



# Tampa Letter Carrier

Volume 1 - Issue 8

A.R. "Tony" Huerta - NALC Branch 599

December 2002

## President's Report

I know that many things have been happening in Tampa lately to make letter carriers' jobs more difficult and stressful. I also know that sometimes carriers and managers disagree, often strongly, about many of the techniques used to get the most out of you in the least amount of time. It sometimes seems like carriers have become just a number, not a human being. As professional carriers, dedicated to the future of the USPS and self-motivated to do the best you can, you deal with these conditions on a daily basis and move forward.

I also find it frustrating when I see and hear of some of the ridiculous programs that management dreams up. The so-called "hour of power" is a perfect example. Why would management proclaim the first hour of the day as being more important than any other hour? Letter Carriers, and all USPS employees for that matter, are expected to be gainfully employed at all times, not just the first hour of the day. They say that you must "stay in the case, no phones, no wandering, no talking". First of all, they cannot enforce a rule that says you cannot talk. The rest of the so-called restrictions are already in force. If the floor su-



**by Jim Good**

*President - Branch 599*

pervisor sees a carrier breaking one of these rules he/she should do their job and tell the carrier to cease. We all graduated from grade school many years ago, and treating carriers like children certainly will not motivate them to work faster!

With that being said, the Holidays are right around the corner. It seems like they come around faster every year. Thanksgiving is a time for everyone to stop, reflect, and give thanks for the many things we have. Often we tend to take the really important things in life for granted, things like our health and our jobs. Even though there will always be problems and concerns that affect our lives, Letter Carriers have

*(continued on page 4)*

### Health Benefits Open

Season Ends

December 9, 2002

Be sure to check out the new NALC Health Benefit Plan which has dropped in cost for the second year in a row.

### An Appropriate

#### Quotation

*"We the willing, led by the unknowing, have been doing the impossible for so long with so little, we are capable of doing anything with nothing."*

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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 NALC 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 be published in The Tampa Letter Carrier to the branch office no later than the tenth of each month.

Jim Good - Publisher  
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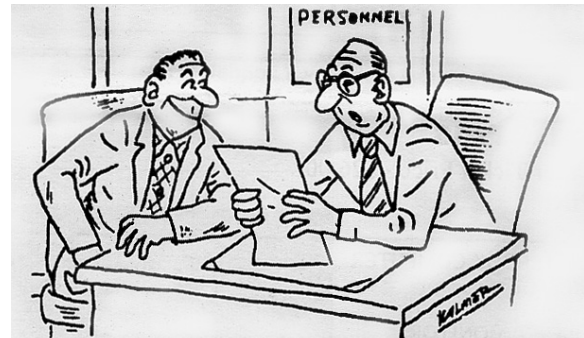
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## The President's Report *(from page 1)*

many things to be thankful for. I, for one, am extremely thankful for the Union and being in the position I am in as your President. I am grateful for being allowed to represent all of the hard working carriers of our Branch and I want to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very happy and safe Holiday Season!

P. S. As many of you know, Branch 599 Treasurer Mike Anderson had heart by-pass surgery on November 4<sup>th</sup>. I'm happy to report that everything went well and he is on the road to a full recovery. Best wishes Mike!



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## The Watts Line

by John A. Watts

*Executive Vice-President - Branch 599*

There is a new phrase floating around in the city of Tampa. It is called "The Hour of Power". This is when letter carriers are to report to their cases, put on their earphones if they wish and to case mail without talking or walking away from their cases or going to get the beverage of their choice from the break room.

It has been reported to this office that to ensure carriers are complying with this new program, management is sending a representative around to the stations documenting which carriers are not complying with the new program. The management representative then reports his/her findings to the Station Manger to take corrective action.

I remember when I first came to work for the Post Office. We had one supervisor and stations manager. The station manager was given goals to obtain by the Postmaster and was allowed to run his or her station in any manner they wanted as long as the goals were obtained

and there was no problems with the Union in the form of grievances.

My, how times have changed. Micro Management is the norm. We have craft employees driving around writing up letter carriers for alleged safety infractions. While they are doing this street supervision, they are given a higher level of pay.

Upper Management is constantly calling the station managers and reminding them of the goals they are not making. The flavor of the month is "Budget". It doesn't matter that a station may be 4 or 5 thousand hours below SPLY (same period last year). If every station cut the budget by 10% every year then pretty soon there would be no budget or Employees or Post Office. Think about it!

Christmas and the month of December is right around the corner, the mail volume is heavier than in recent years and the work load is much larger than before, so be careful and be safe and have a Happy and Healthy Holiday.

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*Bill Moran*

*Retired Letter Carrier Branch 1477 St. Petersburg  
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## In The Know

by George McEndree

Here we are, another year coming to an end, and what a year it was! I've seen more changes and turmoil in the year "2002" than any of the 20 years plus that I have been a Letter Carrier. We as Letter Carriers, through unprofessional **Route Inspections**, have been put under a lot of stress and pressure. We have seen our routes go from a comfortable 8 hours to 10 or more, making time with our families and personal life difficult to plan.

Change is definite and is surely going to create problems. It's not inconceivable to see that the intentions of the Postal Service is to have us Letter Carriers, through automation, report to work in the morning and have our entire route in **Delivery Point Sequence**. All we would have to do is take it to the street and spend the next 8 hours delivering it. Think about it. That is just one scenario. We can become part of the problem or become part of the solution. As NALC members it is our responsibility to become part of the solution, which is why your presence at the monthly Union Meetings is so important. I know everyone has an opinion or an idea of what could be done, these expressions have to be presented at our meetings. I truly believe the future of the Postal Service lies squarely on our shoulders.

Labor and management seem to have lost the mutual trust and respect that we once had for one another. It wasn't always like that. This brings me to another place and another time.

It was Christmas Eve 1979. The weather was like any other winter day for this time of year on the shores of Lake Erie: howling winds, thick blowing snowflakes and a chill factor of about 10 degrees below zero. It was surely going to be a white Christmas. I had just returned to my station after making the last collection for the day. All the other carriers had already left for the day

to be with family and friends for the Christmas Holiday. I on the other hand, had to stay and load the trucks for the last dispatches bound for Cleveland. The only other person there was my Postmaster, Mr. Bernie Whalen. He came up to me and said, "George, I need you to come in tomorrow morning to deliver parcels that may come in." He began to help me load the last dispatch. By this time it was 7:30 pm. I was so disappointed I had to work Christmas Day. I knew he sensed how I felt and said he would meet me on the loading dock at 5:30 in the morning and that it would be a day I would not soon forget.

I arrived the next morning (*Christmas Day*) as planned. To my surprise my Postmaster was on the dock picking and choosing what packages I would be taking out for delivery. He must have already been there for some time, working in the freezing cold in order to get me on my way to deliver the packages as soon as possible. When I asked him why I was only taking certain packages he replied, "These are the ones that are Christmas gifts." He continued to help me load the packages I would be taking, about 30 in all. Once the truck was loaded he said be careful and that he would be waiting for me when I returned.

Pulling out of the loading dock and into the streets of Ashtabula, I soon found out that I was making the first tracks in the new fallen snow. I wasn't sure whether I beat the city snowplows to the street that morning or if they took Christmas Day off. As I began dropping off the packages, I thought back of what took place on the loading dock, and how the Postmaster got up out of the warmth of his bed on Christmas morning to help in making sure people in the community received what he believed were Christmas gifts. I also thought  
*(continued on page 8)*

## And The Beat Goes On

by Ray Wallace

Where did the year go? It's hard to believe that Jim Good has been president of the Branch almost one year. We have a new person in charge of the building, taking the late H. Puigs' position, Jack Newman, who I know will do an excellent job as he does in everything he takes on. I hate to say this, but Jack made his first "mistake". He rented the hall out on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday night of January which has always been the Branch Retiree Dinner Dance. So mark your calendar for the third Saturday of January.

Brandon lost another retiree who had only been in 33511 as a carrier for nine years, leaving in 1977. Clarence Holtkamp, Retired Major of the U.S.A.F.

Branch officer Mike Anderson had a triple bypass on November 4<sup>th</sup>. Out prayers are with you Mike on a speedy recovery.

Brandon has its own Retiree Lunch for everyone whether a carrier, clerk, or manager. It's a nice get together for all to talk about the days we worked together. The one in charge and gets the notice out is Helen McMackin. Thank you, Helen.

From what I have read, the NALC has 307,000 members of which only 96,688 voted for our National President. 31% is a pathetic number to say the least, but what's new? Look at how many members belong to Branch 599 and how many go to Union meetings on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of every month? Very few. Carriers don't seem to care about any thing unless it involves them personally, a raise, or a union dues increase, then the hall is full.

Well it's great that the Tampa management is trying to help the carriers have a nice holiday, O.T. is out of sight. Carriers have told me they have never made so much money. In the western part of the country, it's the complete opposite, no O.T. even to the extent of not delivering

the mail, which is being done.

We all know "Service" in the Post Office is a thing of the past. I read the other day that President Bush wants to privatize parts of the Armed Forces. We all should know the Post Office will be next. If you think about it, it might not be a bad idea. You, as Letter Carriers, have nothing to fear, you always do a hard days work. But what private company would keep all the Dead Wood Managers? It might be the best thing since apple pie. They would be out to make a buck, not spend it on what doesn't works. They would know that their best asset are Craft Employees. They would give out A-1 Service and treat every one with dignity and respect. Can't you just picture how great that would be?

Last year I went to work for a painting contractor and the first time I met him he took me to a house and told me what he wanted done and left me alone till the next day. As I was working I thought to myself, "I can't believe this: He left me completely alone." I worked for the Post Office for 32 years and they never once trusted me. They watched me all morning, came out on the street to check on me. When I told them I was an honest employee, they would say "Oh, yeah! Tell me another one." They would time my breaks, hiding around the corner watching me. When I called in sick, they would say they wanted proof I was sick. They give you a route inspection of one week, timing your every minute to make sure you have an 8 hour day and the rest of the year tell you that you're a crook.

Well if you think about it all, what would the manager have to do if he didn't have carriers to harass? They have to have a justification of why they're even in the building. So the

*(continued on page 10)*



**In The Know** (from page 6)

about what he said the night before, about it being a day that I would not soon forget. Surely he knew I would rather be with my family in a nice warm house exchanging gifts.

What was about to happen next would explain everything. By now it was about 7:30 am and I was nearing the last of my deliveries. My fingers numb from the cold I grasped a rather large package. I began walking toward the house, as I approached the front porch a young boy opened the door, still dressed in his pajamas (the kind with built in footies) and with his mother looking over his shoulder and with a smile from ear to ear he said, "Mom does he really know Santa Clause?" At that moment I felt so much pride in being a mailman that it would stay with me for the rest of my career.

When I returned to the station after finishing the rest of my deliveries, I found my Postmaster waiting for me, just as he said he would. From that day on I had the utmost respect and trust in him and knew the feeling was mutual. Since that day so many years ago Mr. Whalen has passed on. What he instilled in me that day, was that with respect, appreciation, trust and the ability to work with people at all levels, the outcome

would be an overwhelming sense of pride. As I look back still remembering the expression on that young boy's face, I knew why it was so important to Postmaster Whalen that the packages got delivered. It was all about pride and just as he said that Christmas Eve I never forgot.

In solidarity,

Brother George HPCA



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## Outside The Lines

by Leslie Ray Garcia

I have finally reached the magic number for a Civil Service Employee. Yep, I am now 55 years old and officially have 32 plus combined years with the USPS. As in all things in life, you remember the good times and the bad times. Within the last ten years, it seems that the good times are being eroded by the bad times. USPS Management has taken a great job (workplace) and turned this job into drudgery.

With the New Year upon us, letter carriers have been told at different stations that we are basically thieves. Yet since 1987 the USPS has been overpaying the CSRS fund to the tune of \$27 billion dollars. Annually, the USPS states that it is in the red and needs to have more control over its finances. I wonder had these funds not been accidentally misplaced what kind of contracts President Sombrotto could have negotiated for the membership. Fuzzy math?

In 1970 a local President of Branch 36 of New York led a walkout. This took extreme courage because of the Federal Laws with regard to strikes against a government organization. This President became our National President in 1979 and has led our National Union from a state of bankruptcy to financial stability. He has negotiated contracts that have consistently increased our hourly wages and benefits. Vincent R. Sombrotto, President of the NALC is retiring after 55 years of postal and union service. His legacy will be difficult to maintain and his shoes will be hard to fill. Good Luck, Vince!

The USPS now uses an Attendance Control Supervisor (IRM) rather than immediate supervisors when letter carriers have to call for sick leave, etc. Management documents this as un-scheduled leave (USL). I have asked when is the use of sick leave not considered un-scheduled. I have asked why do we have to provide a doctor's certificate when you schedule a doctor's appointment on our scheduled day off (SDO). I have asked why we receive discipline after calling in

sick, etc., (USL) over the allotted percentage. One answer I received is that, no matter what, the absence is *un-scheduled* (UA). So, if you have a heart-attack, die, etc, you get charged (UA)! I don't know if these arbitration rulings apply to any of the above scenarios but here are two:

C-10222 Arbitrator Zumas 12-22-89

*"A call-in for sick leave should be recorded as 'scheduled,' rather than 'un-scheduled' leave."*

M-01138 APWU Step 4 1-5-81, A8NA-0840

*"Discipline for failure to maintain a satisfactory attendance record or excessive absenteeism" must be determined on a case-by-case basis in light of all relevant evidence and circumstances.*

Any rule setting a fixed amount or percentage of sick leave usage after which an employee will be, as a matter of course, automatically disciplined is inconsistent with the National Agreement and applicable handbooks and manuals."

Locally, a female letter carrier was followed by a floor supervisor (this falls under the disguise of street supervisor). When this carrier stopped for her 30-minute lunch it seems the floor supervisor called the station manager and these individuals sat in their private vehicles watching the carrier eat her lunch. I hope these individuals are covered by their car insurance companies for using their vehicles for work.

It is my hope that with the \$27 billion dollar windfall maybe the USPS could upgrade the equipment that is in much need of repair. Maybe the USPS could properly wash and

*(continued on page 10)*

**Outside The Lines** (from page 9)

clean both the inside and outside of our vehicles on a bi-monthly basis? Maybe the USPS could replace NCBDUs on my route that have slots that are 4 inches by 3 1/2 inches even though I could probably save about 30 minutes of delivery time daily. I was told that the mail receptacles are already established and can not be upgraded by the USPS. This is rather strange since I had about 60 park-n-loop stops changed to NCBDUs. These 60 stops were established walk-ups but were changed! The Department of Stupid Ideas at its finest.

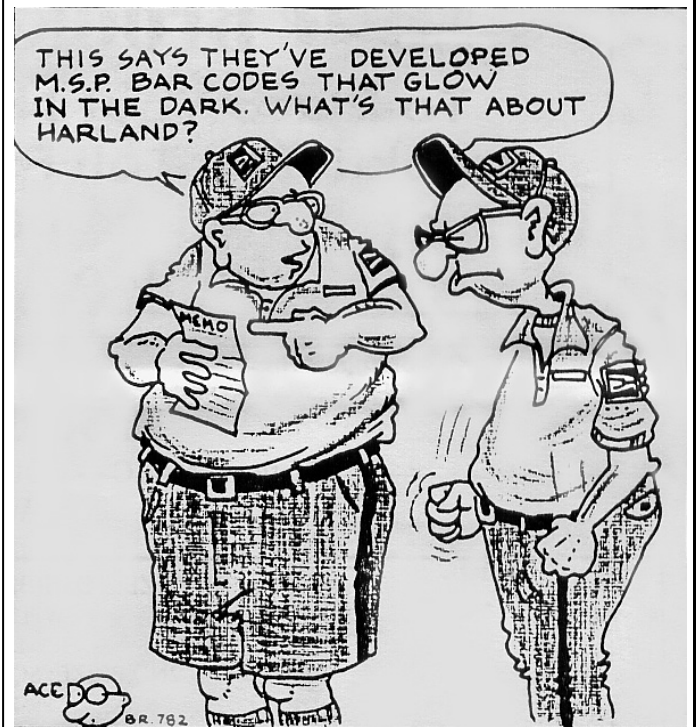
“Don’t get mad, get even.”

Robert F. Kennedy

THINK ABOUT IT!

**And The Beat Goes On** (from page 7)

next time you see your manager walking around with the clip board, think to yourself, because of you he/she has a job. Have a great holiday and stay healthy.



# TAMPA LETTER CARRIERS PRESENT

# BINGO

COME JOIN THE FUN

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DOORS OPEN AT 5:30

GAMES START AT 6:30

AT THE TAMPA LETTER CARRIERS HALL

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Tampa, Fl. 33609

### Tampa Letter Carriers, Inc. Biennial Meeting

The Biennial Meeting and Election of Directors of the Tampa Letter Carriers, Inc. will be held at the Letter Carriers Hall, 3003 W. Cypress, on Tuesday December 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00PM. All members in good standing of Branch 599 are invited to attend, nominate candidates or be nominated, and vote for the Board of Directors who will be governing your business affairs for the next two years.

The outgoing board was very active in its last term in office. Below is a partial list of the things that the Board has accomplished.

1. Completely renovated the kitchen (including new cabinets), replaced stall enclosures in the rest rooms, and stripped and re-waxed the floors in the entire hall.
2. Had the marble inside walls of the hall power washed, knocked down two partial walls in the parking lot and repaved the parking lot at great expense.
3. Are now in the process of painting the outside of the building.
4. Authorized the purchase of two new vinyl storage

sheds and provided for a new phone system for the front office.

5. Bought new chairs for use during rentals and Bingo.
6. Installed new automatic electric front gates.
7. Upgraded office computer system.
8. Installed a neon advertising sign.
9. Painted the front office, replaced all office furniture.
10. Increased its donation to National Convention fund.
11. Replaced the beer cooler in the recreation room.

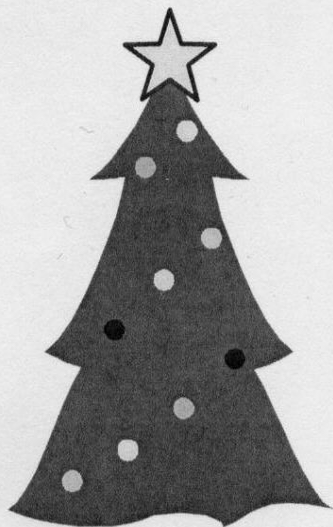
All in all, it's been a very productive two years, and the outgoing board should be congratulated for a job well done! Let's keep up the good work.

F. Quintanilla, Chairman

Tampa Letter Carriers, Inc.

## December 2002

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2 Shop Stewards	3	4	5 Branch Meeting 7:30PM	6	7
8	9 Health Benefits Open Sea-	10 TLC Board of Directors Elections 7 PM	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26 Executive Board 7 PM	27	28
29	30 Shop Stewards 7 PM	31	January 1, 2003	2 Branch Meeting		



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