

January 2001



Alert!

Chapter report 201

The Alert! Is back in print...by overwhelming demand!!

Special Chapter Meeting announcement attached

Y2K, A Year In Review

Districts stood down, Business Units stood up, employees stood by. Transition ate up the better part of the year, and realignment brought in the New Year. The IRS became a customer-friendly entity, chiefs became execs, and employees became corporate assets. If you wondered why we were all supplied with collapsible work areas in fy2000, it is because we tend to do this about every two or three years!

National IRS:

The IRS transitioned from District offices to Business Units. The agency paid the consulting firm of Booz-Allen well over \$200 Million of our hard-won budget dollars to put the new IRS restructuring plan together and help implement the transition. We won't know for several years if that money was well spent. And it was announced in a recent meeting of SB/SE managers and Chapter Presidents from across the nation that Booz-Allen will stay on for a while longer. As often as the IRS restructures, that could be a lifetime commitment!

Besides a few external national office mucky-muck hires (some of whom have already jumped ship!), the restructured "streamlined management" hasn't become apparent to the front line employee. Former Regional and District Execs took Area Director jobs (or lucrative retirements). Division/Branch chiefs melded into Territory management, and other managers still seem to be right where they were before, although they may be sporting new titles.

National NTEU:

NTEU secured a 3.7% pay raise and succeeded in getting employee health premiums paid from pre-tax dollars, which saved thousands of dollars for

"Committed to a better work environment."

employees nation-wide. They settled overtime pay for Revenue Agents, higher-graded duty pay for IS employees and nailed down child-care and transportation subsidy agreements. In mid-term bargaining, agreements were reached to establish and maintain a HRIF (an employee education fund), and to count prior IRS time in EOD calculations (even when there is a break in service). They also helped secure changes to Thrift Savings contributions. Your ability to contribute to the program went from 10% maximum to 15% maximum over a period of time. This will allow employees to defer a larger portion of their salary to their retirement years. The employer's contributions have not changed. Check out the National NTEU Web Page at <http://www.nteu.org> for details.

Locally:

The former South Texas District Director wrangled a temporary job training XD candidates, and a move to San Antonio to retire sometime in the spring of 2001. The former Chiefs Exam, Collection, Communication, Quality, EEO and the Controller have moved on to bigger and better things, some still right there in Austin.

Former Exam Division Chief, Robert Hanson, made the transition to SB/SE Territory 2 Manager. Mike McDermitt, former Austin District Collection Division Chief, and more recently Regional-something in Dallas, returned to Austin as W&I Territory 1 Manager.

Taxpayer Service became *Customer Service* and tapped heavily on collection and exam employees to accommodate the filing seasons.

SB/SE employees became a corporate asset of Area 10, under the supervision of Area Director Steve Burgess, in Dallas. W&I employees belong to Jeff Stetina, Area 5, and LMSB, Appeals, TAS and others have management scattered all over the place. It's pretty confusing, and people who are sitting in the same office are reporting through totally different management chains.

Some posts of duty took on a new look. Auditors got ergonomic furniture and new workstations across the state. **Corpus Christi** employees got a whole new building in mid-December when OSHA finally condemned the one they'd been occupying for several years. In **Austin**, several parking spaces became available when the new territory managers moved to the Echelon to "dwell among the people". In **San Antonio**, Collection Branch Chief Eloise Cubriel *finally* retired. She made room for new SB/SE Territory Managers, Susan Graham and Art Gandara.

The snoops are still in the Valley. TIGTA pops up all over the place, but their extremely tiresome, hyper-activity in **Harlingen** and **McAllen** makes us wonder if it might not be cheaper to give them a permanent office down there.



Recently chapter officials sent out a request for verification of member information, along with a short survey. If you did not receive this request, please contact your steward immediately. If you received the request, but have not completed and returned it, please do so as soon as possible. The information is necessary to update membership lists. In addition, the Chapter wants your feedback on significant issues.

Chapter 52 Wants You To Know

One of the great things about a newsletter is that we get an opportunity, as your representative body, to let you know what is going on out there. The following is a Y2K recap of representational events, as well as a current status check.

Tom Jones became President in January, 2000. At that time there were somewhere between 15 and 18 stewards. We currently have a total of 27 stewards, as well as Benefits Coordinator Eve Weeks; Legislative Coordinator George Garcia; TQO Coordinator Susan Ryan; Chief, Negotiations Sherry Kenisky. Mick Eskew was appointed as full-time Asst. Chief Steward. Bill Grace is the Chief Steward.

Mick Eskew created a Chapter web page that carries information regarding employee benefits, links to other government agencies, current events, names and contact information for all chapter officers and stewards, a *Sound-Off* page where members can submit their own perspectives on any subject they want. Members can send in anything from a yummy recipe to a political commentary. (Fax to 210-706-5376 – you must sign it – but you can *request and receive anonymity* on the web page.) Web address is <http://nteu52.hypermart.net>.

The Chapter joined the tech age by computerizing the internal administrative tasks. This allows multi-party access and instant recovery to provide better and quicker service to members. We are now electronically transmitting national NTEU memos, updates and team solicitations to all stewards in order to speed up information to employees. So if you need information, contact your steward.

An update to the by-laws was completed in December and the changes approved by the Chapter Board. Members will have the opportunity to vote on changes in late February, at a special Chapter Meeting. The by-law draft is available for viewing on the web page.

The Chapter gave significant employee feedback to the national office on proposed critical elements for several jobs, including Appeals, Estate and Gift, Tax Auditors, and Revenue Officer OIC. Much of that feedback was reflected in the final drafts.

Grievances: We had 36 grievances in Y2k, including thirteen (13) for appraisals, six (6) for bilingual awards, several non-selections, and other issues such as admonishment, overtime, leave, disciplinary actions, status quo violations and a mass grievance for FLRA capped pay.

Chapter 52 won bilingual awards for all six employees who were overlooked in the award process. Out of the thirteen (13) appraisal grievances, we have lost none, favorably settled (or won) four (4), with nine (9) still pending resolution.

Arbitrations: We took five (5) cases to arbitration, and won all five cases for employees. Most of the cases revolved around termination for 1203b and UNAX issues. One employee filed a REFUND return ONE DAY LATE. In their infinite wisdom, management wanted to terminate the employee. The case went all the way to arbitration where common sense finally prevailed. We don't take cases to arbitration unless there is merit. Unlike grievances, where the union is pretty much obligated to represent...taking a case to arbitration is weighed heavily against the merits of the case and the hazards of litigation. (Which is NOT the same as whether we think we can win or not.)

Negotiations: Sherry Kenisky is the Chief, Negotiations for the Chapter. We negotiated several new and better agreements such as Awards, Taxpayer Walk-In, and Labor Management Relations Committee. These will be added to the web page soon. Meanwhile copies are available in the San Antonio union office.

Partnership: Y2K partnering activities were fruitful for both the former District and the Chapter. Although we experienced a few growing pains, we accomplished enormous employee gains through partnership, such as local suggestion awards, fewer grievances, pre-decisional input and inclusion, and employee input into the business plan process, to name a few.

Things have changed, however. Y2001 seems to have plunged us into a more haphazard structure. With leaders scattered all over the Area, and territory managers stepping all over each other, unsure where the boundaries of authority and empowerment reside, we find ourselves dealing with multiple parties, across many miles by telephone, VMS and e-mail, to represent the interests of our employees.

The Chapter is no longer involved in any formal local partnership (territories, sites, etc.) however we finally have stewards on a couple of national councils. Congratulations are in order for Trish Kelley, Chapter 52 Appeals steward, Dana Brewer, TAS steward and Steve Lacey, Chapter VP, selected from among hundreds of stewards nationwide to represent employees at the national level. Pat is a member of the National Appeals Partnering Council, and Dana appointed to the National Taxpayer Advocate Partnering Council. Steve will grace the LMSB National Partnering Sub-Council on Training.

Although a new national "Partnering Agreement" was recently signed by the IRS Commish and NTEU's Colleen Kelley, that agreement gives Area councils the deciding vote for lower level partnering councils. W&I just recently formed an Area Partnering Council.



The **Chapter 52 Alert!** can also be found on our Chapter Web Page at <http://nteu52.hypermart.net>. You can e-mail any Chapter officer, staff member or steward from the page.

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Chief Steward, Bill Grace
Asst. Ch. Steward, Mick Eskew*

*Send comments and/or articles to
1700SANW or fax 210-706-5376,
attention Alert! Editor Susan Ryan*

NTEU CHAPTER 52

SPECIAL CHAPTER MEETING

WHEN: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2001

**WHERE: SAN ANTONIO POST OF DUTY
ROOM 240 – 6:30 p.m.**

**CHAPTER BY-LAW CHANGES WILL BE
PRESENTED TO MEMBERS FOR VOTE**