

# NOTES FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

... BY TOM SCHULTE

## JOHN H. HAAKE BRANCH 343



It seems a long time since I first submitted a request at the August 2018 regular branch meeting to change the name of Branch 343 from Dan J. Gould to John H. Haake, but that time has finally arrived.

I initiated this action with just a little apprehension. Many of the old timers, including me, knew or remembered Dan Gould. Dan served this branch as president for 10 years in the late '50s and '60s. He was a World War II veteran, dedicated himself to advancing the cause of letter carriers and was well respected by the officers at NALC headquarters in Washington, D. C.

I first approached the executive board in August 2018 of my intentions to change the name of the branch and received their enthusiastic support. I then sought out the senior members of this local including 96-year-old Ted Hemen, 94-year-old Tom Harman, 93-year-old Jim Kluempers and a couple of youngsters in their 80s. Everyone gave me unconditional approval.

The request was introduced at the August 2018 branch meeting and published in the September Mound City Carrier. A vote by the membership was supported unanimously and the by-law change was sent to NALC headquarters where we just received approval.

And now, just a little bit about John Henry Haake. John served as vice president of Branch 343 under Charles J. Coyle from January 1974 to January 1979. Charles Coyle became a national business agent and John became president in January of 1979 where he served until his retirement in January of 1994.

John advocated for the necessity of well-trained shop stewards who he saw as the backbone of the union. He was one of the first to conduct intense shop steward training seminars at the Union Hall. And he inspired many shop stewards to seek higher office in this local.

John encouraged the continuation of our annual Congressional Breakfasts where senators and congressmen were invited to speak before this union body. John knew we needed political friends in Washington, D. C., if we were to keep our hard-fought collective bargaining rights won in the 1970 Postal Strike. We continue to maintain communications with all of our political

friends who supported union and postal issues. And, if we ever lost support, it was John who led the charge picketing in front of those politician's offices.

John navigated this branch through tumultuous times with postal management until we finally had success with the Employee Involvement Process and Union Management Pairs that helped adjudicate grievances at the earliest levels. Both programs fostered mutual respect and cooperation between the union and management and resulted in a better working environment.

John also understood the power in numbers and formed a merger committee in the 1980s to convince a number of our associate offices to join with Branch 343 including Rolla, St. James, Ste. Genevieve, Fenton and Town & Country.

After nearly 100 years of renting space in numerous union or fraternal halls all over St. Louis, it was John who advocated for the building of a permanent home. In 1984 ground was broken, construction completed and we moved into our current facility.

John had a vision to advance the educational opportunities of the sons and daughters of active and retired letter carriers and started the John H. Haake Scholarship program in 1990. To date, Branch 343 has awarded \$150,000 in scholarships to deserving sons and daughters of union letter carriers entering their first year in college.

In 1992, John asked for and received the support of the membership of Branch 343 to bring the 58<sup>th</sup> NALC Biennial Convention to St. Louis.

John is a man who has distinguished himself on many levels; an advocate for the oppressed; a respected union leader; a visionary and a gentleman. John is an affable man with an infectious smile who is always generous with his time and more than willing to share his sage advice. Many members of this union moved on to serve as branch officers at the local, state and national levels because of John's mentoring. I cannot think of a greater tribute than to name this branch, John H. Haake, Branch 343.

An open letter to members of Branch 343:

I wanted to express my appreciation about the branch action regarding the name change of the branch. Although I have misgivings whether I am deserving of this honor. Mainly because those who came before me made it possible for me to become president of a branch of the National Association of Letter Carriers.



The organization began at a gathering of the Union Civil War veterans who came together during the 1889 annual encampment in Wisconsin of the Grand Army of the Republic.

Letter carriers from St. Louis were there and the branch was first chartered as Branch 44. Those first officers were fired for pursuing the eight-hour workday law for letter carriers.

The branch was chartered again in 1892 as Branch 343 and was named after John J. O'Neill, a congressman from St. Louis who fought for the eight-hour law for letter carriers. (His name is still on the back of the chairs at the Union Hall).

After Charles Coyle was elected president of the branch in the 1970s, through branch action he changed the name to Dan J. Gould. Dan Gould, a World War II veteran was an exceptional man and branch president. He was always a fighter for letter carriers. He was well respected on the national level and worked on the establishment of NALCREST, the letter carriers retirement community located in Florida.

I was vice president under Charles Coyle, and when he became business agent, I assumed the presidency. Although we were able to accomplish many good things for the organization and letter carriers, I do not think I would have been in the position without Charles Coyle leaving the office and the consistent support of the branch officers and members.

In the end to receive such recognition from one's contemporaries is deeply rewarding and to merit such recognition is my wish. Also I am extremely happy I can acknowledge the branch action since it is not done posthumously.

John H. Haake  
Former Branch 343 President