

# A deep roster



**Philip  
Dine**

**W**illie, Mickey and the Duke. Those were the center fielders in my home town. Just one position, one sport, one city—yet three legends. It was, we heard as kids, an embarrassment of riches that we shouldn't take for granted.

Decades later, that term—and that sentiment—apply to what the nation's letter carriers are doing in the communications arena, and to the strength, breadth and depth of the NALC roster.

As we've noted, nothing in the labor movement approaches your efforts to get the message out, and that's key to NALC's success on many fronts.

Labor long has blamed its problems on various factors (unfair labor laws, bad trade policies, globalization, a changing economy) and forces

(corporate adversaries, hostile politicians, uninterested journalists). While there's validity to that, labor itself bears some responsibility for often failing to devise and deliver a message that resonates.

Even unions that recognize the importance of influencing public opinion frequently don't engage their members, thinking the effort should be top-down to assure control and uniformity. But that strategy carries a cost that can't be justified when an embattled movement faces a growing assault. And while labor often touts its grassroots efforts, its boots on the ground, that's largely confined to election door-knocking or phone calls.

Fortunately, NALC's communications effort is, well, a whole other ballgame. Our union's leaders recognize the knowledge, commitment, discipline—and local visibility—of members around the country. That confidence is well placed, as shown by the effectiveness of our membership—national business agents and state presidents, branch officers and local activists and rank-and-file members—in helping change the national conversation on postal issues.

Why mention this now?

Because I've just reviewed what you've done the past few weeks. Here are some highlights.

**President Rolando commented to Cleveland's CBS TV affiliate on the impact of the 2006 congressional pre-funding mandate, bringing balance to station WOIO's report.**

In a letter to the editor of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, he informed readers of Missouri's largest newspaper about postal finances, responding to an editorial. And, his letter in the *Belleville News-Democrat*, biggest paper on the St. Louis metro region's Illinois side, discussed USPS and its local importance, rebutting a prior letter.

Meanwhile, Executive Vice President Brian Renfroe was interviewed on a national radio program on Cleveland-based AWF (America's Work Force). He talked about NALC's and letter carriers'

strength and solidarity, issues of privatization and pre-funding, and the food drive.

In a story in the *Los Angeles Daily News*, our executive vice president spoke of NALC's work with USPS and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to put in place heat-safety measures to better protect letter carriers as they deliver their routes. And his remarks at a rally outside the Canadian Embassy in Washington, DC, supporting the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, were quoted by many of the 150 media outlets covering the rally.

It didn't stop there.

As a brutal cold front hit the Upper Midwest, Chicago Branch 11 President Mack Julion and 23-year letter carrier Dominique White advised folks about keeping warm in a news report on Chicago public radio station WBEZ. The tips also served to remind residents of their letter carriers' dedication.

In a commentary piece for the Mormon Press, Central California Branch 231 legislative officer and 27-year letter carrier Eric Ellis lent support to fellow public employees hit by the federal shutdown and explained why letter carriers aren't involved in government shutdowns.

**We'll end with an example of how vigilant letter carriers not only aid residents but also help get the message out.**

Nancy and Bob Henrichs, retired carriers from Belleville Branch 155, promptly scanned the initial letter run by the *News-Democrat*, sent it to Region 3 Regional Administrative Assistant Bill Jackson, who alerted us, which led to President Rolando's response. The paper doesn't publish letters to the editor online, so we wouldn't have seen it.

"My husband is a past president of the branch and I'm a past vice president," explained Nancy Henrichs, who also served as shop steward. "We both had leadership roles in the branch, we are very motivated union people, and we've answered some of these before. Apparently, the NALC would respond, and we always want to send the best answers we can."

Motivated union people, and perhaps a slight sense of public service. He was a rural carrier for a couple of years before becoming a city carrier—30 years overall in the carrier craft. She, meanwhile, spent 10 years in the Air Force, followed by 20 delivering mail.

Thanks to them, tens of thousands of Illinoisans and some Missourians know more about the Postal Service than they did.

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