



WAKE UP!

President/ Editor
Dave Barbuzzi

Publisher

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Monthly Branch Meeting

Time: Mar 2, 2021 08:00 PM Eastern Time

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President's Message

***“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference”
Reinhold Niebuhr***

Some may recognize the above quote as a mantra for twelve step programs, most notably AA. The full text of the prayer is quite a bit more religious, but the passage above has been “lifted”, presumably for its conciseness.

The “prayer”, however, can also serve as a mantra in daily life. Almost daily, one can face a challenging situation and invoke those words. Think about it, each one of you that reads this article go to work each day in less than optimal conditions. Whether it be extreme parcel volume, overbearing managers, terrible staffing, or just a plain old bad day, you are all up against it.

So what are the things that you cannot change? Well, you cannot change the mail. It's going to come, and you're going to deliver it. So, is it really worth looking at the mail and stressing? I would say it's not. Just forge ahead and do your best, that's all that anyone can ask.

What requires courage to change? I'm going to modify the words a bit and add the word “knowledge” as it fits my narrative. Knowledge is power and power generally fosters courage. So, if you're being taken advantage of you can most likely change that by learning the rules. Elsewhere in this Wake-Up! you will learn about opting on routes. With that knowledge, you can exercise your rights and improve your experience at work, five days at a time.

Opting on a hold down is just a small part of what you can learn. If you take the time to meet your steward and start a relationship with him or her, you should be able to learn all about your rights. If you're not a conversationalist, simply go to the branch website at nalbranch25.com and click on “E-Mail Us”. You can ask whatever question you may have and we will respond as quickly as we can. If we don't have an answer for you immediately, we will find the answer for you.

Perhaps your route is overburdened. Show the courage to change that. Put in for a special route inspection and demonstrate that your route is overburdened. Management is required to adjust your route to as near to 8 hours as possible.

Finally, there is wisdom. We have to be able to realize when we are shoveling the proverbial @#\$\$% against the tide. To keep in line with my analogy, I'll again point to knowledge. In terms of a letter carrier or Union official, the “Wisdom to know the difference”, to me, means that we can't change what the contract allows

management to do. Although some provisions of the National Agreement, and some local agreements, may seem unfair, we have to realize that while the contracts are in effect, we can't change them. The wisdom to know the difference is understanding that what we want and what we are allowed are often times two different things.

This is probably the most difficult part of a Union official's job. I have written in the past that four of the most common words that I have to say, and they are four of the words that I don't enjoy saying, are “They can do that.” These four words are usually spoken to a letter carrier that has called to complain about something in their office, something that management is doing that the carrier believes has run afoul of the contract. Very frequently, after listening to the carrier's complaint, we are forced to tell them that “they” or management can do that.

We don't tell the carrier that because we lack the courage to change things, but because we have the wisdom to know that they can't be changed. We can't make something so simply because that is what you, or we want. During the course of my career, I couldn't even hazard a guess at how many times I've told a carrier that I just can't show up at their office with a big stick or a baseball bat and bend management to my will. It doesn't work that way.

BUT, if all the members start realizing what can't be changed and instead focus their energies on what can be changed, and learning the difference, we can make progress.

I wanted to hopefully clear up some misinformation that was disseminated in the postal service in mid-February by Operations Programs Support during a telecon with managers. Apparently, OPS misinformed some managers that Massachusetts was including the postal service with first responders in the Covid-19 vaccine cue. There were instructions on how to complete the questionnaires for vaccine websites, indicating that we were first responders. Many employees followed the instructions. Some were successful, and some were turned away at vaccine locations. The District Manager made management and the Union aware that the instructions were not correct, and that the postal service is still not eligible for the vaccine in Massachusetts. As many of you are probably aware, the age has been reduced from 75 to 65 and there have been various conditions such as asthma and obesity that qualify Massachusetts residents for the vaccine. We will relay any updates as we become aware.

Stay informed!

Dave Barbuzzi

Executive Vice-President's Report

I hope every member has exercised their right to vote on the ratification of the tentative agreement for our National Agreement by now. It is a good agreement that will expire in the Spring of 2023 if ratified. Everyone will want to know when any backpay will be paid out and the language is usually "as soon as administratively possible". Any payroll and annuity adjustments will also take place as soon as possible, and the NALC website, bulletins and the app will probably address these issues as soon as they know the answers. Stay tuned to these platforms.

If you ever receive a "letter of debt" from the Postal Service please contact your steward immediately, or the Union office if there is not a steward available, for direction. You will also usually receive an invoice in the mail from Eagan MN. Both letters should say exactly why the Postal Service is claiming you owe them money, but they sometimes are not clear. Usually, more information is needed. There are cases where an employee was over paid, or the employee's health benefit payments were not deducted while on the rolls of OWCP, and these could be legitimate. If you do owe money, we can help set up a payment schedule so you don't have to pay it all at once. But there are also times when a letter of debt is issued, and it is a mistake. Sometimes payroll is coded wrong and it results in a debt to the employee, usually involving holidays when on the rolls of OWCP. If you receive a letter claiming you owe a debt to the Postal Service, this letter needs to be grieved immediately in order to stop any deductions that the Postal Service may attempt to make. The Union can then help you determine if you actually owe the Postal Service the debt. The Postal Service must show proof that a debt is owed. Don't assume that any letter of debt is automatically legit, and contact your steward.

As I write this there are approximately 60 million Americans that have received the vaccinations for Covid -19 and hopefully the daily numbers increase tremendously as more doses get distributed. Weather has made a difference in distribution and the weather should be getting better very soon. Unfortunately, Postal employees are not yet on the radar for eligibility to vaccinations in Massachusetts, but the increase in distribution and administering the vaccines should get us closer to eligibility. Keep safe until then and keep wearing masks in the office, when not at your case, and when in contact with any customers or fellow employees. We are still seeing groups of employees being required to quarantine because of contact tracing. It is going to be a while before everyone that wants a vaccine can get one.

If you have any intention to retire before September of this year, I would suggest calling Shared Services now to request your "blue book", the application for

immediate retirement. We talk to a lot of employees that have questions about retirement and the consensus has been that it takes a couple of months to get a retirement consultation to go over the blue book with you. You can't get a consultation date until you have received the blue book. You give a tentative retirement date, up to 6 months in advance, in order to receive the book but that date can be changed once you fill out the paperwork. The retirement is not final until you send in the blue book, so if you change your mind and want to keep working you can do that also. The number for Shared Services is 877-477-3273. The retirement department at NALC headquarters is also an excellent resource for retirement related questions.

We still can't meet in person for our monthly meetings because of the restriction of the size of indoor meetings in the state, but the number of Covid cases and hospitalizations is going down dramatically. If this keeps up it may be possible to meet before the end of the year, hopefully by the summer. Keep an eye on the Wakeup for information every month on the Zoom meetings we are having until we can meet in person. The branch website also has a direct link to the Zoom meetings. We are getting more members every month to join the meetings, it isn't perfect, but we get to share some info and you don't have to leave your house.

Keep your head up!

Paul Desmond

Calendar of Events

March 1	Peace Corps Day
March 2	Regular Monthly Zoom Meeting
March 4	Hug A GI Day
March 12	Girl Scouts Day
March 14	Daylight Savings Time
March 15	Ides of March
March 17	St. Patrick's Day
March 20	International Earth Day
March 25	Feast of the Annunciation
March 27	Passover Begins
March 28	Palm Sunday

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Opt/Hold-down



This month I want to write about one of our more complicated contractual rights: opting. Opting is when a carrier puts a "hold-down" or fills in on a route that is temporarily vacant for five or more days. Article 41 of the National Agreement provides provisions and rights for opting. You may also have a local past practice or governing language in your office's Local Memorandum of Understanding concerning opting. Be sure to check your office LMOU on the Branch website. If you don't have language in your office LMOU and the 2019-2023 National Agreement is ratified, now may be the time to add language during the local implementation period which is April 29th through May 28th. Absent LMOU language or past practice carriers who wish to opt will have to learn of opportunities by word of mouth or through scheduling. If you hear about a hold-down opportunity be sure to pass the word to employees who are eligible.

CCAs may opt after 60 calendar days from the date of their appointment. Be aware that when you are awarded an opt, you are entitled to the route's regularly scheduled hours and days. If the schedule for the route you hold-down has n/s days of Saturday and Sunday for the week, those would be your n/s days. This does not prevent management from scheduling you to work one or both days. On a hold-down n/s day, management may schedule you to work off the hold-down. Using the above example, lets say management tells you they are going to give you Sunday and Tuesday off instead of Saturday and Sunday because a couple carriers have annual leave on Saturday. This would be a grievance, as it violates the general opting rules in Article 41. Furthermore, if management instructs you to work off your opt on a regularly scheduled day, be sure to request union time with your steward and file a grievance.

Another provision of opting is the ability to put a hold-down on a route that is already being held down. As example: Carrier A has a three week opt on Route 1. During week two of the opt, Carrier A goes on vacation. Carrier B may request to hold-down the route until Carrier A returns. When Carrier A returns, they continue the opt for week three on Route 1. These are just a few of the many rules regarding opting. I have heard some bogus excuses from management over the years as to why a carrier is being denied a hold-down. If you have any doubt or something seems off in your request for an opt, be sure to contact the Branch or request union time with your steward.

Tony Bossi

Your "Wake-Up!" is produced in-house at the Branch 25 Union office each and every month.

 **BRANCH 25 RETIREE GRATUITY VOUCHER** 

Name: _____
(as it will appear on plaque)

P.O. Retiring from: _____

Phone number: _____

Retirement date: _____

Please note: Retiree must be a member in good standing at date of retirement. Retiree has 4 months from retirement date to remit this voucher to the branch office. Please mail to: NALC Branch 25
2500 Main St, Suite 201, Tewksbury Ma, 01876

Bob is driving down the street. He sees his friend Joe on the side of the road. Joe's car is smashed up. Bob says, "Have an accident?" Joe replies, "No thanks, just had one." It's an old joke, but getting into an accident is no joke.

Last month, I wrote about the expanded vehicle check list. The list includes making sure your truck has an accident kit. So what should be in the accident kit and what should be done when you have a vehicle accident? The accident kit should have Form 91 which is the accident report form. It should also contain USPS local instructions for accidents. It should contain a piece of chalk which we will cover shortly. It should also contain the notice that explains how the USPS handles insurance and registration on their vehicles.

The Local Instructions is subtitled "Procedure to follow in the event of an accident". I encourage all carriers to read through the document. There are bullet points which are not in any sequential order so depending on the type of accident that has occurred the order of actions may be different.

No matter what the accident situation you need to think about your own safety first. If you are injured, you need to get to a safe place if possible. Next, you need to call 911 or local police. Next, if the person in the other vehicle is injured and needs assistance, help them if you can. From here, if your vehicle is in a dangerous place, move it to safety*. (Management may disagree with moving the vehicle at all, but remember, you are responsible for your own safety). This is where you would use the chalk to mark the vehicle's position at impact. At this point, you would contact your supervisor to inform them of the accident. If you have struck a stationary vehicle or object try to locate the owner.

From here, you will tell the police and your supervisor what happened and begin to deal with the paperwork. As always it is best to be honest and explain fully about what happened. However, at the scene you should keep talking to only what is necessary and try to keep emotions in check.

Stay safe,

Jim Salvati

Lyrics trivia:

"He blew his mind out in a car, he didn't notice that the lights had changed."

Name the song title and the person who sang this line in the song.

As I was gathering ideas for this month's article for the Wake-Up! a particular thought came to mind. Along with Sunday being Super Bowl Sunday the day marks forty years to the day that I became an employee of the United States Postal Service. On that note I'd like the privilege of doing some reminiscing.

I've been thinking about the earliest days when I hardly knew what I was doing at the case and didn't know where I was going as I left the office to deliver a route. No Carrier Academy in those days! I remember some of the grizzled veteran carriers learning that I was "Marty's kid", helping me along the way.

I've been thinking about the countless Beverly Post Office employees, their generosity, along with that of many others, allowing me to be the courier for delivering tens of thousands of dollars to Beverly's annual Good Friday Charity Walk.

I've been thinking about the carrier friends I've made, some of whom have left this earth. Those still here, too numerous to mention, know who they are.

I've been thinking about having the good fortune to be elected to some fifteen national and state conventions and being a party to the good work done there. A memory sticks out. Due to sheer happenstance I had a twenty minute sit-down with then national President Vincent Sombrotto and his wife Rae. Let me sum it up by saying that when I left there my feet didn't touch the ground for the next couple of hours. Vincent had an uncanny knack one-on-one of making you feel as important as he was.

I've been thinking about our NALC leaders on the national, state and local levels who go to work every day and drill down to improving the lives of active and retired letter carriers. I realize that the solid and sustained middle class lives that we live are the result of those efforts.

I've been thinking about today's letter carriers, who, despite all the obstacles, get the job done day after day.

I've been thinking about the wonderful folks on my route(s) who had that glass of cold water for me on those brutally hot summer days and those hundreds of gifts and warm wishes during that "most wonderful time of the year".

I've been thinking about inspirational labor leaders, among them Cedar Chaves ("The struggle never ends") and Martin Luther King, Jr. ("We shall overcome.") and their quest to secure the dignity of labor and the equality of justice.

I've been thinking that thanks to the above and other life's realities I can sit down on Super Bowl Sunday evening, crack open a couple Miller Lites and remember to be grateful for the previous forty years. Keep on truckin,

Rich Donlon

Vice President's Report

In the January issue of *The Wake Up* I wrote about Postal Reform. As I said in that article, all the legislation from the 116th Congress was dead upon the swearing in of the 117th Congress. However, in the roughly 6 weeks since then there has been some new legislation introduced. So far 6 bills or resolutions have been introduced in the House of Representatives and Senate that concern letter carriers specifically:

H.R. 82 Social Security Fairness Act introduced on January 4 would repeal provisions reducing Social Security benefits for those receiving other pensions.

H Res. 47 introduced by Massachusetts Congressman Stephen Lynch, a long-time supporter, would make sure the USPS does not get privatized.

S. 145 introduced on Feb 1 would repeal the pre-funding requirement from the USPS.

H.R. 695, The USPS Fairness Act, introduced on February 2 would also eliminate the pre-funding requirement.

H. Res 109 introduced on February 5 would maintain door delivery for business and residential customers.

H. Res 114 introduced on February 11 would maintain 6-day delivery.

All the bills and resolutions have been introduced but that is just the beginning of a long process. Many more co-sponsors will be added on and the process of moving forward will get going. More information on the progress of this legislation will be reported as it moves along.

Over the summer the appointment of new Postmaster General Louis DeJoy was big news and became bigger news as reports of widespread changes to the operation gained big national attention before the 2020 elections. It has been reported recently that he now has new strategic plan for the USPS. This plan has been reported to include the elimination of the 2-day delivery tier of first-class mail. All first-class mail would be lumped into one category with a 3 to 5-day delivery target. The plan would also seek a significant increase in postage rates as well as eliminating air transportation of first-class mail and only using ground transportation to move it. According to the Postal Regulatory Commission, it cost \$457 million flying first-class mail last year and \$314 million to transport it by truck. The mail has already been slowed. The NALC was forced to extend the date for members to get ballots back to them because of it. It seems like further slowing the mail and asking for higher rates is not the way to go.

There has been speculation that President Biden would get rid of the PMG. The president does not have that direct ability, but he does control appointments of

the 9-member Postal Board of Governors. Last week, Ron Bloom was announced as the new chairman of the Board of Governors and it has been reported President Biden was eager to fill the remaining vacancies on the board. Some members of Congress have publicly expressed the opinion that Biden should get rid of the entire board. In a letter Senator Tammy Duckworth, D-Illinois, said the following, "There should not be any toleration for their silence or complicity in overseeing these harmful policy changes that have also eroded the public trust in this agency." Rep. Bill Pascrell Jr., D-NJ, went even further calling for Biden to fire the entire board when he took to Twitter saying, "Americans don't want to hear excuses. We can start fixing the Post Office by firing the leadership." We will see what Biden does going forward. When asked about it, white House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said: "I don't have any personnel announcements or specifics of the determinations of the – or, I should say, the factors that are playing into those decisions. But, you know, the President stands by his concerns about what happened last fall and improvements he'd like to see at the Post Office."

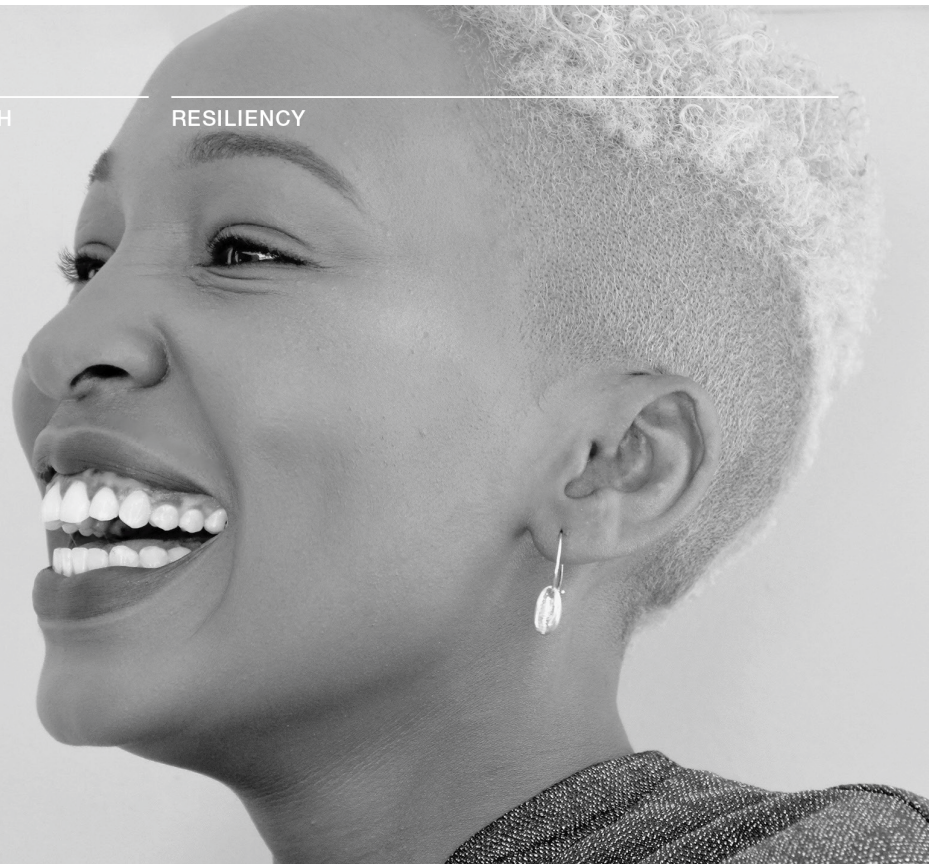
Quarter 1 financial results for the USPS are in and the news was good. The USPS had a profit of \$318 Million in the period covering October 1 to December 31, 2020. This was a big turnaround from Quarter 1 a year ago when the USPS showed a \$748 Million loss. Shipping and package volume was up 25% during the quarter and a whopping 40% during December alone. Management has said that the kind of parcel volume we have seen recently is unsustainable and is still pushing for more operational changes as was discussed earlier in this article. It will be interesting to see what the numbers for the next quarter, without the holiday volumes, look like.

In Solidarity,

Dan Wheeler

Being Resilient

With practice and focus, you can strengthen your resilience.



Being resilient means that you are able to recover and adapt. You are able to handle the unexpected in life with relative ease. Changes and difficult situations don't knock you off course; instead, you meet them with determination, optimism and success. Each of us has some level of resilience, even if it is only for the small, everyday changes we face. With some focus and work, we can increase our resiliency and face changes head on.

Learning to become more resilient takes effort. But it's possible. With a little practice and a bit more focus, you can strengthen your resilience.

The first three steps include:

- Anticipating change
- Recognizing your triggers
- Using the resources available to you

ANTICIPATING CHANGE

Although you may not be able to predict when, you know change will happen. Anticipating it with the right attitude. Remember that change provides an opportunity for growth. When you anticipate change with a can-do attitude, it helps you meet the change head on.

RECOGNIZE YOUR TRIGGERS

Recognize when you are starting to get thrown off and stress is building up. When you realize a change is getting the best of you, focus on practicing resilience.

USING THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO YOU

Some changes require you to look beyond yourself to resources you have — whether it is a family member who helps with childcare during a shift change, a community organization who is able to offer peer support during a loss, or your Employee Assistance Program which can coach you through a change and increase your resilience. Don't hesitate to reach out to available assistance when you experience a change.

Before change becomes a challenge, reach out to your EAP for help with strengthening your resilience.



CALL US TODAY: 800-327-4968
 800-EAP-4YOU | TTY: 877-492-7341
 WWW.EAP4YOU.COM

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