happened to the goldfish. The whole house seems full of birds, to say nothing of what they leave behind them, so please, **STOP!**

Your Emily

**Jan. 1**

Frankly, I prefer the birds. What am I to do with eight milkmaids? And their cows! Is this some kind of a joke? If so, I'm afraid I don't find it very amusing.

**Jan. 2**

Look here, Edward,

This has gone far enough. You say you're sending me nine ladies dancing. All I can say is, judging from the way they dance, they're certainly not ladies. The village just isn't accustomed to seeing a regiment of shameless viragos, with nothing on, but their lipstick, cavorting round the green, and it's Mother and I who get the blame. If

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*Continued from page 4*

- You are not required to use up your cell phone plan minutes for the benefit of the Postal Service.
- If you use a pay phone, you are entitled to repayment for the call. Ask your supervisor for the appropriate form.
- If you don't have sufficient change to call in, tell the supervisor up front, so that he can provide you with some.
- Be honest with your supervisor – tell him approximately how long it will take to deviate from your route to call.
- If he doesn't have any change, call collect.
- As a last resort, if you need to call in, and can't, return to the office for instructions, unless your instructions are otherwise.

Throughout, do your job in a safe professional manner.

Regardless of the intimidation tactics your supervisor tries to use, follow instructions and do your job in a safe professional manner. Remember, your supervisor has to supervise other carriers. He has those computer reports to do. He can't spend the rest of his career following one person. Eventually he will figure out that the estimates on you 3996 are good ballpark figures, plan accordingly, and go do the rest of his job. One final word of caution; Supervisors don't like this tactic. They may try to sneak up on you on the street, or catch you taking an extra break. Always, always, always, deliver your route in a safe professional manner. Besides providing the service that customers expect and deserve, if you're not doing anything wrong, it's really difficult to get into trouble.

## A Look to the Future?

Exerpts from an article in  
The Washington Times;  
September 20, 2010

### The Post Office wants your money to protect its monopoly

*By Rep. Darrell Issa R-Ca.*

...The declining demand for traditional mail delivery service presents a crisis for the U.S Postal Service (USPS). A continued imbalance of costs and revenues means taxpayers could be asked to bail out the independent government agency, which is required by law to be self-funded.

...Last year, USPS revenues declined 9.1 percent, and without permission from Congress to delay requirements to pre-fund some worker benefit plans, the Postal Service would have lost \$5.2 billion. A \$7 billion loss is anticipated this year.

...The difficulty and uniqueness of the situation for USPS is that there is little incentive to cut costs. Under current labor agreements, if USPS and its employees have a dispute over compensation, the negotiations are sent to a binding arbitration board. Unlike almost any normal labor arbiter in a private business, this board does not have to consider the financial condition of USPS when deciding compensation questions.

...Indeed, a sheep's-clothes argument already is being put forward by the postal lobby and some Democratic lawmakers for a \$75 billion taxpayer bailout of USPS.

...No union has or ever will lobby for a layoff, so it's up to USPS management and Congress to demand concessions. Congress must protect the clear interests of taxpayers and postal customers and demand an agreement between labor and management that lays the foundation for a viable business plan for a truly self-funding Postal Service. Allowing USPS to postpone billions in obligations just makes a bailout easier and takes away one of the few inducements for a compromise between USPS and postal worker unions.

...If compromise fails, Congress has an obligation to fix the Postal Service's budget imbalance not through a bailout, but through new mandates to cut costs and revise labor agreements.

*Rep. Issa will become chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, which oversees the Postal Service. As chairman, he would have tremendous influence over legislation affecting postal employees and other federal workers — deciding which bills are considered and how they are handled.*



September 21, 2010

Letter to the Editor  
Washington Times

To whom it may concern:

It's election time in an era of extreme political polarization. But that does not excuse misleading the public with false claims that the Postal Service is seeking a taxpayer bailout. Nor does it excuse Congress interfering with collective bargaining between the financially self-sufficient Postal Service and its unions. Unfortunately, the opinion piece by Rep. Darrell Issa (RCA), the Ranking Member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, fails on both counts. ("Time for another government bailout," September 20, 2010.)

The Postal Service is not seeking a taxpayer bailout. Rather it is proposing to use a massive surplus in its pension account within the Civil Service Retirement System (paid for by postage rate payers and postal employees — its own funds, not taxpayer funds) to cover the cost of future retiree health benefits. The cost of prefunding these future retiree health benefits, some \$5.6 billion per year, was imposed on the USPS by Congress in 2007, just as the economy crashed. This requirement, which no other agency or private business in America faces, caused the recent financial crisis at the USPS not the internet or the recession, though both factors have made things worse. In fact, in the absence of the prefunding requirement, the USPS would have been profitable in two of the past three years, despite the Great Recession. Rep. Issa's editorial is woefully uninformed or misinformed about the Postal Service, particularly in the area of labor relations. The Postal Service has plenty of flexibility to downsize and it has done so massively in recent years — it has cut more than 100,000 jobs since the recession began in late 2007. The no-lay-off clause in the postal unions' contracts that the Congressman criticizes covers only workers with more than six year of service — leaving some 160,000 career and non-career employees subject to lay-off if need be.

Perhaps it would make Rep. Issa happy if even more middle class Americans were thrown out of work, but postal downsizing can be achieved through attrition rather than lay-offs. Sadly, this downsizing is being driven more by Congressional inaction on resolving the unfair pension and prefunding burdens on the Postal Service than by poor economic conditions. Yet Representative Issa proudly vows to block legislation to even temporarily alleviate these problems.

Other Issa claims are both puzzling and false. He says "unions have balked at the idea of changing contracts that refuse to allow necessary lay-offs even if workers would be retrained and offered the opportunity to fill other positions in the federal government." Such a proposal has never been made at the bargaining table or offered in Congress. How can "the unions" have balked? His claim that a postal arbitration board "does not have to consider the financial condition" of the Postal Service during binding arbitration is similarly groundless. Boards are required to consider all the evidence presented by the parties — and the Postal Service has always made its financial condition a central part of its case before arbitrators. The notion that professional arbitrators would ignore such evidence is frankly preposterous.

Rep. Issa says Congress must represent the clear interests of taxpayers and customers and demand concessions from postal employees. But politicizing the Post Office by getting Congress involved in the collective bargaining process is the last thing we should do. It would jeopardize one of America's great institutions. The Postal Service has not received a dime of taxpayer support in more than 25 years and American mailers enjoy extremely high quality services at postage rates that are among the most affordable in the world.

Rather than meddling in collective bargaining, Congress should seek a bipartisan solution to the basic pension and health care issues that have unfairly hampered the Postal Service in recent years. The USPS has more than fully funded its future pension obligations (it has a surplus of \$55-\$75 billion) and has already socked away more for future retiree health benefits (\$37 billion) than any other company in America. Letting the Postal Service use its fairly calculated pension surplus to fully fund post-retirement health benefits makes perfect sense. Injecting partisan politics into the Post Office does not.

Sincerely,  
Fred V. Rolando, President



**Jerome J. Keating Local Branch 9  
National Association of Letter Carriers**

**P. A. L. 9 (Political Action League)**  
11581 Ilex Street N.W., Coon Rapids, Mn 55448-2316

**Lenny Larson, President  
Cheryl Stately, Secretary  
Ron Lawrence, Treasurer**

**Board Members**

**Pam Donato      Mike Zagaros      Bob Baird  
Barry Weiner      Ron Nelson      Lisa O'Neill**

January 4, 2011

**Dear Brothers and Sisters;**

The Holiday season may have left you with sugar plumbs dancing in your head but those plumbs may soon turn to prunes if the new congressional leadership has its way. In the recent election we lost the chair of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee to Republican Representative Darrell Issa of California. He has already drawn up a list of big targets he believes are in need of what he calls reform. Medicare and the Postal Service are in the bull's-eye.

If successful, these so called reforms will have a profound impact on our entire membership. Our retirees paid into Medicare their whole career. Will it still be there when they need it? How long will it be before they come after our pensions and health care benefits?

Active carriers have even more to be concerned about. The PMG began whipping up public opinion a few years ago for five day delivery. Now, there is even talk in Washington D.C. that suggests reducing delivery service to four or even three days a week which would make you all part time workers. There is also a recommendation being made to legislators to increase the minimum retirement age for Federal employees. I can't believe that there is a Branch 9 member that is not extremely anxious over these issues. The wrong outcome of these reforms is highly possible given today's political climate. What will you do if you lose your benefits or job?

The time to stand up and fight for what we have earned and will earn is now. Even though the election is over, the political game remains a full court press. That is why your contribution to 9 PAL is more crucial than ever. As Winston Churchill once said "All politics is local". Access to our U.S. Congress people often comes at home or through and with local politicians. Unfortunately it still costs a lot of money to play in this arena.

We also know that we have members that do not always agree with the Union's political agenda or the need for donations to 9 PAL. If you are one of them, please let us know why or suggest new ways to fight these battles. This is YOUR UNION, YOUR JOB and YOUR RETIREMENT and most importantly, YOUR FIGHT. PLEASE HELP US WIN IT!

**Fraternally,**

**Lenny Larson  
President PAL 9**

**Ron Lawrence  
Treasurer PAL 9**

**Pam Donato  
President Branch 9**

**Mike Zagaros  
Executive V.P. Branch 9**

\*\*\*\*\*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ \$ 25.00 Annual Dues

\_\_\_\_ Very Concerned Membership ( \$50.00 or More )

\_\_\_\_ Active Carrier ( Station \_\_\_\_\_ )

**Clip & Mail to: Ron Lawrence  
11581 Ilex Street NW  
Coon Rapids, MN 55448-2316**

\_\_\_\_ Retired Carrier



# Branch 9's 2010 Retiree Holiday Party

Wednesday evening, December 1st, active letter carriers and Branch Officers joined our retirees at the Fred Babcock VFW, for an evening dinner and warm social gathering. Branch 9 President, Pam Donato addressed the retired letters and their spouses and thanked them for “walking the line” during the 1970 Postal Strike, and making possible the income and benefits we enjoy today. Cheryl Stately (Director of Retirees) thanked everyone for coming together for the evening. Mike Zagaros (Branch 9 Exec Vice President) gave a beautiful invocation before dinner by giving thanks that everyone could gather again to renew friendships.



*Pam Donato (Branch 9 President) addressing the gathering before dinner*



*Mike Zagaros (Br 9 Exec Vice President) and his wife Darlene*



*Over 70 retired carriers and their spouses, along with active carriers and Branch Officers, enjoyed choices of Prime Rib, Chicken, or walleye.*



## OH, BOO HOO!!

*From the National Association of Postal Supervisors letter To Deputy Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe:*

We continue to receive negative feedback from the field concerning the continuation of reductions to the number of EAS field positions during the heart of the 2010 Holiday Season. While we are cognizant of the current financial and structural challenges facing the USPS, however, staffing disruptions within the management ranks at the most important time of the calendar year is disconcerting to our members and could only serve to add additional challenges on top of the ones we are already facing.

Our concern is simply that our folks in the field will be asked to do more with less. Considering the strained nature of our workforce and infrastructure it would be unwise in my opinion and the opinion of our membership to potentially jeopardize our ability to meet our Universal Service Obligation. NAPS believe that it is in the best interest of all parties that these initiatives be delayed until at the conclusion of the holiday season. This would give us the opportunity to adjust our workforce in a more methodical manner without having to deal with the additional task of managing our highest traffic time of the year.

The VOE survey is promoted by the organization to take the pulse of the entire postal workforce. It seeks employee feedback regarding eight specific dimensions that are deemed crucial to successful processing and delivery operations.

All sides agree that a successful

and meticulous completion of this survey allows the Postal Service to fulfill the principles which were laid out when the evaluation process was first implemented.

If the USPS elects to initiate an organizational change that would impact the service at a critical time of year, the transition itself may very well impede the very goals the Postal Service has advocated for since the inception of the survey.

I feel that a more methodical and focused approach allows us to continue our ability to deliver top-flight service while allowing for a more detailed analysis of our workforce and what adjustments can be made to ensure we have the most efficient operation possible. This in my opinion would be the most prudent course of action for all involved.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Louis Atkins  
President



## Holiday Greetings from Around the Branch

*Lenny Larson (Branch 9 President Emeritus), retiree*

**What is your wish for the New Year?** Peace. New contract for carriers with no give backs.

**What are you most thankful for as a letter carrier?** My retirement and health benefits.

**Holiday wishes:** All USPS carriers and retirees.

*Pat Paplow, Andover*

**What is your wish for the new year?** That the Congress moves swiftly and enforces that the Post Office is a vital service to the public and passes legislation that enforces six-day delivery and full time jobs for the future.

**What are you most thankful for as a letter carrier?** The support of 99.9% of the customer's I serve.

**Holiday wishes to:** all my fellow carriers, and thanks for the leadership of Branch 9.

*Mike Smith, West Edina*

**What is your wish for the new year?** Keep 6 day delivery and don't repeal "Obama Care."

**What are you most thankful for as a letter carrier?** Having a fulltime job with good benefits.

**Holiday wishes to:** My family and friends.

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you value our friendship, which I do (less and less), kindly stop this ridiculous behavior at once!

Emily

**Jan. 3**

As I write this letter, ten disgusting old men are prancing up and down what used to be the garden, before the geese and the swans and the cows got at it. And several of them, I have just noticed, are taking inexcusable liberties with the milkmaids. Meanwhile the neighbors are trying to have us evicted. I shall never speak to you again.

Emily

**Jan. 4**

**This is the last straw!** You know I detest bagpipes! The place has now become something between a menagerie and a madhouse, and a man from the council has just declared it unfit for habitation. At least Mother has been spared this last outrage; they took her away yesterday afternoon in an ambulance to a home for the bewildered. I hope you're satisfied.

**Jan. 5**

Sir,

Our client, Miss Emily Wilbraham, instructs me to inform you that with the arrival on her premises at 7:30 this morning of the entire percussion section of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and several of their friends, she has no course left open to her but to seek an injunction to prevent you importuning her further. I am making arrangements for the return of much assorted livestock.

I am sir, yours faithfully,

G. Creep, Attorney at Law

# Corporations Vs. Working Americans

*By Teamsters President, James Hoffa*

If you understand politics as a battle between liberal and conservative, then you don't understand politics at all. The central political battle today is between the corporations on one side and the little guy on the other.

The fight is about whether the government should protect corporate power to enrich a few billionaires, or restrict corporate power to protect the liberty and property of the average American.

I'll tell you who is winning: It isn't the little guy.

Corporate power explains why the U.S. hasn't made the transformation to renewable energy. It's why we can't trust our food, drugs or toys to be safe. It's why we're struggling to develop new industries.

It's why workers' wages have stagnated or fallen over the past decade and why so many families are losing their homes. It's why so many jobs moved offshore so quickly.

U.S. multinationals now employ one-third of their work force overseas.

### FedEx's Bailout

Here's an example of corporate power at work:

FedEx has held up a funding bill for the Federal Aviation Administration. The company's billionaire chief executive, Fred Smith, hates a provision that would put FedEx back under the same labor law as his competitors. So FedEx's army of lobbyists have held up funding for the entire agency that runs the nation's airspace.

Fred Smith is devious about masking his agenda. He claims his competitor is seeking a bailout—when it's FedEx that has long en-

joyed special government treatment. Similarly, corporations have been wily about disguising their plans to further concentrate their wealth and influence. They're adept at creating phony populist groups that claim to support individual freedom.

### Corporate Billionaires

For all our members who believe in individual freedom and smaller government, I have a message for you. Concentration of wealth in too few hands will lead to extraordinary abuses of power and the destruction of your property and liberty. It's the banks, not the government, that are taking people's homes away from them without even making sure they have the right to foreclose on them. The corporate billionaires will say the banks can correct their own behavior. The little guy will say the government needs to make sure they don't do it again. It makes no sense to describe one as "liberal" and the other as "conservative." It's the many of us vs. the few of them.

## Holiday Greetings from Around the Branch

*Kathy Carlson, Jordan*

**What is your wish for the new year?** That everyone could make life a little better for someone else in the coming year.

**What are you most thankful for as a letter carrier?** For the many wonderful people I have met over the years and being able to feel part of their families.

**Holiday wishes to:** My husband, Vic, and my two boys, Cole and Ben,—Love you guys.

**President Report cont. from page 3**

delivery of the mail. We were also successful in ensuring language in the House Appropriations bill that required continuance of 6 days of mail delivery. We have worked with HR 5746, which addresses USPS overpayments to CSRS and FERS retirement funds. Our work was not just in the form of advancing House bills. We also organized several campaigns to inform the Postal Regulatory Commission of the need for a strong USPS, especially one that delivered for the public 6 days a week! We helped give a voice to our "door step patrons" and small business customers, who are truly reliant on delivery services by the USPS in so many different ways. We have built a firm foundation of support with our patrons and most of our elected officials, and we must continue to build on that base.

**CONTRACT COMPLIANCE**

Branch 9 stewards and advocates have worked hard this past year to enforce the National Agreement (NA), which is the signed agreement of BOTH the USPS and the NALC. Enforcement of the NA includes several different facets, from joint training and meetings between the two parties in hopes of coming to a mutual understanding of what the words in the NA mean in everyday application, to investigating situations to see if the NA was followed, to resolving any violation with an appropriate remedy, to possibly appealing the dispute to higher authority for determination and action. Our efforts to educate and resolve contract violations have been honest and whole hearted, but the grievance numbers appear to tell a different story. While the contract has not changed in over 20 years as it relates to overtime and discipline

(which accounts for 80% of our grievances), we still have recorded nearly 350 grievances. Repeated management violations, coupled often with their unwillingness to change their actions, have led to a management cycle of confusion and chaos at the local level, not to mention demoralizing effects on all levels of Branch 9. This USPS approach does not seem to jive with their parallel cries that we all need to work together to save money. Investigating and filing grievances takes time away from the stewards and Step A advocates who would otherwise be casing and carrying mail. When management continues to violate the NA, they perpetuate the short staffing problems (that they have created to begin with). There are times that requests by stewards and advocates for "union time" gets a backlash reaction from carriers because of the personal consequences resulting from these advocates not carrying mail. Let there be no mistake that without stewards, Step A and arbitration advocates there to enforce the contract, your workplace would not be as safe or fair, your pay and benefits would be a pittance and the service you are able to provide would definitely suffer. As is our history, Branch 9 will work together with management whenever and however we can. But we will spare no expense, nor will we pay any attention to the increase in grievance numbers, if management shows an unwillingness to respect our NA, preferring to rather make up their own rules as they go along. (As a side note, the category of training stewards and advocates is getting a healthy boost in our 2011 budget proposal)

**BRANCH FINANCES**

With staffing shortages come lower member numbers. Branch 9's largest single revenue component is membership dues. While our membership is still close to 98%, a smaller number at the base results in a lower number as a net. Despite the challenges, we are still running in black ink, and continue to spend less than we take in for revenue. All of our Branch 9 Officers, Stewards and VOLUNTEERS deserve all the credit here! We continue to successfully run all of our training, member activities/outreach and charitable events, often with less money. Our proposed budget for next year will continue to promote our priorities of training, contract enforcement, and building solidarity, along with a budget for focusing on merger opportunities. Special thanks to Darrell Maus (Treasurer), who has been not only knowledgeable on our accounting programs, but also an experienced voice of reason to the entire Executive Board. As always, a heartfelt thanks to our Retiree's, for your continuing gift of financial security from your early sacrifices, and to all of you for your membership! We need EVERYONE as we prepare for the year(s) ahead, be it contract negotiations, legislation and organizing for solidarity.

**2011...**

We see the work before us. We are aware of the obstacles. We know the stakes. We understand the strength of SOLIDARITY. WE ARE READY!

To each and every member, your family and your friends...may you all enjoy these special Holidays! In every language, in every religion and faith and in every celebration, may you all be blessed with love.

In Grateful Solidarity,  
Pam

# 3rd Annual Branch 9 NALC

## Ice Fishing Outing on Lake Mille Lacs Twin Pines Resort & Motel-Restaurant

Located just two hours north of the Twin Cities on U.S. Highway 169 (mile marker 232).

For more information call 1.800.450.4682 or visit [www.twinpinesmillelacs.com](http://www.twinpinesmillelacs.com)



### Noon Sunday to Noon Monday

### January 16th & 17th

### \$40/Adult

### \$35/Children under 14



**\*The Branch will be hosting a chicken and rib buffet at Twin Pines Resort on Sunday, January 16 from 3:00 - 8:00PM. This dinner is included in the price of the ice house.\***

### Several Houses Available:

- \*4 Hole Ice House (Sleeps 2 - 3)
- \*6 - 10 Hole Ice House (Sleeps 4 - 6)
- \*8 - 12 Hole Ice House (Sleeps 5 - 6)
- \*10 - 12 Hole Ice House (Sleeps 8)
- \*10 - 14 Hole Ice House (Sleeps 10)
- \*11 Hole Ice House (Sleeps 10)
- \*14 Hole Ice House (Sleeps 14)

Each include: Propane Heat, Lights, table/chairs, covered pad for bunks, carpeted floors. Cook stoves are available in the larger houses. Check in time is 1:00PM.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Station: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Ice House: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Paid: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Guests (if under 14 include age): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

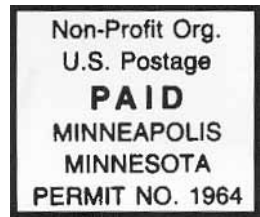
**Deadline is on  
Friday, January 11th**

**Checks payable to: Branch 9 Ice Fishing  
2408 Central Avenue NE  
Minneapolis, MN 55418**

Branch Nine News  
2408 Central Avenue NE  
Minneapolis, MN 55418-3712



## Change Service Requested



### VP Report cont. from page 5

the power of “us” we will be able to overcome every challenge we face

In July of 1890 there was a conference of letter carriers from the larger cities who did not attend the initial gathering in Milwaukee the previous year. They talked about whether or not the fledging NALC

was going to be a viable organization. Charles Kelley of New York, who had chosen to preside at the New York conference, said the following:

“Give to the National Association your loyal support...and you will have the most powerful instrument for good that the Letter Carriers of the United States ever had at their

service.” Since that time, because of the power of “us” it did not matter what challenge was put in front of a group of carriers. The carriers overcame all challenges because of the power of “us.”

As we celebrate the holidays and look to the future. It will be a bright future if we remember that WE are > (greater) than any number.

## Branch Nine Calendar

### January, 4

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

### January 11

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

### \*Tuesday, January 11\*

**\*Stewards Meeting\***  
7:00PM

Golden Valley VFW Post 7051  
7775 Medicine Lake Rd  
Golden Valley

### January 16 & 17

3rd Annual Ice Fishing Outing  
Lake Mille Lacs  
Twin Pines Resort and Motel  
two hours north on U.S. 169

### January 25

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

### \*Tuesday, January 25\*

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

### February 1

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

### February 8

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

### **\*Stewards Meeting\***

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

### February 22

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

### **\*General Membership Meeting\***

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