



# Michigan Messenger

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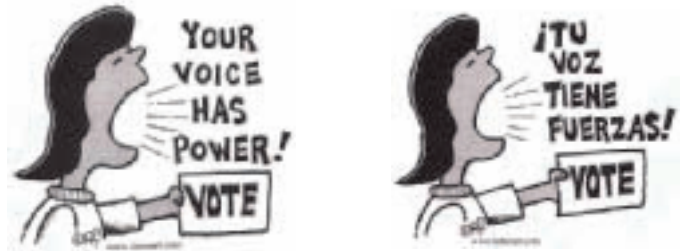
Volume 32, Issue 126

September / October 2006 Issue



## President's Report

Gary VanHoogstraten  
President



Another National Convention has come and gone and as usual the powers above had their way. The city of Philadelphia and the host locals should be commended for their accomplishments in hosting this year's convention. I first noticed this when I checked in for my credentials. There were no lines to speak of, but then again, I know there was a problem the last time when delegates failed to pre-register. I would not go into details because there will be summaries in the National tabloid and other reports coming out. Also, you will be able to get it on the 21cpw.com website in detail. Sorry to say that we did have a tragedy while we were there. Ray Longuski, one of the State Delegates lost his father before he returned to Traverse City. Our thoughts and prayers were with him during the convention and will continue to be there.

On Wednesday, August 23rd, I along with our newly appointed Veterans Director, John Smeekens, attended a dedication ceremony in Gagetown, Michigan. Politicians, veterans, local residents, and friends, gathered to join in a celebration of rededication of the Gagetown Post Office to be the "Gagetown Veterans Memorial Post Office Building." The renaming of the Post Office was first introduced by Representative Dale Kildee on July 20, 2005, as bill number HR 3368. This bill was passed and signed into law on March 30, 2006 as Public Law 109-191. The ceremony opened with Postmaster Ruth Kain, who introduced Pablo Lopez Jr. Mr. Lopez was instrumental and determined to get this name change accomplished, and he did. With the assistance from local veterans committees, the town mayor, and especially Representative Kildee, it is now a reality. Many people spoke during the ceremony, and some of their speeches really touched and moved the crowd. This was an important day for the community and their families.

On Thursday, August 24th, I took a short drive to the town of Resse, Michigan. On that day, the Post Office hosted a military day. They extended their hours to be able to assist customers prepare packages to be sent overseas to our troops. They had tents set up from different divisions in the community with military attire on display. They also had places for donations to assist in shipping these items. The items that were donated, but were not allowed to be sent, were given to the local Women's and Homeless agencies. They wanted to make sure that nothing went to waste and would be used in some fashion. The building next to the Post office was helpful in storing and packaging boxes for the troops. Many of the local town residents assisted in packing up the items. I spoke with many of the military there where there and praised them for the job that they were doing.

Those two days were both emotional and rewarding to see all the veterans in Gagetown and all the town folks who stand behind both of these events. As a veteran of the Vietnam War, I was lost for words as they played many patriotic songs throughout. I am glad that I had the opportunity to attend and show my support for both of these events.

I also attended a day of celebration for the Flint Processing and Distribution Center. The Flint Post Office received recognition for their participation in the VPP program. This program, many of us know as the Voluntary Protection Plan. There was some hesitation from the local leadership in the beginning, but they discussed it and decided to give it a try. The office is the 1st in the Great

*(Continued on page 2)*

(Continued from page 1)

President's Report Continued

Lakes Area to partner with OSHA and in doing this; they received the VPP STAR status. There were dignitaries from the USPS District Managers Office, the Great Lakes Area Office, and other surrounding offices. Also were representatives from the Governor's office, Senator Levin's office, Senator Stabenow's office, Congressman Kildee's office, and the Mayor's office. Cynthia Hutchens-Smith, OSHA Area Manager presented Plant Manager Dunlap a plaque along with a flag to fly in front of the building. Dunlap also received presentations from the Governor and the Mayor. There was a short video shown as to some of the work done at the office. The progress and hard work helped to get this program started and the finishing touch, or the icing on the cake, was for them to be able to receive this status. I appreciate the invitation to attend and I can say that the Flint Area Local and all the employees can stand tall for this award. All the employees can look at the flagpole and see this STAR award and it should remind them that all of them assisted in making this happen.

**CONGRATS TO ALL EMPLOYEES AT THE FLINT PROCESSING AND DISTRIBUTION CENTER.**

By the time this article goes to press, the District Meeting in Iron Mountain will probably be a memory. I know that the 498-499 Area Local and their member will make this a successful event as they have in the past. We should have further information on the upcoming District meeting in Kalamazoo in either the next edition of the Messenger or on-line.

As we get closer to the November elections, we must ensure that we get out and vote. The deadline this year to register to vote is October 10th. A copy of the voters registration form is in this edition of the Messenger. If you or someone you know is not registered, rip out the form, fill it out, and get it turned in to your local Registrar office or Secretary of State's office. I challenge all locals to get their people involved!

Until next time,

Yours in Solidarity,



## Secretary's Writings

Harold Juhl  
Executive Secretary

I would like to start off this article by saying welcome to the newest board member, John Smeekens, the Veteran's Director. John was selected for the position in accordance with the Resolution that was passed at this year's State Convention. Welcome aboard and good luck in your new position.

I am in the process of finalizing the new MPWU Constitution and hopefully it will be done by the end of October. I have sent out all of the business cards and jackets to the new board members. If anyone has any problems with those items please contact me. The mailing list is also done and has been sent out to all local Presidents and Board members. If you didn't receive one, please let me know.

I have been extremely busy in my local lately, with an audit team in our plant, and with working on our casual in lieu of remedy. We are also getting ready to have our elections this November, so to say the least it has been a busy few months. However, the next few months will be very important for all of us, with elections coming up in November for the House and the Senate. I believe we need to get out there and support the candidates that will be supporting our issues as postal employees. It would be in our best interest for everyone to get their friends and relatives involved and to get them out and vote in November. The struggle within the postal service will continue and will not get any easier for us. We need all the support that we can get!

The National Agreement will expire in November of this year, and negotiations have already begun by our National Union. We will hope that our National leaders are ready and prepared to negotiate the best contract that will be accepted by our members. I believe that we will probably end up in front of an arbitrator for a new Agreement. We will see what happens.

In closing, I hope that everyone had a great summer and is ready for a long winter. I personally am not ready for winter, and the bitter cold. I hope to see everyone at the upcoming District Meetings in Iron Mountain and Kalamazoo.

Yours in Solidarity,

*Harold*



## The Long and Short of It

Michael A. Long  
Editor

### Membership List Updated

Whew...what a long two months, but well worth the effort. As of this edition, every state member at large, and a member of a local who pays on 100% of their membership, will be receiving a copy of the Michigan Messenger. The annual review of the Membership List is complete and this year there were quite a few changes. Thank you to each local who kept me abreast of the changes throughout the year. It definitely helped. This year, however, I am very please to report that many will now again be receiving the Michigan Messenger after, for some, a very long time; this is due to finally receiving an updated copy of the Retiree list from National for not only the State Chapter, but for the four local chapters as well. If you know of someone that should be receiving a copy of the Messenger and now isn't, please let me know, and I will find out why and try to rectify that situation. If any local President or Area Director would like a printout of who you currently have on file, please feel free to ask and I will send to you.

### Pictures

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Gary Van-Hoogstraten (MPWU), Catherine Beemblossom (WMAL), and Geoff Higgins (DDAL) for taking pictures for me at the National Convention. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend this year; however, all the pictures you see in this edition and next were taken by these three members. If anyone who went to the convention and have pictures to share, please send them to me. I am more than happy to either put them in the Messenger or on-line at MPWU.com.

### Dental and Vision Plan

In my last article, I mentioned about the upcoming Dental and Vision plan to be offered by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) as a voluntary plan, to be in addition to your health plan. While information as to the coverage and co-pays have yet to be released, costs information and who will be providing the service has. Please check out the information on the back page of this edition to read it.

### Upcoming District Meeting and Educational Convention

It is my hope that by the time this edition of the Messenger reaches you, it should be right before we go to the Area 10, 11, & 12 District Meeting in Iron Mountain. While it may be too late for you to make plans to attend, please make plans to come to the next District Meeting in Kalamazoo during March 2007, and the MPWU Educational Convention in June 2007. Please continue to check the website for more information.

### Upcoming Elections

This subject can be a very controversial among each of us, not only within the Postal Service, but for the union as a whole. There are many who look at one or another specific topic and vote that way. I applaud each of you who take time out of your busy schedule to vote. For those of you that think it doesn't make a difference, please look at different times in history where one vote made a difference:

#### *THE VALUE OF ONE VOTE*

*If you felt your vote wouldn't make a difference in an election, perhaps the following will convince you otherwise...*

- *In 1645, one vote gave Oliver Cromwell control of England.*
- *In 1649, one vote caused Charles I of England to be executed.*
- *In 1776, one vote gave America the English language instead of German.*
- *In 1839, one vote elected Marcus Morton as Governor to the State of Massachusetts.*
- *In 1845, one vote brought the State of Texas into the Union.*
- *In 1868, one vote saved President Andrew Johnson from impeachment.*
- *In 1868, one vote gave Rutherford Hayes the Presidency of the United States.*
- *In 1876, one vote also changed France from a Monarchy to a Republic.*
- *In 1923, one vote gave Adolph Hitler control of the Nazi Party and changed the course of modern history.*

*"The Value of One Vote" was compiled and written by Doug Storer, noted author and broadcaster.*

Your vote does matter. Whether in the national elections, your own school or city elections, and even your local union elections. Your voice does matter and more than ever....Get out there and VOTE!

*Mike*



## Legislative Report

Regina Favors  
Legislative Director

Greetings again Sisters and Brothers, and trusting that you all had a safe and extremely wonderful summer. It is now time to get down (or back) to some serious business (and I do mean SERIOUS). We have much work to do in these mid-term elections. It is imperative that we all work together to make sure and insure that our current Governor remains in office and that we re-elect Senator Stabenow as well. I have attended many meetings and listened to the concerns of many of our other union brothers and sisters (not only Postal) and let me tell you that we are in dire straits. Our current freedoms, rights and everything else still remains under attack. In my previous articles (before Bu—sh) was re-elected I talked about how the courts were being stacked and how the House and Senate was being set up to eliminate unions and their jobs, along with the middleclass in general. You can now see that is exactly what has and will continue to happen if we don't get out and vote to make a change. I know you are probably saying to yourself (hmmpf, I voted last time and BU still got in), but please, do not let that stop you from voting THIS time as well. Don't let them continue to win by being apathetic. Yes, a lot of us did our part, and more, but remember that Bu did not win in Michigan. We as union brothers and sisters, as labor, did an extremely good job in pulling together and getting out the vote. We need and HAVE to do it again for this November election and get people in office in each of our respective districts to send to Lansing and Washington those who are going to work for us and our families. People, let us not continue to fall victim to the folks who have the money and allowing big businesses and corporations to run our Country. This was stated by every speaker at our National convention and at the rally at the Philadelphia Post Office.

The National convention was wonderful, as usual. There were a lot of resolutions that were hard-fought and some of which did not make it, but in the midst of all our (Postal) problems and fights for our jobs and protections, one thing that resonated throughout was this current Government Administration and how they are destroying our way of life. It will be a fight for every State, City, and or County for seats in the House and Senate so we can take back the Government that is currently answering to the big corporations and the wealthiest, while taking away from the working class and the poor. Please, if you are asked to go out and do labors walks or phone banking, please take a short time out of your busy

schedule and help where you can. Giving your support to the candidates who support our fight for affordable healthcare, good wages and benefits and to keep our jobs here, instead of overseas will definitely reap seven-fold for all.

There are a few issues on the ballot coming up in November that you must be aware of. The so-called MCRI (Michigan Civil Rights Initiative) which is actually a proposal to ban affirmative action. We must defeat this proposal which will take away a lot of programs that help women, children, and minorities of all kinds. Another proposal which would cause great harm to the citizens of Michigan is the SOS (Stop Over Spending) bill. This bill would ban allow for politicians to fund their pet projects, while at the same time, cut services to the public. In Colorado (the only other state where this was on the ballot), SOS did serve damage to the state's vital services, such as educations, public safety, health care, etc. That is why, Colorado citizens voted overwhelmingly to suspend it. Go to the [MIAFLCIO.org](http://MIAFLCIO.org) website for more information.

Folks, lets us not be fooled or cajoled into thinking that our vote doesn't count, or that "I am just one person" or whatever other excuse you have used at one time or another. Remember, as I have said before, it was just one person who began the campaign to take prayer out of the schools, and look at the mess we have been in ever since. We have to start somewhere or we will end up nowhere. We do have the power to make change. Look at the recent increase in Minimum wage initiative. Once we got the ball rolling, it made the legislature sit up and notice. We did it once this year; let's send another signal to the legislature at the local, state, and national level that we will do it again.

So until next time, if there is something you (or I) need to know, please do not hesitate to call me.....

HEY! How about those WNBA champions! Wow!! J

In all Sincerity and Solidarity,

*Gina*



## Maintenance Memo

Jane Duggan  
Maintenance Director

I'm grateful to the MPWU for helping make it possible for me to participate fully in the workings of the convention. I'd like to thank Gary Van, Debbie Brand and everyone else who helped make our Michigan delegation look good. It's always nice to get to spend some time with brothers and sisters from the other locals around the state.

### LIFE AFTER OPEN SEASON

Hopefully your office's scores for Open Season printed on time. I emailed a template grievance to everyone on my email list to use in filing if scores were not back timely. If you were not successful, consider updating.

There is an effort underway to make a KSA based listing more accessible. It will be available shortly, I hope, from the USPS blue page. When it comes out, I will let you know how to find it. This will aid you in seeing what NCED courses address your failed KSAs.

### BQnet

In looking for information on filling maintenance vacancies, I found myself on the APWU's industrial relations page. One of the items I found there is BQnet. This replaces the old EL-303 (Position Qualification Standards). Division Director, Steve Raymer, informed me it's been around for awhile and that we got access through a Step 4 sign off. One more reason to belong to the union! It's great to have access to more and more things on line. This particular handbook is often helpful in documenting grievances including 7.2 cross craft cases.

*Jane*

Submissions for the  
November / December 2006  
Edition of the Michigan  
Messenger is due to the  
Editor Not Later Than  
November 15, 2006.

*Happy Holidays*

### Convention 2006 Report

Our National convention in Philadelphia was one of the best I remember. I attended all of the Maintenance Craft Conference. It moved quickly through the resolutions and review of an excellent book prepared by the national officers for the conference.

Resolutions covered the traditional issues. There were no surprises. Upgrades were discussed for custodians, MOS Clerks, MPE mechanics, Material Handler Equipment Operators and Area Maintenance. Certainly the union has a commitment to fighting for higher wages for all of us but these resolutions show the will of the body on particular occupational groups. Most of these resolutions had been previously adopted. However, the body voted "concurrence" on upgrades for Material Handler Equipment Operators and Area Maintenance Technicians & Specialists.

Training is a hot issue too. We voted to seek a cap of forced training. Some members are being forced away from home for long stretches each year. This pertains exclusively to off-site training which generally means Oklahoma.

One of the nicest things was Brother Raymer calling on Chicago's Brother Sinclair Darby to come to the microphone one more time to say, "Darby, Maintenance, Chicago" in his own unique way. Brother Darby brought us all to our feet. This was followed by the introduction of all past national officers who were present. There were quite a few including Al Fouche from my local in Detroit.

Brother Balogun has updated the e-library and made all the maintenance materials extremely accessible. All delegates got a resolution book, a book of important documents designed to be taken apart if necessary for making copies and a C-D.

The convention was hard work. I participated in the MI/IL caucus, a six state caucus, the POWER caucus, an RI399 meeting and a lengthy discussion on the proposal to raid the Mail handlers union. My longest day of meetings went from 9am - 7pm.



## Veteran's Report

John Smeebens  
Veterans Director

I somehow put the cart before the horse in the last issue of the Michigan Messenger, so I will rectify that now, by introducing myself and giving you a little information about me, and what I would like to do for you -- my brother and sister veterans as your new Veteran's Director.

My name is John P. Smeebens and served in the US Army during the Vietnam era. I am a disabled Vietnam Veteran and retired from the Army because of those disabilities. I am 58 years old, and have been married for 38 years to Donna; we have three daughters. I have been a postal employee for 26 years and since 1984 have been an Auto Technician at the Royal Oak Vehicle Maintenance Facility. Prior to the VMF, I worked as a Mail Handler and City Carrier until I found my niche at the VMF.

I was appointed to this position of Veteran's Director for the Michigan Postal Workers Union in July 2006. This position, which was created in May at the Constitutional Convention, will, I hope, be able to give veterans more information when they need it, and to keep them aware of new benefits available to them and their families along with some older benefits that many might not be aware of. Hopefully, we will be able to have some special training to assist veterans with their special needs while in the employ of the United States Postal Service.

If I can be of any assistance to you, please feel free to contact me at the numbers and/or e-Mail address listed in this edition of the Messenger or on the website.

### DAV Donation

The Harley-Davidson Foundation, Inc. recently bestowed a \$1 million gift to the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) at the DAV's National Convention in Chicago. The donation will help support the DAV's service efforts to American veterans left partially or wholly disabled in past and/or current military conflicts. The gift extends Harley-Davidson's long-standing support of the military, a tradition dating back to World War I, when the company produced more than 20,000 motorcycles for the war effort. Chief Executive of Harley-Davidson, Jim Ziemer said: "We are honored by the opportunity to show our

continued support and deep appreciation for the brave men and women who have sacrificed so much to protect our freedom."

### WOW

May 13, 2006 definitely was a milestone, when Robert A. Laurent, a Purple Heart recipient of Kyle, Texas, received the **18 millionth** VA Home Loan Guaranty. The loan was marked at the National Association of Home Builders Annual Spring Conference in Washington D.C. Laurent, an Army veteran, was discharged after four years in uniform because of combat-related injuries in Iraq. Since 1944, when President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act into law, the GI Bill, as it is popularly known, has secured more than \$892 billion in financing for veterans and service members home loans. In fiscal year 2005 alone, VA guaranteed more than 165,000 loans for mortgages valued at more than \$24.9 billion. VA guaranteed home loans are made through banks and mortgage companies to veterans, service members, and eligible reservists. With VA backing a portion of the loan, veterans can receive a competitive interest rate without a down payment, making it easier to buy a home. On January 1, 2006, the VA loan guaranty limit for no-down payment loans was increased to \$417,000. The previous ceiling was \$359,000 (p.s....please don't tell my wife.).

### C.A.I.

Casualty Assistance Information. For some, the idea of death is an unpleasant one best avoided. Unfortunately, death itself cannot be so easily avoided and the failure to plan can cause additional stress for spouses and families when they are least able to cope with it. There are a number of different check lists available than can help in this preparation. Just spending a few hours can make the process much easier for those who have to do the necessary things upon the demise of the veterans and/or their spouse. The completed checklist can be kept with other legal documents, and when the time comes and those documents are need, it will be there, ready to guide the survivors through the legal and governmental processes. I have access to a very thorough checklist. If you would like one, please contact me through the 480-481 Area Local or through the MPWU website, and I will get one out to you as soon as possible.

### Michigan Volunteer Defense Force

Formally known as the Michigan State Troops and the Michigan Emergency Volunteers, the Michigan Volunteer

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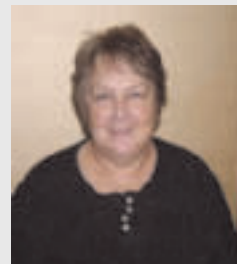
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Veteran's Report continued

Force prepares and trains to aid the Michigan National Guard as they protect the people and communities of the Great State of Michigan. Their mission statement includes 10 tasks. They are to perform: (1) maintain or augment Emergency Operations Centers; (2) damage assessment; (3) emergency exercise evaluation and control; (4) critical infrastructure security evaluation; (5) donations and logistic management; (6) management of volunteers; (7) augmentation of family support operations; (8) crowd and traffic control assistance; (9) Armory management when units are absent; and (10) respond to specific Homeland Defense initiatives. The MVDF is an asset to the State of Michigan and non-deployable outside of the state's boundaries. The MVDF is seeking dedicated individuals who are interested in serving in officer or enlisted positions. These positions are located statewide and include opportunities within four regimental regions and field battalion districts. Your military experience may correspond to a needed skill, and if not, you will receive training in other mission related skills. Additional information is available on the DMVA website at [www.michigan.gov/dmva](http://www.michigan.gov/dmva) and clicking on "Volunteer Defense Force," or by contacting your local county's Veterans Service Officer.

Yours in Solidarity,

*John*



## Area 6 Report

Mary Stephenson  
Area 6 Director

### Can They Do That?

On 7/14/06, a custodian found a baggy containing a "suspicious" substance while performing his cleaning route. He took it to his supervisor. Upon examination, the supervisor proclaimed that she believed it to be an illegal drug preferred by Cheech and Chong. She notified the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) (formally the Postal Inspection Service) and made them aware of the baggy.

That started the ball rolling for an eventful Friday night in the Lansing P&DC. The special agents for the OIG arrived to begin questioning. After assessing the situation, the OIG special agents called in the Lansing Police Department canine unit. Both the men and women's locker rooms were closed while the drug dog searched the lockers in the locker room, in maintenance, in the administration hallway, and the Zone 6 carrier section. During this time, no one was allowed to retrieve personal items – even after they were off the clock. The union was present, while several Lansing management representatives were watching as the search progressed. (As of this writing, no results have been made available from the baggy contents or the locker searches.)

Several employees were surprised to find out that management could open and search their lockers. Management has duplicate keys and a master key for all lockers. The OIG special agents and management can also authorize the use of bolt cutters to remove personal locks.

The answer to the question "Can they do that?" is Yes. Your locker is not really "yours". It is postal property – you are using it. (When you retire, you don't take it with you.) Your locker is subject to search if management suspects it is being used to store drugs alcohol, weapons, or for any criminal activity.

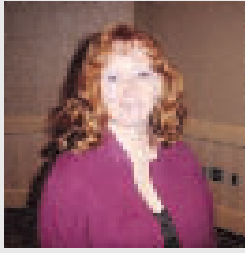
Do you have any rights regarding your locker? Yes. You have the right to be present or to have a steward present during the inspection of your locker. Article 17, Section 9 of the National Agreement states that "...the Employer agrees that, a steward or the employee shall be given the opportunity to be present at any inspection of employees' lockers..."

An additional word of warning – the signs posted by the gates at the entryways serve as notice to employees that their vehicles may be subject to search as well. Once employees are on postal property, we can be searched. Our purses, backpacks, bags, vehicles, and lockers can all be searched. If OIG special agents or management requests to search your locker, vehicle, or belonging, always request a Union steward. You will want to know your rights and to have a witness.

Please make sure you don't jeopardize your job by bringing or keeping anything that the Postal service considers illegal onto postal property/premises.

In Solidarity,

*Mary*



## Area 9 Report

Michelle Gregory  
Area 9 Director

Last month, our State President wrote in his article the importance of supporting our Retiree and Auxiliary Chapters. I firmly agree with Gary and urge anyone on the brink of retirement to stay involved through his or her Local Retiree Chapter. Additionally, if a member of your household would like to become involved with the union, please check out the Auxiliary. You can obtain information needed from either your own local or from the respective state officer.

These men and women are the front-runners of our locals and state organizations; some even the “founders” of what we now have when the merger created the APWU in 1971. They deserve our utmost respect! Without them and their hard work and dedication through some of the roughest years of bargaining, Brothers and Sisters, we wouldn’t be where we are today. I think it is time to take a step back and reflect upon what was fought for in the past, the unity and respect our Brothers and Sisters had for one another, and learn from it. We need to stop squabbling amongst ourselves as it only makes us weaker – especially to management. You remember them – the people we are suppose to be fighting against? Again, it is time to reflect upon our past, learn from it, and move forward in more positive directions.

I wish the Area 10, 11, & 12 Directors good luck on their upcoming District meeting in October and to remind everyone to keep the Area 7, 8, & 9 District Meeting on their calendars for next year in early spring to be held in Kalamazoo. Look for more details to follow.

For those APWU bargaining employees, not covered by a local, and live in 493-494 area and need representation, please feel to give me a call at 616-776-1489.

In Solidarity,

*Michelle*

## Honoring Those Who Served and are currently Serving

Editor’s Note: The below four pictures were from Gagetown Post Office renaming ceremony (top 2 pictures) and the Resse Post Office Military/Veteran’s day. Congratulations to both Post Offices.



Photo Taken by Gary VanHoogstraten



Photo Taken by Gary VanHoogstraten

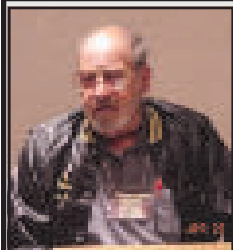


Photo Taken by Gary VanHoogstraten



Photo Taken by Gary VanHoogstraten





## Retiree Involvement

Al LaBrecque  
MPWU Retirees President

### From Out of The Past

For the past several months, the Retirees Dept. has furnished address labels of newly retired APWU members whose Locals do not have Local Retiree Chapters, and are potential members-at-large of the State Retiree Chapter. Now that I'm receiving this information from national, I'll be composing a letter to new retirees encouraging them to stay connected to their Union by joining the Retirees Dept. Some of those who have reached blessed retirement with whom I've had long-standing friendships due to our mutual Union Involvement at MPWU functions, and others I've met along the way are:

**Patricia "Pat" Ryan - Traverse City, John Hendrickson-Gaylord, Fred Fowler-Niles, George Corneil-Southwest MI Area Local, Larry Walls-Fife Lake, Steve Fuqua-Traverse City,** and there's a bunch more but I have a problem with matching names with faces. They all will be hearing from me. In the meantime; may your ride into this new phase in life be one of contentment and good health!

**Requiem.** I was recently informed of the passing of retired Brother, **Finis Fuqua**, who was a steward in the Central MI Area Local (Lansing), with whom many of us old timers had the good fortune of knowing and respecting his dedication to his Union. *"Eternal rest grant unto him O' Lord, and may Perpetual Light shine upon him". Amen.*

**Retirees Dept. Conference Report:** The pre-National Convention Retirees Dept. Conference was an intense one and a half days with enough walking to put the hurt on 'good' legs and backs! I'm not so sure Dept. Dir. Doug Holbrook expected retiree delegates to be such a feisty bunch. I appreciated the fact that I was graciously given every opportunity to address the issues and resolutions on the floor. Two things struck me upon arrival Fri. to register. The Retirees Dept. booth was empty. That's when I learned that our secretary to the Dept., Rosie Livingston, would not be in Philly. It seems that all the hired APWU staff would be from the Eastern Region. So, our extremely knowledgeable and helpful Rosie would not be available, much to my disappointment, What occurred next was incredible. The fully staffed and computerized COPA table(s) was right outside registration. I noticed there were pink and white convention delegate badges. Curious, I asked someone why? Turns out the white badges identified those who were on "the list" of COPA contributors, and pink signified those who were not on "the list" as contributors. My reaction was; "You

gotta be kidding!" The "Scarlet Letter"! What's more, is that there were a lot of upset "pink delegates" who claimed they had given rather generously to COPA at Union functions, among some deleted expletives. Since there were an awful lot of "pink delegates", I fully expected the issue would hit the Convention floor with a vengeance. A lid was put on it when it was announced that delegates with pink badges could have them replaced with white badges. I'm told some irate delegates stayed "pink" to demonstrate their displeasure.

Anyway; the Conference: It was announced that the APWU and USPS came to an agreement which requires the Postal Service to restore individual and group retirement counseling. Local Personnel operations were eliminated in postal facilities to a central "Shared Services" site in Greensboro, NC. The ELM provides that there be at least one group retirement counseling each fiscal year for employees within 3 years of retirement eligibility, and upon request, employees are entitled to individual retirement counseling.

A common thread ran through the entire Conference; Legislative activity. Retirees have no contract. Our 'negotiations' are with Congress. There was also the constant beat of the COPA drum. It was acknowledged that retirees are the largest single group contributing to COPA. Nearly \$217,000. in '05 and on track to match that this year. I concur that legislation in the U.S. Congress on Social Security, Medicare, Health Care, Prescription Drugs, that affects retirees and **future retirees** is an absolute priority. So is the federal/postal retiree legislation; Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), Government Pension Offset (GPO), AND **Premium Conversion** whereby retirees would be able to deduct their health insurance premiums from their pre-taxed annuities. Certainly, the GOP Chairman of the House Ways & Means Committee sits on these proposals with an iron butt, undoubtedly at the behest of his "leader" in the White House. Still, I believe Premium Conversion was doable, and there was not one mention of it in our APWU Legislative Dept. Officer's Report. It is, and has been my conviction that our retiree membership is not getting the bang for the COPA bucks! Retirees Dept. Dir. Doug Holbrook is well qualified to testify before Congress and lobby key legislators, and our Legislative Dept. should be working closely with the Retirees Dept.

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Just as certainly, our 40,000 Retiree Dept. members, Local and State Retiree Chapters, need to get off our collective fannies and WORK in behalf of our friends seeking election and re-election. If we are ever going to move our legislation, drastic changes have to occur in the makeup of Congress and State government. In Michigan, that's our outstanding Senator **Debbie Stabenow (D)**, Governor **Jennifer Granholm (D)**, in my District; Congressman **Bart Stupak (D)**, postal workers champion Congressman **Dale Kildee (D)**, and we all should know the record of our own Congressperson representing our District. Then vote accordingly. Yes, all the listed are Democrats. Yes, they **must** be reelected as they are proven friends of postal workers, working and retired families on the real 'bread and butter' issues affecting us all. Reminds me of a bumper sticker I recently saw which read; *Working People Who Vote Republican, Are Like Chickens Supporting Colonel Sanders*". I proposed that the APWU COPA Committee seriously consider 'putting a face' on COPA contributions by allowing Local and State Union and Chapter officers to present the COPA check personally to favorable candidates. That has far greater impact than a generic check from APWU Hq. to candidates' campaign committees. This position on distribution of COPA monies was received favorably by the retiree delegates.

A hot topic raised by Dir. Holbrook, and office of the APWU Sec.-Treas., is the accounting and reporting of retiree dues rebates by Local and State Chapters. It seems there are inactive Local Retiree Chapters whose rebate monies are being absorbed into active Locals' general funds as "windfall" income. The intent of rebating 40% of a Chapter's membership dues is for those monies

be used by and for Chapter activities and retired members. Inactive retiree chapters risk having their charters suspended and rebate monies withheld by national. The MPWU State Chapter and our 4 Michigan Local Chapters are in compliance. Sec.-Treas. Dept. Special Asst., Judy Beard, advised she reviews all Constitutions & By-Laws as part of her duties. Beard stated that she is in the process of composing a model constitution for chapters to use as a guideline. Chapter officers are well advised to carefully and regularly review their governing document to insure compliance.

Dir. Holbrook announced that as of Oct. 15, 2006, a new in-house computer program will be implemented so that in the future Retirees Dept. members will be identified by the Local Union number from which they retired, unless the retiree requests their membership and dues rebate be transferred to another Local Chapter. Not a new concept, but one we proposed and which was adopted at the 2000 National Convention, but didn't appear in the APWU Constitution until '05.

Eleven "Retiree of the Year" awards were presented which included our own State Chapter V.P. **George Hendricks**, and Central Region Retiree Delegate Beverly Shealy. The recipients were nominated by their Local Retiree Chapter for outstanding community and chapter activities.

Then the Conference was devoted to debate on the retiree resolutions submitted to the APWU Constitution Committee for Convention delegate's consideration. I knew our 4 paramount resolutions were in for an uphill struggle when our own Retiree Dept. Conference was divided on the proposals. The Constitution Committee nixed all but one with nonconcurrences, which I'll relate below, putting the possibility of adoption in a deep hole right out of the gate. Again, Dir. Holbrook

graciously gave me great latitude in addressing our position on our resolutions.

The APWU National Convention: I can only relate what occurred on the retiree resolutions from information received from those delegates who participated in the convention. Since I'm 'only' a member of the Retirees Dept., I'm not eligible to be a credentialed convention delegate. Because I refuse to 'sit in the back of the bus', I returned to Spruce on Mon., trusting support of our resolutions to our active delegates. We won't know the verbatim substance of the debates on each until the Official Proceedings (minutes) are published some 1 1/2 years down the road, or who spoke for and against.

First up was the "40-40-20" resolution originally authored by the Ohio Postal Workers Union's State Chapter Sec.-Treas., Phyllis Wood, at the '04 convention. Michigan State resubmitted it for this convention. Florida State submitted a similar resolution with the requirement that at least 50% of the retiree members in a state must be in organized local retiree chapters before the 20% dues rebate to State Chapters for **all** Retirees Dept. members in the state is implemented. A valiant effort to substitute Michigan's version on the convention floor fell short, and Fla.'s resolution received the necessary 2/3 approval of the delegates. The 50% requirement really doesn't make much difference for our State Chapter's dues rebate revenue. Dept. Dir. Doug Holbrook furnished totals of our Local Chapters at my request. The total members in organized local retiree chapters is currently 509. Our State Chapter average total of M.A.L. retired members was 480. Thus, Michigan meets the 50% requirement meaning the 20% dues rebate for **all** Retirees Dept. members

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## NBA Report

Lynn Pallas-Barber  
NBA - Clerk Div. - Chicago

### WOMEN IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT

#### Lucy Parsons – THANKS FOR THE 8 HOUR DAY

Little is known about the early life of Lucy Parsons. She claimed to be the daughter of a Mexican woman and a Creek Indian. She was orphaned at the early age of three (3). She was then raised by her maternal uncle on a ranch in Texas. The possibility also exists that she was a slave in Texas.

She married Albert Parsons; a former Confederate soldier turned radical Republican, in 1872. They were forced to flee Texas because of their mixed marriage. They settled in Chicago in 1873 and became involved in the labor movement. Her husband was blacklisted from the printing trade, so Lucy opened a dress shop. Lucy began to get involved in the labor movement. She began writing articles for "The Socialist" in 1878. Her articles were about homeless and the unemployed, Civil War veterans and working women. After developing as a powerful speaker and writer, she became a crucial part of the workers' movement in Chicago. In 1883 she helped found the International Working People's Association (IWPA). Lucy began writing articles of the IWPA weekly paper "The Alarm" in 1884.

In addition to being a labor activist, she was also an advocate of the rights of African Americans. She wrote numerous articles and pamphlets condemning racist attacks and killings.

In 1886 Lucy and the IWPA worked with other trade unions for a general strike in support of the 8-hour day. This strike involved nearly 80,000 workers. Five days after this strike at a rally in Haymarket Square, a bomb was hurled at the police after they attacked the demonstration. The police blamed the IWPA and began rounding up some of the organizers, including Albert Parsons, Lucy's husband. Lucy took charge of organizing their defense. They were all found guilty of murder. Lucy traveled the country on their behalf spreading their innocence and raising money for their appeals. Four of the organizers were hanged in November, including Lucy's husband Albert.

After Albert's death she continued to work on the behalf of workers, political prisoners, and people of color, the homeless and women. She participated in the founding of the Industrial Workers of the World. In 1927 she joined the National Committee of the International Labor Defense, a communist-led organization. After working with the Communist Party for a number of years, she finally joined in 1939. After 50 years of activism, Lucy died in a fire in her Chicago home in 1942. She was continued to be considered a threat even after her death, her personal papers and books were seized by the police from her gutted house. Both Albert and Lucy Parsons lived their lives fighting and dying for the rights of workers. They helped establish the 8-hour working day that we often take for granted today.

#### USPS PLANS FOR A \$1 BILLION IN COST REDUCTION IN 2007

A USPS news release dated 9/12/06 stated that the Board of Governors approved a fiscal year 2007 integrated financial plan that included cost reductions totaling \$1.1 billion. This cost reduction contains a planned decrease of 40 million work hours. These savings are allegedly going to come from automation improvements and implementation of additional; "breakthrough productivity."

Executive VP H. Glenn Walker was quoted as saying: "There is a potential for more risk in the achievement of this plan compared to recent years. The pending rate case, the current labor negotiations with our four largest unions, and uncertainties with the economy-including fuel prices-all have the potential to affect actual revenue and expense figures."

The Board also approved the funding to purchase eight (8) Automated Package Processing Systems (APPS). This is the second phase of their program which will bring the total number of APPS machines deployed in the field to 84. It is anticipated that the eight (8) APPS machines will be deployed IN July of 2007.

It is apparent to me that our economic package in contract negotiations will be a very tough battle. There is a continuing struggle concerning the number of career craft employees. It is the intention of the USPS to replace us with lower level craft employees and over whelming automation.

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**NBA Report Continued**

**ELECTION 2007**

More important than ever working families need to get out and vote in the 2007 elections. In the 2004 elections, spending by Big Business accounted for a whopping \$1.22 billion, 23 times more than the contributions of working families. Big Business political spending overwhelmed the contributions of working families by 12-to-1, translated into dollars \$62 million from working families vs. \$709 million from Big Business. Our COPA dollars are important more than ever.

Corporate America is not committed to electing public officials concerned about the issues working people face at home and at the job site. We, as working Americans, need to do our part in getting our brothers and sisters to the polls this November.

**NATIONAL BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH**

The month of October is once again upon us and for more than 20 years has been designated as National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. As a two-time survivor of breast cancer this issue is always near and dear to my heart. It is important that every woman take charge of their own breast health. The practice of regular self-breast exams and making sure to schedule an annual mammogram are steps in the right direction.

It is difficult these days to find any one person where cancer has not touched someone in their life. Early detection coupled with new treatments can only improve our chances of survival.

**EXCESSING**

Excessing continues in Illinois and Michigan. The deployment of AI, PARS, APPS, the USPS use of Function 4, removal of CSBCS, WOS and now something called PUFs (Postal Unit Fact Sheet) continues to attack the hours of the Clerk Craft in offices of all levels. The purpose of Article 12 is to minimize dislocation and inconvenience to employees. Are we going to be able to prevent dislocation to our bothers and sisters? I don't think that we can stop postal management from moving our membership around, but the inconvenience should be kept to a minimum.

Article 12 and Article 6 of our contract provides job security that is almost not found any where else in the private

job world. It may not seem like much cancellation to a bother or sister that is being moved from their work location, but it has to be better than standing in the unemployment line! The struggle does continue.

On brighter note, I hope that every brother and sister has a wonderful fall and try to remember our veterans in November.

Until next time,

In solidarity,

*Lynn*





## Death Benefit Facts

for

### G.I. and Federal Employees—2006

Submitted by: George Hendricks (MPWU Retiree Chapter Vice-President)

#### 1. Social Security Administration (SSA) for Social Security eligible Retirees: (800) 772-1213.

##### Need to provide:

- a. The deceased's Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Copy of deceased's Death Certificate

##### Needed for:

- a. The deceased's lump-sum DEATH benefit, if any.
- b. The Government's Burial allowance
- c. To collect Survivor benefits (SS checks intended for the deceased after their death must be returned).

#### 2. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for federal employees: (888) 767-6738

##### Need to provide:

- a. The deceased's Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. CSA # \_\_\_\_\_ Civil Service employee or  
FERS # \_\_\_\_\_ Federal employee since 1983.
- c. Copy of deceased's Death Certificate

##### Needed for:

- a. The deceased's employee Pay or Retiree Annuity adjustments
- b. Survivor Benefits
- c. Survivor Annuity Payments
- d. Life Insurance
- e. Accident Insurance
- f. Health Benefit changes

*NOTE: Annuity checks for the deceased after their death must be returned.*

#### 3. Veterans Administration (VA) for military service veteran benefits: (800) 827-1000

##### Need to provide:

- a. The deceased's Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Active Duty Service Number: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Copy of deceased's Death Certificate

- d. Copy of deceased's Military Service Records (DD Form 214, Discharge Papers, etc.)

##### Needed for:

- a. The receiving of:
  - a. American Flag for the deceased family and vet's funeral
  - b. Government Bronze Marker (for the vet's gravesite or home)
  - c. Federal Burial Allowance (if applicable – receiving a disability)
  - d. Veterans Life Insurance (lump sum (if any) for beneficiaries)
  - e. Possible VA Survivor Benefits (depends on survivor's finances)
  - f. Possible County Burial Allowance in which the veteran had resided in (contact the county)

*NOTE1: The deceased veteran's Remains/Cremains may be buried in a Federal Cemetery at no cost to the deceased's family; and also the surviving spouse may be buried there later as well; application for which MUST be made ahead of time to the cemetery involved.*

*NOTE2: Contact the Veterans' Life Insurance (for lump sum payments) (800) 669-8477.*

*NOTE3: Contact Tri-Care Health Benefits for military personnel may be available to Surviving spouse of a deceased vet. Call: (866) 773-0404*

4. Grave Markers (if wanted) must be purchased and deceased name/names applied.
5. Medicare contacted to inform them of the deceased's death. (800) 633-4227
6. If a Secondary Health Benefit Payer (or a primary) is involved, they must also be informed of the deceased's death and whatever else might be necessary.

- a. One example I am familiar with is the American Postal Workers Union (APWU).
  - i. APWU Health Plan (800) 222-2798
  - ii. APWU Accident Benefit Association (ABA) injury/loss of limb/accidental death. (603) 436-2217 or (8
  - iii. APWU Retirees Department (the department has a \$5,000 accidental death and dismemberment coverage) (202) 842-8584/85 or (877) 279-8669

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Death Benefit Facts Continued

- iv. APWU Voluntary Benefits Plan: (800) 422-4492
- b. Another example is the National Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE) which also has Health and Life Insurance programs: (800) 233-5764
- c. Another is American Association of Retired Person (AARP) which has programs for Health Ins. (800) 523-5800; Pharmacy (800) 456-2227; Life Ins. (800) 449-1548, etc.
7. Fraternal organizations and Labor Union members may have death and other benefits.
8. Real Estate (if jointly owned with the right of Survivorship), a copy of the deceased Death Certificate must be filed with the Register of Deeds in the county in which the property is located. NOTE; Change the title on the property.
9. Vehicles-Boats-Trailers, a copy of the deceased Death Certificate filed and sent with the Old title for Title Transfers to the Secretary of State office where titled.
10. Bank and Credit Union Accounts for Joint accounts, provide a copy of the deceased Death Certificate to change Title and Name, and Beneficiary and Survivor names, etc. Accounts may have deposit life insurance Due survivors. Also, all financial and credit obligations must be checked (some may be covered by Life Insurance, payable at time of death) and arrangements made. Note: if the deceased's name appears and beneficiary on any of the above mentioned documents, that name must be removed if necessary.
11. Last Wills and Testaments, if they exist, concerning the deceased person in whole or in part, need to be updated, particularly upon the person's death. Also needed are: A Durable Power of Attorney, Living Will, Patient Advocate Form, Living Trust, etc.
12. advance Directives is your right to make choices and decisions that effected you life for yourself and letting family, friends, doctors, and medical community know what you wishes are. Your directives include your present health, but more importantly, your directive also include what your wishes are when your health begin to fail. Also, when your pending death occurs, your instructions are carried out by the Power of Attorney person you choose.

Most of the above mentioned documents are available from your attorney or organizations dedicated to help people when (or before) these needs occur. One thing that is EXTREMELY important is to help find a good, reputable Funeral Director. Their job is to help you and your family out during the time of loss.

*George*

## How do I Register to Vote?

See Next Page for Application!

To register to vote you must be ...

- a U.S. citizen;
- at least 18 years of age by election day;
- a resident of Michigan and the city or township where you are applying to register to vote.

**How.** You can register to vote for federal, state, and local elections by mail; at your county, city, or township clerk's office; or by visiting any Secretary of State branch office.

In addition, specified agencies providing services through the Department of Human Services, the Department of Community Health and the Department of Labor and Economic Growth offer voter registration services to their clients. Military recruitment centers also provide voter registration services.

**When.** You must register at least 30 days before the election. This gives the clerk time to process the forms and send you a Voter Identification Card.

**Change of Address.** If you move **within a city or township**, you must update your address. This can be handled through your local clerk, at a Secretary of State branch office, by mail or at any other location where voter registrations are accepted.

Whenever you move to a **new city or township**, you must re-register to vote.

The residential address used for your voter registration **must be the same as** the address on your driver's license. Consequently, when you submit a driver's license address change, it will be applied to your voter registration. Similarly, when you submit a voter registration address change, it will be applied to your driver's license.

**First-time voter.** If you have never voted in Michigan and register by mail, **you must appear in person to vote in the first election in which you wish to participate.** This requirement does **not** apply if (1) you personally hand deliver the mail-in registration form to your county, city or township clerk's office instead of mailing the form (2) you are 60 years of age or more (3) you are disabled or (4) you are eligible to vote under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act.

If you have never voted in Michigan and register by mail, you may also be subject to a new identification requirement provided under federal law. The identification requirements are explained on the mail-in registration form.

**Outside the U.S.** If you are temporarily outside the U.S., you may use a Federal Postcard Application (FPCA) form to register. The FPCA forms are distributed through U.S. embassies and military bases. A Michigan resident who moves and registers out of state may not re-register to vote in Michigan until he or she reestablishes residency here.





## *Oppose Michigan “Civil Rights Initiative”*

WHEREAS: The so-called “Civil Rights Initiative” that will be on the ballot for Michigan voters this November is deceptively titled, and,

WHEREAS: This initiative, which is the brainchild of Californian Ward Connery, is actually an anti-civil rights measure, and,

WHEREAS: This initiative is opposed by such diverse groups as the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO, and by the major party candidates for Governor (Jennifer Granholm and Dick DeVos), and

WHEREAS: This initiative would stifle programs for people of color and endanger programs for women such as breast screenings and women’s shelters, and

WHEREAS: Statistical comparison of wage levels by race and gender show that affirmative action programs are still necessary in our society, therefore be it,

RESOLVED: That the MPWU goes on record in opposition to the so-called Michigan Civil Rights Initiative, and be it further

RESOLVED: That a copy of this resolution be published in a future issue of The Michigan Messenger.

**Editor’s NOTE:** This resolution was overwhelmingly passed at the Michigan Postal Workers Union 20th Biennial State Convention held in Detroit, Michigan from May 4– 6, 2006. I personally can not stress enough how much this initiative needs to be defeated. Since the convention, more information has come out on this. Not only will it affect any Affirmative Action initiatives currently in place, or in the future, but pretty much outlaw any initiatives or programs that is based on either Sex and/or race. Please join me and all the delegates in defeating this initiative.



