

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



THE SENTINEL

Spring 2011

2011 Retiree Luncheon

by Mike O'Neill

Smiling faces were the order of the day as Branch 38 held our annual Retiree Luncheon in honor of the members who retired during 2010, and those who achieved 50 and 60 years of membership in the NALC. Fourteen of our retirees were able to attend, and eight 50 year gold card members joined us to receive their cards and certificates. This truly is an enjoyable event, and the retirees and their guests seem to exude that feeling.

Congratulations were offered by Director of Retired Members Charlie Connell, Branch President Pete Maglio, Branch Attorney Don Millman, and NJ State Association President Tony Massa. NALC Director of Life Insurance Myra Warren extended her own best wishes, and warm regards from NALC President Fred Rolando and the entire NALC Executive Council. Myra reminded the honorees how important the continued support and participation of our retirees is to the continued success of the NALC.

Even the bleak picture of the current attacks on labor painted by Region 15 NBA Larry Cirelli, and his plea for additional COLCPE contributions, couldn't dampen the spirits of these retirees. Many were there during the Postal Strike of 1970 when



Our Newest Gold Card Recipients

they risked all by striking against the United States Government. They had done their share in the past, and can be counted on to do even more in the future. Today, however, was a day of celebration, old friends, and smiles.

A special moment came when Past Branch President and Region 15 RAA Bruce Didriksen awarded the NALC Gold Card commemorating fifty years of membership in the NALC to Gerhard Henning, the first Gold Card Awardee from Bruce's own office of Park Ridge, NJ. The smiles continued when Bruce pointed out that Gerhard had delivered mail to Bruce's house when Bruce was still a young boy.

We all owe a great deal of thanks to all of our retirees who have done so much to build this union and win for us the wages and benefits we enjoy today. If not for the sacrifices and hard work of these men and women, the smiles we enjoyed at their luncheon would be fewer and less frequent. All of the officers and members of Branch 38 wish all of our retirees a long and happy retirement. Remember, you may have retired from the Postal Service, but you will always be members of the NALC.



Tony Massa, Pete Maglio, & Myra Warren

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

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Mark McGrady	Dan Szucs
Joe Rutkoski	John Dock

BRANCH 38 TRUSTEES

Keith Hemmings	Richard Mitchell
Richard O'Connell Jr.	William Trudell
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MUTUAL BENEFIT REPRESENTATIVE

Martin Spielman Jr. 732-261-7191

DATES TO REMEMBER

BRANCH MEETINGS

May 4, 2011
June 1, 2011
September 7, 2011
October 5, 2011
November 2, 2011
December 7, 2011

SPECIAL EVENTS

Food Drive
May 14, 2011

Memorial Day
May 30, 2011

Scholarship Night
June 1, 2011

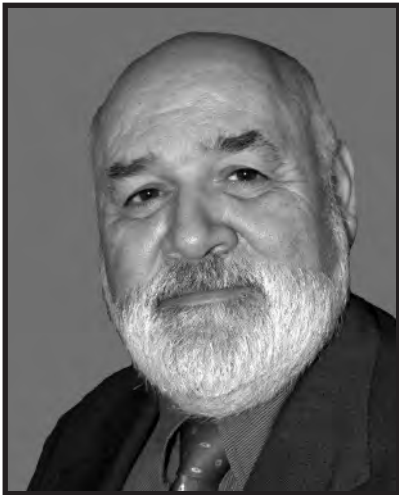
Independence Day
July 4, 2011

**NJ Merged Branch 38
Web Site**

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

The President's Report

FSS & COR - This is Progress? *by Pete Maglio*



As you probably know by now, FSS (Flat Sorting System) and COR (Carrier Optimal Routing) are here, and the combination has proven to be an accident waiting to happen. When offices were first scheduled to go on line with FSS, the NNJ District Manager gave a service talk to the carriers. She predicted how this new product was going to revolutionize the Postal Service and make our jobs more efficient. Well, the new product has arrived and so far has been a calamity. Not surprisingly, the District Manager has not returned to a single office to speak with the carriers after FSS was implemented and routes subsequently adjusted. Routes in Northern NJ were adjusted to projections of receiving 70% of their flat mail in sequence order. That has not occurred. At best, offices are receiving 45%–50% of machinable mail. Often days go by with no FSS Mail at all. This, of course, immediately makes your projected office time completely inaccurate, and your routes out of adjustment before you even leave for the street.

Now let's talk about COR, which in my opinion is the main problem with this process. What is COR? Carrier Optimal Routing simply takes information about routes in a zone (DOIS, 3999, mail volumes, etc), realigns the zone, and creates new travel patterns. It reduces park points and relays where possible. If used correctly COR can eliminate unnecessary travel time and align the routes in an office more efficiently.

One way that COR tries to maximize efficiency in a zone is by identifying actual "allied time." Allied time is time that a carrier spends on the street doing functions other than actually delivering mail. Some examples of allied time are: travel to and travel from the route, loading and unloading the vehicle and gassing the vehicle, travel within, which is travel that occurs within the route such as moving the vehicle from park point to park point, parcel

and accountable time, relay time, which is time spent loading relays into a satchel from a vehicle or relay box, and personal time, customer contact, and street breaks.

It is particularly important that allied time is correctly put back on routes that have been adjusted by COR. If not, the route will most likely be out of adjustment creating overburden routes. In Northern New Jersey, we have many routes that have been adjusted by COR. As a result, routes in many of these installations are unrecognizable and unmanageable. Carriers are delivering mail until 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM on a regular basis, and even after 9:00 PM some evenings. In some cases, carriers have been given ninety minutes of auxiliary assistance, plus two hours of overtime on a nearly daily basis in order to complete their assignment by 6:00pm. This is not a JOKE!

It is imperative that you keep in mind that any adjustment to a carrier's actual street time must be documented and explained by appropriate comments on the reverse of the PS Form 1840. Additionally, travel to, travel from, and travel within times must be validated, documented, and discussed during the required "carrier consultation." If new travel patterns have been created, the new times must be validated (see pre-arbitration agreement M-01661).

Remember that the use of FSS & COR is a one-sided process. The union was not a participant in the creation or end result of this procedure. The route adjustments are done by management unilaterally, unlike the MIARAP and JARAP programs. As a result, the only way to correct the gross inaccuracies produced by management is to utilize the procedures provided for in the FSS Memorandum of Understanding.

Sixty days after implementing route adjustments for FSS, the local parties must review the adjustments to ensure that routes are as near to eight hours as possible. If agreement is not reached regarding the length of the routes by the local parties, they must revert to the provisions of the M-39, which includes the right to special route inspections (Section 271, Handbook M-39; Section 918, Handbook M-41). The sixty day period following the route adjustments does not count toward the six week time frame required to qualify for a special route inspection process.

Unless there is a locally developed and mutually agreed upon adjustment process to correct overburdened routes, your best option is to request a "Special Route Inspection." Do not be afraid of a route inspection. It is a time tested course of action, and the only way to establish your own office and street times.

In Honor Of Our
Fallen Heros

Memorial Day
May 30, 2011

by Ralph Silvestri

As a US Army Veteran, I am proud to be able to write this article, and express a small tribute to the countless men and women who gave the ultimate sacrifice of their lives, while proudly serving their nation around the world.

Memorial Day was officially proclaimed on May 5, 1868 by General John Logan, the National Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, in his General Order No. 11. It was first observed on May 30, 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate Soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. Ironically, this tribute occurred 143 years ago to the day, this year.

In 1915, inspired by the poem "In Flanders Fields," Moina Michael replied with her own poem, which reads:

We cherish too, the Poppy red
That grows on fields where valor led,
It seems to signal to the skies
That blood of heroes never dies.

Moina Michael then conceived the idea to wear red poppies on Memorial Day, in honor of those who died serving the nation during war. She was the first to wear one, and sold poppies to co-workers and friends to raise money to benefit servicemen in need. This tradition spread over the years, and in 1922 the VFW became the first veterans' organization to nationally sell the red poppies. In 1948 the United States Post Office honored Ms. Michael for her role in founding the National Poppy movement, by issuing a Red 3 Cent Postage Stamp with her likeness on it.

In closing, I would like to ask everyone to please take a moment on this Memorial Day, and in your own way, remember, reflect, and honor those veterans who lost their lives for their country. In the days ahead, when you see the men and women who serve our country in uniform, just take a minute to go up to them, shake their hands, and simply say thank you for your service. As a veteran, I can assure you, that small gesture will be greatly appreciated, and it will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

NALC
National Food Drive

Saturday
May 14, 2011

by Paul Biggs

The officers and staff of New Jersey Merged Branch 38 would again like to express our thanks for the cooperation and effort put forth during last year's Food Drive. This year, on Saturday, May 14, 2011 we hope to surpass those totals collected previously to further assist those less fortunate than us.

We are again asking all the offices within the branch to participate on National Food Drive Day and help the many families in our area who need assistance due to the continuing economic problems throughout the New Jersey. Branch 38 will distribute almost a million and a half Campbell Soup Card flyers prior to this event informing every household how they can help us and the other companies involved assist and aid those who need our help.

Information and helpful suggestions aimed at making the 2011 Food Drive another successful endeavor have been distributed to all of our local shop stewards. Aside from helping to alleviate hunger within our local communities, the Food Drive provides an immeasurable amount of positive public relations for letter carriers and the Postal Service. The excellent publicity that is a by-product of the Food Drive will come in handy when we need the support of Congress, and when we take our seats at the bargaining table later this year.

The donations should be brought to local food banks and local churches to help support many of the patrons within the towns we serve. In some instances, this will be the major donation given to them throughout the entire year. Please contact merchants in your community to support and assist us in this endeavor and seek media coverage to emphasize the day and the importance of the Food Drive.

As always, I am sure our letter carriers will come through when asked to get involved. This will be another example of why letter carriers are considered to be such a valuable asset in every community, and why the members of New Jersey Merged Branch 38 continue to be one of the most respected branches throughout the National Association of Letter Carriers organization!

TSP - Use It or Lose It

by Pat Flannery

The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) came to be when the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) was closed to employees hired after 1984 and replaced with the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). The major difference between the plans was that, unlike the fixed annuity of the CSRS plan, the FERS plan contained three complimentary components. The three legs of the FERS retirement plan are: 1. A basic annuity; 2. The TSP fund; and 3. Social Security. It is the combination of the three that provides FERS employees with the possibility of attaining a retirement annuity far in excess of that available under the CSRS. The most crucial FERS component, without question, is the TSP benefit. It is the one option that makes the crucial difference between a livable annuity and a sub-par one.

Briefly, under TSP the employer automatically contributes 1% of the employee's basic salary, but will contribute up to an additional 4% in matching funds based on the employee's contributions of at least 5% of his/her basic salary. The employee can contribute more than 5%, but does not receive matching funds for the additional contributions. The exact ceiling percentage for contributions is determined by the IRS annually, and is unique to each participant's circumstances.

The TSP is basically a 401K plan where contributions go into the account pre-tax, thereby lowering your annual taxable income. That feature also allows for the fund to grow without taxation until you retire and begin to make withdrawals, a point in life where most of us will be in a lower tax bracket.

The preceding is only a barebones sketch of the Thrift Savings Plan. The point of this article is to bring to your attention this crucial benefit which can make or break your ability to enjoy your retirement years, and is aimed specifically at those brothers and

sisters not maximizing this benefit. I am deeply saddened when counseling a retiring member who has spent 25 or 30 years carrying the mail, but did not fully participate in the TSP program. It is a disappointing shock to those individuals when they discover how little their annuity will be without the added benefit of a well funded Thrift Savings account. It is not too late to make up for lost time and avoid that devastating shock come retirement time.

If you are not contributing the maximum allowable amount, or not getting the full matching funds, then I strongly urge you to go to the TSP web site and get up to speed on this vital retirement tool. Think of the matching funds of 4% as money just laying there for you to pick up.

A Carrier with a base pay of 50k would get the automatic 1% contribution of \$19.23 per pay period. The additional matching 4% from the employer would amount to \$76.92 for a total contribution from the employer of \$96.15 per check. Over the course of a year the 4% matching funds would total \$1999.92, a rather substantial pay increase which is yours for the taking!

That is the yearly amount being left on the table by those not getting the matching funds available to them. With an employee contributing only 5% per check the total TSP contribution would come to about \$5,000 a year. Another way to look at it is... if you save \$192.30 a month the Postal Service will give you another \$192.30 every month. Where can you get a deal like that?

I have not even mentioned the various rates of return your combined earnings can potentially earn! You need to go to TSP.GOV and find out if you are doing all you can do to insure that your retirement will be one that you can fully enjoy when the time comes. You may also e-mail me for assistance at Flannery38@verizon.net



Mr. & Mrs. Rich Mitchell, Mr. & Mrs. Pete DelPopolo,
& Mr. Gerhard Henning & Daughter

Wisconsin and Beyond

by John Sheridan

There has been a recent increase in national media coverage in the state of Wisconsin. The newly elected Governor, Scott Walker, and a number of anti-labor legislators have enacted and signed into law a new bill that takes away the right's of state workers to bargain collectively for fair wages and benefits. Under this new law, state workers are prohibited from negotiating their health benefits in the future, and raises would be tied to the rate of inflation. The bill also requires public workers to contribute more to the cost of their retirement plans and health care premiums. Unless this law is overturned, Wisconsin public workers would become collective beggars.

How does this labor dispute in a small state nine hundred miles away have any effect on us as Federal Employees? In order to answer that question, we need to examine our own historical struggle prior to the great postal strike of 1970. Thanks to our right to collective bargaining, our contracts since 1970 have included a no lay-off provision, decent wages increases, an uncapped cost of living (COLA), health benefits, and a retirement plan. It wasn't always that way.

Prior to 1970, all increases in wages and benefits had to be approved by Congress. The process has been referred to as "collective begging." There was a period of about thirty years from the 1920's through the 1950's during which letter carriers received only one wage increase. Before the era of collective bargaining, a full time letter carrier married with two children often qualified for food stamps.

In 1970, letter carriers throughout the country risked everything they had and went on strike, demanding fair wages, benefits, and collective bargaining rights. Thanks to those brave men and women, we currently enjoy the right to bargain collectively with the Postal Service in an effort to obtain fair wages, benefits, and working conditions. That right is currently under attack by many who currently hold office and are more interested in protecting the earning capacity of the big corporations than protecting fair wages for American families.

Make no mistake, the attack on public workers in Wisconsin is an organized attack on every union worker in this country. The corporate agenda and strategy of union busting has spread to other states including Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Similar attacks against working men and women can be found within the Halls of Congress.

With so much at stake, all union members need to get involved. Sign up as an E-activist. Make phone calls or send E-Mails to your representatives in Congress, encouraging them to vote against anti-labor bills when they are introduced. Sign up for COLCPE and contribute bi-weekly through pay roll deductions. A small contribution to a well organized political action committee delivers a powerful message to our elected representatives. Sign up your entire family for vote by mail, which would help the Postal Service increase revenue and support our friends in Washington. Contact your local shop steward or area representative if you need help signing up.

The enemies of labor know that labor's voice, when raised as one, is a very powerful tool. That is why they are attempting to silence that voice. It is important that we use that tool to protect our rights and have our voices heard, from Wisconsin to New Jersey, and throughout our great nation.

Just as letter carriers stood together in 1970 to win fair wages and benefits and for a seat at the bargaining table, so must we stand together today to protect those wages and benefits, and to preserve that all important seat at the table. The time for action is now.

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?

Would you like someone looking out for your interests in Washington?

Sign Up for COLCPE Now!!!

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

Branch 38 Scholarships

27th ANNUAL NJ MERGED BRANCH 38 SCHOLARSHIPS

NJ Merged Branch 38 is proud to announce that we are now accepting applications for our 27th Annual Scholarships in honor of Michael J. McTigue, former Executive Board member of NJ Merged Branch 38, former Branch Chaplin, Gil Hampton, and former National Secretary Treasurer, Richard O'Connell.

All three scholarships are in the amount of \$1,500 and will be awarded to three dependents of Branch 38 members in their final year of high school. The scholarships will be presented to the winners at the June 1st Branch Meeting at the Woodbridge Elk's Lodge #2116, 665 Rahway Avenue, Woodbridge, N.J.. Details for entering are as follows:

To be eligible, the applicant must be the son or daughter of an active or retired member of Branch 38, and must be graduating from an accredited secondary school this year and planning entry into an accredited college or university this September. Other applicants will be considered where a member of Branch 38 is shown to be the student's primary source of dependency.

Interested applicants should fill in the accompanying form on this page, or provide the requested information in a legible manner and send along with their High School transcript to: NJ Merged Branch 38 Scholarship, 374 Morris Avenue, Springfield, N.J. 07081-1106.

The transcript must include S.A.T. scores, scholastic records and any extra-curricular activities participated in. Recommendations of faculty or guidance personnel may also be included.

**APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED
NO LATER THAN
MAY 16, 2011**

2011 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Name of Branch 38 Member (Parent):

Social Security Number: _____

Office Employed: _____

If Other Than Father or Mother:

Name and Address of High School:

List of Colleges or Universities Applied To:

Signature of Applicant:

Signature of Member:

THE SENTINEL
NJ Merged Branch 38, NALC
374 Morris Avenue
Springfield, NJ 07081

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TRENTON, NJ

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Branch Meeting Information & Directions

Meetings are held at 7:30 PM on the first Wednesday of each month.

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.