

POPenny on being a steward

The union becomes a part of your life. You sacrifice leave and personal time working for the union. It becomes a part of you, an extension of your family. This is the true fraternal spirit.

I sometimes think that is why us union folk are so offended by scabs. We know the NRLCA is not perfect, but we are damn sure in there fighting and scraping to make it better. Those who choose to sit on the outside and snipe are insulting those of us who are struggling to make us stronger and more united. We try to make things better on the workroom floor, doing our best and sometimes making split second decision that others with the luxury of time second guess.

A steward, in particular, works many more hours than they are paid. A steward comes to hate that blinking light on the answering machine. A steward has broad shoulders and understands venting. A steward has a dog eared contract and a messy house. Yet, many think we have it easy, we are off again on union time and some picture that as stretched out on a beach with a margarita in hand. In reality, you are hunched over a steering wheel driving to some hole in the wall PO or hunched over a computer processing grievances. You spend quality time with the local kid at the copy center. Doubtless you eat at the computer and are up late making that deadline. At work the next day, you get, "off again"? Yet when that same carrier has a gripe or is in trouble, you are the first person they run to.

But there are those times, the thank you card, the hug, the tears of gratitude. Those times, you know it is worth every effort you have given. I had a message left on my answering machine on Christmas day. A grateful carrier letting me know his appreciation, it made my day.

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