



Tampa Letter Carrier

Volume 2 - Issue 4

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

April 2003

President's Report

by Jim Good

President - Branch 599

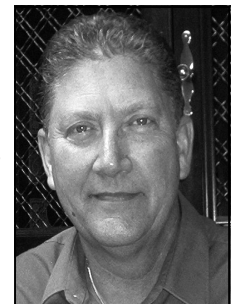
"Dignity and Respect". That has been the motto of the USPS since the first deadly tragedies involving postal employees occurred many years ago. Many statements and agreements have been signed, both nationally and locally, to ensure that every employee of the USPS, both management and craft, is treated in a manner that allows them to do their job without fear or intimidation. In other words, treat each other like adults and in the manner you would want to be treated yourself.

Yet even after all these years the situation has not changed. Here in Tampa, as well as throughout the country, the stress on the workroom floor has reached an all-time high. Many supervisors and station managers still feel a need to harass and intimidate the carriers. They take the carriers aside and make veiled threats concerning their future with the Postal Service if they do not conform to the supervisor's wishes. They take them into their office, under the guise of an "official discussion", and threaten them with discipline if their attendance does not improve. Of course these same supervisors deny this when questioned about their behavior.

At Tampa Carrier Annex a few weeks ago a supervisor rewarded the carriers for bringing in a large number of USPS mail tubs (collected from businesses on their routes). He cooked them breakfast after the carriers that brought in the most tubs donated their bonuses to pay for the

food. While the carriers were in line to get their food, another supervisor walked through the line picking out certain carriers and telling them to go back to their cases.

Because of this abusive behavior by the supervisor, some of the other carriers decided they didn't need this kind of treatment and boycotted the breakfast. Now that is the way to motivate employees!



On November 5, 2002, an intervention was held with then acting Director, Human Resources (Suncoast District) Frank Dyer, regarding the way the Tampa Postmaster was managing the city. Our NALC Business Agent, Matty Rose, flew in from Miami to attend the meeting. The Postmaster chose not to attend because of a previous engagement. We discussed the situation in length, but not much has changed in the city since that meeting.

Because of the ongoing problems in Tampa I have followed up in two different directions. I have scheduled a meeting with the new Director of Human Resources, Terry Green, for March 20th. I first met Ms. Green at the Dispute Resolution training classes given on March 13th at the Union Hall. She seemed receptive to the meeting and I will be discussing a long list of our concerns when we meet.

Secondly, I have set up a meeting with
(continued on page 4)

**BRANCH
MEETING
THURSDAY
APRIL 4
7:30 PM
AT
THE
UNION HALL**

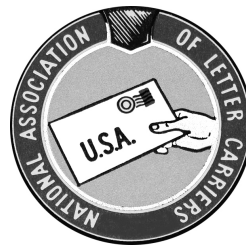
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The National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 599, 3003 W. Cypress Street, Tampa, FL 33609-1617, publishes The Tampa Letter Carrier monthly. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writers, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of 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.



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Port Tampa	33616	Sammy Graham	813-837-6257
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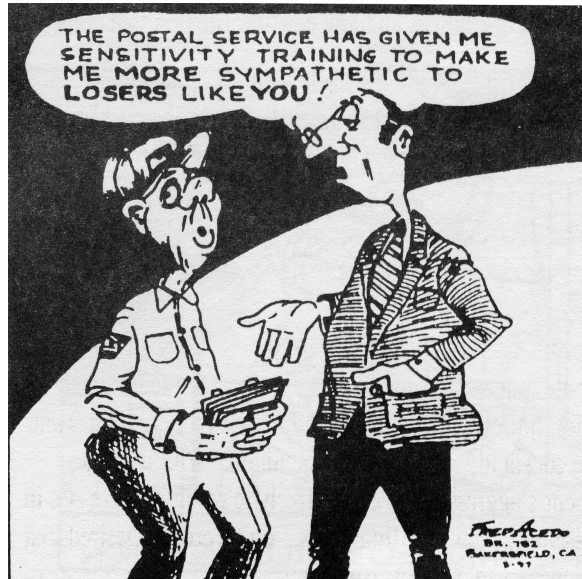
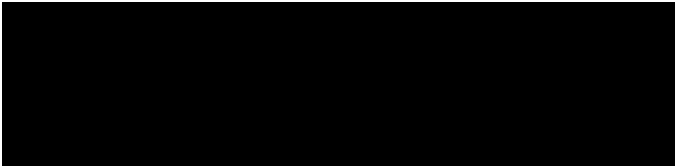
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Presidents Emeritus

Milton McConnell	James Butler
Sam Dolcimascolo	Garland Tickle
Howard Carter	Orbe Andux
Don Thomas	Michael Anderson
Lenin V. Perez	

RETIREES BREAKFAST
First Monday of every month
9:00 AM
at
The Coffee Cup
4407 N. Hubert
in Drew Park
(NE corner of MLK & Hubert)



The President's Report *(from page 1)*

Congressman Jim Davis for the evening of March 24, 2003. Many carriers, at different stations throughout the city, have requested an opportunity to speak with Mr. Davis regarding working conditions within the Postal Service. The meeting will be held at the Union Hall so that there will be ample room for any and all carriers who wish to attend.

It is my opinion that the main cause of this continued harassment and stress is the lack of carriers left in the city to deliver the mail. Every single supervisor and manager that I speak to brings up this very fact. They must force overtime on the carriers because of this reason. They are told by upper management to count carriers that are off work for military leave, permanent disability, and even those that have filed for disability retirement against the compliment of working carriers that are allowed to take annual leave. This means that if your station is allowed five carriers to be off on annual leave, and one has been called back to active duty and another has not worked in *five years* because of an on-the-job injury (this actually happened), your station can now only have three carriers off on annual. That is not the intent of our Local Agreement, but in management's reasoning it is the only way they have to keep enough carriers at work to deliver the mail.

Management, both locally and at the district level, cries about sick leave usage. Is it not logical to assume that if a carrier is forced to work six days a week, nine or more hours per day, without the hope of being able to take a day of annual leave, that he/she will wear out and take off on sick leave? Carriers are not robots or machines, and if management would realize that fact and treat you accordingly then maybe the atmosphere on the workroom floor would improve.

Let me say this in closing. If you feel that you are being harassed or intimidated by your supervisor, ask to speak to your shop steward. Management must allow you access to your steward within 24 hours. You will then be allowed time, on-the-clock, to document what has happened and write a statement of the facts being as specific as possible. Remember, if you are asking for assistance or overtime on your assignment, you are required to give your reasons why you need the help. But you are also entitled to be spoken to in a professional manner that is conducive to a stress-free working environment. That is what the union and USPS officials have agreed to on the national and local level, and that is what must be done!

Health Benefits Report

Protecting our privacy is an ever growing concern in this "information age". It seems like everyone wants to know everything about us whether they are entitled to the information or not. The confidentiality of our health care information is protected by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act Privacy Rule. In compliance with this rule it is the policy of the NALC Health Benefit Plan not to disclose anyone's Protected Health Information except for the purpose of treatment, payment, and health care operations, or as required by law. Any other disclosure of this information is done only with the written authorization of the individual. Any adult member of our plan must give the NALC Health Benefit Plan written permission to disclose their Protected Health Information for

by **Detlev Aeppel**

Branch 599 - Health Benefits Representative

any reason other than treatment, payment, and health care operations. This is something spouses should do for each other as well as for any adult children included in the plan. A member can choose anyone they wish as their Personal Representative. This includes trusted friends and partners. Members may also name their local Health Benefit Representative as their Personal Representative. This allows your Representative to contact the Health Plan directly on your behalf. Selecting a Representative is done by filling out the HIPAA Privacy Rule Personal Representative Authorization form. Authorization remains in effect until it is revoked by the member. The authorization also remains in effect for two years after NALC Health Benefit Plan membership ends.

The Watts Line

by John A. Watts

Executive Vice-President - Branch 599

On February 27 I attended the State of the District meeting. In attendance were Postmasters, Plant Managers, and the new manager of Human Resources, Terry M. Green, most union presidents from around the district including the APWU, Mail Handlers and the rural carriers State Representative.

Michael Jordan, the District Manager, gave a presentation on how our district compares with other districts in the southeastern area. We were shown graphs on the pitfalls – increasing use of sick leave, and here our budget for next year was going to be even tighter than last year. Did you know that there were 1.7 million deliveries added in the United States last year? The letter carriers delivered this mail with 14,000 fewer positions.

When I started delivering mail in Tampa in 1983 there were over 800 full time letter carriers. As of 01/09/2003 there are approximately 595 full time letter carriers. What does this mean? We are delivering more mail with less letter carriers' and we are making money hands over fist for the city of Tampa. What I found out in the State of the District meeting is, because of the job letter carriers are doing in the Suncoast District, a lot of small post offices and less revenue making parts of the country are staying afloat because of the revenue we are providing in this district. My question to upper management in this city and in the district is why are the employees subjected to the type of management that harasses, intimidates and threatens? Is this how you treat your children?

I have found out by raising two children, who both graduated from college, that if you support, encourage, and compliment, you will not only gain respect but you will also get the best out of an individual which in turn will help everyone obtain the unit's goals. Let's continue as a union to keep reminding management that we all are the USPS and if we don't get support from our managers and supervisors in the way of recognition for a job well done, we will never be able to resolve our labor disputes.

Except for letter carriers being removed or disciplined, most work room disagreements involve a personality conflict between the supervisor and the craft employee. Often, as a result of something as simple as a five or ten minute disagreement, or because of a problem that built up over a short period of time, we see jumps in grievance filings, EEO's, worker's compensation claims and, in extreme cases, law suits. I feel it is our job as union representatives to recognize the degree of severity of the problem and try to resolve the situation in the best interest for both parties involved. The cost of arbitration and litigation is staggering.



We are in difficult times in the coming months with the war in Iraq. Let's pray for our brothers and sisters who are in harms way to protect our freedom and who are guaranteeing a society free from the threat of terrorism.



Outside The Lines

by Leslie Ray Garcia

It is the month of madness, March of 2003, and Hilldale 33614 is having its first masquerade party in over six years. There are at least 15 individuals on the management team fictitiously counting the mail (a letter here and a flat there). Local management has directed them to count ½ of the routes in the 14 zone and resume counting the other half after they take a spring break.

According to the last M-39, M-41 and Arbitration rulings I have read, route evaluation and implementation is to be completed with 52 days from the first day or start of route count. The route inspections started on Thursday 3/13/03 and will end for ½ the station on Wednesday 3/19/03. When the other half of the station has been counted and the figures compiled the total number of days will be more than 111 days.

Some carriers are being ridden with only twice (such as a former 204B) while another letter carrier who is 55 and in ill health has been ridden with four times. The route counters are instructing the carriers on the casing and delivery of the route. Unless the M-39, M-41 and Arbitration rulings have been changed, they are only supposed to take notes. At the end of the count week each carrier will be talked to by the Station Manager about any red-line items.

We had one of these route counters actually get in the face of the shop steward, when the steward was trying to explain to a letter carrier what was happening, and in front of the station manager tell the steward he didn't give a sh**! The steward told the station manager that if a letter carrier had said that to the examiner, the carrier would have been put on administrative leave pending termination! (Mutual respect? Hah!)

I told a supervisor that I was physically tired and he said "You ought to be a supervisor and find out what tired is." I said that I could have been a supervisor 25 years ago and I probably would have fired all of the current managers when they were craft. Another carrier said that I was too smart to be a supervisor and I said "No, I am not that smart, it's just that I'm not that stupid!"

At our Friday stand up talk we were told that Suncoast District is not meeting the necessary percentile in several categories: 1.) express mail, 2.) delivery confirmation, 3.) sick leave, and 4.) vehicle accidents.

Let's see: 1.) our billion dollar partner, Fed Ex, (our competitor) is supposed to transport the express mail items but they don't work Saturdays and Sundays. 2) 95% of the Delivery Confirmation items have no specific color, no specific location for the replacement of the bar code and, often times addresses have been partly pasted over the bar codes, there is no uniformity, etc. 3) Sick leave is on the increase because the routes are overburdened, carriers

have no days off and work 10 to 12 hours daily because of excessing, and carriers not on the OTDL are being forced to work 10 and 12 hour days. 4) Vehicle accidents are up because carriers are being forced to deliver in darkness, and carriers are mentally and physically fatigued because of over-burdened routes and mandatory overtime.

Saturday the stand up talk (lecture) consisted of us being told that only 3 or 4 of the inspected routes had made office time. Reading between the red lines this meant that the inspection team felt that we were dogging it and there should be undertime. They said if this practice continued, the count would be thrown out. We were told that an inspection team from either district or region would come in and cross every "T" and dot every "I" be stricter. (Egad! This sounded like a threat to me! What happened to *zero tolerance*? Oh yeah, zero tolerance only applies to craft.) If they wanted better numbers they should be giving the station a fair count! You know--release the mails that are being withheld. My question is why should letter carriers give management undertime when that time will be added to our routes? Of course, after the dust has settled the floor supervisor will expect you to give undertime every day because of your *demonstrated ability* even though the route has doubled in volume. The letter carrier once again is in a no win situation.

Hilldale has always been the north end of a southbound mule in the eyes of management. To prove a point, on a recent Saturday, Hilldale letter carriers delivered all the routes with no overtime usage. There was no Station Manager, no floor supervisor and no 204B present! Hilldale managed themselves. The following Monday a team of management was at the station trying to figure out how the work got completed without supervision. Times have not changed much, by the way. This happened once before about 25 years ago.

It is my firm belief that the reason for discipline being on the rise for sick leave usage is that management wants to whittle down our yearly 13 days given to us through the National Agreement. If they can get every letter carrier to only use a maximum of 6 days annually, guess what facts and figures will be brought to the bargaining table in 2006 to verify their claims that 13 should be only 6 or less!

"Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." John F. Kennedy

THINK ABOUT IT!

And The Beat Goes On

by Ray Wallace

Sick leave seems to be a big issue all over the U.S.A. It always was but now it seems to be worse than ever and, as always, intimidation is the name of the game aided by a lack of knowledge of our local and national contracts.

Don't ever abuse your sick leave; it's always nice to have in case the need ever comes up. But if you are sick, don't let management talk you into coming into work.

Nationwide, postal managers are going crazy with trying to cut hours, cut routes, cut sick leave and in general cut the letter carriers' throats. If, God forbid, you spit on the floor, they will try to fire you. A clerk in a midwestern state is up for removal for reading a book in the break room entitled "Going Postal", that was written by a retired carrier. The postmaster brought these asinine charges.

This is just one example of how postal management is treating the craft. Two other postmasters at two different offices put recording devices on the counter to listen in to the clerks talking to the customer. When this was exposed in their local paper, the postmaster took them out. The Post Office said this secret taping was a violation but "no charges" would be brought. Can you believe it? If a letter carrier even came close to doing anything similar they would terminate him/her the next day.

President Bush has his own commission looking into the post office. They are open to suggestions. If you want to

write to them the address is: Presidents Commission on the U.S.P.S., 1120 Vermont Ave. N.W. Suite 971, Washington, D.C. 20005.

It's too bad postal management doesn't read the *Federal Times*. In an article it said "Letter Carriers are liked and trusted. Everyone loves the letter carrier. They are one of the Postal Service's biggest assets."

I doubt if this Postal Commission is going to come up with any good suggestions as not one of them works for the Post Office. One of the best ways to save money and improve the post office would be to get rid of all the dead wood managers. There are more managers in every office than are needed. They get the bonuses and never have to worry about getting punished or terminated.

One of our biggest problems is the loss in mail volume. In 1998 there were 54 billion 1st class letters. In 2002 there were 49 billion. There are more delivery boxes but less mail because of e-mail. Serious problems may be in store for the post office.

They are going to put on a big push to regain the parcel business. (Same thing they gave away over 50 years ago.) They hope to reduce the clerk craft by at least 16,000 by the end of 2003. 58,000 are eligible to retire but they know that many won't. From what I've read, there will be no incentive given to retire.

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

In The Knowby **George McEndree**

As of February 20, 2003, it has been 211 years since the U.S. Post Office was created, by then President George Washington. I'm sure this act was signed in order to give the people of the United States a *viable and trusting service* in order for all American citizens to communicate. I myself have had the privilege to be a part of those 211 years by working for the Post Office, and then the Postal Service, for some twenty years. If there is one thing I can testify to in the years of my experience it is that the public in general had a trust, respect, admiration and appreciation of what we did on a daily basis as letter carriers.

Unfortunately the trust and respect we once had with our patrons is changing, this change being a negative one. I'll give you some simple examples of why their feelings are changing. First I would like to try to figure out who is responsible for the ever-changing public opinion of the United States Postal Service as being a service. It certainly can't be the fault of letter carriers, for we do what we are told by management. For whatever reason it seems that management, especially upper management, lacks the insight and awareness of what the public's needs really are. That being *service!* Because of management's ignorance of what the Postal Service is all about, it is heading downhill in a self-

destructing mode. There are definitely some stupid decisions being made in the upper level of management. These decisions are not only unpopular with lower management, but also trickle down resulting in the dissatisfaction of the letter carrier and the disgruntlement of our patrons. One example of this is when, in delivering to apartment complexes, management has decided to make one drop to the office of apartments, even though the units all have their own mail receptacles (this really irks the customers.)

Another example of bad decision making was when they had an opportunity to have the account of the World Champion Tampa Bay Buccaneers but this multi-million dollar account was lost to UPS. Way to go, management!

With all that said, I've got to tell you last month's branch meeting was a perfect example of the importance of attending these meetings. I'm talking about union members coming together regardless of the issue at hand, to be present to hear the pros and cons of an issue, to voice your opinions and to finally vote on the action that is most popular with the membership. This is your **UNION!** Be a part of it. If you don't show up and share your concerns, how can you have any gripes? **THINK ABOUT IT!**

In Solidarity,

Brother George HPCA

ARSLAN UNIFORMS

Bill 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: 727584-4307

LARGO, FL 33770-3063 CELL: 727-530-2542 FAX: 727-535-9367

wfm505@tampabay.rr.com

Your EAP Provides:

Easy access to services
Getting help is easy, convenient and confidential. Just call 1-800-EAP-4-YOU to speak with a live person at anytime. Our intake specialists and professional counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to discuss your concerns. Crisis counseling is always available to insure that you get the help you need when you need it.

Immediate resources
Whether there is an immediate crisis in the workplace or the need for a resource address close to you, the EAP is ready to provide services to meet your needs. You can get names and resources in your community that provide Child Care and Elder Care services by calling 1-800-EAP-4-YOU or by accessing the website: www.EAP4YOU.com.

Personalized care
The Employee Assistance Program representative will help you:

Clarify The Problem. The EAP representative will help you clarify the issue for which you are seeking help. This insures that your concern is being addressed.

Identify Options. Together, you and the representative will explore alternatives for addressing the problem. EAP counselors provide an objective point of view and can offer suggestions that you may not have been considering.

Develop a Plan. An individualized plan is then developed. The plan may involve short-term counseling through the EAP or a referral to a helpful resource in the community. Family members may also be included in counseling

as part of the action plan for problem resolution. In all cases, the decision of how to handle your concern and manage your life is up to you.

Confidentiality

Your privacy is protected by strict federal and state confidentiality laws and regulations and by professional ethical standards for counselors. Information you share with the EAP may not be released to anyone without your prior written consent, except as required by law (e.g. when a person's emotional condition is a threat to him or herself or others, or there is suspected abuse of a minor child, and in some states, spousal or elder abuse).

At varying times in each of our lives we must face personal problems. Some problems are more easily resolved than others, but many can best be solved with professional assistance.

The EAP can help you resolve your personal concerns, so you can be your best at work and at home. Among other things, the EAP can help you with:

- Work Stress
- Relationship Problems
- Anger Management
- Coping with Change
- Child Care Services
- Elder Care Services
- Family/Parenting Issues
- Anxiety or Depression
- Alcohol or Drug Dependancies
- Grief or Bereavement

The Employee Assistance Program is provided by the USPS for its employees and their families, through an agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Federal Occupational Health Services.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Who can use the Employee Assistance Program?

A. Services are available to USPS employees and their families.

Q. When can I call the Employee Assistance Program?

A. You can call 1-800-EAP-4-YOU anytime, 24 hours a day, seven days a week — from wherever you are. You will always speak to a live person when you call.

Q. How much will the EAP cost me?

A. There is no cost to employees who receive counseling and other services provided directly by the EAP. If additional outside professional services are needed, the costs are your responsibility if not covered by your Federal Employee Health Benefit Plan or private insurance. The EAP will work with you to identify the best available outside treatment services in line with your individual finances.

Q. Is the program just for workplace problems?

A. No. You can use the EAP to help you deal with any number of concerns, big or small, whether or not they have a direct impact on your work environment.

Q. Can I call even if my concern isn't a crisis?

A. Yes. The Employee Assistance Program is a life management tool, designed to help you sort through whatever is happening in your life. Call your program when you need a new perspective on things. Call when you need help identifying your options and making informed choices. Program services have been provided to help you live healthy and work well.

A Closer Look At Tampa Letter Carriers, Inc.

by Brian Obst

TLC - Tampa Letter Carriers, Inc. – is a corporation established to provide a social and recreational facility for the members of Branch 599, N.A.L.C. The board of this corporation meets monthly to tend to matters necessary for the operation of the corporation.

My name is Brian Obst and I ran, unsuccessfully, for the TLC, Inc. board in Dec 2002. After losing the election, I approached the outgoing chairman, Mr. Quintanilla, and asked if I was able to attend the TLC board meetings as I wanted to learn more about the operations the board was involved in should I run for the board again in the future. Mr. Quintanilla told me that the board meetings were open to all members in good standing of Branch 599 N.A.L.C. The only thing was, I would not be able to speak at the meetings unless I had previously petitioned the board to do so.

With this information in hand, I went to the Jan 03 meeting. During this meeting I was asked if I was on the board and I stated no that I was only there as an observer trying to learn. The new board asked me to step out while a debate took place as to whether I was allowed to remain and observe the proceedings.

I must point out that while I was observing I was taking notes in full view of all present. The board chair took offense to this and told me it was illegal to do so. I stopped and surrendered my notes to be shredded. These notes disappeared by meetings end and, while the chair told me they had been shredded I have no way of knowing this for certain.

The debate as to whether I could stay ended with me being allowed to remain. I attended the February 3rd meeting and was again asked to step outside while debate took place as to whether I could attend the meeting and the outcome this time was to not allow me to remain.

My concern with this issue is why I, a member in good standing and a shop steward for Branch 599 N.A.L.C., cannot attend the meetings of the TLC board. The TLC, Inc. Bylaws do not deny any member access so why does the board attempt to do so? The Articles of Incorporation state that it is established for the members of Branch 599 N.A.L.C. This is a non-profit corporation that answers to the membership of the branch so why can I, a branch member, not attend to see and learn what is happening since this board is answerable to me as a member of the branch?

The meetings of the TLC, Inc. board are listed on the calendar in this newsletter and I highly recommend that all members take a strong interest in these meetings to learn what is going on at TLC, Inc. as it is for all of us in the branch membership. Remember: Knowledge is the key to all things.

In Brotherhood,
Brian Obst
Shop Steward - Town & Country Station

NOTICE

Branch 599 Trustee John Derosa has resigned his position effective immediately. I have appointed Town & Country Shop Steward Brian Obst to replace him for the remainder of the term. Brian has shown his dedication to the branch in the past as a steward and will be an asset in his new role as Trustee.

Jim Good



APRIL 2003

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		<i>1</i> <i>Shop Steward Meeting</i>	<i>2</i> <i>Bingo</i>	<i>3</i> <i>Union Meeting</i>	<i>4</i> <i>Bingo</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>6</i>	<i>7</i> <i>Breakfast Club</i> <i>The Coffee Cup</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i> <i>Bingo</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i> <i>Bingo</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>13</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i> <i>Bingo</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i> <i>Bingo</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>20</i> <i>Happy Easter</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>22</i> <i>TLC Meeting</i>	<i>23</i> <i>Bingo</i>	<i>24</i> <i>Executive Board Meeting</i>	<i>25</i> <i>Bingo</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>27</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>29</i> <i>Shop Steward Meeting</i>	<i>30</i> <i>Bingo</i>	<i>Union Meeting</i>		

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