

Postal Newsletter

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION

NATIONAL POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

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The origin of baseball

By Tony Carobine, President

Many of us enjoy the game of baseball; watching the game that is. Whether it's sitting in the stands at our children or grandchildren's little league game, watching a game on television, or after a tailgating session, cheering on our favorite professional team at the ballpark, we enjoy the game.

It recently occurred to me that many of us have watched hundreds or perhaps thousands of baseball games over the years and never wondered where the game came from, who invented it and how it has evolved since its inception. We can be sure that it just didn't drop from the sky and magically appear. Someone had to generate an idea for the game in their mind before it was ever played; the number of players, bases and distance between them, rules, etc. all were developed in some fashion long before you and I ever sat in front of a television with our favorite beverage enjoying a game.

When you think about how the game of baseball is watched without thought as to its origin and how it evolved, there are similarities between that scenario and our livelihood as postal workers. How many of our members and nonmembers alike take for granted that livable pay and benefits were always a

part of postal employment? How many among us don't associate the union as being responsible for the substantial gains postal

no collective bargaining rights and barely earned enough to sustain themselves and their families. The wages were so low that many postal workers qualified for food stamps. Because of the bravery and unshakeable resolve of these individuals, postal workers now enjoy collective bargaining rights, a good salary and benefits, and job protection.

As the years have passed, many of our brothers and sisters responsible for the postal strike of 1970 and early successes of our union either retired or are no longer with us but their achievements live on. A question we need to ask

workers have enjoyed over the years? How many of us don't realize that all these gains could be wiped away unless we maintain a strong union?

Unfortunately, the answer to these questions is – too many!

This past March 18 commemorated the

ourselves is; what are we doing to continue this legacy? What are we doing to increase the amount of union knowledge among postal workers?

In order to tackle this problem we have to keep in mind that the makeup of workers has changed. A majority of those who

have entered the workforce over the past several years come from families that have no prior history of unionism. Through no fault of their own, most have little or no knowledge about

unions or the purpose and necessity for them.

Also, some in today's workforce mistakenly believe that by law they are guaranteed such benefits as paid holidays,

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“It recently occurred to me that many of us have watched hundreds or perhaps thousands of baseball games over the years and never wondered where the game came from, who invented it and how it has evolved since its inception.”

48th anniversary of the 1970 postal strike. Current postal workers are benefactors of the unionists who put it all on the line 48 years ago and struck for better wages and working conditions. At that time postal workers had

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The origin of baseball

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vacation and sick leave among other benefits and protections. In reality, absent a union contract, workers aren't guaranteed anything but instead are classified as "at will" employees – serving at the will of their employer.

Given the lack of prior knowledge and exposure to unions by newer members and prospective members, we must keep in mind that "automatic loyalty" and commitment to the union doesn't just happen today as was commonplace in the past. What do I mean by automatic loyalty? For the most part, it used to be that when an individual was hired at the post office, they would join the union, be supportive and stay a union member throughout their work lives. The main reason for this is because they clearly understood the precious value of the union.

Unlike the game of baseball that does not or will ever have a shortage of players, we cannot take for granted that our union will always be around, unless we make an effort to focus on the development of a more supportive and active membership, especially from among our younger members as they are the future of our union.

One of our best assets to accomplish this task is communication. Whether it's new members, longtime members, or nonmembers, the need to communicate through union publications, social media, bulletin boards, mailings, one-on-one contact and any other form of communication that is available is a never-ending necessity.

Even with tight budgets, communication should not be sacrificed; in fact if anything communication should be increased.

By disregarding the benefits of communication, especially with the many ongoing issues facing postal workers, we reduce the union's strength along with our chances and opportunities to defeat these challenges. Reducing the union's visibility will also work to disconnect members from their union, will not generate any encouragement for them to get involved and may eventually leave them wondering if they should retain their membership. Meanwhile, nonmembers need to be constantly reminded about the value of union membership and that their livelihood is also dependent upon a strong union.

As communicators, as caretakers of the "voice of the union," we have a special responsibility to ensure that we do all we can to help keep our union strong by maintaining a union presence in front of our members via the "flagship of communication," the union publication along with as many other forms of communication as possible.

Unlike baseball, let's not take the origin and development of our union for granted. For we owe those who came before us our deepest gratitude and respect. I can think of no better way to honor their contributions than to continue the good fight and do everything we can (especially using communication) to maintain and build the greatest union in the Labor Movement – The American Postal Workers Union!

Are you in style?

There are three styles for setting headlines. All caps were the norm for many, many years in American publications. That was because larger sizes of display letters either were not available or were not convenient to set when metal type was used. So, to give a little more weight to the headline, all caps were used. But all caps are hard to read. That's because we recognize words by their silhouette, especially the upper portion. When only caps are used, that upper perimeter becomes just a straight line, lacking a distinctive shape.

Later, upper-and-lower case headline

styles were adopted. In that style, each word starts with a capital letter but the rest of the letters are lowercase. This was an improvement but still not ideal; the caps in each word slowed the reader.

Finally, downstyle was adopted, whereby headlines are capped by the same rules as body copy. The first letter of the first word in a headline is capped as are proper nouns. All other words are lowercase. This style, by far, is the easiest to read.

Remember: cap heads as you do body type.

Time for spring cleaning

By Jenny Gust, Editor-at-Large

Yes. It's that time of year again – spring cleaning time! And no I don't mean your house! Of course I am referring to your paper. Time to clean it up and change it up

“So before you start spring cleaning the house or doing yard work, take a look at your paper.”

just a little. Move your banner, change up the headings of your articles by the officers. Keep your officer listing but change up the stewards listing and put it someplace new. Use subheads, bullet points, artwork – try to keep things fresh and different. That way your members don't look at an issue and they aren't sure if it was from last month or even last year. Geez they all look the same!

If you think about it your union publication is the best way to communicate with your members. Facebook is great for family and friends but not so much for union business. Does anyone keep a bulletin board anymore? Is it updated regularly? Is it accessible to all your members? Probably not. A website is wonderful but it is more for quick bites of information – I for one am not going to read some big, long article on a web page. And last but not least, is word of mouth. We all know how we hear gossip on the workroom floor. Do you want to hear union business like that? Yes sometimes you can't stop that but putting the facts in print, on paper will help nip that in the bud!

Your publication helps with the image of

the union. Keep it informative, professional, and positive. The paper can be a reminder to those who pay the dues that we are in this together and the union fights for them as much as possible. Keeping your members in the loop and setting the record straight when needed makes them feel included. Reinforce the benefits of belonging. Try to keep them proud that they belong to this organization. Unfortunately in this day and age many of our members know very little about unions

in general. A great article to include is one on the history of the APWU. Tell them how much postal employees made back in the 60's and blow their minds. Yes, we have come a long way!

So before you start spring cleaning the house or doing yard work, take a look at your paper. Could it use a few changes and some cleaning up? You don't have to overhaul the whole paper. Just a few little things here and there. Just do it! Happy spring!

Register now: Pre-convention workshops

The PPA will be participating in the pre-convention workshops sponsored by the APWU Research & Education Department being held on **Friday, August 17** in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Two half-day workshops will be presented by the PPA. ***Communicating at the Local Level (10 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.)***: Examines the importance of information sharing using various mediums with special emphasis on the process of producing a member-oriented, high quality, highly read, union publication.

Legal Issues and Union Communications (2:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.): A review of editorial policies, union election regulations, libel, copyright and federal election laws that apply to hardcopy and electronic forms of communication.

More information about the pre-convention workshops as well as the online registration process can be found on the APWU's website www.apwu.org.

Don't repeat words

Reading the same word over and over gets boring. When you're done writing, go back and see how many words you've used more than three times, maybe circling them in pencil. Try to change some without hurting the meaning, especially if the same word appears twice in a sentence.



Every paper needs photographs

Big, striking photos attract readers. They help people picture what the organization's doing and why. And best of all, photos can show readers the paper involves them. Print as many photos as possible of your members. And don't stop there. Include pictures of all different kinds of people, someone for every reader to identify with.

Say it with pictures

A good picture is worth a thousand words. And when a picture dramatizes an idea, the text doesn't need to repeat what the photo says. An article written partly with pictures is shorter, quicker to read, more powerful, and more fun to look at than a page full of words.

The best proof

Don't expect people to believe whatever you say. Convince them with facts, interviews and logic – plus the right pictures. Photos may show just a part of the truth, but at least readers know what's before their eyes is real. Reading that a hall was filled to capacity isn't as impressive as seeing a photo with hundreds of animated people everywhere you look.

The camera doesn't lie; it exaggerates

Photographers aren't neutral observers; they pick and choose what to show. The same room is either half-full or half-empty, depending on how the photographer looks at it. If you're glad so many people showed up, pick the most crowded bunch, and take a close-up. If you're upset there weren't more people, capture rows of empty chairs in front.

Make your group's events look interesting

If you don't think before you shoot, you'll find yourself printing nothing but boring clichés. Who wants to see a parade of speakers hugging the podium, the same old officials holding awards, and officers sitting behind a long dreary table? Here's how to avoid photos that make your group look dull.

Look for action

To take a picture of the union president for example, visit him or her on a busy day. Don't let the president sit behind a desk, dressed up in fancy clothes looking like a manager. Instead, capture a photo of the president serving the membership. Snap a photo of him or her visiting the workplace, speaking at a meeting,

talking on the phone, discussing a problem, or just plain on the move.

Make speeches come alive

You may not think there's much action in a speech. Granted, the action is subtle. It's in the gestures and the expressions on people's faces. When you shoot each speaker, include the hands and capture as many moods and gestures as possible.

Show the speaker with the audience. If you forget the audience, you'll get photos that make it look like the speakers are up there



all alone, as isolated as if they were in their offices.

When the audience does appear, too often it's just the backs of heads. It takes some doing, but look for an angle where you get at least part of the faces of both speaker and audience. It will be near impossible to get that shot if the front row or two of the audience is empty or the podium is too far from people.

If you just pop in, take a picture and take off, you will likely get an audience that looks half asleep. Sooner or later they will clap, laugh at a good joke, or otherwise look alive. Don't be shy. Stand in front of the audience and take head-on shots of the whole group.

Sometimes the situation is hopeless, when look-alike speakers just stand there reading while everyone else examines their papers. Unless you're exposing the dullness of the event, look for photos that dramatize the issues the event deals with. After the speech, stick around. If people rush the podium to chat with the speaker, that could be the shot you need.

Get close-ups

If you're too far away from the speakers, that big clunky podium could end up dominating each photo, making all the speakers look the same. To capture the gestures and faces that make each speech special, don't be shy. Move in close. If you shoot a group that's too far away, everyone will look like little ants. Get close enough to a few people so their faces stand out bigger than everyone

else's. That will help draw the casual viewer into the scene.

Try different angles

Move around so that each speaker and each event or person interviewed is seen in a different way, from a different spot. For variety, hold the camera different ways, to get both tall and wide shots of the same subject.

If tables and other lines in the photo go straight up, down and across, they just echo the lines of type and columns on the printed paper, and don't attract attention. To get dramatic diagonal shapes instead, shoot from an angle – the side, above or below. For example, to shoot a bunch of people sitting at a table, stand to the side so that the table goes diagonally across the photo.

(That also gives you a nice, big face in the foreground.)

Make someone look sinister or bigger than life by crouching down and shooting up. Diminish that person or make someone look vulnerable by standing on a table and shooting down.

Catch someone looking right at you

Whoever's looking at you will end up peering into the eyes of the reader browsing through your paper. This "eye contact" can startle readers, making them feel involved. Just make sure the expression on the person's face is meant for the reader.

Avoid "grip-&-grin" shots

If you keep taking the same tired shot, over and over again, of your leader presenting a check or plaque to someone as they shake hands, your group will start looking like a bunch of robots who spend all their time at ceremonies stiffly clasping hands. Instead, show the person holding up the check and looking excited. Or catch someone hanging the plaque on the wall, surrounded by merry well-wishers. Think up shots that dramatize how the money was raised, or why the check or plaque was awarded. Capture spontaneous good feelings, not frozen grins.

Use symbols

Ask members to wear union or group t-shirts or buttons. When picturing a protest or picket line, ask people to hold original hand-made signs (if available) rather than pre-printed ones.

Evaluate your own publication

Appearance

Does your publication have a pleasing appearance?

Does layout make reading inviting and easy?

Is nameplate (logo) distinctive and discreet in size?

Is paper stock suitable for publication?

Are columns wide enough and uniform throughout?

Is typeface attractive and readable in size and family?

Do you stick to one or two type families throughout?

Is there contrast between black heads and gray text?

Do you avoid color on headlines and captions?

Are facing pages (spreads) laid out as a unit?

Do you use white space effectively, not as "holes"?

Do you avoid tight crowded pages?

Content

Do you plan each issue in advance?

Do you plan several issues ahead?

Do you strive for editorial balance in each issue over the year?

Do you present material in order of importance?

Do you pace material (serious, light; long, short)?

Do you have at least one major story per issue?

Do you review each issue to see if you are meeting objectives?

Do you conduct surveys to determine reader reaction?

Do you report results from survey to readers?

Do you make changes based on survey results?

Do you sometimes include negative or controversial news?

Writing

Do you vary writing styles (non-fiction, fiction, editorials)?

Do you organize thoughts before writing?

Do you research each story carefully and pick best data?

Do you avoid pompous, heavy-handed propaganda?

Do you write clearly so that ideas are comprehensible?

Do you write naturally, avoiding jargon or lingo?

Do you write interestingly, luring the reader through the story?

Do you write more short than long sentences, usually one idea per sentence?

Do you illustrate ideas with examples, anecdotes?

Do you indicate significance of story to your reader?

Do you use simple words instead of fancy ones?

Do you avoid generalizations and cite specifics?

Do you lure readers through story by revealing facts slowly?

Is there good transition from last and first sentences of paragraphs?

Do you end story with a good closing sentence or paragraph?

Are your facts and details right?

Do you break up lengthy copy with subheads, layout, and photos?

Do you include background material to give readers perspective?

Do you occasionally update a story from a previous issue?

Does your publication appear consistently on time?

Is material timely, up to date?

Do you offer readers a change of pace (special issue, new look)?

Headlines

Do you write headlines carefully for maximum impact?

Do you write short, punchy heads of two or three lines each?

Do you avoid passive voice and use strong nouns and active verbs?

Do you avoid headlines that are only titles (e.g., President's Report)?

Do headlines lure readers into story without giving it away?

Do you vary headline width (one, two or more columns)?

Does major story have largest strongest head?

Do you avoid side-by-side heads that confuse readers?

Captions

Are all photos captioned?

Do you avoid "ganging" captions for several photos in one block?

Do you avoid captions that tell readers what's obvious in photo?

Are captions short and provocative?

Do captions start off with interesting words, not names and titles?

Do captions avoid repeating what's in headline or story?

Do you correctly identify people in all photos?

Do you avoid using initials, using both first and last names?

Do you avoid overly long captions that should be stories?

Miscellaneous

Do you invite feedback through special features such as Questions and Answers, Letters to the Editor, etc.?

Do you read consumer and other union publications to get ideas? Do you review past issues to see how you have progressed?



Editor's toolbox: Suggestions for improved communication

When you can't get started

If, like many, you occasionally hit a wall when you're trying to write and just can't get started, you might want to:

- **Write** a letter to someone about what you would say if you could only get started.
- **Decide** on a reward you'll give yourself if you write a page; then get started and really give yourself the reward if you earn it.
- **Open** your dictionary randomly, and without looking, point to a word, and use that word in your first sentence to get started – even if it's silly.
- **Talk** your article or report into a tape recorder.
- **Begin** in the middle or the end if the beginning is too difficult for you to get under way.
- **Do something** that bores you for twice as long as you think you can stand it; then write.
- **If you're** immobilized by having to correct everything as you go, get two hats, one labeled "writer" and the other labeled "editor." Tell yourself you can't edit when wearing the "writer" hat and vice versa. Switch at increasingly longer intervals.
- **With a tape** recorder going, have someone interview you about what you'd like to say. Transcribe the tape and use that as a rough draft.

Write clearer, more readable paragraphs

Paragraphs should make reading easy. Put the topic sentence first; follow with supporting material, held together with conjunctions; and finish with a summary.

Here are some tips:

Think of paragraphs as units of thought. Give each main idea its own paragraph.

Keep paragraphs fairly short. The breaks between paragraphs are stopping points for readers; don't stretch their patience by making paragraphs more than 4-5 sentences long.

Vary paragraph length. This will help maintain your readers' attention. Use single-sentence paragraphs sparingly to emphasize important ideas.

Solving the gender problem

Writing "he and she" to avoid using the generic "he" is one way writers solve the gender problem. Unfortunately, the usage is wordy and distracting.

Others use dull passive constructions. Still others use "they" in second reference, a trend that is accepted in informal language only.

If you want to avoid the "he" problem, consider these rewrites:

- **Rewrite** the sentence in the plural. "A careful editor will couch his queries in neutral terms" can be rewritten as "Careful editors will couch *their* queries in neutral terms."
- **Recast** your sentence using *we/us/our*. "Each must do his best" can become "We must all do *our* best."
- **Rewrite** your sentence in the second person. "No man knows what he has until it's gone" can become "You don't know what you have until it's gone."
- **Replace** he with such words as *someone, anyone, one, the one, no one, etc.* You can also omit the pronoun entirely. "Everyone can laugh at a pratfall except he who has fallen" could be changed to "...except *the one* who has fallen."
- **Replace** the pronoun with a noun. "He who betrays a friend loses him" could be changed to "To betray a friend is to *lose a friend*'."

Publication tips

To get the highest possible readership for an article:

- Put the title in question form instead of statement form.
- Scatter copy breaking devices throughout a long article. But don't overdo them. Use boxes, bullets, borders, subheads, boldface type.
- Write titles in an optimistic or pleasant mood instead of a pessimistic one.
- Use captions under all photographs. They get more readership than text areas.
- Avoid cropping photos in the shape of a square. Readers prefer rectangles.
- Avoid using long blocks of reverse

type (light type on a dark background). Although they appear dramatic, long reverses slows reading by about 11 percent.

Dramatic conclusions for your next story

The conclusion of your news story can be just as important as your lead. A strong ending can make the article memorable; a weak one can drain the energy from your entire story. Here are some useful tips for creating an effective ending:

- **The inverted pyramid ending.** You probably learned in school that most news stories start with the most important facts and close with the least important so that the story can be easily cut to fit the available space. Thus, the story just fades away. This works best for a straight news story.
- **The punch line.** Tell the story in chronological order, but hold back the most dramatic moment for the ending. You can hint at the punch line a bit so it won't be totally unexpected, but save the last one or two paragraphs for some piece of information that puts everything into perspective.
- **The delayed gratification ending.** Ask a question in your lead that relates to your story. Describe a situation. Set up a conflict. Then go on with the rest of the story, and, answer the question only at the end. Be sure that your opening question (or situation, or conflict) is strong enough to be memorable and hold interest throughout the story.
- **Echo the lead.** Repeat a phrase from the lead of your article. Be sure the phrase is memorable enough for readers to remember, and use it only if it makes sense on its own in case readers don't recall it.
- **The striking image ending.** Find a significant visual image that sums up the story as a whole. Take the time to polish for maximum effectiveness.
- **The "In Conclusion" conclusion.** This ending works best for straight news stories and information-heavy features. Summarize the information presented in the story. This reinforces your message. You might want to echo the lead.

Instantaneous communication

You only have a few seconds to catch your reader's eye. That's because most readers are not "readers" at all, but "scanners." They flip through the pages of the publication, looking for information that's relevant to them. It's up to you to grab them with stories of interest.

There are several points on the page where you can logically snag the scanner – the head, the lead, photographs and captions, subheads, pulled quotes and callouts, and sidebars. If you assume that your readers (or scanners) will only spend three to five seconds per page, then you've got to provide them with more than text. You've got to provide them with the total gist of the story outside the text in order to make those seconds productive.

Looked at this way, your head, lead, photos, captions, subheads, pulled quotes, callouts, and sidebars take on new importance. They aren't merely dressing up your story; they're actually retelling your story for those who aren't willing to invest the time to read your entire text.

Heads, subheads, and photo captions must be written to provide meaningful insight into the story. Photos must show what the story is about. The most important points of the story must be called out from the text and emphasized as pulled quotes and callouts. These should be presented in large, boldface or italic type, possibly in a second color.

Sidebars are another way to emphasize information quickly. These short, related

stories, placed next to the main story, can also put facts at the readers' fingertips.

Pulled quotes, callouts, and sidebars are not only a boon for the contemporary reader, they are also a godsend for editors faced with stories running too short or too long. Story too short to fill the page? Rely on an extra quote, callout, or sidebar. Story too long? Tighten facts and lists, or pull a secondary story out of your text to lighten it up or shorten it. Story too dull? Find a humorous angle and emphasize it in your sidebar. Late-breaking news? Place it in your sidebar. When you think beyond story content to all the elements that help readers and scanners understand your message, then you create not only a more dramatic story, but a real communication marvel.

Writing

Keep your readers in mind

Always remember when writing on any topic that your goal is to make it easy and enjoyable for your readers to understand. To do that you must put yourself in their position. What are they interested in? What do they want to learn more about? What knowledge do they already have? Your first sentences must catch their attention and tell them what reading this story or article will do for them.

The words used in the story and the logical sequence of thoughts have a lot to do with how easy it is to understand. In school, we may have been taught to use long or complex words, technical explanations, and extensive footnotes when writing essays. In organizational communication it is almost the opposite. We must know all about the topic. Then our task is to pick out the most important facts and present them in simplest possible terms.

- Start with an outline. What do you want to say? What order makes the most sense?

- Write as you speak. Be as simple and direct as you would in conversation. Never use a long word when a short one will do.

- Keep sentences short. Try an average of 15 to 20 words per sentence. Studies have shown that ease of understanding is related

both to sentence length and word length.

- Stick to the subject. If you find you are wandering, go back and rewrite. Sometimes the order can be improved. Occasionally you may find your final paragraph should be your lead.

- Weed out unnecessary words. Don't use several when one word will do.

- Write in the active voice. It is more effective to write, "A work accident injured two members," than "two members were

injured in a work accident." Avoid the passive form. Try writing a story without using any forms of the verb "to be." It's hard work and forces you to identify the sources of the actions. When you write this way, you can see how active verbs propel the movement of the story.

- Use direct quotes. They provide color, pace, and emphasis.

- Above all, respect your readers. They are intelligent.



Vote for your union newspaper!

Sixty-second workshop

What is new(s)?

So here you are, local members expect to see a newsletter next month. And, you ask yourself, “How are we ever going to fill those pages?” Visions of empty pages and missed deadlines race through the mind. Actually, there are a lot of newsworthy events going on every day in the local that members need to know about and that will help fill the pages of your paper.

The problem often faced by editors is deciding what news is, and what news isn't. Following are some guidelines to keep in mind:

- **News is timely.** It reports on the here and now. This is not to say that something that happened a couple of weeks ago, even a couple of months ago, isn't news if nobody knows about it. It will still be news to your local members when you print it in your newsletter. But beware of a news item that may change or become outdated by the time your paper finally gets into readers' hands.

- **News informs and motivates.** Background information on current political or economic problems can help to explain the reasons behind your union's position on a particular issue. A key role of your publication is to build the local union. You'll want to explain union activities; inform the members; get people active in committees; bring

people out to union meetings; and, most important, make your members feel they are part of something active and positive.

Attention PPA Members:

Send in your photos!

Have your event featured in the *Members in Action* section of *The American Postal Worker*

The APWU Communications Department needs your help! Please send photos of local officers and members at APWU local or state (retiree chapter or auxiliary) sponsored events, community parades, picnics, or any other civic gathering.

Photographs from events such as informational picketing, supporting a picket line or organizing drive for other union brothers and sisters, charitable activities, to handing out flyers or membership picnics, would be appreciated.

High-resolution photos should be emailed to communications@apwu.org.

