

There's no place like NALC's home



**Nicole
Rhine**

One of my newest, and by far coolest, duties is being the national officer in charge of maintaining and operating the NALC Headquarters building—your building. I took over this task a few months ago when Director of Retired Members Ernie Kirkland retired from NALC. Ernie had been in charge of the NALC building—as have many national officers over the years.

As I begin to learn even more about every nook and cranny of 100 Indiana Ave. NW, it occurred to me that many of you may know very little about your Headquarters building.

If you've never been to Washington, DC, or never studied a map of the area, you might not know that

the NALC Headquarters building sits in a prominent location at the foot of Capitol Hill. The office of the president has the most spectacular view of the Capitol building, which is just across the street from the front entrance of the NALC building. When NALC purchased the site in 1950, it was one of the last available for development adjacent to the U.S. Capitol grounds. The total cost: \$1.7 million.

NALC Headquarters was first dedicated on Aug. 31, 1952. According to historical records, in 1943 then-NALC President William C. Doherty had persuaded the members to accept a dues increase and create a special building fund. At the time, NALC did not have a home of its own and was actually renting two rooms at the AFL building.

Along the way, individual members, branches, districts and state associations, as well as auxiliaries, were making contributions as well. Donations were even sent by service members during World War II from the front lines. In fact, the first-floor meeting hall at Headquarters is named for Fred B. Hutchings of Syracuse, NY Branch 134, who left \$35,000 for the building when he died in 1949—the largest individual gift to the fund. Today, Hutchings Hall is used for meetings and receptions and occasionally is rented out for events. It was where the opening statements for the interest arbitration on our national agreement took place last year.

The original building had eight floors and allowed the NALC to bring to Washington, DC, both the Mutual Benefit Association headquarters from Nashville and the National Sick Benefit Association from Boston. The new building meant that NALC, for the first time in history, could all be under one roof.

Then, in 1962, an eight-story annex was added, primarily to accommodate the growth of the Health Benefit Plan. Today, the Health Benefit Plan is located in Ashburn, VA—a suburb of Wash-

ington, DC. The MBA, however, remains at Headquarters and occupies the entire fifth floor of the building.

Currently, the NALC occupies six of the eight floors. Historically, NALC has leased floors of the building for extra income. Past tenants have included the Teamsters, Meatcutters, Railway Mail Clerks, Flight Attendants and other government groups. Today, NALC has available the third and fourth floors for leasing. The fourth floor is currently occupied by a government contractor and the third floor is being advertised as available for lease.

Five years ago this month, the building was rededicated as the Vincent R. Sombrotto Building, following a unanimous vote by delegates at the 2006 National Convention in Las Vegas to rename the building in honor of him. A plaque and a bust of President Emeritus Sombrotto are prominently placed at the entrance to the building.

Your Headquarters building is in extremely good condition, inside and out, thanks to the many employees whose job it is to help maintain it. NALC employs a full-time painter, a full-time carpenter, two full-time engineers, a full- and part-

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time guard and a full-time porter. All are union employees, and they take great pride in being stewards of your building. (For more information on NALC's building employees, please see page 12 of this month's *Postal Record*.)

Another unique feature of your Headquarters building is its outer shell, made of unpolished, high-quality Vermont marble. There are only a few other buildings in Washington, DC, with marble from the same quarry—including the U.S. Supreme Court building and the Jefferson Memorial—making the NALC building architecturally significant.

I encourage you to visit Headquarters if you ever are in Washington, DC. Tours of the building for visiting members are given quite frequently by members of the NALC staff. It's always enjoyable to meet on any given day a member, and often their family, getting a tour of the building. No appointment is necessary for a tour; you just need to come in and ask. It is, after all, *your* building.

I hope that each of you at some point get a chance to see your beautiful building—there really is no place like NALC's home.