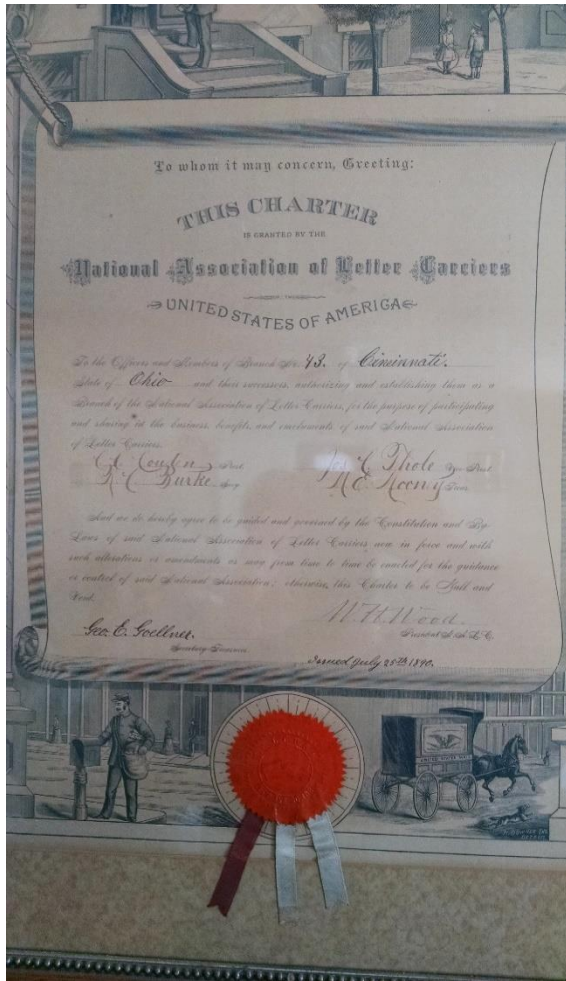


Your Branch  
Branch 43  
An illustrative history of  
Queen City Letter Carriers



By:  
Ted N. Thompson  
September 13, 2016

## The Beginning



Original Branch 43 Charter

Branch 43 officially came to existence less than one year of the founding of the NALC on July 25, 1890. The original charter which is located in the Ed Wesseling memorial conference room of the union hall bears the signatures of Charles C. Couden as Branch 43's first President and R. C. Burke as the branches first Secretary. This charter further bears the signatures of NALC 1<sup>st</sup> National President William H. Wood and NALC Secretary G. L. Goellner. Branch 43's charter application has the signatures of twenty carriers. By such charter the "Queen City" Branch was adopted.

Branch 43 would maintain that adoption until 1932 when the Branch changed its name to the John T. Mugavin Branch in honor of the deceased Branch 43 member and National Officer. Branch 43 would change its name back to the Queen City Branch in 1981; a name still born today.

Branch 43 started out as serving only Cincinnati Post Offices. Since the beginning Branch 43 has grown tremendously with population and mergers and now represents and serves 22 other associate Installations as well as Cincinnati which includes 17 Post Office's where City Carriers are part of the workforce. Branch 43 has always had strong union

membership and today membership levels are still strong with Branch 43 more organized through both regular Carriers and City Carrier Assistants above the national average.

Branch 43 has always had strong union leaders at the helm. While not inclusive, the leadership through Branch 43 Presidents has been strong with the likes of John Mugavin, William Doherty, Jack Rich, Norb Evans, Gary Gabbard, Gerald Giesting, and now through David Kennedy. Today Branch 43 has 20 members making up the Branch Board of Officers. There are two full-time Officer positions through the positions of President and Vice-President. These Officers are here to represent your rights through the grievance arbitration procedure, helping with or education of benefits, help with education/representation of injury and OWCP, leave, local negotiations, as well as numerous other ways. Please do not hesitate to contact the Branch for any help/inquiry you may have. Also, please take note to become involved with the NALC. Branch 43's current Officers will not be around forever and the Branch is always interested in getting new members more involved. Branch 43 is a total democracy, with every Officer, Steward, and Delegate position being elected from the membership. Stewards and Delegates are elected every 2 years while Branch Officers are elected every 3 years.

Today the men and women who make up the Branch 43 Board of Officers is as follows:

President: David Kennedy  
Vice President: Douglas Lape  
Secretary: Burt Hughes  
Recording Secretary/Assistant Secretary Treasurer: Ted Thompson  
Treasurer: Connie Griffith  
H.B.R./M.B.A.: Jim Metz  
Sergeant at Arms: Michael Mize  
Compensation Officer: Tom Roos  
Director of Retirees: Gerald Giesting  
Trustees:  
Denny Doud, Dave Durbin, Skip Grant, Don Mueller, Randy Utz  
AFL-CIO Delegates:  
Brian Bailey, Sue Egbers, Diana Enwright, Kevin Gabel, Lamont Seaborough, Kevin Hensley

The men and women Board of Officers at Branch 43 can be contacted at any time at the current Branch 43 union hall.

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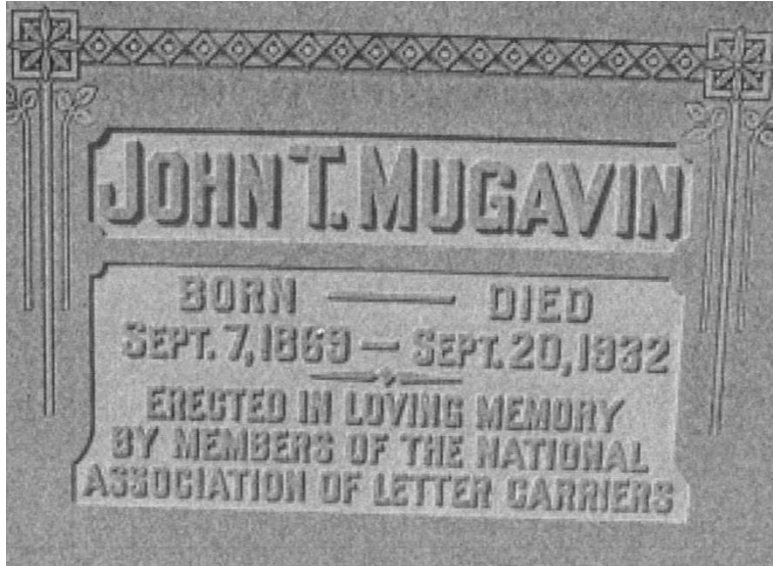
### **National Officers**

In the 127 years of the NALC there have been a total of 17 National Presidents. Of those, 2 were from Branch 43. Branch 43 has also had the distinction of numerous other Branch members holding National Officer positions. These members include:

George Sweeney (one of only two delegates sent by Cincinnati) was elected to the Executive Committee at Branch 43's first attended National Convention at Boston in 1890. George served in this capacity for one term and was succeeded by Charles C. Couden

Charles C. Couden started his career with the Post Office Department in 1870. Charles first represented Branch 43 at the 1891 convention in which he ultimately succeeded George Sweeney on the Executive Committee. During the 1892 convention Charles was once again elected to the Executive Committee in which he became the Chairman and served until 1893. In 1894 at the Cleveland Convention Charles was elected as the 5<sup>th</sup> President of the NALC. Charles would serve one term as President of the NALC as he did not run for re-election the following Convention and returned to Cincinnati to his mail route. At one point, Charles was stabbed while delivering mail. Charles stayed active in the NALC however and served as a Branch Delegate to Conventions.

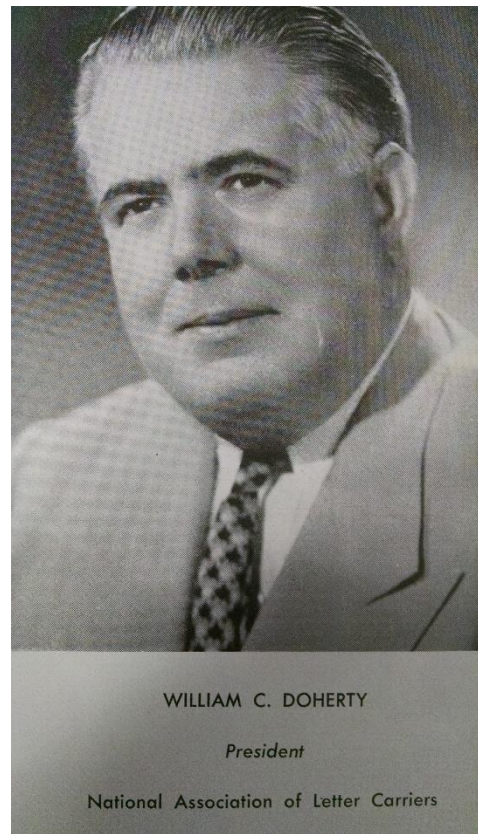




John T. Mugavin became an Officer of Branch 43 with the position of Trustee in 1896. John held this position until he was elevated to National Office and subsequently became the first Chief Clerk of the NSBA (National Sick Benefit Association). John took such title as the result of all his hard work to get sick benefits to ill or injured Carriers prior to the Federal Employee Compensation Act (FECA) and paid sick leave for federal employees. John held this position until his untimely death in

1932. John was so regarded within Branch 43 that after his death the Branch changed its name to the John T. Mugavin Branch and further honored him when the Branch paid for his headstone which is inscribed with “Erected in loving memory by members of the National Association of Letter Carriers.”

William C. Doherty became President of Branch 43 in 1928 and was installed at the time by National Officer, and Branch 43 member, John Mugavin. Bill further went on to become President of the Ohio State Association. Bill held this position until 1932 with the death of John Mugavin was appointed to the National Board of Officers. In 1941 at the National Convention in Las Angeles, Bill was elected as the 12<sup>th</sup> President of the NALC. Bill served as President of the NALC for 21 years. Bill is arguably one of the most instrumental Presidents of the NALC. During his tenure Bill is responsible for numerous benefits awarded to letter carriers. Bill helped get 10 carrier pay raises passed into law as well as the equalization of salaries regardless of where the carrier worked. Bill is responsible for the passing of resolution 43 at the 1960 National Convention to establish NALCREST (a non-profit Letter Carrier retirement community). Bill ultimately pushed the first shovel into the ground during a groundbreaking ceremony in 1962. Bill championed the push for the campaign to grant exclusive right to the NALC to represent City Carriers. Prior to 1952 the NALC leased office space from the AFL. Bill helped create the NALC building fund which was used to purchase the building located at 100 Indiana Avenue in Washington D.C. This building is the NALC National Headquarters building today. Bill also



wrote an autobiography titled “Mailman USA” from which he donated all proceeds to the NALC building fund. In 1952 Bill also selected the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) as the official charity of the NALC. Brother Doherty also helped get legislation passed that gave Carriers the right to their first official uninform allotment in 1954, a benefit we all enjoy now through collective bargaining/ interest arbitration. Bill was also instrumental in the passage of the Federal Employees Health Benefit Law in 1959. Bill oversaw the end of union segregation through the revocation of the dual charters system in 1954 and the merger of all dual charter Branches in 1960; a revolutionary move at the time. Also, in 1960 Bill oversaw the operations of the newly founded NALC Health Benefits Plan. Bill was instrumental in the issue of Executive Order 10988 by John F. Kennedy in 1962 which granted exclusive recognition to national unions to represent craft employees. Bill was standing behind the President Kennedy in the oval office when such order was signed. In fact, President Kennedy later assigned Bill as the first United States Ambassador to Jamaica. Bill remained in this position until 1964 in which he fully retired at NALCREST.



Jack Rich was President of Branch 43 when he became NALC District Director (a title equivalent to National Business Agent today). Jack was District Director of the Cincinnati Region in 1965 which is now known today as NALC Cincinnati Region 11. This Region now encompasses Ohio and upstate New York. Rich also served as the General Chairman at the 1960 National Convention.

### Strike

On March 17, 1970 Branch 36 New York voted for and went on strike. Their strike had a domino effect in surrounding area's and then swept the country. By March 23<sup>rd</sup> some 200,000 Letter Carriers were on strike. Carriers wanted to rid of collective begging of Congress and gain the right to collective bargaining. The strike was successful. Ultimately the strike led to the Postal Reorganization Act which abolished the old Post Office Department and created the United States Postal Service as a publicly owned quasi-corporate entity. This Act also led to the right of collective bargaining, a right we all enjoy today. As the strike swept through the country it also hit Cincinnati.

Branch 43 records do not indicate whether the Branch voted for strike or not. Some offices in Branch 43 went on strike, others didn't. Some within offices went on strike, others didn't. In Cincinnati the strike was a true wildcat strike. To understand the reasoning for the strike and strong unionism Branch 43 has been lucky to have numerous members account for their involvement as well as others during the strike. A sampling of these members include:



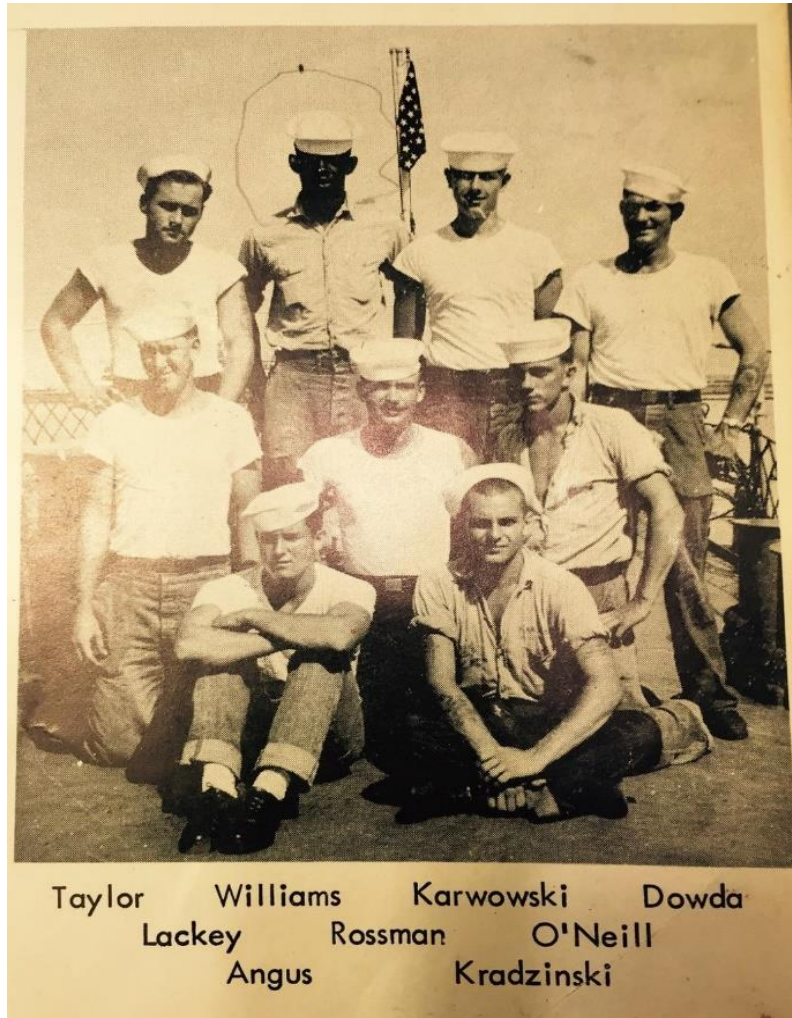
*Joe McGowan*

Joseph A. McGowan started with the Post Office on April 30, 1962. At the time Joe was the sole supporter of his family as he was married with two children and was living in southwest Indiana. Joe took the Post Office job for stability and benefits. Joe knew times at the Post Office were tough as he received no overtime and most in the office were working second jobs. Joe at the time of the strike was assigned to the Mt. Washington Post Office. There were three paint crews that worked out of this office and many times customers would come to the Post Office to ask to speak to the painters to get work done. Joe knew well of unions prior to joining the NALC as he had three uncles that served as Presidents of labor unions. When news of the strike reached Mt. Washington there was a lot of discussion among the members of that office as to whether to support the strike or not. Joe accounts roughly half the office decided to strike while the other half did not. Joe decided to support the strike and he went on strike on Saturday (St. Patrick's Day). Joe ultimately decided to go on strike because the financial hardships of working for the Post Office at the time. Joe was hoping the strike would gain two

things; money and bargaining. Joe was hoping for wage increases so there was not a necessity of working a second job and he was hoping for bargaining because at the time there was no grievance arbitration procedure or no recourse to fight against the Post Office. During the strike mail at Mt. Washington was not getting delivered. The Post Office eventually locked the building and sent everyone home. Carriers were outside the building picketing to keep mail dispatch trucks from getting to the building and the drivers honored such pickets by honking and continuing to drive. As Joe signed a release upon employment that he would not go on strike he was worried about a federal prison sentence. Postal Inspectors filmed the strikers. Ultimately the national strike came to an end and Joe went back to work the following Monday as all the Post Office superintendents called everyone back to work. Joe returned to work feeling the point had been made. Upon return, there was animosity between those who went on strike and those who did not at Mt. Washington and close friendships were destroyed. Joe was still apprehensive as to what the consequences of the strike was going to be; however, for him the sacrifice was well worth the ultimate outcome. For the first time ever Joe had a contract that afforded more rights than ever before. Immediate wage increases and the right to appeal grievances put a light at the end of the tunnel that wasn't there before the strike. The outcome of the strike made Joe a middle class citizen through which he could send three children to college. Joe ultimately worked 45 years for the Postal Service when he retired out of the Anderson Post Office in 2007. Joe also held many positions with the Branch including Branch Secretary.



Charles E. Williams started at the Post Office with four years' seniority due to his time serving in the Navy during the Korean conflict (1951-1955) on May 11, 1964. Charlie took the job at the Post Office for the benefits (retirement, medical, etc.). Prior to his membership with the NALC and the Post Office Charlie worked for the Cincinnati Die Casting Company which had no union. Charlie recognized the importance of the NALC because the union fought for the same rights for everyone. At the time in the private sector, blacks made less wages for the same work. Charlie also recognized the uniform made a difference in perception. As a black male the perception of society was if you were in uniform you were ok, as society looked at people different with a uniform on versus civilian clothing. At the time of the strike Charlie was the sole income for his family as he was married with two



*Charlie Williams top row second from left*

children. Before the strike while working at the Corryville Post Office Charlie had a second job at night working for U.S. Janitorial Services in downtown Cincinnati. Charlie had to secure and work this second job due to the low wages he was earning at the time. Charlie worked long hours without overtime pay at the Post Office and at the time was relying on Congress for wage increases and how it took 21 years to top out hourly. Through the news word of the strike spread. Charlie was told by the Union through Corryville Steward Harold Berns at an office talk with approximately 20 carriers. The carriers at Corryville never voted to go on strike, however many supported the strike. While no carrier walked out or picketed Charlie and the carriers at Corryville showed their support by slowing down production and calling in sick. Carriers at Corryville took the labels off the cases. Through his actions, while he was not so much worried about going to jail because he thought it would be tough to house 200,000 people, he was worried (along with everyone) about losing his job. Charlie took the strike in a day to day situation. Ultimately, news of the strike ending was heard and Charlie worked out the remainder of his career. Charlie also stayed active with the NALC and continues so to this day as a Branch delegate.

## Representation

Branch 43 has represented its members since inception, however it was not until the first contract with the Postal Service that the Branch leadership had more options and rights than they did before collective bargaining. Not long after the first contract Branch 43 had a couple cases that went to, and were decided on, by a National Arbitrator. The initial case arose out of the Mt. Healthy Post Office when Carrier Boehl was terminated for not taking obvious shortcuts on his route during inspection. Carrier Boehl was accused of not crossing lawns and taking obvious shortcuts on at



least 200 of his 401 deliveries made that day. This then created the second case for interpretive issue of the term ‘obvious shortcut’ as it appears in the M-39 and the USPS Policy created in 1977 in respect to the crossing of lawns by City Carriers. This case is now known as the famous Cincinnati lawn crossing decision and is incorporated into the current contract via Article 41.3.N. Although National Arbitrator Sylvester Garrett did not set down clear standards for determining when customers have objected to carriers crossing their lawns and when hazards exist which would make crossing lawns unsafe he did set the following general guidelines:

1. A carrier may be instructed broadly to take “all obvious shortcuts” and to cross all lawns where there is no reason to believe the customer may object. However, the determination of what constitutes an obvious shortcut or whether a hazard exists is made in the first instance by the carrier. The carrier’s judgement can be exercised only in light of the specific conditions at the location involved.
2. A supervisor may conclude, after personal observation and discussion with the carrier, that a particular lawn should be crossed and order the carrier to cross the lawn. The carrier may not ignore such order with impunity. His remedy is to file a grievance. However, discipline should not be imposed upon a carrier who had exercised his discretion and not crossed lawns, merely because a supervisor later decides that some of the lawns could have been crossed.
3. The only proper instruction before and during route inspection is that the carrier deliver the route “in exactly the same manner as he does throughout the year.” During the route inspection the Examiner “observes but does not supervise.” Therefore, “A carrier cannot... be directed on the day of a route inspections to take any shortcuts which the carrier does not use throughout the year.”

Further, National Arbitrator Garrett sustained the unions grievance on removal and order that the grievant be reinstated and made whole for all lost earnings. Branch 43 has continued successful representation of members in the grievance arbitration procedure. For your own benefit, it is however recommended you don’t cross Rosco’s lawn.





Today Branch 43 has 3 Arbitration Advocates, a Step B Representative, and 6 Formal A Representatives that are thoroughly versed in the contract and engage in negotiations with the Postal Service to settle disputes. Branch 43 also has a Steward in or assigned to every office. These representatives are here to fight for your contractual rights as well as represent you through disciplinary proceedings in the event your vehicle is struck by an aircraft.



### Political



*From left; Dave Kennedy, Ted Thompson, Rep. Brad. Wenstrup, Doug Lape, Jim Meale, Kevin Gabel, and Denny Doud*

Like it or not, the Postal Service is a government entity and always has been since the adoption of the Constitution of the United States of America. As such, the government can give to Letter Carriers with the stroke of a pen and can take away from Letter Carriers with the stroke of a pen. Branch 43 has worked hard on representing Letter Carriers and carries a strong tradition of successful lobbying in the halls of Congress.

Every year Branch 43 sends a delegation to Washington D.C. to lobby in the House of Representatives and the Senate. Branch 43 representatives meet with elected members of Congress to push for Letter Carrier friendly legislation. Branch 43 is also involved politically through the

use of release of Carrier's to work on campaigning for Letter Carrier friendly candidates. Such release usually starts after Labor Day until the election in November.



*Branch 43 Pres. Jerry Giesting (left) and NALC Pres. Bill Young*

Branch 43 and its members are also involved through the use of the Letter Carrier Political Fund. LCPF is a PAC which was created for Letter Carrier's to donate to for the support of national political candidates. Any member can donate to this PAC through voluntary payroll deduction. All current Officers of Branch 43 contribute to LCPF and encourage participation by all members.

Branch 43 also keeps members informed of current or possible legislation through the use of E-activist. Under such program, any carrier enrolled, will receive e-mails when Postal legislation is brought up in the halls of Congress. E-mails will also be sent for updates on current House or Senate Resolutions as well as those members of Congress who have signed such Resolutions. Through e-activist Branch 43 can

keep its members informed in an instant. Branch 43 was also honored at the 2008 National Convention as having the Branch with the highest percentage of its members belonging to E-Activist for a mid-size Branch.

Branch 43 also hits the street with boots on the ground when necessary. In 2013 during a national day of action, Branch 43 participated by holding a rally on Fountain Square to protect Saturday mail delivery and strengthen the Postal Service. Branch 43 has maintained that any cuts in delivery service would threaten jobs and cut the only universal mail delivery infrastructure. Opening the rights for



*Branch 43 members outside of the Cincinnati Main Post Office on National Day of Action*

competitors to the rights of mail boxes threatens not only jobs and salary, but also service.



## Conventions



1960 Convention Badge

Since Branch 43's official charter of membership, the Branch has sent Delegates to every National Convention. George Sweeney was Branch 43's Delegate sent to the first convention held in Boston in August of 1890. George Sweeney was also elected to the Executive Committee. As Delegates being the ruling body of the NALC, Branch 43 recognizes the importance of participation. Delegates vote on proposed resolutions and by-laws at National Conventions that create/alter the NALC Constitution and by-laws and adopts official bargaining positions the NALC is to take in contract negotiations. Most recently, in 2016, Branch 43 sent a delegation of 35 members to the 70<sup>th</sup> biennial convention in Los Angeles. Any member interested can run for and be elected Delegate to attend both the State and National Conventions.

Branch 43 also had the honor of hosting the National Convention in Cincinnati at Music Hall August 21-27, 1960. Cincinnati has further had the honor of hosting numerous State Conventions as well as Committee of President Meetings (COP). Cincinnati and Branch 43 will continue to hold Conventions in the future.



Commemorative 1960 Convention Plate

## Muscular Dystrophy Association



Branch 43 members outside of Paul Brown Stadium

In 1952, Branch 43 member and National President William Doherty selected the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) as the official charity organization of the NALC and in doing so the NALC became the organization's first national sponsor. Branch 43's members joined the first efforts to raise funds for MDA in 1953 during the Letter Carrier March for



Muscular Dystrophy. This campaign effort to raise funds was nicknamed the Porchlight Brigade. This effort worked through Carriers after the delivery of their route donating their time and walking house to house with their satchels and any house that had a porch light on the Carriers would knock on the door to solicit donations. In 1953 alone with the efforts of Branch 43 members and other Carriers throughout the county raised nearly 4 million dollars for MDA. Since that time the members of Branch 43 have consistently donated time and money in the efforts to help raise funds to find a cure.

Branch 43 records do not indicate total monetary donations prior to 2003. However, in 2003 the Branch has kept records of each event held every year in an effort to raise monies. The Branch has raised funds for MDA through various functions. The Branch has hosted Texas Hold'em tournaments, held raffles at NALC functions and Branch meetings as well as in Branch offices. Branch 43 has raffled off Cincinnati Cyclones hockey tickets, held fill the satchel rallies at local Cincinnati sporting events in which Carriers dress in uniform and solicit donations from patrons attending the events to fill the satchel with donations. Branch 43 has hosted block parties. Branch 43 has also recently annually held a shoot for the cure event. At these events participants shoot pistols at targets with awards handed out for high shooter and all other proceeds going to MDA. This is a fun event for anyone who likes to shoot firearms in a competitive forum while raising money for a good cause.



*Branch 43 members from the Lockland Branch at the Jim Frentzel Bowl Against Dystrophy*

Perhaps the MDA event Branch 43 is most known for is the always well attended annual Jim Frentzel Memorial Bowl Against Dystrophy. Branch 43 has held this event for 16 years now and is always held on “no football Sunday” in January the week before the Super Bowl. During these events Branch 43 fills entire Bowling alleys with nothing

but Letter Carriers. T-shirts are provided to all who attend and teams are set in groups of four. This is always a fun competitive event as rolling trophies are provided for the team with the highest score as well as the Branch Post Office with the most participating teams. Split the pot raffles are also held during this event. This event will continue to be a Branch tradition annually and for those

who have not attended your participation is encouraged as you will find this is an extremely fun event that generates thousands of dollars for MDA annually.

If there is a way to raise funds for MDA Branch 43 is always interested. Currently the Branch has 2 MDA Coordinators who donate countless hours and energies in efforts to find new ways to raise funds as well as volunteering their time to coordinate current events. Anyone with innovative ideas to raise money for this great organization are encouraged to offer suggestions.

Branch 43 records indicate that since 2003 the Branch has raised \$165, 674.00 for MDA; an impressive figure. Branch 43 has also received numerous awards as the Branch contributing the most during Ohio State Association Conventions; an honor of which Branch 43 members can be proud.

### **Union Hall**



*Gary Gabbard Branch 43 Union Hall*

Branch 43 has had numerous offices from which official business was conducted in the past. These offices include anything from individual's homes/residences to offices rented in downtown Cincinnati at 513 West Third Street. Branch 43's current union hall located at 4100 Colerain Avenue was purchased in 1983. This building is now officially paid off and owned by Branch 43. This large white building which was a prior residence is perched on top of a hill in the historic Northside district. Inside this large building all current official operations of the Branch are conducted. There are offices for the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Compensation Officer, as well as an office for the Branch Formal A Representatives to work in for the processing

of grievances. There is also an Officer's room where official board meetings take place. Branch 43's union hall also includes a uniform closet for new members looking to get uniforms until their allotments get them all the necessities and comforts of uniform items Carriers need in the performance of their duties working in a city that truly has four seasons. The union hall is also where monthly membership meetings are held the second Thursday of every month. Branch 43 also rents out space to other unions/organizations from time to time.

Currently the Branch building is named after long serving Branch 43 President Gary Gabbard. The union hall is named in honor of William Doherty, and most recently the Officer's room has been dedicated and named after Ed Wesseling. Branch 43's union hall is also decorated with historic memorabilia of the NALC including Conventions badges, uniforms, and NALC Veteran memorials. All members are encouraged to attend meetings or visit the building when given the chance.

### **Food Drive**

The NALC from its inception has always recognized the importance of roles that City Carriers play for their customers as well as the communities in which they serve. Perhaps the most nationally known example is the annual NALC Food Drive. Originating out of Phoenix Branch 576 the NALC has grown to holding this event the second Saturday in May every year. Branch



43 has participated in the annual Food Drive for 24 years now. Collections of non-perishable food items have thus been solicited and collected by Branch 43 Carriers with great success. The food collected during this day is donated to local food pantries to help feed the hungry. Food collected at this time is critical for helping to feed local hungry families as this is a non-holiday pre-summer time when the local food banks receive little donations. Locally in Cincinnati, this is the largest



one-day food drive for which Branch 43 has been honored numerous times in having proclamations awarded by the Hamilton County Commissioners Office labeling the second Saturday in May as Branch 43 Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive Day.

Records do not indicate prior to the year 2000, but since 2000 Branch 43's members have collected 3,142,241 pounds of food. In 2016 Branch 43 members collected 170,378 pounds of food from which the Cincinnati local FreeStore FoodBank estimates provided 141,981 meals to the hungry. Branch 43 is proud of its strong tradition of support through such a great program. Currently Branch 43 has a food drive coordinator to help set up community support through radio/television appearances, works at the FreeStore FoodBank the date of the drive, coordinates truck drivers and dispatch drives to pick up food collected from the offices, and ensures that postcards and bags are provided to Branch offices prior to the drive for carriers to deliver to their customers to help generate support. The efforts of this charitable drive shine a bright light on Letter Carriers to the community from which we so proudly serve. This food drive is also a great way to get local politicians involved to see the efforts and sacrifices Letter Carriers make for their communities.



*MCSO Gary Brummett, Rep. Steve Chabot, Letter Carrier Brent Welage, Branch 43 Pres. Jerry Giesting, and VP Dave Kennedy*

This Branch history and information is presented in dedication to Ed Wesseling (1945-2014),  
a true historian and faithfully dedicated Branch 43 member.



*Ed Wesseling at the 2010 Branch 43 Veteran's Day Retiree Breakfast with his NALC memorabilia.*