



Tampa Letter Carrier

Volume 6 - Issue 5

A.R. "Tony" Huerta NALC Branch 599

Tampa, Florida

May 2007

President's Report

by Jim Good

President - Branch 599

Trust Your Elected Officers

After just returning from the Committee of Presidents' meeting in Ponce, Puerto Rico, on March 27th I thought I would share some information that was disseminated to the attendees. According to our National President Bill Young a number of carriers (some who are shop stewards/officers/local branch presidents), who communicate with each other over the internet, feel that he is withholding information and/or misleading the membership regarding the ongoing contract negotiations. These *byters* feel that it is the Executive Council's duty and obligation to keep the membership informed and updated on every offer and counter offer as they are presented. By God, we pay their salaries and they should answer to us!

To this I say, "Chill Out." Let these people do the jobs they were elected to do. Evidently these whiners have never been involved in negotiations. The last thing you want to happen, when you are trying to work out the best deal for the people you represent, is to give away your hand. People talk. Word gets around. If President Young were to tell the

membership everything that is going on behind closed doors, the bargaining team for the USPS would find out what we are asking for, and what we are willing to settle for, giving them the upper hand. The offer that President Young proposed and made the local officers aware of in late January was presented long before the membership was notified. Now a second proposal will be on the table if the two sides don't agree by the April 6th deadline. We will be informed as to the terms of that offer once it is in the hands of the arbitrator.

I guess my point is this. President Young, along with every other member of the Executive Council with the exception of one National Business Agent, was elected by acclamation during the 2006 National Convention. They had the unanimous support of everyone at the convention. Let them do their jobs. Continue to support them and show them the respect that they have earned. Our national leadership has always done an excellent job of negotiating contracts and/or presenting cases in arbitration in the past and will continue to do so this time around. Give them a chance to once again prove themselves worthy of their positions.

Now I want to notify you all of a new situation that has presented itself in our branch. We are once again under withholding. This means that because of the scheduled implementation of the Flat Sequencing System (FSS) in the Orlando Installation in November of 2009 the USPS is withholding 174 letter car-

rier positions within a 100 mile radius of the Orlando, FL Post Office. I know, I know, why in the world would they withhold 174 positions 2 ½ years prior to the scheduled implementation date? I really don't know. I haven't got a clue. But what this means is that until they have withheld these 174 positions no part-time flexibles will make regular. Once they have withheld that number of positions then they are required to start making regulars again. But it gets better. Headquarters at the USPS has claimed that for every part-time flexible that puts in for an opt (hold-down) on one of these withheld positions management has the right to hire a TE. So here we go again. The transitional workforce will once again come into play in the letter carrier craft, at least until we file a grievance and are successful in putting a stop to this nonsense. President Young has initiated a National Level Grievance at the Interpretive Step regarding their proposed hiring of TE's and because of the methodology they used in estimating the impact of the FSS. So hold onto your hats. It's going to be a wild ride once again. They just keep getting dumber and dumber, with no end in sight.



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Branch Meeting
May 3, 2006
7:30 PM

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RECORDING SECRETARY	Cindy Perez	(813) 766-1220
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TRUSTEE	Terry Franklin	(813) 657-9690
SERGEANT-AT-ARMS	J.C. Howard	(813) 621-1976
MBA / NSBA	Albert Guice	(813) 621-7931
HEALTH BENEFITS	Lance Jones	(813) 220-1292
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LABOR - MANAGEMENT	Eric Fleming	(813) 310-8274
LABOR - MANAGEMENT	Brian Obst	(727) 507-0135

Branch 599 Shop Stewards

Brandon	33510	Terry Franklin	(813) 657-9690
Brandon	33511	Phil Chirico	(813) 657-3180
Carrollwood	33618	Brian Obst	(727) 458-0679
Commerce	33602	Rickey Robinson	(727) 409-1911
Forest Hills	33612	Warren Sumlin	(813) 486-7612
Forest Hills Annex	33613	Alan Robinson	(813) 843-9762
Hilldale	33614	Sam Santilli	(813) 215-7595
Hilldale Annex	33634	Bill Mandikas	(813) 263-8636
Hyde Park	33606	John Livingston	(813) 253-3651
Interbay	33611	Detlev Aeppel	(813) 505-7914
Interbay	33629	Detlev Aeppel	(813) 505-7914
MacDill	33608	Detlev Aeppel	(813) 505-7914
Palm River	33619	J.C. Howard	(813) 621-1976
Plant City	33565	Brian Obst	(727) 458-0679
Port Tampa	33616	Detlev Aeppel	(813) 505-7914
Produce	33610	Eric Fleming	(813) 310-8274
Ruskin / Sun City Center	33570	Jack Hencoski	(813) 685-9034
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Tampa Carrier Annex	33607	Mike Sovan	(813) 872-0709
Tampa Carrier Annex	33609	Dennis Lorenzo	(813) 966-3989
Temple Terrace	33617	Frank Pereira	(813) 610-1801
Town & Country	33615	Brian Obst	(727) 458-0679
Ybor City	33605	Detlev Aeppel	(813) 505-7914

Presidents Emeritus

Michael Anderson	Orbe Andux
James Butler	Don Thomas
Garland Tickle	

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

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. All articles are subject to editing and revision at the discretion of the publisher & editor. All articles must be submitted no later than the fifth of the month. Submit articles as .txt, .doc or .wpd documents attached to email sent to newsletter@nalc599.com.

Jim Good - Publisher
 Kit Kelley - Editor

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

Executive Vice-President's Report

by Detlev Aepfel

Good Luck With That

Last fall a city wide staffing grievance was filed by President Jim Good and me on behalf of all the letter carriers in the city of Tampa. We included extensive documentation showing how much forced overtime was used in the city of Tampa during the preceding 6 months. We showed that letter carriers had been denied annual leave and even denied scheduled sick leave for medical treatment by management due to "the needs of the service". We pointed out the parts of the contract and the manuals that held management responsible for hiring enough craft employees to accomplish our mission of service to the public. We included statements from supervisors, station managers, and affected letter carriers. We provided management's own DSSA figures which showed our staffing to be well below the normal 1.40 or 1.38 city letter carriers per route.

Management had a different point of view. Management insisted in their argument that the city of Tampa was adequately staffed. They felt that the problem was too many letter carriers on limited or light duty, too many sick calls, and too many letter carriers not working up to their potential. Management also argued that only 3% of the total overtime was forced overtime and that was an insignificant amount.

Unfortunately the arbitrator agreed with management's assessment of the staffing situation. The arbitrator pointed out that the contract allows for forced overtime under certain conditions. The arbitrator also felt that the amount of forced overtime was at an acceptable level. But let's not deceive ourselves. This ruling will hurt all parties. First, the letter carriers will be getting no relief. Second, management will have to make due with the resources available. Management insisted that there was no shortage of letter carriers and now they will have to learn

to live with what they have. If the union had prevailed in this case then it would have been a classic win-win situation. The arbitrator would have ordered the staffing shortage corrected in some way. Letter carriers would have gotten some much needed relief. Management would have gotten extra employees with which to fulfill the USPS mission. But that is not how it turned out. We ended up with a lose-lose situation.

What does this mean to us? We will have another year of forced overtime and a shortage of auxiliary assistance to contend with. It looks like it will be another tough summer when vacation time gets here. Management will continue to perform its wild act of juggling "the 5 o'clock window", no penalty overtime, and forcing people to work overtime that have no desire to do so. I wish them good luck with that!

So what is a letter carrier to do? My advice is to ask your steward to file a grievance on your behalf every time you feel your rights may have been violated. Ask him or her to do a thorough investigation. Some of these grievances will be won, some will be lost, and some will be withdrawn. The important thing is to make management aware of

our displeasure with the status quo. Eventually they will get the message and fix the mess they have created in the city of Tampa.



The COLCPE sign-up from the April 5 meeting was great. Five people either came on board with the "Gimme 5" or increased their level of automatic contribution. COLCPE will be a major weapon in the fight to save letter carrier jobs. We will need to draw on our friends in congress to outlaw contracting out letter carrier jobs. It takes money to do that. Please, do your part to save our jobs by joining the "Gimme 5" program. We will be helping letter carriers sign up during branch meetings for the next several months. Remember to bring in your employee ID number from your pay stub, your PIN number, and your copy of *The Postal Record* for automatic payroll deduction, or bring in a voided check for automatic EFT payments. The choice is yours.

In solidarity...



May Meetings

The following note was sent by Sabine Vasquez, wife of carrier Gus Vasquez who recently passed away.

Thur 5-3-07 - Executive Board Meeting
Union Hall, 6:30 PM

Thur 5-3-07 - Branch Meeting
Union Hall, 7:30 PM

Tues 5-22-07 - TLC Board Of Directors Meeting
Union Hall, 7:00 PM

Patrick, Luna, and I want to express our biggest THANK YOU ever for all the USPS family has done (and is still doing) for us. Ever since Gus became sick our family had this strong support from the entire USPS family. Every day colleagues visited Gus in the hospital. It helped us tremendously to know that we were not alone, that there are so many caring people. Especially because we just moved from Germany to Tampa two years ago and we do not have immediate family living close by.

Our very special thanks go to Alan Robinson and Richard Henderson. They came up with the idea to organize a benefit golf tournament for Gus in January. From that moment on they invested a lot of time, hard work and effort to make this event happen. The tournament took place on March 25th and it was more than successful!!! We also thank all the letter carriers, their family members, sponsors, golf players and of course Pebble Creek Golf Club. Everything was very heart warming and overwhelming. We appreciate that very, very much. Gus had very special colleagues! He would be proud of all of you. We love you! THANK YOU!

With best regards,
Sabine Vasquez
Secretary II, Pre-kindergarten Services
District School Board of Pasco County
Phone: 813 794-2179 Fax: 813 794-2736

Arslan Uniform Drawing

Ruskin / Sun City Center carrier William Collins' name was drawn at the April 5th branch meeting, but he was not in attendance. Because of that, the jackpot for the drawing (sponsored by *Bill Moran* and *Arslan Uniforms*) is up to \$80.00.

Just show up for the May 3rd branch meeting, and if your name is drawn, it's your money. On top of that, you just might learn something new concerning your job.

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

320 PATLIN CIRCLE EAST PHONE: 727-584-4307

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

bilmor@tampabay.rr.com

Unionism

by Brian Obst

Chief Steward - Branch 599

An Unusual Lesson

(This month's article comes by way of an unsigned e-mail I received some time ago. I am unaware of who the author was but I feel it bears repeating for all to read.)

A mouse looked through the crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife open a package.

"What food might this contain?" the mouse wondered. He was devastated to discover it was a mousetrap. Retreating to the farmyard, the mouse proclaimed a warning: "There in a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!"

The chicken clucked and scratched, raised her head and said, "Mr. Mouse, I can tell this is a grave concern to you, but it is of no consequence to me. I cannot be bothered by it."

The mouse turned to the pig and told him, "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mouse trap in the house!" The pig sympathized, but said, "I am so very sorry, Mr. Mouse, but there is nothing I

can do about it but pray. Be assured you are in my prayers."

The mouse turned to the cow and said "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!" The cow said, "Wow, Mr. Mouse, I'm sorry for you, but it's no skin off my nose."

So, the mouse returned to the house, head down and dejected, to face the farmer's mousetrap alone. That very night a sound was heard throughout the house—like the sound of a mousetrap catching its prey. The farmer's wife rushed to see what was caught. In the darkness, she did not see it was a venomous snake whose tail the trap had caught. The snake bit the farmer's wife. The farmer rushed her to the hospital, and she returned home with a fever. Everyone knows you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard for the soup's main ingredient. But his wife's sickness continued, so friends and neighbors came to sit with her around the clock. To feed them, the farmer butchered the pig. The farmer's wife did not get well and finally she died.

So many people came for her funeral, the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide enough meat for all of them.



The mouse looked upon it all from his crack in the wall with great sadness.

So, the next time you hear someone is facing a problem and you think it doesn't concern you, remember – when one of us is threatened, we all are at risk.

As a union steward I cannot find any more appropriate words to explain how something that may seem minor and unimportant to you individually, can be devastating to union members as a whole.

Remember: Each of us is a vital thread in another person's tapestry; our lives are woven together for a reason.

As always, remember: Knowledge is the key.

Yours in brotherhood,
Brian Obst, Chief Steward - Branch 599



Congratulations to recently-retired Commerce Station carriers Dook Ramotar, Charlie Thompson and Mike Brousseau

A Point of Personal Privilege

Who's On First?

A very good friend and fellow union member retired recently, Gilbert Cabanas. Gil and I worked together and were stewards at Hilldale Station. Now Jerry Sainz is the last of the 1972 original Crest and Lois post office letter carriers. Gil will be missed by this writer as I am sure he will be missed by many of his fellow workers. I think with over 41 years of USPS work, this is well deserved. By the way my brother, David Garcia of TCA, also retired in March. My only problem is I hope they don't get too *bored* by being able to have every Saturday off and sleep till at least 8AM every morning. One day I'll be able to join these loafers. I only have five years to go but I said that ten years ago!

In past years I have often written about the problems that our craft, letter carriers, have had to face due to management. Since my hiring as of 1972 nothing has changed in the way of the USPS's primitive thinking of "me Tarzan, you Jane." To prove this point look at how many of the thousands and thousands of grievances that are or have been filed by the union stewards over the same if not identical issues. These grievances consist of contractual and discipline violations. Some are valid but most are induced by management strictly to institute fear and reinforce their position of power. I have a major problem with this factor because there is no accountability when management continually and repeatedly violates the same contractual issues. It is frustrating that all letter carriers are held to a higher level than management. When letter carriers make a mistake, we are punished and often times lose our jobs but when management makes a repeated mistake they are transferred to another area and even promoted to a higher level pay. As one letter carrier has often said, "It's their candy store."

As of 3/21/07, the (Iraq) war has caused 3,241 U.S. fatalities in Iraq and 373 in Afghanistan. 24,187 have been maimed in Iraq. The official *'Iraq Body Count'* is approximately listed at 65,660 dead but according to *The Lancet*, the count is more like 655,000 dead. I have read where troops that die in hospitals because of injuries or wounds from this *war* are not totaled into the entire number of deaths. What upsets me is that the Bush administration continues to use the term "*Coalition of the Willing*" to refer to the countries which supported (most of them not militarily) the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and the subsequent occupation duties since "*Mission Accomplished.*" The March 2003 list included 49 countries but the war was deeply unpopular in many of these coalition countries and at least one, Costa Rica, requested in September of 2004 to no longer be considered a member. It has been pointed out that 98% of the military forces consist of troops from the United States and Great Britain. Many of the non-coalition countries describe this as a predominantly Anglo-American force.

The Tampa Tribune reported on January 22, 2007, that Congressman Adam Putnam (R) of Bartow, chairman of the House Republican Conference Committee, attacked the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi (D), California, through the media on Pelosi's request for a bigger plane for official travel. Recently, he admitted to the Tampa Tribune that he not only does not know if the story was true but he doesn't care. He stated that he had read the story in the Moonie paper in Washington, DC, and that was enough evidence for him. He has yet to formally issue a letter or a statement of apology for this lie. For his failure to do so, *Countdown's* Keith Olberman gave Putnam a gold medal, awarding him the distinction of being that day's "*Worst Person in the World.*"

As of March 6, 2007 Lewis 'Scooter'

by Leslie Ray Garcia

Libby, the former top aide to Vice President Dick Cheney, was convicted and found guilty on four of five counts of perjury, obstruction of justice and lying to the FBI about a conversation with NBC's, Tim Russert. What many Americans can not comprehend is that the release of the name of a covert CIA agent, such as Valerie Plame, not only endangered her life but endangered the lives of her informant pipeline. Her job was to track the illicit sale and transfer of weapons of mass destruction, in order to help prevent a sinister, major terrorist attack on the United States. The release of her name should have been treated as treason. Treason against the United States is defined as levying (making) war against the United States or giving aid and comfort (any help) to the enemies of the United States. One member of the jury stated that Libby was the sacrificial lamb. Should an appeal be sought, the hearing will be held in the D.C. Court of Appeals, where Republican appointee, Federal Judge David Santele sits. This is the same judge that overturned the Iran-Contra felony convictions of Oliver North and John Poindexter. After his acquittal, Oliver North wrote in his book that President Ronald Reagan and Vice President George H.W. Bush were fully aware and informed of the entire Iran-Contra affair. Santele also appointed Ken Starr as the special prosecutor in the Clinton case. This judge has voted to suppress *habeas corpus* and has even stated that there is a "*...liberal conspiracy to destroy America.*" Should he not give a verdict of acquittal in the case of Libby, then it will be appealed to the Republican-controlled Supreme Court, and if the Supreme Court justifies the verdict then President Bush will more than likely give Libby a last minute Presidential pardon.

March 16, 2007, Dr. James Knodell, director of the Office of Security at the White House, told a congressional committee that he aware of no internal investiga-

(continued on page 11)



Things You Should Know

Your EEO Case

Hello everyone in the active work force. I would like to start by thanking Ray Wallace and Tony Diaz for their kind words about me in their newsletter columns. And yes, Tony, I will stay active in our great branch.

Let's start with some information regarding our EEO procedure. If anyone wishes to file on their case, you can call me and receive some advice on those issues. I'm still in charge of those procedures and will help you to build a solid case. Remember that the burden of proof is on your shoulders. In order to prove discrimination you must have dates, facts and copies of all documents. You will need statements, clock rings and schedules to show any display of favoritism on management's part. Sometimes you will need to identify the party which you felt management compared you to. You will need to state

what purview you are basing your case upon, such as age, race, or gender. Finally, you must identify the supervisor who openly displayed this unwarranted condition upon you.

Maybe a new supervisor has implemented different orders which subsequently had an adverse effect on you. Perhaps that supervisor already has a history of controversy in another station. So, do your homework. Gather your facts, dates and copies before you process your case. Being you are the moving party in a discrimination case, solicit other carriers to verify this information in other stations.

You can now call the EEO office at the airport post office to start this procedure. In about 10 days you will receive this form. After identifying yourself, you must write a short summary about your issue. Indicate the person being compared to you and the supervisor who you felt perpetrated this action. Finally you must list your

representative on this form and mail it back to the EEO office. Your shop steward can help you gather copies and statements that can show where, when and how any of these issues occurred.

At your hearing you must state what remedy you will be seeking to settle your case. Maybe you were deprived of lesser hours, days off or mistakenly scheduled days. These could be monetary value cases. Perhaps your rights were violated, you are continuously harassed or are placed in some uncomfortable situation by your supervisor. Maybe you feel added stress in comparison to other carriers. These could all be forms of discrimination. So, whenever you are unsure of your situation call me or any shop steward and receive advice on your case.



by Gilbert Cabanas

Vice-President - Branch 599

TAMPA LETTER CARRIERS PRESENT BINGO

COME JOIN THE FUN

EVERY WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAY

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

AT THE TAMPA LETTER CARRIERS HALL

3003 W. CYPRESS ST.

TAMPA, FL. 33609

813-877-4785

Around The Horn

Gus Vasquez Memorial Golf Tournament

Brothers and Sisters, to say The Gus Vasquez Memorial Golf Tournament was a success is somewhat of an understatement. On a Sunday morning (March 25) with beautiful weather conditions, a full field (144) of friends, co-workers, supporters and strangers came out to support the Vasquez Family. In fact, had it not been for several no-shows we would have had to turn golfers away that were walk-ups, just wanting to show their support. As I watched the enthusiastic army of golfers drive off in their carts to the assigned holes, scattering every which way, the culmination of months of planning and preparation was an amazing feeling (with goose bumps to accompany). Pebble Creek Golf Club was the perfect setting for this great event. The course layout has holes 1,9,10 & 18 surrounding an oak tree shaded patio area where the remarkable group of volunteers that I was honored to be a part of, was positioned to stay busy all day long. From the registering of golfers to selling raffle tickets and mulligans, passing out water and Red Bull, giving out door prizes, running the putting and chipping contest to finally giving out the seemingly endless list of raffle prizes, we were all ready and willing. Every golfer that passed through the patio area in route to their next hole was greeted with a ice cold water or Red Bull and at that time could redeem a door prize ticket that all golfers received in their goodie bag at registration. Raffle ticket sales were brisk all day long as the bighearted field dug deep into their pockets for a chance to win one of the many wonderful raffle prizes that were for the most part donated by extremely generous businesses and individuals more than eager to help. For all the donors efforts a large poster was made and posted for all to see with their names to say Thank You. Hole sponsorship signs were placed in the

most visible locations, in all there were about 54, that alone is amazing at \$100.00 per sign, 3 signs per hole really is remarkable. I was stationed right off the 18th green and everyone was up beat as they passed by, many of them stopping in for a chance to win a donated gas grill at the chipping contest. The participants were given 3 balls for \$5.00, but they were whiffle golf balls, so the challenge was to gauge the wind correctly and try chipping one of your golf balls into the grill itself. We had many rim-outs and close calls but when it was all said and done we had 2 golfers that made one of their shots and were eligible for a chip-off for the grill. This contest was different from the putting contest, which came down to a putt-off between 3 golfers in order to declare a winner. Different not only because they are two separate shots, but for the reason that I worked the chipping contest by myself as opposed to the putting contest where 4 to 5 women volunteers worked trying to lure the predominantly male field of golfers to take part in their contest. Knowing I had to sell my contest, I had a sales line for all the golfers that approached, it was a lot of fun and everyone was good-natured about it, and oh, it helped raise more money. Sabina Vasquez (Gus's wife) arrived at about 1:00pm along with her two children and her parents, and to say they were overwhelmed with the entire production of the event is putting it mildly. I had the honor of meeting the family and many of the other volunteers on Saturday night as we all prepared for Sunday's event at (Tournament Coordinator) Alan Robinson's home. While talking to Sabina and her Mom it was evident the outpouring of support they would experience on Sunday was something they would never forget, heck they were amazed as were arranging everything. The dinner provided by Pebble Creek was excellent and right on time despite the fact the course lost all electricity the majority of the day. They made a generous cash donation to the

by Tony Diaz

Financial Secretary - Branch 599



tournament as well as several complementary rounds of golf for any inconvenience there might have been. The awards ceremony ended a fantastic day, while participants devoured their food Alan, myself and Richard Henderson began the presentation. The winning team (lowest score) received four \$50.00 gift certificates to Charlie's Steakhouse to start things off and the anticipation grew as the gifts progressively became more expensive. With Gus's two young children drawing the winning numbers and our voices quickly fading we reached the end with some awesome prizes, resisting the temptation of any under-the-table offerings being made by certain unnamed parties for the cherished prizes. The conclusion was emotional and rewarding as Alan thanked all who participated, who donated and who helped. With his efforts and the tireless efforts of others, Sabina was presented with over \$9200.00, that's right over \$9200.00 with expenses taken care of. Sabina closed with soft heart felt words thanking everyone as she still tried to grasp the thought of everyone coming together on Gus's behalf to help out her and her beautiful children. Thanks to everyone and thanks to Alan for taking the initiative to make this memorial as huge success. While there were a few stressful moments, everything went quite smoothly. A great friend of mine for over 40 years, it was a pleasure to assist Alan in this most worthwhile endeavor and enjoy a few adult beverages with him. Alan, Gus would be proud!

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

Perspective

by David Brubaker

Dog Confrontation: Part Two

Friday, March 2

There's not a lot I can do now but heal. I'm staying on the drugs steadily because of pain, although not to the point of being spaced out. I did receive a call from the lady at Injury Compensation asking for the latest CA 16 and CA 17, so that I would get paid. I had copies made before I sent in the originals. I certainly would not want to be accused of making this up.

Monday, March 5

Today I received a letter saying that I have been approved for surgery.

Thursday, March 8

While at the doctor's office in Brandon (Feb.22), I was given a date of March 14, for a follow up appointment after surgery (March 1). I was not given a time at that time because their computer's were down. I decided to call today to find out if I could obtain a time to see the doctor on the 14th. You guessed it-she had no idea what I was talking about. She did find that I had surgery on March 1, but was unable to give me a time for the 14th. Apparently the nurse she needed to talk to was unavailable. So, she asked me to call tomorrow. It would seem to me that she should call me simply because I may call and she could possibly still not have the information. But hey, what do I know. I'll just keep calling, reminding them, and hopefully and eventually be able to get a time to see the doctor.

Friday, March 9

I called Florida Orthopedic to obtain a time to see the doctor. It was apparent I was not getting anywhere. Since I still was unsure exactly where to go, I decided to call the Brandon office and explain my situation. I left a voice mail and the lady soon returned my call. Bingo! I was to go to the Brandon office, 1:20 p.m., on March 14. What a time of celebration. I experienced a rare opportunity of speaking to some-

one that knew what was going on and providing me with information crucial for my follow up visit.

Saturday-Wednesday, March 10-14

As I move closer to my doctor's appointment on Wednesday I was thinking about various last minute things I need to do before possibly going back to work for light duty on Thursday. Contacting an attorney, necessary paperwork concerning the dog, etc. A thought did occur to me though. In my opinion, I'm not ready to go back to work. I still need a few days more for healing. The reason is because of my particular routine at this time. Although I no longer take as much medication now, as I did at the beginning, I still need to take something at certain times during the day. For instance, I usually take a pill or two before bed, about 10 p.m. Since the effect wears off 4-6 hours later, when I get up around 5-6 a.m., my arm is hurting, enough so that I need to take something (usually two tablets). It makes me loopy enough to desire a nap soon after taking them. I also take one or two later in the day, depending on the level of pain.

As just previously mentioned, my intake has lessened over time, but I still need to take something. A few more days of healing would strengthen my arm, as well as, eliminate the need to continue with the medication. If I were to go on light duty right now, I would be loopy at work, not to mention the fact that I would be driving to work impaired. Someone suggested I go to work first, then take the medication, however, I don't think that's a viable option.

Another thought occurred to me. What if I were to be released for light duty work, and yet I feel that I'm not ready. Do I call in using my own sick leave? If, after three days, medical documentation is required, how do I obtain it since I've been cleared to go back to work? Hopefully, the doctor will understand my dilemma and allow me some extra time.

Wednesday, March 14

Things went pretty well at the doctor's office. My temporary cast was removed.

My wrist looks terrible. On the top it's still swollen. Underneath is an incision about five inches long that was stitched up. I can only move my arm a little in each direction since it has been one month confined in a cast. It's very painful. New x-rays revealed the metal plate with eight screws still intact. From a doctor's point of view things are progressing well. Fortunately I was able to stay home to continue healing. Absolutely no contact is allowed to my left wrist area. The x-ray also revealed large bone fragments that had broken off and were near the break area. I was assured that in time the bone pieces would be assimilated into my arm, heal, and is not a cause for alarm. This would explain the constant pain and continued use of pain killers and anti-inflammatory drugs. The time off will enable me to heal slowly and correctly (as much as possible) and also get off the drugs eventually. They are keeping me constipated. I was given a permanent cast and will return to see the doctor on April 4th.

Thursday, March 15

Healing.

Friday March 16

I went to see an attorney. Unfortunately, my concern is that my wrist is permanently damaged and may very well give me problems in the future. Not to mention the metal in my wrist that I'm not happy with. No monetary settlement is enough to take the place of a good limb. But you have to plan and prepare for the future.

Saturday-Sunday, March 17-18
Healing.

Monday, March 19

I awoke this morning realizing that last night, and since my injury, I slept well without my arm and wrist aching. It did, but was tolerable. I didn't have to take a pain killer first thing this morning.

Tuesday-Sunday, March 20-25

Not a whole lot going on. Just trying not to use my left hand at all. I say that because it's easy, without thinking, to inadvertently try to steady something,

(continued on page 10)

Perspective (from page 9)

grab something, button something, etc. I'm actually doing a good job of letting it waste away. I was able to avoid medication for five days straight. I finally gave in because it's been difficult to get a good night's sleep.

Monday, March 26

Today was interesting. I received a message on my phone recorder from Diane at Florida Orthopedic. She said I didn't have authorization for the sling for my left arm. It was given to me after my surgery on March 1. She needed my Workers' Compensation case number. I called back and left it on her voice mail. She soon returned my call and stated that although she contacted Workers' Compensation, and the number was good, they would not give her the date of my injury so that she could complete her paperwork. I then returned the second call and left my injury date on her voice mail. I didn't hear back from her, so I guess I can keep the sling. (Of course it didn't make sense, remember whom we are dealing with). Also, when you have an injury that will involve Workers' Compensation, and will be out for a while, you should receive in your initial paperwork information about a "First Script" card. This is a card that you would give to the pharmacist when picking up prescriptions and it would be charged to Workers' Compensation. Let's see, I was injured on February 15, and I received the card today. One more thing about my status, because my wrist and hand are isolated and confined in a cast, only my fingers are able to move, and that limited. What's unfortunate about it, is that my hand at the base of my fingers is drying up. The surface skin is starting to peel off, not to mention a constant state of being slightly swollen. I still have several days yet before the cast comes off. Oh well, time for a pill...

Tuesday, March 27

Today I received a first class postcard from "First Script Network Services."

It explained my benefits.

Wednesday, March 28

It just never ends...I called Injury Comp. and talked to a lady I had conversed with before. She remembered me and asked about my welfare. After some chit-chat I explained the reason for my call. I was asking for clarity on my continuance of pay, after my 45 days of COP had ended (April 1). From what I understand, I can submit paperwork and continue receiving COP at three quarters the rate of pay, or, use annual or sick leave (which I can buy back later). I'm going with sick. What was interesting about this call was that she expressed concern that the doctor had put my dislocated bone back in the wrong place, and I'll be requiring more surgery. She stated she had received this information from my supervisors. That made it easy to understand. I told her that it was not the case and they had either misunderstood me, and if that's the case, perhaps they had to emphasize to higher management there is a valid reason for my taking so much time off. Who knows? Anyway, I'm getting some reading done but am always waiting for the next goofy thing to happen.

Friday, March 30

Bingo! Goofy day is here. A new player in the scenario has jumped into the foray-fraud. I was amazed but not really that surprised. If we go back to February 26, I explained the incident involving me having to get an EKG before surgery. I paid the \$35.00 cash to have the procedure done (I have the

receipt.) Today, I received a statement from my personal insurance (NALC) saying they had been billed for this procedure [the dates match], and what my patient liability balance is. Although, this Florida Medical Clinic is where our family doctor is located, at no time did I show them my personal insurance card. In other words, they had to intentionally go into my medical records and obtain my insurance info to bill me again. Needless to say I'm back to trying to clear up someone else's incompetent work.

Weekend, March 31-April 1

Thank goodness for the end of the week. It's a good time to try and rest before it starts again on Monday.

Monday, April 2

I'm not going to bore you with a lot of details, but I did stop by the billing department of Florida Medical this morning. The receptionist brought up my name showing that there was indeed a record of my having an EKG on February 26. But, as per the continuation of incompetence, there was no record of a Workers' Compensation claim. I went home to gather additional info and gave her a call. She promised to get back with me but never did. So, what's new? I'll call my NALC health representative to see what I can do.

Currently, I still have my cast on and will see the doctor tomorrow, April 4. I'm sure I still have a long way to go in all aspects of this process.

Until next time,
David



Retired But Not Tired***Retirees Breakfast***

Dear brothers and sisters of Branch 599, at our Retirees Breakfast on April 2nd, I sat next to Sy Adel. Sy has been retired since 1975. That's close to 32 years, no matter how you look at it. This gentleman has been retired longer than most carriers work.

When Sy retired, his *high three average* was approximately \$13,000. Today city carriers' *high three average* is approximately \$50,000. If my subtraction is right, that's a \$37,000 difference. So, in 32 years carriers' wages have increased at a rate of over \$1,000 a year. This didn't happen because that's what the U.S.P.S. wanted to pay city carriers. It happened because, for the National Association of Letter Carriers' great Presidents and Officers, a good contract was always a must. Through their hard work

and negotiations they have made life better for each of us.

Yet over the years, as a branch officer and shop steward, how many times have I heard, "What's the union doing for me?" Let's start with representation, higher wages, better hours and conditions, health benefits, COLAs, family leave, and sick leave, just to name a few. Brothers and sisters, you *are* the union, each and every member. A union is only as good as its membership. How about coming to next month's meeting? Unity is a great thing!

Congratulations to recent retiree Jimmy Munns, who came to our retirees breakfast on April 2nd. It's always nice to see a new face show up. Jimmy was Henry Dupree's T6 at Produce Station. I was told Present Good even picked-up Jimmy's tab. President Good just set precedence, whether he knows it or not.

by John Gebo*Director of Retirees - Branch 599*

The retirees were glad when President Good walked in. Darius Lundy had brought in James Good's obituary. Wrong James Good! I guess that's good.



We had 15 retirees at the breakfast, Good, Adel, Dupree, Rossell, Bobeau, Stouffer, Edge, Munns, Lundy, Ilana, Lazo, Brennan, Anderson, Oliva and yours truly. This is not a clique. All retirees are welcome to attend. Hope to see you at the Coffee Cup on May 7th.

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

Fraternally,
John Gebo

Personal Privilege *(from page 6)*

tion or report into the identity leak of covert CIA agent Valerie Plame. The White House had first opposed Knodell testifying under oath but relented after the committee threatened to issue a subpoena. Dr. Knodell testified that in August of 2004, a year after the leak, that his records show no evidence of a probe or report and that he had "...no knowledge of any investigation in my office." It seems that once again the White House shrugged off the internal security investigation of the Plame leak, citing the supposed pending criminal investigation. Months before the criminal investigation was initiated, President Bush spoke on televised national news programs of a full internal probe, but Knodell repeated that no such probe took place and that no probe was happening. He admitted that leaking classified information called for action, whether the leak was accidental or on purpose. Members of the committee stated that this was "...*shocking, a breach within a breach, and a dereliction of duty.*"

"You can't be 'Pro-war' and 'Pro-life' at the same time."
Source unknown



President Good presents a 50 year NALC Membership Gold Card to Brother Denio Sanchez

It's never too late or too early to start saving for your retirement!

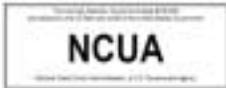
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