

# ... Portland-based Letter Carriers celebrates 125th anniversary

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presidents, and guests, including State Rep. Lew Frederick, took a peek in history through storytelling and a PowerPoint photo display.

Branch 82 has embraced its history. It maintains photographs and detailed historical records dating back to its formation in 1890 — including ledgers containing minutes of just about every union meeting held for the last 125 years.

Over that timespan, Branch 82 has had 39 presidents. Seven are still living, and three were at the anniversary celebration.

Jim Falvey currently serves as president. He became a letter carrier in 1988 and was a long-time chief steward at the Rose City Post Office before retiring in 2013. The NALC constitution considers retired members to be “members in good standing” for the purpose of voting and running in elections, at membership meetings and conventions, on everything but the national contract ratification vote. Falvey was elected in 2014 to succeed Jim Cook, who re-retired. Falvey recently was re-elected by acclamation to another two-year term that expires in 2017.

Cook is the longest-serving president in Branch 82’s history, with 16 years. Next in line is

Charles N. Coyle, who was president for 13 years, from 1945 to 1958.

Cook actually served three stints at the helm—from 1988 to 1993 (in 1994 he went back to delivering mail and to run a national campaign for NALC safety director); from 1996 to 2001; and again from 2010 to 2013. Cook returned to work as a letter carrier in 2002, and retired from the U.S. Postal Service in 2007. He served his last two terms as a retired member.

Cook remains active in the labor movement, serving as a Branch 82 delegate to the Northwest Oregon Labor Council. He chairs NOLC’s History Committee, and he’s a member of the musical band General Strike, which performs on picket lines and at rallies.

Former president L.C. Hansen set several “firsts” at Branch 82. She was the first woman elected to hold the office of president (in 2002), and she was the first woman elected to sit on the Executive Board (in 1981).

Hansen worked as a Letter Carrier for 29 years. After retiring as president in 2009, she went to college to earn a degree in education. Today she is a substitute teacher in the Portland Public School District.



**LETTER CARRIERS BRANCH 82 PRESIDENTS PAST AND PRESENT:** Jim Falvey (left), the current president of Letter Carriers Branch 82 in Portland, with past union presidents Jim Cook (center) and L.C. Hansen. The three are looking at a copy of the National Association of Letter Carriers magazine featuring the national convention held in Portland in 1988. Branch 82 celebrated its 125th anniversary Dec. 2 at its union hall in Northeast Portland.

Other past presidents still living are Peter Cherkes (1994-1995); David Loprinzi (1980-1987); Robert Funge (1976-1980); and Nathan Gray (1971-1973). Funge was the first full-time president of Branch 82. The union changed its bylaws in June 1976 to make the post a full time job because many of the smaller branches surrounding Portland

had merged with Branch 82, resulting in a larger workload. The workload continued to grow, and by 1982 the office of vice president was also made a full-time position. Gray and Funge later went into postal management.

Over the years, the battle to privatize the U.S. Postal Service has grown. At the 125th anniversary celebration, union leaders

and participants vowed to continue to fight for reforms that protect and strengthen the postal service— not destroy it.

“Letter carriers have been an active part of their communities from the beginning. That hasn’t changed. That won’t change,” said Linda Smith, a longtime member who helped research the union’s history.

