



# No. 47



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THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ST. LOUIS NEWSPAPER GUILD LOCAL 36047

## 6th-floor madness — now *that's* scary

The treatment of our retail ad salespeople on the sixth floor and their comrades in the bureau is so abusive and sales plans and regulations so irrational, we question whether Lee and Post-Dispatch managers really want the salespeople to succeed. The outrageous actions by management lead us to suspect the Post is planning to eliminate the retail ad sales force.

As a high-ranking executive was preparing to leave his job at the Post recently, he indicated to a Guild member that the largest share of retail ad accounts was being given to Suburban Journals salespeople because they are nonunion!!!! All union members should be concerned. Which of our departments will be next?

We want you to know what the retail ad sales force is up against:

■ **Lists of prospective and active clients in the territories assigned to salespeople often contain useless or out-of-date information.** Some listed businesses have long been closed or they aren't even businesses. Eight pages of one salesperson's prospect list contained government offices, which, as we know, don't buy ads. Frequently, businesses included in Post salespeople's territory are actually in the territory of Suburban Journals salespeople, and therefore, off-limits to Post sales staff.

■ **Delineation of sales territories is not well thought-out.** In some territories, most businesses are mom-and-pop stores that can't afford to buy a lot of ads. Or the territories are peppered with low-income areas, where many businesses have shut down. Salespeople are still expected to sell ads and meet goals.

■ **Salespeople have to leave the Post building every morning by**



**10:30, regardless, even if they could sell ads by talking to long-established clients by phone.**

■ **Management is constantly changing course, setting new sales goals and focus, so salespeople aren't given enough time to sell ads for one special publication before they're asked to sell for another.**

Salespeople are given goals to reach within a few hours. You get a \$2,500 sales goal by noon, one person said. You're told in the morning and it has to be by noon.

Sales efforts become a mad scramble, and regular clients don't get the attention they need.

■ **Supervisors are pressing salespeople to sell regardless of whether the product is appropriate for the**

**particular advertisers.** Salespeople have gotten to know their advertisers and believe they know what's going to be most effective for their clients. Salespeople feel they will lose credibility with advertisers if they are forced to keep calling them about products that aren't appropriate. I know my territory, said one salesman. I know where the dollars might be. Some products don't fit certain clientele.

A salesman noted that Pulitzer never told salespeople to badger clients, as salespeople are expected to do under Lee.

■ **Management has created a punitive and abusive environment that is not conducive to the positive attitude needed in successful sales efforts.**

The names of salespeople who have and haven't made their goals are posted for the staff to see. Salespeople have been threatened with disciplinary action if they don't meet their goals. They have been told, If you don't sell an ad, don't come back.

Supervisors push sales above all, at the expense of integrity and of salespeople's well-being, thereby eroding enthusiasm for the work. Last week, a saleswoman's car was rear-ended while she was out working. She called her supervisor at 3 p.m. and said she was shaken up, that her back and head hurt, and that she wished to go home.

His response: Get back on the horse, and use the accident to make sales by telling clients that she was in an accident on her way to see them.

Then, they will have to buy something from you, he said. (When the saleswoman was able to see her doctor, he urged her to go home, saying she needed to rest for several days.)

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# No. 47

The No. 47 is a publication of the St. Louis Newspaper Guild Local 36047.

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The No. 47 welcomes submissions from all members of the St. Louis Guild.

## ST. LOUIS NEWSPAPER GUILD ELECTIONS

# Voters guide

Nominations were made at a Guild meeting Oct. 21 for offices and Executive Committee memberships for three-year-terms beginning in January. Candidates unopposed and their offices are: Jeff Gordon, president; Kathryn Rogers, first vice president; Joe Kenny, second vice president; Jim Gallagher, treasurer; and Matt Harper, recording secretary. In addition, Kathy David is unopposed for chairwoman of the Post-Dispatch unit. Elections for the other Guild units will be held later.

Nine Guild members were nominated for four seats on the Executive Committee. Following is a list of the candidates in alphabetical order and some information about them. All candidates work at the Post-Dispatch. We asked each candidate to say why he or she is seeking a leadership position. Here is what they said:

### MEREDITH ANDERSON

Utility clerk, circulation department  
Guild member for 19 years  
Currently serving as shop steward

(Questionnaire was not returned)

### THERESA E. COBB

Utility clerk, circulation/retention department  
Guild member for 20 years  
Currently Guild first vice president; shop steward for 19 years; has served as an officer or Executive Committee member for 10 years.

I would like to remain part of the Executive Committee because I believe in the Guild and all that it stands for. I feel I have contributed a lot in representing my co-workers in the circulation department.

### BARRY GILBERT

Copy editor, features copy desk  
Guild member for eight years  
Currently serving as a shop steward, member of the Guild Journalism Committee and associated editor of the Guild newsletter.

The next contract negotiation is likely to determine whether the Guild survives at the

Post-Dispatch. The most recent contract talks with Pulitzer were just the beginning: Lee Enterprises, as we all know, is no Pulitzer. If Lee thinks the right to book a week at their lodge is a negotiable benefit, what will their attitude be on real issues that would cost them or us real money? We already know the answer to that question, as our members in advertising know only too well.

"Although the Post-Dispatch is the first Guild paper I've worked for, I have been a supporter of the union movement since I began working. I was part of a group that attempted to organize the Lawrence (Mass.) Eagle-Tribune back in the '70s; our drive failed, but we won first-ever maternity and other health benefits, as well as raises.

"I lived through the 'January Massacre' in 1997 at the nonunion Arizona Republic: 70-plus newsroom employees fired without notice and without cause and escorted off the premises one Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Don't say it can't happen here; without the Guild, it could very well happen here.

"I'm running for the Executive Committee to help us be prepared for the next negotiation, to help keep us strong and united in the face of a hostile corporate parent, and to defend our contract our rights as journalists and P-D employees.

### RICH HUGHES

Advertising artist, creative services department  
Guild member for 28 years  
Currently Post-Dispatch unit chairman, member of the Joint Standing Committee; has been convention and sector conference delegate and Midwest District Council delegate; has served on the negotiations committee and as second vice president of the Local.

I am seeking a leadership position to provide a transition and history to help us grow as we start a new and challenging chapter in the history of the Guild in St. Louis and to continue to represent ALL members of the Post and Local 36047.

**GREG JONSSON**

**Reporter, news department  
Guild member for six years  
Currently shop steward and associate  
editor of the Guild newsletter.**

This is a time of many new challenges for the Guild but also many opportunities as we prepare for the future. If chosen for the Executive Committee, I will strive to represent all members of the Guild and bring a fresh perspective to the issues we face on a day-to-day basis. Also important is strategy as we prepare for negotiations preparations that should begin as soon as possible.

"I would welcome your vote but value your participation above all. Even more important than the leaders we choose, our union is only as strong as the commitment of its members, and both are factors that will be vitally important in the years ahead.

**ODELL MITCHELL JR.**

**Staff photographer, news department  
Guild member for 24 years  
Currently serving as shop steward**

I decided to seek a leadership position because I believe I have a duty to serve the Guild. At some point, you have to begin to serve the Guild because it serves you.

**KEITH SCHILDROTH**

**Sports agate clerk, sports department  
Guild member for 30 years  
Currently serving as shop steward; delegate to St. Louis Labor Council, and member of the executive board of the North County Labor Legislative Club**

Over the past several years, I have become more active in the Guild with such activities as marching in the Labor Day Parade, work-

ing on an informational picket line at the Pulitzer annual stockholders meeting, serving as a shop steward and taking part in shop steward training.

"I have helped fellow Guild members with problems and have helped them get answers to questions under Pulitzer management and Lee Enterprises. I have represented the Guild at the St. Louis Labor Council and have served as an active voice in the labor community with the North County Labor Legislative Club.

"I think the next few years will be the most important in the history of the Post-Dispatch in terms of how organized labor will be treated by Lee Enterprises. The Guild needs an experienced person with a strong labor background who has spent his life at the Post-Dispatch appreciating what the Guild has done for employees and who is not afraid to fight to keep those rights

"I think I have the qualities to represent this membership in an honorable and distinguished manner.

**KELLI THOMPSON**

**Telephone sales representative, classified recruitment  
Guild member for nine years  
Currently a shop steward**

With so many of our strong, loyal Guild members having retired or taken the buyout, I feel it is imperative that the rest of us step up for the good of our union. We need committed people to fight for the great contract we deserve, to assist our members day to day and to keep it top of mind that this newspaper is only successful because of the hard work we all do every day. I want to do my part.

**CAROLYN TUFT**

**Investigative reporter/special projects,  
news department  
Guild member for 14 years  
Currently a shop steward and graduate  
of steward training; member of the Post-Dispatch Journalism Committee**

Fellow Guild members, I am running for the committee because I want to work hard in an attempt to repay all of you for giving me such an awesome display of support in my case still pending before an arbitrator. I promise that, if elected, I will use the same zeal and dogged determination in that position to protect all of your rights and seek a fair contract as I do in my job investigating stories for our newspaper.

"As all of you know, the business of journalism is being redefined. And the rights, duties, challenges and credibility in our jobs as journalists have never been more threatened. As we fight for our rights to perform the jobs we were called to do, it is not that dedication to our jobs, but the Wall Street investors and top corporate executives, who receive the benefits of our hard work and dedication.

"Even though I work in the newsroom, I want all of you to know that I will work on the board to protect the rights and work toward a contract that is fair to all of you no matter which department you work in. Even if you decide not to back my candidacy, I hope that you all take seriously the importance of this election and your Guild membership. This election will shape our negotiations as we battle for a fair contract in 2009. It is a critical business in this age of journalism where the bottom line dictates how newspapers like ours will be run in the future. Thank you all for your support of the Guild. Please take time to vote.

# Your leadership is up to you!

Be sure to mail in your ballot  
so that it arrives by noon, Nov. 13.

# Survey results

Nearly one-third of our 478 Guild members responded to a recent survey, with results showing some surprises. Surveys such as ours usually solicit responses skewed slightly toward the more senior, experienced members. While we did receive replies from 35 members with 10 to 20 years of service and 37 responses from members with over 20 years experience, the largest group of responses (46) came from members with from 5 to 10 years of employment.

We think that bodes well for our organization and shows that, on some level at least, our younger members are engaged with the union. Twenty-seven members with 1 to 5 years of employment also responded, as did 10 of our newest members, with less than one year of employment.

## SCARY

### Continued from Page 1

#### ■ Commission plans aren't set up to reward people for selling a lot of ads.

Commission salespeople earn a commission based on the percentage of their sales growth the increase in the amount of sales in a particular period this year over the amount of sales during the same period last year. But commissions are adjusted so that the salespeople take home pretty much the same earnings or less every year.

The company has said it came up with the current commission system in order to protect a salesperson from a precipitous drop in earnings in case the salesperson had a bad year. This plan was offered after the Guild exposed the unfairness and nonsensical nature of the company's prior plan. The company said it looked at each salesperson's earnings for the past three years, figured the average and then came up with a plan to allow the salesperson to make at least that average annually.

But actually, salespeople say, commissions are adjusted so that they never make ABOVE that average. And if you had three years of low earnings?

You're screwed, one saleswoman said.

This being the case, salespeople have lit-

Most people responding (60 percent) said that their current jobs are their first with a union. An overwhelming majority said that unions were still necessary. In fact, only one respondent said unions were no longer necessary, and two said they weren't sure about the matter. (We expected more than that.)

As far as trusting management to do the right thing goes, 14 (9 percent) said they did trust management, and two weren't sure. Eighty-nine percent (135) said they didn't trust management. (We expected fewer members to say that.)

Eighty-one percent knew who their Guild shop stewards were, and the same percentage said they were being kept informed of Guild events and issues. Over half of those who didn't know who their stewards were have over 10 years on the job. This could mean that some areas do not have stewards. (If that's the case in your area, let us know if you know someone who would be willing to step up to the plate.)

Most people (66 percent) like their bosses, but only 53 percent think that employees

in their area are treated equally.

### WORKPLACE ISSUES

The cost of health care is the single biggest issue checked by our members as urgent. It was picked by 80 percent. Job security was second and wages came in third (42 percent). Next came retirement benefits and staffing levels.

Many Guild members employed for 10 years or less see working conditions as the most urgent issue, but that issue was hardly ever cited by people employed for over 10 years. (We heard more than once about the temperature in the building.)

Members frequently cited job jurisdiction as an urgent issue. Sales commission plans and short-term disability also were cited.

We want everyone to know that all responses were read and will be the focus of many future discussions among Local leaders and stewards as the union plans for the future.

Again, thank you for your participation.

tle incentive to keep selling ads.

■ **Salespeople are burned out and stressed out.** Many won't take a week's vacation (they'll take it a day at a time) because they're afraid they won't make their sales goals and will lose money and face disciplinary action.

The stress is creating physical problems for some. Several salespeople are taking medication for stress. Another is on medical leave for stress. Yet another was recently fired without just cause, a clear violation of our contract.

Last week, three of us couldn't stop shaking or couldn't stop going to the bathroom or had stomach aches, one saleswoman said.

Six of nine retail ad salespeople who spoke recently with No. 47 said they're looking for other jobs, with several saying that no amount of money in commissions is worth trying to deal with the hostile work environment.

With no enthusiasm for the job, how are the salespeople supposed to win over advertisers?

If you're under that amount of stress, you're going to lose your grip on other things. You're going to have angry clients. You're going to have (advertisers) pulling

out, a saleswoman said.

■ **Employees of Lee Enterprises corporation accompanying Post-Dispatch salespeople on their calls are evaluating our Guild members and making sales situations worse.** Guild members say the Lee people don't care about the advertisers here and aren't totally honest in making their sales pitches.

One salesperson described the Lee people as car salesmen. (No. 47 would like to apologize to honest car salespeople who might happen to read this.) Salespeople fear that the behavior of the Lee people will hurt their credibility with longtime clients and repel prospective new clients, adversely affecting ad revenue.

The Guild will be taking action on behalf of the salespeople over the coming months. We will be publicizing the problems created by sales management and will keep you informed of the ways you can support the salespeople. Our union will continue to work for fairness, respect and rationality on the sixth floor.

Meanwhile, if you see a salesperson in the lobby or elevator at the Post, tell them they're doing a good job and that you back them. They need all the moral support they can get.