

Looking back at 2013



**Lew
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what a treasure he was, and always will be, to us. However, the fact is, we have had tens of thousands of letter carriers who began working for the Postal Service after

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Vince retired.

Vince led letter carriers through many employment storms during his tenure. He understood and taught us that you have to always fight for letter carriers with two fists. You use one for the contract, and the other for legislation.

Vince understood the reality that there will always be opponents in both arenas who will attack the wages and benefits of letter carriers. He was a fierce opponent with USPS management and in the halls of Congress. He was truly a prize fighter for letter carriers. For those of you who didn't know Vince, he was all that and so much more.

Don't get me wrong. Vince didn't act alone. He led and we followed him. We acted when he called us to act. We all stood together. Vince taught us over time that this is how

you win the war that letter carriers will always be fighting. Rest in peace, Vince, and many thanks for all you did for us!

As for our new contract, we went right to work on implementing all of the changes from our old agreement under the direction of President Rolando.

One of the changes is to move toward eliminating the PTF category of letter carriers by converting them to full-time status during the life of the current agreement. Nearly 2,000 PTFs were converted to full-time status on Jan. 11. That was a start, but it still left us with 10,700 PTFs.

The award also called for the elimination of the TE category of letter carriers and the creation of the city carrier assistant (CCA) category of letter carriers by April 10. The award required USPS to give TEs an opportunity to become CCAs. The catch was that TEs had to take the postal exam along with the general public and score high enough to be hired, consistent with their test results and legal requirements.

We immediately started preparing letters notifying all TEs of the opportunity to become CCAs. We also developed practice exam books to help with the test and distributed them to all of our TE members. The toughest part of this project was that USPS opened the window to apply for CCA jobs just 16 days after we received the award, and we didn't yet have addresses for about 2,500 newly hired TE members in our system.

The next issues came when TEs began trying to apply to take the postal exam in late January. Many TEs were having computer problems when trying to register, trouble taking/passing the pre-test, or difficulty even getting a reasonable location to take the test.

We spent the next few months working to correct these problems. Meanwhile, President Rolando signed M-01799 on Jan. 29. This agreement ensured that TEs would begin to be paid for the time they spent traveling to the testing location and taking the test. On Jan. 30, Rolando signed M-01800. This agreement allowed all former TEs to continue to receive TE wages until April 19, regardless of when they became CCAs. As of Nov. 2, we had about 12,500 former TEs on the rolls as CCAs.

The next problem was the host of issues affecting CCAs that weren't spelled out in the Das award. We began negotiating a series of questions and answers that set/clarified many of the work rules, rights and benefits for CCAs. The first version came out on Feb. 20, followed by later versions on April 12 and May 22. Each version added new questions and answers designed to solve problems. I hope there is yet another version out by the time you read this.

On March 19, President Rolando signed the MOU Re: Part

Looking back at 2013 (continued)

Time Flexible Opportunities (M-01808). This MOU was designed to allow PTFs the opportunity to move from one city to another to be converted to full-time status, and to allow regular letter carriers the chance to transfer and maintain their full-time status while we waited for the CCA hiring process to be completed. The CCA hiring process wasn't complete by April 19, so we continued the MOU until May 24.

Another problem that emerged was CCAs being paid incorrectly—or not at all, in some cases. We worked to get all those problems fixed. The one pay issue that affected every CCA was that USPS was shorting them of the hourly wage they were due for overtime work. It took longer than we wanted, but we convinced USPS to correct the problem and issue back pay checks for all money owed.

By the time M-01808 expired, CCA hiring was completed for the most part, and we were down to 8,200 PTFs. There were many places where vacant positions remained that should have been filled. This would have caused CCA career conversions. USPS refused to fill positions this way. Many branches started grieving the matter. On June 7, USPS filed an interpretive dispute, effectively blocking the conversion of CCAs to career status. This dispute remains pending at the national level.

President Rolando continued to negotiate with USPS to reach the point of CCA conversions outside of the grievance procedure. His efforts paid off. On Aug. 30, he signed the MOU Re: Residual Vacancies – City Letter Carrier Craft (M-01824). This MOU is designed to continue facilitating transfers, converting PTFs to full-time status, and ultimately to promote CCAs to career status.

M-01824 has produced more than 900 PTF conversions to full-time status as of this writing. This leaves us with fewer than 6,400 PTFs nationwide. This agreement also has produced about 1,500 CCA conversions to career status thus far. We expect that both of these numbers will grow considerably by the time M-01824 is scheduled to expire on March 31, 2014, through natural attrition. I'll continue reporting on this as we go.

The key to success lies with local branches reporting vacancies that are posted for bid and come down with "no successful bidder" (residual vacancies) to your national business agent's office. It doesn't matter if you are under withholding or not. If you'll just report any and all "no bid" vacancies, we'll take it from there.

USPS notified us of its plan to test Sunday parcel delivery in May. The test took place in six locations in three cities (Philadelphia, New York and Washington). Based on the success of the first test, the Postal Service notified us of an expansion of the test to include more than 900 additional ZIP codes.

The NALC is fully supportive of Sunday delivery. This is one of many ways the Postal Service can increase revenue.

E-commerce is growing rapidly, with more and more people shifting to online shopping around the country. This package business will create jobs and increase job security in the future.

We have been meeting with the USPS regularly regarding the delivery of Sunday parcels for several months now. The Postal Service has expressed its need for additional staffing during the holiday season and the Sunday package delivery test. We recognize that it may have legitimate needs in some places, and we are willing to do whatever it takes to make our company successful in its attempts to capture and keep new e-commerce business.

We have some needs of our own. CCA conversions to career status carry a price under the Das award. The price is, you have to do a 90-calendar-day probation period if you haven't been a CCA for two consecutive CCA appointments. During this period, you would not have access to the grievance procedure if management separated you. This was a real concern we had for those of you being converted to career status under M-01824.

President Rolando took care of this problem when he signed the MOU Re: Sunday Delivery – City Carrier Assis-

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tant Staffing (M-01826) on Oct. 22. This MOU provides that city carrier assistants converted to full-time regular career status between now and March 31, 2014, would not serve a probationary period when hired for a career appointment provided the letter carrier served as a TE directly before his/her initial CCA appointment.

This month's Contract Talk is dedicated to printing the text of the three relevant MOUs. It sure has been a busy year. I'll leave you with a few thoughts especially intended for letter carriers who came along after the Vince Sombrotto era. President Rolando can't act alone. He is leading and we should follow. We should act when he calls on us to act. We should all stand together. That's how we will win the war that letter carriers are fighting now.

In closing, I want to wish each of you and your families a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year!