

Confessions of a Former Station Manager

by Guy Nohrenberg, PTF Carrier (Simi Valley/ **Branch 2902**)

(edited)

It was the middle of the most sweaty part of summer. You know, when coverages tattoo your arm and you see mirages of swimming pools. My wife called me. She's a Letter Carrier. She asked me if I knew what the temperature was. I looked at the thermostat and told her, "72! Like it always is!" She hung up on me.

Well, I thought it was funny. I was a Manager then. It's like rolling down your window just a little to hand out a 4584 driving observation so the chilled air doesn't escape.

- Six Shelves full of flats. No problem.
- Five Shelves jammed full and extra bundles all over the case? District Policy.
- Not making street time? Street time is street time. You have to make street time.
- Heavy mail? How much heavier is it? It doesn't feel heavier than yesterday.
- Most carriers don't try to make 5:00.
- Nationally Creating the Managed Service Points barcode system for everyone to scan was fun!
- I wonder if I'll get a new desk?

Well that was last year. See, Upper Management doesn't like when you disagree with them.

After 20 years of Managing. I'm a Letter Carrier now! You may have worked for me. I've been in many of the offices in this District. (Sierra Coastal District)

Soak that up for a moment.

Yes, A Level 22 Station Manager has requested, for the third time, to become a PTF Letter Carrier and THIS TIME they finally let me do it. This time for wanting to go to the good place when my less than 100 years is up. It was a good decision. One I do not regret. Letter carriers are the heart and soul of our organization and I can attest that the pencil pushers only look down upon us in disdain. It's like the Marine Corps saying they'd be just fine if it wasn't for all those doggone Marines running about.

Well guess what I'm learning?

Mail, can be Heavy!! Two coverages bursting out of a full satchel and a boss yelling that each street only takes 12 minutes! (No he can't even walk the sidewalk empty handed in 12 minutes in his K-Mart jogging outfit).

Heat? I carried last summer. No longer is it 70 degrees in my world. I did get a 4584 driving observation though... slid through the cracked window of a smiling supervisor's vehicle. Yes I thought it was funny too.

Who in the WORLD decided that a magazine should be shoved into little 6 inch tall slots? Irwin, I understand now. DPS Counts do matter! Coverages DO affect times...especially when they arrive looking like something my dog played with. What do you mean I missed that MSP scan? Who invented how we use this stuff?

Dogs, cars, supervisors raising their voices and making smart-alecky remarks, sweat running down my brow. Learning mounted routes like Lucille Ball flipping pancakes! Street time is street time? Oh, that one came back at me too. Who doesn't try to make 5:00?Most carriers DO! Wow.... Carriers really DO care! They only say they don't when they're discouraged that nobody else does.

You deserve to have an article like this and be able to enjoy reading it. You work HARD! You really DO deserve some credit! My wife used to remind me of that every day and while I believed it, I didn't "feel" it. You know?

It is so apparent, now, when faced with adversity, weaker-minded Managers and Supervisors, compensating for something, as Shrek would say, and take it out on the Carriers.

I believed that you should be the kind of manager you'd want your kids to have when they entered the workplace. If a Carrier is trying, you help them with everything you have. Now look at me! I'm carrying mail... I thought it would be easy! It isn't, the Carriers who worked for me just made it look that way.

Sure, you can do route inspections, run units, be successful. But can you really help effect positive change without perspective? Perspective can be lost too! A long time friend of mine just made the move from Letter Carrier to ASP graduate and I heard from her lips that telltale cliché ... "Oh, all routes can be done in under-time on any day if the Carriers wanted to." Yes, in less than a year, she's already forgotten yelling at me just the opposite when she was hauling mail on an overburdened route.

To effect real positive change, you need to obtain and reinvigorate perspective. Anytime you hear "I was a Carrier" or "I carried mail", then you're talking to someone who has done it so long ago that they are clueless as to what it's about. They cannot help this organization and I thought I'd never say that. Think about it. What if each pencil-pushing keyboard-dancing employee carried mail for a week every 4 months, on a route of OUR choice.

Things would improve. Why? Because the poor sup would have to do it again in 4 more months! I'd bet most of them are too donut-filled to be even capable of performing the task. Me? I've lost 22 pounds on the "PTF Diet Plan!" and I am losing more fat while gaining more perspective.

It is clear that our organization is in need of obtaining and maintaining true perspective.

Think of your Supervisor, Manager, or Postmaster having to do what I am doing now; casing and carrying mail. It's good, hard, work, but with peace of mind of a sense of accomplishment. If you're treated with decency then there are hopes of a diminished idiocy in the decisions which affect you.

I was a dinosaur. I believed in being straight with people. Now, things are much different. "Dinosaurs" have been replaced by "Used Car Salesmen". Like that old song, "Smiling Faces... Sometimes". Remember it? By the "Undisputed Truth" from back in the 70's. Can you sing it?

I have no plans of ever supervising or managing again. Not after making carriers like you to scan endless barcodes. Not after thinking that carrying was easy. Not after failing to defend you from all the stupid policies which slowed you down and tripped you up. I should have spoken up long ago. I had a responsibility to our organization, a group of hard-working carriers, which I should have heeded, instead of bowing to the whims of power intoxicated bosses. A wise man recently told me, "If you're lucky, you'll pay for your sins in this life." I shall, in the heat, the cold, and on the streets with you. For the next 10 years until I retire, I will carry mail, but after my 100 years on this planet, I do hope to do good and go to the good place. Now, my wife calls me and asks if I'm ok. I tell her I'm fine and I'm proud to be in uniform once again. What would it be like if all our Executives obtained such perspective... and maintained it?

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