

Michigan Messenger

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President's Report

Gary VanHoogstraten
President

There is no doubt that our world is a bloodied and battered place these days; with wars, terrorism, and deadly acts of nature taking a terrible toll on us all. As I begin this column, I am reminded of the number of fatalities in Iraq from Michigan. As of January 1st, that number stood at 118, and even more a terrible number, when you consider that there has been over 3,000 from the United States as a whole. Many of them were young, those who still had dreams, which now will never be fulfilled. Whatever position you might hold on the war, please take a moment to remember our fallen heroes. We have even lost a few of our own Postal Union Brothers in the fight.

A deeply saddened city of Grand Rapids, and the entire nation mourned the passing of one of Michigan's own, Gerald R Ford. Character, integrity, and honesty were just a few words that so aptly described President Ford. Governor Granholm was quoted: "The nation has lost a President, but Michigan has lost a native son, who honored us with his service to our state and the nation." Republicans and Democrats praised Ford for his bi-partisan nature during his quarter century in the US House and his 895 days as Vice-President and President. House Speaker, Nancy Pelosi said of Ford: "I have great respect for the fair and reliable leadership President Ford displayed throughout his service in the House." Sen. Carl Levin praised President Ford for his bi-partisan nature and the respect it ignited in Democrats and Republicans. "President Ford could work both sides of the aisle and everyone knew it." He also was said to have helped heal the nation after that terrible war in Vietnam. His honesty and patriotism should be a model to all elected

officials today and in the future. President Ford will truly be missed. I was able to go to Grand Rapids the night before the funeral. I stood in a line at length to show my respects. Please keep the Ford family and friends in your thoughts and prayers.

On a positive note, on a chilly, cloudy, windy New Years Day, on the steps of the State's Capitol, I was privileged to be able to attend the Inauguration Ceremony of Governor Jennifer Granholm. I was lucky to be one of the ones that had credentials to be upfront and close for this event. While it was brief, only 15 minutes, I can attest that it was very inspiring and moving. While we all know that nothing can be accomplished overnight, we now have hope that with the Democrats in control in the House of Representative that we will see some positive changes for the citizens of Michigan.

We now have a new contract as well. APWU members ratified a four-year Collective Bargaining Agreement by a vote of 84,486 to 12,016. Out of the 215,000 ballots that were sent out, only 45% of them were returned. I would like to commend those that took time to vote (41% of Michigan Postal Workers Union's Members at Large voted and had their voices heard). While I have some reservations about this contract, I will share them with you at future meetings. I am not saying it was good or bad, but I came from a small office, and I can only see these members getting forgotten.

The District Meeting is now finalized and the classes are set for March 2nd & 3rd. Check the website and this edition of the Messenger for details.

We are making the final preparations for the State Educational Convention in June. Director of Education, Mike McCain and I have been in communication as far as the classes and I am told that his article will contain some information about these. Our connection with the hotel has been nothing but a pleasure. At the time we signed

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President's Report Continued

the contract, Mark Hart was the Educational Director. I would again like to thank him at this time for getting us started and to where we are at this time. We never skipped a beat with the transition to Mike. Because of the distance, location and rates, we are having the American Plan for the convention (which is all inclusive (room and food)). We have had this type of plan before, but I must remind those who plan to attend that everyone will have to purchase the plan. This type of arrangement gives us the leverage we need to keep costs down for you and the state organization by getting many of the rooms (training, etc.) at no cost. I know in the past, members have tried to sneak in with someone else. Please, be honest with the hotel and the MPWU and do the American Plan. Any and all information is on the web site and will be sent to all local presidents and state officers.

In closing, at the time of this writing, we have yet to receive any measurable snow, but it is in the forecast. Once it does arrive, I hope each of you have an enjoyable and safe winter.

Until Next Time



Education at Work

Michael McCain
Director of Education

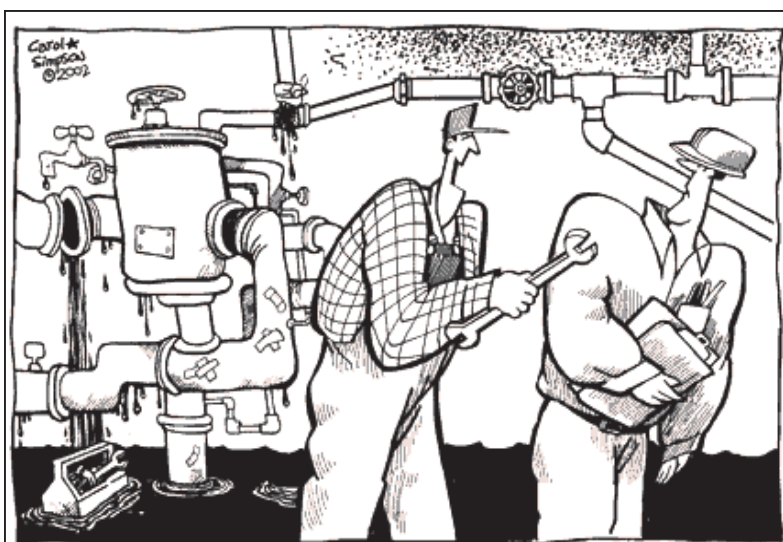
We have a lot planned for the upcoming 2007 Educational Convention, but I would like to start by thanking Jane Duggan and Richard Blake for all their help and insight into planning this event. I would also like to thank the instructors who have offered to teach.

At this upcoming convention we have put together classes that we thought would be of great importance to those across the state of Michigan. We have tried to listen to Local Presidents, Officers and Stewards, and to the State Officers and found what they feel are important classes to have. While we have some classes that will have limited space available due to teaching requirements or size of class rooms (e.g. Arbitration will be limited to 20 students and the computer classes will be divided into beginners and advanced at 30 students per class), I strongly believe that everyone should find and learn something.

As of now, the following classes will be offered.

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| * Arbitration | * Basic Computers |
| * Advanced Computer | * MVS |
| * Article 12 | * OWCP |
| * Maintenance | * Retirement |
| * Veterans Issues | * Editor's Training |
| * Fiduciary Responsibility | |
| * Steward Training A-Z | |

APWU
APWU
APWU



*"What do I need a union training program for?
My cousin is the supervisor here."*

Kelly Wilinski, who heads the State's APWU Auxiliary, is planning many activities for the families and children of members who will be busy in classes. Kelly expressed to me how she would like to help educate the young children on the Union and its' functions, but she also wanted to build relationships with the families of the unions brothers and sisters. This would be a great way to start growing the Michigan APWU family by bringing them to functions and help in making our Organization even stronger. If you want to help Kelly in her quest, go to the Michigan Postal Workers Union web site under Auxiliary and you will find her contact information.

Congress Approves 'Reform' Bill, ouch! We take another hit thanks to last minute moves by con-

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Education at Work Continued

gress. We must use annual leave, sick leave, or leave with out pay (LWOP) for the first three days while injured on the job, and must be off work for more than fourteen days to collect anything. Of course we can "get back" our portion of leave used if our claim is accepted. I tell you this because we must use this as a platform to tell our members how important COPA is to the union. Our COPA contributions help get the message to legislators of what is important to us the Union.

In closing, if you know of any classes that you would like to have at the upcoming Educational Convention that aren't listed here, or at any upcoming District Meeting, please let me know.

Yours in Solidarity,
Mike



The Long and Short of It

Michael A. Long
Editor

We have a Contract

Well, I know in the last edition I said it would happen, but now it is official, or is it? Maybe by the time this paper arrives, it will have been signed off and be in effect. At the upcoming District Meeting, we will be having a discussion/information session about the new contract. Make sure you plan to attend. I know personally, there are a few questions I have and look forward to being answered.

Discounts for Cell Phones

Also in my last article, I made mention about the discount for AllTel. I stated that it was 20%; since then, I have found out that the information I was provided was incorrect. When I personally went and signed up for AllTel, I was given a 15% discount for my first line of service. If you have any questions, please feel free to give me a call, and I will help you also to get a discount. Information as to the "code" needed for this discount will be posted on the website.

Upcoming District Meeting

The upcoming District Meeting being held in

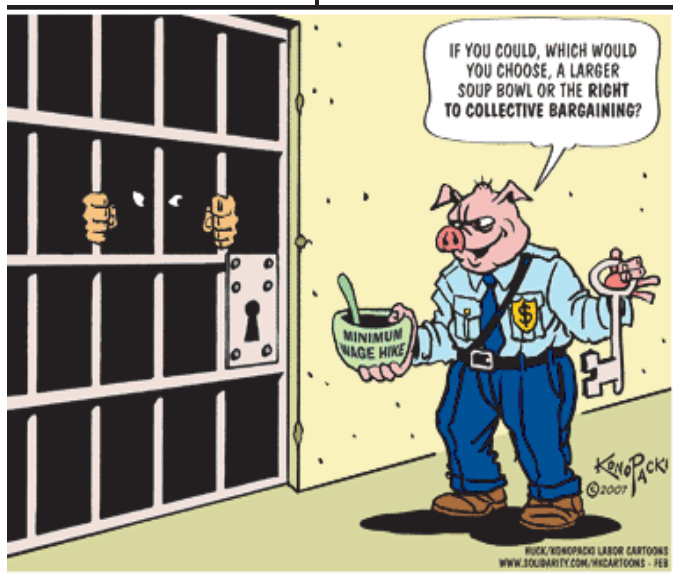
door late last month, you weren't the only one. I feel that I should let you know the information I have as to the reason and hopefully it won't happen again. The paper was sent to the printers on December 15th; however, I can only surmise that due to the upcoming holiday season, and subsequent

backlog it wasn't finalized at the printers until December 26th and then sent to the mailers. From there, I don't know what happened as to why it took so long from there to you. I spoke with the mailers and they told me that they had it out to the Postal Service within three days of receipt. (putting it at or around December 29th). I can only guess that with the New Year holiday, along with any backlog of Standard Mail, that it took that long to process. As the Editor, I take responsibility, and apologize to you. I would strongly suggest that to ensure you get the information contained herein as soon as possible, that, normally, the same day the paper is sent to the printers, it is also available for viewing on the website.

Did you know? The comment on the back page of the last edition of the Messenger was actually a statement from the Calvin and Hobbes comic strip. I just thought it was too perfect for what we were dealing with at the time.

In closing, I wanted to make sure you remember it is now time to file for any scholarships for next year for either your college bound child or if they are already there. The National APWU and the Auxiliary both have Scholarships to apply for. Good Luck. Unfortunately though, when I started writing this article, I was going to tell you to contact Lifecare to assist you with getting the scholarships; however, as of January 31, this service is no longer available. Hopefully we get it back, I know we have lost it in the past; however this is one service we do not want to lose, ever!

Until Next Time... Yours in Solidarity,



Kalamazoo is planned and finalized. Check on the last page of this edition for specifics. See you there!

Michigan Messenger - Nov/Dec 2006 Edition.

If you were wondering why the Messenger arrived at your



Legislative Report

Regina Favors
Legislative Director



Veteran's Report

John Smeekens
Veterans Director

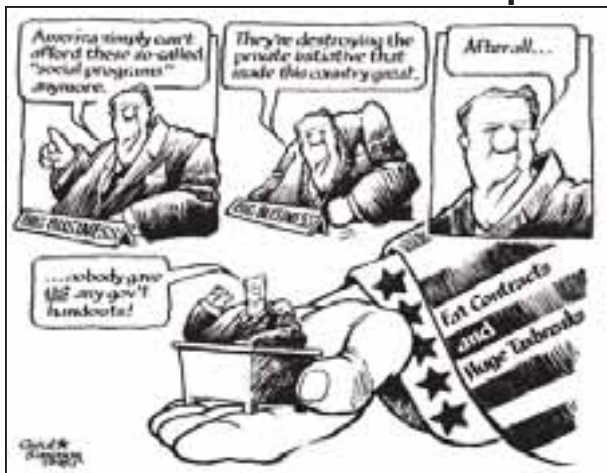
Greetings and Happy New Year to everyone. Hope that everyone welcomed in the New Year looking forward to better and brighter days. I also hope that no one has already broken any of their resolutions (smile). I want to thank those of you that have sent well wishes and prayers to my granddaughter. To those who do not know or have not heard, my granddaughter became ill in November and was subsequently diagnosed with a brain tumor and had surgery on the 26th and has been in a coma since that time. As of now she appears to be trying to come out but is not fully awake yet is somewhat responsive to some things, THANK GOD!!.

Sisters and Brothers, if your young children have headaches please try and insist on the doctor giving them a brain scan or whatever they can to detect this because contrary to popular belief it is not normal even when you can attribute it to something so simple as too many sweets, or too much salt, playing too hard etc. Again thank you for the prayers.

On the legislative note, let us be mindful that even though nationally the Democrats gained control we still need to hold our elected officials accountable and not let them forget the promises they made. We need to continue to push for and assist Rep. John Conyers Jr.'s Universal Health Care Bill (HR676). We must continue the fight for Social Security because it ain't over yet. And lastly (for now) we must stay tuned for what will be happening about that dread passage of Prop 2. We don't know yet what the next step will be, but I am sure that the struggle is not over and done with because I am still not convinced that people fully understood what they voted for!

Stay Tuned,

Gina



COMP INCREASE

On October 16, 2006, President Bush signed into law a cost of living adjustment for disability compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) and certain other related benefits for disabled Veterans' and/or their spouses. The rate of increase is 3.3 percent effective December 1, 2006, which should have shown up in your January 01, 2007 check. In addition to the compensation increases, raises are expected in dependency allowances and statutory awards. The VA anticipates a clothing allowance award to be increased about August 1, 2007

PRESCRIPTION SCAM

The DVA (Department of Veterans Affairs) is telling all Veterans to be on alert for telephone calls from someone claiming to be from the "VA Pharmacy" and asking for personal information and a list of their present medications. Some disabled Veterans have received phone calls from a man who claims to be from the VA pharmacy, and then asks for their social security account number and a list of their medications because of new co-pay regulations. Then they say that the Veteran is told that they owe money because of the new VA co-pay regulations and asks for their credit card number and information to pay the bill. The DVA stresses that there have been **no change in regulations**, and that they do not contact patients by telephone for prescription renewals. Officials urge Veterans to be very careful about giving out personal information over the phone to people they do not know.

MILITARY NURSES MEMORIAL

I'm sure many of you have seen the three nurses, just several hundred feet from The Wall, in DC. There they are assisting a wounded soldier from the Vietnam era. But were you aware of the heroic size white marble figure, sitting against a background of evergreens, which looks out upon the Army, Navy, and Air Force nurses who so valiantly earned their right to lie at Arlington? The granite statue of a nurse in uniform, sculpted by Francis Rich, honors the nurses who served in the U. S. armed forces in World War

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Veterans' Report Continued

I, many of whom rest among the hundreds of nurses buried in Section 21, also called the "Nurses' Section." There was an inscription on the base of the statue that said "Army and Navy Nurses." That's been changed, due to a rededication, on November 20, 1970. Presently, now on a bronze plaque, over the original inscription, in raised letters it states; "THIS MONUMENT WAS ERECTED IN 1938 AND REDEDICATED IN 1970 TO COMMEMORATE DEVOTED SERVICE TO COUNTRY AND HUMANITY BY ARMY, NAVY, AND AIR FORCE NURSES." Thanks to Naval Captain Delores Cornelius, Deputy Director of The Navy Nurse Corps, who on July 12, 1970 requested authority to install a bronze plaque over the existing inscription. So see, you can make a difference.

VIETNAM-OFFSHORE VETERANS - Court overturns VA opinion.

Veterans who have a disability, considered presumptive due to herbicide exposure and who served in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia or on Navy ships off the coast of Vietnam may be entitled to VA benefits and **SHOULD FILE A CLAIM.** Also, Veterans who were previously denied service-connected disability for a presumptive disability related to exposure to herbicides because they served offshore and did not actually set foot on soil in Vietnam should reopen a VA claim. I have the names and phone numbers of all the **Veterans Representatives** for all the counties in Michigan. Note: these are Veterans' Representatives for each county office of Veterans' Affairs. These reps do not work for the VA; they work for you and are there to help you. **DO NOT CONTACT THE VA BY YOURSELF, GET HELP FROM A VETERANS' REPRESENTATIVE AND HAVE THEM HANDLE YOUR CLAIM AND ALL ASSOCIATED PAPERWORK.** This also goes for **Widows and Widowers** of Vietnam Offshore Veterans. Those who were previously denied service-connected disability for a presumptive disability related to exposure to herbicides because they served offshore and did not actually set foot on soil in Vietnam, and whose disability either **CAUSED OR CONTRIBUTED TO THEIR DEMISE**, may be entitled to and should file for **DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION** benefits. The process takes time, and it could take as long as a year to get an answer, but if it is accepted, it is retroactive to the date that the VA accepts your claim. You have nothing to lose, it only takes up some of your time, and it doesn't cost anything. **DO IT!!!!**

MICHIGAN BUSINESS

If you're reading this article, you're probably a postal employee, you probably have a decent job and you might even be happy about it. But did you know that there are some great benefits out there for disabled veterans who would like to start their own business. Plus, last year Governor Granholm signed Public Act 91 of 2005 into law. PA91 of 2005 amended the Management and Budget Act to provide a 10% price preference for companies owned by Veterans' with service-connected disabilities. It also established a goal of awarding at least 3% of total expenditures for construction, goods, and services to qualified disabled Veterans. So if you know a Veteran who owns their own business, have them contact Sean Carlson at 517-373-0300 to find out more about State contracting opportunities. And if you're interested yourself in getting into your own business, contact your local Department of Veterans Affairs to find out about business loans for Veterans.

ARLINGTON TO EXPAND

The Defense Department has acquired more than 70 acres of land to expand the now 600 plus acre hillside on the West bank of the Potomac River. In 1998, it was estimated that Arlington would run out of grave space between the year 2025 and 2030. Officials have searched the area around the cemetery in all directions to see who owned the land, what it was currently used for, and the likelihood of being able to acquire it. So far the results of the search have yielded three parcels of land which will allow Arlington to continue operations until 2060.

VETERANS' BENEFITS & SERVICES

I recently received copies of "Veterans' Benefits & Services for Michigan Veterans who served in the Military." This 40 page booklet gives you names and numbers of the myriad of people and benefits available for Veterans and their families. Who to call, who to contact, in regards to education and training, home loan and tax credits and insurance, health care and hospital benefits, V.A. center for Women veterans, and etc. etc. etc... It is a new edition as it was revised in August of 2006. The booklet was made available from the office of State Representative Lisa Wojno of the 28th District, with the kind assistance of Mr. Bill Drake of that office. If you would like a copy, contact me through the 480-481 Area Local Office, or through the MPWU website.

Yours in Solidarity,

John



Injury Comp Report

Ron Krumrie
Human Relations/
Injury Comp Director

National Reassessment Process (NRP)

What is the National Reassessment Process? The NRP is part of the 2002 Postal Service Transformation Plan to reduce the cost associated with accepted OWCP claims involving injured employees.

One of the ways identified by the Postal Service to reduce costs was by a "private sector outplacement of injured Postal service employees".

Now it didn't start out as a reassessment process. In the beginning it was called what it really was, the Outplacement Pilot Program. Just what the 2002 Transformation Plan called for.

PHASE ONE

In May 2005, the Postal Service notified the APWU at the National Level that in March of 2004, in response to a need created by declining workload, they began an Outplacement Pilot Program for the purpose of reassessing rehabilitation and limited duty assignments in the New York Metro Area. At that time, no APWU craft members were impacted as a result of this initial pilot program.

PHASE TWO

However, in mid 2005, Phase 2 started in San Diego, California. The Postal Service changed the name of the program to the National Reassessment Process, and now APWU craft members were impacted and they are still calling it a Pilot program.

PHASE THREE

In early 2006, Phase 3 took place in the Western New York District, still called the National Reassessment Process, more APWU craft members are impacted, and we are still calling it a pilot program.

PHASE FOUR (where we are at now)

The Postal Service has expanded the "Reassessment Process" nationwide, and it will no longer be called a pilot program.

All districts will participate, and more APWU craft members will be affected.

Here are some options if you are impacted by this so called process:

- ⇒ Filing a Claim with OWCP
- ⇒ Congressional Inquiries
- ⇒ Appeal to the Merit System Protection Board (MSPB),
- ⇒ Filing a Grievance
- ⇒ EEO Complaints
- ⇒ Disability Retirement.

OWCP rights were fought for and won by the Union brothers and sisters who came before us. It seems injured employees are now deemed damaged merchandise, expendable human corpses.

Everyone represented by the APWU may someday suffer an injury in the performance of their duties. You should demand your worker's compensation rights if that day comes and that is what this Union is here to protect.

The Postal Service has a right to re-evaluate and reassess employees in limited duty jobs. However it has an obligation under law to make every effort to provide limited duty to employees who have compensable injuries.

That obligation is in no way diminished by any Transformation Plan, Outplacement Program, Reassessment Process, or anything else the Postal Service may want to call it.

The Postal Service has changed some words, such as outplacement to reassessment and program to process. However the goal has never changed. That goal has always been to reduce the cost associated with accepted OWCP claims involving injured employees.

This battle to protect our rights continues; grievances have been filed and are pending, with many more to follow. MSPB appeals have been filed by some of the affected members, with many more to follow. Congressional investigations are being conducted, with many more to follow.

May all your grievances be winners and your claims approved.

Ron



Clerk Craft Report

Richard Blake
Clerk Craft Director

Management's "new and improved" method of window staffing

As part of their relentless and obsessive push to eliminate career Clerk positions, management appears to have come up with a new method of "staffing" their retail operations. It appears that their new plan is for every customer who enters a retail lobby to have to "run a gauntlet" of people who are trying to do everything possible to *prevent* them from reaching a Clerk's station, by using "lobby directors" and "APC hosts" to divert people from the Clerk's stations. This wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing if the "lobby directors" and "APC hosts" were *Clerks* - but they rarely are. In this article I'd like to address these two issues, and educate our stewards and our members how to fight this attack on our craft. Please note, I have emphasized areas by either bolding or italicizing only.

Lobby directors - most of you are aware of the basic function of lobby directors, and it's pretty hard to argue against them *in principle* - after all, why should a customer who's only looking to drop off a "hold" form, or pick up a piece of certified mail, wait in line for 10 minutes so that they can be helped by a window clerk, when a lobby director can serve them much quicker? All fine and dandy - but the problem lies in the fact that management thinks *anybody* can be utilized as a "lobby director" - including managers and injured employees from other crafts. Well, in Section 125.4 of the Postal Operations Manual, a "lobby director" is defined like this - "a friendly, knowledgeable **clerk** in the lobby who greets customers, determines what they need, and assists them in selecting services and preparing paperwork before they reach the service counter. Lobby directors perform the same duties as the clerks behind the counter, except that they do not handle money." The same language can be found in the Office of Retail Programs "Lobby Director Program Guide", which not only repeats the definition above, but outlines how they should be selected - *by soliciting volunteers from an office's window clerk staff*. Several arbitrators have found in our favor regarding managers performing this work, despite two old Step 4 settlements which give management the right to perform "lobby sweeps" on an occasional basis; probably the best of the bunch is the award from Arbitrator Oberstein (E94C-4E-C-97050098), where he not only specifically

addresses those Step 4 settlements (and finds that they did not authorize management to act as "lobby directors" or perform "lobby sweeps" on a consistent, regular basis) but also finds such actions to be a violation of the National award from arbitrator Snow (AC-N-6922), an award which management usually uses *against* us because it weakened our claim on work which doesn't directly involve either processing mail or waiting on customers.

With regard to injured employees from other crafts performing this work, there are some good awards out there on this issue as well; probably the best is the one from arbitrator Stiglitz (F98C-4F-C-99135531), where she dismisses management's attempts to characterize such work as "lobby sweeps" and says, basically, that no matter what you *call* the work, it's still **Clerk craft work**. In Ann Arbor we recently got a very large settlement on this issue, involving the use of injured carriers as "lobby directors".

Remember, when management is trying to find work for an injured employee, their first obligation is not to say "gee, where do we need help?", but rather to make every effort to first find them work within their own craft (ELM 546, Handbook EL-505, Chapter 7). When management has tried utilizing the injured employee in their own craft only to find that there's no medically-suitable work available for them in that craft, *then* they may consider employing them outside of their craft. In addition, management should discuss such an assignment (of an injured non-Clerk to Clerk duties) with the Union in advance (as has been held by arbitrators such as Helburn, Parkinson, and Sugerman, among others); such language has been incorporated into the 2006 National Agreement as well. Also, management has the burden of proving that there was no medically-suitable work available for the injured employee in their own craft (rather than the Union being put in the impossible position of having to prove a negative), as has been held by arbitrators Walt, Nathan, and Marlatt, among others. I realize that there are plenty of loony managers out there who insist that they have the right to do this (without discussing the assignment with the Union and without having to prove that there was no medically-suitable work available for the injured employee in their own craft), but once you research the issue you'll find out that their position doesn't hold water.

"APC Hosts" - many offices now have these machines (the "automated postal center"), which were specifically designed to eliminate Clerk jobs. Of course, there is no such thing as a *bid position* called "APC Host", or "APC Assistant", whatever management wants to call it - but just because there is no specific bid position doesn't mean

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Clerk Craft Report Continued

that the Clerk craft shouldn't still assert jurisdiction over this work. Of course, management immediately reacted to the deployment of the APC's by thinking "great, not only do we have a machine that will help get rid of Clerks, we also have some place to stick injured employees", but things haven't worked out that way. In January 2006, arbitrator Sugerman said this regarding the duties of APC Host (or whatever you want to call it): "the work performed in the APC program is of the type and nature performed by APWU-represented postal clerks", and "will be considered exclusive to the Clerk craft" (this case originated in Ann Arbor). In an award from April of 2006, arbitrator DiLeone Klein also held that such duties are Clerk craft duties, and that the assignment of an injured carrier to a position of "APC Host" (or whatever) was in violation of the contract. In September, 2006, the Step 3 settlements of 2 cases from Minnesota stated that "the duties in question involving the APC are Clerk craft work"; this represented an admission by management that these are Clerk duties. Also, as with the discussion above regarding the use of injured non-Clerks as lobby directors, all of the same arguments will apply with regard to the assignment of an injured employee as an "APC Host": management first must make every effort to find the injured employee work in their own craft, they must discuss the assignment of the injured employee with APWU, and management has the burden of proving that there was no medically-suitable work available for the injured employee in their own craft.

I'd be remiss if I didn't admit that I've oversimplified these issues just a tiny bit, and I must remind you that the facts of each individual grievance are unique, but in general, please remember - we're having success with these issues when we research and prepare our grievances properly, and we don't have to surrender any of this work to managers or injured employees from other crafts without a fight.

Keep up the pressure - keep fighting for our jobs!

Until Next Time,

Richard



Maintenance Memo

Jane Duggan
Maintenance Director

Happy New Year one and all. I'm sure you've been buzzing about the proposed contract that will likely be in place when your paper arrives. I've been out of the loop for a while. So if you will indulge me, I'd like to share some thoughts that for the most part have little to do with the maintenance craft in particular.

I've been on FMLA since December 16th taking care of my Mom in Chicago. I'm in week five and it's been the most wonderful and the most difficult assignment in my life. I've felt honored day-to-day and week-to-week to be helping my Mom write the last chapter in the book of her life.

Mom has graced us with story telling and laughter some of which we've taped. Her friends have brought and read poems and special blessings in English, French and Spanish (with translation, of course).

It's stunning to me that I'm the only one of her eleven children who has FMLA coverage and the ability to take up to twelve weeks leave a year to care for her. My siblings have all been doing what they can, but no one else could leave their job/family/home/etc to live in Mom's house and assist with her full time care.

For several years now, I have guarded my sick leave carefully. I've used 80 hours of "sick/dependent care" leave each of the last three years to care for my

Mom. I think that "sick/dependent care" clause is one of the greatest contractual advances in my postal career.

For the first three weeks here in Chicago, I gave myself the title of "executive secretary". I opened and read Mom's mail to her every day and she sent me out to buy a bulletin board so she could see all the pictures that came in her cards when she sits at her kitchen table.

Last week, I promoted myself to "executive secretary-treasurer". With that title, I have begun to buy special gifts for her that she wants to give kids, grans, friends and neighbors. I've shopped, wrapped, boxed and delivered beanie babies, books, ornaments and Chinese vases.

Amidst all this activity, two especially sad days reminded me of you and my own life. A family friend and a cousin, each in his fifties, died from long-term results of Agent Orange. My cousin was a marine with a coffin full of medals including two purple hearts. None of those medals could save him from diabetes, blindness and renal failure. My Brother John reminded me that my sense of loss from Vietnam pales in comparison to what the Vietnamese people must have suffered and must still be suffering from Agent Orange.

On that sad note, I'll sign off. I hope all the veterans out there are doing all that's medically possible

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Maintenance Memo Continued

to keep Agent Orange at bay. I hope that all of you are able to conserve sick leave usage so you'll have it when you need to take FMLA and "sick/dependent care". And finally, I hope you will all have a chance some day to spend time with a loved one and be blessed with the "final gifts" that come at the end of life.

Solidarity,

Jane

the small offices. In this era of downsizing and excessing and withholding of clerks in many offices such as Farmington, Southfield and my home office of Troy, management at the Area is not giving the local managers the authority to hire. In a Level 21 office, they are short staffed due to 2 clerks being called up for Military duty. The POOM put out a request to all the postmasters for assistance. Only one office responded. The clerk being sent to this office does not want that many hours but her fellow PTF clerk in her home office does. Wouldn't logic dictate to the postmaster to "offer up" the clerk who wants more hours? No, we take the clerk who **DOES NOT** want more hours and **FORCE** her to go to another office. Unfortunately, the way the Hub clerk agreement was written, the clerks were not "**grandfathered in**" nor can you have a choice in going. I was however able to get the postmaster to agree to **POST** the work schedule and mail a copy of the schedule to the clerks involved as provided in Item 4 of the Hub Clerk Q and A, so there is some **ADVANCE NOTICE** on a weekly basis. This agreement does not give, in my opinion, many options to the PTF clerks in small offices but if you feel that you are being singled out by management, contact your steward or Area Director for assistance.

POLITICS: Until recently, the APWU and other postal unions, in my view, gave their "blind loyalty" to the Democratic Party. Today's Democratic Party is not the same Democratic Party of FDR, Harry Truman, or JFK, but at least they do not hold the extremist views of much of the Republican Party. Now that the Democrats are in control of both houses of Congress, **organized labor** needs to aggressively remind these folks who put them in the **majority** and lay out



Area 1 Report

Larry Moyer
Area 1 Director

It has been some time since I have written a report for the **Michigan Messenger**. For the most part, things have been relatively quiet in the offices I represent as Area 1 Director. I hope everyone had a most enjoyable holiday season and Happy New Year.

HUB CLERK AGREEMENT:

Management in the Southeast Michigan District has a difficult time getting PTF clerks hired for

R. Ford, I look back and remember how a Moderate Republican was in the White House. Certainly, we had our problems from 1974 to 1977, but at least we were not at war based on false motives. Only time will tell if today's Democrats will only pay "**lip service**" once again to **Organized Labor**, as they have in the past.

NEW COLLECTIVE BARGINING AGREEMENT:

Once again I am in the minority with regard to the membership who vote in favor of the 2006-2010 agreement. My biggest gripe is that we sold out our future to grow as a union with the 360-day casuals. While I think it is great for those PTF clerks in 200 man year offices will be converted to Regular status by 12-1-2007; however, in my opinion, it was not very well thought out to allow 360 day casuals. **As the postal service continues to down size, what will make management hire new career clerks again?** In order for management to hire a career clerk in my office of Troy with the 11 % installation cap of casuals, 6 career clerks need to retire, die or get terminated for the number of our casuals allowed to drop by one. This agreement offers nothing for the clerks in offices with less than 200 man-years (e.g. level 21 and below).

The agreement would have been great if we eliminated Casuals and made these 360 day employees Transitional Employees with a minimum amount of sick leave and Annual Leave earned, and a "bare bones" medical plan and life insurance and **UNION REPRESENTATION**. However, this did not happen. The two tier wage system is alive and well in the USPS and I don't think this will be a "shining moment" for the APWU in years to come.

PERFORMANCE BASED CONTRACT UNITS: In our district, management has begun to give out contracts to private individuals or companies to run a retail contract unit. The only difference is, compared to prior contract units, these units are provided the counter line and POS equipment that we use in our offices. If the contract unit meets the performance goal, they get a reward. Our National officers are silent on this issue. Apparently they just feel it is a variation of the contract units pres-

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Area 1 Report Continued

ently in place. Is the goal here, with these contract units, APC machines in the lobbies, stamps at the checkout line in the grocery store, stamps sold at USPS.com, that window clerks will be the least utilized by the public for postal purchases in the future?

COMPUTER TRAINING: In the Southeast Michigan District we have four computer training sites in which postal employees can learn computer skills. These centers have been open for the last few years, and this past summer a decision was made to ask craft employees to work as instructors. For those who do not know, I am two classes away from an Associates Degree in Computer Science Microsoft Networking Option. I will then pursue a Bachelors Degree in Internet Security. I applied to be an instructor and was accepted. **No, I have not gone over to the Management ranks!** The other craft instructors and I still receive our craft pay level, in my case PS-5. Some may ask, "Why do this when other instructors were being paid EAS pay?" My feeling is that if this ever catches on nationwide, then the **APWU can rightfully negotiate for a computer instructor position in the craft**, as opposed to management at the headquarters level maintaining that a Computer Instructor is only an EAS position. As far as I am concerned that argument **CANNOT be made** as they already have craft members as Computer Instructors. (Then hopefully they will bump up the pay scale as well). If you are an employee in the Southeast Michigan District and wish to learn more about computers to help you do your job easier, then sign up for Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, PowerPoint, Windows XP, or Intro to Computing. Log on at work to the District home page, click on the Human Resources link, and finally the Computer training link for more information, or call the PEDC at 248-524-3707 for more information. Our Director of Research and Education Michael McCain has also asked me to put on similar computer training at our State Convention this June, which I look forward to doing!

Until next time, if what is happening in your office doesn't seem right call me (if I am your Area Director) or your Area Director or Local Union Steward and file a grievance to get a just settlement to your issue or problem.

Yours in Union Solidarity;

Larry



Area 5 Report

Joanna Atkinson
Area 5 Director

The New Year is here and I hope it is off to a great start for all of you. I am sorry I haven't written more articles for the paper, but I will try to do better this year.

We have a new contract and I guess at this point it doesn't matter whether you voted for or against; what matters is that you took time to vote. Now that it is a reality, we will all need to get trained on the finer points of the new language. The upcoming District Meeting in Kalamazoo and the subsequent Educational Convention in June will have training to give us the knowledge and insight into this new agreement. I personally am making plans on being at both. Never is there a time when someone can have too much training or too much information. You always learn something new.

Since my last article I have bid back to the main office in Saginaw. I am still on Tour 1 but the phone number to reach me has changed. Please call 989-771-5718. I work 10:30pm to 6:30 am. My home number and cell are still the same. If you don't reach me, please leave a message and I will call you back.

Over this last year I have traveled to many AO's when requested. Sometimes things can be taken care of over the phone, but not always. I hope those that have contacted me are pleased with the outcome. Granted some issues are not resolved the way I would like, but I think for the most part results have been good. I always feel bad when there is only one clerk willing to stand up for their rights. I know how postmasters can make your life a living hell. But the main thought to remember is, you are doing the right thing and I will support you however I can. Please feel free to call me whenever you need to. I'm here even if you just need to vent.

Until next time...

Joanna



Created & Submitted by Bob Maloney

YA! I WANT TO GO INTO MANAGEMENT!



Area 7 Report

Thomas Lothamer
Area 7 Director

THE COLOR OF IT ALL

While I was a youth in Southern Michigan my understanding of racial prejudice was to say the least, limited. Men like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were just another face in a history book. No different than a President, scientist, astronaut or any other historical figure that my teachers were exposing me to.

I remember even then, comments made by other children that made being different a bad thing. I mean when we are all children or at least most of us I should say, fitting in and being the same is kind of a child thing to do unless we have parents or teachers that show us how to embrace difference not to shun it as if it were a bad thing.

It wasn't until I was much older and was able to travel the country and subsequently the world that my eyes were truly opened. "Let freedom ring from every hill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring, and when this happens...when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!" That speech, it rings as true today, as it did when it was first spoke forty four years ago. Not judging people "by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." Dr. King mentions this in his famous speech then. It would be nice to say that his dream did come true but would we be telling the truth if we said yes? Are we as a society able to see the world as a human race? Color blind as it were, able to see past people's differences whether it be gender, race, religion, sexual preference or disabilities.

"Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred."

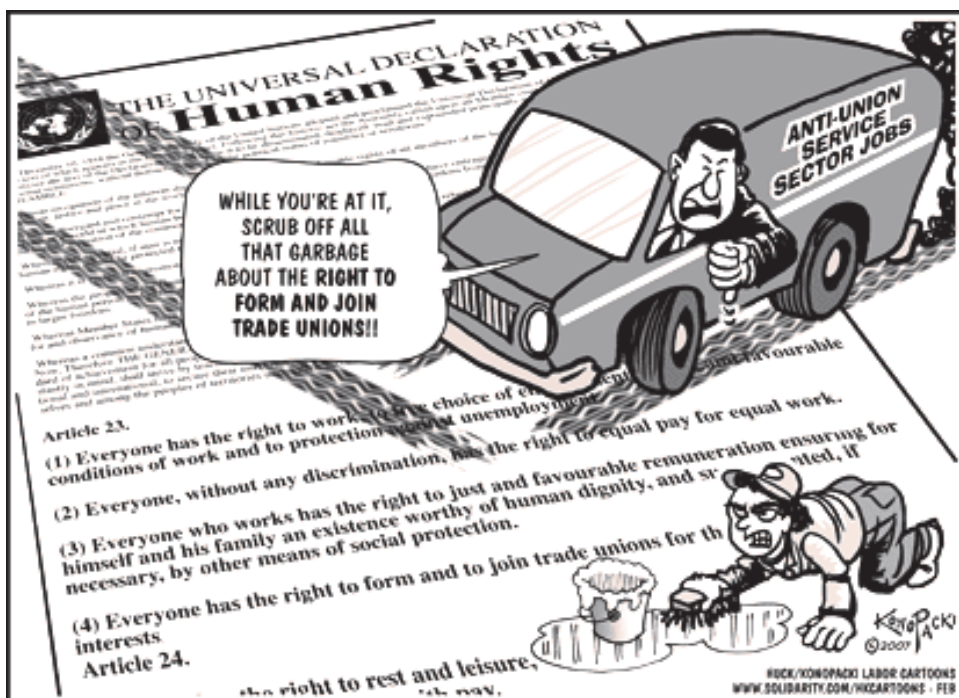
We are public servants working for the postal service yet our prejudicial intolerances are self evident even today. Are any of you of mixed blood? Mutts not a thoroughbred as an old first generation Irish American buddy used to jokingly say. "As we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back." Does the Muslim and Arab community feel this way in this country today? How about the Gay community? Education not segregation is what I really got out of Dr. King's speech and not only from the words that were spoken in 1963 but from the man himself; Dr. King exemplified his words with his character and his life.

So, pause and reflect when you read this article. Then the next time you encounter someone different for whatever reason from yourself, pause and reflect again. We are all different some how, some way, but together with our differences we can still be one nation, one union. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

Thankfully your Representative,

Thomas

Excerpts from Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.
"I Have a Dream" speech
Washington D.C.
August 28, 1963





Retiree Involvement

Al LaBrecque
MPWU Retirees President

As far as retiree issues go, it's been a pretty slow news couple of months. The 110th Congress is just gearing up and occupied with their first 100 hours agenda. I'm sure our perennial 'hot item' legislation, Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), Government Pension Offset (GPO), and Premium Conversion are being resurrected in the congressional legislative hopper. While we have great hope that the new makeup in the House and Senate will give these bills a better chance, the reality is that the current astronomical federal budget deficit makes much chance of passage pretty dim. That doesn't mean we should give up on our efforts to get our Members of Congress to support this legislation.

The MPWU Education Convention, scheduled for June 7-9 in Sault Ste. Marie, is the next event the State Retiree Chapter may be involved with, depending on the class agenda, which at the time of this writing is yet to be determined.

The National Agreement. Presuming the APWU-USPS contract will be ratified at this writing, a negotiated item which may be of some interest to retired clerks is a memorandum creating a Retail Sales Task Force to; "...establish a Retail Sales Associate program in commercial establishments." The Union will furnish lists of prospective workers to the USPS to perform retail sales in commercial establishments. (God forbid any should be in Wal-Mart)! This Task Force will be developing rules and procedures for the employment of **retired postal employees** as 'sales associates' to be hired and paid by the APWU and contracted to the Postal Service. The Task Force will be meeting between Feb. 7th and May 1st. I can only surmise this will apply to large urban areas, and the APWU says it will ensure that it will not infringe upon postal facility retail sales, but (again presumably) replace private contract stations staffed by non-postal employees. Before anyone (retirees) gets too excited, let's see what this Task Force comes up with.

Another aspect of the Agreement is Bereavement Leave automatically granted up to three days due to the death of a family member. That is an issue long advocated via resolution after resolution I authored through the MPWU for years. However, it is only what I consider a first step toward real Bereavement Leave to be paid by the employer, not taken from annual leave, sick leave or LWOP. But, it IS a significant first step. Having seen the list of just who is to be

considered a 'family member' massaged by MPWU resolutions committees over many conventions, it will be interesting to see how postal management will apply this one!

Associate Office PTF Hours. It is curious that right on the heels of the tentative contract announcement, a small office PTF advises that their postmaster informed them that they were not scheduled to work the next month (January) except on Saturdays to replace the PM. Apparently the postmaster will handle all the clerk craft work, including sorting box mail and other exclusive clerk craft work. If that's happening anywhere else I strongly urge PTF's to immediately contact your MPWU Area Director and file a grievance! When I was assigned to survey small Associate Post Offices in September '05, I was deeply troubled upon discovering numerous instances of Postmaster Relief's (PMR's) performing clerk craft duties in those offices where there are bargaining unit PTF's. I included those instances in my survey reports, hoping to alert the APWU into taking corrective action. Now, I see where the APWU has filed briefs in what the Union terms as; "...in our long-ongoing case asserting PMR's are doing Clerk Craft work." Yeah, I've witnessed that first-hand!

Senior License Fees. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has proposed to have the State Legislature increase fishing and hunting license fees. Media reports state **senior license fees would quadruple** under the DNR proposal, taxing the most for those who generally can afford it the least!

It's disturbing to learn after the fact that, by voters overwhelmingly approving Proposal #1, amending the Michigan Constitution mandating that all license fee monies must be used for conservation, that it would result in the state cutting revenue to the DNR from 38% to 9% in the Fish and Game Fund. We were blindsided by what appeared to be a reasonable proposal. Had voters understood this downside to Proposal #1, we may have voted differently. I certainly would have! Seniors (65 and older) who have purchased their fishing and hunting licenses for 50, or more, years at the required rates should not now be penalized with a 300% increase with a not-so-veiled threat that fish and game programs would be otherwise cut.

Should the State Legislature ultimately determine license fees must be increased, senior fees should result in no more than the same percentage as regular fishing and hunting fees, which reportedly are proposed to dou-

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Retiree Involvement Continued

ble. If this DNR proposal comes before the Legislature as currently recommended, I urge all concerned seniors to write, e-mail, or phone their State Representative and State Senator, as well as Governor Jennifer Granholm, to vigorously oppose this outrageous proposal to quadruple senior fishing and hunting license fees. We've "paid our dues" and it's grossly unfair that DNR would increase senior license fees fourfold! Don't wait to register your protest! Reportedly, the Legislature will be considering this proposal within the first three months of 2007.

Footnote: I've e-mailed and written my State Rep., State Senator, and Gov. Granholm. A snotty staffer said the senior license fee is "only" \$6., so \$24. really isn't that much! To which I responded that \$24. for a fishing license, \$24. for a small game license, and \$24. for a deer license adds up to \$72. bucks....a far cry from the \$18. seniors currently pay! The recommending body; the Natural Resources Commission's reasoning that the quadruple increase for senior licenses was based on a 20% "discount" of the proposed regular license fees is ludicrous!

Jack Love, former APWU Secretary-Treasurer, passed away in November in Saginaw, MI. Jack Love began his Union career in the Jackson, MI Local, was a NFPOC V.P., and rose to UFPC Sec.-Treas., thus becoming the first APWU Sec.-Treas. upon the merger in 1971.

Brother Love began the Health Plan, now known as the APWU Health Plan in 1961. I regret that I do not have the obituary for the exact date of Brother Love's passing and Jack's age, as I was informed of his passing by a phone call. Jack's late wife, Phyllis, to whom he was devoted, was a national officer of the Auxiliary, and a powerful political force in behalf of our Union. I scanned the pages of the Jan.-Feb. issue of the APWU Postal Worker and was dismayed that there was no mention of Jack Love's passing. Please look at the memorial in this edition of the Messenger.

Be Strong!

Al



The Auxiliary Report

Kelly Wilniski
Auxiliary President

The Auxiliary is up and running; however, one aspect is missing ... you and your family.

Becoming a member in the Auxiliary to the APWU is easy - you need to be sponsored by any of the following:

- a member of the American Postal Workers Union
- a retiree
- or a member in good standing at the time of their death.

If you are reading this article, more than likely you are included in one of the three above.

Members receive a copy of our award winning newsletter, "Auxiliary News & Views" monthly; however, no newsletter is published in the months of July and August. You will find legislative information, activities of the organization, labor education, a monthly communication from our national president, APWU health plan information, and much, much more.

To be a member, send me your name, address, city, state, zip code, telephone and/or email address. Your information will be kept confidential.

By joining, you will also be linked to a growing organization of members who share your interest in the APWU, the U.S. Postal Service and the cause of organized labor. We also keep up to date on information for retirees, health and human service issues and a host of other activities.

Our members are very active in their local communities with a variety of human relations projects including our Two-Can-Do food drives, collections for homeless, abuse or neo natal centers - and many more. We collect bears for the Share a Bear project - to give a symbol of security to children in crisis.

If you would like more information about the Auxiliary or joining, please do not hesitate in giving me a call. My information is listed in the Michigan Messenger or the MPWU Website. Debbie Groux will also be in attendance at the District meeting if you have any questions.

In Solidarity,

Kelly



P.O.W.E.R. Report

(Post Office Women for Equal Rights)

Karen Hodges
Power Representative

Just What Is Power?

APWU POWER (Post Office Women for Equal Rights) is the women's committee within the American Postal Workers Union. It unites women, with their special concerns, yet works within the framework of the national APWU organization.

How Do I Join Power?

If you are a female member of APWU, you are automatically a member of APWU POWER.

When Was It Founded?

APWU POWER was founded in St. Louis, Missouri on April 28, 1979. The APWU National Constitution was amended to include APWU POWER at the American Postal Union's National Convention in Detroit, Michigan in August of 1980.

Why Is APWU Power Necessary?

In the United States, women make up nearly 50 percent of the workforce. In the Postal Service, they constitute approximately 48 percent of the workforce. The same percentage describes the membership in the American Postal Workers Union. Paralleling the women's movement in our country, the women of the APWU recognized that their involvement and active participation had not kept pace with their membership. In the late 1970's a women's movement in the APWU developed, designed to raise consciousness among the rank and file women of the union. Out of the movement came APWU POWER.

How Is Power Structured?

APWU POWER committees exist on four levels—local, state, regional and national. A national Steering Committee consisting of one coordinator from each of the five regions, assists in local, state and regional committee operations and communications.

How Do We Form a Local Power Committee?

If you're interested in forming a local APWU POWER committee, first contact your local union president for assistance. Then contact your regional APWU POWER coordinator, who will provide further assistance and materials.

Now We are in Business, What then?

- ⇒ First, set a convenient meeting place, time and date. Remember, many members have family and union responsibilities; make arrangements for child care.
- ⇒ Provide a sign-in sheet at the meeting. Let members introduce themselves. Circulate a questionnaire that will elicit insight into members' interests.
- ⇒ Plan educational programs that encourage member participation, based on results of the questionnaires.
- ⇒ Display APWU POWER posters, literature and related materials. Invite interesting speakers.

What is Power's Purpose? (as adopted at the founding conference of APWU POWER):

- ⇒ To establish an APWU national women's committee, to be incorporated within the structure of one of the present APWU national departments.
- ⇒ To establish APWU local and state women's committees
- ⇒ To establish a viable communications network for APWU women throughout the country to exchange ideas, issues, problems and solutions; and to initiate and support educational programs
- ⇒ To encourage the involvement and participation of all women in the APWU.
- ⇒ To organize the unorganized workers in our workplace.
- ⇒ To promote affirmative action programs in the APWU; to assist women in achieving leadership roles with the ultimate goal of equalizing participation in leadership positions.
- ⇒ To join and become fully involved in the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW).
- ⇒ To enhance harmony within the realm of the National APWU Executive Board.
- ⇒ To work in cooperation with other groups and individuals where possible and appropriate to promote women's rights and advance the labor movement.

We espouse "a woman's place is in her union," and will constantly endeavor to make the above quotation a reality.

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POWER Report Continued

What kind of Programs should the Local Committee Undertake?

Many program suggestions can come directly from local members. The regional POWER coordinator can offer information on what other local committees are doing. Some recommendations are getting to know your union sisters, contract review, women in non-traditional jobs, sex discrimination, labor history, child care, affirmative action in the workplace and in the union, occupational health and safety, organizing the unorganized, legislative issues, communicating for action, leadership skills, stress, and CLUW.

With that, the APWU POWER Steering Committee--and all the members of APWU POWER--invite you to join them in our rewarding and productive action-oriented program. Together we can help improve the working climate not only for APWU member but for all working people.

March is Women's History Month. Each local president will receive ribbons to be distributed. Please wear your ribbon with pride and Happy Women's History Month.

I would like to extend an invitation to all the APWU sisters and brothers to attend the 13th Biennial APWU POWER National Convention to be held in Atlantic City, New Jersey sometime this summer. Further information will be forthcoming in the APWU National Tabloid. You are also invited to attend the Central and Western Region POWER Conference—March 1 - 4, 2007 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Any questions, please feel free to contact me at home (616) 453-7091 or at work at (616) 776-1542 (note: I work Tour 1, 2300 - 0750), or you can contact the Central Region APWU POWER Coordinator Stephanie Berry at (614) 472-0595 (work) or (614) 432-0622 (cell).

In Union Solidarity

Karen

Jack S. Love - 1916-2006. Former APWU Secretary-Treasurer, Jack Love, passed away on Monday, November 20, 2006, in Saginaw, MI at age 90. Jack Love began his postal and Union career at Jackson, MI, and was first elected to national office as a Vice-President of the National Federation of Post Office Clerks, AFL-CIO (NFPOC), later being elected as Secretary-Treasurer of the United Federation of Postal Clerks, AFL-CIO (UFPC). Upon merger of the UFPC, National Postal Union (NPU), and Craft Unions in 1971, Jack was elected as the first Secretary-Treasurer of the merged American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO (APWU) and served in that office until retirement.

Jack and his beloved wife, Phyllis (Picard) Love, spent a quiet retirement in Saginaw. Phyllis was a highly respected strong advocate and spokesperson on behalf of postal workers in the political arena as a national officer of the (then) Union's 'Ladies Auxiliary'. Phyllis preceded him in death on June 12, 1998. Jack Love formed the Union's Health Plan, now known as the APWU Health Plan, in 1961.

Lest we forget, Jack Love was Michigan's own! And, we offer our sincere condolences to Jack's Family and friends. For those of us who knew and worked with Jack, he was a devoted husband to his wife, Phyllis, an ethical, astute national officer who was always accessible to the membership, and a willing mentor to those who would follow him into Union service. In retirement, Jack was the founding member of the Holy Spirit Catholic Church 'Senior Spirit Social Group'. Jack graduated from Saginaw Arthur Hill H.S. in 1934, and was a veteran of WWII, serving with the U.S. Army in the Philippines.

Memorials: Those who wish to remember our Brother, Jack S. Love, in a special way may wish to consider memorial contributions to:

Holy Spirit Catholic Church
1035 N. River Rd.
Saginaw, MI 48606

"Eternal rest grant unto him O' Lord, and may Perpetual Light shine upon him. Amen."

(Thanks to past MPWU Auxiliary President Sue Griffith, who furnished a copy of Brother Love's obituary with much of the information contained herein.) Respectfully submitted: Al LaBrecque

Fewer Clerks & City Carriers on Postal Rolls at the End of 2006

While Mail Handlers and Rural Carriers were the only two bargaining unit groups that had a significant increase for 2006. Clerks and Carriers were down by 8,354 (211,991) and 2,399(224,218) respectively; while , Mail Handlers and Rural Carriers increased by 1,376 (57,261) and 1,996 (66,977) respectively. Casual utilization also increased by 3219 (17206). The Postal Inspection Service is down by 687 (2837) and The Office of Inspector General increased it staff by 272 (1132). Total workforce complement was down 7,921 compared to 3704 at the end of 2005.

Complement Stats From Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC)

Retirees can expect faster full annuity checks – in 2008

By TIM KAUFFMAN

Federal Times

January 24, 2007

Last year, nearly 200 federal employees received their full retirement checks the first month after retiring. That might sound insignificant, but when you consider that most retirees wait between two and six months to be paid their full annuity, getting new retirees the entire check right away is quite an achievement.

Unfortunately, it'll have to do for now.

Despite the promising results of a pilot program that enabled the quick turnaround of retirement checks, the Office of Personnel Management has opted not to continue or expand it this year.

OPM Director Linda Springer said the program required too much manpower and expanding it to larger agencies is not feasible.

"OPM and the agencies had to dedicate even more people than normally work on these retirement functions to make sure it happened," Springer said in an interview. "It just required a lot more to be done on the front end before someone retired."

Instead, OPM is focusing on the planned 2008 launch of an automated retirement processing system to allow retirement claims to be calculated and managed online.

"Only a year from now we're looking at what is a real answer versus a manually intensive stopgap," Springer said.

All of the files OPM uses are paper. Agencies that maintain their own employees' personnel records electronically have to print out the files and ship them to OPM because the system

OPM uses to calculate annuities doesn't support other agencies' electronic systems.

OPM currently is converting the paper personnel records of more than 1 million active and former employees to electronic files that will then be inputted into the new Web-enabled retirement system. Employees will be phased in to the new automated system during a 12-month period beginning February 2008.

Employees covered by the General Services Administration's payroll system will be the first to migrate to the new system. They will be followed by the U.S. Postal Service, then employees covered by the National Business Center, then the National Finance Center and finally the Defense Department.

Four small agencies participated in the pilot program: the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Government Accountability Office, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and OPM.

During the last six months of 2006, the agencies received 265 retirement claims and processed 191 of them — 72 percent — in time for employees to receive the full annuity payment with their first retirement check. That was far better than OPM's goal of 50 percent. But it was a scant percentage of the 46,536 retirement claims that were processed government wide between July and December.

Ordinarily, OPM withholds between 15 percent and 35 percent of an employee's projected monthly pension until it can determine the correct amount. Beginning in October, OPM began processing 90 percent of retirement claims within 30 days of receiving the claim from the agency. That means most retirees receive their full checks two or three months after retiring, although employees with more

complicated work histories or incomplete files can wait many more months to receive their full claims.

Under the pilot program, agencies notified OPM as soon as they became aware that an employee was planning to retire, instead of waiting until after official papers had been filed. OPM and the agencies began pulling together their records immediately, so claims could be processed as soon as the paperwork was submitted.

Agencies also received a list of OPM claims examiners who would be handling their cases. This allowed agencies more immediate access to the people processing the cases than they usually have, said Tina Young, a human resources specialist at EEOC and the agency's benefits officer.

"If something was missing, then they were able to get right back to us and we were able to get right back to them. Some of the things that would linger under the old system were resolved relatively quickly," Young said.

One lesson Young said she learned was that her agency was filling out forms in a way that required additional work for OPM, so the process has been changed.

Springer said a key to the new automated system's success will be having complete data upfront. Much of the current delay in getting employees their retirement checks on time is because of incomplete paperwork.



APWU 2007 LEAVE CHART

BROUGHT FORWARD			PAY PERIOD		EARNED THIS PERIOD												USED THIS PERIOD		BALANCE		
ANNUAL	SICK	PP	BEGINS	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	ANNUAL	SICK	ANNUAL	SICK
		1	23-Dec-06			2007-12-24 Christmas Day															
		2	06-Jan-07											2007-01-08 MLK Day							
		3	20-Jan-07																		
		4	03-Feb-07																		
		5	17-Feb-07			2007-02-19 President's Day															
		6	03-Mar-07																		
		7	17-Mar-07																		
		8	31-Mar-07																		
		9	14-Apr-07																		
		10	28-Apr-07																		
		11	02-May-07			2007-05-07 Memorial Day															
		12	26-May-07																		
		13	09-Jun-07																		
		14	23-Jun-07												2007-06-26 Independence Day						
		15	07-Jul-07																		
		16	21-Jul-07																		
		17	04-Aug-07																		
		18	18-Aug-07																		
		19	01-Sep-07			2007-09-03 Labor Day															
		20	15-Sep-07																		
		21	29-Sep-07											2007-09-24 Columbus Day							
		22	13-Oct-07																		
		23	27-Oct-07																		
		24	10-Nov-07			2007-11-12 Veterans Day											2007-11-22 Thanksgiving Day				
		25	24-Nov-07																		
		26	08-Dec-07																		
		27	22-Dec-07			2007-12-24 Christmas Day															

Leave Year - Begins PP 02-2007 (January 6, 2006) Ends - PP 01-2008 (January 4, 2007) NOTE: 40 Hours worked is the maximum hours for leave computation.
NOTE1: You earn **Annual Leave**: Under 4 Years: 1 Hour per 20 hours worked; 4 Years - 15 Years: 1 Hour per 13 hours worked; Over 15 years: 1 Hour per 10 hours worked
You earn **Sick Leave** for 1 Hour per 20 hours worked (no matter how long you have worked for the Postal Service for a maximum of 4 hours per pay period)
NOTE2: November 11, 2007 (the legal public holiday for Veterans Day) falls on a Sunday. For most Federal Employees, Monday, November 12, will be treated as a holiday for pay and leave purposes.

To Contribute to COPA through PostalEase

(Employees are currently limited to two payroll allotments)

Follow the instructions below:

1. Add your Social Security number to the 8-digit COPA account number (29320001) in line 11 of this form. This 17-digit number (no hyphens) will enable the APWU to identify this contribution as having come from you.
2. Dial 1-877-4PS-EASE (1-877-477-3273)
3. Press #1 for PostalEase
4. When prompted, enter your employee identification number.
5. When prompted, enter your USPS PIN number (if you don't have a USPS PIN or cannot remember your PIN, follow the instructions on this form, under "Don't Have Your USPS PIN?")
6. When prompted, choose option #2 (to select payroll allotments)
7. When prompted, choose option #1 (to select type of allotment).
8. When prompted, press #2 to continue.
9. When prompted, press #3 to "add" the allotment.
10. When prompted, add routing number: 054001220
11. When prompted enter the COPA account number: 29320001 _____ (followed by your Social Security number (no hyphens, 17 digits total). Press #1 if correct.
12. When prompted, press #1 for checking.
13. When prompted for the dollar amount of this allotment, enter \$_____.00, your choice for a biweekly allotment. Press #1 if correct.
14. When prompted, press #1 to process.
- At this point, you will be provided with a confirmation number and the start date of the allotment. Record the confirmation number _____ and start date _____.
15. Press #1 to repeat, or press #9 to end the call.

Retain this form for your records.



This COPA solicitation is paid for by the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, 1300 L Street NW; Washington DC (202) 842-4200. It is not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee. Contributions or gifts to COPA are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. COPA will use the contributions it receives for political purposes, including making contributions to candidates for federal, state, and local offices and addressing political issues of public importance. Contributions to COPA are voluntary. More or less than the suggested amount may be given and the amount given or the refusal to give will not benefit or disadvantage to person being solicited. Federal law required political action committees to report the name, mailing address, occupation, and employer for each individual who contributions aggregate in excess of \$200 in a calendar year.

Don't Have Your USPS Pin?

To obtain your PIN. Call PostalEase at 1-877-477-3273. Press #1 for PostalEase. When prompted, enter your Employee ID Number. When prompted for your PIN, pause, then press #2. Your PIN will be mailed to your address of record the next business day.

To Contribute to COPA via Electronic Fund Transfer

Please fill out and mail coupon with a voided check or a copy of a check to:

APWU COPA; PO Box 96542; Washington DC 20077-7120

The COPA fund will automatically deduct the amount you choose to contribute with no fee to you. I hereby authorize my bank to deduct from my checking account the sum of:

☐ \$1 ☐ \$2 ☐ \$4 ☐ \$6 ☐ \$10 ☐ \$_____

Per pay period and forward that amount to the American Postal Workers Union, Committee on Political Action (COPA). I make this authorization voluntarily and may revoke it at any time by notifying the APWU COPA Committee in writing.

If you are currently contribution to COPA through EFT and want to change the amount of your deduction, please check this box: ☐

Name: _____

Social Security or Employee ID Number: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Local: _____

Occupation: _____

Date: _____

Please fill out and mail coupon with voided check or a copy of a check to the APWU COPA address above.



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To Contribute to COPA by Check or Credit Card

Please fill out and mail coupon to:

APWU COPA; PO Box 96542; Washington DC 20077-7120

☐ My check in the amount of \$_____ is enclosed. (Please make your check payable to APWU COPA).

☐ I would like my contribution of \$_____ charged against my MasterCard, Visa, AMEX or Discover Account

Check one: ☐ Monthly ☐ Quarterly ☐ One-time Only

MasterCard or Visa Number: _____

Amex or Discover Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____

I authorize COPA to charge my contributions against my credit card:

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Social Security or Employee ID Number: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Local: _____

Occupation: _____

Date: _____



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(Contact Area 2 Dir for Assistance)

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Area 6 Director, Mary Stephenson

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H: 517-569-3911; W: 517-768-0726; e-Mail: rdn447255@aol.com

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W: 616-776-1489; H: 616-897-8629; e-Mail: mimgregory7@yahoo.com

Area 10 Director, Terry Nelson

W: 231-933-1020; H: 616-855-0903; C: 231-631-3720; e-Mail: Area10Dir@hotmail.com

Area 11 Director, Mike Wekwert

W: 989-354-2520; H: 989-356-2302;
e-Mail: Wekwertm@chartermi.net

Area 12 Director, Dennis Barber

U: 906-774-6303; H: 906-774-2083; FAX: 906-774-7353; e-Mail: apwu498-499@sbcglobal.net

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The MICHIGAN MESSENGER is published six times yearly, and is the official publication of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, also affiliated with the APWU Postal Press Association.

The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Editor, the MPWU, or anyone in particular. Any correspondence to the Editor may be sent to: Michael Long, Editor, PO Box 280, Sheridan, MI 48884-0280; fax to: 616-776-1536; or e-Mail to: mpwueditor@yahoo.com

Your articles are welcome! They must be signed to be printed, but your name will be withheld upon request. Articles sent via electronic media will be treated as being signed. Be aware that articles may be edited to fit the confines of this publication.

In addition, this paper is designed with everyone in mind, please be aware that all mistakes are intentional for the express purpose of keeping those happy that are most happy when finding errors in others.



The Michigan Postal Workers Union proudly represents the Members at Large within the Great State of Michigan. The following locals have also affiliated with the MPWU for training, education and information sharing between their members, stewards and officers of their own local and others throughout the state and nation:

Alpena	Battle Creek
Central MI	Detroit
Farmington	Flint
480-481	498-499
Gaylord	Hillsdale
Jackson	Ludington
Manistee	Muskegon
Petoskey	Pontiac
Roger City	Saginaw
Sault Ste Marie	Traverse City
Southwest Michigan	Troy Local
Western Michigan	

Upcoming Events to Plan For:

March 2 - 3 2007 - Area 7, 8, & 9 District Meeting, Kalamazoo, MI

June 7 - 9, 2007 - MPWU Educational Convention; Sault Ste Marie, MI

August 1 - 4, 2007 - National Postal Press Convention; Reno, NV

November 5 - 8, 2007 - National Multi-Craft Convention, Las Vegas, NV

May 2008 - MPWU State Convention, Grand Rapids, MI



Area 7, 8, & 9 District Meeting

In accordance with the Constitution of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, the next District Meeting has been scheduled. Information is hereby provided: More and specific information is available on the MPWU.com website.

Where: Radisson Plaza Hotel
100 West Michigan
Kalamazoo, Mich.
(269) 343-3333



When: March 2 - 3, 2007

Costs: Lodging (Hotel): \$99.00 (plus applicable taxes)
Parking: \$5.00 (per day)
Registration: \$50.00 (includes Friday Night's dinner)

Class Itinerary is tentatively scheduled as:

Friday, March 2nd

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 (noon)

New Contract Review (General Assembly)

1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Maintenance Class
Basic Steward Class
MVS Class

Saturday, March 3rd

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 (noon)

Advanced Stewards Class
Inspector/OIG Class
Maintenance Class

1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Advanced Stewards Class
Maintenance Class
Article 12

Any and all submissions for the
March / April 2007
Edition of the
Michigan Messenger is due to the
Editor Not Later Than
March 15, 2007

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Return to APWU/MPWU
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