



NAPS Branch 61



Volume 9 Issue 1

“To succeed in life, it is not enough to be stupid, you must also be well-mannered.” – *Voltaire*

January 2009

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President's Corner



Happy New Year! What a turbulent end to 2008, the snow storm of the century, had many of us truly challenged. Who would have thought that we actually would not get to every house every day? You all need to give yourself a hand you did a tremendous job for the Postal Service.

Fiscal Year 2009 will be another year filled with challenges. Our declining mail volumes have now hit all of us. We all need to be diligent in our daily duties to ensure we meet our daily goals. For some of us this will mean eliminating routes, excessing employees, closing facilities, and in some cases combining facilities. The Seattle Air Mail Center (AMC) will be the first facility closing in March of this year. The Seattle P&DC has almost entirely eliminated Tour 2. We all need to look and see where we can cut costs. Remember these are our jobs we need to make sure we are doing the right thing. This includes working over 8 hours only when we are required to, if you clock in you clock in at your designated starting time not early. We as EAS never arrive late. We all need to remember we are EAS employees not craft employees. We are held to higher standard than craft employees. How can we as EAS employees ever deal with an employee who comes in late if we, ourselves, can't make it to work on time? It is appalling to me to hear about EAS employees who are late to work, who clock in early, who decide they can sit around and talk for an hour, and/or who take advantage of the generosity of their Postmaster or Manager. Our employees see everything we do. We all must lead by example! This year will be the toughest we have faced in a long time. We'll need to do the right thing. If you think you struggled last year don't expect it to be any better this year.

We are all going to have to deal with a lot of stress this year. Some of us do a good job dealing with stress and some of us don't. Some of us are naturally laid back during stressful times and then there are those of us who just lose it. There are many ways we can deal with stress. We can try relaxation techniques, eat healthy, call a friend for support, seek counseling (EAP) and, of course, there is always exercise.

Make sure you side aside and take at least 30 minutes a day

continued top of Pg 2

What's Good About A Price Hike? - by Sylvester Black, VP, Western Area Operations

No one likes to pay more -- for anything! But we believe that there are some positive outcomes surrounding the parcel services price adjustment effective Jan. 18.

Earlier this year, our major competitors raised their prices. FedEx raised their overall prices 5.9 percent and UPS nearly 5%. It's costing everyone more money to do business and our adjustments aren't out of line.

The good news is that we can now compete on price for our best customers. For the first time, we'll offer Commercial Plus pricing, a real value for high-volume Express Mail and Priority Mail users. It's something they've been wanting for a long time and I'm glad we can meet their need. Volume discounts are an industry standard that should help us compete.

Commercial Plus prices for Express Mail are 14.5% less than retail on average. For Priority Mail, the price break is around 7 percent.

And, when it comes to Express Mail and Priority Mail packages weighing less than 5 pounds, we're still the best value around.

We have a great product that is competitive and is backed by service. That's something we can all take pride in

In This Issue

President's Corner - (continued)	2
"Veeps Peeps" - by Ron Hanson, 1st Vice President	2
Branch Meeting Notice New Location	2
November General Meeting Minutes - by Rich Wilson, Editor	3
CY 2008 Financial Report - by Anne Kush, Treasurer	3
"Veeps Peeps" - (continued)	4

President's Corner - continued

just for yourself if it means getting out for lunch or just taking a walk, all of these can help us with our daily stress.

Our Legislative Training Seminar will start on March 29th this year in Washington DC. The Executive Board will be meeting after the general membership meeting on January 27th to determine the number of and which members will be attending. If you are interested in attending this great Seminar you must have attended 6 meetings in the previous twelve months.

With the New Year our Branch has new officers. I would like to welcome Ron Hanson, 1st Vice President; Alisa Masunaga 2nd Vice President; Anne Kush, Treasurer; Gene Williams, Legislative Chair; Tena Ivory, Recording Secretary; Brenda Chambliss, Corresponding Secretary; Rich Wilson, Editor; and Bridgett Hammond-Ray Sergeant-at-Arms. Rounding out our Executive Board are our Trustees Bjoern Gruetzmacher, Nick Chicka, Janet Doyle, Yolanda Grayson and Mary Mitchell. Please join me in welcoming our new Executive Board. I am looking forward to working with this great group.

The Next Branch Meeting

**will be held on Tuesday,
January 27, 2009
at the Auburn Eagles
702 M Street E
Auburn, WA at 7:00 p.m.**

Remember all members of the Branch can submit an article for our newsletter, so if you have something that you want to say submit an article to our editor. I hope to see many of you at our next Branch Meeting on Tuesday, January 27th at 7:00 p.m.

"Veeps Peeps" - by Ron Hansen, 1st Vice PresidentIntroduction:

I was recently elected First Vice President of NAPS Chapter 61 and for that I am very grateful and honored. I wasn't probably the best choice (Bjorn was a better one but his name is harder to spell), but I am proud to serve Branch 61 for the next two years.

I was in a Post Office family as long as I can remember. My father started as a letter carrier in Kalispell, Montana in the early 50's. He became the assistant Postmaster of Whitefish, Montana and worked his way up to the District Manager of the Alaska District. He passed away before I began my career with the Post Office.

He probably would have been entertained and surprised by my career in the USPS. I was signed up to take the test when I was 19, but I overslept; I am quite sure this was not one of my father's prouder moments.

My career with the Post Office began in February 1987 as a mail processor at the old Processing and Distribution Center on Fourth and Lander. The first Optical Code Readers were just being installed and the clickety old Bar Code readers were the primitive versions of the Flash Gordon technology of today.

I really wanted to do something more varied and with a day schedule so I requested a transfer to the carrier craft. I started at Interbay Post Office as a PTF carrier in Seattle in January 1989. I really liked being a carrier, however I was asked to become a 204-B in April 1991 at International Station and that began my management career. Since then I have worked in thirteen delivery units as either a supervisor or manager in the City of Seattle. I am now a level 22 Station Manager at Bitterlake Post Office.

My wife Jayn and I have two boys (adopted from Romanian) that are now 23 years old. We adopted Ionica at age 8 and Sorin at age 10. I am a poor golfer, worse tennis player, decent photographer and aspiring artist.

I have a deep affection for my fellow EAS co-workers who have shared the same pressures, the same challenges, and the same aspirations as I have. It is never easy, but it is always worth the effort doing what we do. We all need to support the NAPS' mission to protect our rights, our benefits, and our Post Office. Please come to the meetings and become part of the process. The larger the voice of membership, the more effective the message becomes. N.A.P.S supports positive outcomes on critical legislative issues that will affect both you and your families in both your active work life and in your retirement.

Let your voice be heard!

The Postal Christmas Story

Scrooge, aka Ron the Grinch Hanson, confidently and emphatically told his wife several weeks before Christmas that "**Christmas is dead to me**". Needless to say, even though my wife knows how ornery I am, thought that maybe I was being overly melodramatic and a heartless cry baby. Of course, **Christmas is dead to me**" became the theme of this year's Christmas and I became the anti-Christ du jour.

So this is a story about how Christmas did regain some stature in my jaded eyes, just like Scrooge. However I will re-visit my ornery attitude about the Christmas season again next December. I think Scrooge might be a better man than me.

So let's start with the ghost of Christmas past. My apologies go to Charles Dickens for this unfortunate diatribe.

The Ghost of Christmas Past:

Imagine a crisp snowy rural Montana night in the 1950's and a chubby little kid's freckled face scrunched up against a frosty window pane with strained bulging eyeballs in hopes of Santa landing in the front yard with "Rain"deer. I was really hoping all that talk about being a good boy was not all that important, because as I mentioned before I was and am an ornery little handful and hoped that Santa had a higher opinion of me than my mother had. (Actually, my

continued on page 4

November 2008 General Meeting Minutes - by Rich Wilson, Editor

- President Cindy McCracken called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.
- Sergeant at Arms Jo Blake led the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Bjoern Gruetzmacher moved and Art Williams seconded waiving the reading of the October meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.
- Anne Kush read the Financial Report. Bjoern Gruetzmacher moved and Janet Doyle seconded accepting the Financial Report as read. The motion passed unanimously.
- Bjoern Gruetzmacher gave the Legislative Report. He said there would be no EAS pay concessions. Once the economy gets better the USPS will get about \$5 Billion to pre-fund future retirees. The USPS has asked Congress to lengthen the payment schedule. FEHBP (Federal Employee Health Benefits Program – President Elect Obama wants a national Health Care Plan based on what's available to the Congress.
- Cindy talked about the importance of SPAC (Supervisor Political Action Committee). Allotments can be made to make contributions to SPAC. She also talked about the Northwest Area President's meeting she attended in Bend Oregon, the site of the next Northwest Area Convention in May 2009. The Western Region Training will be held at the Wild Horse Pass Resort in Phoenix Arizona in August 2009. She also talked about a SPAC drawing where tickets are \$10.00 each. The drawing will be held at the Northwest Area Convention on May 16. Membership was discussed. She committed to Northwest Area VP Ben Clapp that Branch 61 would reach a 66% membership rate. Currently the Branch stands at 60.96%. There was discussion to increase Postmaster membership.
- The District has eliminated all SPOT Awards
- There will be additional Advocate Training in FY 2009
- Rich Wilson offered to get the non-member list posted on the NAPS Northwest Area Web Page.
- A committee was established to review and update the Branch 61 Bylaws. They were last updated in 1999. The committee consists of Jo Blake, Art Williams, Bjoern Gruetzmacher, and Cindy McCracken.
- A committee was established to determine Branch Meeting venues. The committee consists of Alisa Masunaga, Bjoern Gruetzmacher and Ron Hanson.
- A committee was established to get Postmaster names, offices, and telephone numbers. The committee consists of Ann Kush.
- The Ballot Committee read the results of the Branch Election. Rich Wilson was the spokesperson for the committee. The results are: President, Cindy McCracken; 1st Vice President, Ron Hanson; 2nd Vice President, Alisa Masunaga; Recording Secretary, Tena Ivory; Corresponding Secretary, Brenda Chambliss; Sergeant-at-Arms, Bridgette, Hammond-Ray; Treasurer, Anne Kush; Legislative Representative, Gene Williams; Editor, Rich Wilson; Trustees (5), Nick Chicka, Janet Doyle, Yolanda Grayson, Bjoern Gruetzmacher, and Mary Mitchell. Congratulations to them all!
- The next meeting will be Tuesday, January 27, 2009 at a place TBD.
- Alisa Masunaga won the \$25.00 door prize
- 7:55 pm. Rich Wilson motioned and Zak Jennings seconded to adjourn the meeting. The vote was unanimous.

2008 Financial Report, Year Ending December 31, 2008 - by Anne Kush, Treasurer

<u>Income:</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>Expenses cont.:</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Member Dues	\$48,000.00	\$48,565.00	\$ 565.00	Leg Training Exp.	4,500.00	5,003.00	503.11
Associate Mbr. Dues	247.00	370.00	123.00	Nat'l Conv. 2008	20,000.00	15,927.66	(4,072.34)
Interest	50.00	73.06	23.06	Member Brunch	5,000.00	0.00	(5,000.00)
Total Income	\$48,297.00	\$48,008.06	\$ 711.06	WA State NAPS Dues	2,500.00	2,512.00	12.00
				NW Area Conv. (Boise)	6,000.00	3,063.83	(2,936.17)
<u>Expenses</u>				Postage	35.00	287.76	252.76
Legal Retainer	\$ 3,750.00	\$ 3,138.00	\$ (612.00)	NW Area President Mtg.	400.00	564.20	164.20
Newsletter	2,430.00	2,666.99	236.99	Printing (Ballots)	0.00	54.49	54.49
Door Prize	250.00	125.00	(125.00)	Nat. Convention Pins	500.00	1,875.00	1,375.00
Meeting Refreshments	1,500.00	743.06	(756.94)	PO Box Rental	250.00	86.00	(164.00)
Tax Preparation	400.00	385.00	(15.00)	Campaign Contribution	0.00	2,500.00	2,500.00
Advocate Mileage	600.00	682.56	82.56	Miscellaneous	500.00	416.54	(86.46)
Leg. Training Seminar	570.00	570.00	0.00	Total Expenses	\$50,850.00	\$42,266.20	\$ (8,583.80)
Nat'l Conv. Reg.	1,665.00	1,665.00	0.00				

Return Service Requested

FIRST-CLASS MAIL

Veeps Peeps (continued from page 2)

parents were really pretty reasonable people who made sure even if Santa discerned that I was not worthy of presents that I would have enough toys to provide me the necessary projectiles and means to disrupt the house for the next twelve months.)

During this time my father was a letter carrier in Kalispell, Montana and like all good Post Office people he worked late during the Holiday season. The seeds of "Christmas is dead to me" discontent were sown. My father came home exhausted from his long day of delivering the mail and was dead tired during most of the Christmas Holiday. He somehow failed to see the humor in snow ball barrages, the melting snow puddles through out the house, the overly stimulated children (especially me), and the high expectations of providing a living during lean times.

This was my image of Christmas, some people get really tired and cranky, especially Postal Employees.

The Ghost of Christmas Present:

Now, instead of my father being really tired and cranky, the Scrooge is me. In fact, if Scrooge and the Grinch were able to have a baby it would be a creature that looks remarkably and unfortunately like me. For twenty some years I have been a diligent member of the cadre of Post Office employees that dutifully trudge through the Christmas season.

For anybody who wasn't under a rock, this was arguably one of the toughest Christmas Holidays of all for the Seattle area. The weather and its persistent duration were unparalleled in the annals of the Pacific Northwest. One of the weather gurus said it was basically a month of very challenging unrelenting conditions.

Oddly enough, during this toughest of tough times, I had a "Tiny Tim" moment. I could see in most everyone's eyes the fervor to provide service to our customers. I saw managers and supervisor's doing everything possible to get the mail out to as many customer's that could be accessed safely, including putting on chains and pulling trucks out of ditches. I saw the sad look in the eyes of the carriers who had to bring back mail because of safety considerations. I saw the effort of our clerks in handling the desperate and sometimes unreasonable customers who Christmases were being altered by the weather.

The dedication of my co-workers saved this Christmas for me and I thank all of them for that. Everyone came to work and did the best they could to make sure our customers were taken care of in a very difficult time. It is a little premature to think I have been changed forever, but hey, the Christmas spirit visited me for a few moments this year and I will take what I can get.

The Ghost of Christmas Future:

So this leaves one spirit for us to face. How do we, and more importantly the Post Office proceed into the future? It can be a rather bleak landscape and we are faced with lots of challenges. I think we need to face it the same way we faced the weather of this year. We roll up our sleeves and put in the effort to save our Post Office. We help each other succeed. We take as good as care of ourselves as possible. We work smarter and we participate in NAPS to keep a voice in our future.