

Cumberland Mountain State Park
Crossville, Tennessee

“Happiness
is not a goal...
it's a by-product
of a life
well lived.”

*Eleanor
Roosevelt*

The Prez Says ...



Larry Minniear

Another April marked off the calendar, another convention into the memoirs of NARFE history. It was a good one as all of them are. The Clarksville Chapter with some help from Dickson and Jackson chapters pulled off a really good show. I do not intend to elaborate in this article about the convention as it has been adequately covered in other articles. Plan now for next year. We will be in Pigeon Forge at MainStay Suites.

We had our national president, Richard Thissen, with us at the convention. Richard is a very straight-forward, tell it like it is type person. I can appreciate that. A few of the statistics he gave us were a bit disturbing. NARFE lost 2,800 members due to death last year or 26 members per day. We had over 305,000 in 2011, and we are now down to 323,000, a loss of 73,000 members in just 4 years. That is a pretty steep slide in the wrong direction. We need to recruit 30 members daily just to break even. Can we do it? Of course, it is possible. Is it probable? Not unless we think membership with a whole lot more enthusiasm than we have in recent years.

Many naysayers say our membership is getting old and dying off. Here is a news

flash for you: this holds true for every other organization. The Future of NARFE Committee suggested we expand our membership eligibility to include people outside the federal sector. The potential member pool is not the problem. There are over 2.7 million active federal employees. There are 1.8 million federal retirees across the country. The federal employee and retiree pool in Tennessee is over 87,000. These statistics are a few years old, but they show clearly, the potential for strong membership growth is there. The problem lies elsewhere.

People do not like to work membership. It is as plain as that. We have no Federation Membership Chairperson, nor do we have one at many chapters. I realize working membership is not easy. I made contact with numerous potential members over the last year. They will be polite and listen to you. You give them the information. Then, you never hear from them again. We must do better if we are to survive as an organization. Without members, we have no reason to exist. I, for one, do not believe that having people pay dues to a national office so they can receive a magazine and a few discounts is not what an organization is all about. If they do not attend at least a few functions to become informed of NARFE's purpose, it is unlikely they will do anything to assist with our legislative advocacy efforts.

As I have stated many times, if we are

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Old Stone Fort State Park
Manchester, Tennessee

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The Prez Says ... (continued)

serious about recruiting active members, we must make our meetings or events available to them at least occasionally. There has to be a reason to belong. In most cases the programs at chapter meetings are very good. The problem is, no one knows about them. Very few chapters have a newsletter any longer. No reminders are sent out. The telephone tree system of notification is seldom used. Only about 30% have email registered with NARFE.

We really need to get back to basics in terms of membership. Make use of your personal connections as well as social media as much as possible. Personally invite a prospective member to the next member and provide transportation if

feasible. Once they see what we have to offer, it is pretty hard to say no. But, they have to be educated.

Everyone is a part of the membership committee. Everyone must work to reverse this trend in membership decline. Only YOU can make it happen. Pitch in. Do your part. After all, someone recruited you, didn't they? It is your turn to return the favor.

-Larry Minniear

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A fine slate of Federation officers elected

I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for re-electing me as your NARFE Tennessee Federation Secretary. I also want to thank you all for your help and support these past years that I have served. It is a pleasure to work with each one of you. When I have requested information, you each have gone out of your way to get it to me as quickly as humanly possible.

A commendation goes to you all on the fine slate of officers you have elected. Each is a dedicated individual anxious to serve you and bring you the first-hand scoop the fastest way they possibly can. Their goal has been to make sure you know what is going on in our government so you don't lose any of your hard-earned

benefits, pensions and annuities.

Throughout the year, please remember to send me a copy of your F-7 officer rosters when you elect your new slate of officers each year, even if they all remain the same. Plus, please keep track of your deceased members so we can honor them at our Convention and also memorialize them in our In Memoriam book which is prepared and kept as a history of the members of our fine organization.

Again, thank you for your assistance and thank you for your much appreciated support. I'm looking forward to a successful year of reaching and surpassing the goals NARFE National has set for us.

-Merilyn Evans

Tennessee Federation Secretary



Rock Island State Park
Rock Island, Tennessee

Convention was a huge success



Rhonda Mooney

Our 2015 Federation Convention in Clarksville was a huge success. A lot of fun was had by all and we received some very valuable information. Convention Chair Sandra Simms and the Clarksville Chapter 870 Convention Planning

Committee with assistance from Dickson Chapter 727 and Jackson Chapter 519 did an excellent job, and I want to say a huge thank you to all. All comments that I heard about the Convention were positive - I didn't hear a single negative comment.

We were very fortunate to have NARFE National President Richard Thissen at our Convention. In his talk he stated that "we're all in this together." He stated that NARFE Headquarters has reorganized and is now poised to move into the future. He noted that we have a great legislative staff. He further explained that Congress will be coming after retirees and active employees this year. After hearing him say this, I plan to be more diligent in contacting my representatives when requested by NARFE to do so. He mentioned that a study showed that NARFE's Federal Benefits Department may attract more active employees to NARFE than advocacy. The next time I'm talking with an active employee, I'm going to put more emphasis on the Federal Benefits Department. I had the opportunity to speak with President Thissen various times during the Convention, and I was very impressed with his straight-forward answers to my questions. I asked him several questions, and he answered every question without hesitation. He even prefaced one answer by saying that I was probably not going to like the answer. He was right -- I didn't really like the answer, but I appreciated his honesty, and after listening to his explanation, I now have a better understanding of the issue. I feel much more optimistic about the future of NARFE

after talking with him.

Our Sixth Annual West Tennessee Joint Chapter Meeting will be hosted by Shiloh Chapter 861 on August 13 at 11 a.m. The meeting will be held at Pickwick Landing State Park Conference Center. The meeting room has a beautiful view of Pickwick Lake. The speaker will be Lisa Hogan, R.N., who is the Administrator for the Savannah Health Care & Rehabilitation Center, Inc. She will be providing information on Alzheimer's. Please mark your calendars now and begin making plans to attend -- I hope to see lots of folks from all our west Tennessee chapters in attendance. If you have any questions or would like additional information about the meeting, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Congratulations to Larry Minniear on his election as our new Federation president. Please support Larry as he works to help make NARFE the best organization that it can be, which in turn will help better protect our hard-earned benefits.

I want to say a heartfelt thanks to Larry Henderson for his service as our Federation president for the past two years. Larry is a very dedicated NARFE member and did an outstanding job as our Federation president.

I appreciate the opportunity to serve as your Federation 1st Vice President. If I can be of assistance, please feel free to contact me.

*-Rhonda Mooney
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Five Points of Attitude Adjustment

Sometimes the Internet appears to be a flowing fountain of advice and experiences. You can very nearly live several lives through the expressed experiences of others, just reading the plethora of advice and remembrances of others sent to you by email or posted on venues like Facebook or Twitter.

Recently someone sent me a listing of 60 – 60! – points for adjusting your attitude. While they were all interesting, the sheer weight of all that was overwhelming. So while I thought it would be good if we could put into action all that advice, I also realized attempting to do that would probably just get in the way of actual life, dealing with everything that comes at us 24 hours a day.

The list consisted of things like these five below.....

1. You don't drown because you fell in the water, you drown because you didn't get out.

2. If you concentrate on the people who make you sad, you can miss those who make you happy.

3. When you call someone ugly, it doesn't make you prettier. (This is so true in its simplicity it is almost golden.)

4. Trying to be someone else just wastes the person God made you to be. (I was always told that I might as well be myself because everyone else was taken. But I was recently advised by a grandchild that I should always be myself, but if I could be Batman, always be Batman.)

5. The hallmark of this age seems to be those people who spend money they don't have, for things they don't need, to impress people they don't know.

So whaddaya think? Insightful? Just silly? I'll bet if I had posted all 60 most of us would have selected a different set than those I chose. And yet, attitude adjustment is very important to you and me. Not necessarily our attitude, but the attitude of those on Capitol Hill who have a handle on our benefits. Also, to those active duty federal employees who tell us on surveys that they believe Congress cannot change our benefits. They could not be more wrong.

But therein lies the importance of NARFE, we know it can happen, and we have experts on the Hill working hard at adjusting attitudes toward active and retired federal employees.

Think as ordinary citizens we can't do much? I would refer you to Greg Stallworth, the EEO Officer at Fort Campbell, who gave a barnstorming speech at the 59th Tennessee Federa-

tion Convention in Clarksville, April 20-21. Federal employees deal with acronyms all the time, but he threw a new one at us: UPP. Turns out UPP is your Unique Personal Power. Greg pointed out that our Founding Fathers had it, as did many coming up through our history, in order to bring America to the leadership position has in the world today.

UPP, says Greg, is the ability to look at the situation and speak truth to power. It means being a leader in whatever situation you are in, regardless of position or title. And it often means working for the benefit of others, your joy being in accomplishment.

He points out that as we wake each day, as the day lays itself out before us, we have in those waking moments the opportunity to decide to be negative or positive. A positive decision energizes our UPP throughout the day, regardless of what comes.

Jumping for a moment from Gregg Stallworth's speech to the address by our NARFE President, Richard Thissen, he told us frankly this is going to be a tough year. NARFE has added some new experts to the team in Washing-

ton, D.C., in anticipation of a tougher battle to keep the benefits of NARFE retirees untouched. We haven't lost anything, he said, since they delayed our COLA in 1993.

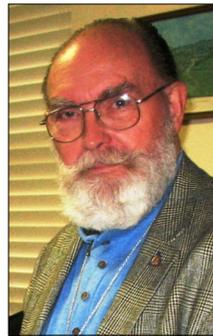
Now, while NARFE is not the biggest funded agency on the Hill, and we are smaller than some, still in 2013 NARFE was honored by *The Hill Magazine* as one of the top ten lobbying agencies. Now, let's be real. That doesn't happen because the congressmen and senators fear our lobbyists, but because our lobbyists can quote you – who vote them in and out of office – and you follow up with email, letters, telegrams and such. They know when they hear from NARFE lobbyists that they are hearing their voters.

So this year, already seen to be a tough year for federal workers, this year if you have never done it before, crank up that UPP, and when NARFE notifies you that your congressman and senator need to hear from you on an issue, make sure they really hear from you! You make the difference. Your NARFE staff in D.C. provides the platform, but it's your voice that makes the difference.

-Ed Evans

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Ed Evans

What is really going on in Washington?

What is really going on in Washington and how is it going to affect us as federal employees and retirees? This is the question all of us are raising and rightly so, because it is not clear at this point (at least not to me) how things are progressing.

In my opinion, we are still “under the gun” and easy targets for the politicians to cut and pick the “low hanging fruit” in an effort to balance the budget. This is a basic problem because again, in my opinion, the large deficit we have was caused by two wars and a stimulus package and the trillions of dollars of cost cannot be reduced by savings of billions of dollars from the cuts to federal employees and retirees. Also, we have already contributed our fair share in the 120 billion dollar reductions in the past.

The budget proposals by the House (\$280.9 billion) and the Senate (\$170 billion) proposed deep cuts, especially in the House version and for the first time could affect retirees in addition to active employees. The cost in health benefits would increase our cost of premiums from approximately 28% to 50% over a 10-year period. The Senate version mentioned some of the same cuts, but was less specific.

This week the House passed the “non-binding” compromise GOP budget for Fiscal Year 2016. The Senate is expected to approve

this compromise since the provisions were hammered out in the joint committee process. This provision did not contain the increased contributions for employees or the change in the G fund.

The good news, in addition to not mentioning the above provisions, according to NARFE headquarters, is that the budget resolution does not set reconciliation into motion (an expedited process to achieve savings). However, sequestration (ten years of budget caps included in the 2011 Budget Control Act) is still in effect even though suspended through the end of FY 2015.

In summary, Jessica Klement (NARFE's legislative director) has stated that even though some items were left out, NARFE members must remain vigilant and cannot stand by while Congress works to reduce our earned pay, retirement, and health benefits. Do your part. Learn all you can by going to chapter meetings and respond by sending emails or calling whenever we are asked to by NARFE headquarters.

-Jim Glenn
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Vacant

Special Project Officer
Vacant

Tennessee Tuesday on Capitol Hill



Federation Past President Larry Henderson (from left), Senator Lamar Alexander, Senator Bob Corker and Federation Legislative Chair Jim Glenn share a moment together on March 17, during Tennessee Tuesday on Capitol Hill.

Stay active in summer months

The summer months can make it hard to stay active. As we age, we're at greater risk of heat-related illnesses, such as dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke, so we may be spending more time indoors to avoid the sun. How do we get around this?

1. Make it a morning walk.
2. Visit a museum, aquarium, or indoor cultural event.
3. Join a senior center. Many offer indoor exercise classes specifically designed for seniors, so you won't feel behind.
4. Go to a dance.
5. Go for a swim.
6. Sign up for water aerobics.
7. Use that green thumb. Many people don't think about gardening as a physical activity, but it requires a lot of movement and burns more calories than you realize.
8. Volunteer your time.
9. Join a golf club.
10. Continue your normal routine. Do you regularly engage in exercises during the other months? It's likely that you can keep it going even in the summer – just take it down a notch or schedule it earlier in the day.

Remember, if you're going to spend an extended period of time in the sun, don't forget to dress appropriately, stay hydrated, and protect your skin with sunblock and a hat.

Julia Dennis
www.seniorhealthmemos.com

Henderson summarizes first class convention

A well planned, first class production occurred in Clarksville, Tenn. on April 20-21. Convention Chairperson Sandra Simms and the Clarksville Chapter 870 Convention Planning Committee assisted by Dickson Chapter 727 and Jackson Chapter 519 did an outstanding job of providing a venue that could hardly have been more comfortable, the facilities more appealing, the logistics more responsive, or the planning more complete. I am especially grateful to the Convention Standing Committee Chairs for your exceptional work, and I appreciate all of the delegates, alternates and members for your efforts to make the 59th Annual Federation Convention in the historic city of Clarksville a resounding success.

We were honored to have NARFE National President Richard Thissen as our keynote speaker. He was very well received by the group and his honest, straightforward comments seemed to be appreciated. Local dignitaries included Cynthia Pitts who was representing her husband, 67th District State Representative Joe Pitts, Montgomery County Mayor Jim Durrett and Clarksville City Mayor Kim McMillan. Other NARFE guests included Region X Vice President William Shackelford and Alzheimer's Region X Coordinator Donna Shackelford.

A delicious banquet meal was catered by Chartwells from Austin Peay State University. Chartwells is comprised of three divisions: K-12 Schools, Flik Independent Schools, and Higher Education. It is a diverse family of dedicated food and nutrition specialists whose "eat, learn, live" philosophy brings healthy dining to the academic community.

After a short discussion, the revised Federation Constitution & Bylaws were adopted. I believe it is a significant improvement over the previous document, and I commend Committee Chair Ronnie Collins, Larry Minniear, Rhonda Mooney and Ed Evans for their excellent work.

I was pleased to present the board members with well deserved Distinguished Service Certificates; they are a fantastic team! I was also pleased to present two plaques to Max Coats. One for him and one that he received on behalf of his daughter, Lisa Varney, for 10 years of excellence in publishing our Federation Newsletter. I have seen a lot of newsletters from other federations and ours is, by far, the most attractive; they do great work!

Presentation of the incentive awards was a lot of fun. Martha M. Planck of Clarksville

Chapter 870 won the free night at the MainStay Suites in Pigeon Forge early registration award, Leon Broyles of Athens Chapter 152 won the \$25 new member award, Julia Metcalfe of Millington Chapter 1382 won the recruiter Riverview Inn lodging equivalent award, and Joyce Knott of Jackson Chapter 519 won the \$25 recruiter award.

The recruiting contest produced a three way tie. Carolyn Cribbis and Leila Johnson of Millington Chapter 1382 and Larry Minniear of Chattanooga Chapter 108 won \$70 each. The top recruiting chapter was Millington Chapter 1382 and Jackson Chapter 519 was second. Donelson Chapter 1576 and Chattanooga Chapter 108 tied for third place. By all accounts, the recruiting contest was a great success. During 2014 the Tennessee Federation recruited 48.9 percent of our new members from the field. That is more than double the total NARFE Association field recruiting average of 21 percent for the year. Good job Tennessee recruiters!

There was another great success that I am delighted to report. At the conclusion of the excellent Legislative Training presentation by Federation Legislative Chair Jim Glenn, National President Richard Thissen issued a challenge to the attendees. He said that several other federations had already held their convention and the Legislative Department had challenged them to contribute more than last year at their NARFE-PAC table. At that time, the Hawaii Federation had contributed the most with a total of \$1,400 and President Thissen challenged us to beat their total. Convention Chairperson Sandra Simms made the announcement during the banquet Monday evening and, thanks to the amazing response of our Tennessee members, Federation NARFE-PAC Chair Charles Thompson collected a grand total of \$2,023 - over 250 percent more than last year. NARFE-PAC is an often underemphasized but very important part of NARFE's advocacy efforts, and I am very proud of this tremendous accomplishment.

Cleveland Chapter 860 took home the Weida White Tolley Memorial Alzheimer's Award this year with per capita donations of \$13.85, and Clarksville Chapter 870 was recognized for contributing the largest dollar

Henderson (Continued)

amount to Alzheimer's with a total of \$1,408.76. Cumberland County Chapter 1719 took the Leo Potts Memorial NARFE-PAC Award back to the same place that it has resided for several years with donations of \$25 per capita. I commend all of these chapters for their excellent support of these important NARFE programs. In addition, I would like to thank everyone who helped make the Alzheimer's Silent Auction a success; a total of \$1,069 was raised during the convention this year.

As I reflect on the past two years, there is no time more fitting than now to express my gratitude. Thank you to all of the members of my home chapter, Tri-County Chapter 806, for your patience as I tried to balance the duties and responsibilities of Federation President with the duties and responsibilities of Chapter President; I could not have done it without your support. Thank you also to all of our loyal, dedicated chapters for your warm hospitality during my visits and for the pleasure of working with our federation's outstanding chapter leaders. I could not have hand-picked a better Federation Executive Board; the spirit of cooperation and unity among the members of this exceptionally talented team is greatly appreciated. And thank you for the privilege of serving as your Federation President for the past two years; it has been a high honor and a very enjoyable experience.

Please remember our less able senior members. As the summer temperatures rise and air conditioners struggle to keep up, additional assistance may be needed.

Larry Henderson
Immediate Past President
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Convention Scenes



Important Notice

To contact OPM (Office of Personnel Management), call 888-767-6738 or 202-606-0500

Be sure to have your CSA number available (annuity, insurance, health & life, etc.)

2016 Federation State Convention

The 2016 Federation Convention will be held on April 25 & 26 at the MainStay Suites, 410 Pine Mountain Rd., Pigeon Forge, Tenn. The Main Stay is located just two blocks off the Pigeon Forge Parkway at traffic light #6. All suites are non-smoking with kitchens, queen bed(s), sofa, flat screen TVs, free wifi and some with private balconies. Free hot breakfast buffet including biscuits, gravy, sausage, waffles, scrambled eggs, fruit and more. The facility has an indoor pool, hot tub, cardio exercise room, an outdoor pool, lazy river and kiddie pool. Just minutes from the LeConte Center at Pigeon Forge, Dollywood, Dixie Stampede, the Old Mill and the Island in Pigeon Forge.

We have 40 rooms blocked for early arrivals on Sunday the 24th and 60 for Monday the 25th. The rate is \$79 plus 12.25% room tax, and that rate will be good through Thursday of that week. Reservation can be made at any time (now), through March 24th

at 888 428-8350 (mention NARFE).

Knoxville Chapter 204 and hopefully with the assistance from other East Tennessee Chapters will host the convention. Start making plans now and make your reservations.

-Larry Cunningham
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