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MAIL HANDLER MEMORY: 1994

DANIEL ST. MARIE, NORTHEASTERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT,
LOCAL 301 PRESIDENT



IN 1994:

- Bill Clinton was President of the United States, Nelson Mandela was elected President of South Africa, and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was established.
- The Dallas Cowboys were the Super Bowl Champs, the New York Rangers won the Stanley Cup, and the Houston Rockets beat the New York Knicks 4 games to 3 to become NBA Champions. Unfortunately there was no World Series in 1994 because of a strike by the MLB Players Association.
- Forrest Gump was the top grossing picture in the United States, and would eventually win Best Picture at the Oscars (1995). Ace of Base's song "Sign" was Number 1 in Billboard Magazine's Top 100 Songs of 1994, Green Day had the Number 1 Rock & Roll Hit with "When I Come Around", John Michael Montgomery had the Number 1 Country Hit with "I Swear", and Boyz II Men had the Number 1 R & B Hit with "I'll Make Love To You".
- A loaf of bread cost \$0.99, a gallon of milk was \$2.88, a dozen eggs were .87 and a pound of ground beef was \$1.39. A gallon of gas was \$1.11, and a postage stamp was \$0.29.
- The median household income was \$32,264, the average cost of a new home was \$154,500, the federal minimum wage was \$4.25 per hour, and an ounce of gold was \$383.25.

1994 was also the year that I became a card-carrying member of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union (Local 301). I started at the Springfield MA BMC/GMF in early September

as a Part-Time Regular, but in a month, with a grievance from the Mail Handlers Union became a Part-Time Flexible (PTF), as this would be the path to eventually making Full-Time

A close-up photograph of a flip clock against a dark, textured background. The clock consists of two rectangular panels. The left panel displays a large white number '9', and the right panel displays a large white number '4'. The panels are held together by small black clips or pins. The overall aesthetic is modern and minimalist.

Regular (FTR). At this point in time, the Springfield BMC employed well over a thousand mail handlers. As a PTF in Springfield, you were either working Tour 1 or Tour 3 (Tour 2 was not an option). I was assigned to the West Inbound on Tour 1. I was a PTF for about 3 years when I made Full-Time Regular. In 1994 there was no MOU: Filling of Residual Vacancies or Automatic Conversion after 24 months.

When I started, the last of Eight COLA's from the 1990–1994 National Agreement had just kicked in. I started at an hourly rate of \$10.23 (PTR), but when I was moved to PTF my hourly rate went to \$10.61. The 38 cents difference was because PTFs did not get any paid Holidays, and because of that, were paid a slightly higher wage. In 1994, a Full-Time Regular Level 4 Mail Handler at Step O made \$16.28 an hour. A Level 5 Mail Handler at Step O made \$16.68 an hour.

At this same time Negotiations had just begun for what would be the November 21, 1994–November 20, 1998 National Agreement. William Quinn was the President of the NPMHU at that time, and Mark Gardner was Secretary Treasurer.

Flash forward over 30 years. There are no PTF's in the Mail Handler Craft in installations which have 200 or more man

years of employment. Mail Handler Assistants (MHAs) have taken their place as the supplemental complement. There are two ways for an MHA to be converted to career, the MOU: Filling of Residual Vacancies and the MOU: MHA Automatic Conversion To Career. Current wage charts show MHAs start at \$19.02, a Level 4 Step P at \$36.19 and a Level 5 Step P at \$36.77. And currently the Mail Handlers Union is gearing up for another round of Contract Negotiations in June, 2025. The current contract expires September 20, 2025. NPMHU National President Paul Hogrogian and Secretary Treasurer Kevin Tabarus will lead our negotiating team into battle to improve wages, working conditions, and contract language for the 50,000 plus Mail Handlers across the country.

Many things change over the years. Stamps are now \$0.73, a gallon of gas is \$3.00, a loaf of bread costs \$3.49, and an ounce of gold is \$3,317.50. But one of the consistencies over the years, and which I'm proud to be a part of, is the fight the NPMHU has always had on behalf of its members. Whether protecting Mail Handlers (FTRs, PTRs, PTFs, and MHAs) rights on the workroom floor, or fighting for better wages and working conditions at the bargaining table, this has never changed!!!