

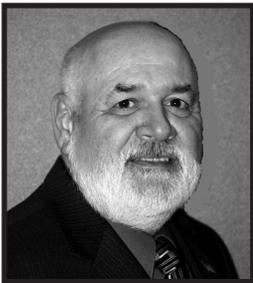
*The Official Newsletter of
NJ Merged Branch 38, NALC*



THE SENTINEL

Summer 2014

Letter Carriers Use To Be Out of Bounds



President's Report

by Pete Maglio

I have been in the Postal Service for many years, and for as long as I can remember it was an unwritten law that letter carriers were “Off-Limits” to gangs and other thugs. Carriers were able to deliver mail on their routes without the worry of being mugged, beaten, robbed or shot at. This has all changed, and has gotten worse with time.

Letter carriers, both male and female, have now become targets of gangs and irate customers. Carriers are often confronted with violence, while performing their daily deliveries. Hearing gun shots ringing through the air in some areas is common. Being caught in a cross fire is also not unusual. Just trying to do your job can be fear provoking.

We know that letter carriers have to contend with obstacles such as dogs, bees and wild birds on a daily basis. In today’s world, these obstacles now include the threat of violence by the very people we are dedicated to serving. This is an unfortunate, but very real, fact of life for many letter carriers. During the summer months, these problems become more frequent. School is out, and more people are outdoors and on the street.

Letter carriers must be cognizant of their surround-ings. Do not wear jewelry that can draw attention to you, and avoid verbal confrontations with customers or adolescents. If you believe that you are being followed, or may be in physical danger while in the performance of your duties, contact the police and your Post Office immediately. Don’t run the risk of becoming a target. Your safety and well being must come first.

NALC and USPS have recently agreed to engage in a joint effort to address the problem of letter carrier safety. They will be working in areas where the problem is most severe. They will be reviewing issues such as scheduling, route design, and any other issues that may increase carrier safety. As always, however, you are the one most responsible for your safety.

NEW JERSEY MERGED BRANCH 38

National Association of Letter Carriers

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Springfield, NJ 07081**

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Branch Officers

Pete Maglio	President
James Stasse	Executive Vice President
Michael O'Neill	First Vice President
Paul Biggs	Treasurer
Ralph Silvestri	Director of City Delivery
John Sheridan	Corresponding Secretary
Pat Flannery	Recording Secretary
Charlie Connell	Director of Retirees/HBR
Pete Bednarz	Sergeant-At-Arms

PART TIME AREA REPRESENTATIVES

Pete Bednarz	Roy Jancio	Mark McGrady
Joe Otero	Joe Rutkoski	Dan Szucs
Christine Strasser	Dominic Walton	Ron Villegas

BRANCH 38 TRUSTEES

Keith Hemmings	Richard O'Connell Jr.
Christine Strasser	William Trudell
Dominic Walton	

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BRANCH 38 ATTORNEY

Donald Millman, Esq. 973-669-9776

MUTUAL BENEFIT REPRESENTATIVE

Martin Spielman Jr. 732-261-7191

EDITOR - Michael J. O'Neill

DATES TO REMEMBER

BRANCH MEETINGS

September 3, 2014
October 1, 2014
November 5, 2014
December 3, 2014

SPECIAL EVENTS

Independence Day
July 4, 2014

National Convention
July 21-25, 2014

Columbus Day Golf Outing
October 13, 2014

Retiree Breakfast
October 19, 2014

Veterans Day
November 11, 2014

Holiday Party
December 13, 2014

**NJ Merged Branch 38
Web Site**

<http://www.branch38nalc.com/>

The Shop Steward



First Vice President

by *Michael O'Neill*

Allow me to begin by thanking each and every shop steward. Thanks for stepping up, for doing the right thing. Thanks for caring about your fellow letter carriers, for standing up to unreasonable managers, for remaining calm when confronted by a frustrated member. Thanks for coming to meetings, for sharing information with the carriers in your office, for promoting the efforts of your union.

You're not required to work on grievances at home, but you do it anyway. You don't have to take time away from your family to attend training sessions and conventions, but you do it. No one expects you to take calls in the evening from carriers with questions and concerns, but you're happy to do it. Attending Branch fund raisers is not a job requirement, but you enjoy the comradery, and you want to help. You understand the importance of being an e-Activist and a contributor to COLCPE, and you take that responsibility seriously. That's why you promote those programs, and give a little bit extra. Thank you.

Not everyone has the time or the make-up to be a shop steward, but we all have a responsibility to support them, and our union. We have a responsibility to the stewards and to our fellow workers. Mostly, we have a responsibility to the carriers who came before us; to those who fought the good fight so that we may enjoy the many benefits we have today. So, from time to time, let's offer a word of thanks to our shop stewards, and ask them what we can do to support their efforts. Their's is not an easy job, but they have put themselves out there to protect you and your benefits. Let's help them out.

This topic comes to mind at this time for two reasons. President Maglio has recently appointed four Branch 38 members and shop stewards to serve as part-time area representatives. They are Roy Jancio (River Edge), Joe Otero (Holmdel), Ron Villegas (Old Bridge), and Dominic Walton (Orange). Each of these brothers have served as shop stewards in their offices, and have accepted assignments for the Branch in many different capacities in the past.

These men have experienced first hand the sacrifice and frustration that often comes with the job of shop steward. They have now agreed to accept more responsibility, sacrifice, and frustration, by bringing their experience and skills to other offices. There will be more meetings, more work at home, more unreasonable managers, and more members in need of assistance. I thank them for stepping up even further by accepting this appointment. I also ask the membership for your support. I'm sure we all wish them well.

The second reason that this topic comes to mind is the retirement of our Executive Vice President, Jim Stasse. Jim announced his retirement, effective on August 1, 2014, at the June Branch Meeting. Jim had been talking about retirement for some time, so it came as no surprise to many of us. Once the announcement was made, however, it caused me to reflect on what we do as unionists, and why we do it.

Jim was hired as a letter carrier in East Brunswick in 1967. He is a veteran of the Vietnam War. He became a shop steward in 1975, served as a part-time area representative since 1980, and has held various positions as a full-time officer in Branch 38 since 1985. Jim's career is an example for those who are inclined to step forward and fight for their fellow workers. Many carriers have benefited from Jim's determined representation over the years. I have benefited from Jim's friendship and example throughout our years working together. I think I speak for all of us when I wish Jim and his wife Sue a long and happy retirement. Thank you for your service to the members of Branch 38.

The Future is Now



Part-Time Area Representative

by Christine Strasser

Rarely does a day pass when the United States Postal Service does not make the headlines on the internet, on the television news, on the radio, or in the newspapers. Most recently, our ongoing battles with Congress, and the alleged loss of revenue have been major topics. One story that we need to focus on is the prospect of Amazon creating its own delivery service.

The biggest challenge to Amazon's plan to deliver its own product is density. To make a profit, there has to be enough deliveries, close enough to each other, in order to cover the cost of the driver and the truck. This is why Amazon, to this point, has chosen to work closely with the Postal Service. The USPS is the last mile delivery, delivering to every address daily.

About five years ago, Amazon created "Amazon Fresh." It was a service in which they would accept orders to have groceries delivered to the customers' door throughout Seattle. They have recently added San Francisco and Los Angeles. Amazon clearly foresees a time when it will not be cost effective to lean on other

companies such as USPS to remain competitive in the e-commerce market.

As mail volume continues to dwindle, where will this leave the USPS? Although no one can answer that question with certainty, we can be proactive instead of simply waiting to react. Our best strategy would be to provide the service to Amazon's customers that they expect, deserve, and have paid for. Scan every package every day. Scanning is a key component of every delivery service. It is no longer the future. The future is here, and our future depends on how well we adapt.

We are a customer service driven business. I don't scan a package to make my supervisor happy, or to make some percentage number for the District. I scan the package for one simple reason; the customer requested and paid for the service! If customers receive the service they want and pay for, they'll be back. Our jobs will survive.

Our competitors, FedEx and UPS, have the most updated scanners. Fortunately for USPS, both fell short last year during the busy holiday season. That is one reason Amazon has been researching its own delivery service. Letter carriers have to work with less updated scanners and antiquated vehicles, but we still deliver for America proudly each and every day. Let's all work together to keep Amazon's business, and expand even further into the e-commerce market.

A Special Thanks to Jim Stasse

Executive Vice President James Stasse will be retiring effective August 1, 2014. I want to express my best wishes to Jim and his family on his retirement, and express to him our appreciation for his many years of service. His commitment and hard work helped formulate this Branch into the service driven organization it is today. Those of us who have worked with Jim over these many years know his commitment to the membership and his willingness to help anyone who sought his support and assistance.

As President of NJ Merged Branch 38, I want to convey to my friend, on behalf of the officers and the entire Branch, our gratitude for what you have meant, and what you will continue to mean, to the growth and progress of our great union. We wish Jim and Susan a long and happy retirement. God Bless you Jim.

Pete Maglio, President

The Low Down on Hold Downs - Opting



Part-Time Area Representative

by Joe Rutkoski

In the past, Article 41 of the National Agreement allowed certain groups of letter carriers to opt on (hold-down) vacant duty assignments. Opts are also called “hold-downs,” because an employee is said to be “holding down” the assignment until the regular full time letter carrier returns to that assignment. The 2011-2016 National Agreement has extended that group of employees that are eligible to opt on vacant assignments to now include CCA’s. The JCAM, Page 41-10, states in relevant part that full-time reserve letter carriers, full-time flexible schedule letter carriers, unassigned full-time carriers, part-time flexible carriers, and city carrier assistants may all opt for hold-down assignments.

The vast majority of part-time flexible employees (PTF’s) would exercise their opting/hold down rights. Today with the very small number of PTF’s remaining in the USPS, it leaves a large number of vacant duty assignments for our CCA’s to place hold-downs on. Upon completion of 60 calendar days from the date of appointment, CCA’s have the right to hold down any full time assignment which is vacant for five days or more. The employee must simply submit a request in writing to their supervisor. A CCA who has been awarded a hold down is entitled to work the days and hours of that assignment, for the duration of the vacancy. Management can only remove an employee from a hold

down under limited circumstances, such as to provide sufficient work for full-time employees.

If management improperly removes an employee off a hold down, it would be a violation of Article 41.2.B.4 of the National Agreement, and a grievance should be filed. The appropriate remedy would be a “make whole” remedy, in which the employee would be compensated for the difference between the number of hours actually worked and the number of hours he/she would have worked had they not been improperly removed from the opt/hold down.

We have had problems in some offices in which the Postal Operational Managers (POOMS) are ordering CCA’s to work in another installation. If a CCA is on a hold-down, this would be a violation. In these situations, and other similar circumstances in which the improper removal of the employee from his/hers hold down was clearly egregious or deliberate, or after local management has received previous instructional resolutions on the same issue, management has demonstrated that a “cease and desist” remedy is not sufficient. To insure future contract compliance, the union has successfully won compensatory remedies (monetary awards) to the injured party.

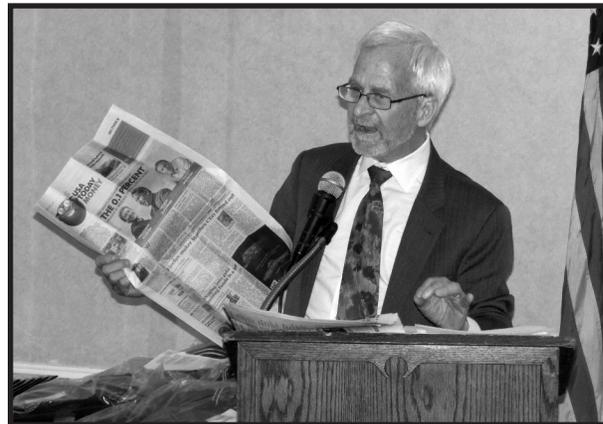
Opting is an important right. It gives the employee the opportunity to work a more consistent schedule, and it allows the CCAs, PTF’s, full-time reserve letter carriers, full-time flexible schedule letter carriers, and unassigned full-time carriers some choice over what work they will do. It is a right that the NALC has fought hard for, and all the above mentioned employees should be exercising that right. If your supervisor or Postmaster attempts to deny you of your right to opt/hold-down a vacant duty assignment, let your Shop Steward and/or your Area Representative know immediately.

Uniform Allowance for CCA’s

In accordance with Article 26, Section 3 of the 2011 National Agreement between the U.S. Postal Service and National Association of Letter Carriers, city carrier assistants (CCAs) are provided with an annual uniform allowance. To qualify for a uniform allowance CCAs must either complete 90 work days or be employed for 120 calendar days, whichever comes first. CCAs who have previously satisfied the 90/120 day requirement as a transitional employee (with an appointment made after September 29, 2007) become eligible for a uniform allowance at the beginning of their first CCA appointment.

The current annual allowance is \$399. In November 2014, it will increase to \$409, and in November 2015, it will increase to \$420. If you do not receive your uniform allowance as soon as you become eligible, or on your anniversary date, contact your shop steward immediately. You are entitled to this benefit without delay. Do not permit management to put you off. We can help.

NJ Merged Branch 38 *Retiree Luncheon*



As we do every Spring, Branch 38 held our Retiree Luncheon. At this very special event, we honor all of our sister and brother letter carriers who had retired during the previous year, as well as a number of members who had attained the status of a fifty or sixty year member. This is always an enjoyable day in which we look back with gratitude for the unionists who came before us and paved the way for this great organization. We also look forward to their participation and leadership, as we move forward together in the never ending battle for workers' rights.

We were fortunate to have with us, on that day, three NALC Gold Card recipients. They are pictured on the left, above, and are: George Larty, Robert Chaneski, and Joseph Horvath. Congratulations to them, and all of our recent retirees. You have contributed greatly to the NALC and the Postal Service. We thank you.

Thanks, also, to NALC Director of Retirees Ron Watson, NBA Larry Cirelli, NJSALC President Richard O'Connell, RAA Bruce Didriksen, and Branch Attorney Don Millman for joining us to honor our retirees.



Scholarship Night

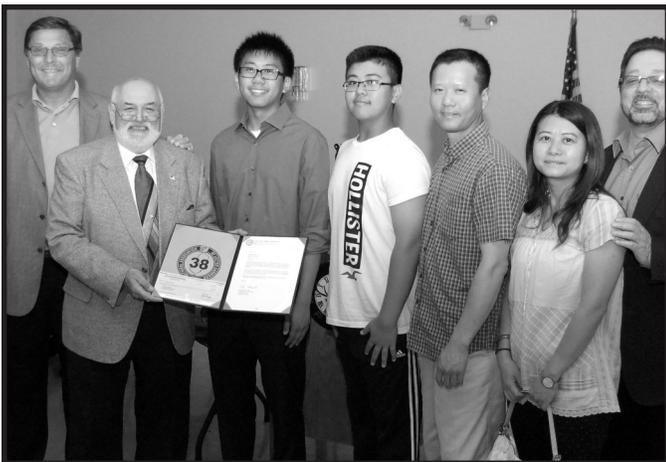


At our June Meeting, Branch 38 was pleased to award three \$1,500 scholarships to three very deserving students. Each has compiled incredible scholastic records, and all have distinguished themselves in their extracurricular activities.

Scholarship Night is a very special event. We honor three great unionists who were critical to the building of Branch 38; Gil Hampton, Michael J. McTigue, and Richard P. O'Connell. We also honor three young Americans, who are certain to become important contributors to their communities.

The scholarship winners are: Ritchey Yeung, whose Dad, Hun, works at the Fair Lawn Post Office; Shannon Samaris, whose Dad, John, carries mail at the Englishtown office; and Richard Felicetti, whose Dad, Richard, retired from the Parlin Post Office.

Special thanks go out to NALC Director of Health Benefits Brian Hellman, NBA Larry Cirelli, RAA, Bruce Didriksen, NJSALC President Richard O'Connell, and Branch Attorney Don Millman, all of who helped to make the evening special.



Safety First

Job related injuries are a enormous financial burden on the Postal Service. It affects management goals, service to our customers, and results in an added work load for our fellow carriers. Of course the most damaging aspect of injuries is the pain and suffering endured by the injured employee. Injuries are a financial and psychological burden placed on the employee and his/her family.

That is why we encourage all of our members to take the time to be safe. Use the handrail going up and down stairs. Take a second to pause before getting in and out of your vehicle. Do not pull into drive-ways when it can be avoided, and always be especially careful when backing up. Always wear your seat belt, and park your vehicle properly. If you have a safer park point than the one assigned on your route, have it changed. We can help with that.

None of these precautions take much time, but the pain and aggravation they can save you and your family is priceless. If you don't make safety your number one priority, no one else will.

Beat the Heat

Now that the winter from hell is a distant memory, the challenge of the summer's heat is upon us. People who work outside, like letter carriers, have to be especially aware of the dangers of excessive heat. Here are some important reminders.

Drink as much water as you can. Drink it before, after, and during work. While outside in the heat, try to drink 8 ounces of water every 15 to 20 minutes. Stay in the shade as much as possible. Wear a hat to protect yourself from direct sun light. If you need to take an extra break or two to get out of the heat and into some air conditioning, do it.

If you experience a headache, confusion, dizziness, extreme sweating, an unusual rash, nausea, muscle cramps, or unusual fatigue, get out of the heat and contact your supervisor or 911 immediately. If you are experiencing heat stress or heat exhaustion, time is of the essence. Do not try to be a hero. It is critical to reduce your body temperature as quickly as possible. We want everyone to be around for the first snow storm next winter.

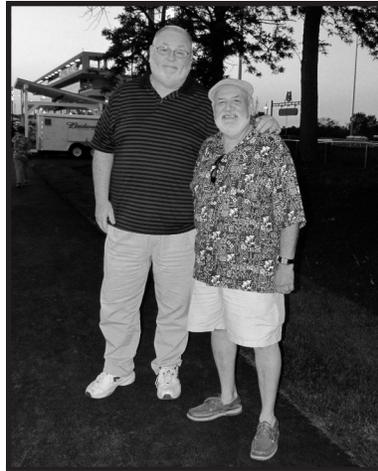
NJ Merged Branch 38 **Retiree Breakfast**

On Sunday, October 19, 2014, at 9:00 AM, NJ Merged Branch 38 will be holding our annual Retiree Breakfast. The Breakfast will be held at the Chandelier Restaurant located at 340 Franklin Avenue, Belleville, NJ 07109. To reserve a spot, and to get directions, call Director of Retirees, Charlie Connell at 973-564-7244 (Ext. 21). All Branch 38 retirees are welcome to attend. There is no charge to retired members.

Charlie Connell will preside over the festivities, and invited guest speakers include NALC President Fred Rolando, NBA Larry Cirelli, RAA Bruce Didriksen, and NJSALC President Rich O'Connell. All NJ Merged Branch 38 officers and staff will be in attendance as well. This is an excellent opportunity for retirees to come together to exchange old stories, renew old friendships, and hear the latest news from Washington affecting letter carriers and retirees.

All of New Jersey's Congressional Representatives have also been invited and, based on years past, some will be sure to attend. This is a critical time in our nation's history, and for the Postal Service as well. The Retiree Breakfast will be an excellent opportunity to hear first hand from our friends in Washington, find out where our country is headed, and what they are doing to protect the interests of letter carriers and retirees.

Night at the Races!



Columbus Day Golf Outing

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2014

BUNKER HILL GOLF COURSE - GRIGGSTOWN, NJ

**FEE - \$95 per Golfer - Price Includes:
Golf, Cart, Steak Dinner, Beer, Soda, Hot Dogs & Prizes**

To reserve a spot for your foursome, or to make a donation, call:

**Mike O'Neill (973-564-7244 Ext. 18) or Charlie Connell (732-634-6104)
or**

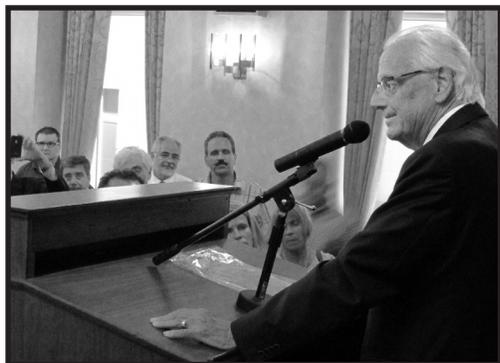
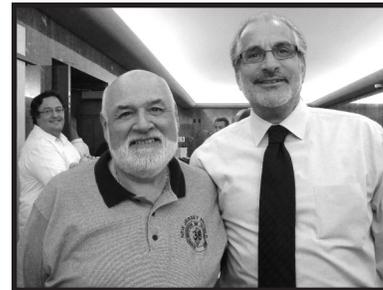
Mail a check with the names of the golfers in your foursome(s) to the Branch Office

All Proceeds Go To MDA

Congressional Conference



Branch 38 joined a contingent of New Jersey letter carriers during our annual trip to Washington DC. We were very well received by our Representatives, and their staffs. The NJ Congressional delegation has been a strong supporter of USPS and letter carrier issues, but we can never become complacent. Thanks to the NJ State Association for organizing the event. We must all keep up the pressure. Join the fight. Give to COLCPE and become an e-Activist.



Worried about the future of the USPS?

Worried about the future of your job?

Tired of listening to all of the rumors?

Want to know what's really going on?

Sign Up as an e-Activist
Now!!!

Go to: <http://nalc.org/>

Want to keep your job?

Want to keep your health benefits?

Hoping to collect a pension some day?

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Branch Meeting Information & Directions

Meetings are held at 7:30 PM on the first Wednesday of each month, except July & August.

The Branch Meetings are held at:

ELKS BPO LODGE #2116
665 RAHWAY AVENUE
WOODBIDGE, NJ 07095
732-634-2116

Directions:

SOUTH on Garden State Parkway. Take Exit #129 to Route 9 North to Woodbridge Exit (Just after the Forge Restaurant on your right). At the end of the Exit Ramp, turn right onto Main Street (Route 514) and proceed until you reach a monument at City Hall. Bear left onto Rahway Avenue. The Elks is @1/2 mile down the road on your left.

NORTH on Garden State Parkway. Take Exit #127 to Route 9 North and follow directions above.

NJ Turnpike. Take Exit 12 (Carteret). Bear right after toll booth and turn left at light after overpass. Proceed through industrial park to Rahway Avenue and turn left. The Elks is 1 mile ahead on your right.