

NALC: Office of the President

James H. Rademacher
Collection

1950-1987
(Predominately 1968-1977)

Accession No. 1313

James H. Rademacher, the 14th president of the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), placed his papers in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs in 1987. Additional records from President Rademacher's office were deposited by NALC in 2001. Together, the James H. Rademacher Collection opened for research in December of 2006.

Rademacher was born in Detroit, MI on July 18, 1921 into a letter carrier family. His father was a member of NALC's Branch #1 in Redford, MI. (His brother later became a letter carrier in Tucson, AZ and his brother-in law worked as a carrier in Roanoke, VA.) Rademacher graduated from Cooley High School in Detroit and, in January of 1941, entered the Post Office Department as a temporary substitute carrier. In June of 1941, he was made career substitute carrier and that same year married Martha Kathryn Rice. Rademacher entered the U.S. Navy in 1944 during World War II and, upon his discharge from the service in 1946, returned to his job at the post office. He began his union activity in July of 1946 when he accepted the job of station representative—a job that no one wanted—at Branch #1. From 1949 to 1950, he served as secretary for both Branch #1 and the Michigan State Association, then president of Branch #1 from 1951 to 1960. He sat on a number of NALC boards and committees, including the NALC Hospitalization Committee from 1950 to 1952, the Sick Benefit Association Board of Directors from 1952 through 1958, and NALC's Executive Board from 1957 to 1960. In 1957, Rademacher became field director for the Chicago Region, moving to the Philadelphia Region from 1959 to 1960, and to the Atlanta Region from 1960 to 1962. In 1960, Rademacher was also elected to the office of national assistant secretary-treasurer, then national vice president in 1962. At that time he became editor of the NALC *Postal Record*. In 1968, Rademacher was elected to the office of national president and remained in that position until 1976.

Beginning in 1953, Rademacher also served in various capacities as an unpaid official of the Muscular Dystrophy Association of America (MDAA), and he was instrumental in establishing the first MDAA clinic in Detroit. For over twenty-five years he was a member of the Executive Committee of the national MDAA organization. Rademacher was also elected Chairman of the Government Employees Council in 1969 and served six years in that office. Along the way, he and wife Martha became the parents of two children and, later, grandparents.

As president, Rademacher led NALC through many battles in an effort to improve the lives and the image of letter carriers. He was a strong supporter of postal reform, and one of his most significant (and controversial) accomplishments—accompanied by accusations of secret negotiations with President Nixon and a nationwide strike by the rank and file in 1970—was his ability to win labor support for the creation of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) in return for the right to collective bargaining for postal workers. He set up a process for resolving grievances and negotiated contracts that improved working conditions and brought letter carriers' pay and benefits to levels comparable to work in the private sector, far from the near-welfare levels in place at the beginning of his term. However, with growing internal dissension over the union's relations with USPS management and vocal dissatisfaction with his leadership, Rademacher chose not to run for reelection when his term ended in 1976.

In 1977, following his retirement, Rademacher was appointed by the U.S. Senate to the Commission on Postal Service, a panel designed to investigate problems within the post office, and was subsequently named vice-chairman of that group.

The collection consists of general administrative records generated during the Rademacher presidency, such as assignments, correspondence, minutes, reports, and convention materials, as well as subject files relating to special concerns such as private delivery competition and mechanical mail systems. Also included is material documenting significant events that occurred during this period, such as contract negotiations, the wildcat strike of 1970, and the reorganization of the Postal Service, much of which is in the form of news clippings, statements, and transcripts. Biographical information consists of both text materials and a small number of artifacts. Correspondence generated by assistants to the president Gerald Cullinan (an author of books relating to the Postal Service) and John T. Donelon is included in the correspondence series. Executive Council records include transcripts of meetings conducted by Rademacher's predecessor, President Jerome J. Keating, between 1962 and 1968.

Important subjects covered in this collection:

AFL-CIO
Collective Bargaining
Contract Negotiations
Equal Opportunity and Full Employment Act of 1976
Insurance Plans
Mail Sorting
NALC Conventions, National and State
National Labor Relations Act
National Labor Relations Board
Postal Reorganization and Salary Adjustment Act of 1970
Postal Service
Strikes
Technology
United States Postal Service
Wildcat Strikes
United States. Post Office Dept.
Richard M. Nixon
United States Postal Service Automation
United States Postal Service Automation Evaluation

Important correspondents in this collection:

Edward L. Baker	William Lehman
Winton M. Blount	Elliott H. Levitas
Anne Campbell	Ray Marshall
Harvey Campbell	John McCormack
Charles J. Carney	John Mitchell
Charles W. Colson	Joseph M. Montoya
John P. Doran	Edmund S. Muskie
Gaylord Freeman	Richard M. Nixon
Foster Furcolo	James G. O'Hara
Herbert E. Harris, II	Arthur E. Summerfield
Augustus F. Hawkins	James J. Symbol
Lyndon B. Johnson	W. Marvin Watson
J. Bennett Johnston	G. Mennen Williams
John F. Kennedy	

Transfers

A number of photographs and audiocassette tapes have been placed in the Archives Audiovisual Collection, and two books that were included with the Rademacher papers have been moved to the Archives library.

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Series I: General Administration, 1962-1977, Boxes 1-8:

Subseries A: Assignments, 1972-1977, Boxes 1-3:

Files in this subseries contain requests by branches and state associations for national representation at local NALC events. Beginning in October of 1973, Travel Authorization forms were added. Files are arranged chronologically by date of event.

Subseries B: Correspondence, 1968-1977, Boxes 3-6:

This subseries contains both incoming and outgoing correspondence, the bulk of which relates to communications between the president and union members seeking advice and/or assistance on various issues, and letters of commendation for assignments completed. Many responses appear to have been written for the president's signature by his assistants, as indicated by Rademacher's numerous handwritten instructions. Also included is correspondence of assistants to the president, Gerald Cullinan and John T. Donelon. Communications relating to the publication of Cullinan's books can be found in his correspondence files.

Subseries C: Executive Council Meetings, 1962-1977, Boxes 6-7:

Files in this subseries contain minutes, reports and other supplementary materials generated for examination and discussion during meetings of the Executive Council. Meetings are conducted by the current NALC president, and discussions touch on all aspects of administration and union activity. Records here represent meetings led by President Jerome J. Keating from 1962 through 1968, and by President Rademacher during his term of office from Aug 1968 through 1977. Records are arranged chronologically.

Subseries D: Subject Files, 1966-1976, Boxes 7-9:

Materials in this subseries consist of records that pertain to the general operation of the union and functions of the president's office. Included are the president's responses to critical editorials throughout the country, his statements on various topics of concern to NALC, and his rulings on constitutional issues at the request of branches and members alike. Of particular interest is material documenting efforts by the Postal Service to mechanize the forwarding of mail, and the evaluation of that system by postal workers. These files are arranged alphabetically with contents, in most cases, in chronological order.

Series II: Contract Negotiations, 1973-1976, Boxes 8-9:

Records in this series are arranged chronologically, then in alphabetical order. These include a copy of the 1971-1973 National Agreement and related material, 1973 negotiations correspondence, and minutes, correspondence and background material compiled in connection with the 1975 contract negotiations.

Series III: Wildcat Strike of 1970, 1969-1971, Box 9:

This series contains correspondence, clippings, articles and transcripts that relate to events leading up to, during, and immediately following the postal workers' wildcat strike of 1970. Of particular interest are transcripts of the NALC emergency meeting and subsequent press conference, which provide details of events and discussions that occurred during the final hours of the strike.

Series IV: Postal Service Reform, 1969-1984, Box 9:

Material in this series primarily consists of statements presented by Rademacher with regard to reorganization of the Postal Service, notes pertaining to the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970, and studies by outside sources (with notations by Rademacher) that examine and analyze the reorganization. Also included is correspondence documenting Rademacher's appointment to the Postal Service Advisory Council.

Series V: Clippings, 1968-1987, Boxes 9-10:

This series contains Rademacher's personal collection of newspaper clippings collected from across the country during his term of office as president of NALC. The bulk of these articles document events, opinions, and analyses of the postal workers' wildcat strike of 1970 and the reorganization of the Postal Service. Articles include opinions on the controversial Nixon-Rademacher meetings and statements from members of Congress. Of special interest is an introduction, handwritten by Rademacher, which provides his personal perspective on these events. Also included are articles covering Rademacher's retirement, with reflections on his career and legacy as president of NALC.

Series VI: Biographical and Personal Files, 1950-1981, Box 10:

This series contains a brief biography, feature articles, and material documenting Rademacher's life, both personal and professional. There are certificates and citations, election material, personal correspondence, including letters from President Richard Nixon, clippings, and a transcript of Rademacher's final address to NALC members upon his retirement.

Series VII: Non-Textual Materials, n.d., 1960, 1970, Box 11:

The items in this series consist of miscellaneous artifacts found among Rademacher's personal papers. Most notable are his president's gavel with inscriptions documenting his terms of office as both branch and national president (completion date of national term is omitted) and a 24-inch noose sent to Rademacher anonymously during the wildcat strike of 1970.

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