

BACKROADS JOURNAL

Winter 2009

MaRLCA



FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

For the first time in more than 25 years I was not seated at the head table at the November state meeting. Instead I was a member of the audience and I was looking to my state officers to entertain and educate me. They did both (kudos to all.)

State steward Art Courcy provided members with critical information on three major subjects, FSS, the new automated bidding process and the contractual provisions concerning excessed rural carriers. First FSS appears to be broken even before it begins. Start dates continue to be pushed back (a good thing for rural carriers). However, the contractual obligations of the MOU seem to have spread through the state like a virus. Even if you will never actually have FSS it is likely that even today it is negatively affecting someone in your office. The new bidding process should be implemented in spring of 2010. This new process carries with it many contractual changes that will impact every rural carrier, reg. and RCA –if and when an RCA actually gets to bid. This process could be a good thing and is now used by other USPS crafts but it will be imperative that you understand how the process works. Also discussed were the provisions that would apply if and when rural carriers might be excessed. You could hear a pin drop in the room as carriers absorbed this possibility.

And let's not forget five day delivery. Apparently that time bomb is still ticking. Ramona Daniel, State VP and PAC chair reported that the PMG continues to push for support of his plan. Should Congress ever buy into his proposal it would change the face of the USPS forever.

In all of my years as a carrier and officer I never thought I would see the day when a carrier would have 700+ deliveries and still be an 'H' route. I never thought I would see the day when five day delivery might actually become a reality and I never thought our rural carriers might face the possibility of being excessed to another office or even to another state. The meeting was well attended and when I looked around I would venture to guess the majority of those in attendance had ten or more years of their postal careers to look forward to. I expect that over those next ten years more changes than ever will come. I have always and still do believe the USPS will survive and that the rural carrier craft will endure and even grow. But for the first time I am truly thankful that I am on the outside looking in...

JUDY DUGGAN



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Report of the State President

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Fall 2009

By Craig "Barney" Lewis

Fellow officers and members of the Massachusetts Rural Letter Carriers Association, here is my semi-annual report for the 2009 Fall State Meeting Sunday, November 15th in Marlboro, MA.

I have fulfilled all of the duties required as your State President. In May, I attended the President's National Legislative Seminar in Washington DC with Vice-President Gary D'Onofrio. Gary did a great job lobbying our Congressmen and Senators on your behalf.

Gary has since transferred out of the rural carrier craft and is now a ptf city carrier in Union, Missouri. I would like to wish Gary and his family well in this move and thank him for his years of service to the MaRLCA.

Ramona Daniels was approved by the board on October 21st to be the new Vice President.

In August, I was a national paid delegate to the National Convention and spent the week with President's duties and being on the tellers committee.

Our membership has dropped a little so we were able to send only 15 delegates to the National Convention in Grapevine, Texas this year.

In September, I attended 4 of the 5 District Meetings. There were very good turnouts in Districts 2 and 3. The new District 5 and District 1 had a slightly smaller turnout than expected. President of Dist 5, Kerry Durgin, did a nice job setting up the meeting and Diane Romme, District 5 committeeman, did a great job of running the meeting. Hopefully we will see larger turnouts in the spring.

I have also attended and run all of the MaRLCA State Board meetings in the last year as well as handling many of the Vice Presidents duties.

Financially the association is showing some revenue shortfalls. At the July budget meeting we saw that dues from our regulars would be severely impacted by the FSS MOU. Holding routes and not making RCA's regular, significantly cuts dues to the state at about \$200 per member. We currently have about 50 routes being held. That is a big revenue shortfall. Also, rising costs for expenses is putting a big dent in our accounts. The mileage rate, increase in discipline, PDI's, NRP's and the amount of LWOP being used is putting pressure on your state association's bank account. We have cut out 33 administration LWOP days since last year to try and help the financial situation. We have cut down on the amount of board meetings and on expenses at all of our State Meetings. The state board needs to keep an eye on the budget and the spending of your hard earned dues money.

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. It is apparent that we do need a dues increase to cover shortfalls. We have not had a dues increase in the state for the last 12 years. I would like to thank past and present board members for holding the line over these years as not to have raised your dues. It is evident though that the time has come for a dues increase. We have worked hard to maintain a years operating expense in savings. This is no longer feasible. Thank you in advance for your co-operation in supporting this expense. (Editor's Note: the dues increase was unanimously passed at the fall state meeting.)

I would like to thank Art Courcy, the new State Steward, and his assistants Deb Gendron and Don Ryle, along with area steward Jim Hardy. They are doing a great job and make my job easy. I would also like to thank and encourage all of the local stewards to stay on. Without you the job would be impossible. Art held a local steward training in September and it was well attended. Thank you all. The New Guarantee Period has started and Christmas Overtime will soon be upon us. RDWL's should have been filled out and Option changes made if you had one. In January we will be conducting Mail Count Schools please attend to help protect your salary.

Secretary Treasurer Steve McCarthy and his assistant Jerry Bligh have done an incredible job with the trying times and rising expenses. Thank you.

Please remember to do your job in a professional way and stay safe in the upcoming mailing season. With Christmas coming, I would like to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season. Thank you all for your continued support.



State Steward Report

by Art Courcy

Well the dust has finally settled from the District Class Action grievance filed from the 2009 mail count and the additional time credits have been added to all of the routes that were entitled to additional edit book and/or safety/service talk time. In total, almost 400 routes throughout the state received some form of additional time credit. I have received numerous calls from carriers that have received anywhere from 2-6 new PS Form 4241A's. The adjustments to rural routes were done retroactively back to April 25, 2009, which was the date that the 2009 mail count took affect. From that time through the beginning of the new guarantee year, if you had changes to your route, all of the changes were also affected due to having an increase in standard hours from the settlement. Thus, a new PS form 4241A was created for each of those changes also. If you have questions regarding your 4241A's, first look at the effective pay period date of each that should be reflective of the changes at each respective time period. If you are unsure or think that the PS Form 4241A may be inaccurate, please ask a steward for clarification.

It's hard to believe but the holiday season is once again upon us. The Christmas period this year runs from December 5th through December 25th. If you have any previously earned X days accumulated, you cannot use those X days from the beginning of the new guarantee year until after the Christmas period. If you work your relief day and earn any X days from the beginning of the new guarantee year which began October 24th through the Christmas period, you may use an X day earned as long as it is used within the same pay period that it is earned. The same questions arise each year and the overtime crackdown is hot and heavier than ever. Can management send me home during the week if I am going to go over my evaluated hours for the week? Can management use an rca to deliver my parcels in order for me to stay within my evaluation? The answers are yes and yes. You will still be paid the evaluation of your route. I want you to be aware however, that we have two new districts that are calling the shots this year. I fully expect to have issues where carriers' contractual rights may be violated.

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MaRLCA Statement of Activities
July 1 through November 29, 2009

	Jul 1- Nov 29, 09	Jul 1- Nov 29, 08
Income		
4100000- Interest/Dividends	1,214.64	1,665.52
4200000- Membership Dues	87,989.34	97,649.26
4400000- Reimbursements	238.73	939.33
4500000- Sales	490.00	620.00
4600000- Steward Training Dues	15,679.00	6,270.00
Total Income	105,611.71	107,144.11
Expense		
5000000- Accounting Fees	2,138.00	2,322.00
5100000- Awards Recognition Bereavement	50.00	100.00
5410000- Equipment Purchases- Steward	0.00	660.21
5700000- National Convention	37,562.16	29,262.16
5800000- Office Expense- Admin	374.84	580.66
5810000- Office Expense- Steward	235.93	209.49
5900000- Payroll Taxes	2,548.61	2,737.68
6000000- Per Capita Dues	7,285.00	7,322.00
610000- Postage- Admin	961.89	1,039.42
6110000- Postage- Steward	431.74	667.74
6200000- Printing- Admin	583.74	310.18
6210000- Printing- Steward	135.89	41.51
6300000- Eastern States Conference	0.00	100.00
6420000- National Seminars	2,172.04	4,524.59
6600000- Salaries & Wages- Admin	5,698.50	5,368.90
6610000- Salaries & Wages- Steward	20,219.07	19,290.43
6620000- Salaries- Annual	0.00	0.00
6700000- State Meetings	1,078.79	1,639.49
6701000- Backroads Journal	1,702.14	1,787.50
6800000- Steward Training	12,964.59	14,993.18
6900000- Telephone- Admin	583.59	625.19
6910000- Telephone- Steward	1,171.12	1,740.29
7000000- Travel- Admin	1,874.74	2,791.28
710000- Travel- Steward	4,246.01	2,557.70
7200000- Web Site	183.99	0.00
7300000- Storage Rental	424.00	380.00
8000000- State Income Tax	298.00	378.00
Total Expense	104,924.38	101,429.60
Net Income	687.33	5,714.51

MaRLCA Statement of Finance
As of November 29, 2009

	Nov 29, 09	Nov 29, 09
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Checking/Savings		
1000000- Banknorth	17,819.75	13,952.80
1100000- APCU Savings Account	31,863.42	60,415.53
1200000- APCU CDs	110,276.86	105,886.84
Total Checking/Savings	159,960.03	180,255.17
Total Current Assets	159,960.03	180,255.17
TOTAL ASSETS	159,960.03	180,255.17
LIABILITIES & EQUITY		
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Other Current Liabilities		
2100000- Payroll Liabilities	1,719.58	2,462.38
Total Other Current Liabilities	1,719.58	2,462.38
Total Current Liabilities	1,719.58	2,462.38
Total Liabilities	1,719.58	2,462.38
Equity		
3900- Net Assets	157,553.12	172,078.28
Net Income	687.33	5,714.51
Total Equity	158,240.45	177,792.79
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	159,960.03	180,255.17



Left to right: State Steward Art Courcy, President Craig "Barney" Lewis, Vice President Ramona Daniel, (holding her Member of the Year award) and Secretary/Treasurer Steve McCarthy.

I have already heard some of the creative management plans to cut down on potential overtime situations. Some of which would involve crossing crafts. This is a violation that we cannot and will not tolerate and grievances should be filed immediately. If management utilizes any employee other than a rural craft employee to case or deliver mail from a rural route and there is a rural craft employee available, overtime situation or not, the rural craft employee needs to be working. Once again, if you have any questions related to working during the Christmas period, please call a steward and get the answers.

If you attended any of the various fall district meetings or our fall state meeting, thank you. You have heard of all of the changes and challenges that we are facing today. FSS implementation dates have changed. The best way to get up to date information is to attend your respective meetings.

Our next mail count is scheduled for February 27th through March 12th 2010. It will be a two week mail count. It is also once again an option in mail count. All vacant and auxiliary routes will be counted. The only other routes to be counted will be those in which either management or the regular carrier opts for a count. As we all know, last year management opted in all routes due to the decrease in mail volume because it was obviously to their benefit. We are unsure at the time of this writing what management's intentions will be as to count us or not. It will be a decision based on projected volumes during the upcoming mail count period. If management sees more savings due to a higher reduction in mail volumes from last February's mail count, rest assured that you will be counted again. As always, we have scheduled mail count trainings for our Union members. The best way to be proactive and get every second that you are entitled to during a mail count is to attend a mail count training. Whether this will be your first mail count or your 30th, a mail count training is beneficial and we all learn from them. I hope to see you there. I would like to wish you all a joyous Holiday Season and a healthy and happy New Year.



Safety and You

Don't let it be said that I didn't warn you, it's what I did when we had a QWL Safety team and I still believe in it. It is something we take for granted, an accident won't happen to me, and then it does. How can I get it across to you to watch out for yourselves, and sometimes those around you? Here is one thought I was watching the TV show "Dirty Jobs" with host Mike Rowe and it was really all about safety first. He thought it could be third because first really was getting the job done. He went on to explain that before most jobs that they take on they usually go through at least Two hours of safety training for that segment of filming. What does it mean to you who go and do the same job each and every day? It means don't become complacent, think about what you are doing in the office and out there on the streets. If you don't watch out for yourself who will? Winter is almost upon us and with it the hardest driving time of the year. This is your winter safety advice from me, increase stopping distance, watch out for the icy spots, think about what you are doing, and don't forget to dress appropriately for the conditions.

Please be safe and come home each and every day to those who love you. Don't become a statistic in an accident report, or worse, an obituary in a newspaper.

District 4 President
Bill Piwowarski



District 2 Committeeman & Resolutions Chairperson Dawn Makrinikolas answers questions about the dues increase at the fall state meeting in Marlboro.

POLITICAL ACTION SUCCESS!

FERS EMPLOYEES WILL NO LONGER BE FACED WITH A USE IT OR LOSE IT, SICK LEAVE SITUATION.

In a program that will be implemented over a 4 year period, retiring FERS employees will have unused sick leave credited to their retirement annuities with 100 percent credit by January 1, 2014. Those under Civil Service retirement have always enjoyed this benefit, but it was not included in FERS retirement. This left employees who were lucky enough to have good health through out their postal career in the awful position of losing their sick leave without credit. Federal employees unions have been working for years to change this. **THIS WILL IMPACT EVERY FERS EMPLOYEE'S RETIREMENT.** Please watch for further information on the National web sight and from the Postal Service.

VOTE FOR A NEW SENATOR! SPECIAL ELECTION JAN 19, 2010!

The primary on Dec.8th, has not yet taken place as I write this article but probably will be over before you receive it.

President Barney Lewis endorsed MIKE CAPUANO on behalf of the MaRLCA. Mike has been a strong supporter of our Union's legislative goals and deserves our support in return.

No matter who wins the primaries please take the time to listen to the candidate's positions and get out and vote. Democracy requires participation!

Postmaster General Potter continues to push for 5-day delivery.

A reduction in service would require action by Congress, so make sure they hear your voice, not just Potter's.

The National Rural Letter Carriers Action Committee works to keep Congress informed on the issues that effect you, your job and your benefits.

Please continue to monitor legislative issues on the Union's national website and donate as generously as you can to PAC. You can now have a donation taken automatically from your paycheck. These donations will allow the National PAC to better plan its actions by having a dependable base fund of donations.

I would like to thank those members who do make this donation and are supporting PAC on a daily basis: Art Courcy, Ramona Daniel, Steve McCarthy, Gill Perez and Rebecca Rose-Darling.

As always, donations may be made at anytime with a check made out to NRLCA PAC (not to me or Mass., please) and send to:

Ramona Daniel (PAC Chair)

PO Box 924

West Barnstable MA 02668

Happy holidays everyone and I hope you've all been good this year! I have been lucky enough to know someone for the last 30 years who has done a lot for the little children in my area and on my route both in S.Deerfield and Whately MA. Her name is Betty Hollingsworth and she has answered letters to Santa for the last 54 years! She used to work at the local school as a secretary and was very active in the school union. She got to know the children that way but as time went on she asked the local postmaster if they needed anyone to answer the letters to Santa and that's how it all began. Betty had to type each letter by hand (there were no computers in those days) at least now she can cut and paste but she still has a system that ensures that nobody gets the same letter twice and two children in the same family have completely different letters. Recently Betty has come into some serious bad luck: three months ago she had a heart attack then a few weeks later they told her she had breast cancer. A few weeks later she had surgery and two days after that her husband passed away. She is now going to start chemo therapy and in February she will be having knee replacement surgery. So I was hoping we could all take the time to send her a card or drop her a letter wishing her a quick recovery and thanking her for the many years of service. Please send cards to Betty Hollingsworth 16 Eastern Ave.S.Deerfield,Ma.01373 Thanks everyone and I hope Santa is good to you!

District 1 Committeeman Vicky Laczynski

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Meeting notices are mailed out in advance to each member with exact dates, times & locations. Support your union by attending district & state meetings.

Dec 25 Christmas

Jan 1 New Year's Day

Jan 18 Martin Luther King Day

Jan 27 Count School Holiday Inn Taunton MA

Jan 31 Count School Holiday Inn Marlboro MA

Feb 27 Mail count begins

Mar 12 Mail count ends

MaRLCA Web Site: www.marlca.org

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FIRST CLASS MAIL