



Tampa Letter Carrier

Volume 4 - Issue 4

A.R. "Tony" Huerta NALC Branch 599

Tampa, Florida

April 2005

President's Report

by Jim Good

President - Branch 599

Grievance or Lawsuit?

During recent visits to the stations I have been questioned about the Stone vs. USPS lawsuit notice that has been mailed to all employees in the middle district of Florida. This issue was also brought up at the March 3rd branch meeting, and since there was a very limited number of members present I feel a need to address the union's position at this time.

The notice informs employees of a class action lawsuit against the USPS for violating the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) by failing to pay the employees for overtime worked. This was done through the alleged deletion of clockrings. The National Association of Letter Carriers, at the national level, was contacted regarding this lawsuit and decided not to endorse it. There are a number of reasons why I believe this decision was made. The NALC protects its members through the national agreement and all of the handbooks and manuals that are incorporated into the agreement through Article 19. If a member is wronged, whether it is because of management deleting clockrings or management disciplining a carrier without just cause, the proper way to address this wrongdoing is

through the national agreement. The NALC fought long and hard to get the rights and protection that we have written into the national agreement through the collective bargaining process.

At this point in time, with postal reform on the horizon and congress looking at possibly altering our collective bargaining process, we need to show them that we can handle our internal problems within the venue of the national agreement. We do not need to file lawsuits to solve the problem of deleted clockrings. That is what the national agreement is for, through the *Dispute Resolution Process*. If you think that you are not getting paid for the hours you work, ask to see your shop steward and he/she will investigate and file a grievance if necessary. This is a problem that can easily be handled because every time a clockring is deleted the social security number of the person doing the deletion is listed on the clockring report.

One last bit of advice regarding the lawsuit, which covers the period from February 23, 2002 through the present. I also received a notice in the mail. The notice stated, "*You are receiving this notice because the USPS's records indicate that you had overtime hours deleted from your payroll records.*" It also says: "*Under certain circumstances you may be required to pay a portion of the USPS's litigation costs if you opt-in to this lawsuit and do not prevail on your claim.*" Because of the fact that I have not worked a single hour during the period covered by the lawsuit, and was told that I did, and because of the statement in the notice saying that I could be liable for litigation costs if I lose (which I definitely would), I contacted the attorneys handling the case. They assured me that it was the USPS's fault for submitting my

name to them. They said the USPS told them it was too much work to give them only the names of employees who had deleted clockrings so they gave them the names of all employees, and I would not be held accountable for litigation fees if I submitted my name.



That being said, I think everyone understands that lawyers look very carefully at every word they write into a notice or contract and put them there for a reason. I may be a bit paranoid and the explanation given me by the attorneys may be legitimate but, if that is the case, then why wasn't the clause pertaining to the possibility of being liable for litigation fees taken out of the notice? Please make sure you read and understand everything you sign before you sign it!

On another note, I have been told that more and more mail coming to the stations has been delayed by the plant. Because of this the station managers have been directed to have the carriers deliver every piece every day. Now there's a novel idea! The reason I mention this is because it seems that the 5 o'clock window has been set aside, at
(continued on page 4)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

EXECUTIVE VP'S REPORT	3
POINT OF PERSONAL PRIVILEGE.....	5
UNIONISM.....	6
AROUND THE HORN.....	11

Branch Meeting

Thursday

April 7, 2005

7:30 PM

at the Union Hall

Branch 599 Officers

PRESIDENT	Jim Good	(813) 960-3759, cell 417-8877
EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT	Detlev Aepfel	(813) 907-9685
VICE-PRESIDENT	Gilbert Cabanas	(813) 855-0516
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	Veronica Lorenzo	(813) 926-9555
LABOR - MANAGEMENT	Brian Obst	(727) 507-0135
MAPS COORDINATOR	Chris Albrecht	(727) 781-7162

Presidents Emeritus

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

Branch 599 Shop Stewards

Brandon	33510	Terry Franklin	(813) 657-9690
Brandon	33511	Miroslaw Oldziej	(813) 661-1636
Carrollwood	33618	Freddie Nimphius	(813) 968-7491
Commerce	33602	Dook Ramotar Sr.	(813) 780-6254
Forest Hills	33612	John Watts	(813) 971-5525
Forest Hills Annex	33613	Eddie Alvarez	(813) 817-7391
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	Marie Brown	(727) 488-8434
Interbay	33629	Alfonso Higareda	(813) 741-1687
MacDill	33608	Marie Brown	(727) 488-8434
Palm River	33619	J.C. Howard	(813) 621-1976
Plant City	33565	Misty Bauer	(813) 681-6890
Port Tampa	33616	Alfonso Higareda	(813) 741-1687
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	Pedro Jiminez	(813) 727-9280
Temple Terrace	33617	Mike Anderson	(813) 681-5688
Town & Country	33615	Brian Obst	(727) 507-0135
Ybor City	33605	Detlev Aepfel	(813) 505-7914

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TAMPA RETIREES' BREAKFAST

First Monday of Every Month

9:00 AM at

The Coffee Cup

4407 N. Hubert

in Drew Park

BRANDON RETIREES' BREAFAST

Second Tuesday of every month

8:00 AM at

Buddy Freddy's

134 Gornto Lake Rd S.

in Brandon

The National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 599, 3003 W. Cypress Street, Tampa, FL 33609-1617, publishes The Tampa Letter Carrier monthly. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writers, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Branch 599. It is the policy of this publication that all articles submitted for publication must be signed by the writer. All articles are subject to editing and revision at the discretion of the publisher & editor. Please submit articles to the branch office no later than the tenth of the month. Submit articles as .txt, .doc or .wpd documents attached to email sent to: newsletter@nalc599.com

Jim Good - Publisher

Kit Kelley - Editor

Executive Vice-President's Report

by Detlev Aepfel

Executive Vice-President - Branch 599

e-Activists Get The Facts

Hopefully everyone is now signed up in the e-Activist program. This program is providing valuable information about the postal reform struggle heating up in Washington. The text of the letter sent to the Honorable Susan M. Collins, Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, United States Senate, by the Postal Board of Governors is a wake up call to all letter carriers.

The Board of Governors urges the Senate committee to make fringe benefits now guaranteed by federal law and federal regulation subject to collective bargaining instead. That means all fringe benefits including retirement benefits, medical benefits, and thrift benefits would be up for grabs on the negotiating table with each new contract. These benefits would be included with wages in a total compensation package. As such it is likely management would agree to pay raises for active letter carriers only if there was a freeze or reduction in retiree's benefits, and vice versa.

The Board of Governors (BOG) also wants to weaken collective bargaining by changing labor law so that an arbitrator would be "required by statute to factor into the decision the economic history of the employer, present financial health and ability to pay, as well as anticipated future growth, productivity, and total labor costs." This would end binding arbitration as we know it.

On the other hand, the BOG wants "...to be empowered to establish, without external review, levels of compensation, based on performance, for the chief officers of the organization rather than being limited to caps on federal pay." This means the board would have a free hand to boost top executives pay to astronomical levels

at the letter carriers expense.

Those signed up as e-Activists also received an update on the Social Security reform debate. The NALC fact sheet provided a brief history of Social Security and outlined the areas of Social Security reform that would have an impact on letter carriers. Most of us are aware of the central role the labor movement played in the establishment of the Social Security system as part of the New Deal in the 1930's. The system was set up as a *pay-as-you-go* system whereby younger workers would finance benefits for the retired workers.

This process has worked remarkably well for over 70 years with minor tune-ups along the way as needed. In the 80's a "fix" was made by the Greenspan commission that would ensure solvency throughout the retirements of the baby boom generation. If no changes are made to Social Security, the trust fund will be depleted in 2042. The \$3.7 trillion deficit predicted by 2042 is in reality only 1.2% of the estimated payroll subject to being taxed by Social Security between now and then.

One solution is a 1.2% total increase in payroll taxes which would in effect wipe out the entire deficit. All of this would be undercut if younger workers were allowed to reduce payments to Social Security by investing in private stock accounts. This would defund Social Security and force a reduction in benefit payments.

Private accounts would not solve any of the problems we're facing. The problems would actually worsen. All this is without even considering the suitability or security of a retirement system for younger workers based on the volatility of the stock market. What would their retirement be worth after a market plunge such as the one seen a few years ago during the insider trading scandals?

There will be no easy solutions. The NALC will continue to monitor all these proposals and keep carriers advised as to the pitfalls and benefits of proposed changes.



If you are one of the 75% of letter carriers that must rely on Social Security for a significant part of their retirement, read up on these issues and stay informed. This isn't about political party affiliation. It is about your economic security and your ability to retire.

In Solidarity...

TLC



President's Report (from page 1)

least in some stations, so that this clean-up can be achieved. In other stations, I have been told, carriers not on the overtime list have been told they must carry overtime on their own routes so that carriers on the overtime list can be back within the 5 o'clock window. If you are not on any overtime list and are being told to deliver mail on overtime either on or off of your assignment, please ask to see your shop steward to ensure that management has adhered to the terms of the national agreement.

Hope to see you all at the next branch meeting. Now is the time to get involved and join together in helping to solidify our union! **TLC**

Health and Welfare

Antonio Moran, father of Anthony Moran and father-in-law of Joe Villa, passed away.

Mike Brousseau's sister passed away.

Marvin Clark's mother passed away.

TLC, Inc. Board of Directors Meeting Summary

Tampa Letter Carriers, Inc. – February 22, 2005 – Board of Directors Meeting

- The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chairman Brian Obst.
- The minutes of the January 25th meeting were read and accepted.
- Donation Committee member Dean Minter spoke about an organization called Faces of Courage that helps children with cancer/blood disorders. A motion was made and passed to donate \$250.00 to this organization.
- The new sign has been installed for Branch 599 and the front door has been redone with the branch insignia.
- A fountain machine from Pepsi has been installed at no cost to the corporation.
- Reports were given by the standing committees.
- A new safety deposit box has been acquired.
- A motion was made and passed to send notices of the Board of Directors' Meetings out to all the stations for posting.
- The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Jim Good, Secretary - TLC, Inc.

President's Station Visits

33611/29	INTERBAY	WEDNESDAY 3/30
33616	PORT TAMPA	
33612	FOREST HILLS	TUESDAY 4/12
33613	FOREST HILLS ANNEX	THURSDAY 4/14
33614	HILLDALE	TUESDAY 4/19
33615	TOWN & COUNTRY	THURSDAY 4/21
33617	TEMPLE TERRACE	WEDNESDAY 4/27
33618	CARROLLWOOD	TUESDAY 5/3
33619	PALM RIVER ANNEX	THURSDAY 5/5
33634	HILLDALE ANNEX	WEDNESDAY 5/11
33510	BRANDON	TUESDAY 5/17
33570	SUN CITY CENTER	FRIDAY 5/20
33564	PLANT CITY	THURSDAY 5/26

Important Branch 599 Meetings

March Meetings:

Tues 3-22-05 - TLC Board of Directors Meeting
Union Hall, 7:00 PM

Thur 3-31-05 - Executive Board Meeting
Union Hall, 7:00 PM

April Meetings:

Tues 4-5-05 - Shop Stewards Meeting
Union Hall, 7:00 PM

Thur 4-7-05 - Branch Meeting
Union Hall, 7:30 PM

Tues 4-26-05- TLC Board Of Directors Meeting
Union Hall, 7:00 PM

Thur 4-28-05 - Executive Board Meeting
Union Hall, 7:00 PM

A Point of Personal Privilege

Postal Happenings

The USPS along with the NALC have joined in a program to increase the revenue. It is called *Customer Connect*. It is a very simple and innovative idea, one in which I believe has been long overdue. The letter carrier does the initial contact with the customer and if the customer is interested, paperwork is submitted to a customer service representative to see if the USPS can acquire the company's business. To date I do not know the amount of additional revenue this program has brought to the USPS but I am sure it is in the millions of dollars.

It seems *Customer Connect* has become very successful but I have a question or two about what happens to the increase in volume to letter carrier routes for these items. Is this increase in volume to be absorbed by that letter carrier? What about the later and later begin tour times affecting the delivery times of mails to the business and residential customers that need the mailings at a specific time daily? Will the customer become disillusioned with our promise of service and seek another avenue of delivery? Once again the letter carrier will be blamed for management's lack of foresight.

Speaking of management's lack of foresight, didn't the USPS once have the corner on the parcel post service? Some bright-eyed and bushy tailed individual stated parcel post delivery cost too much money. So an industrious individual took over the bulk of this costly mailing and helped establish a billion-dollar business, United Parcel Service. Talk about your costly blunder!

How many of you have noticed that many of the CNG vehicles are having the \$750 per truck equipment removed? How much revenue was wasted on the natural gas equipment at several stations? Over \$100,000? I guess this

equipment will be stored with the electric vehicles...

The Board of Governors of the USPS are appointed by the President of the United States. There are nine members on this board consisting of a chairman, vice chairman, five additional members, the Postmaster General and a deputy PMG. Each governor receives \$300 per day for not more than 42 days of meetings each year, travel expenses and an annual salary of \$30,000. The term's of each governor expires on December 8 of each year. James C. Miller III is the chairman and was appointed by George W. Bush, as were Carolyn Lewis Gallagher and Louis J. Guiliano. Alan C. Kessler is the vice chairman and was appointed by Bill Clinton, and LeGree S. Daniels was appointed by G. H.W. Bush. Robert F. Rider and John F. Walsh were appointed by Clinton. Ms. Gallagher, Mr. Guiliano and Mr. Miller have gone on record as being advocates for the privatization of the USPS and the dismantling of the monopoly that the USPS has on first class mailings. Four of these seven individuals were appointed by the Presidents Bush. I believe the board also appoints the US Postmaster and the Deputy Postmaster.

Here is something that some of you may have missed. The first pay raises for postmasters and other USPS managers under a new performance-based pay system will likely be larger than raises and bonuses under past systems, said postmasters' representatives. NAPUS President stated that management's larger raises are well-earned and under this new program, it is by no means a giveaway program. The president of NAPUS also stated that in order to receive these bonuses management needs to strive diligently. Postmasters, supervisors and managerial support staff will receive their first paychecks containing a performance-based raise January 28, 2005. The raises are based on how well each manager met personal goals set by his supervisor, how

by Leslie Ray Garcia



well his post office or facility met its goals and how well the USPS as a whole met national goals. I have a question or so about the raises. How hard does management have to work to receive those bonuses? Who establishes the goals? What are the goals based on? How can the USPS give 80,000 management members raises and state that it will have to increase the rates on mails? What entity in nature receives its livelihood from another life form?

Another item that I feel hurts the letter carrier craft is an arbitrator ruling dated October 31, 2003. The ruling number is C-24768 by Arbitrator Briggs and states basically that a change of greater than 50% in a route does not constitute abolishment under Article 41.3.0 of the National Agreement. I believe this opens the door for management to eliminate the routes of carriers that have had their routes for years, both senior letter carriers and active union members.

"I don't give them hell. I just tell the truth and they think it is hell."

Harry S. Truman

TLC



Unionism

by Brian Obst

Labor Relations Representative - Branch 599

Article 14: Safety and Health

Safety and health are of the utmost importance for all employees of the United States Postal Service, craft and management, as it goes hand in hand with our daily duties.

The JCAM Article 14 details all of the pertinent information about Safety and Health in the post office and it is here that we take most of our discussion from so be sure to review this article at your leisure to ensure you get all the information available.

Responsibilities for safety and health - who do they fall on? The correct response would be all employees; we all have responsibilities when it comes to safety and health. Management is tasked with the responsibility of providing safe working conditions for all employees and it is the union's responsibility to cooperate with management in its efforts to fulfill this responsibility. Putting it simply, all employees are tasked with the responsibility to assist in keeping the workplace as safe as possible. No one may turn a blind eye to any safety concern.

Cooperation is necessary. Both management and the union insist on the observation of safe rules and safe procedures by employees and both also insist on the prompt correction of any unsafe condition. Machinery, vehicles, equipment and the workplace must all be maintained in a safe and sanitary condition, including adequate occupational health and environmental conditions. It is management's responsibility to make available for the employees at each installation the proper forms to report unsafe and unhealthful conditions. These forms would include red tags (for removal from service of defective equipment), 1767s (for reporting unsafe conditions), vehicle reports (for reporting vehicle problems), as well as others. It is the responsibility

of the employee to properly report any unsafe or unhealthful condition utilizing the proper reporting forms.

Employees who feel that a problem is not getting the proper attention, after reporting and discussing the problem with management and their steward may file a grievance at the Formal A level within fourteen days of supervisory notification if corrective action has not been taken. The employee may also take the issue to the union representative for the local Safety and Health Committee, who will take it up with the supervisor involved as well as the next Safety and Health Committee meeting. Our local Safety and Health Committee member is Vice President Gilbert Cabanas and he has made it clear that he wants to hear from you with your safety and health issues so he can address them with Officer In Charge John Nagel. Mr. Nagel has emphasized safety since his arrival here in Tampa and the only way to make it better is to bring forth all problems so they may be addressed promptly in the proper corrective manner.

Does Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) have any power over the postal service? This is a good question and the answer is YES. Ever since the passage of the Postal Employees Safety Enhancement Act of 1998, OSHA has had jurisdiction over the postal service in matters of occupational safety and health. Although it is one option available for use if problems are not being addressed locally, it is recommended to use the local safety committee and the grievance process whenever possible for addressing safety and health concerns.

I will wrap this up by saying that safety is everyone's responsibility. Don't take this responsibility lightly for the accident you prevent might have involved you! Lets all pull together to make the workplace a safe place to

work for everyone.

Yours in Brotherhood,

Brian Obst
Shop Steward
Town and Country



From The Chair of TLC, Inc.

by Brian Obst , Chairman - TLC, Inc.

The Board has been busy since last month and some of the highlights are as follows:

- Approved purchase of new computer system for the branch treasurer to allow for implementation of new software for LM-2 compliance.
- Approved charitable donation to Faces of Courage organization
- Approved purchase of heavy duty shredder for proper destruction of outdated files

Ongoing business has the board looking into better ways of advertising our hall to ensure a maximum number of rentals yearly as well as looking for ideas for the future to help provide a quality hall for many years to come. If you have any ideas you would like considered, please forward them to us through the branch address to attention of TLC.

Once again I would like to remind all branch members in good standing that we encourage you to attend our monthly board meeting. See you at the next meeting.

Serving the members of Branch 599,

Brian Obst

TLC Chairman

Whata-Ya-Doin?

by John Gebo

*United We Stand,
Divided We Fall*

WHATA-YA DOIN? Hope you're getting by without all the V-time and overtime. Seems now carriers are upset about not getting O.T. Not so long ago, all you heard was, "Gee, I'm being forced to work and can't get a day off." Oh well, life's a beach isn't it?

The February issue of the Postal Record was quite interesting. Also, our local newsletter had a list of contributors to COLPE. If our branch officers and shop stewards don't contribute, why would the general membership contribute? With the wages being made, I can't understand why a carrier cannot contribute at least a dollar or two. Committee of Letter Carriers Political Education. Now you know what COLPE means. What is the money used for? To lobby Congress and the House of Representatives in Washington and make contributions to those who support carriers' and retirees' needs.

On another note, let's talk about the NALC Health Benefit Plan. Do your branch officers and shop stewards belong to the health plan? Then why should the general membership? I hear there are shop stewards that even talk against the plan. Unbelievable. I have been a member of the NALC health plan since day

one because not only is it the best plan, but it is also the NALC health plan.

In Branch 599, the retirees far outnumber the active carriers in ratio. The plan is comparable to other plans and a lot better than most. Just think, if more carriers would join their own health plan, premiums would go down and benefits would go up. Right, Lance?

Yesterday I received a letter in the mail, just like all of you, I assume. It asked if I would like to be part of a *class action lawsuit* against the U.S.P.S. for stolen clock rings. I have a question: Why wouldn't a carrier file a grievance if he wasn't paid for time worked? Make sure you get all the facts about "Who, Why, and When" this was started. Will you really win or lose or benefit by this "class action" lawsuit or will others?

I am sure that you have heard most of this before, but let me go on from here. The union is only as good as the membership. Over the years how many times have I heard, "Our union isn't worth a ****!"? They blame the president, the branch officers and shop stewards. When things don't go the way some individuals want, everyone else is wrong. They are very selfish in

their way of thinking. They are not thinking about what is best for the whole membership. One day these brothers and sisters are making "deals" with management and the next day they want to file a grievance because management won't make another "deal" that day. These are the ones that knock the union, yet pay union dues. I don't quite understand their thinking.

You as a member of Branch 599, are part of the union. The union is the membership so when you hear one of the brothers or sisters say, "Our union isn't worth a ****!" what they are saying in reality is they themselves aren't worth a ****, and neither are you. Remember the saying, "United we stand, divided we fall."

I've been retired one year as of March 1, 2005. Boy, how the time flies when you're having fun. Don't rush it; you will be there soon enough. Till then I ask,

Whata-ya-doin?



TLC

Retirement Party for Hyde Park Carriers Vince Arcuri and Ernie Kerns



Labor - Management Report

by Veronica Lorenzo

Labor / Management Representative - Branch 599

Report on Labor-Management Meeting 2-2-05

First I would like to thank everyone who supported me in the election. I will be committed to all the issues that you have and encourage everyone to please feel free to bring any and all of your concerns to us. We will try to be aware of the situations at hand. However, it is always helpful to receive everyone's input.

I'd like to report on the most recent Labor/Management meeting which was attended by Jim Good, Brian Obst and Veronica Lorenzo. We met with management, which included OIC John Nagle, Tim Dose and Lawrence Goss.

The first meeting was both informative and interesting. The issues were many. Although some were still left unanswered, they *are* being addressed.

The first issue is on DPS errors. Anytime you receive a large amount of

DPS errors you should bring it to your supervisor's attention. Ensure you pull the tag from the tray where the problem was discovered and provide this with an account of what the problem was for the supervisor to make a proper report. They are required to fill out a report on this problem each and every time there is a problem, not just when it is a recurring problem. So please do your part in informing your supervisor, but keep a record for yourself as well just to cover the bases. This goes the same for flats that are coming in mixed with first class and bulk mail. Management also indicated they were considering forming a committee of management and craft employees to create better communication between the plant and the stations to avoid these kind of problems.

The issue on the LLVs being cleaned better has been addressed. However, if you are *still* having a problem, please make your supervisor aware so they can make sure it is handled at your station.

The issue on carriers being asked to deviate for trips to make a MSP scan for an allotted time, which then created the problem of the MSP scan points on your own routes being late, was determined to be an unreasonable request.

The issue on the flats that are coming in with bar codes over the address is a precursor to DPS flats that is still in the beginning stages from headquarters. This issue is being reviewed in an effort to alleviate the problem. Just as all new programs come along, there is a process that needs to be allowed time to work out all the problems.

That's where my final issue comes in. I feel it is *so important* for us to bring these issues to management and give them the opportunity to fix them. **TLC**



Retirement Party for Hyde Park Carriers Ernie Kerns and Vince Arcuri



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

LARGO, FL 33770-3063 CELL: 727-543-0705 FAX: 727-585-9367

wfm505@tampabay.rr.com

TAMPA LETTER CARRIERS PRESENT

BINGO

COME JOIN THE FUN

EVERY WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAY

DOORS OPEN AT 5:30

GAMES START AT 6:30

AT THE TAMPA LETTER CARRIERS HALL

3003 W. CYPRESS St.

Tampa, Fl. 33609 813-877-4785

Retirement Corner

by Jaime Rodriguez

My Concerns on Social Security

I am now retired after forty years of federal government service. During my federal employment, I paid into the *Civil Service Retirement System* at a fixed percentage that was guarded. Today I receive a retirement annuity more than twice the present amount that the average Social Security recipient receives. Through the many years of employment I had no concerns. I paid in to the system, the employer paid their share and a government agency controlled the funds. The funds were placed under lock and key. During my employment period I did not pay into the Social Security system so today I am short 24 quarters to qualify for Social Security. When I do qualify for Social Security, the Wind Fall program will take away 60% of any Social Security benefits I may be entitled to.

The CSRS system was killed by a conservative administration in 1984. The new employees hired into the government service were placed in the Federal Employees Retirement System and Social Security. Then President Reagan did not guarantee the solvency of the retirement system for the workers that will retire in the future with FERS and SS. The retirement changes made in 1984 will prove to be a disaster for millions of workers in the government service. FERS retirees will receive a small retirement check and will have to hope that Social Security will provide some additional retirement benefits.

The *Thrift Saving Plan (TSP)* may also prove to be disastrous. In effect the young workers of today pay into the plan, spin the wheel until retirement and hope that the funds are there when the time comes. I joined the TSP for an additional retirement plan in 1990 and in 2000 the market crashed. As a result, my investment was reduced to half the money previously in my TSP account.

Today I have the same amount of funds in the TSP account as I had in the year 2000. Taking into account that for five years I paid into the TSP account with no catch-up opportunity, today my TSP account has not progressed to become a viable investment.

When the Social Security program was established, it was established to support those that were at the bottom. Keep in mind that there were no monies at the inception of the program and the government had legislated the funds to kick start the program. Now we look at Social Security as a retirement system.

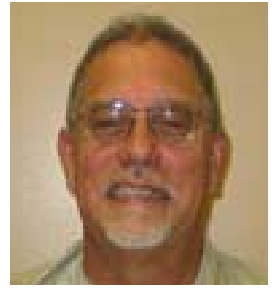
Why not search for a system that will be there forever? Perhaps the answer is in a program similar to the CSRS concept. The worker pays for their retirement with a percentage of his or her pay and the employer adds a portion to the employee's retirement account. An agency could be created for all, such as a *Government Retirement System (GRS)*. The GRS agency could operate under the U.S. Department of Labor and it could follow the same operational protocol as the *Office of Personnel Management (OPM)*. This could allow us to eliminate the OPM office and the *Social Security Administration* (one a mammoth and the other a small elephant.) Medicare could also be merged into the GRS agency. Workers could pay into a future *Health Benefits Program* similar to *Medicare*. Large and small companies could be relieved of the burden of administering their retirement plan and health benefits for retired employees by creating a fee-based service to the employers for a government maintained system. Administration of the GRS program services could be handled in cooperation with the company's personnel structure or could be contracted out for service.

Data for this concept may be easily available to those interested in pursuing it. This idea may be of interest to current and future retirees and not just necessarily hypothetical. GRS could well be the salvation for Americans' retirement needs as a trusted program in the future.

Thank you for attention.

Jaime R. Rodriguez

TLC



Around The Horn

Workplace Safety Issues

Brothers and sisters, thank you again for your responses to my last article. I again received two emails, one with an approval of the contents of my February article and the other telling me I did not know what cold weather was until I delivered mail in sub-freezing temperatures (and the brother is absolutely correct.) Nor do I ever want to experience that feeling.

This month I would like to discuss safety at our postal facilities. Safety is an issue that has always supposedly been taken seriously. The slow response time to reporting an unsafe condition has been a real concern throughout my career with the Postal Service and I am certain many of you have had the same concern. Thus the normal response turns out to be, why should I report that safety hazard when I know nothing will be done about it.

Well, let's try to forget the past and start anew. Let's take safety seriously for your sake as well as for your co-workers. With doctor and hospital bills skyrocketing through the roof, the injury expenses paid out by the Postal Service has become a big concern. Having said that, it appears upper management is now paying more attention

to supporting a safe working environment for all of us. Letter carriers can help this process by staying alert to safety hazards in your stations and branches and reporting unsafe conditions as they occur.

I know you are thinking, why is this going to be any different than in the past? Well, we have a new safety program coordinator for Branch 599 who is determined to make a difference for all of us. Gilbert Cabanas has an agenda to help create and maintain a safe workplace and he is asking for our help.

When you see an unsafe condition there are several ways to approach the situation:

- Notify your shop steward
- Report the unsafe condition to your supervisor or/and manager, or
- Fill out a Form 1767 yourself and turn your complaint in at your office.

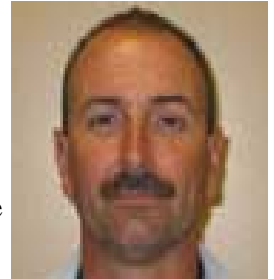
The Form 1767 (*Safety Hazard Report*) has several copies, one of which Mr. Cabanas will receive and be able to address at safety meetings or at labor-management meetings. If the problem

can be taken care of at your station or branch, that would eliminate any need to further the com-

plaint. Should you not want to get involved for fear of retaliation because of your safety complaint, please see your shop steward or call the union office. Your complaint or report could prevent a serious injury.

Mr. Cabanas has reported to us at the Executive Board meetings, the shop steward meetings and at the union meetings about several items the Safety Committee is looking into. One is the heat factor in LLV's and solutions to that. Also, some stations have reported faulty gurneys that must be addressed.

Let's give this safety program a chance and do our part. I am sure if safety issues are not being addressed to a satisfactory level, and there are not substantial changes, Mr. Cabanas will notify us as to the validity of this new safety program. Remember, you can email me at dcoach9@tampabay.rr.com with your opinions and comments. I look forward to talking to you next time when we go *Around The Horn*. TLC



E.S.R.C. Golf Tournament

Sunday, April 24, 2005

The Eagles (Lakes Course)

Time: 8 AM - Shotgun Start

Cost: \$45.00 per player (Includes lunch after - BBQ Chicken & Ribs)

Limited to first 128 players

Prizes for: 1st, 2nd, 3rd place; closest to pin; and longest drive for both men and women

Check your station bulletin board for notice or see your shop steward.

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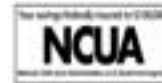
3 - year	5 - year
4.00% APY*	4.70% APY*
1 Step-Up	2 Step-Ups

Offer Available April 1 - April 29, 2005

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*APY - Annual Percentage Yield. Fees could reduce earnings. Penalty will be imposed for early withdrawals. \$500 minimum deposit required to open account. Rates effective as of March 1, 2005. The member holds the responsibility of monitoring rate increases and notifying TPFCU when the Step-Up(s) will be implemented.



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