Tony Massa, An Exceptional Man

Pete Maglio, President
NJ Merged Branch 38

I met Tony Massa in 1980 when I took over as President of Branch 624, Orange, NJ. At that time, Don Millman was the branch president. Don was leaving the Post Office to begin his new career as an Attorney-at-Law. One of the first things I recall Tony saying to me when we first met was, “Hey kid, if you work like Donny, you’ll be ok.”

Tony was indeed an exceptional man. There was nothing phony about him. He was straightforward and would always tell you what he really thought. He was old school. When Tony made an agreement, it was reached with a handshake. His word was his bond. Tony would frequently remind us of how things have changed in the Post Office. He recalled that years ago he would make a call to get things resolved, and he bemoaned the fact that those days are gone. There are many letter carriers over the years that owe their jobs to Tony, thanks to his unique ability to get things done.

Tony always treated people he met with respect. It didn’t matter if you were a Senator, Congressman, President of the NALC, or a letter carrier. Tony always made time to advise new union officers or shop stewards when they were confronted with difficult decisions. We at Branch 38, who have had the honor and privilege of working with Tony over these many years, are the better for it.

There are some things you may not have known about Tony. He was a World War II veteran, and was awarded the Purple Heart. He began his career in the Postal Service in 1954, as a letter carrier in the Newark Post Office. He served as President of Branch 38, Newark from 1974 until he orchestrated the merger with Branch 991 in January, 1983. After the merger, Tony continued his role as Chief Shop Steward in Newark and assumed the office of Vice President of Branch 38. He won election as President of the NJ State Association of Letter Carriers in 1981, and continued to serve in that capacity until he retired from the State Association in June 2013.

Tony was one of the most well known and beloved State Presidents in the country. Under his leadership, NJSALC legislative efforts have become the gold standard throughout the NALC.

As the President of Branch 38, and on behalf of the officers and members of the entire Branch, I expressed to his wife Connie and their family our deep sorrow on Tony’s passing, and our gratitude for what Tony had meant, and what he will continue to mean to our great organization. Tony would always end his address to the membership with “God Bless.” Tony, May You Rest in Peace, and May God Bless You.

NJSALC Announces 2014 Annual Trip to Washington, DC
June 8th, 9th, and 10th, 2014 - Capitol Hill Hyatt Regency
Further information available at NJSALC.com
VIEWPOINT

Jeff Fox

When I edit each issue of the Garden State Letter Carrier, I wait until it’s complete to write my article; normally, at that point, the article writes itself. I am finding my article difficult to write in this issue. I wanted this issue to be a tribute to Tony Massa who passed away on 10/21/2013; I hope that goal has been achieved. I found Richie O’Connell’s article especially poignant; it was his father, Richie, Sr., Vince Sombrotto and Tony Massa who I looked up to when I started my career in 1979. They were giants among letter carriers; all letter carriers who walk a route today, have these great men to thank for the NALC, as it exists today.

What can I add to the conversation about Tony Massa? I knew him for the better part of the last 30 years; I knew him and I respected him. He provided me with lessons and guidance when he didn’t even know he was doing it. He did this by setting an example of what a union leader should be; he was firm, fair, and most of all he made the hard decisions. Tony came from a time when a handshake was your bond and there are countless letter carriers that owe a debt of gratitude to that handshake.

Tony made everything look easy, as those of us who must carry-on in his footsteps are finding out. While searching for some pictures of Tony, I was struck by his rapport with every Congressman and Senator from New Jersey. When Tony reached out to them with his giant hand or placed it on their shoulder, there was a real connection between him and them. There were times when Tony would go to Capitol Hill and Senators or Congressmen would step out of committee hearings to meet with him in the hallway on a letter carrier issue. He was tireless in his defense of letter carriers in Newark, in New Jersey and on Capitol Hill.

Sadly, Tony’s passing marks the end of an era; we can only hope that he has already taught us the lessons necessary to continue his legacy for many years to come and make him proud. Tony Massa will be greatly missed by his wife and family; his NALC family will also miss him.
The Passing of a Great Union Leader

Richard O’Connell, Jr.
President, NJSALC

With the passing of Tony Massa, regrettably we have lost another icon of the NALC. Tony’s dedication has been second to none. The history of his service to his union brothers and sisters has been wonderfully articulated in many articles, but they tell only a small part of the story of Anthony’s legacy.

The vision, dedication, and hard work of Tony made the NALC, and particularly Branch 38, the strong and service driven organization it is today.

Those of us who were lucky enough to work side by side with Tony on a daily basis know his concern for each and every letter carrier. He would make time for anyone and everyone who sought his assistance.

As a youngster, I remember Tony coming to my house to meet with my father on union business or going to a union function in NJ or NY. They would always be talking about the “Union”. The “band of brothers” usually consisted of Paul Berto and Big Frank Trimmarco. Sadly, they have all passed on. Anthony touched the lives of many people. He was truly a gentle giant.

I would be remiss if I did not mention some other friends that Anthony had an enormous effect on; there was George Pretto, Al Ferranto, Don Millman, Bruce Didriksen and Pete Maglio. These gentlemen were not only colleagues of Tony but good friends. There are so many others to mention but I would be here writing all night.

It is still hard to realize completely that we are to be denied his companionship. Tony was a gentleman in the truest sense of the word and I doubt if there are many in our business that possess the depth of compassion and high regard he had for others. We shall miss him very much.

In my heart I believe that somewhere upstairs Tony Massa, my father and Vince Sombrotto are playing cards, you know, those crazy games they would make up. God bless you Tony.

Larry Cirelli
NBA, Region 15

What can you say about the passing of Tony Massa? He was a family man. Loved by his wife, children, 15 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. They spoke of him in reverence and tones that would make anyone proud. Saying that they loved him, doesn’t do it justice.

He was a soldier. He served in World War II and talked about his exploits but I knew him for years and he never told me he received a Purple Heart for being wounded in combat. He never bragged, he was always humble.

He was a hard worker. I cannot tell you all the jobs he took and the work he did to support his family. He never put himself first; it was always for the wife, kids and grandchildren. He sacrificed much to support them but never complained.

He was a union worker. He started in the Post Office in 1954. Got involved in the NALC and impacted many a letter carrier. He helped merge branches and create one of the largest NALC branches in the country but he never did it for himself, he did it for the betterment of the NALC. He oversaw the carriers in Newark Post Office and he was famous for saving a carrier from being fired with just a handshake with management. He worked tirelessly to help his fellow carriers. A better union representative, you could not be.

He was the President of the State Association. His methods of meeting and influencing Congress are now used all over the country. Congressmen ran to him. The way he handled them and talked to them can never be duplicated. He had them in the palm of his hand. He made the New Jersey NALC coalition the one to emulate.

I could go on and on. He was a mentor, and icon. An example of how to be a union representative and a man. Unique, hero, unselfish, tireless, and more.

Most of all, to me, Tony was my friend. He will leave a large hole in my life and he will be missed.

Save the Date:

NJSALC 2014 Seminar
September 28, 29, and 30 2014
Caesar’s * Boardwalk * Atlantic City
As I write this article, I have just received information that a letter carrier was shot and killed in Landover, Maryland. All the details are not in, so I am not going to assign blame or target darkness as the predominate factor.

What I am going to go into are your rights and responsibilities concerning your job and, more importantly, your responsibility to your family.

Your number one priority is being safe. Delivering your mail and returning safe. Completing your day at work and returning safely to your family. Nothing else is as high of importance! No matter what anyone says or anyone orders you to do. If the situation puts your safety in jeopardy, your life in jeopardy, you have a right and obligation to you and your family to refuse the order under safety regulations.

Darkness of itself is not unsafe. Darkness of itself is not a reason to refuse an order. Not being able to see where you are walking is unsafe. Not being able to see the steps you have to walk up and down is unsafe. Not being able to see dogs and other animals is unsafe. Walking in the street because the block does not have sidewalks is unsafe. Delivering in a high crime neighborhood or street after dark is unsafe. We know the dangerous areas and should refuse to deliver there after dark. These are reasons to bring the mail back and refuse the order. If you get disciplined, we will grieve it, but at least you will be safe and alive to grieve it. Please remember this and pass the word to your fellow carriers and especially the new CCAs.

I am not naive and I know that a lot of carriers love the overtime and are willing to work late but remember you and your family can’t spend overtime money if you are not here. Be safe, be with your family, and think about what could happen and how your family would be impacted.

For all those carriers that are using the hat lights, the so called miner hats, they are not approved equipment. They are not as safe as you think they are. If you are using the light to read the mail, you can’t see where you are stepping. If you are looking at your feet, you are going to miss that low hanging tree limb. If you are looking at the handrail, you are missing the step. DO NOT USE THEM! The same goes for flashlights. They are not approved equipment. We don’t have enough hands to carry the mail, adding a flashlight to the mix is dangerous. DO NOT USE THEM.

I am asking all shop stewards to file a class action grievance in locations where management is handing out miner lights, flashlights or permitting their use. They are not approved; they are not safe and should not be used.

Completing the route is not worth it. The extra money is not worth it. What is worth beyond price is your health and safety. Don’t let anyone take it away from you. Be safe.
Unresolved Issues Affecting CCA’s
Joe Rutkoski, NJSALC Executive Board Member

The arbitration decision that set the wages, benefits and working conditions for letter carriers for the period of 2011-2016 left several issues that pertain to City Carrier Assistants (CCA’s) to be worked out by the two parties. This article will focus on three of these issues, which are of primary concern to CCA’s.

The establishment of a noncontributory 401(k) for CCA’s. The NALC’s lawyers and investment advisors are preparing to present proposals to the USPS that would allow a CCA to save for retirement before they are converted to career status and become eligible for the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). The goal of the NALC is to have this plan available for CCA’s beginning in 2014. More details will be made available when a final plan is approved by the parties. Shop Stewards and CCA’s should watch NALC bulletins and visit nalc.org for complete details.

A method for converting CCA’s to full time career status. On August 30, 2013 a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the USPS and the NALC. This memorandum (M-01824) will serve as the foundation for the process in which CCA’s will be converted to full time career status. This memorandum has already resulted in the conversion of many city carrier assistants to full-time career status, with many more to follow in the near future. The MOU provides: Residual City Letter Carrier vacancies, (That are not being properly held under Article 12. Withholding and Exceeding), will be filled in the following order:

1. Within 28 days of an assignment becoming residual, the assignment will be filled by assigning it to any unassigned regular or a FTF (full time flexible carrier) within the installation.

2. Promoting the senior PTF (part time flexible) to the residual vacancy. Residual vacancies that cannot be filled through above two steps will be posted on e-reassign for a 21 day period during the next available posting cycle. At this point, applications for these vacancies will be accepted only from career city letter carriers.

3. Residual vacancies that remain will be filled by acceptance of transfers, requests from other crafts from within the installation, or through eReassign and the conversion of a CCA within the installation that has the residual vacancy.

It is the union’s position that converting CCA’s to career status should be as simple as filling a residual vacancy with a PTF, and if there is no PTF in the installation, then the CCA with the highest relative standing in that installation gets the vacancy.

Prior to M-01824, management took the position that they would not promote any CCA’s to a full time career position while there were still any PTF’s throughout the entire Postal Service. The NALC has filed a grievance on the CCA’s behalf that is now pending national level arbitration. Until this issue is heard by an arbitrator, M-01824 is the method that will be used for converting CCA’s to career status.

Setting the guidelines for working CCA’s in installations outside of their own.

I have received numerous complaints from many CCA’s about this issue over the past several months. A similar issue addressing Transitional Employees (TE’s) was addressed in the 2009 JCAM as follows:

Can a Transitional Employee be temporarily assigned outside their employing post office (installation) to another post office (installation) within the district? The language in Article 7 states in relative part that Transitional employees will normally work in their employing post office but may be assigned to work in another office within the same district on an occasional basis.

On December 3, 2013, the parties reached an agreement with similar language applicable to CCA’s. That MOU (M-01827) provides:

The parties agree to the following regarding the temporary assignment of city carrier assistants (CCAs) outside their employing post office (installation) to another post office (installation):

1. CCAs will normally work in their employing post office but may be assigned to work in another post office in the local travel area (Continued on next page)
Within the same district on an occasional basis (the assignment may be for a partial day or several consecutive days, depending on local circumstances). Sunday CCA work assignments are not subject to the occasional basis limitation.

2. Temporary assignments must otherwise be consistent with the National Agreement (e.g. assigning CCAs to work outside their employing office may not violate Article 7 1.C.4 in the temporary office or the letter carrier paragraph in the employing office).

3. Management will schedule CCAs to work in other post offices in advance of the reporting date whenever practicable.

4. When the need arises to temporarily assign CCAs outside their employing post office, management will, to the extent practicable, use volunteer CCAs from the delivery unit providing assistance as long as the volunteers will be in a similar pay status (e.g. straight-time rate, regular overtime rate, penalty overtime rate). If sufficient volunteers are not found, CCAs from the delivery unit providing assistance will be temporarily assigned to the other installation in reverse relative standing order whenever practicable as long as the junior CCAs are in a similar pay status.

5. CCAs who are required or volunteer to work outside their employing office may receive payment for mileage for the difference between their residence and employing office provided the difference is greater (Handbook F-15, Section 7-1.1.1.2.d).

These provisions should be strictly enforced by the shop stewards. CCA employees who are detailed to a temporary work location should be done so in accordance with this MOU. They are also entitled to payment for millage that exceeds the employee’s normal commute to his/her permanent location.

For example, if a CCA’s normally travels 10 miles round trip to his/hers assigned office, but is temporarily sent to work in another office that is a 30 mile round trip commute, the CCA would be entitled to be paid for 20 miles of travel at a current rate of 56.5 cents per mile. Shop stewards should closely monitor and verify that any CCA that is sent to another office to work gets paid for mileage. If not, a grievance should be filed under Article 36, Article 19, ELM Sec 438 and the Postal Handbook F-15.
President Emeritus Anthony Massa

Tony with Senator Menendez

Tony Massa

Tony and Congressman Holt

Tony with Congressman Frelinghuysen

Tony with Congressman LoBiondo

Tony with Congressman Pascrell and Bill Young
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