



Tampa Letter Carrier

Volume 5 - Issue 2

A.R. "Tony" Huerta NALC Branch 599

Tampa, Florida

February 2006

President's Report

2006 – A Crucial Year

The beginning of each new year brings with it the hope that many of the problems affecting the working conditions of letter carriers will be resolved. When we look to the upcoming events in 2006 we can see that it will be a very crucial and decisive one, perhaps the most important in many years.

A major issue that has been ongoing for many months now is that of *Postal Reform*. As the *Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2005 (S662)* was making its way through the Senate, Missouri Senator Kit Bond put a "hold" on the bill, stopping it from being voted on. In an effort to persuade the senator to lift the hold, hundreds of carriers staged a picket line outside of his offices throughout Missouri. As a result of this action and thousands of phone calls made by e-activists to his offices, the senator backed down and stated that he expected a vote on the bill in February. It should be noted that Senator Bond refused to even listen to the NALC's position regarding the bill and did not respond to a letter written to him by NALC President Bill Young. Mr. Young attended Branch 599's Retirees Banquet on January 21st, to install the station shop stewards, and during his speech to the attendees gave us some good news. He said it looked promising that a vote would be taken in the Senate in the very near future and it

seemed likely that it would pass unanimously. This incident shows the power of organizing as *e-Activists*, so if you have yet to sign up or have not submitted your e-mail address to our national office please do so now. Log on to the NALC website at <http://www.nalc.org> and follow the instructions.

The 65th *Biennial National Association of Letter Carriers' Convention* will be held in Las Vegas the week of August 14th through the 18th. This will be an extremely important convention as it comes at the time that our national officers will begin negotiations for our next contract. I think that we all are aware of what has been going on throughout the country involving labor unions and the all out attack on our benefits. The auto workers, airline pilots and other unions have had their pension benefits reduced and with the rising cost of health care, it is guaranteed that the Postal Service will seek to reduce their contributions to letter carriers' health benefit plans. The Postal Service is currently paying a much larger percentage towards employees' health care than other federal agencies and they will undoubtedly try to change this. Even a one percentage point drop in the Postal Service's contribution will have a dramatic effect on the letter carrier's take home pay. Mr. Young stated, at the installation banquet, that he will not send a contract to the members for ratification that he would not sign himself. He said that the current contract has served the membership well, with the base pay of a Grade 1 Step O letter carrier going from \$42,323 per year on March 10, 2001 to \$47,950 per year on November 26, 2005. A new contract based on the same pay criteria would be acceptable as long as health benefits are not affected.

Finally, this is an election year in the United States Congress as well as for our own NALC national officers. Mr. Young thinks that we have a good chance of electing representatives and senators who are familiar with and willing to support the issues affecting letter carriers if we all just study the candidates' records and get out and vote. As far as our own national elections go, I personally believe that President Young, during his first term in office, has proven himself to be a great leader. He has initiated new programs for the training of new letter carriers, newly elected shop stewards and current letter carriers who want to be future union leaders. Former Region Nine Administrative Assistant Fred Rolando, who is currently the National Director of City Delivery, has also done a great job in his position. He has been successful in continuing to clarify the National Agreement, through the Joint Contract Administrative Manual, on a yearly basis and ensuring that it is enforced at the national level.

Whoever you decide to vote for is really not the most important thing. What really matters is that you study the candidates and vote. Only 40% of the membership voted in the 2002 election of national officers and hopefully that percentage will be much higher this year.



by Jim Good

President - Branch 599

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Branch Meeting

February 2, 2006

7:30 PM

Branch 599 Officers

PRESIDENT	Jim Good	(813) 960-3759, cell 417-8877
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VICE-PRESIDENT	Gilbert Cabanas	(813) 855-0516, cell 597-7396
RECORDING SECRETARY	Cheryl Clothier	(727) 385-7337
FINANCIAL SECRETARY	Tony Diaz	(813) 598-9635
TREASURER	Michael Anderson	(813) 681-5688
TRUSTEE(Chairman)	Henry Dupree	(813) 621-6471
TRUSTEE	Jose Oliva	(813) 873-2747
TRUSTEE	Terry Franklin	(813) 657-9690
SERGEANT-AT-ARMS	J.C. Howard	(813) 621-1976
MBA / NSBA	Albert Guice	(813) 621-7931
HEALTH BENEFITS	Lance Jones	(813) 220-1292
DIRECTOR OF RETIREES	Jack Newman	(813) 805-2942
LABOR - MANAGEMENT	Eric Fleming	(813) 310-8274
LABOR - MANAGEMENT	Brian Obst	(727) 507-0135
MAPS COORDINATOR	Chris Albrecht	(727) 791-7162

Presidents Emeritus

Michael Anderson	Orbe Andux
James Butler	Don Thomas
Garland Tickle	Lenin Perez

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Branch 599 Shop Stewards

Brandon	33510	Terry Franklin	(813) 657-9690
Brandon	33511	Phil Chirico	(813) 657-3180
Carrollwood	33618	Gilbert Cabanas	(813) 855-0516
Commerce	33602	Dook Ramotar Sr.	(813) 780-6254
Forest Hills	33612	Warren Sumlin	(813) 486-7612
Forest Hills Annex	33613	David Camuy	(813) 892-6553
Hilldale	33614	Gilbert Cabanas	(813) 855-0516
Hilldale Annex	33634	Lance Jones	(813) 220-1292
Hyde Park	33606	George McEndree	(813) 935-0244
Interbay	33611	Dean Minter	(813) 767-6538
Interbay	33629	Jim Knotz	(813) 832-6644
MacDill	33608	Jim Knotz	(813) 832-6644
Palm River	33619	J.C. Howard	(813) 621-1976
Plant City	33565	Misty Bauer	(813) 681-6890
Port Tampa	33616	Dean Minter	(813) 767-6538
Produce	33610	Eric Fleming	(813) 310-8274
Ruskin / Sun City Center	33570	Jack Hencoski	(813) 633-5422
Seminole Heights	33603	Tony Diaz	(813) 872-1542
Sulphur Springs	33604	Matt Kokich	(813) 431-3686
Tampa Carrier Annex	33607	Ken Lee	(940) 368-4771
Tampa Carrier Annex	33609	Brian Obst	(727) 458-0679
Temple Terrace	33617	Mike Stewart	(813) 310-1292
Town & Country	33615	Brian Obst	(727) 458-0679
Ybor City	33605	Detlev Aepfel	(813) 505-7914

TAMPA RETIREES BREAKFAST

First Monday of Every Month

9:00 AM at

The Coffee Cup

4407 N. Hubert

in Drew Park

BRANDON RETIREES BREAKFAST

Second Tuesday of every month

8:00 AM at

Buddy Freddy's

134 Gornto Lake Rd S.

in Brandon

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Jim Good - Publisher

Kit Kelley - Editor

Executive Vice-President's Report

by Detlev Aappel

Executive Vice-President - Branch 599

Show Me!

Hopefully as you read this, a new minor adjustment procedure will be in place in Tampa. This procedure will involve making adjustments based on the regular carrier's actual office time and actual street time and actual volume (letters, flats, sequenced mail, accountables, and parcels) as recorded during the previous year. It is the union's position that enough information is gathered daily by the various USPS programs that these records can be used to give an accurate picture of the average work load of each route and the average time used by the regular carrier to complete it. This promises to be a cheaper easier alternative to the six day count and the formal minor inspection process. This would benefit both the USPS and the letter carrier. Management would be much more inclined to give carriers relief via minor route adjustment if it doesn't cost them an arm and a leg to do so. Of course the whole thing depends on accurate clock rings and accurate daily volume figures. Hopefully all letter carriers are doing their part. This would include accurate clock rings, 3996's, 1571's, and good follow through when errors are discovered in the

volume count.

There is a good possibility that Postal Reform will reach the Senate floor by the end of February. Senator Christopher (Kit) Bond (R-MO) had pledged to keep Postal Reform from reaching the floor of the Senate. The Hallmark company is headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri. Hallmark executives felt that the provision in the reform bill that allows postage rates to rise if gas prices rise would be detrimental to the greeting card industry. I must admit that this logic escapes me. Hallmark fears that someone would decide not to purchase one of their \$4.50 greeting cards if the postage stamp required to send it went up a nickel in price. Senator Bond bought into this fuzzy thinking and acted on Hallmark's behalf by blocking the reform bill. This didn't sit too well with the letter carriers of Missouri. On December 6 letter carriers put up informational picket lines in front of Senator Bond's offices in St. Louis, Kansas City, Jefferson City, and Springfield. On the 6th and 7th e-Activists used phone banks to urge Missouri's 6300 letter carriers to phone Senator Bond's offices demanding that

the Reform bill be voted on by the Senate. In addition NALC President Bill Young did a *radio media tour* as he was interviewed by local broadcast reporters on the air. President Young also wrote a column on Postal Reform in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Senator Bond was home in Missouri for the Thanksgiving recess so the activism was impossible to ignore. As a direct result Senator Bond relented and agreed to withdraw his opposition to a Senate vote on Postal Reform.

Union activism is still a force to be reckoned with as the letter carriers from Missouri showed us. I guess they really are the *show me* state. They sure showed me something. I think Branch 599 letter carriers are just as capable. All they need to do is make sure they are signed up as e-Activists and put their money where their mouth is by contributing to COLCPE automatically.

In Solidarity...



President's Station Visits

STATION	DATE
Commerce 33602	Wednesday, February 8 th
Seminole 33603	Friday, February 10 th
Sulphur Springs 33604	Wednesday, February 22 nd
Ybor 33605	Thursday, February 23 rd
Hyde Park 33606	Wednesday, March 1 st
TCA 33607 & 33609	Wednesday, March 8 th
Produce 33610	Wednesday, March 15 th
Interbay 33611	Wednesday, March 22 nd
Interbay 33629	Thursday, March 23 rd
Forest Hills 33612	Wednesday, March 29 th
Forest Hills Annex 33613	Friday, March 31 st
Hilldale 33614	Wednesday, April 5 th
Town & Country 33615	Thursday, April 13 th
Temple Terrace Annex 33617	Friday, April 14 th
Carrollwood 33618	Wednesday, April 19 th
Palm River Annex 33619	Friday, April 21 st
Hilldale Annex 33634	Wednesday, April 26 th
Sun City Center 33570	Friday, April 28 th
Plant City 33564	Wednesday, May 3 rd
Brandon 33510	Wednesday, May 10 th
Brandon 33511	Thursday, May 11 th

February Meetings:

Tues 1-31-06 - Shop Stewards Meeting
Union Hall, 7:00 PM

Thur 2-2-06 - Branch Meeting
Union Hall, 7:30 PM

Tues 2-21-06 - TLC Board Of Directors Meeting
Union Hall, 7:00 PM

Thur 2-23-06 - Executive Board Meeting
Union Hall, 7:00 PM

Health and Welfare

George Ralston, Jr., retiree, passed away.

Anna Noble, wife of Interbay Carrier Adam Noble, passed away.

Nilda Perez, mother of Lenny Perez passed away.

Jerry Peterson, Hilldale Annex carrier, recovering in hospital.

Guy Swendson, retiree, passed away.

Mary Alexander, mother of carrier Glynnis Alexander, passed away.

Chester Roach, Seminole Heights carrier, is in LifePath Hospice.

ARSLAN UNIFORMS

Bill & Shirley Moran

Retired Letter Carrier Branch 1477 St. Petersburg

Honorary Member Branch 599 Tampa

NEED UNIFORMS IN A HURRY?

SHOP BY PHONE FROM HOME

320 PATLIN CIRCLE EAST PHONE: 727-584-4307

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bilmor@tampabay.rr.com

Unionism

by Brian Obst

Chief Steward - Branch 599

Opting On Vacant Assignments

In this time of hiring freezes and withholding for other areas we find ourselves in the position of having many vacant assignments throughout the city. It is vitally important that the people in each station are keeping up to date on any vacancies and ensuring that they are being properly posted for opt-bidding on a weekly basis.

You might ask - What is an Opt-Bid? Well an Opt-Bid is a bid where a Reserve Regular, PTF, unassigned regular (and in some cases a regular carrier) will bid on a vacant assignment within their station. This process works the same as a regular bid cycle except that the bidding is only done within the station where the vacancy is located. The bid is to be posted for a week to allow for bidding to take place. The posting of the bid is to be in a place where all potential bidders can locate the bid sheet and the actual bidding should be done on a 3971 form in duplicate so as to prevent any possible "lost" bids.

Why should you consider Opt-Bidding for a station vacancy? The answers are varied and are different for each person. If you are a PTF you might consider bidding for an opt to secure a guaranteed 40 hours a week or a set schedule instead of being assigned to report to work at different times to suit managements desires. In the case of a vacant T-6 string a regular carrier might want to opt-bid to see if a T-6 position would be something they could handle for possible future bidding for permanent assignment. Regardless of your reasons for submitting an Opt-Bid there are some rules you should be aware of before entering the process.

The Opt-Bid process is detailed in the JCAM Article 41 and the Higher Level Assignment process (for T-6 positions) is covered under Article 25. The most important rule for Opt-Bidding is that once you bid and are successful in getting an opt on a vacancy you must fulfill the opt-bid for the duration of the vacancy. In layman's terms this means that if the vacancy was to be for two weeks, but something happens to cause the vacancy to extend for six more months, you are required to fill that position for the duration of the six months. As a PTF if you make regular while on an opt bid this means you will remain on the opt-bid and not go to your new assignment. PTFs who bid on a higher level assignment (T-6 position) do not have this protection. They will be taken off of the temporary higher level assignment and go to their new assignment when they are converted to full-time regular. The only difference in these cases is that once the PTF makes regular the right to bid on citywide vacancies is now in force so a PTF who has just made regular may bid on another position in the city which would allow for termination of the opt bid should they be successful in their bid. This protects the bidder for an opt assignment since management may not remove you from the assignment just to suit any purpose they deem needed.

Another important rule governing opt-bids is that the bidder is GUARANTEED the hours and days of the schedule for the assignment they have opted on. This means that if the opt bid normally starts at 0730 Management may not change the hours to 0900 in an attempt to have the bidder work later into

the day thus allowing management to have other carriers do the casing work for the assignment. When it states the hours and days of the schedule, in the case of a PTF carrier, it does not mean that the normal scheduled day off is guaranteed. As a PTF you have no scheduled day off guaranteed so on the SDO for the opt-bid you would be available as any other PTF for work as assigned by management. This is simply an overview of the process for Opt-Bidding and it is recommended that you read up on the process as detailed in Articles 41 and 25 of the National Agreement and follow up with your shop steward if you have any questions. Is Opt-Bidding right for you - only you can make that decision but the benefits are great and you have protection while there so I recommend that you give it some thought.



Remember, knowledge is the key.

In Brotherhood,

Brian Obst

Shop Steward Town & Country

National Convention Delegates

Phil Burnison, Branch 599 Delegate to the Las Vegas National Convention in August, and his wife will be traveling to Los Angeles to be on the television show, *The Price Is Right* while they are in the area.

They are inviting any other convention delegates who wish to be on the show with them to call the union hall.

A Point of Personal Privilege

Love Is In The Air

Iwould write about the current status of the USPS but all you need to do is examine the steps taken by management prior to our last contract. It is the same criteria: more discipline, attempted elimination of overtime, excessing, the excuse that craft is the cause for the deficit and the price of stamps has to increase. Letter carriers are being forced to work overtime off their assignments even if they are not on the OTDL. The union files grievances on these issues but the resolves are after the fact. Mis-management is never to blame because the problem starts at the top. Did you read the January 2006 *Postal Record*? Look at the photo on page 48. Does the picture remind you of anyone in particular? (Big brother is watching!)

When was the last federal minimum wage increase? If you guessed 1997, you guessed correctly. I believe the increase occurred during the Clinton administration and the wage was \$5.15 per hour for an annual income of \$10,712. Since 1997 Congress has increased their own pay several times for an total increase of \$31,600. Last year the Republican controlled Congress voted down almost unanimously a proposed minimum wage increase.

It seems that the Republican controlled Congress has finally agreed to do some budget cuts in order to get a handle on the five year spending binge and the tax-cuts of G. W. Bush. Apparently this is an attempt to address the massive national debt that has been caused by the squandering of a record budget surplus. On the surface this seems to be a good step forward until one sits down and examines where the cuts are to be made. Yes, the cuts are directed at enti-

tlement programs, some of the same programs that the conservatives have been after since they were implemented by democratic President, Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Republicans want to either decrease them or eliminate them altogether. Among these current programs to be cut are Medicare, Medicaid, student loans, food stamps, etc. Senator John McCain R-Arizona, stated that one advised cut would be the restructuring of the Bush prescription drug plan that is expected to exceed \$700 billion rather than Bush's stated \$300 billion. Of course, nothing is being done to eliminate the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest 2% of Americans, nor are the tax breaks to corporations that are outsourcing jobs to foreign countries (one example of *corporate welfare*). Some of the other budget cuts are: states will be allowed to impose significant new costs on health care for the poor; cuts in child enforcement and foster care; and the imposition of new work requirements for welfare recipients.

It seems to me that whenever Bush's poll numbers plunge the rhetoric returns to 9/11. The American public forgives all because of this flag waving and the Bible thumping. No in depth investigations are made by the "*liberal media*" that castigated Bill Clinton for eight years. Nothing is said about the involvement of the Bush family with the House of Saud. Nothing is said about the Reagan & Bush support of Saddam Hussein or of the two wars under Bush I and Bush II. Nothing has been done by Bush about the outing of a CIA agent, which is treason. Nothing is done about the limiting of pre-war intelligence to Congress. nothing will be done about the spying on US citizens. Nixon did this and it helped contribute to his downfall but Bush does it

and nothing will be done!

In February of 2002, Senator Bob Graham, D- Florida, has stated that General Tommy Franks had said "...the war (on terror) was being compromised as specialized personnel and equipment were being shifted from Afghanistan to prepare for the war in Iraq." This was being done more than one year prior to the invasion of Iraq. Graham said, "Even at this early date, the White House was signaling that the threat posed by Saddam Hussein was of such urgency that it had priority over the crushing of al-Qaeda, the Taliban and Osama bin Laden." This seems to be the reason why there are more military deaths every day. General Casey has stated that the US military presence in Iraq is aiding the growth of the insurgency. Rep. Jack Murtha, D-Penn., offered a plan for the Iraq war, "...a strategic redeployment to make our forces in the Middle East more effective and to get the target off of our troops' backs..." After his speech, Republican Rep. Jean Schmidt of Ohio gave a blistering speech that called Congressman Murtha a coward for suggesting redeployment. Despite having no military record or background herself, she attacked a decorated Vietnam veteran. Doesn't this action sound familiar? She later apologized but the character assassination was already complete. This public smearing is the established reaction by the White House and the Republican Party whenever anyone publicly criticizes or disagrees with Bush's political or economic policies.

"When you say that you agree to a thing in principle, you mean that you have not the slightest intention of carrying it out."
Otto von Bismarck





TAMPA LETTER CARRIERS PRESENT

BINGO

COME JOIN THE FUN
EVERY WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAY
DOORS OPEN AT 5:30
GAMES START AT 6:30
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Around The Horn

by Tony Diaz

Sick Leave Dependent Care

Brothers and Sisters I hope your New Year is off to a great start! Last month my article focused on questions and answers frequently asked about FMLA. This month I wanted to talk about SLDC (Sick Leave Dependent Care), what it is used for and how it differs from FMLA. The Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM) 513.1, Purpose, and 513.32, Conditions for Authorization, were revised effective October 27, 2005. This was done to differentiate sick leave used for employee incapacitation, and from sick leave used for dependent care. Also, to clarify, leave used for care of a qualifying family member (after a maximum of 80 hours of sick leave are used), will be charged to annual leave, or to leave without pay, at the employee's option. 513.11 covers our personal sick leave we take because of illness, injury, medical exam or treatment. 513.12 is about SLDC and how there is a limited amount of sick leave that can be used for the medical needs of a family member. You are allowed up to 80 hours of your accrued sick leave per leave year to give care or otherwise attend to a family member.

Questions & Answers

- 1) What are some differences between FMLA and SLDC? FMLA is a federal law that entitles eligible employees up to 12 workweeks of unpaid leave during a 12-month period, SLDC is a contractual right with paid leave as I have mentioned above.
- 2) Is SLDC protected from discipline, as is FMLA? No, unless the illness, injury or other condition is a serious health condition with a family member the employee can be disciplined for unscheduled absences.
- 3) How are they the same? Both were developed to balance the demands of the workplace with the needs of the families.
- 4) What are some examples of a serious health condition? a) an overnight stay in a hospital, hospice or residential medical care facility, b) a period of incapacity of more than three consecutive calendar days – including any subsequent treatment or period of incapacity relating to the same condition that also includes treatment by a member of the health care profession, c) pregnancy – any period of incapacity, prenatal care, morning sick-

ness or doctor visits, d) chronic conditions – which occur repeatedly and require treatment (diabetes, epilepsy or asthma), e) permanent long term conditions requiring supervision (Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis or terminal cancer, f) non-chronic conditions which necessitate the need for multiple treatments such as kidney dialysis or physical therapy after an accident.

5) Is the time used for SLDC separate from time taken from FMLA? No, if the employee needs time off to care for a family member with a serious health condition and takes SLDC the time off will be counted towards both the 80 hour SLDC *and* the 12 week FMLA entitlement.

Should you need SLDC or FMLA follow the proper procedures and they can become effective tools members can use to protect themselves against disciplinary action. Again you may contact me at dcoach9@tampabay.rr.com with any comments, suggestions or questions.

Look forward to talking to you again in the next *Around The Horn*



Correction

An article in January's *Tampa Letter Carrier* incorrectly stated that FMLA was made effective in 2003. FMLA was made effective in 1993. The *Tampa Letter Carrier* regrets the error.

Branch 599 Christmas Party



See more photos online at <http://www.nalc599.com/members.htm>

Branch 599 Christmas Party



See more photos online at <http://www.nalc599.com/members.htm>

Branch 599 Retirees / Installation Dinner



NALC President Bill Young Presents Clarence Renner His Gold Card For 50 Years Membership In The NALC



NEED A LINE YOU CAN COUNT ON?

Too Many Bills Adding Up? *Consolidate With Us!*

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