



# Tampa Letter Carrier

Volume 7 - Issue 6

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

Tampa, Florida

June 2008

## President's Report

by Jim Good

President - Branch 599

### *Proud to Help*

The 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Letter Carriers Food Drive is history, and once again the Tampa Bay community has come together to answer the call to feed the needy. I, as well as many others who are closely involved in the "business" of feeding those less fortunate, was very worried that in today's economy we would fall short of our goal and not be able to collect as much food as in previous years. I am pleased to say that we were wrong. The "Stamp out Hunger" drive was a huge success and we surpassed last year's total. The exact figure can be found in Lori McMillion's article elsewhere in this publication.

I want to take just a minute to say a special "Thank You" to the Rural Letter Carriers throughout our area. As many of you know, the rural carriers recently finished a route inspection and adjustment that resulted in a large cut in pay and/or addition to their routes. This was caused largely by the drop in the volume of cased mail. But that did not stop the carriers from helping to make our NALC Food Drive the success that it was. Many of these fellow carriers not only picked up

the food that was left by the mailboxes, they helped to unload their co-workers vehicles and stuck around the station until the last of the food was on its way to the warehouse. We couldn't have done it without them, and next year I will try to get more outside volunteers out to the rural stations, as well as the city delivery units, to give all carriers a little additional help. I know that all the stations were a little short of help this year, but some of that extra work was the result of the large amount of food donated by the customers on your routes. Brian Obst and I actually did a little physical work ourselves helping to unload food at Northdale Station, as well as deliver extra boxes to Interbay Station because of the large amount of food that they collected. All in all the day was a huge success!

By the time you get this month's newsletter Branch 599 will have completed our Annual Muscular Dystrophy Stoplight Blitz. I can only hope that we are as successful in this endeavor as we were in the Food Drive. I am proud to announce, as printed in the June *NALC Postal Record*, that Branch 599 was Number One in donations in Category III, branches with membership between 1,000 and 1,499, collecting \$18,602.00. This is an outstanding accomplishment which could not have been achieved without the combined participation of over 220 volunteers who walked the intersections in Tampa last year representing our branch.

Our branch could not have been so

successful in helping these very worthwhile causes without the following two important people who helped lead the way:



Lori McMillion has been the Food Drive coordinator for three or four years now, and she has done an outstanding job every year. Thank you, Lori, we couldn't have done what we did without your hard work and dedication.

Eric Fleming, as the MDA coordinator, has taken our branch to Number One in our Category in 2007. Only four year's ago we were not even involved in collecting for MDA. What a great job he has done in bringing our branch together to help out this great organization! I know that as you read this article we will be bragging about how great we did again this year. We all have a lot to be proud of, and I want to thank all of you for the good work you do to help those who need your help the most.

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### **Branch Meeting**

**Thursday, June 5**

**7:30 PM**

**at the Union Hall**

**Branch 599 Officers**

PRESIDENT	Jim Good	(813) 417-8877
EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT	Dook Ramotar	(813), 404-4380 cell
VICE-PRESIDENT	Gilbert Cabanas	(813) 855-0516, cell 597-7396
RECORDING SECRETARY	Mike Brink	(813) 661-1106
FINANCIAL SECRETARY	Tony Diaz	(813) 598-9635
TREASURER	Michael Anderson	(813) 681-5688
TRUSTEE (Chairman)	Henry Dupree	(813) 621-6471
TRUSTEE	Jose Oliva	(813) 873-2747
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
DIRECTOR OF RETIREES	John Gebo	(813) 985-5474, cell 503-1256
LABOR - MANAGEMENT	Eric Fleming	(813) 310-8274
LABOR - MANAGEMENT	A. Sam Santilli	(813) 215-7595

**Branch 599 Shop Stewards**

Brandon	33510	Terry Franklin	(813) 657-9690
Brandon	33511	Phil Chirico	(813) 657-3180
Carrollwood	33618	Dook Ramotar	(813) 404-4380
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	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
Palm River	33619	J.C. Howard	(813) 621-1976
Plant City	33565	Jim Davis	(813) 961-6865
Port Tampa	33616	Sammy Graham	(813) 832-6644
Produce	33610	Eric Fleming	(813) 310-8274
Ruskin / Sun City Center	33570	Jack Hencoski	(813) 685-9034
Seminole Heights	33603	Tony Diaz	(813) 598-9635
Sulphur Springs	33604	Matt Kokich	(813) 431-3686
Tampa Carrier Annex	33607	Dook Ramotar	(813) 404-4380
Tampa Carrier Annex	33609	Dennis Lorenzo	(813) 966-3989
Temple Terrace	33617	Temporarily Vacant	(813) 875-0599
Town & Country	33615	Brian Obst	(727) 458-0679
Town & Country	33635	Brain Obst	(727) 458-0679
Ybor City	33605	Detlev Aeppel	(813) 505-7914

**Presidents Emeritus**

Michael Anderson Orbe Andux  
Don Thomas Garland Tickle

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The National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 599, 3003 W. Cypress Street, Tampa, FL 33609-1617, publishes the *Tampa Letter Carrier* monthly.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writers, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Branch 599.

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, .rtf, .doc or .wpd documents attached to email sent to

[newsletter@nalc599.com](mailto: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

*Fitness for Duty*

**R**unning with You would like to share these concerns...more later.

This position has been an eye opener for me, working with the stewards when the president is away—first I got a call from a steward about one of his carriers being sent for *fitness for duty*, so I called the Office of Inspector General (OIG) and asked what's going on; he said, *just routine*. I replied, *Just fitness for duty?* He said yes, so I relayed this to the steward a little later.

The carrier involved called me and said they wrote down *drug test*. I said to this carrier that personally, I would not sign any consent for any test other than the fitness-for-duty (no drug or blood test). The carrier was on the way for the test when the steward called me, and when the carrier called they were at the office to be tested. I relayed to the steward that the carrier should not take the test, and if management forced the carrier to do so, he should grieve it.

Second, I sat in on an arbitration where it would boil down to the carrier's word or management's—the carrier was interviewed by not one, but two individuals. One works on contract for the Office of Inspector General (this individual is a former Postal Inspector). The other one was also from the OIG (a former cop). This carrier was being investigated by those two inspectors without any union representation.

The carrier said he asked for representation; the inspectors said he did not. Who to believe? Most important, who will the arbitrator believe...the two inspectors or the lower ranked carrier?

**We as carriers, have the right for union representation, but we need to ask for it.** If you are called into the office by management or inspectors, ask what this is about and whether it will or could lead

to discipline [if it will/could, shut your mouth and ask for a steward, and keep it shut until you get one]. If a steward is not available, call the union office and request a steward. Your Vice President or Executive Vice President also can represent you...so call!

Personally, if I was being questioned by 2 officers from the Office of Inspector General, I probably would ask for a lawyer.

Many of us think the supervisor or manager is on our side and would not try to get us in trouble; sure they are. There are those who will treat us with dignity and respect, but you should never fail to recognize the fact they are our bosses and they too have bosses...so trust no one...and never give up your rights.

Now back to some facts *Running with You* would like to share—As I mentioned in a previous article what the St. Pete Times reported on catalogs etc., the USPS is getting ready to set

up Flat Sorting Machines, but there is a driving force to eliminate catalogs from being mailed to us; for instance, 19 billion catalogs are mailed to us every year which is good for us but there are groups who (I won't mention names or statistics) want this to stop. They quote how much paper and trees this amounts to and went on to say as of April 1<sup>st</sup> 694,478 people opted out of 9,181,316 catalogs. (I hope you can see where this is leading)

Catalogs=Phone or mail in to order=shipping some by us= bills mailed to us= payment mailed back to company...do you see how this will affect us? I hope when the time comes we will all join together to defeat this law.

“Don't go around saying the world owes you a living; the world owes you nothing; it was here first.”

Mark Twain




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### Health & Welfare

We are sad to announce that the following friends and/or carriers have recently passed away:

Antoinette Dennis, daughter of retired carrier and Branch 599 MDA Officer Al Guice

Marina Cuevas, mother of Seminole Heights carrier Rolando Cuevas

Retired carrier Fernando P. Llana

Retired carrier Harold L. Carella

Retired carrier Jack G. Lopez

Retired carrier Ralph G. Embich

Retired carrier Floyd M. Fussell

Retired carrier Roger O. Harvey

Retired carrier Frank Liuzzo

Our deepest condolences go out to all the families of these members.

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### Arslan Uniform Drawing

The name drawn at the May branch meeting for the \$100.00 Arslan Uniform prize was Monica Reid. Because Monica was not in attendance the prize will go up to \$110.00 for the June meeting.

Just come to the meeting, hear what is going on in your union and win \$110 if your name is drawn.

# ***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*

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**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

### Route Checks

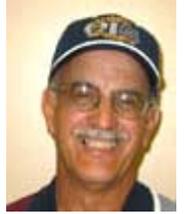
Our city route checks are coming to an end, at least for the Summer. The city route checks will probably start again in the Fall because our first class volume is still dropping the Post Office must take advantage of that situation. It appears that we have lost 5 routes in the 3 stations that were route checked. We have gained 2 routes in Palm River station where the National Test Site took place. That's where our office and standard street times figures were matched within the basic projected times or each carrier. No other stations have been mentioned for this new procedure within that basic formula but I hope that that trend will continue. We will also gain 2 CD routes from our downtown station, that's the procedure that allowed the Post Office to contract out deliveries within city deliveries that will happen in June. Hopefully the 3 other stations which are Forest Hills, Port Tampa and TCA will start to convert their CD routes into city deliveries, like the one at International mall. It seems that after all these years of new programs and schemes that the Post Office has implemented in order to decrease the over time, falling first class volume might accomplish that issue for them. I only hope that this poor economy will prevent us from having a wonderful carrier food drive on May 10<sup>th</sup>. Why does it seem that the people that need the most help in difficult times are the ones that suffer the most? We must pull together on this vital issue because food is a necessity, not a luxury item. Now for the TE employees who have been employed by the Postal Service for 180 days, you must take the battery 437 test to convert into a career Letter Carrier. If you have already taken this test, you don't need to take it again. But for those who wish to retake the test, remember the new grade will stand on the register.

Also uniform allowances will be provided for the TE employees on a quarterly basis, after 91 days, on 181 days and finally on your 271<sup>st</sup> day for a total of \$298. Your local manager is authorized for this payment and will track allowances for each TE employee. Are the good old days of the 1900s coming back? That was when the bigger companies bought out all the smaller one, which was called Monopoly. What is it called now, a business entrepreneur? It appears our oil companies are now enjoying those same right in order to control the fluctuant of gas prices. It seems like every day so many companies are filing for chapter 11 and the housing market is going deeper into bankruptcy. Please don't despair over the bad news in the newspapers because even the depressions of the 1930's, our craft employees worked 2 hours every day. So don't been intimidated by the floor attacks that are contained within your service talks. We do realize that the Postal Service lost about a billion dollars in revenue this year, but this wasn't caused solely by our new contract pay raises,

by Gilbert Cabanas

Vice-President - Branch 599

even though upper management received 30-39% pay raises didn't help the issue at all. I do believe that the oil companies enjoying their latest billion dollar profits are the real reason for our lost revenue. So before management blames our craft members for this lost revenue, try to remember that everyone is working hard to provide a great service to their customers. If the threat of some sort of machine to replace us still is existing in their mind [managers] they must remember that those wonderful computers must someday replace those folks that don't touch any mail. So instead of threats and intimidations as some sort of motivation, why don't we treat each other with dignity and respect and have some compassion for each other. We might then be able to survive this falling recession, because our future depends on each other.



## Food Drive 2008



## Around The Horn

**COLCPE**

**B**rothers and Sisters, I have recently returned from a three day Legislative Lobbying assembly in Washington D.C. I appreciate the opportunity to represent all Letter Carriers from Branch 599 on Capital Hill. We were briefed on key Bills vital to Letter Carriers and then were handed our assignments. I guess meeting and lobbying with Legislators made me realize even more so the importance of COLCPE, the NALC's Political Action Fund. The NALC has made great strides in becoming a big time player on the political front with our COLCPE contributions. Remember COLCPE is not only important in election years; we must always be prepared to fight or support new Bills that should arise. Over the years I have written several articles regarding the importance of COLCPE and having the budget to contribute to legislators that we may need to count on for support as friends of the Letter Carrier. It would be wonderful to see our local Branch 599 have contributions from 50% of our members. By payroll or checking deduction, five dollars a pay period or ten dollars a month is not a lot to ask. With The Gimme 5 COLCPE contribution program an overwhelming success a couple years ago; the NALC again has introduced new COLCPE Contests for members. Again reminiscent of a couple years ago before the NALC's National Convention in Las Vegas, the new Contest will be pushed at this Summers 66th Biennial National Convention in Boston. The top prizes featured are a trip to the World Series and a beautiful 32-inch flat screen LCD high definition television set. Las Vegas featured a Gimme 5 day, with all members who previously contributed or signed up at the Convention wearing special Gimme 5 tee shirts for the day, that was a great show of unity!! "We're grateful for all those who have already stepped up to help out, but there's still plenty of room for more to join in our

cause", NALC President William H. Young said in announcing the contests. Accompanying the World Series Tickets for two games is airfare, three night's hotel accommodations and a per diem for expenses. Every active and retired member who is on the books by July 7 as a "Gimme 5 for COLCPE" contributor will be eligible to win. Also eligible for the drawing are active Letter Carriers who have given at least \$120 to COLCPE between January 1 and June 30 in 2008. Regular automatic donations are preferred because they help the Legislative Department plan with budget funds more efficiently. Complete enrollment instructions are posted on the nalc.org website. Get enrolled now or make that minimum donation to be eligible.

**Quick Hits: Information you should know**

\*) **Safety and Health Fair:** held Sunday April 27, at our own Letter Carriers Hall was a big success, the blood screening was very thorough and confidential and the vendors that participated were very informative. I urge all of you to take ad-

vantage of this wonderful service the Postal Service and the Safety and Health Committee is providing. The next fair will be scheduled toward the end of October, no date chosen yet.

\*) Remember, price changes began Monday May12, new prices for shipping services including Express mail and Priority Mail. The Postal Service will have unprecedented pricing flexibility aimed to compete with our competitors.

\*) **COLA:** Third COLA already at \$392, nearly 19 cents per hour, or \$15.08 per pay period. Third COLA scheduled to be paid in September.

\*) **Pay Scale:** Grade 1 Letter Carrier, top pay Step O, yearly base salary is \$51,251 that is \$24.63 hourly regular rate, and \$36.96 at the overtime rate. Not bad at all!!!!

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

by Tony Diaz

Financial Secretary - Branch 599

**Food Drive 2008**

## Unionism

by Brian Obst

Chief Steward - Branch 599



### *Your Steward?*

**F**irst let me start by thanking you for your thoughts and condolences on the untimely death of my father. The support and kind thoughts I have received from you have been a blessing in this most difficult time for me and my family. Due to an illness that I had I was unable to be with my father prior to his operation and I missed talking with him due to visitors and medication when I called him. I was able to be with him in the end but I'm not sure he was aware of my presence. I can only say that the old adage of telling someone how you feel about them is very true, you never know if you will get to speak to them again. Thankfully my last words to my father were "I love you Dad and I will see you in mid April." Whatever you do please tell your friends and loved ones how you feel about them every time you speak to them, because you never know.

Now on to the article. In December of every year each station has elections for Station Shop Steward in accordance with both Local and National Guidelines of the NALC. The elected individual is installed as the Steward for the next year and is the representative for the carriers in his/her station. During the course of the year they may be times where the elected Steward is unavailable for some reason (i.e. Annual Leave, Sick Leave, Training Seminar, Conventions etc.) and you require a Steward for a grievance or defense of Disciplinary Action. During these times the Local President will assign a Steward to provide said representation. This is the only way, short of a

carrier representing himself, that a Steward can be assigned to represent you.

For some reason Management has taken it upon themselves to call other stations to get Stewards so they can do Investigative Interviews, Postal Inspector or OIG Interviews, and discipline grievances. You should know that this is in violation to both Local and National guidelines and should not be allowed to occur under any circumstances. If Management needs a Steward to do any of the above then there is a procedure that needs to be followed. First Management needs to call the office of the Local Union President and make a request for a Steward. Said request should include the reason for the request and the reason why the Station Steward cannot be utilized for the issue. Unacceptable reasoning would be if the Steward is on his SDO and Management decides that they want to do an Investigative Interview, in this case they can wait one day until the Steward returns. Acceptable reasoning could be that the Steward is on two weeks of Annual Leave and Management wants to do that same Investigative Interview. In the long run it is the Decision of the Local President that decides if the reason for the request is appropriate. Second the President will assign a Steward and the schedule for the Steward will be set so the need can be filled if appropriate.

Remember that the yearly election is held for a reason and Management has no ability to bypass the elected representative simply to conform with their own reasons unless the Union finds them to be justified. If you are a carrier and a new Steward

is brought in to your station to represent you, you should ask them if the Local Union President has authorized this action and if not you should call the President at your first opportunity to file a formal complaint on this issue. If you are a steward and you are contacted by Management to go somewhere else to represent a carrier you need to inform Management that you cannot do this without the direction of the Local Union President as you are not authorized to act as a steward outside of your elected station. Request that Management contact the Local President or offer to make the call yourself if you have all the needed information but make sure they know that you cannot go without the direction of the President.

Remember that the appointment of Stewards is the sole domain of the Union and the Local President is the only one who can authorize the movement of one steward to another location for Union work representing carriers, within the installation.

The same rules apply for Management obtaining a Steward for outside the Installation only the request must go from the Local President to the National Business Agent for the region to get the request approved.

As always, remember: Knowledge is the key.

Brian Obst  
Chief Steward

## Food Drive Report

by Lori McMillion

Food Drive Coordinator - Branch 599

**Food Drive Thanks**

I always receive positive comments about our Food Drive. This year all carriers went above and beyond with helping to get the word out, "Stamp Out Hunger". It starts with the posters being displayed in every Post Office. Then a very exciting announcement came from Mr. Healy during a Ray's game on April 20th, where coordinators from St. Pete, Clearwater and Tampa got to go on the field and be introduced as such. Work continued to swell as we gathered the t-shirt orders between placing phone calls for pallets & boxes, sorting, counting, & labeling Publix bags on a Sunday morning and Campbell's postcards later the following week.

May 2nd was our Food Drive Kick-off which was held at the new Val-Pak facility in St. Pete. It was the first year we joined St. Pete and Clearwater as a combined effort. Channel 10 was there to host the event as well as executives from USPS.

The night of May 6th I was invited to talk about our Food Drive to a Labor Council Meeting held at the IBEW Local 108 on Falkenburg and Hwy.92. I was welcomed warmly and all went smooth.

This was our 16th year of collecting food and all Letter Carriers of Tampa have every reason to be proud. Our grand total of food collected this year is **1,223,180** lbs! To know that you are helping to feed many children and families over the summer helps give a sense of who we are as human beings and how we will care for our neighbors. From the bottom of my heart, Thank You!

Special thanks to: Branch 599 President Jim Good, Tampa Mayor Pam Iorio, all the Rural Carriers who gave of their own time, USPS Public Relations Manager Gary Sawtelle, Nikki Hiester from the Flyer, USPS's Bridgette Robertson, Will Carey of Tampa Bay Harvest, my chauffer Lance Jones, AFL-CIO Community Service Liaison George Guthrie, The MVS Drivers and Branch 599 Office Secretary Rodna Kirk.



A special "Thank You" to all the Carriers who helped with the box-truck stops and emptying vehicles of food. Also for helping me get truck stops corrected and all the encouragement I received. You know who you are, Thanks!

Sincerely, Lori McMillion

**Personal Privilege** (from page 9)

McCain has positioned himself as pro-environmental but when it was his time to come to bat he has struck out! The media's total lack of investigative journalism in 2000, 2004 and now 2008 has lead and will lead to the evaporation of every citizens' civil liberties guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States of America!

"The day you write to please everyone you no longer are in journalism. You are in show business." Frank Miller Jr.

REFERENCES used: (1) [blogs.abcnews.com/politicalpunch/2008/04/the-complicated.html](http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalpunch/2008/04/the-complicated.html) (2) [colorofchange.org/mccain\\_facts/](http://colorofchange.org/mccain_facts/) (3) [bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=2060113&sid=aF28rSctk0ZM&refer=us](http://bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=2060113&sid=aF28rSctk0ZM&refer=us) (4) [thinkprogress.org/2008/02/06/buchanan-gandi-mccain](http://thinkprogress.org/2008/02/06/buchanan-gandi-mccain) (5) [thinkprogress.org/2008/02/20/mccain-torture-veto/](http://thinkprogress.org/2008/02/20/mccain-torture-veto/) (6) [msnbc.msn.com/id/17222147/childrendefense.org/site/PageServer?pagename=act\\_learn\\_scorecard2007](http://msnbc.msn.com/id/17222147/childrendefense.org/site/PageServer?pagename=act_learn_scorecard2007) (7) [cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/10/03/mccain.interview](http://cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/10/03/mccain.interview) (8) [ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5h-](http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5h-)

S1sWHm0tchtdMP5LcLywg5ZtMg5ZtMgD8VQ86M80 (9) [bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aHMiDVYaXZFM&refer=home](http://bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aHMiDVYaXZFM&refer=home) (10) [abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory?id=4301022](http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory?id=4301022) (11) [boston.com/news/nation/articles/2008/01/27/famed\\_mccain\\_temper\\_is\\_tamed/](http://boston.com/news/nation/articles/2008/01/27/famed_mccain_temper_is_tamed/) (12) [thinkprogress.org/2008/04/02mccain-black-lobbyist/](http://thinkprogress.org/2008/04/02mccain-black-lobbyist/) (13) [abcnews.go.com/Blotter/story?id=4210251](http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/story?id=4210251) (14) [motherjones.com/washington\\_dispatch/2008/03/john-mccain-rod-parsley-spiritual-guide.html](http://motherjones.com/washington_dispatch/2008/03/john-mccain-rod-parsley-spiritual-guide.html) (15) [thinkprogress.org/2008/03/12/mccain-hagee-anti-gay/](http://thinkprogress.org/2008/03/12/mccain-hagee-anti-gay/) (16) [thinkprogress.org/2008/02/2/hagee-mccain-endorsement/](http://thinkprogress.org/2008/02/2/hagee-mccain-endorsement/) (17) [alter-net.org/blogs/environment/77913/](http://alter-net.org/blogs/environment/77913/) (Literature used: ARMED MADHOUSE & THE BEST DEMOCRACY MONEY CAN BUY by Greg Palast, WHAT HAPPENED IN OHIO? by Robert J. Fitrakis, Steven Rosenfeld and Harvey Wasserman, FOOLED AGAIN by Mark Crispin Miller, STATIC by Amy & David Goodman, HOUSE OF BUSH HOUSE OF SAUD by Craig Unger, THE BUSH AGENDA by Antonia Juhasz, COBRA II by Michael Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, HUBRIS by Michael Isikoff and David Corn and AMERICAN DYNASTY by Kevin P. Phillips)

**Food Drive 2008**

## A Point of Personal Privilege

### Politics As Usual

On March 19, 2008 the war in Iraq was 5 years old! What bench marks have been achieved to justify the US military's presence in Iraq? Let's see...gas prices have risen over \$4.00 a gallon, a Clinton-less recession is occurring, the housing market is in shambles, unemployment is at an all time high, outsourcing American industry continues on a large scale, there is massive corporate welfare, infrastructures of states and cities are crippled, the crime rate has increased, food prices increase daily, the extreme cost of medical prescriptions is unchecked, big businesses are reaping huge profits while employees lose benefits, a barrel of oil has reached \$119, over 4,000 troops have been killed, 6,000 plus returning troops have committed suicide, most of Iraq still doesn't have the basic essentials, electricity, running (clean) water, medical supplies, food, etc. "So", but 'we got our man!' Osama Bin Laden, the main architect of the 9/11 attack and leader of the Taliban? Nope, we got (Mission Accomplished) Saddam Hussein the tyrant of Iraq who had no ties to Al-Qaeda or the Taliban and a dictator whose country had no "Weapons of Mass Destruction." This is the same dictator that a Republican President of the United States sent military supplies to in order for Iraq to wage war with Iran. A Republican President also supplied Hussein with the poisonous gas that killed multitudes of Iranians and Iraqi Kurds. Another Republican President, George W. Bush, has done what no other leader of the USA has done. He ordered the invasion and occupation of a sovereign nation.

The real crime against world humanity was our media's total blindness to the "stolen elections of 2000 and 2004!" What are the election plans for 2008? The 2000 election in Florida was turned into a joke with hanging chads and limited recounts. The network news media failed to investigate the established electoral system in Florida. A story of corruption, intimidation, harassment, profiling and violations of the rights of individuals to vote was totally ignored. The truth was never sought by the commentators of the national television, radio or newspapers! They were too busy making an incompetent into Presidential material and slam dunking a viable candidate into an imbecile. Al

Gore was portrayed as an 'out-of-touch elitist' even though both he and George W. Bush were both sons of successful and wealthy politicians, both attended private schools and Ivy League colleges. However, George W. Bush was portrayed as a 'regular guy!' In 2004 the media allowed specialty groups to lie about the service record of a decorated war veteran, John F. Kerry. The media (depicted and allowed an AWOL Texas National Air Guard officer to be shown as a 'War Time' President.) Thus they allowed Bush's military record to go unchallenged. Of course the media never spoke of Bush's cache of bicycles worth \$13,000 nor that his Crawford ranch wasn't a ranch but Kerry's windsurfing was deemed as the pastime of the wealthy. John F. Kerry was barbecued for ordering a cheese steak with Swiss cheese. Yet when George W. Bush lied about ordering his with Cheez Whiz the media "*politely stayed silent!*" The major news media gave carte blanche and unprecedented leeway to George W. Bush. This allowed 9/11 to be the sword that George W. Bush needed to invade Iraq. There was no media scrutiny of the fictitious evidence presented by the Bush Administration to stop this failed policy. In 2008 the media is scrutinizing (presidential candidate) Senator Barrack H. Obama's every gaffe and every individual acquaintance. Yet, Senator John McCain is given a free ride! McCain and his staff distort the Democratic candidates' tax plans on a near daily basis. McCain has not clarified his 100 years comment especially the issue how long he is willing to continue fighting in Iraq. He has stated "*setting a date for withdrawal is a date for surrender, and we would then have many more casualties and many more Americans sacrificed if we withdraw without a setting a date to surrender*" (even though he surrendered to the North Vietnamese). In 2006 McCain and Senator Ted Kennedy introduced a bill for comprehensive immigration reform. The press has not reported McCain will no longer vote for the bill he introduced in 2006 and emphasized strengthening borders rather than providing a legal pathway for citizenship. McCain was against Bush's tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans but now that he is the Republican nominee for President...the oldest flip-floppy now supports making it a law. McCain has been a staunch advocate for election reform but the media has not investigated his PAC...Straight Talk America which has received millions of dollars from American Defense International, Microsoft's

by Leslie Ray Garcia

government affairs office, JP Morgan Chase and the lobbying firms of Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld and the DCI Group. McCain has collected more moneys from media corporations than any other sitting member of Congress. Many of his high level campaign personnel are current and former telecom lobbyists. It seems the media is consistently overlooking, ignoring or dismissing the following viable facts! John McCain voted against establishing a national holiday in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Now he says his position has "*evolved,*" yet he has continued to oppose key civil rights laws. He is more hawkish than Bush on Iraq, Russia and China. Conservative columnist Pat Buchanan says McCain "*will make Cheney look like Gandhi.*" McCain has built much of his reputation on his opposition to torture as he voted against a bill to ban water-boarding but (flip-flopped) applauded President Bush's veto of the ban. The Senator opposes women's right to choose, "*I do not support Roe versus Wade and it should be overturned.*" John McCain voted against the children's health care bill in 2007 and defended the President's veto of the bill. He and his wife Cindy Hensley, the daughter of multimillionaire Anheuser-Busch distributor James Hensley, own at least eight homes yet McCain says the solution to the housing crisis is for people facing foreclosure to get a "*second job*" and skip their vacations. I guess since John Kerry's wife was called the 'Queen of Catsup' John McCain's wife should be called the 'Queen of Boozers?' The rhetoric on John McCain is that he takes on special interest groups. I guess he took them on literally (59 known lobbyists are on his campaign staff) in order to raise moneys for his Presidential bid? Several of his unnamed Republican senators have stated that McCain is too reckless to be commander in chief and one said, "*The thought of his being president sends a cold chill down my spine. He's erratic. He's hot-headed. He loses his temper and he worries me.*" Senator McCain's self proclaimed "*spiritual guide*" Rod Parsley has stated "*America's founding mission is to destroy Islam which is a false religion.*" McCain sought the support of right-winger preacher John Hagee, who believes that Hurricane Katrina was God's punishment for gay rights. Hagee has called the Catholic Church "*the Anti-Christ*" and a "*false cult.*"



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## The Cutting Edge

by Marilyn Cutting

### *I Went On Vacation*

**T**here are times in our lives when we need to get away, to sort our lives out, and to breathe fresh air, to slow down and enjoy life. I went to Phoenix/Sedona, Arizona. I surprised my whole family (with the help of my niece) on their vacation! Oh, what fun we had! I relaxed. I unwound. I took deep breaths. I guess I did not realize how much stress I've (our whole office) has been through. My body was trying to tell me I was stressing---daily headaches; unexplained hive like rashes appeared on my body; plain rudeness to other people. I was not listening though. I continued to run around in my vicious circle called work. For months, we have been dealing with the inspections, inspectors, route adjustments. On the evening of March 28<sup>th</sup>, after we had delivered our routes we had to come back and change our cases to start our new routes on Saturday the 29<sup>th</sup>. It was decided our route/case configuration would be changed. So we literally moved three cases down from where we were, If you did not work that Friday or were off on vacation you had to hope that who ever moved you moved all your stuff to your new case, if not, believe me people couldn't find their stuff, their pink cards or anything else for well over a week! Since we were also changing to a five shelf case system this also meant that all the shelves had to be taken apart and rearranged, After the first carrier left in the morning, maintenance and supervision started to take apart their case. Sammy, our union steward said it took them approximately 45 minutes just to tear down the shelves and clean them. So multiply that by 24 and you get a disaster waiting to occur. I was one of the first ones back. I walked into a room full of people (other supervisors from other stations, maintenance) wearing masks!

Apparently, the shelving was a little dusty. Dust mites were scrambling on the floor as these shelves were being taken out. It was chaos! I donned a mask too as I am thinking we've probably released an Ebola virus here with all this dust! I went to my new case, which luckily had the five shelves already installed. I began to clean. A half bottle of cleaning fluid and lots of vacuuming an hour later I was ready to put dividers and new labels on. Now mind you we came in at 6:30 a.m. and had to get off the clock by 5p.m.--no penalty over time! On this new five-shelf system, we are to alternate use of one small, one medium divider. O.K. So where are they? Some where in the middle of the work room floor with everything else pushed in the middle. So by the time I find some, so does every one else who has come back and are ready to install them. Guess what? There isn't enough of each kind. Now we have known for over a month that we were going to change everything on March 28<sup>th</sup>. So you would think that all the proper equipment would have been ordered and on hand. Not so. The Postal way of why plan ahead we can do it by the seat of our pants plan works so much more efficient. We are instructed to use what we have on hand until we receive more dividers, When? Tomorrow? Next week? Don't ask just put them in. O.K. That job done. Now the labels. Open up my packet---oops---Delivery sequence wrong. How can that be? Three people worked on these labels--an inspector, a union representative, an ASO clerk. Now it wasn't just my labels it was every one's in our whole station! I asked permission to cut labels and put in correct order. The answer was no, that DPS will arrive in that order on Saturday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, and that is how we were to case mail. Now in my case, it was pretty minor. I had one block put in front of my route, which had to go in the middle. Other routes had them criss crossing. Hillsborough, Dale Mabry and even residential streets. A nightmare to case let alone to deliver that way. We were assured that by Saturday afternoon our labels would be run again in the correct

order. I had to cling to the belief that there was someone who was working in the "Big House" on Saturday to correct this minor flaw. The new labels attach to a plastic channel, which theoretically slide right in. Again, prior planning would have prevented some frustrating moments (one hour) of trying to install them. After bending, cajoling and using a hammer to get them to go in, I got help from my T6, who with bleeding fingers, finally slapped them all in. After ten and a half hours, I finally schlepped exhausted. Tomorrow, March 29<sup>th</sup>, we start again at 6:30 A. M. to finish the labels and divider placement.

Saturday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 A. M., our supervisor informed us that we had some dividers come in. Then told us that since we used the same size dividers we would have to change them all out. Now we are back to square one. Oh yeah! Hurry up, do it in a timely fashion, and be off the clock by 5:00.

At 8:30 A. M., not one person had put up a single piece of mail. It's two hours later and we are still messing around with this nonsense. I failed to mention that one route was the only one that did not change. No new labels were ordered, so when we moved cases no one moved the old labels. Whoever got an old case put the labels over the top of them. Thus, we had a whole route with no labels! Ah yes, organized we were not, frustrated we were! The clerks were handed the new scheme that morning! So all morning when we finally did begin to case, we ended up handing mail off to each other -- a small circus act! Ten and a half hours later again, I schlepped home exhausted. Monday comes, no new labels. We continue to work in a haphazard fashion. Tuesday a person shows, up to talk to all of us to straighten out this whole label mess. Wednesday, no new labels. Thursday, no new labels. Friday, no new labels. A week has gone by and as usual, the carriers picked up the slack. WE worked with putting the mail in the right delivery order. We handed off mail to each other.

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## Food Drive 2008



### Cutting Edge *(from page 10)*

We split the Flyers / Advo's (still doing it today) to each other. We helped one another set up cases. I never want to hear from anyone, --- management, carriers or clerks that we are slackers. We work hard. Hard, I repeat. Cleaning cases, moving cases, installing shelves, putting on new labels, helping people set up their cases and then delivering our routes for the day. We all worked side by side for two days until we all dropped, literally. Whether from all the hard work or all the stress that was created in that environment, I do not know. Probably some of both.

As I write and read this whole scenario back to my self, I see that perhaps I was stressed to my limits. It

took a nice fun filled, thoughtful vacation to realize it. Stress was ever so quietly insinuating itself and into my life and finally exploding with these events. That's what it usually does not only to me but also to everyone. I thank divine intervention for planning my vacation a week after all of this. In December, when we put in for all our vacation's, we knew what date our inspections were but no date on when all the changes were to occur. I was able to clear my mind, to see what I needed to see, what really is important in my life.

For the next stations to go through this hell, heed my words. It will not be easy, you will be frustrated, you will complain to each other, you will be stressed, but

you will come out the other end of it all too. Be strong, stick together and help one another through it all. See all of this for what it is - a job. Go kiss, enjoy, and love your family.

P.S. We are having our 141<sup>st</sup> semi annual picnic at Fort Desoto on May 18<sup>th</sup>. All former and present Hilldallions are invited.

P.P.S. We will not ask Chris to bring the chicken.

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