



The RETIREE RECORD

A NEWS BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS
AFFILIATED WITH APWU POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

PITTSBURGH AREA RETIREE CHAPTER
OF THE AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO

POST OFFICE BOX 39 ◊ SLOVAN ◊ PENNSYLVANIA ◊ 15078

JOHN P. RICHARDS, *President and Editor*

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MEMBERSHIP MEETING

THE NEXT MEMBERSHIP MEETING WILL BE HELD ON
THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 2012, TIME ~ 11:30 AM

PLACE~ GIANT EAGLE MARKET DISTRICT

100 SETTLERS RIDGE CENTER DRIVE, PITTSBURGH PA 15205, SECOND FLOOR

THERE IS EXTENSIVE FREE PARKING AND
ELEVATOR SERVICE TO THE SECOND FLOOR.

DIRECTIONS/QUESTIONS AVAILABLE AT THE CHAPTER AT 724 947 9374

*SETTLERS RIDGE IS LOCATED RIGHT OFF THE PARKWAY WEST FROM BOTH
DIRECTIONS NEAR ROBINSON TOWNSHIP*

A DELI TRAY WILL BE AVAILABLE

END OF AN ERA ~ OSCAR C. LECKMAN 1915-2012

It is likely that a fair portion of our membership may not have heard of or remember Oscar Leckman who passed on February 26 at the age of 96. His obituary was very brief, including the fact that he was the first elected President of the Pittsburgh Metro Area Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO. But as is the case for all men, there is more, much more to his legacy.

It is ironic that the previous issue of The Retiree Record included a reference to leaders of the past, published and in the mail, when word of Oscar's passing reached us.

When Joe Anthony and I joined the Pittsburgh Post Office separately in the 1950's, little did we know that there was an ongoing struggle for representation of the workers in a very chaotic hostile union atmosphere, and we would be caught up in it. The most noted figures of the time were Ted "The Fed" Kozlowski and Richard "Dick" Aul, competitors in 'The Federation', and Oscar, who was President of the Industrial Union known as the National Postal Union, or NPU. This was the group that had previously walked out of a Federation Convention in Boston in disgust with ineffective leadership to form that Union.

Oscar cut his teeth in Steelworker organizing at the Firth Sterling works in McKeesport before joining the Post Office. His was one of the first Union Cards issued for that mill! Shortly after coming to the Post Office, Oscar was tapped for military service for WWII, in which he honored himself and his unit and was highly decorated for that service. In the meantime, in accordance with regulations at that time, his seniority and tenure continued while he served in the Army. Upon honorable discharge from the Army, he returned to the Post Office and the Union wars there.

Joe and I quickly recognized the difference between the NPU and the other groups, and Oscar's dynamic leadership. In no time we had joined up (dues \$1.50 at the time), and Oscar quickly moved us into responsible representation and other duties.

(over)

Oscar was a fighter. Some of our battles with Superintendent Walt Dudich and Postmaster Ed Coll were unbelievable. At that time we had little or no rights, this was before even President John F. Kennedy's Executive Order 10988 of January 17, 1962, which cracked the door a little later on. But with very limited 'rights', we won work floor seniority that continues to this day, one of the greatest accomplishments of all time. At one point Oscar tied up with a Steelworker's attorney and dragged the Post Office and the Federation into Federal Court over a number of issues, including hospitalization remittances.

On many occasions Oscar took us to Washington DC by B&O RR Trains (the era before easy air travel) to drop in unannounced on Assistant Postmasters General, who always admitted us, to argue over management policies at the Pittsburgh Post Office.

As time moved along, Oscar's conduct at the Great Post Office Strike of 1970 was tactically perfect. He had the workers firmly behind him. There was no hesitation in following him out the door and onto the picket line despite the personal peril for each and every one of those strikers. While US Marshalls were searching for us officers with back to work Court Orders, Oscar's strategy was brilliant, keeping us from the clutches of the Court, which could have financially ruined the Local and with us sent to prison for the illegal strike.

When the strike was settled with passage of the Postal Reorganization Act, Oscar rolled up his sleeves facing a diverse group that was seeking power for the now merging groups. It was a very rough ride, with a few bloody noses at joint membership meetings, secret meetings by the old Federation, and a worker financed lawsuit that brought the group under trusteeship. In our view, it was that short lived trusteeship that set the course for the critical first election and the future of the Local where again Oscar's strategy was brilliant. He pulled together most leaders of the craft groups and formed a coalition that brought him and our entire team to victory in that first election. When that term ended, most of the infighting had subsided. The elections were 'spirited' but cathartic, cleansing the Local from much of the previous bickering.

Oscar set up the first Pittsburgh Metro Office, hired the Local's first office staff, brought consultants aboard and obtained the best equipment available to do the Local's work, while pulling the various factions closer together. The members remained loyal to him for the short three years or so that he served, leaving office only because of health reasons into disability retirement.

But because of Oscar, the die was cast for others, including this writer, to follow in his footsteps. It was a perilous era. Oscar had our Local stand tall in that hectic time. Now you have earned your rest Oscar. You leave a legacy that is unequalled within the APWU or the Postal Labor Movement. What we owe you is beyond measure. We thank you and honor you for what you have done to advance the cause of Postal workers everywhere. On a very personal note, I thank you for an exciting and rewarding career. Rest in peace.

NEW MEMBER ~ Tony Sarazen. Welcome aboard!

PASSING ~ Janaan Burkhart and Thomas Benicky have passed. May they rest in peace.

SHUT-IN LIST ~ Bill Adams, Norbert Conway, Jeanne McCarthy, Laverne Heil, Dorothy Walker, and Ruth Marlett are on the shut-in list. Please keep a good thought for our shut-ins. There but for the grace of God..... (To be included on the shut in list, call the Chapter at 724 947 9374.)

MAY BE PASSED AROUND/DUPLICATED