

Tampa Letter Carrier

Volume 7 - Issue 5

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

Tampa, Florida

May 2008

President's Report

Committee of Presidents Report

I recently attended the Committee of Presidents' meeting in New Haven, Connecticut. The meeting is held twice a year at different locations throughout the country. There is always a great deal of information that comes out of these meetings, either directly from our National President, from agenda items that are discussed on the floor between the branch presidents in attendance or from the conversations that take place after the meetings are over in one of the *hospitality rooms*. The very fact that there are presidents from all across the nation available to speak with, as well as those from Puerto Rico and occasionally the U.S. Virgin Islands, makes these meetings a valuable way to find out how other branches handle situations that we all deal with.

The meeting opened with an update from our National President Bill Young. On Sunday morning President Young started out by informing us that the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), a Washington, DC think tank, released information regarding what they considered a "good job" in the United States today. It must be comprised of three essential items. First,

prised of three essential items. First, the salary must be at least \$35,000 per year. Secondly, it must include some type of health benefit plan (at least partially paid by the employer). And lastly, there must be some kind of employer sponsored retirement plan (not necessarily contributed to by the employer). This is what they considered a "good job" in America today. They stated that only 23% of the jobs in our country meet these standards! Compare these figures with the job of a letter carrier and you will see what our union has done for us. A top-level carrier's base pay is over \$50,000 per year, the USPS pays well over 75% of our health benefit plan and matches 5% towards our retirement.

President Young then gave an update on the Contract Delivery Service routes. The USPS had originally identified approximately 3,000 city only delivery units in the country. After much investigation and discussion around nine hundred additional units have been added to that list and a finalized total has been agreed upon. Those units are currently being adjusted and the contract deliveries are being changed to city delivery. (The units represented by Branch 599 have been correctly identified and verified with our National Executive Vice-President Fred Rolando. I will be speaking with Fred in the near future regarding the time frame for these deliveries to be changed to "city delivery routes".)

The topic of Transitional Employees was addressed next. The question of

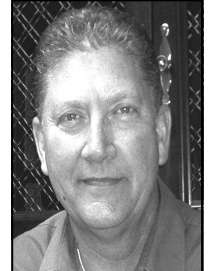
moving TE's from one installation to another was raised and President Young stated that there are still many TE questions unanswered and currently being discussed. In our branch, because we only have three offices other than Tampa, this has not been a major issue. PTF's are not normally permitted to move between installations and TE's should be treated in the same manner. President Young then spoke on the lawsuit filed against the Office of Inspector General concerning the medical privacy issues. He stated that no one has ever successfully sued the OIG office, but our attorneys feel we have a strong case and we will follow through with the case.

President Young then asked that all Letter Carriers send a letter to their representatives and senators asking them to support the Employee Free Choice Act (HR 800, S 1041). These bills would do a number of things to protect employees trying to form unions. They would provide mediation and arbitration for first contract disputes. To find more information just *google* "Employee Free Choice Act" and you will see all the benefits future union activists would receive from the passage of this legislation.

As you can see, the COP meetings are very informative. These are just a few of the many issues that were discussed at this meeting. Come to our branch meeting on May 1st and I'll fill you in on the rest.

by Jim Good

President - Branch 599



IN THIS ISSUE

RUNNING WITH YOU.....	3
THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW.....	5
AROUND THE HORN	6
AND THE BEAT GOES ON	7

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Forest Hills	33612	Warren Sumlin	(813) 486-7612
Forest Hills Annex	33613	Alan Robinson	(813) 843-9762
Hilldale	33614	A. Sam Santilli	(813) 215-7595
Hilldale Annex	33634	Bill Mandikas	(813) 263-8636
Hyde Park	33606	Tom Cobert	(813) 694-0711
Interbay	33611	Sammy Graham	(813) 832-6644
Interbay	33629	Jim Tobin	(813) 716-3696
MacDill	33608	Sammy Graham	(813) 832-6644
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newsletter@nalc599.com

RETIREES BREAKFAST
(In Tampa)
First Monday of Every Month
9:00 AM at
The Coffee Cup
4407 N. Hubert
in Drew Park

RETIREES BREAKFAST
(In Brandon)
Second Tuesday of Every Month
8:00 AM at
Buddy Freddy's
134 Gornto Lake Rd S.
in Brandon

Read the *Tampa Letter Carrier* online at
<http://www.nalc599.com/newsletter.htm>

Running With You

by Dook Ramotar

Executive Vice-President - Branch 599

Training Seminar

I sat in the training seminar for Stewards conducted by the FSA of Letter Carriers in Maitland, FL- my first as Executive Vice President of Branch 599. My mind wandered to my first training seminar as a Steward, which was in Key West, Florida. I still remember to this day two guys who started out with me, probably not at the same time as Stewards but who were training together- John DeRosa who works in Produce and Steward Sam Santilli of Hillsdale. They were good days and we took our training seriously.

Anyway, as I reflected back to the present, I looked around and saw some guys who were there for their first time as Stewards and wondered whether they would be the new leaders of the future of Branch 599.

The training was informing as usual. They passed out a list of Branches who participated in last year's Muscular Dystrophy Association Fundraising for the year 2007. A total of 18 branches were listed and Branch 599 came in second out of those branches. We lost by about \$90.00 from 1st place.

A big Thank you to all the carriers who participated in helping Jerry Kids, also thanks to Eric Fleming who organized the drive. An award was presented, which was accepted by President Good. Better luck this year guys.

There was an article in the St. Pete Times on Sunday March 9, 2008. Running with you would like to share excerpts from it:

"Postal Service pinched by the economy, E-mail consumers are switching to paying their bills online- first class mail are drying up.

Now a new trend in Consumers Activism- do not mail lists ending in 18 states- threatens to reduce deliveries of catalogs and other junk mail that makes up the largest volume of postal deliveries.

Because of these factors, postal officials are expecting operating deficit of \$1 billion this year.

Postmaster General John Potter told a senate subcommittee we cannot afford literally or figuratively to begin the year more than \$1 billion in the red- we would never be able to dig out of that hole."

The article went on to say as recently as 2004 the postal service has a \$3.1 billion surplus. If my math is correct, at the end of 4 years we lost \$4.1 billion.

To prevent this from happening again, heads will have to roll- we have to round up the usual suspects who caused this to happen- The letter carriers whose motto is neither rain nor sleet no snow etc. neither one billion dollars will not stop them from their duty. Of course, we have to do longer routes- and extra work within the 8 hour day. The lowly carrier can't pass it on, not to the customers, we need them- what about the dogs we come in contact with, that's animal cruelty. Therefore, we have the task of making sure we do not make that shortfall of 1 billion dollars this year.

Of course, our bosses also won't let this happen. They will have a plan.

"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."

Albert Einstein



Arslan Uniform Drawing

The name drawn at the April Branch meeting for the \$90.00 Arslan Uniform prize was Tony Pupello.

Because Tony was not in attendance the prize will go up to \$100.00 for the May meeting.

Just come to the meeting, hear what is going on in your union and win \$100.00 if your name is drawn!

Branch Meeting
Thursday, May 1 - 7:30 PM

ARSLAN UNIFORMS

Bill & Shirley Moran

Retired Letter Carrier Branch 1477 St. Petersburg

Honorary Member Branch 599 Tampa

***NEED UNIFORMS IN A HURRY?
SHOP BY PHONE FROM HOME***

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bilmor@tampabay.rr.com

TAMPA LETTER CARRIERS PRESENT

BINGO

Come join the fun

EVERY WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAY

**DOORS OPEN AT 5:30
GAMES START AT 6:30**

AT THE TAMPA LETTER CARRIERS HALL

3003 W. CYPRESS St .

Tampa, Fl . 33609 813-877-4785

Things You Should Know

Representation for All

Union dues were created for the sole purpose of representation for all members, not just the established members. This last contract the Union was finally able to negotiate Union Rights for all our members. This is the last part of our member structure that solidifies our great Union. The ability to represent our newest member is what our Union was striving to achieve. Our TE employees can now join our Union on their very first day of employment and receive their representation. In the last 2 years within our EEO process, we have represented 4 PTF employees and now a TE employee. That means that our Union has finally gone full cycle in representing all Letter Carriers. All 5 employees were threatened with dismissal and discipline charges. One of our PTF employees was dismissed in their 85th day, fortunately this charge was overturned and the employee was given a new 90 probationary period. Another one of our PTF employees was reassigned to a different station because of all the ongoing disciplinary prob-

lems created for them in that building. Still another PTF employee was transferred into another craft because of their personal problems to fulfill their carrier duty assignments. The last PTF employee had dismissal charges because of their inability to control their anger issues. This same employee did the unspeakable and displayed their anger at our EEO hearing, which of course didn't help win our case. Now for the last part of our story, our TE employee was dismissed in their 60 day evaluation period. This TE employee was dismissed, not because of their work ethics or their inability to perform the job, but because of their attitude. It appears that when all else fails within a managers desire to fire you, they can use your attitude. Maybe management feels that they can dismiss any employee within their 90 day probation period with little evidence or resistance from the Union. Upon questioning during our hearing with the managers, this TE employee didn't display this attitude among the carriers in the station or field from any complaints from the customers during this period. How come this attitude was displayed during an office evaluation with the 2 supervisors? Of course this TE employee was alone during that evaluation without his Shop Steward. Can

by Gilbert Cabanas

Vice-President - Branch 599

you imagine a TE or any employee displaying a vocal attitude during their 60 or 90 day evaluation discussion? Luckily after much discussion, we were able to transfer this TE employee with a help of the labor department to another city location within that area. So in the end we were able to help overturn the unjustly treatment with 4 of our members. I now feel that that old adage that your are only as strong as your weakest link or newest member is true now within our Union. So please don't be afraid to voice or file a complaint with your Shop Steward or EEO representative whenever you feel you have been treated unjustly or some sort of discipline was displayed against you unfairly. Remember that you're not alone in the Union process, you have people who can and will help you solve your problems even if you are only a TE employee.



Retired But Not Tired

Joy and Sorrow

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Branch 599,

A past month of joy, sorrow, and happiness. While I was on vacation, I came home to find a message on my recorder from Retiree John Danielson. John had left his phone number and I returned his call. He went on to say how he enjoys our newsletter and reading my article. He now lives in Blue Hill, Maine. The day I spoke to him, they had snow flurries and snow still on the ground. What a change from Florida. John retired in 1983 from the USPS at age 60. If my addition is correct, that makes John 85 years young. Good health to you and your wife. Stay warm!

At our April Union meeting we had two members receive their Gold Cards. These Gold Cards are given to members

for being Union Members for 50 years. Retiree Earl Thurston Jr. and Oscar "Big O" Torres. Congratulations to both of you on this accomplishment. I never had the pleasure of working with Brother Thurston or Brother Torres. I got to know the "Big O" from his attendance at union meetings, and national and state conventions. I can't remember him missing one. The "Big O" as he was called, is a small man in stature but has a big heart. Seeing this man at age 94 years old come to receive his 50 years "Gold Card" was very special to me. The standing ovation that he and Brother Thurston Jr. received when President Good called them to the podium was well deserved. I will always remember the words Brother Oscar "Big O" Torres said, "I love this organization. I love this organization." May God bless you both and keep you in good health.

On a sadder note we lost Retiree Brother Frank Bohannon on April 2,

by John Gebo

Director of Retirees - Branch 599

2008. Brother Quintanilla and this writer attended the service on April 4 to give our condolences to the Bohannon family and Brother Dave. Dave is also a retired member of Branch 599. The Bohannon Brothers... a pair that would beat a full house. Playing cards after the union meetings with Frank was always relaxing and enjoying. He was a very shrewd player. Bo, as he was called, was a decorated WWII Veteran. Not once did I ever hear him mention the medals of commendation he had won. That was the kind of man Bo was. Twenty years Air Force. Fifteen years U.S.P.S. What a career! I'll always remember you by that little smirkey smile, when I had a full house and you came up with four aces. Thanks for being my poker buddy and may God Bless you on your flight to



(continued on page 6)

Around The Horn

Growing Postal Revenue

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank my Brothers and Sisters who responded to my ATH article last month. Hopefully the information will be useful should you be confronted with a situation that needs your attention.

As all of you are well aware, our economy isn't in the greatest of shape, in fact some economists' claim we are in a recession. You hear it every day about someone losing their job or how slow business is or how skyrocketing costs (materials, fuel, etc.) are crippling company profits.

We cannot presume for a minute the United States Postal Service is impervious to an economic slow down. With decreasing mail volumes and increasing operating costs, the USPS is feeling the crunch. With private companies looking to capture pieces of our product, we must become much more aggressive from a business standpoint.

I know some of you might be asking where are you going with this? I am guaranteed 40 hours a week, what does this have to do with me? Certainly, all of us must open our eyes and realize the urgency to create new business and generate new income to ensure and secure our retirement from the USPS.

On March 26th, I attended a 2-hour introduction to the improved Customer Connect Program. Along with fellow carriers, supervisors, President Jim Good and our District Manager, a more aggressive program was unveiled. This program has been endorsed and fully supported by NALC President Bill Young. A program that began in our Suncoast District in October of 2003, and having generated 2,867 leads, resulting in 609 sales and 11 million in projected annual revenue, has now been revamped. It's a program that is a key component of Postmaster General Jack

Potter's Transformation Plan to improve how the USPS operates and competes. Also it provides enhancements to make the USPS stronger and provide opportunities for the USPS to fight back and recapture lost revenue.

The success of Customer Connect, a revenue growth program, is vital to the future existence of the Postal Service. Letter Carriers will be asked to seek-out businesses (leads) that would possibly switch to USPS for shipping and other services. All Carriers will be provided a source code to keep track of new leads, with the goal of contacting 2 customers a month. Forms will be provided to fill out new company and contact information, what couriers they are currently using and approximately how many packages are being shipped.

New leads require a follow-up within 48 hours of assignment to Sales personnel. These assignments are directed into an external system and are available the next day to the sales staff. New technology will track the new leads to insure on-time follow-up that sales personnel will be held accountable for.

There will be weekly Customer Connect Service Talks, recognition and incentives to top-performing carriers. New leads alone will be rewarded with movie passes and drawings for gift cards.

Retirees Report (from page 5)

heaven.

On the way to our cars after the service, Brother Quint says to me, John, I didn't see anyone else from the post office or union here. My response was I guess the older you get the less people there are your age. Look at all the Brothers and Sisters that have gone before you. Brother Quint then said, I guess no one will be at my funeral, then. I promised him I would be at his service and funeral. As long as you go first. With a laugh, he said, that is nice to know that

by Tony Diaz

Financial Secretary - Branch 599



Remember if 100,000 Letter Carriers find 1 new customer per week to mail 1 Priority Mail package a day, the USPS will generate over 1 billion in new revenue. If 1000 Letter Carriers in the Suncoast District find 1 new customer per week to mail 1 Priority Mail package a day, this would generate over 1.4 million in new revenue. A sales staff representative should be arriving at your Station soon to introduce the more aggressive Customer Connect.

Quick Hits: Information you should know

*) NALC Food Drive is May 10th, the day before Mother's Day. Mark both days on your calendar.

*) The Safety and Health Committee seems to be headed in the right direction. I want to thank all the carriers involved in the Safety program for their efforts and support. There are some excellent Safety issues being worked on at the different stations, keep up the good work!

Look forward to talking to you again on the next Around The Horn

at least there will be one. Let us show respect to the families of our Brothers and Sisters during their time of sorrow by trying to attend their services.

On another sadder note, the lack of participation of active and retired letter carriers giving to COLCPE. The February edition of the Postal Record showed a very short list of Br. 599 members who donate. It amazes me how some who claim they are such strong union people can't afford to contribute \$5 a month to protect their job or retirement. With elections coming up in November, continued on page 7)

And The Beat Goes On

Not Much Has Changed

What I couldn't write in my May article because of time restrictions on getting this in to the editor, and the date of our Retiree Luncheon all conflicted, what I'd like to say is about our March 10th luncheon with George Bell & his wife in attendance from Arkansas.

Poor George was coming back to Florida from Arkansas for treatment. He just had a knee replaced and a week before he was to come back his son Randy was killed due to accidental shooting. Talk about life being bitter, huh? Knowing George would only be in Florida for one week, I tried to get as many carriers to come to our luncheon.

One big surprise was our retired postmaster, Bob O'Neil and his new wife who came in from Tennessee. I was going to call Tampa Postmaster Nancy Fryrear, but knowing her busy schedule I did not. But George told me Ms. Fryrear had sent him a nice card and also an email with her condolences.

Also in attendance were Bill Lister, Ron Burkett, Don Sorrel, Dick Arnold, Danny Nelson, Tom Shawah, Mrs. J. Myers, Jim Folke, Janice Hufstetler and yours truly. Too bad more didn't

come but that's life and their loss.

In past years all of the employees in Brandon would get together for a large picnic, even going as far as Coquina Beach in Bradenton Beach. We always had a lot of good times, clerks, carriers and the few good managers. None of us seem to realize how fast our life is going till we're retired and look back to the memories and ask, "Damn, where did the years go?"

I recently read this and I know you would like to know what your back-breaking work in the Post Office is doing for upper management. All of the senior postal officers got a nice raise. Postmaster General Potter got \$72,240, nearly a 39% increase. He now makes \$258,840.

The senior V.P. of operations got only a \$31,900 raise and now makes only \$215,000. Then at the lower level, the floor manager gets a performance bonus. So what are the carriers getting? From what I see, *the shaft*, as always.

I read other union branches' publications every month, ones that I requested years ago to be on their mailing list, including Lakeland, FL, West Coast, FL, St. Petersburg, FL, and Westchester, N.Y. I also read the Federal Times.

Recently this year as I was reading them I thought to myself, "What a damn shame that in thirty years not much has changed in the Post Office, especially with the

in Washington to support us. Please contribute to COLCPE. It is \$5 a month well spent.

At the April 7th Retirees Breakfast, those in attendance were Quintanilla, Bobeau, Lundy, Holt, Krezel, Follman, Adel, Jones, Edge, Fritts, Freeman, Dupree, and this writer. Welcome newcomer Jim Deignan. Jim retired in 1983 and still looks like the day he retired. Welcome aboard.

Next Retirees' Breakfast will be on May

way the poor letter carrier is treated. ("Why do you need overtime? My computer says you don't...") The intimidation goes on forever.

We now know that it will never end. The Post Office will always have what they call managers or supervisors, of which 80% are neither. They become managers because they don't want to work for a living.

In every walk of life there are people who do not like to work and I would be remiss if I did not say we have some who are letter carriers and maybe union officers, too. All I can say is always do your job as a professional letter carrier and you will stay out of trouble.

Management love to intimidate you. They know most letter carriers are honest, hard working individuals, and if they can get you to go faster, or break a rule, then you have made management happy.

But God help you if something goes wrong and you get into trouble because of your actions because no one is going to help you but the NALC.

The manager will say, "Who? I don't know him. Does he work in this office?"



by Ray Wallace

Retirees Report (from page 6)

we must lobby to get the right people elected. Don't take things for granted. In the March edition of the Tampa Tribune there was an article "The Postal Service in The 21st Century". It stated that Postal officials are expecting an operating deficit of \$1 billion this year. How much longer will this go on? Five-day delivery-private delivery, no delivery. With a swipe of a pen we could lose everything. This is not a joking matter; we need those

5, 2008. Hope to see you there. Call a retired friend, say "Hello", invite him or her to the next branch meeting or breakfast.

So, as Roy Rogers and Dale Evans sang, "Happy trails to you, until we meet again."

Fraternally,
John Gebo

Another Point of View

by Don Thomas

President Emeritus - Branch 599

Time To Plan For The Future

I keep reading and hearing about a *small vocal minority* at Branch 599. Our branch has always had members speak up on issues throughout the years and that keeps our branch strong. The *small vocal minority* of our members that attend the meetings are better informed, yes a *small vocal minority*. If you look at our entire membership, the members that attend and vote on the business of our branch are in fact a *small vocal minority*; a fact that has been in place for years.

Many of the brothers and sisters we see at union meetings today are the same faces that have been present for years. Granted, everyone cannot dedicate the time it takes to serve as a shop steward or officer of our branch; this takes a great deal of personal sacrifice in your life. We are very fortunate to have a *small vocal minority* willing to step up and go to bat for all of us.

Yes, it keeps going back to a *small vocal minority!* You can become part of that *small vocal minority* by attending your branch meetings and/or giving whatever time or expertise you can share with your brothers and sisters. Together we are an awesome force, divided we are vulnerable to defeat. Bottom line, we the members are the power of Branch 599. Those that came before us in this great Branch have given us so very much, just look at our union hall. What will we leave behind for the younger members and future members of our branch? The ball

is now in your court; will you pick it up or walk around it?

Now, to the proposed bylaw changes on elections, the majority of which were taken right out of the *NALC Regulations Governing Branch Election Procedures*, The PO Box portion was taken from the US Department of Labor's *Electing Local Union Officers by Mail* and the part on securing the PO Box key was put together by part of the group of members submitting these proposed changes. These proposed bylaw changes are in no way intended to make it more difficult for our Branch to conduct an election, they are spelled out in the language of our National to protect the Branch in future elections.

It is more important than ever that we, the members, do everything in our power to protect our Branch. Proposing these bylaw changes now, gives the Branch time to budget and plan for our first mail-out ballot should the bylaw changes pass. It would not be fair to anyone in our Branch to submit a bylaw change of this nature close to an election. Today is the time to plan for the future of our Branch.

Part of the *small vocal minority* attending the union meetings has voiced to this writer that if a member cannot or will not come to the union hall to vote, they do not need to vote. I disagree with that type of thinking. I believe that every member should receive a ballot to cast his or her vote. We live in a *right to work* state. Letter Carriers do not have to join our great union, they choose to join and support this Branch financially; they may not be at the meetings or active in any other way, but they keep paying dues to support our Branch. Not everyone is cut out to be a union officer or an active member; they do however, care

enough to pay dues to support our union.



Our National Union is trying to get our government's state and national elections conducted by mail. If we vote for these proposed bylaw changes, we can be a small part of that effort. We can let our National and State officers working on that project know that we have changed to mail-out ballots. Yes, I realize that this change is scary to some, but we must move forward. We can be leaders in this change to mail-out ballots. Change is rarely easy, but change is not always bad.

I would encourage each of you that can be at the May 1, 2008 Branch meeting to come with an open mind and listen to what is being discussed on these proposed bylaw changes. Make up *your* mind as to what *you* feel will be in the best interest of Branch 599, then vote as *you* believe, not as someone else has told or asked you to vote. The will of the membership is supreme and will rule; it is up to each of you to cast your vote. Should you choose not to vote, that too is your right, however, if you do not vote, I would ask that you support the will of the members that did vote.

Very Important: If you are one of the many members who, for whatever reason, cannot get out to the union hall for elections [or if you ever forgot or didn't know in time to request an absentee ballot], you need to go out of your way to attend the May 1, 2008 meeting...in order to vote on the proposed bylaw changes that will convert our voting procedures to a vote-by-mail system.

(continued on page 9)

Retirees Corner

On Matters of Concern

We live in a democratic society where freedom of speech is the essence and the lightning rod that drive our passion to speak and write on matters that affect us. When we speak, we speak responsibly in hope that what is set is accepted in an objective manner on the subject, specially when the speaker is saying is informative and of value, most important when the speaker brings forward is important, helpful for our organization and what is set will bring corrections and changes on issues that were improperly done.

In the April 2008 issue of the Tampa Letter Carrier, The Director of Retiree's in his monthly article makes a statement and he set "It amazes me how certain individuals come out after elections just to stir up the pot". The Director is making reference to this writer on a letter that was circulated at the February 2008 Union Meeting.

The following is excerpt of the letter past out at the meeting. Please, in the Tampa Letter Carrier February issue you will find the proposed Bylaw Changes concerning Article V Elec-

tion in our Bylaws. Come out and support the makers of the Bylaws changes.

I had the opportunity and privilege to serve in our past branch elections as an observer during both elections. In the past I served as Election Chairman in other branches, I was very much aware of the process and procedures to follow in carrying out the elections.

The branch elections are guided by separate Rule and Law. The first one is set by the Bylaw of the National Association Letter Carriers Elections for National and Associated Branches. The second is guided by the Department of Labor Employment Standards Administration Office of Labor Management Standards [OLMS]. The Union Bylaws and the guide lines under OLMS are set forward under a Democratic process.

The Union Bylaw should not be in conflict with OLMS during the process of the election, no conflict should entail between the parties involved in the election. The Election Chairman should not be at odds with either party and no one should have the appearance of a conflict of interest.

The past two election in my point of view were very complex and time consuming, procedures and rules were not followed to the full extend, we should adheres to

the process, for the benefit of the candidate running for office and for our Union.



My concerns, is to make you aware on how the by-laws of the branch affect the membership's best interest. Bylaws for Union Elections should be structured by strict guidelines, enforcement and fairness for the people involved in the process and for the membership.

Elections are not meant to divide us but to unite us; we must make changes when changes are needed as the will of the membership dictates. Every elected official has the responsibility to uphold our constitution and work to enforce the Bylaws in our Branch.

We stand in support of our elected Officers and Shop Stewards; their job is not as simple as some may think.

Being involved in this process has been a great learning experience, I was able to meet new friends and see good old once GBY. I encourage every one to participate in the activities of the Union. There is a place here for you and a chair at the Union Meetings waiting for you.

My wishes have always been that I be able in assisting my Union.

Another Point of View (from page 8)

Will you join us at the May branch meeting to vote for change, or will it be business as usual?

This has been said in many different ways and times: no matter which candidate or what changes you support, we all need to get behind the officers and changes that the membership votes for. This should never be personal; we should always be free to support any candidate of our choice and changes that we believe to be in the best interest of Branch 599, without reprisal from members who disagree.

Let me end by saying, it sure was nice to see my fa-

vorite writer put *The Cutting Edge* back in print. Marilyn has a wonderful way of writing and getting her message out. Thanks, Marilyn, for taking the time to share your thoughts with us; makes me real happy to say how great it is to be retired. Let me say that again...it sure is great to be retired!

Health & Welfare

We are sad to announce that Fred Obst, father of Town & Country carrier and Branch 599 Chief Steward Brian Obst, passed away on Saturday, March 29th. Retired carrier Frank Bohannon, brother of retired carrier David Bohannon, passed away on April 1, 2008. Our condolences go out to both of their families.

Hurling Stones

Rant By A Rookie

Since this is the first article that I have submitted I must ask that you allow me to introduce myself. My name is Timothy Hurlstone. I am a PTF assigned to the Hilldale Station. I have been with the Post Office since February '07.

Due to my relatively short time in the postal service, I am generally considered a rookie. That is fine with me and that is the basis from which I shall write. This article is based on certain things that I have observed and that annoy me greatly.

I have noticed that a number of my brother and sister carriers have a tendency to whine and moan about the current leadership of the branch and what the branch does and does not do for them. As unsolicited as it may be, here is my advice to them: Shut up.

That's it, no reasoning or cajoling. You are being represented by the people that YOU duly elected. If you are unhappy with the way things are being run, then either put yourself forward for a position, campaign for the person you think best suited, or at least come to the monthly meeting and bring up a point of personal interest.

I am sorry, but I am sick of hearing those who don't even come to the meetings complain about anything. I understand the reasoning that if you pay your dues then the union should represent you. However, it is YOUR union. Without the input of active carriers the union can not progress. Change can and will happen every day.

If I seem to be harsh, it is for a reason. The monthly meeting is just that: MONTHLY. It averages one hour. Multiplied by twelve months, that is twelve hours. That's right, only half of a day out of your life each year. And please don't give me the "I don't want to deal with traffic." By the time

by Timothy Hurlstone

the meeting is over it is much past "Rush Hour." Yes, that is correct, after the meeting you will get home more quickly, than if you went straight home from work. If you live closer to your office than the Union Hall, the drive ONCE a month won't hurt all that much.

Out of 1100 or so active members of our branch less than 100 show up for the meetings on a regular basis. That is less than 1/10th. Don't get me wrong, I truly believe that, most of the union membership has the "greater good" in mind. However, there is a much better forum for discussion than the workroom floor.

So please, if you want to better the union, come to the meetings. Express your thoughts there. Someone there may be able to educate you. Remember it is your career. You never know, you may learn something. And if I may be forgiven the quote showing my age. "Knowing is half the battle."



Branch President Jim Good and 50 year Gold Card recipient Oscar Torres during the presentation at the April 3rd Branch meeting.



Branch President Jim Good and 50 year Gold Card recipient Earl Thurston during the presentation at the April 3rd Branch meeting

Protect Yourself During Skin Cancer Awareness Month and Beyond

Nearly every hour, someone in the United States dies of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, and more than one million Americans will be diagnosed with skin cancer this year. Women aged 20-29 are particularly vulnerable, with melanoma ranking as the second most common form of cancer in the age group.

These statistics are particularly alarming for a disease that, when detected and treated early, is nearly 100 percent curable. Skin cancer is also one of the few cancers for which the cause of most cases is known: excessive sun exposure. Adopting a comprehensive sun protection program that includes daily UV protection, monthly self-examinations and yearly screenings by a dermatological surgeon can substantially lower skin cancer risk, according to the American Society for Dermatological Surgery.

In recognition of Skin Cancer Awareness Month this May, Olay and the ASDS have joined forces for the fourth year for "Skin Cancer Takes Friends," a nationwide free skin-cancer screening program that encourages Americans to take a friend to a participating dermatological surgeon's office for a free skin cancer screening. Screenings are quick, easy and painless. They are noninvasive visual inspections of the entire body and only take a few minutes.

A complete list of volunteering dermatological surgeons is available at <http://SkinCancerTakesFriends.org> and <http://asds.net>. In 2007, more than 300 volunteer doctors con-

ducted over 9,000 free screenings in 45 states.

"Desperate Housewives" star Marcia Cross joins in the effort for the second year to raise awareness about the risks of skin cancer based on her personal experience with the disease. She is dedicated to helping spread the word about this worthwhile program, and about the importance of sun protection and regular screenings in the fight against skin cancer.

"Having had two family members stricken by melanoma, I've become very passionate about helping to educate the public about skin cancer prevention," explains the Emmy-nominated actress. "Thanks to early detection, both my grandfather and cousin survived the disease, but too many others aren't as fortunate. I urge everyone to protect themselves and their loved ones by scheduling a free screening together. Those few minutes could save lives."

"When skin cancer is detected early, the five-year survival rate is almost 100 percent. That means that an annual skin cancer screening is essential because a dermatological surgeon can recognize even the earliest stages of skin cancer," says Dr. Darrell S. Rigel, president of the ASDS.

Melanoma is particularly difficult to treat and cure once it has spread to other parts of the body. However, it can be readily treated if detected in its earliest stages.

How can you stay safe?

Dermatological surgeons overwhelmingly agree that the most im-

portant step in skin cancer prevention is applying a daily moisturizer with broad spectrum sun protection every day before going outside, like Olay Complete Defense SPF 30 for the face and Olay Body Age Transform Intensive UV Defense Serum for the body. Additionally, be sure to follow these steps:

1. Examine skin at least once a month to search for any spots that seem to have changed size, color or shape. Focus on your neck, chest and torso, and use a bright light, full-length mirror, hand-mirror and blow-dryer to inspect hard-to-see areas such as the scalp and back of the neck. For more information on self-screening, visit SkinCancerTakesFriends.org.
2. Learn the "ABCDEs of moles and melanoma" and alert your dermatologist immediately to any of the following key warning signs: Asymmetry, Border irregularity, Color variability, Diameter larger than a pencil eraser and/or Evolving moles that change size, shape or color.
3. Schedule a screening appointment once a year in order to increase your chances of detecting and treating melanoma.

For more information, visit <http://SkinCancerTakesFriends.org> and <http://asds.net>.

Courtesy of ARAcontent

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