



THE Mail Bag NEWS

★ SOLIDARITY

★ EDUCATION

★ ORGANIZATION



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FSS Is Coming, FSS Is Coming, FSS Is Here!

By Frank Salazar, President

After two years of delays, the Flats Sequencing System is finally up and running in our Branch. Before FSS hit our first office, I asked our District Manager, Kerry Wolny, if I could visit the plant and check out the FSS machines and visit an office outside our Branch that was receiving FSS before us. I just wanted to get an overall feel for what was happening and what to expect. I want to thank Mr. Wolny for giving me the opportunity to make my observations.

On January 3rd and on several other days, I visited the plant in Van Nuys to observe the FSS machines. There are 3 FSS machines in Van Nuys that are about 25 ft. tall, 90 ft. wide, and 120 ft. long more or less. The machines are capable of processing 16,500 pieces per hour or 280,500 pieces per day

to more than 125,000 delivery addresses. The machines are basically hands off with very little human labor involved. To be simplistic, mail can be hand fed into an inductor or fed through the use of a bulk mail container, which can be rolled up to the induction part of the machine. The inductor will mechanically lift and dump the mail on to a conveyor belt. The belt takes the flat material bundled or unbundled to clerk stations where clerks unwrap bundles of flats and face the flats labels up and binders down into green trays know as Automated Compatible



Trays (ACTs). When full, the clerk passes their hand over an electronic eye where the tray mechanically lowers and moves to another belt at the bottom of this machine. This belt takes the ACT to a stacker, which places it on a cart with wheels. Once the cart is full with ACTs, a clerk/mailhandler then moves this cart to the bigger machine, which sorts the mail into delivery order.

The bigger part of the machine takes the ACTs off the stackers and runs the ACTs through a series of belts and rollers where the mail is separated into stepped groups similar to two-pass. The mail is then transferred to Rigid Conventional Trays (RCTs), which are blue in color. The mail is then processed again and transferred into ACTs (green trays) where they are put into walk sequence order. Finally, the finished product is transferred into yellow street trays (the carrier takes these trays out to the street) where the machine stacks them into rolling carts. The carts are taken from this part of the machine and lined up for transportation. You have to see actually see the process to get a better idea. I may have gotten some of the steps and descriptions mixed up, but you get the general description. If you

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want to check out the FSS machines in action, follow the links on the Branch website or check out Youtube by searching FSS machines.

La Crescenta Visit

On January 5th, I visited the La Crescenta office, which is part of Pasadena Branch 2200. I wanted to observe how the carriers were handling FSS, before it came to us. When I arrived, the MPOO Rick West was going to have carriers collate their residual mail (the mail you case) with the coverage. We convinced the MPOO that it would be better if the carriers collated the mail with the FSS flats. A joint memo signed by NALC President Emeritus Bill Young and USPS Vice President Doug Tulino (M-01663) states that if you're a park & loop route or a foot route or have that type of delivery on your route that you do not have to carry more than 3 bundles. Moreover, if the coverage meets the definition of carrying it as a 3rd bundle (ECRWSS- 90/75%), then a carrier is required to collate the residual mail with the FSS. If the coverage doesn't meet the criteria, then the carrier collates the residual mail into the coverage. However, if they gave us a choice, that would be the best bet. If they don't give us a choice, the rule is collate with FSS when the coverage is labeled ECRWSS. If the coverage is not ECRWSS, collate the residual with the coverage. Remember that this is only for Park & Loop and Foot Routes or sections.

When FSS does arrive at the unit, the yellow FSS street trays are rolled off the truck on rolling racks similar to what the DPS is staged on. Each tray is numbered and identified. Each letter carrier route has a color-coded placard assigned to it: Red signifies an all mounted route. There should be no collating of residual mail. Yellow signifies a combination park & loop and mounted route. There should be some partial collating. Green signifies a park & loop or foot route. There should be collating. Management devised this system so they can tell at a distance if you are doing something that you shouldn't be doing. Please remember that all collating is done in the office at the case, not on the street or in the parking lot.

S999 mail (holdouts, vacation holds, etc.) comes in its own street tray, which should be brought to your case by a clerk. I was told that some mail was shredded badly, but I was not shown this mail.

Loading

When I went out to the parking lot to observe the carriers in La Crescenta loading, I noticed a shelf retrofit system in the LLV's. It appears that the tray next to the driver was wider. However, the driver side tray would not accommodate the yellow FSS street tray and three hard white trays (the ones with metal) across. But, the tray would accommodate the FSS street tray and three flimsy white trays straight across. The tray system at the back of vehicle is helpful for storing trays, because it's on a roller system with pull out shelving. But, once again, there are problems. The retrofit takes up too much room

in the back of the LLV, which affects high volume, high parcel routes. A carrier cannot jump into the back of the vehicle. The shelf on the ride side of the vehicle that folds down to form a flat surface does not stay in the upward position on bumpy roads nor do the pins used to stop trays from moving forward on the roller system.

Other problems loading the vehicle were that carriers had a hard time figuring out how to load the vehicle in the most efficient manner. In La Crescenta, letter carriers were not instructed how to load their vehicles. The carriers having the most trouble were mounted carriers, because the driver side tray could not accommodate the DPS tray, residual tray, FSS tray, and tray of coverage straight across. They were not allowed to collate the residual mail, because these are mounted routes. Some carriers put mail on the floor next to them. I'll just say that I noticed some safety violations. We even had a Supervisor suggest unbolting a bar from the floor of the LLV to accommodate a tray of mail. We told her it was a safety hazard and that the bar was there to keep a tray from sliding across the floor. Please remember that you are not required to work mail from the floor and you should try to avoid this at all costs.

Feedback of La Crescenta Carriers

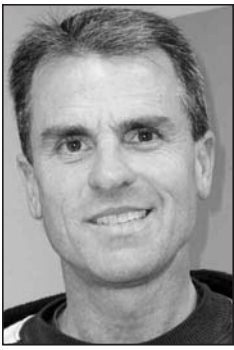
I returned to La Crescenta on January 12th to get some feedback on any potential problems that the carriers may have had. These are some of the things I heard. (1) Parcels were late and accountables were late, which caused carriers to leave late. (2) Mounted carriers stated that they were extending their street time by :10-:15 minutes, because they had more places to look (i.e., DPS tray, residual tray, FSS tray, coverage, & parcels). (3) More time to reload. (4) Forgetting to look in a specific place for a tray or parcel. (4) More time fingering mail. (5) Pulling mark-ups. (6) Addresses covered by barcode stickers.

Park & loop carriers also stated that they had some expansion, but a little less than the mounted carriers. Let me state clearly that you do not have to carry anything on your arms. There is no street or time standard. However, if you do choose to carry flats on your arm in a Park & loop environment this is what the carriers stated to me: (1) If carrying FSS and residual mail collated on your arm, there was a problem pulling addressed mail from the satchel, especially if an address skipped. In addition, inserts fell out of the coverage into the satchel. (2) If carrying the coverage on your arm, there was a problem pulling FSS and residual mail from the satchel, because smaller residual mail pieces ended up in the bottom of the satchel. (3) There was problems constantly looking in three places especially when the addresses for the different bundles of mail did not all line up for the same delivery point. (4) It took more concentration.

FSS Studio City & Newbury Park

As of the writing of this article, we've had five locations go live with FSS: Studio City, 25 zone in the Northridge Main Office, Newbury Park, 61 zone in Thousand Oaks Main Office,

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May I or Must I???

By Ray Hill, Executive Vice-President

There is a saying that goes something like this: When you've hit bottom you should stop digging. Well, I feel like the USPS has hit bottom but the shovel is still digging at a frantic pace. President Frank Salazar has written a comprehensive article in this issue of the Mailbag News dealing with much of the doom and gloom currently affecting our membership, so I won't beat that dead horse any further in this article. However, although there is rough sailing ahead, I do know we will survive.

In my last article in the Mailbag News, I referenced some information from the Postal Operations Manual (POM) regarding mailbox regulations for mounted deliveries. One of the provisions that I referenced was Section 632.524 of the POM that reads as follows, in relevant part: "...Customers **must** remove obstructions, including vehicles, trash cans, and snow, that make delivery difficult..." (emphasis added).

A few days after the Mailbag News was delivered to the membership I received word from one of our Stewards that my article had caused a minor ruckus in the Sylmar Station.

From what I was told, a carrier in Sylmar was copying my article and handing it to other carriers, fueling the minor ruckus. I do not know all of the particulars involved that caused this Sylmar carrier's reaction to my article but here is the gist of it, from what I was told.

Apparently, this carrier was upset because he was having a problem on his mounted route with a patron constantly blocking his mailbox with a vehicle and the carrier felt that Management was not backing him up by suspending delivery to the patron.

Once again, I do not know **all of the particulars** of this carrier's situation so I might not be 100% accurate in this portrayal.

Again, from what I was told, this carrier was upset because I wrote an article in our newsletter referencing the provision of the POM that states that "*Customers **MUST** remove obstructions, including vehicles...that make delivery difficult...*" The word **MUST** is absolute and not permissive.

However, Management was not backing the carrier and the carrier was mad about it.

After I heard about the Sylmar carrier's complaints, I went back to the POM and found the following provision:

632.14 Approach to Mailbox

The customer is responsible for keeping the approach to his or her mailbox clear to facilitate delivery. Where the approach to the mail receptacle located at the curb is temporarily blocked by a parked vehicle during normal delivery hours for the area, or snow or ice hampers the approach to the mailbox, the carrier normally dismounts to make delivery. If the carrier continually experiences a problem in serving curblines boxes

*and where the customer is able to control on-street parking in front of his or her mailbox but does not take prompt corrective action after being properly notified, the postmaster **may**, with the approval of the district manager, withdraw delivery service.*

What this means is those carriers on mounted deliveries should dismount to deliver the mail if a parked vehicle **temporarily** blocks the box. However, if the carrier continually experiences problems "where the customer is able to control on street parking in front of his or her mailbox" the carrier should then utilize PS Form 4056 to notify the customer that the approach to their box "*should be kept clear of snow, vehicles and other obstacles*". Management can provide you with a supply of PS Form's 4056. The customer should then "take prompt corrective action". If the customer does not take prompt corrective action "*the postmaster **may**, with the approval of the district manager, withdraw delivery service*".

As you can read, this provision from the POM is "permissive" and in conflict with the other "absolute" provision from the POM that says "*...customers **must** remove obstructions, including vehicles...*"

Nevertheless, if the customer does not take prompt corrective action *after being properly notified*, using PS Form 4056, notify your supervisor who should then make an attempt to get the patron to comply with the regulations from the POM.

If that does not work the supervisor should notify the Postmaster, who **may**, with the approval of the District Manager, withdraw delivery service.

Once again, this language is very permissive, but we should still make every attempt to have Management comply with this provision.

The District Manager, Kerry Wolny, reads our Newsletter so he now knows to expect a phone call from San Fernando (Sylmar's Installation) Postmaster Tom Ludovico requesting approval to suspend mail delivery to a stubborn patron that will not remove his vehicle from in front of his mailbox. I'm starting a betting pool (**for entertainment purposes only**) on whether or not Tom will ever call District Manager Wolny requesting such approval. The opening line is 500 to 1 against Tom placing the call. We shall see. Just kidding, Tom, just kidding.

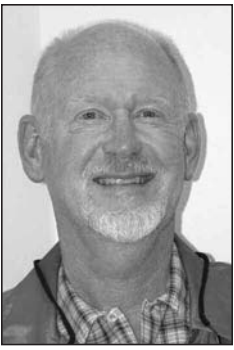
Spring training in baseball is just starting and for the next 6 weeks every team, including the Kansas City Royals, Pittsburgh Pirates and yes, even the Los Angeles Dodgers can dream of being World Series Champions. Yeah, right, like that's going to happen. Talk to you all in two months.

"The illegal we do immediately. The unconstitutional takes a little longer."

-Henry Kissinger

UNWANTED STRESS

By Greg A. Gaddis, Shop Steward / Trustee



I'm seeing and hearing more and more carriers who are getting stressed out and frustrated when dealing with management. I know everyone is already being bombarded with "doom and gloom" rumors about

the USPS and the need to cut down on the hours being used by carriers. There is not a lot you can do however, as far as the survival of the USPS. By that I mean you can't fix the financial troubles all by yourself. I think the best thing to do is continue to do your job the best you can by providing the best service to your customers each and everyday. Your motto should be "a fair days pay for fair days work" and let the chips fall where they may. We can't stop the changes that may come about as far as excessing of carriers, closing of offices, FSS, route adjustments, etc. We just have to deal with each issue a day at a time and not place unwanted stress on ourselves.

As a shop steward it's up to me to see that any changes that may come about are within contractual guidelines and file grievances if they are not. I can't change everything either, but I will do my best to try and help you deal with the stress that you may be experiencing. Getting upset won't change anything; it will only add more stress to your life that you don't need. I know you are probably thinking "that's fine for you, you're retired". And that is true to a certain extent. However I am still a shop steward representing the letter carrier craft. I am still dealing with management and trying to make your job as less stressful as possible. I may be retired from the USPS, but I take my job very seriously as a shop steward when I represent you for contract violations or disciplinary issues. I don't like to lose. I guess it's the competitive nature in me to fight every fight to win and not give an inch.

However if there is one thing I have learned over the years, it's to not get upset or stressed out and angry over something stupid that management did. I try to live by the motto "life is just too short". Sometimes you have to take a step back, cool down and just know that if you did your best, management can't take that away from you unless you let them. And I for one won't let them. Life is really too short, when all you are doing is getting stressed out day in and day out when dealing with management. We have to handle our own situations the best we can and not let them get the best of us. Getting angry and doing something you might regret will just add to your problems. Don't let management get the best of you. If you are experiencing a situation with management, request to see your shop steward. There are resources that might help you deal with management so you don't put pressure and stress on yourself that you don't need.

If a supervisor denies your 3996, or tells you that you have down time. Don't get upset...for those of you who know me, I always tell you to do what? I tell you to let the supervisor know you will do the best you can and you will call from the street if you can't make it. Don't argue if your request for time is denied in the office or when you call from the street for more time. Ar-

guing will only get you more upset, right? Has anything really changed? Probably not, except now you're mad.

Do you know of anyone who has received discipline just because they asked for a 3996 and requested extra time to complete their duties? Or when management denied a request for assistance on a 3996? Have you heard of anyone receiving discipline when they called from the street just to request more assistance? Don't argue with management... ask for further instructions if your time is denied. If you are told to deliver the mail and be back by their time and you can't make it. Simply say, "I will do the best I can" and continue to deliver the mail. When you get back to the office request to see your shop steward if you receive these instructions. If management is stupid enough to issue you discipline for expansion of street time or unauthorized overtime, don't get upset...see your shop steward. The shop steward will file a grievance because management issued you conflicting instructions to deliver all the mail after you informed them you could not make it back in time. A grievance may also be filed if you were mandated to work overtime. The bottom line is this. If you are doing your job correctly by requesting a 3996 when extra time is needed or if you are calling from the street when you can't make it back in time, then discipline won't hold up, just because you could not perform all of your duties in the amount of time that they expected you to do it in. It's only when you argue, get mad, and put pressure on yourself to meet their time and then forget to scan a bar code or forget to scan an express mail item that may lead to further fact-finding investigations and possible discipline. Don't put unwarranted pressure on yourself. If you can't make the time that management expects, tell them. It's when you try to meet an unrealistic delivery time that you get yourself into trouble. That's when you start making mistakes by "cutting corners". Don't do it!

In my 34 years that I worked for the USPS I only received one letter of warning for an accident and it was removed because it was not my fault. I was placed on restricted sick leave once and that was rescinded, and that's it. I don't tell you this because I was a model carrier. Believe me when I say, management was always telling me I was the slowest carrier in the office, that I don't try, etc. But did I get mad? The answer is no, because I was always consistent in my delivery times. If the mail was heavy my request for extra time was reflected on my 3996. If the mail was light the amount of time I used reflected it. I can't tell you how many times during my postal career that management told me that I didn't care about the USPS or my job. I was threatened with removal a few times if I did something they didn't like. I didn't let it stress me out though. What I learned was not to let them know it affected me. What I did was get even. I started to learn what my contractual rights were. I filed grievances whenever management violated the contract, or violated my rights. I always knew that if I was doing my job by the book, there was really nothing they could do to me. I let management get angry, mad and stressed out, but not me. Life is really just too short...Until next time.



Welcome to your new (best) plan

By Joe Gutierrez, Health Benefits Representative

I want to begin by thanking all of our new members who joined our health plan for 2011. My wish is that you never have to use it but to assure you that if the need arrives you will be well taken care of. As of now we

do not have a complete count of how many new members we gained but the count so far is 1047 new members with a complete count hopefully by the time you read this. There isn't much to report as I hope you have all read the brochure as to what the benefits are available to you.

If you have not received your new insurance card call the health plan or contact me to get a new one.

A reminder to our health plan members, you must belong to an FEHB for five consecutive years to be able to have health insurance after you retire. Also you must have family coverage at time of death AND a monthly survivor annuity for your surviving spouse and children to be covered.

I have had many members who lost their health insurance because they took their spouses insurance to save money and ended up with no coverage when their spouse died. As I said before, please read the brochure before any major procedure is done such as surgery which needs prior approval.

For those of us who are 65 or approaching that age we are eligible for Medicare and the NALC health plan will waive the co-pay for hospital admission, the coinsurance for hospital admission and the deductible for inpatient care in a treatment facility. If you have part B the PPO copayment is waived for office visits, allergy injections or outpatient visits along with the coinsurance for services billed by physicians and other health care professionals and facilities. Best of all, calendar year deductibles are waived. It is costly to have two insurance plans but in the long run peace of mind is more valuable.

If you have any question or problems with the health plan give me a call and I will assist you as best I can, but remember this is only for the NALC health plan.

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and 64 zone in Woodland Hills. I'm most familiar with the Studio City, Newbury Park, and Thousand Oaks offices, so I will inform you about what I learned there. Note: The Union just learned at this writing that machine 2 failed to be accepted, so FSS implementation will be delayed in some offices. I've been informed that machine 2 was shredding a high number of mail pieces.

Volume Fluctuations

Let me preface by saying that when FSS comes on line there are volume fluctuations for the first few weeks. On the first day of FSS, the FSS is cased to ensure the quality, which is usually very good (but, not always). If you get a piece of mail that is backwards, it's because a clerk spilled the tray and manually put it in backwards. After the first day, the rest of the week will have a high volume of FSS. This is the burn in period. On the second and third week, the machines are in an acceptance period and the week's volume will be lighter or lower in volume. By the fourth week, volume will be high again like the first week.

Start Time Change & Waiting for Mail

Prior to FSS coming to the units, the start times were changed to 8:15 a.m. This was done because Management needs time to get the parcels and accountables ready for the carriers, so the carriers won't have to wait around. What we found in all offices is that carriers are still waiting for parcels to be thrown and for accountables to be distributed. In Thousand Oaks Main Office, I observed that the truck driver was waiting for the empty street trays and carts. However, there is not a second set of street tray carts so Management instructed the

carriers to take the street trays off the existing carts and stack them at their case. This, in my opinion, is a safety hazard (right of egress) that causes double handling of the trays, possible spilling of the trays, and clogs the isles for employees and equipment such as the movement of hampers and the rolling accountable cage.

Collating & Retrofits

There is also confusion on what to collate or not to collate. Management has failed to properly instruct carriers, because not everyone is getting the correct message on the proper methods (refer to the 4th paragraph in my article or see your Steward). When loading the vehicle in Studio City, carriers found that their LLV's were switched overnight with a retrofit system they were not trained to use. Management tried to rectify the situation by giving a video presentation on a computer. Picture 25 carriers huddled around a computer watching a video that they can barely see and hear. My suggestion is that Management get some good audiovisual equipment and get some one from safety to instruct on the proper use of the equipment.

Loading

When it came to loading the vehicles, the carriers had the same problems that they had in La Crescenta. Carriers were not sure how to best load the vehicle in the most efficient manner possible. Again, we reiterate that you do not have to work mail from the floor or under the tray. The Union recommends nothing on the floor, nothing on top of your trays, and nothing stuck on windows. For mounted routes, we recommend on the LLV tray to your left: DPS tray/Residual tray/FSS tray with Coverage behind it or a variant, if Management permits. If your Supervisor instructs you to do differently, follow the instructions of

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Step into Spring with Family Protection

By Chris Alessi, MBA/NSBA Representative

insurance products, they can offer policies that can suit your individual needs based on your families particular life styles.

According to the Life Insurance Marketing Research Association as reported in September 2006, 45% of widows and 37% of widowers say their spouse was **inadequately insured**. One or two years after spouse's death half of the widows and one-third of the widowers are barely getting by financially. 12% of U.S. households would have immediate trouble meeting everyday living expenses if a primary wage earner died, and another 15% would have difficulty keeping up with expenses after several months. Lastly, 25% of heads of household don't feel they have a plan in place to provide decent standard of living for their families if they died tomorrow.

This is why at least once a year you should review your income and debt ratio based on life's changes to see if you would have enough income to live a good quality of life for your family if your love one passes away and there is loss of their income.

Some Important expenses to consider are:

{1} Final Expenses- onetime expenses incurred by your death, including funeral costs, legal fees, and estate taxes.

{2} Outstanding Debt- to be paid off at your death.

{3} Readjustment Expense- to cover a transition period, including child care, additional homemaking help, and training for a surviving spouse.

{4} Dependency Expense- until all children are self-supporting.

{5} Educational Expense- Annual college cost in current dollars multiplied by the number of years and children to attend.

{6} Life Income for the surviving spouse- After all the children are self-supporting, estimated annual amount desired minus annual income from employment.

{7} Retirement Income for the surviving spouse- Annual Income desired in current dollars minus Social Security and any Pension Income.

Now is the time to plan your purchase of life insurance coverage and to do research on insurance carriers. The financial soundness of the insurer is a very critical concern, you have to have assurance that the company will be around in case you aren't.

The **MBA** was established in 1891 and is a nonprofit fraternal benefit arm of the NALC to provide low cost life insurance to members of the NALC. The MBA is financially sound with 200 million in assets and 30 million in reserves. You can always contact the insurance companies and ask about its ratings. In general its best to go with an insurer rated "A" or better, the most financially sound insurers are rated "AAA". Make sure any reports you get are current, specifically within the last six months. Always review your coverage every few years or when changes occur, such as buying a home or having children.

You can call me any time to make sure your coverage is always aligned with your needs or you can call the MBA at: 1-800-424-5184 Tuesday and Thursday 8:30-3:30 PM EST. Or call: 202-638-4318 from 8:30 -3:30 EST Mon- Fri.

Take care, and God Bless You. In solidarity, Chris

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your Supervisor unless it is unsafe to do so. Do not argue with him or her, and see your Steward as soon as possible.

Street Delivery

The street delivery problems I heard were about the same as I heard in La Crescenta (Refer to my section of Feedback from La Crescenta Carriers), except that the expansion of street time might be longer. In Newbury Park, the Carrier Supervisor gave an instruction that carriers can no longer turn a letter for a parcel, which is causing longer loading and street times. Carriers in Studio City stated that it is difficult to estimate their street time, when looking at the FSS trays. Most likely, because we are not familiar using or carrying street trays. In addition, carriers constantly state that they are waiting for accountable items and that they are constantly pulling lots of for-

wards, vacation holds, undeliverable mail, and other mark-ups on the street.

I've Got What!

Management is showing no mercy when it comes to street time. On the first day of FSS, Managers from within or from outside your office are riding with or following carriers on the street to see what they are doing and how long it is taking them. From day one, Management is alleging that a carrier has undertime. Well, in a way, it's true. Take for example a carrier with a 2-hour office time. If this carrier is getting out of the office in one hour, in theory, he should have one hour undertime minus any expansion for learning and dealing with FSS. However, Management is not giving you time to learn how to deal with FSS. They're on a carrier from the jump. In Newbury Park, Thousand Oaks, and Studio City, Management is having carriers take swings to the street or Management is having

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THE GOOD LIFE

By Bev Sucich, Director of Retirees



I hope everyone had a good time at the December 2010 luncheon at West Hills Home Town Buffet. We had 21 members and 14 guests. I made cookie packages and had candy canes for everyone to make the day a

little more festive for all.

Our winners were Al Fitz, who won an overnight Bag, Lois Perkins who won a small overnight bag, Ed Smith who won an insulated bag, Lucille Meehan who won a small back pack, Greg Gaddis who won a jacket, June Tipton who won a Borders gift card, Lee Leighton who won a Subway gift card, Cynthia Smith who won a TGIF gift card, and Bev Sucich who won a Lowes gift card. Our extra gifts were donated by Joe Gutierrez, a retiree from Woodland Hills. Thanks Joe for all those extra goodies.

We started the New Year on January 20th, 2011 at Hometown Buffet in Simi Valley. We had 25 members and 9 guests. Our winners were Don Esterman, who won a TGIF gift card, Al Cox who won a Subway gift card and Dan Gorman who won a Coldstone gift card.

We were all glad to see Don Esterman back at our luncheon. He was very sick for quite awhile, but he is doing much better now.

We would like to send our sincere condolences to the family of Ben Kelly. Ben passed away in January 2011; he was a retired Letter Carrier from Simi Valley. He lived a long and good

life, he was 92 years young.

I would like to encourage all retirees to read articles in the Postal Record under the Director of Retired Members. There is always some good information there for us retirees. All new retirees should make sure to complete form 1189 and continue your membership in NALC. If you do not complete 1189 you will be cancelled from the union and you will not be able to be reinstated and I know you new retirees will want to come to the luncheons so fill out that form 1189. If you have the NALC health insurance you must continue to be a member of the union.

Just a little reminder about COLCPE. Even if you donate a dollar or two a month, it helps our active Letter Carriers and it protects our annuities and our health plans. So please give if and when you can. Thank you.

On a final note, I hope all retired and active Letter Carriers in the states that have been bombarded by terrible weather and harsh snow storms are safe and hopefully by the time this article gets out, the weather conditions will be much milder.

I announced at the January luncheon, that I am looking into a day trip to a casino within a two hour drive. I hope to have some information by the March luncheon.

If anyone has any problems that I can help them with, please do not hesitate to call me. If I do not know the answer to your questions, I will find out for you.

Be safe until next time.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

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swings dropped off to carriers on the street to deliver on their alleged under time. The problems here are many; (1) If you're not on the overtime desired list, and you will be in an overtime status with the extra swing call from the street as early as possible. (2) If you are on the work assignment list and will be carrying off your assignment in an overtime status, call your office as soon as possible. Other problems that are arising are problems such as being unfamiliar with the route and territory of the swing, and the length of time for the swing. When Management tells you it's :30 minute swing, it usually takes longer for a variety of reasons like it was not a :30 minute swing to begin with.

This is just a brief report on what we have observed. As we go through your offices, talk to us and let us know what the problems are. Once again, my thanks to District Manager Kerry Wolny for letting me observe the different aspects of FSS and to FSS Coordinator Stacia Crane for showing me around the machines.

Early Outs?

The rumors may be true. What I've read on some very re-

liable websites is that there will be a reduction in force for Managers and a Voluntary Early Retirement for 80,000 eligible Civil Service and Federal Employee Retirement Service employees. However, the information states don't look for a financial incentive. Hmmmm, if there is no incentive, why go? You would figure if they wanted employees to leave, you would give them an incentive. We'll see how this plays out. Expect more details by March.

Excessing

Right on the heels of FSS comes the excessing meetings. Since FSS is expected to conservatively knock out 2-3 routes per zone, the affected installation has need for less full-time employees. As of the writing of this article, I have been involved in two excessing meetings: one in Newbury Park and one in the 61 section of the Thousand Oaks Main Office.

According to Management's current figures for the affected offices, 25 Level 01 Regular Carriers, 6 Level 02 Carriers, and 2 TE's would have to be excessed from the carrier craft. The TE's have already been reassigned at the time we had the meeting with the affected carriers. To say the least, the meeting was shock & awe! As in "Awe S@#!", I have to move!

Lisa Diniakos, the District Complement Coordinator has the

continued on page 9

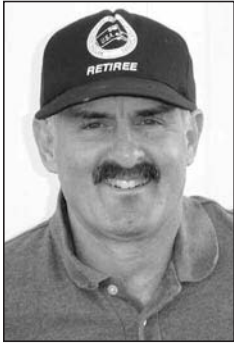


RETIREES CORNER

By Fred Shaw, *The Roaming Retiree*



Checking out Czechoslovakia!



We arrived in Prague in the early evening after a long seventeen hour flight. San Francisco to Frankfurt to Prague. My wife Lisa's cousin Shel picked us up at the airport and as we drove into the city. It seemed no different than most big cities. But outskirts can be deceiving. Once in the downtown it was obvious we weren't in Kansas anymore! Structures far older than

the United States loomed all around us intermingled with new department stores and grand music halls. The nighttime skyline from our hotel room was filled with spires, tall buildings, and lights from a bustling downtown.

The next morning, on our own, we walked a few minutes to Old Town Square. From here the famed astronomical clock with its attendant church was off to our right. Built in the 14th century it keeps perfect time (except for a 200 year lapse when its creator – blinded by the emperor so it couldn't be duplicated – killed himself by putting his hand into the workings). It then took two centuries for someone to figure out how to make it work again.

The Old Town Square becomes essentially the world's largest outdoor barbecue stand around 11 AM. The aromas of hams and roasts cooking over wood were enticing. From here we strolled – with our guide Klara – through the heart of Old Town. In one block we encountered a Baroque church, a Renaissance mansion, and a Gothic seminary, clearly a city of diverse and contrasting architecture.

Here I'll briefly mention defenestration – a curious Czech custom that has gained traction throughout the centuries. If you're the ruler you invite your opposition to dinner – several stories above the courtyard. Once they're all assembled, have been fed, and liberally plied with alcohol you have your palace guards throw them out the windows to their death. This has happened over thirty times since the 4th century when Prague was first built. You'd have thought by now that someone would have caught on, but it was done for the last time when the Communists took over the country. Slow learners! And this brings up another curious part of the

Czech psyche. The older generations walk around and act as though they're still under authoritarian control. The younger folks who didn't experience Communist rule are very westernized. Outspoken – lively – very into fashion and modern technology.

After wandering by the Jewish Quarter we came to the Vltava River and the Charles Bridge. The river separates the city proper from the Lesser City which is the area that grew up at the river's edge below the Emperor's castle. It used to be where all the effluent flowed from the palace but now is the most expensive real estate in Prague.

Once over the bridge we strolled up to the castle. The streets were cobbled – often narrow and steep – as we climbed the hill. Along the way we passed many restaurants and artisan shops. Here you could get a Pilsner Urquell for about 1.50 (for you beer drinkers a must) – less than half the cost of a bottle of water or a soda. The Czech diet seems to be heavy on dumplings and meat, but quite tasty. In front of the castle (which is still the seat of the Czech government) is a large square that can hold thousands of people. This is where President Obama spoke on a recent visit. As you enter the outer gates there are guards – much like Buckingham Palace – that go through the whole guard changing routine several times a day. We found ourselves in the outer courtyard which was about the size of a Junior College football stadium. Here are the government offices, the museum, and a plain white chapel with gold statues of the 12 apostles off to the right. The top floor (of 4) is the president's official residence.

Then you enter the inner courtyard you see the old castle and king's quarters to the right and a very ornate Gothic cathedral directly in front of you. Walking thru the walkway between, we follow our guide to the castle gardens from where the entire city of Prague is visible. Here our tour ended and after lunch nearby we walked, after getting lost some, back to our hotel. Locals say the city streets are somewhat like a spider web centering on the Old Town Square. That evening we went to a charity fashion show where cousin Shel and his friends were the musical background. A lot of fun for a good cause.

The next day we were off to Kutna Hora and its Bone Church. Seems this town lost nearly 50,000 people to the

RETIREES CORNER...

Continued from page 8

Plague and they memorialized their remains in a local church. Literally bones in the walls. Ensuing centuries saw the locals get more artistic so the church now has sconces, coats of arms, and even a chandelier made entirely of skeletons. Very macabre, but also interesting.

After indulging in handmade hot chocolate (it was in the low 40's) we had lunch at a local pub and headed back to Prague. That evening it was off to a jazz Gershwin concert in town and out for an incredible chocolate banana dessert.

The next day we took the trolley with Shel and his friend Mark over to Lesser Town and up to the local monastery where they've been brewing beer since the 5th century. Good beer, great food, and arguably an even better view than we'd had from the castle. We spent the last night with Shel and friends exploring some of the town at night. Then off to bed. Next stop Milan, Italy!

Benjamin J. Kelly (1918 - 2011)



Benjamin J. Kelly passed away at his home in Simi Valley on Jan. 9, 2011.

He was born in Peabody, Mass., on Nov. 9, 1918. Ben served as a Quartermaster in the U.S. Army during WWII. He was employed by the U.S. Postal Service and retired after 27 years. During his retirement he enjoyed golfing and loved to go to Vegas and Laughlin to gamble.

Ben was always trying to win the big one for his children. It is we, his family and friends, who really hit the jackpot because we had the privilege of knowing him. After 62 years of marriage, he was preceded in death by his beloved wife, June.

Ben is survived by his son, John; daughters, Nancy Milner and Patricia Cordle; foster children, John Paul Malloy and Nancy Lingenfelter; brother, Cecil; and brother-in-law, Roger Hanley.



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PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

Continued from page 7

hardest job in the Post Office. She has to conduct a meeting with scared and pissed-off carriers that don't know what is going to happen to them. Basically, there are too many regular employees for the installation so to provide work, the excess carriers have to be moved to other offices within a radius of up to 900 miles. Management will try to find openings as close to the duty stations as possible. And, if there are none within a 25 or 50 mile radius, they will look to other assignments outside the craft, but within the installation. However, this isn't going to happen, because clerks are going to be excessed too.

Ms. Diniakos did a good job in explaining what was going to happen and she gave out her email and telephone number. She also made things easier by having Thousand Oaks carriers only compete with Thousand Oaks carriers for jobs and by making EAP available for employees that need it. These meetings are difficult, because of the fear of the unknown. At this time, Management does not know exactly how many people they will be forced to excess or where the new assignments will be. Carriers are anxious, because they may be forced to move a long distance. And, if so, they might have to sell their homes, if they can. They might have to pull their kids out of school, leave friends and family, etc.. It's really a tough deal, but things are bad with the economy, the unprecedented volume drop, and the mechanization process wiping out good middle class jobs. Although, I can't cover every scenario about excessing, the following points are the most basic.

- Excessing is done by level. There are two carrier levels for Regular Letter Carriers-CC1 & CC2 (T-6).

- **Seniority:**

- If you are reassigned to a residual/withheld position in the carrier craft in another bid installation, you will be reassigned with your seniority.

- If you are reassigned to a withheld assignment in the clerk, mail handler or custodial craft either within your current installation or in another installation, you will be reassigned in a full-time status but you will begin a new period of seniority. However, upon being returned or retreated, as appropriate, you will take the seniority you previously had in the carrier craft augmented by the intervening employment in the craft to which you were excessed.

- **Retreat Rights:**

- If you are reassigned out of the installation to a withheld assignment in your own craft or another craft, at the time of your reassignment, you will have the right to file a written request to return to the first same level vacancy in your craft and installation.

- Additionally, you may elect to change to PTF status. However, please be aware that changing to a PTF to stay within your craft and installation does not preclude you from being excessed as a PTF at some later date, if the number of PTF's exceeds management's needs. The minimum work hour guarantee for PTFs in a non-200 man year office is 2 hours per pay period.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

Continued from page 9

- If you are placed in another craft within your installation, you will also have the option of changing to PTF status in lieu of being reassigned to another craft. However, as noted above, if you elect to change to PTF status, you are subject to having reduced hours and/or being excessed from the craft as a PTF. The minimum work hour guarantee for PTFs in a non-200 man year office is 2 hours per pay period.

- **Placement Preferences:**

- You will receive a list of withheld assignments from which to indicate your placement preferences shortly along with instructions on completing the preference selection worksheet. If you are a preference eligible (veteran) you will not be placed in a lower level assignment. If you select and wish to accept a lower level assignment, you will be required to sign a waiver of your MSPB, EEO or Grievance-Arbitration rights relative to being placed in a lower level assignment.

- **Salary:**

- If you are placed in a lower level assignment, you will receive protected salary.

- **Relocation:**

- If you are placed in a withheld assignment outside of your current installation, you shall receive moving, mileage, per diem and reimbursement of household goods, if appropriate, as governed by the Bargaining Employees Relocation Benefits package dated November 2010.



- **Bargaining Employee Relocation Benefits**

- As a bargaining employee you may be eligible to receive relocation benefits if you transfer from one duty station to another for permanent duty and the transfer is primarily in the best interest of the Postal Service. To qualify for benefits, your transfer must also meet two additional requirements:

- The distance between your old residence and your new permanent duty station must be at least 50 miles greater than the distance between your old duty station and your old residence.

- You must agree to remain at your new duty station for 12 months.

Remember, these are just a few basic points. Carriers

who are being excessed will be given a 60-Day Notification Letter informing them of the process and what they are entitled too, along with appropriate phone numbers and e-mail addresses.

50 Year Gold Cards

On a very lighter and better note, the Branch at the January Meeting honored two brothers for 50 years of membership. National Business Agent, Chris Jackson and Regional Administrative Assistant James Henry presented Gold Cards to Don Bach of San Fernando and Richard Cinnater of North Hollywood. Brother Bach started with the Postal Service on July 13, 1959 and worked much of his time at the North Hills/Sepulveda Station. Brother Bach retired on December 31, 1989. Brother Cinnater started with the Postal Service on February 4th, 1960 and he worked much of his time at the Bendix/Victory Station in North Hollywood. Brother Cinnater retired October 1st, 1992. Congratulations to both Brothers for their long years of service and for their life long membership in and support of the NALC. All for now back in two.

By the Numbers Membership 2010

By Susan Degenhardt, Recording Secretary

As of Pay Period 26, 2010

Active 1279
Retired 397 (including 24 Gold
Card members) = 1676 total members

During the last year:

Separated	16*
Retired	26
Deaths	1
(Active carriers)	
Transfers out	6
Cancel	<u>9**</u>
Total	58

New Members	3
Transfer In	2
Re activate	<u>2</u>
Total	7

*Increase due to separation of TE's

**Increase due to members changing craft

Branch 2902 is 94.1% organized



Union Meeting

January 18, 2011
Chatsworth

The meeting was called to order by President Salazar at 7:13PM. Sonny Castellano led the pledge of allegiance. Roll call of officers was taken. Asking to be excused were Larry Orcutt, Ernestine Hernandez, Joe Vedder, Laura Walters, Kathi Albritten, Steve Dickerson, and Frank Mercado. Fred Shaw makes a motion to excuse these brothers and sisters, S/C.

Members are reminded to sign the attendance book and purchase tickets for the 50/50 raffle.

President Salazar introduces Region 1 NBA Chris Jackson and RAA James Henry.

Members review the minutes from the November 16, 2010 meeting. Fred Shaw makes a motion to accept the minutes as printed, S/C.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Training session on COR for union representatives on January 27, at 2902 union hall from 6-9PM.

AMP (Area Mail Processing) Study on 1/20/11. This is a public hearing at the Oxnard Performing Arts Center 6-7:30PM.

CSALC By-law changes. Will be brought up under new business.

COMMUNICATIONS

Voluntary Early Retirement (VER)- The rumors are true. Details have not been released yet.

Reduction in Force (RIF)- Possibly reduce administration by 30%, consolidation of districts, Postal Service looking to cut 7500 jobs overall.

FSS- USPS has invested over 1.5 billion dollars in this technology. President Salazar gives overview about implementation of FSS throughout the country. Our district will have three machines. The sort process is explained. Safety issues are discussed. Tray placement methods are discussed. Deployment schedule is reviewed. COR adjustments and excessing are discussed.

COMMITTEES

Recreation- Paulette Dyer gives members information on central coast attractions. She donates a See's gift certificate for the raffle. She has homemade cookies for sale.

Union Apparel- Lori Stewart gives a report on the union jacket order. Deadline is January 31.

MDA- Sandy Gaunce reports on the November Bowl-a-thon results.

Retirees- Bev Sucich reports on December luncheon and announces the January 20 luncheon will be in Simi Valley at the Hometown Buffet.

Legislative- David Hyman announces a City Candidate

Forum on 1/31 at the CIS building on Balboa Blvd.

Health Benefits- Joe Gutierrez discusses cost vs. coverage. Plan comparisons, drug coverage and benefits for belonging to NALC plan are discussed.

MBA/NSBA- Chris Alessi speaks to the membership about the Paid Up at 65 plan. Medical documentation requirements for disability claims are discussed. He reminds members that option B for FEGLI can get very expensive and the MBA offers coverage for less. MBA appointment calendars are available.

NEW BUSINESS

Paul Drapkin makes a motion to adopt an Executive Board recommendation to spend up to \$15,000 on new heating and air conditioning units (2) for the Branch office, S/C.

Fred Shaw makes a motion to provide refreshments for Informational COR meeting 1/27, not to exceed \$100.00, S/C.

Members vote to support proposed CSALC by-law change (1) to meet every 3 years instead of every 2 years and (2) a proposed change regarding submission of resolutions. These by-law changes will be presented and voted on at the upcoming state convention.

GOOD OF THE ASSOCIATION

- Know your rights

NBA Chris Jackson and RAA James Henry present members Don Bach (San Fernando), and Richard Cinnater (North Hollywood) with their 50-Year Gold Cards and pins.

NBA Jackson speaks to the members on the state of the Postal Service. Customer Connect, automation issues, COR adjustments, NRP arbitration success, excessing of carriers, FMLA forms, Get out the Vote 2012, and the Food Drive in May.

Membership reviews the Treasurer's report. Kurt Whitesell makes a motion to accept the report, S/C.

A motion to adjourn in the name of Marva Golden is made by Kurt Whitesell, S/C.

Louie Rodriguez won the 50/50 drawing for \$27.00. Mrs. Walter Williams won the See's candy gift card. Oxnard carrier Pablo Galvan was the name drawn for the membership drawing for \$828.50. He was not present to win.

Respectfully submitted by Susan Degenhardt, Recording Secretary

Only Irish coffee provides in a single glass all four essential food groups alcohol, caffeine, sugar and fat.

— Alex Levine

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RETIREES LUNCH

RAFFLE AT 12:30

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When: Thursday,
April 21, 2011

Time: 11:00am to 1:00pm



Where: Hometown Buffet
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When: Thursday,
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Time: 11:00am to 1:00pm



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- Bob Golden

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James Perryman
Sandy Gaunce
Greg Gaddis
Kurt Whitesell

**“People who never get carried away
should be.”**

*-Malcolm Forbes,
American Publisher
(1919-1990)*

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Chatsworth Chief S.S.	Angel Hale
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Alternate	Lori Stewart
North Hollywood Chief S.S.	Steve Leyton
	Louie Rodriguez
Chandler	Greg Gaddis
Laurel Canyon	Steve Leyton
Studio City	Greg Gaddis
Valley Village	Steve Leyton
Northridge Chief S.S.	Onofre Varela
Shop Steward/ Webmaster	Larry Orcutt
Porter Ranch Alternate	Larry Orcutt
Ojai Chief S.S.	Kurt Whitesell
Oxnard Chief S.S.	Philip Navarro
Pacoima Chief S.S.	Ernestine Hernandez
Alternate	Steve Dickerson
Alternate	Frankie Mercado
Alternate	Rocio Fraire
Port Hueneme Chief S.S.	Lorie Moore
Reseda Chief S.S.	Kathi Albritten
San Fernando Chief S.S.	Ray Hill
Alternate	James Perryman
M.C.A.	Albert Reyes
North Hills	James Perryman
Sylmar / Main Office	C.C. Flatts
Santa Paula Chief S.S.	James Perryman
Simi Valley Chief S.S.	Laura Walters
Mt. McCoy Station	Sandra Gaunce
Thousand Oaks Chief S.S.	Sandra Gaunce
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	Alex Lopez
Alternate	Walter Williams
Newbury Park	Mary Stanley
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Union Meeting

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MAR 15 Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Union Hall-Chatsworth
Dinner served 6 pm

MAR 17 Retiree Lunch 11:00am
Hometown Buffet-Simi Valley
St. Patrick's Day



APR 5 Executive Board Meeting 6pm
Executive Council Meeting 7pm

APR 19 Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Garden Palm Hotel-Newbury Park

APR 21 Retiree Lunch 11:00am
Hometown Buffet-West Hills

APR 29-30 NALC State Convention
San Diego

MAY 3 Executive Board Meeting 6pm
Executive Council Meeting 7pm

MAY 8 Mothers Day



MAY 14 NALC National Food Drive

MAY 17 Regular Branch Meeting 7pm
Union Hall-Chatsworth
Dinner served 6 pm



RAA James Henry and NBA Chris Jackson present members Don Bach (San Fernando), and Richard Cinnater (North Hollywood) with their 50-Year Gold Cards and pins.