



Tampa Letter Carrier

Volume 2 - Issue 3

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

March 2003

President's Report

by Jim Good

President - Branch 599

On January 25th Branch 599 held their annual Retirees'/Installation Dinner at the Union Hall. I'm pleased to announce that over 225 people were in attendance, and although I would have hoped for more everyone there had a great time. The food, prepared by Catering by the Family, was excellent, and all in all it was a very enjoyable evening. Our National Vice-President, Gary Mullins, was the installing officer, and it was an honor to meet and talk with him. He gave a very interesting yet disturbing speech about the future of the Postal Service and their relationship with the National Association of Letter Carriers.

President Bush has established a Commission on the United States Postal Service to identify the operational, structural, and financial challenges facing the Postal Service in the years to come. The Commission, established on December 11th, will recommend legislative and administrative steps to ensure that the USPS stays viable well into the future. Although the NALC agrees that changes need to be made concerning the USPS, some of the topics being investigated by the commission are alarming.

One of the sub-committees, the Workforce Subcommittee, will be responsible for assessing the Postal Service's current collective bargaining and dispute resolution procedures as well as reviewing alternative methods. It will review employee pay and other related labor costs, as well as productivity and workers'

compensation costs. They will submit a report to the president by July 31, 2003.

As you can see, letter carriers will be under the microscope even more so in the very near future to find new ways to make us more productive and take away more of our bargaining rights.

Because of this commission, and the changes that may come about because of their findings, President Bill Young will be going around the country, speaking at Regional Rap Sessions, to organize letter carriers in a national letter writing campaign. Not since the days prior to the 1970 Postal Reorganization Act has the future of the Letter Carriers' job been in more jeopardy. I will keep the membership of our Branch updated on the status of President Young's campaign as more information becomes available.

Locally, the climate in Tampa gets worse by the day. The powers that be, on the third floor at the GMF, are spending countless hours trying to think of new ways to make letter carriers' lives miserable. It's not bad enough that they are forcing carriers to work overtime against their will, they have now taken to trying to figure out new ways to circumvent the newly signed Local Agreement pertaining to annual leave percentages. A few examples: I, as the President of

(continued on page 4)



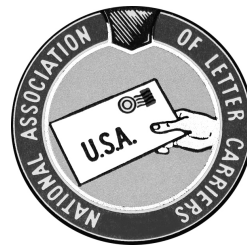
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MEETING
THURSDAY
MARCH 6
7:30 PM
AT
THE
UNION HALL**

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

Branch 599, am being counted against the compliment of carriers allowed to be on annual leave at Hilldale Annex. All carriers that have been called back into active duty in the military are being counted against the compliment, as well as carriers that have put in their paperwork for retirement. At one station, the station manager has been told to count five such carriers against the compliment,

leaving no slots open for annual leave as long as those five carriers are off work. Now that's what I call working together.

Your Officers and Stewards will do all that is necessary to handle these and any other situations that threaten the well-being of the Letter Carriers of Branch 599.

ARSLAN UNIFORMS

Bill Moran

Retired Letter Carrier Branch 1477 St. Petersburg

Honorary Member Branch 599 Tampa

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The Watts Line

by John A. Watts

Executive Vice-President - Branch 599

The relationship between this union and management in the city of Tampa is at an all time low. Why is this happening, you may ask. Well, from my perspective, upper management in this city is doing everything they can to violate the contract and to undermine the leadership of Branch 599.

In one instance upper management told certain station managers that the union president had agreed to minor adjustments to avoid a full week's route inspection. This was not the truth. What President Good said is, if they wanted to do minor adjustments until such time as the route inspections were scheduled, that would not be a problem but since there is no current data at the stations to be inspected, a full week's inspection would be required, according to the M-39. This UNTRUTH caused great discord at the stations causing, in my opinion, a hostile work environment.

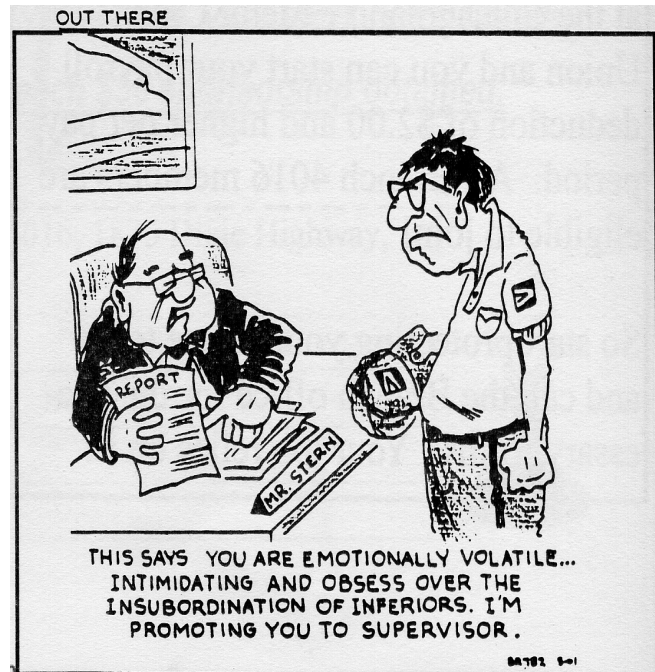
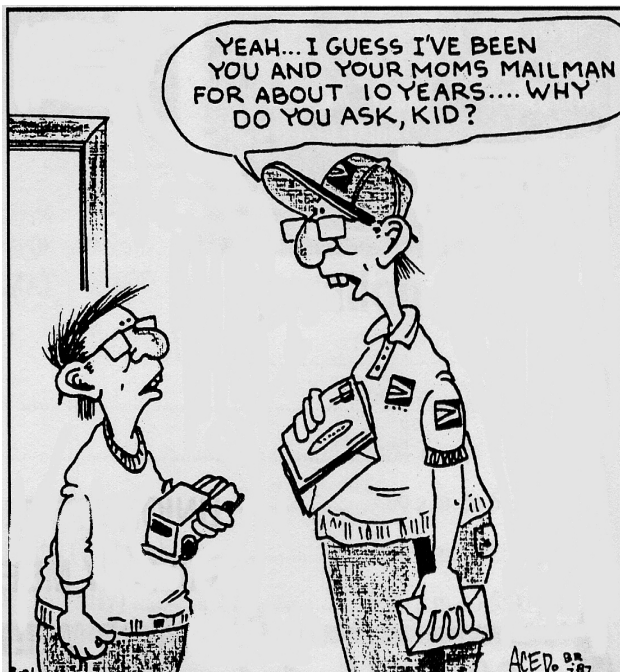
In another incident, upper management was contacting individual stewards and telling them they had no right to file a grievance because they had a deal with the union president that all Article 12 grievances would be handled by the president himself. The letter carriers are being told that the mail volume is the worst it has been since the great depression and the recession of the

1980's. This may be the case around the United States but it is not the case here in the city of Tampa.

A carrier at the Forest Hills Annex was being challenged on a daily basis about his productivity. The carrier requested an office count to verify management figures. Low and behold, the flats that were counted by the computer and management were approximately 550 flats. The manager conducted the requested office count (verified by the carrier) showing approximately 775 flats. It makes you wonder why we are being told that mail volume is down. I feel the volumes are purposely being deflated to increase productivity in order to eliminate routes.

All letter carriers should closely watch what is happening in Washington, especially the committee that was formed on postal reform. The present administration is slowly contracting out bits and pieces of the Postal Service.

Why do you think the APWU signed an extension of their contract until the year 2006? Why do you think management is spending a lot of money on rural route counts? Every department in the USPS is being attacked. Stay informed and get active in voicing our concerns to our elected officials.



Over The Edge

by Marilyn Cutting

Last month our union president wrote how he's never seen morale so low amongst the letter carriers. I say that's an understatement! Low? There is *no* morale out here in the trenches. I'm sure our president gets his ear full of carriers calling or visiting about the constant abuses going on in the stations. We live it, day-in, day-out from the time we punch on the clock to the time we go home (at whatever hour).

There are those days too when you bring it home with you no matter how much you try to leave it at work. What ever happened to the old postal line "eight hours work for eight hours pay"? Now they want ten hours of work done in eight hours. They want you to put up two routes and still use only eight hours. After inspections they add on to your route and blame *you* if you go over eight hours. They want you to come in sick and if you ask to go home, they tell you they won't give you a trip and you can go home after eight hours. They want you to have an *hour of power* so you won't go over eight hours.

They excess carriers claiming we don't have eight hours to give them and yet PTF'S put in 56 hours. In recent weeks a new game has started: PTF'S are now only getting six hours (to show that there really isn't enough time to bring back excessed carriers) and other carriers are getting ten hours instead of eight.

It's all a numbers game. Every morning a supervisor comes by and says "...according to the numbers I've calculated from your APS and SPUR'S, you should have 30 minutes undertime." They don't actually ask me, the person, if I can do it. If the machine says so, then it must be the truth. I am not me; I am a route number. When I scan my MSP points, there's a machine that detects where I am. Those are then downloaded into a computer every evening and in the morning I will be informed from the supervisor if I have performed "*well*" according to the numbers. No wonder a letter carrier was killed in Missouri. He was going against some manager, sitting at a desk and looking at his numbers, who ignored that carrier's concern about delivering in the dark. He never considered this man's family. He saw only a route number about which he would have to explain the next day to his supervisor the reason for using more than eight or ten hours. He saw his bonus numbers going out

the window. How have we come to this point in our lives that we are simply a number?

Are we now being asked to give our lives up to satisfy a computer's readout? Do we have to decide whether we disobey a direct order and pay with our jobs or even our lives? If you are in an occupation such as the military, the police, a fireman, you can well understand that your life is on the line. But DELIVERING MAIL?

The final insult to my humanity came when at a recent safety meeting our station manager trotted out these orange vests to wear if we are out delivering in the dark. I have never, ever, been as humiliated in my years in the post office as when I saw this meeting of station managers flashing through my mind with them discussing the dilemma of carriers working in the dark. I saw them laughing at us all and saying to each other how the vests would solve all the late night delivery problems. I could just see them laughing - "Ha, Ha...go back to your stations and present these safety vests to your union stewards." Now we'll all be safe. A VEST?! What an ultimate slap in the face - an insult to my intelligence - to stand there and tell me that. Now I know I'm not Marilyn, but truly only a route number.

Mr. President, morale is low because we are treated in this way. Morale is low because when we go to union meetings we get no answers. Let me assure you I know grievances are being filed. I know how long they take to resolve (I had one that went on for over a year), but we still have to work our routes without help. We are being forced to work overtime when not on any list. Our routes are being changed over 50%. We are taking questionable neighborhoods' mail out in the dark. People are going out on stress leaving no one to cover their routes except us. Leave is being denied all year long because we have to carry these absent people on our leave roster. We are working in dirty, filthy trucks. We are having surprise supervision on the street not only by one, but two supervisors.

Mr. President, come to the stations. Talk to us, give us some hope, then perhaps our morale will once again make us proud to call ourselves letter carriers, to see ourselves as worthwhile individuals and not only as a statistic.

And The Beat Goes On

by Ray Wallace

The annual Retiree/Shop Steward Installation Dinner Dance on January 25 was great. The food was excellent and there was free tap beer. Presidents from Clearwater, St Petersburg and Lakeland were there as was former national officer Jim Sousa and his ever beautiful wife. NALC Vice President Gary H. Mullins was the installing officer and he has said that he has a habit of talking too much and I will agree with that. He was interesting but a bit too long for a dinner/dance program.

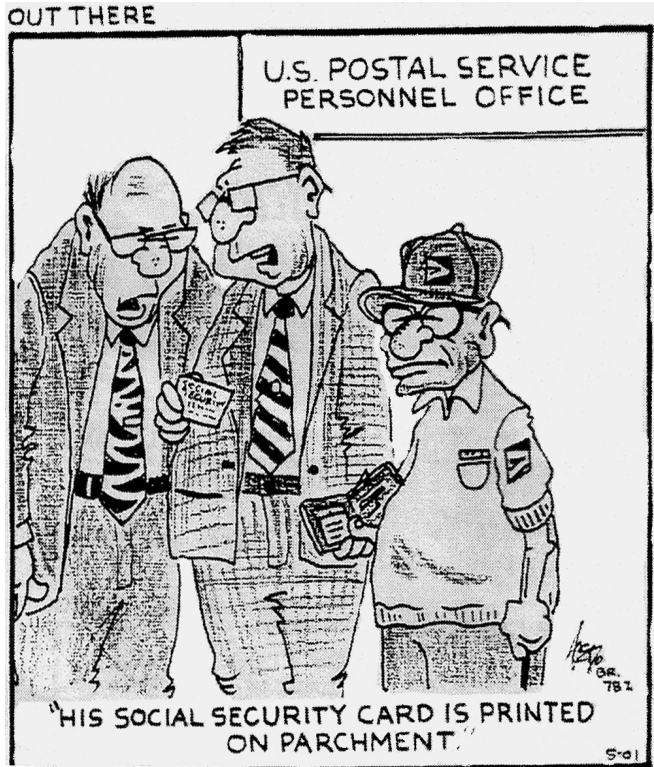
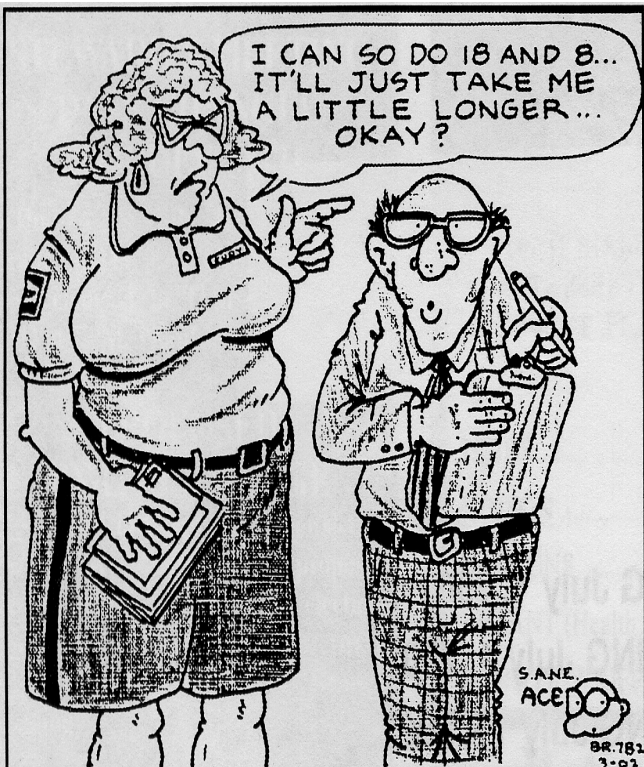
A big thank you to Jack Newman who does a lot of behind-the-scenes work with tickets, getting all the retiree gifts, etc. Surprise! Brandon had a good showing for a change. The Brandon attendees were Lorraine Hass-Oldziej (OJ), Doug Rinaldi, Michele Dresden, Alicia Gebo, Jim Brophy, retirees Al Naubaum, Karen Pasco, Helen McMakin, and yours truly.

I am sure you're all aware that Vince Sombrotto has retired after 24 years as our NALC national president. I myself believe no matter how good a president is, there should be a limit as to how long they stay in office. Plus, what a tough job it is now for our new president, Bill Young, to take over. The same goes for our former branch president, Lenny Perez who said "I've had enough" and left after

eleven years as president to pursue a quieter life away from all the BS of Branch 599.

Now we have a new President, Jim Good, who is taking over and I'm sure it's not an easy task to take over where Perez left off and especially in some of the most trying times ever faced by any president. We have the republican president George Bush who is 100% against labor and for sure against unions. He has a committee right now investigating the Post Office. He is against the working class people making overtime and wants to do away with it. President Bush's aim is to make the rich get richer and you and I, the working class, poorer.

More than ever, all of us need to be united as one. Branch 599 President Jim Good is facing labor battles like never before. You have all seen it with the route inspections, cutting of routes, transferring regular carriers away from their stations, working in the dark, the total disrespect from floor managers of all carriers and our contracts. Shop stewards need to try and get as many non-union carriers as possible to join the union. This is a fight for the survival of all carriers and it can only be done, not alone, but as a group. And that group is the NALC.



Labor Representative Report

by Matthew V. Kokich

President Bush named a nine-member commission in December to develop a new vision for the U.S. Postal Service and to recommend legislative changes to ensure "long-term viability of postal services." The Commission is expected to hold hearings around the country and in Washington and meet with members of Congress, major mailers and other interested parties. Its final report is due July 31, 2003. Legislation on our part will be very important on any changes that may take place with our Jobs. This is not an "us and them" theory. All of us must take the time to stay informed on all Legislative Proposals. This is the time more than ever that we all get involved in what may come about from The Commissions Proposals. But keep in mind

that we should focus and concentrate on how each Branch will voice there concerns to their local politicians on any proposals that may harm us and our jobs. The Postal Record and our Branch will help us all in this task and keep us informed. Now is also the time to take advantage and give to COLCPE (Committee on Letter Carriers Political Education). If all members of Branch 599 gave a \$25.00 contribution with approximately 800 members it would add up substantially, do the math. With July 31, 2003 not very far from here let us all try and give each month. I believe this will show a strong alliance from our branch.

In Solidarity

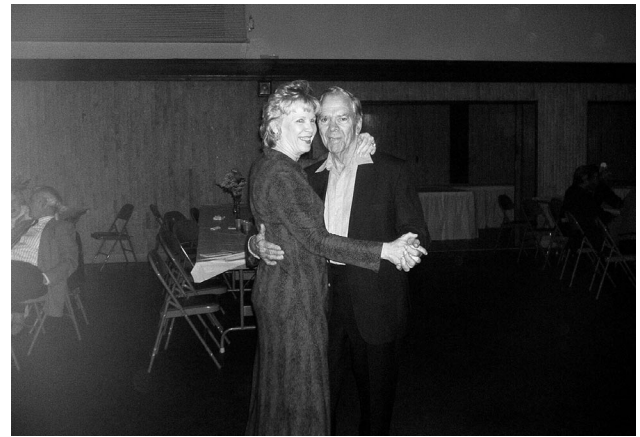
MBA / NSBA Report

by Al Guice

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MARCH 2003

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3 <i>Breakfast Club The Coffee Cup</i>	4 <i>Shop Steward Meeting</i>	5 <i>Bingo</i>	6 <i>Union Meeting</i>	7 <i>Bingo</i>	8
9	10	11	12 <i>Bingo</i>	13	14 <i>Bingo</i>	15
16	17	18	19 <i>Bingo</i>	20	21 <i>Bingo</i>	22
23	24	25 <i>TLC</i>	26 <i>Bingo</i>	27 <i>Ex-Board</i>	28	29
30	31					

APRIL 2003

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

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