



Tampa Letter Carrier

Volume 4 - Issue 11

A.R. "Tony" Huerta NALC Branch 599

Tampa, Florida

November 2005

President's Report

Protect Yourself ... Make Them Supervise

As some of you may be aware, there has been what I consider to be an extraordinary number of letter carriers in Tampa who have been issued removal letters in the recent past. Some of these carriers were accused of doing something that many would consider relatively minor in nature and some allegedly did things more serious. Some of these carriers were placed "off the clock" in a pay status because they are military veterans, some were put on administrative leave pending removal, and some were placed in a leave without pay status immediately because of what management has deemed an emergency situation. But all of these carriers shared one common result. Their lives were placed in turmoil. For the first time in their lives many of these carriers faced the possibility of losing their jobs. In some cases the carriers waited five months or more to find out the results of their appeal, and in other cases carriers were forced to give in to a costly settlement offer rather than take their chances in arbitration.

Every carrier in Tampa needs to be

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aware that upper management in our city has taken the position that removal is the discipline of choice in what they consider to be serious offenses. Don't get me wrong. There are situations where carriers may do things that I, and the union believe warrant removal. Stealing from the mail is a good example. But locally it seems like management is trying to prove a point. *Step out of line and I will take your job. No excuses, you made a mistake and now you're going to pay for it for the rest of your life.* In cases where they do feel the carrier "deserves mercy", they punish him/her with costly last chance agreements, knowing they will sign off because they have been out of work for a number of months worrying about their future in the USPS.

The reason I am telling you all this is simple but very important. I don't want to see anyone lose their job. Be professional. Eight hours work for eight hours pay. Don't argue with or be offended if your supervisor asks why you need more time than what *DOIS* says. Tell them. You know your route better than them, give them a fair estimate (in writing on a 3996) of how much time you need and stick with that estimate. If you find you need more time because of something that happens after you are on the street, call them and ask them what they want you to do. That is their job. Make them do it. If you get done early go back early. The important thing is

that they are the supervisors and managers. If a situation arises where you have a question as to what you should do or how you should handle a certain problem, ask the supervisor. They are not always well trained and are often inept in their jobs, but if you ask them to make the decision you will never be wrong.

Now on to Brandon. With the coming of a new postmaster, and after a very brief honeymoon period, it seems evident that Postmaster Tafelski has a unique managerial style that many of the carriers find offensive. During a recent station visit, after speaking with only six or seven carriers, I sat down with the postmaster and voiced my concerns about what I had heard regarding the workforce morale. We came to an agreement that Shop Steward Terry Franklin and I would hold a series of meetings with groups of ten or so carriers, to find out and make note of their concerns and ideas of how the working conditions

(continued on page 4)



by **Jim Good**

President - Branch 599

Branch Meeting

Thursday

November 3, 2005

7:30 PM

Branch 599 Officers

PRESIDENT	Jim Good	(813) 960-3759, cell 417-8877
EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT	Detlev Aepfel	(813) 907-9685, cell 505-7914
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	Michael Stewart	(813) 310-1292
LABOR - MANAGEMENT	Brian Obst	(727) 507-0135
MAPS COORDINATOR	Chris Albrecht	(727) 791-7162

Presidents Emeritus

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

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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	Warren Sumlin	(813) 486-7612
Forest Hills Annex	33613	Eddie Alvarez	(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	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

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

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 Aeppel

*Executive Vice-President - Branch 599****Less Than Zero***

First things first. I apologize for failing to post a report for the October newsletter. I was immersed in observing the route inspections at Interbay Station zones 16 and 11. I was also handling one of our numerous removal cases. Unfortunately I missed the deadline for submitting my article.

The inspection process seemed to go well at Interbay. Once again the carriers stepped up to the plate by taking the inspections seriously and did an excellent job of controlling the form 1838-C's. Some carriers thought the mail volume was a little low but that is no surprise. No big problems were exposed by the inspection so management acknowledged that the carriers were doing a good job. As a result it looks like there will be one whole route and two auxiliary routes added. Good job, Interbay carriers.

The unprecedented removal of letter carriers seems to be continuing. As soon as one removed letter carrier returned to work another carrier was faced with a removal. A particular concern is the removal threshold. At what point is proposing removal appropriate for the alleged infraction? For example, the USPS has a zero tolerance policy for threats and violence in the work place. That is a good thing. Postal employees are entitled to a safe work place free of harassment, threats, and intimidation. This holds true for craft employees and management alike. However, zero tolerance does not mandate removal for each and every perceived infraction of this policy. Presumably the policy would be administered un-

der the guidelines of *Just Cause and Progressive Discipline*. Depending upon the circumstances and particulars, zero tolerance would lead to appropriate discipline running the full range from apology to removal and including all steps in between. If even minor infractions of the zero tolerance policy are met with the extreme discipline of removal then zero tolerance runs the risk of becoming less than zero tolerance. As any grade school math student can tell you, less than zero is negative.

October marked the start of the new fiscal year for the USPS. Upper management is rolling out new programs and educating supervisors and managers as to what will be emphasized and expected in the coming year. As carriers we will be learning how far and in what direction the pendulum will swing. This is especially important in light of the fact that we have a new postmaster in Tampa. With the new fiscal year starting Postmaster Nancy Fryrear will end her caretaker role from the past fiscal year. The new fiscal year means her responsibility for productivity and working conditions in Tampa really starts. Is this the dawn of a new day in Tampa or is the honeymoon over? Carriers should pay close attention to the upcoming service talks for clues as to what the future will be like.

Some in management have expressed frustration that several PTFs are still holding down preferred bids after making regular and being assigned to a vacant bid. I don't get it. The rules governing

preferred bids are extensively spelled out and explained in the *JCAM*. These PTFs remain in the assignments they hold preferred bids on until the PTF bids to another assignment or the vacant assignment is filled. Preferred bidding is one of the few privileges PTFs enjoy. Preferred bidding is supposed to be a win-win situation. Management knows who is going to fill that position everyday and the PTF knows what their assignment will be each day. The problem comes when the PTF is now not available to fill in anywhere at the whim of the supervisor. This often results in grievances when the supervisor attempts to force the PTF off of the preferred bid improperly. Rather than trying to subvert the contract management should hire a sufficient number of PTFs to get the job done.

In solidarity...



Branch 599 Christmas Party

Branch 599 will hold their second annual Christmas party on Sunday, December 18, 2005 at the union hall from noon until 3:00 pm. There will be clowns, cookie decorating, games and food for all the children. Santa Claus and two of his elves will be there to give out gifts to the kids. Look for more information in December's *Tampa Letter Carrier*.

Health and Welfare

Pam Miles recovering from surgery

Sgt. Eric Fifer, grandson of retiree Leon Fifer, was killed in Iraq.

Milton McConnell, past president of Branch 599, passed away.

Retiree Bubba Ramirez recovering from stroke.

TLC, Inc. Board of Directors Meeting Summary

The September 26, 2005 meeting was called to order by Chairman Obst at 7:00 pm. The reading of the minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as read. Financial report by John Gebo. Building Manager's report by Jack Newman. The entrance gate at the west side of the building is broken again. Termites were found in the archway between the kitchen and the hall. An exterminator was called and checked it out. None were found and Jack will keep an eye on the situation. The ice machine is not working properly and will be checked on 9/28/05. Jack will see about a service agreement on the ice machine and the entrance gate. The hall has been reserved by the branch for the December 18th Christmas Party. A motion was made by Noble to raise the Building Manager's pay to \$15.00 per hour and \$125.00 for an eight hour hall rental. Seconded, discussion and passed. Old business: Motion was made and seconded to accept the application of Eric Fleming to fill one of the vacant director's positions. Discussion and passed. No other applications were received. Motion to include TLC's \$1,000.00 donation (which was approved at the September branch meeting) with the union's donation. Seconded, discussion and passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Jim Good , Secretary - Tampa Letter Carriers, Inc.



October Meetings:

Tues 10-25-05 - TLC Board of Directors Meeting
Union Hall, 7:00 PM

Thur 10-27-05 - Executive Board Meeting
Union Hall, 7:00 PM

November Meetings:

Tues 11-1-05 - Shop Stewards Meeting
Union Hall, 7:00 PM

Thur 11-3-05 - Branch Meeting
Union Hall, 7:30 PM

Tues 11-22-05 - TLC Board Of Directors Meeting
Union Hall, 7:00 PM

Thur 11-24-05 - Executive Board Meeting
Union Hall, 7:00 PM

Attention All Members

The Tampa Letter Carriers, Inc. By-laws, Article 2, Section 11 reads: "When a vacancy occurs on the Board of Directors, and there are no alternates available to fill that vacancy, any member, in good standing, of Branch 599 NALC may submit a written request to be considered to fill the vacancy. The Board of Directors will decide by a majority vote as to whether the applicant(s) will be appointed".

Due to the vacancy of one board member position, TLC will be accepting applications for this position. Any member who wishes to be considered to fill this vacancy must submit his/her name to the following address by November 20, 2005:
Tampa Letter Carriers, Inc., 3003 West Cypress, Tampa, FL 33609-1617. The new director will serve the remainder of the appointed term, which will end on election day in December 2006.

Jim Good, Secretary - TLC, Inc.

President's Report - (from page 1)

could be improved. Man, did we get an earful! We will sit down with the postmaster and floor supervisors on November 10th during a Labor/Management meeting to discuss our findings and try to improve the situation. Management in Brandon, and everywhere for that matter, needs to understand that respect is a two way street, and although they are tasked to get the mail delivered and meet certain *goals* set by district and area officials, carriers are much more productive when they work in an environment free of veiled threats and direct orders. That is not only one of our goals, but also one of our rights, to be able to look forward to going to work in an atmosphere free of stress and harassment.

Unionism

by Brian Obst

The Form 3971 Leave Slip

Labor Management Representative - Branch 599

As city letter carriers it is our responsibility to properly document many different pieces of information. One of the most important documents we are tasked with responsibility of properly filling out is the form 3971, otherwise known as the *leave slip*.

The 3971 is a multi purpose form that is used to document a number of different situations such as annual leave, sick leave and preferred bids, to name a few. We will confine our discussion to these items for now.

When you desire to take annual leave, it is your responsibility to submit a properly filled out 3971 to your supervisor in a timely manner for management's consideration. Timely generally means prior to the weekly schedule being posted for the period your leave is requested in. The filling out of the form is generally self explanatory and any questions can be answered by your steward or supervisor. It is important that it is filled out as completely as possible to ensure that

there are no problems in processing the slip. One of the biggest problems I have seen with the 3971 is that carriers fail to get back their signed copy from the supervisor. It is the responsibility of the carrier submitting a 3971 to get back their copy from the supervisor. There is a place for the supervisor to sign the slip as received as well as a space to sign after they take action. It is up to the carrier to submit the 3971 form in triplicate and to wait for the supervisor to sign the form as received and to return to the carrier his/her signed copy. This is your protection in the event of a "lost" leave slip or a mystery leave slip showing up after your slip is properly submitted. Your failure to have a signed copy will make it difficult for your steward to assist you should there be any problems.

When you are out of work for a period of illness, you must submit a 3971 for the time missed upon your return to work. You are not required to sign any management prepared documentation as long as you submit your 3971 when you return to work and this is recom-

mended as it has been shown that management prepared 3971's are often incorrect and this is detrimental to the carrier and their pay status.



The LMOU for Tampa states that a preferred bid should be submitted on a 3971 and all the same rules apply about submitting and receiving your signed copy from the supervisor. Remember that if you have a signed copy of the 3971, there will be few questions about your bid and, should there be issues, your steward will have the information needed to protect your contractual rights.

The 3971 is not difficult to fill out properly and it will help protect you in the event of problems with your supervisors so take the time to do the job properly. Remember, forewarned is forearmed.

In Brotherhood,

Brian Obst

Shop Steward - Town and Country

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

Around The Horn

by Tony Diaz

Financial Secretary - Branch 599

Hurricane Katrina



Brothers and Sisters wanted to talk this month about something that affects each and every one of us at some level on a daily basis. What I am talking about is Stress, described as America's #1 health problem. As Postal Employees we all have experienced stress, some at higher levels than others. Job stress is by far the leading source of stress, but stress also an issue with children, teenagers, college students and sadly the elderly. Many things can cause stress, but what may be stressful to one person may not be for another. As a result, people handle situations differently. For example getting stuck in traffic may be handled in several different ways; one person may just see the situation and just turn on the radio or do some reading, on the other hand the next person may swear, curse, hit the steering wheel, or get out of the car and start yelling at anyone in sight. Guess which one is healthier? Stress can contribute to strokes, heart attacks, diabetes, ulcers, neck or low back pain and other diseases. Why does stress contribute? Due to increased sym-

pathetic nervous system activity and an outpouring of adrenaline, cortisol and other stress related hormones. Stress can also contribute to depression, anxiety and skin irritation and breaking out. I personally have seen carriers snap because of stress in the workroom, it is very sad and frightening and very unhealthy. Stress in our work places is a way of life and something we have heard will one-day change. While job related stress is a very serious on going problem for all of us, recent events I believe have caused a more serious form of stress, Hurricanes. Hurricanes have caused a considerable amount of stress to many of us first hand. As I mentioned in my previous article on Katrina I was very affected by our 4 hurricanes last year and my stress level was never higher. However, as bad as things were I look to the gulf coast, New Orleans and Texas and say wow would I have been able to handle those situations? How would I have handled those situations? The questions, the uncertainty, that is mind boggling to me what they have had to endure. We mention stress at a high level, but that would certainly lead many into mental health issues. Ask

yourself these questions, where will I work? Will I have to relocate very far? Where is the rest of my house? Will I find any personal belongings? Will insurance cover all I have lost? Are all my family members accounted for? Where will I get my next meal? Where can I get some clothes and shoes? Can I find some water? Where can I find a restroom? What do I do now? Can you imagine those questions in 90-degree heat, hungry and wearing the same clothes for who knows how many days? That's stress in the highest form. My point for this article is awareness and the dangers of stress. Remember (knowing what many of our fellow brothers and sisters and family members are having to endure currently or have endured due to the rash of hurricanes), when something does happen to simply ask yourself is it really that bad for me to react in a way that is unhealthy?

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



From The Chair

by Brian Obst

TLC At Work

Hello again from the chair of TLC. Let us start the article by bidding welcome to new TLC member Eric Fleming who was installed at the September meeting. The board is still accepting applications for anyone interested in becoming a member of the board as there is still a vacancy to be filled.

There were several maintenance issues the board discussed and we are looking into securing maintenance contracts for our gate system, our ice machine and our air-conditioning systems to assist with preventive maintenance on these systems. The maintenance of our hall is an ongoing concern and the board is constantly looking for the best ways to keep ahead of areas of concern when it comes to maintenance and repairs.

As I previously reported last month, the board has approved a donation of \$1000.00 to go along with the branch donation and the station collections to assist our brother and sister carriers

along the Gulf Coast regions that were adversely affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Our thoughts are with all the victims of these devastating storms as it could have easily been us on the Gulf Coast of Florida, as evidenced by last year's numerous storms. I would like to extend my thanks to the members of the board, members of Branch 599 and to all the members of the local postal community who have chipped in to help the victims of these storms.

Finally, I would like to mention that the hall has been reserved on the 18th of December for the annual Branch 599 Christmas Party. I will defer any further information on the party for the branch president to disseminate at a later time. For now, lets all make plans to be there as last year's was a great time for all.

As always I would like to remind you that the meetings of TLC, Inc. are open to all members in good standing of Branch 599. The members of the board, as well as myself, welcome any

interested member to come to the meetings with any concerns and/or suggestions. Remember, we are here for the benefit of the membership of Branch 599. Until next month, I remain

Your Chairman,

Brian Obst



Notice of Nominations and Elections

Nominations for delegates to the 2006 National Convention in Las Vegas will be held at the November 3rd branch meeting. Elections, if needed will be held at the December 1, 2005 branch meeting. This meeting begins at 7:30 PM. Nominations and elections shall be in accordance with Article 5 of the Branch bylaws and will be held at the union hall at 3003 West Cypress, Tampa, FL 33609.

ARSLAN UNIFORMS

Bill & Shirley Moran

Retired Letter Carrier Branch 1477 St. Petersburg

Honorary Member Branch 599 Tampa

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320 PATLIN CIRCLE EAST PHONE: 727-584-4307

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

bilmor@tampabay.rr.com

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