



Tampa Letter Carrier

Volume 8 - Issue 1

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

Tampa, Florida

January 2009

President's Report

by Jim Good

President - Branch 599

New Year, New Responsibilities

Another year has come and gone, and with the beginning of 2009 comes a new obligation placed on letter carriers. Carriers are being tasked with the job of re-assessing their routes. This process is based on the actual times that they have shown it has taken them to deliver their routes during the months of May and September of 2008 and the time taken from their most recent 3999. By studying the data from these periods and forms, and at least two in depth consultations with a local union/management adjustment team, the carriers are asked how much time, if any, they feel can be added to their routes as a result of the recent drop in mail volume.

This may sound like a fairly simple thing to do, but in many cases that is not the case. In many instances the two parts of the equation both show the route to be eight hours long, when in fact it is less than that because of the drop in mail volume. If the 3999 is from almost any period prior to the summer of 2008 then the volume was probably still there. In that case the carrier is expected to do the right thing, and, if they did indeed have a major drop in volume, let the adjustment team know how much time they are able to have added to their route. Only the carrier knows how much time, if any, that is.

With the onset of this new "Interim Route Adjustment Memorandum" carriers now have an opportunity to be more involved in the route adjustment process, and at the same time play a major role in doing away with the archaic six-day mail count and route inspection process that has been around for what seems like eternity. From my experience, dating back to 1974, not many carriers like the old way of adjusting routes and are welcoming this new process. Combine that with the financial savings the Postal Service would see by doing away with the time consuming six-day count and it's easy to see how this new method is a win-win for everyone involved.

So far the new process seems to be working well, with only a few problems. We have seen some carriers who, rightfully so, are upset when their routes are effected by major territorial changes. An example is when a route is abolished in a station, and as a result of the abolishment the surrounding routes must absorb the territory of the abolished route and the territory is pushed outward. One route in Produce station had its territory changed by a major amount and the carrier (with quite a bit of seniority) had his route changed to the point of being non-recognizable.

Although the union is very sympathetic with the carrier, sometimes this cannot be avoided. While we would very much like

to see his route considered abolished, so that the affected carrier would have a chance to bid within the station on any route held by a carrier with less seniority than him, arbitrators have ruled that this would be a non-contractual action and the union would lose any grievance filed on his behalf. So the best we can do is to try to minimize the territorial changes, thereby minimizing the impact on the affected carriers.



Branch 599 just held our annual Christmas/Holiday Party and it was a huge success. It seems like every year more and more children show up, and that is what Christmas is really for. The kids! Santa was here (Dick Rheem from Sulphur Springs Station) and he did his usual fantastic job. One of our shop stewards put it best when he said that Dick makes him almost believe in Santa just by his looks! If you didn't make it this year you really should come next year, especially if you have small kids or grandkids.

I want to wish everyone a very happy and prosperous New Year, and I hope everyone is thankful for their jobs and retirements, either with or from the Postal Service. With the economy in the condition it's in today, we really need to realize how fortunate we all are.

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Health Benefit Open Season has been officially extended. The new closing date is Saturday, January 31, 2009.

The January Branch Meeting has been re-scheduled for Thursday, January 8th because of the New Year Holiday.

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TRUSTEE	Jose Oliva	(813) 873-2747
TRUSTEE	Terry Franklin	(813) 657-9690
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Presidents Emeritus

Michael Anderson	Orbe Andux
Don Thomas	Garland Tickle

Branch 599 Shop Stewards

Brandon	33510	Terry Franklin	(813) 758-3061
Brandon	33511	Phil Chirico	(813) 657-3180
Carrollwood	33618	Eddie Berroth	(813) 493-5224
Commerce	33602	Pedro Jimenez	(813) 727-9280
Forest Hills	33612	Stephen Hall	(813) 494-4669
Forest Hills Annex	33613	Alan Robinson	(813) 843-9762
Hilldale	33614	A. Sam Santilli	(813) 215-7595
Hilldale Annex	33634	Butch Smith	(813) 889-3915
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
Palm River	33619	J.C. Howard	(813) 621-1976
Plant City	33565	Jim Davis	(813) 340-9354
Port Tampa	33616	Sammy Graham	(813) 832-6644
Produce	33610	Maggie Lancaster	(813) 317-7522
Ruskin / Sun City Center	33570	Jack Hencoski	(813) 685-9034
Seminole Heights	33603	Tony Diaz	(813) 598-9635
Sulphur Springs	33604	John Rowland	(813) 770-7769
Tampa Carrier Annex	33607	Mike Sovan	(813) 735-4226
Tampa Carrier Annex	33609	Dennis Lorenzo	(813) 966-3989
Temple Terrace	33617	Warren Sumlin	(813) 486-7612
Town & Country	33615	Brian Obst	(727) 458-0679
Town & Country	33635	Brain Obst	(727) 458-0679
Ybor City	33605	Detlev Aeppel	(813) 505-7914

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Articles must be submitted no later than the fifth of the month. Submit articles as .txt, .rtf, .doc or .wpd documents attached to email sent to

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

Attica! Attica! Attica!

What's with this chant? Is Running For You losing it? Well, no.

First things first though, congratulations to carrier Eddie Alvarez of Forest Hills, who was placed on removal in 2008. With the good defense of Branch 599, he was able to win his case in arbitration.

I'd like to comment some on this matter. Management had little to go on yet they proceeded with the removal. "We're losing money..." they cried. "You need to pick up the pace, you have undertime, you don't give back...", etc., etc. For the information of Branch 599 members, this case of removal which the USPS lost will probably cost about \$90,000. Yes, you read this right, nearly ninety thousand dollars, maybe more.

Yet, each day management will say we are losing money. As I mentioned in one of my precious articles, if upper management assess supervisors, managers, etc., for lets say 15%

of the cost when they lose, you would see less of this type of reckless behavior of management.

As Running For You said in last month's newsletter, if your steward is doing a good job, support him or her. If not, then run for the job. After nomination last month, elections will be held at three stations for stewards this month.

I also commented on the route inspections conducted by district of routes at Tampa Carrier Annex. Well, at 33607 where I am the temporary steward, after a few weeks on their implementation of the new routes, things are not looking good. This week they rode with the carriers on Tuesday, Wednesday, etc., to correct a problem that would not have been a problem had they enlisted and worked with the union before going through with the adjusted routes (again losing money when we don't have any to lose). Will management ever learn? Maybe. There is a team of carriers and management teaming up in stations to check over the carriers' daily activities and time spent do-

by Dook Ramotar

Executive Vice-President - Branch 599



ing their route, then consulting with the carriers on how their route can be 8 hours, whether to add or subtract. Hopefully we can work together for the benefit of both of us.

And now to the chant-ATTICA! ATTICA! ATTICA! Years ago when I transferred from New Jersey to Florida, I ended up at commerce. At that time commerce and Hyde Park were in one building. After a while, Commerce went on to South Florida Avenue and then part of us to Pierce Street and North Florida Avenue. What's funny when I retired, Commerce was back at the same building with Hyde Park where they are today. Anyway, a carrier came to commerce later by the name of Mike Loreda and often he would use those words. He told me he often used those words due to the way the supervisor or managers rule or try to. So I was at Commerce along with a good friend who was at Commerce when I came to Florida. He, too, was a transferee. Charlie Thompson came from New York. He showed me the way around and when time came for our final clock in, we both did so on the same day.

Now back to Mike. He was a nice guy at Commerce. Carriers and clerks were family. I always ask carriers who transferred to Commerce what they think of the station. Good, they would say. So it was with Mike. He stayed and we became good friends. So on his last day I was there, his family was, too. Postmaster Nancy Fryer and Tim Dose came to give him a good send off.

Well, Mike, you can use those words but it won't mean too much as you are a free man. No more "ATTICA! ATTICA!" unless you consider you are now under new management. And I can't be your steward against Rosalie as I support her to keep you in line from now on.

With the Christmas and New Year seasons approaching quickly, Running For You would like to extend to you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Be careful and safe. Until next month, Running For You is saying good luck and God bless! "Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night!"

Tampa Letter Carriers, Inc.

Elections were held for directors of the Tampa Letter Carriers, Inc. on December 4th after the regular Branch 599 meeting. The results of that election are listed in the table to the right.

Congratulations go out to all the newly elected directors and officers. We thank them for their time and commitment to our members and wish them the best of luck during their 2009-2010 term of office.

Tony Diaz	Chairman
Terry Franklin	Asst. Chairman
John Gebo	Treasurer
Jim Good	Secretary
Joe Oliva	Trustee
Henry Dupree	Trustee
Ray Wallace	Trustee
Brian Obst	Director
Detlev Aepfel	Director
Michael Anderson	Director
Fernando Quintanilla	Director
Audie Childers	Director
Lance Jones	Director
Adam Noble	Director
Silven Zimmerman	Director
Sal Marsala	Director
Larry Tharrington	Director
David Skelton	Director
Cheryl Clothier	Director
Cash "Rocky" Randels	Alt. Director

Retirees/Installation Dinner

The Annual Retirees/Installation Dinner will be held on Saturday, January 17th at the Union Hall. Doors will open at 6:00 pm with dinner served at 6:30. Our National Director of Retirees, Ernie Kirkland will be the installing officer.

Active members can get tickets from their shop stewards and retirees should call the union office at (813) 875-0599 by January 9, 2009. Let's have a good showing by attending this annual event.

ARSLAN UNIFORMS

Bill & Shirley Moran

Retired Letter Carrier Branch 1477 St. Petersburg

Honorary Member Branch 599 Tampa

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Things You Should Know

Be Safe

Here we are at the end of another year in our careers and not much has changed in our postal lives. It seems that first-class mail is still going down but the accidents and threats are still going up. Is this a coincidence or not, or will management ever learn new ways to motivate the carriers?

One can say that not everything improves with time. It seems when supervisors cannot make their numbers in their station then they must revert to intimidation or threats to improve those numbers. Please remember that during your floor talks about the lack of efficiencies, or threats concerning the loss of our jobs, that it still takes a carrier to place the mail in the mailbox. Also, don't those supervisors realize that their

jobs might just disappear with the falling volume of first class mail? Our letter carriers survived the Great Depression and I feel positive that we will survive this great recession. The letter carriers worked two hours a day during those hard times (1932) and we will work through this recession, even if the over time disappears. It just might take a little longer for our PTFs to convert to regulars, but with the current attrition your career will be secure. Also, the union will monitor the 88-12 ration still in effect.

Our internal alternate route adjustment process team has now been chosen by our local president. There are three letter carriers from Tampa and one from Brandon, with a local supervisor on each team. All stations will be adjusted under this new procedure even if your station just went through a 6 day count. So, if our first class mail continues to lower in volume dropping more than 13% again

by Gilbert Cabanas

Vice-President - Branch 599



after April 2009, you will see one of these new teams coming to your station. The good news is that you will not have to go through another route check so you will be saved that stress and expense by the Post Office. The actual office and street time data to be used will be based on the performance of the regular carrier under this new procedure. In closing, please use good judgment when driving and focus at all times because an accident can occur within any two second period. So don't let any supervisors scare you into making a mistake with your job performance by their threats.

Please stay busy in your job and let management stay busy with their job. Also, enjoy your holidays by staying safe so you can return to your family every day and have a great New Years.

Retired But Not Tired

Retiree News

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Branch 599, Happy New Year to all! May 2009 be a year of good health and prosperity to each and everyone.

At our December Retirees Breakfast, first-timer Barney Weatherford was in attendance. What a pleasant surprise for all who were there. I first met Barney back in the late 70s. He was Vice-President under the late John Bailey. Barney was one who gave much to this union. I have much respect for Barney, not only as a union brother, but as a good man. After the breakfast he was headed to St. Joseph Hospital for volunteer work. Thanks again, Barney, for representing the carriers of Branch 599 and dedication to the branch. Hope to see you at the Retirees Dinner Dance and Installation on January 17, 2009.

Yes, retirees, on Saturday, January 17, 2009, the Annual Dinner Dance and Installation will be held. National Director of Retired Members Ernest Kirkland will be our guest speaker. Ernest was very informative last year and had a lot of good information for retirees. Let's show Ernest that retirees are still involved in branch functions. For me

by John Gebo

Director of Retirees - Branch 599



personally, it is a great time to reminisce and see the "old crew". Call the union secretary for tickets. The phone number is (813) 875-0599.

As most of you know, Bill Moran, from Arslan Uniforms attends our union meetings. He and Arslan Uniforms have been very generous over the years. If you attend the monthly meeting, you could win cash or a gift card. By the way, this writer won the gift card last month. Thanks, Bill. You, too, Shirley. You are great friends.

At the December Retirees Breakfast those in attendance were Jim Good, Mike Anderson, "Nundy" Quintanilla, Joe Oliva, Jim Stoffer, Norman Bobeau, Darius Lundy, Pat Krezel, Jimmy Munns, Henry Dupree, Barney Weatherford, Jim Deignan, Bill Brennan, Cecil Edge, Don Holt, Jim Follman, Lance Jones, Sy Adel and John Gebo. Next breakfast is the first Monday of the month, January 5, 2009, at the Coffee Cup. Hope to see you there.

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

Fraternally,
John Gebo

President's Station Visits

Commerce 33602	Tuesday, January 6
Seminole Heights 33603	Thursday, January 8
Sulphur Springs 33604	Wednesday, January 14
Ybor 33605	Friday, January 16
Hyde Park 33606	Tuesday, January 20
TCA 33607	Thursday, January 22
TCA 33609	Friday, January 23
Produce 33610	Wednesday, January 28
Interbay 33611 & 33616	Wednesday, February 4
Interbay 33629	Thursday, February 5
Forest Hills 33612	Tuesday, February 10
Forest Hills Annex 33613	Thursday, February 12
Hilldale 33614	Wednesday, February 18
Town & Country 33615	Friday, February 20

Around The Horn

Alternative Route Adjustments

Brothers and Sisters, I want to take this time to wish each and every one of you a Happy New Year. We face many challenges and hurdles in 2009, as you are well aware of. Hopefully the economy will rejuvenate itself and this great country can pull out of the current slow-down. I have thought for some time we were in a recession mode even though the experts used different terms. With the growing unemployment rate and the foreclosure rate increasing, we can only hope we do not fall to the depths of a depression. We will all face some kind of economic issues, for some unlike any we may ever experience. The Postal Service has not been spared from the current slow-down. We will face continued changes in procedures and changes in our routes in an effort to save the Postal Service. With mail volumes continuing to decrease the NALC and the Postal Service have jointly agreed on a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding), the Alternate Evaluation Process. Many of you will have already experienced the new route process when you read this article. If not, your Station will be scheduled for consultations with a selected Local District Team very soon. Branch 599 President Jim Good has chosen (or as he calls it hand-picked) four NALC Representatives who will be teamed with a Management Rep throughout this process. I was selected along with Terry Franklin, Alan Robinson and Phil Chirico. Having received detailed training, I am confident all four of us will be very representative in this new process. We are all very capable of executing this Alternative Route Adjustment, which hopefully we can continue to use in the future in place of the dreaded six-day mail count. We all trained together at Produce Station and from the initial carrier consultations to the squaring-off of territory and ending with the final carrier consultation, I thought the process went very well. I am teamed with Management Representative Kent Moyer, and thus far we have consulted with carriers from Forest Hills Annex and Sulphur Springs. Next up for our Team is Forest Hills Station and Carrollwood Station, not necessarily in that or-

der. I can tell you this, when Kent and I jointly conduct the initial consultation, we try to take out the uncomfortable feeling one would normally associate when being called to the office. There has been no pressuring and no intimidation, furthermore there is an understanding and educational process we conduct to better put you in touch with numbers associated with your route and your performance. We present you with your own data, a calculated average from the two months (May & September) agreed to (MOU), and the most current 3999 (street evaluation form). Again these are your averages your figures, no one but the regular can be averaged during this period. There are exceptions for the vacant routes and for those of you just beginning on a new bid assignment with no current data. For those wondering, Kent has done an excellent job of staying within the parameters of this process and has respected the TEAM concept since we have been paired together. We conduct the Station stand-up talks together with Jim Good, we alternate presenting the information at the consultations, we alternate making detailed notes and comments we have discussed with the carriers, and we both sit in on any conference calls, mostly with the joint NALC/USPS Route Evaluation Team (Detlev Aeppel & Bill Bishoff). (Gosh, I hope I have not just ruined Kent's reputation). After we present you with your data, we then ask **you**, the person who does the route every day, What is a fair street time? on a heavy day? and on a light day? This will help determine how a third bundle influences your route and how to establish an **average** street time. We have made carrier input a big priority in our consultations, we want to know if there is a unique situation on your route, a special parcel pick-up or maybe you have a stop with a large outgoing mail pick-up. Your input is also encouraged should any territory be taken from your route and we need new territory added to square the route up or make the route 8 hours. In the early stages of this process, the carriers that have participated are accepting and cooperative, realizing this process is a far cry from the full blown inspections we are all accustomed to. So I ask you, be open and truthful even if you do proceed with some caution. There have been very, very few instances so far where a joint 3999 was required to verify a disagreement over a carriers demonstrated average through the data compiled and his or hers time.

by Tony Diaz

Financial Secretary - Branch 599



Quick Hits: Information you should know

Wanted to thank the Tampa Letter Carriers Inc. (T.L.C.) for electing me as the new Chairman beginning this year. With the eroding economy the T.L.C. Board will face some critical decisions. The Board will work together with only the best interest of our wonderful Hall and the Membership in mind. Outgoing Chairman Brian Obst has agreed to meet with me to insure a smooth transaction. I will certainly need his support and advise to serve this Board with the greatest capacity and I thank him.

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

From The Chair *(from page 7)*

back in the beginning volunteer work was the rule and everybody was happy to pitch in to help for the good of all carriers in the branch. In recent times it seems that some carriers have forgotten about helping out with the hall and various functions that the branch holds. I would ask that we all examine our lives and see if we can find the time to lend a hand for the benefit of all carriers in our branch. Let's keep up the previous traditions laid down by our brother and sister carriers from the past so we can maintain what they have provided for us – *the best union hall in the state of Florida*.

Once again I want to thank all the members of Tampa Letter Carriers, Inc. for allowing me to be of service to the membership. It was a learning experience and I hope to be able to assist the next chairman in getting acclimated to the duties and responsibilities of the job. I may not be chairman any more but as a member of the TLC, Inc. Board of Directors, I won't be far away.

Signing off from the Chair,

Brian Obst
Chairman - Tampa Letter Carriers, Inc.

Unionism

Investigative Interviews Are Your Friend

As letter carriers dealing with management on a daily basis, most of us have had to deal with being a part of an *Investigative Interview* for some reason that management feel it is needed. As a steward I have been part of numerous Investigative Interviews and they have been extremely helpful for me in defending the rights of the grievants. While the Investigative Interviews that management hold for their investigations are a goldmine of knowledge for the steward, I want to focus on the Investigative Interviews that the union steward conducts as a part of his investigation of issues raised in a grievance.

As stewards part of our responsibilities in dealing with grievances is conducting a proper investigation into the facts surrounding the grievance issue. A large part of the investigation is focused on documentation and reports and, while this information can be helpful with the case, one should not discount the benefits of the Investigative Interview.

Let us consider a discipline action where management statements say that the grievant is guilty of some offense, and they provide some minor details of what was supposed to have happened giving rise to the discipline. Now if the steward is doing an Investigative Interview, he will be able to ask detailed questions in an attempt to ver-

ify the information management have presented against the grievant. Remember, details can make or break the case so when you are writing your questions, give extra thought to what information you are trying to obtain and ask questions in that direction. Make the questions about specific details and don't allow management to be evasive in their answers. Remember they are the ones who made the statements that you are attempting to show are not true or incorrect in the grievance issue.

As a steward I have had many cases that turned on the information I was able to get out of an Investigative Interview as management have a tendency to exaggerate the facts (or lack thereof) in their haste to get discipline on a carrier. As a steward, when you are doing an investigation you are permitted to interview any individual involved in the case, or anyone who might have information pertinent to the case at hand. This includes postal inspectors, OIG agents, managers, supervisors, postmasters, area managers, other craft employees, and customers that have filed complaints resulting in discipline. These are just some of the people available to the steward for interviews. Should you have any difficulties obtaining these interviews, please contact your union branch office. You should also file an additional grievance for violation of *Articles 17 + 31*. Your president will be happy to remind management that they must cooperate in all investigations, just the same as craft employees. One more thing about Investigative Interviews: You should prepare for and conduct

these interviews as soon as you can. Why, you ask? Well the sooner you conduct the interview and lock in the answers from management, the less likely they will be able to adjust their stories to conform to what the other people might say in their interviews.

The proper way to conduct the interview is to write down your questions ahead of time so you know where you are going in the interview. Remember, you can add additional questions as you interview, should an answer lead you in another direction. After the interview you want to type up the questions and answers and you should annotate who did the interview, who was interviewed, who was the witness (if any), and the date and time of the interview. This information will help should your case end up in arbitration.

Again this information is just a brief overview of Investigative Interviews and if you want to learn more, feel free to contact me and I can arrange a training session to assist your development as a steward.

Always remember – *knowledge is the key.*

Brian Obst
Chief Steward - Branch 599

by Brian Obst

Chief Steward - Branch 599



From The Chair

Signing Off

Well, it's hard to believe that four years have passed already. As my tenure as Chairman of Tampa Letter Carriers, Inc. comes to an end, I wanted to take an opportunity to thank all the members for the privilege of serving as your chairman, and for the opportunity to be of service to all the members of TLC, Inc., which is made up of all the members in good standing of Branch 599.

I also want to bring the membership up to date on what has been accomplished during the last four years. TLC, Inc., as

you may or may not know, is the holding company which operates and maintains the union hall for the branch. During the last four years the members of the Board of Directors have taken on the unenviable task of making repairs and upgrades to the hall. I say unenviable because, like all of us in our home lives, this involved spending large sums of money to ensure that our hall could continue to be the envy of all the other branches in the state of Florida. Some of the tasks that were accomplished included the installation of a new ceiling, cleaning and repainting of the interior of the hall, replacement of all but one of the air conditioning units in the hall, and the major refurbishment of the men's and women's restrooms and all associated plumbing. This job also included

the complete refurbishment of the main branch office and the conference room, which included repainting, installation of all new wood trim, and installation of new carpet in the conference room, as well as new floor tile in the office, restrooms, and the main entrance to our hall. While all of this work cost TLC, Inc. a lot of money, it was important that this was done to maintain our hall for the present, as well as future generations, of carriers in our branch.

The former carriers of Branch 599 had the foresight to procure the property and build the hall that we currently have. This was done mostly by the sweat of their brow as

(continued on page 6)

by Brian Obst

Chairman - Tampa Letter Carriers, Inc

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