



Tampa Letter Carrier

Volume 7 - Issue 9

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

Tampa, Florida

September 2008

President's Report

by Jim Good

President - Branch 599

Convention Report

I want to thank the members of Branch 599, on behalf of all the delegates who attended the 66th Biennial National Convention in Boston, Massachusetts last month, for the honor of allowing us to represent you at the convention.

A total of twenty-six delegates attended, many of who also attended morning and/or afternoon workshops in addition to the general sessions; to learn a little more to help them better represent you, the members who paid for their expenses for the convention. Some of the delegates are retired members, and went to the workshops to learn more about issues that affect their lives after the Postal Service.

There were workshops relating to Social Security Benefits, Contract Administration, City Delivery, Thrift Savings, NALC Health Benefit Plan, Mutual Benefit Association, OWCP, Labor 2008, and retirement issues in general. My point is, there were classes of all kinds for any and every delegate to choose from so that they could learn and share the information they had gathered. A number of the delegates did just that at the August Branch 599 meeting.

The convention began with President Young's Key Note Address, followed closely by a speech from Senator Hillary Clinton in which she spoke

highly of her one time adversary Barack Obama. President Young then invited the delegation to induct Senator Clinton as an honorary member of the NALC, at which time she motioned that we officially endorse Senator Obama as the Democratic Candidate for President of the United States. The crowd overwhelmingly approved.

A number of Constitutional Amendments were discussed and voted on, mostly to clean-up language and clarify gray areas. One amendment however, which involved a proposal to amend Article 7, Section 3(d), would have caused a major change to the constitution. The new language sought to convert the union's strike Contingency Fund into a Legislative and Political Action Fund, to be used as directed by the National President to support the union's non-partisan political and legislative activities. A lengthy discussion and debate was had, and in the end the amendment passed. This money can be used only for non-partisan political and legislative activities. Approximately 4.4 million dollars will be transferred into a legislative fund to be overseen by our national president to help elect legislators who are friendly and sympathetic to the wants and needs of our union members, the postal service, and are labor friendly!

This is a huge victory. We, the members of our great union, have now given President Young everything he has asked for to make his job doable. We have begun to join together in an effort to contribute monies, through payroll deduction, to our political action fund, COLCPE. (Although we as a branch have only been able to enroll 45 members, a mere 4.2% of our 1,070 members) A large number of us have signed up for President Young's eActivist Net-

work, so we are made readily available through e-mail to contact our representatives when the need arises. Many of us have also volunteered, through the Carrier Corps, to donate ten (10) hours of our time to help with neighborhood walks for candidates running for office that are our friends. Any convention delegate who had achieved these three objectives was given a t-shirt to be worn on the Thursday of Convention Week. On the front of the shirt was written; Super Delegate. On the back was; "I hit the Trifecta for Political Change". I'm proud to say that almost (not quite) all of the delegates from Branch 599 wore one of these shirts that day.



So needless to say I believe that this was a very successful convention. We have much work to do if we are going to be successful in electing representatives who care about the working men and women of our country, from the president down to our state representatives. If you have signed up for COLCPE, thank you. If you have not, shame on you.

The latest figure for our next Cost of Living Raise, with still a month to go, is a whopping \$1,330.00 per year raise. That is 63 cents per hour. \$51.15 per pay period. We are asking for only \$5.00 per pay period as an insurance policy on your job. \$5.00 out of the additional \$51.15 that you would not be receiving if not for the NALC. Think about it, and then call Tony Diaz (813-598-9635), our Branch COLCPE Coordinator to have him help you get on board.

Please do the right thing; for yourself and for your union

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Temple Terrace	33617	Union Office	(813) 875-0599
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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.

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All articles are subject to editing and revision at the discretion of the publisher & editor.

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

by Dook Ramotar

Executive Vice-President - Branch 599

Route Adjustments

I believe the laws of the U.S.A state that you are presumed innocent until proven guilty. Well you are not according to a note I recently read issued by the USPS. More on this later.

Running for you has been told that there would be minor adjustments in the 2 offices he is the steward. And at the steward meetings, we were told by the president it would be going on in other offices as well.

I have no problems with management getting the routes as close to 8 hours as possible, and trying to capture undertime with the loss of mail in the systems. What I am concerned about is that they may try to make the routes more than 8 hours in anticipation of the possibilities of less mail in the system later on.

This is an election year and as such there would be mailing of literature from candidates granted it would end by year's end but this is also the time of year when stores and other companies would be sending out there catalogs and other ads to get shoppers into the stores or buying in line when this happens how will the minor route adjustment affect the carriers? Whose route were increased significantly.

Would they be saying to the carriers. "Listen guys, your routes were adjusted and according to your proven ability, you can do it in 8 hours," "Oh, and don't forget the computer what does the computer (DOIS) says yes, you have an 8 hour route now." Remember those little notes by the time clock saying how much undertime you have would they disappear now or still pop up now and again.

A while ago I wrote how there is a network trying to get you to sign or call up not to send catalogs or do not mail lists. This week I read in a major retailer ad that if you want to stop by and sign up to be on their mailing lists, just stop by and sign up to receive their mailings. I'm already on their mailing lists, my family and friends sign up and hope you do as well, this way we are helping to keep our jobs. By the way, how would they be doing the minor route adjustment is it by the contract or by the numbers and their heading and interpretation of the contract.

Does management have reasonable current route inspection data and the same carrier serving the route the past year. Management is required to make at least annual route and unit reviews , the reviews are utilized to verify adjustments that have been made or need to

be made to maintain efficient service. In addition to these reviews, management must maintain to the route in reasonable adjustment throughout the year. Hopefully management will try to do right by the contract and carriers and conduct a fair minor route adjustment.



About the route, any employee who is involved in a motor vehicle accident while performing their duties, regardless of whether the accident is deemed preventable or unpreventable, must be removed from their driving duties until they have completed the online defensive drivers course.

You be the judge. Do you keep your engine running whilst away from the vehicle or not? (This is still happening.) When will we learn carriers are sent home for this infraction, and we are being watched on the street whilst doing our duties trying to be safe, Is it worth being sent home for unsafe practices? I think not !

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Health and Welfare

We are sad to announce that the following retired carriers have passed away:

John J. Wathey passed away Thursday, July 17th and Warren Brown passed away on July 28th.

We are also sad to announce that Louis Reyes, the father of Town & Country carrier Louis Reyes, Jr., passed away on July 27th after a long illness.

Our deepest condolences go out to the families of the deceased.

Arslan Uniform Drawing

The Arslan Uniform prize for the September Branch 599 meeting will be \$140.00.

If you are in attendance at the meeting on September 4th and your name is drawn, you will win the \$140.00 donated by Bill and Shirley Moran of Arslan Uniforms.

Why not come to the meeting, hear what is going on in **your** union, and maybe win \$140.00?

ARSLAN UNIFORMS

Bill & Shirley Moran

Retired Letter Carrier Branch 1477 St. Petersburg

Honorary Member Branch 599 Tampa

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Around The Horn

National Convention

Brothers and Sisters as I begin this month's article, I am gathering my thoughts on my return flight from Boston, Mass. at 32,000 feet. Returning from the week long 66th Biennial NALC Convention. First I want to thank Branch 599 for the opportunity to attend as a paid delegate and also serve as the Convention Chairman. No matter how many NALC National Conventions you may attend, when you experience rising together with 8,000 of your brother and sister delegates, it is an awesome feeling. There were 646 Branches represented from all 50 states, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. Branch 599, with 26 delegates was well represented throughout the week. Boston is a Historic City, and was also the site of the 46th Biennial Convention in 1968, 40 years ago. On Monday July 21 at 10:06 am, National Secretary-Treasurer Jane Broendel called the Convention to order. National President Bill Young gave his keynote address to the enthusiastic delegates. He urged members to take back the White House and deliver victory to even larger pro-worker majorities in the Congress. Political success is vital to the existence of our jobs. Not surprising, President Young did not sugarcoat the grim realities that are present in our country today including the state of the Postal Service. In fact he said and I quote "As for the Postal Service, the recession really began more than a year ago. Mail volume has declined for five straight quarters. In the second quarter of 2008, First Class mail volume fell by 3.5 percent, the steepest drop since the September 11 terrorist attacks of 2001. With the addition of escalating energy costs, the financial outlook of the Postal Service is dismal, at least in the short run." If you wish to read more in depth on the President's address you can find more on the NALC website, the Postal record and the bulletin board at your Station. Sen. Hillary Clinton, who would make a motion for the NALC to endorse Barack Obama for President of the United States, treated the convention to an opening day address. She was greeted with a standing ovation and was very appreciative to all Letter Carriers who supported her run for Presi-

dent. Barack Obama won the endorsement unanimously. Following her address she was made an honorary member of the NALC and a delegate to the Convention, also unanimously. Tuesday brought a very moving tribute to former National president Vince Sombrotto. Our NALC headquarters located in Washington D.C. is now officially named the Vincent R. Sombrotto Building, in tribute to his Great Leadership from 1979 to 2002. Also unveiled was a bronze bust of him that will be placed in the newly renovated lobby of the building named for him. Sombrotto served as our 16th National President over seven terms. In March 1970 despite holding no union office, he led thousands of New York letter carriers on a wildcat strike demanding decent pay and better conditions. As President, he led the way with the implementation of several key Acts and Programs that redefined the Postal Service and the NALC. Constitutional Amendments, Resolutions along with quest speakers both political and union completed the day as well as Wednesday. Thursday was called Trifecta Thursday. NALC members who have joined the e-Activists network, Gimme 5 for COL-CPE and the Carrier Corps were considered Super Delegates and thousands of us wore the issued blue tee shirts. The sea of blue was an awesome sight and showed how many delegates were actively involved. We received a letter from the Obama camp to the delegates that President Young read. It began "I'm sorry I can't join you in person for your convention, but I want to thank all the brothers and sisters for your support." Barack Obama was in the Middle East at Convention time. Executive Vice president Fred Rolando gave a through report on the new methods to evaluate and adjust routes. The NALC is pursuing a system that is "simple, inexpensive and non-intrusive to the letter carrier". It will be a joint effort with the Postal Service and is currently being conducted in 12 test locations around the country. Stay tuned; hopefully this will eliminate the dreaded six-day mail count inspections. Friday consisted of the completion of any unfinished business and a look ahead to the next NALC Convention in two years. The Anaheim, California delegation presented a preview of the 67th Biennial Convention and vowed to host a thrilling week in 2010. Thanks again to Branch 599 for the opportunity and thanks to Boston for a wonderful Convention.

I want to take this time to talk about a de-

by Tony Diaz

Financial Secretary - Branch 599

ceased retired union brother John (Big John) Wathey. Big John passed away on July 17, at the age of 80, after 20 years of retirement life. My former Seminole Heights Station co-worker was very helpful as I began my Postal career at Seminole 28 years ago. He along with all the old timers I was fortunate enough to work with helped train me and are all instrumental in my carrying abilities today. At the young age of 22, combined military and postal veterans surrounded me, and man was that a lesson in life. Big John was a gentle giant, a real life character that had no enemies. With a funny comment, a joke, an unbelievable story (and I mean unbelievable) or breaking out one of his favorite songs, he kept everyone loose. In speaking with his wife, she informed he was a big reader of my Around The Horn article, which I was thrilled to hear. I was proud to present a Bible on behalf of Branch 599 to the family of our deceased brother and a good friend. I ended up spending about an hour with the family and another retired co-worker of Big John's, Denio Sanchez just reminiscing and telling stories. We could have stayed another hour just talking about Big John's antics. He was a wonderful person and I will cherish the fun times we had at the station called "The Country Club" back in the day. Thanks Big John!!



The third COLA has now reached \$1,330 annually and payable in September of this year. This is equivalent to 64 cents per hour, or \$51.17 per pay period.

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

Branch Meeting**Thursday, September 4****7:30 PM****at the Union Hall**

And The Beat Goes On

The Good Times

Brandon had their Retiree Luncheon on August 4th at 2 PM at Buddy Freddy's. We had 8 carriers, 5 clerks and 5 wives. It's always nice to see the folks you worked with for years. Being the small office we were, and not being able to work anywhere else but Brandon, you do have a bond of sorts with them. I don't know if this still exists today with the office so much bigger than it was 10-20 years ago. When I started in Brandon in 1973, having come in from the post office in N.Y., it was quite a change for me and a shock, too. In N.Y. an auxiliary route was just that, like 3 hours.

I'll never forget my first day. The supervisor, Wayne Priess said, "Well, since you just started here I'll put you on an auxiliary." I said, "Great, seven hours." Later a carrier, Jim Grossman, came over and said "Hey, you're doing great." I replied, "If this is an *auxiliary route* what do your regular routes look like?" I soon found out they were all monsters.

At that time there were only 12 routes and we all took our 10 minute break in the office in one room. How times have changed, huh? But then again, not. One day a carrier was charged with being 10 minutes late. He came to me and said, "Ray, the time clock is wrong." I then used the phone on the manager's desk (the only phone in the building office at that time) and I called to ask the correct time

and, sure enough, the time clock was wrong. I told Postmaster Marcum that and he said, "Wallace, who gave you permission to use the phone?" So even then when they were wrong they did not want to be made aware of it. What has changed 30 years later?

But it was a nice experience to see Brandon grow and the 12-20 carriers working at that time were part of it. Rt. 60, Lumsden, and Bloomingdale, were all one lane. Apartments were rare and there was a lot of dirt roads. My jeep got stuck in the sand more than once. I'll never forget the first time I went down Pauls Drive. I thought I was on *Tobacco Road*. I mean slums. Now look at it.

We finally got a new Postmaster, R.W. O'Neill, a Yankee from Connecticut, thank God, and things started to change for the better. I told him that it was two good things his initials were R.W. The grievances never stopped and we had plenty of arguments, but in general he was a man of compassion. We gave some great retirement parties and the best was for Bob Lockhart. So many have died and not of old age. Most were younger than me. At every wake my buddy, Jose Hernandez (old Route 3) and I would look at each other and think, who is next? I'm thinking, "I hope it's Jose..." and Jose is thinking, "I hope it's Ray...".

The first carrier in Brandon was Luther Sands. He just hit age 80 and looks as good as ever. He had Route 1 and a lot of walking. I do believe the walking keeps all of us carriers in good health...
(-coughing-) Where's my cane?

by Ray Wallace

If you read President Jim Good's August article about the NALC convention I'd like to add to that my first time going to a National Convention. We flew to San Francisco on Pan Am (who ever thought they would go out of business). I sat next to Freddie Nimphius.



Jack Newman had got Branch 599 a motel off the beaten path and all of the Tampa carriers stayed in the same place. It was great for me as I just merged Brandon into Tampa and I didn't know anyone except then-President, John Bailey. Well, it was one great feeling to be in a convention center with thousands of carriers from all over the USA. At night you're on your own and you can site see, eat at the best restaurants, walk, see shows, etc. One of the big highlights for me was a tour of Alcatraz prison. I'd seen movies of it for years and here I was, in there. I was even in the solitary cell for 5 minutes. Talk about "dark". My wife said, "Leave him in there!" but they said it was against the rules.

I'll never forget getting on a bus and the driver was telling us the best places to go and he mentioned the street our motel was on. He said, "Stay away from that street! There's a lot of trouble out there." No wonder Jack got such a good deal. Ha ha. I hear the next convention is in 2010, so save your money, and annual leave, and take the family and enjoy a once in a lifetime experience with your brothers and sisters from all over the USA.

Recent retirees Bill Mandikas, Harold Frantz and Jeff Fisher receive congratulations and their retirement gratuity checks from Branch 599 President Jim Good



Unionism

Your Workday

It is Monday morning and you have just arrived at the station so you can stand in line and wait to go on the clock to start working. Before you even get on the clock you see a board posting that tells you how much time it is going to take you to do your route and what trip you are going to take on your under time. You wait your turn and find that by the time you get to clock in it is 3 or 4 clicks past your start time, You check your vehicle, get your mail from all the cases and proceed to your case to begin your days work. In some stations this is how things are.

Does this sound like how your day starts? If so, something is definitely wrong.

How does the supervisor know how much time you need to case and deliver your assignment? How does the supervisor know what issues may affect your ability to get the job done today? What reason does the supervisor have for forgetting the guidelines under the contract, and other postal handbooks such as the M-41. Ask yourself when was the last time you reported to work and found that the accountable mail was ready for you to pickup? How could the Supervisor have a completed 3996 form and, if needed, a completed 1571 form if you have just arrived at work?

It is time for carriers to stop being their own worst enemy. We know that management comes around every day and we are to provide an estimate of how much time we believe it will take to do our assignment for the day. What most carriers forget is that we have the right to withhold the estimate until we receive our last draw of mail. Also carriers forget that you may change your estimate right up until the point of leaving the station to start your assignment. The only thing you must do is justify your change in estimate time, such as receiving 2 express letters and 18 certified letters for your route. This obviously will add significant time to your day and should be updated in your estimate. Also when the supervisor asks for your estimate you are entitled to a 3996 form that you are to fill out explaining why you are unable to complete your assignment in 8 hours. Now we all have been subjected to the statement "Why can't you do it in 8

hours...DOIS says you have under time!" This statement constitutes harassment of the carrier and was resolved in a memo of understanding in the latest contract negotiations, which says "DOIS is simply a tool for management to help them manage their workload..." it is not the end all for work time and reporting requirements detailed in other handbooks and manuals still apply. If a supervisor or manager attempts to harass you using DOIS you should ask to see your steward right away as they are not allowed to even discuss DOIS with the carrier when seeking an estimate.

Another thing management has been doing is pushing the carriers to make it back to the station by 1700 every day. This "GOAL" of a five o'clock window is being pushed on carriers getting them to skip lunches and breaks and to do things that are unsafe to reach this unrealistic goal. On top of this management then goes out on the street to do safety checks and attempts to discipline carriers for cutting corners to try to reach this goal. Understand that the Union bargained to ensure that you get to take a thirty minute lunch every work day as well as two - ten minute breaks every work day and as many comfort stops as you require during your work day and when you give these away you are working for free. Cutting corners on safety will only get you fired in the long run as Management doesn't care why you do it only that you did it.

I have learned a very important lesson since I have been in the Postal Service and that is that management doesn't care about you they only care about that next telecom and what is going to be said to them. I am on the clock when I start work and I stay on the clock until I finish my work every day. The only time that is unpaid is my half hour lunch, so I always take my lunch, I don't work for free. I follow the safety guidelines as given to me. Wear my seatbelt, close my door, shut off my engine and remove the keys from the ignition and lock the door even if I am within the sight of my vehicle so that Management has no reason to have issue with me for safety. I know that Suncoast Safe Driving Rule #13 allows you to leave the keys in the ignition and the door unlocked if you are within sight of the vehicle but is it worth the hassle from management?

by Brian Obst

Chief Steward - Branch 599



Safety is a hot item right now with management, I don't know why since they only give it lip service and they only seem to care after an accident has happened. We in the Postal Service should be proactive not reactive when it comes to safety issues, when you see something unsafe write it up and follow up to see that it is addressed by management to correct the problem. If management fails to follow up and correct the problem ask for your steward and file a grievance under Article 11 Safety, these grievances will bypass the supervisor at the Informal Step A level and go straight to the manager at Formal A. Trust me, this will get some action to correct the problem.

I can only tell you about what you already know is happening, it is up to you to do the right things to help change the unprofessional attitude of management by holding them to the terms of the contract and the handbooks and manuals that are written to explain how the job is to be done. If you are unsure of what is in the M-41, you should remember that you get 5 minutes weekly to review publications and you should be using it every week. You all have received a copy of the latest National Agreement in the mail when it was ratified so use it and take the time to read what it says as it will only help you during your time in the Postal Service.

These rambling thoughts are simply observations from me based on what I have seen throughout the Postal Service during my time and it only leads me to my usual closing, which is more important now than ever: *Knowledge is the key.*

Until next time,
Brian Obst
Chief Steward - Branch 599

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM BRANCH 599

Barack Obama WON'T Take Away Your Gun...

"I have always believed that the Second Amendment protects the right of individuals to bear arms."

—Barack Obama (Washington Times, 6/30/08)

Obama is committed to protecting the habitats of fish and wildlife and expanding access to places where sportsmen and women can hunt and fish. (Obama Campaign Policy Position Paper, accessed 7/8/08)



...But John McCain WILL Take Away Your Union.

'STRONGLY OPPOSED' TO PROTECTING WORKERS TRYING TO FORM UNIONS. McCain said he is "strongly opposed" to the Employee Free Choice Act that protects workers from employer harassment when trying to form unions, and he voted for a national "right to work" for less law that would attempt to eliminate unions altogether. (Congressional Record, page S8389, 6/26/07; H.R. 800, Vote 227, 6/26/07; S. 1788, Vote 188, 7/10/96)

REPEATEDLY BLOCKED WORKERS' BARGAINING RIGHTS. McCain voted to block public-sector workers' right to bargain and to allow employers to permanently replace striking workers. (H.R. 3061, Vote 323, 11/6/01; S. 4, Vote 64, 3/7/07; H.R. 3539, Vote 304, 10/3/96; S. 55, Vote 189, 7/13/94)

SUPPORT CANDIDATES WHO SUPPORT WORKING FAMILIES**VOTE NOV. 4 ★ BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT**

How you vote is a personal decision. Branch 599 believes Barack Obama is the best candidate for working families. For more information, visit www.WorkingFamiliesVote08.org or call 813-875-0599.

LT1-112168

N.A.L.C. BRANCH 599 LABOR DAY PICNIC

See your shop steward
Retirees call the union office (813) 875-0599



Sunday, August 31, 2008, 12:00-4:00 PM
at the Union Hall, 3003 W. Cypress St., Tampa

INSIDE

Magician 1:30 – 2:30

FOOD

Provided by “Catering By The Family”
hamburgers, hot dogs
barbequed chicken & pork
beer, soft drinks and water – all day
cotton candy, snow cones, ice cream

KIDS

face painting – 12:30-3:30
gigantic wet slide
2 moonwalks – all day
sack race

EVERYONE

egg toss
water balloon toss

A \$5.00 donation, per family, for MDA is requested and will be accepted at the door

NALC 66th Biennial



Delegates Henry Dupree and Bill Langgle



John Gebo and NALC Vice-President Gary Mullins

NALC 66th Biennial



Branch 599's Convention Delegates



Detlev Aepfel and John Gebo at the convention in Boston

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