

Sometimes you have to roll with the punches



**Jamie
Lumm**

One Sunday evening in the early 1980s, I received a telephone call from my state association's director of education, Sam Martin. He had previously asked me to arrange for a venue for him to hold a shop steward training session in my town of Kent, WA. The NALC had just published a new grievance handling workbook and Sam was going around the state conducting workshops on successive Sundays. The training in Kent was intended for the branches in the south Seattle area and he expected about 30 students.

This was my first attempt at doing something for the union beyond my branch, so I wanted it to turn out well. I found a nice restaurant in the down-

town area with a banquet room that could accommodate us and provide coffee breaks and lunch for about \$10 a person (remember, this was 1982), so I felt I'd done a pretty good job for my first time arranging such an event. Sam had told me that he was going to drive by and check out the restaurant on his way home from another training the week before ours was scheduled, so when his phone call came in that Sunday night, I hoped it was to tell me what a great location it was. Not quite. The conversation went something like this:

Sam: Hi, Jamie. I just want to make sure I have the right address of the restaurant where the training is going to be next week. Is it at 201 North Second St. or 201 South Second St.? I sure hope it's 201 South Second, because the restaurant on North Second is surrounded by fire trucks and is burning to the ground.

Me: %\$&#!!!

Needless to say, I had to scramble to find an alternative location to hold the training. Fortunately, I was friends with another restaurateur on my route and he was able to accommodate us on very short notice. Letters were sent and phone calls were made to inform folks of the change, and the event went off fairly smoothly. At the time, I had only been active in the union about a year, so this was a rather inauspicious beginning to my career as a union educator. But it taught me a valuable lesson: You have to be flexible. Stuff happens and you can't fall apart when it does. Just make the necessary adjustments and move on. Sometimes that that has been easier said than done.

But here I am, some 32 years later, working at NALC Headquarters as the director of education making arrangements for and conducting union training around the coun-

try. As Dean Martin sang: "How lucky can one guy be?"

And this past year was another year full of training. We started 2013 off in early January with Leadership Academy Class 15. This was the first class to be held at the Academy's new location at the Maritime Institute Conference Center near Baltimore. The old site, the National Labor College, was suddenly put up for sale in 2012, so, once again, we had to scramble to find a suitable alternative location. It's turned out to be a great site and although it's a bit farther away from NALC Headquarters, it's very convenient for the students, as it's adjacent to BWI-Marshall Airport. Since January, we've held five more weeks of Leadership Academy training in 2013 at the Maritime in March, May, August, October and December. We also held advanced OWCP training for regional administrative assistants there in December.

The NALC conducted several joint training sessions with the Postal Service in 2013, including week-long Dispute Resolution Team training at the Bolger Center in Potomac, MD, in January, April and October, as well as Intervention Team training in San Diego in February. We also went on the road with Secretary-Treasurer Jane Broendel to conduct financial workshops for branch and state association officers in February in Orlando, FL, and again in April in Cleveland, OH.

Leadership Academy 2014

As noted on page 24 of this *Postal Record*, 60 students were chosen from more than 200 applicants for one of the two Leadership Academy classes to be held at the Maritime Institute in 2014. About the time this issue reaches you, Class 17 will be deep into their first week, where they will learn about labor history and teaching techniques while developing their leadership skills. After that, they will return again in March and June and then spend a week in their NBA's office. Class 18 will begin in August and will continue in October and December, followed by a week in their NBA's office in January 2015. There were so many great applicants this past round that it made selecting just four from each region a difficult task. But as President Rolando remarked, "That's a good problem to have. The quality of these applicants really encourages me about the future of the NALC."

It's understandable that those who applied but were not selected may feel disappointed, but I hope they are not discouraged. Not being chosen does not mean that you were not qualified. It may be that you were from a branch that has already had several members attend the Academy. Or it may be that a spot went to an applicant from a branch that had greater need for leadership training than yours does. So please, reapply during the next application period. Other than the first few classes, most of those who are picked have applied multiple times. Being persistent and not giving up is a good leadership attitude to have. Being flexible and rolling with the punches is another one.