

Newsletter

February 2021

(Published monthly September – June)

Vol. 38, No. 5

UPCOMING MEETINGS/ACTIVITIES (Open to all)

Chapter:

- **Members Meetings:** Feb 23, Mar 23, Apr 27.
- **Newsletter Input Deadlines:** Feb 19, Mar 18, Apr 17.
- **Board Meetings:** Mar 3, Apr 7, May 5, Jun 2.

Outside Events:

- Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board Mtg., Feb 16 @ 7:00 PM teleconference, (301) 715-8592 Meeting ID: 993 6902 0579.
- NARFE Region II Training Academy – Cancelled.
- MD Federation Conference, Ocean City- May 2-4.
- NARFE Centennial Gala, Washington, D.C., June 21.
- NARFE LegCon, (legislative training) in Washington, D.C., June 21-23.

NOTE: Unless otherwise noted*, our Members Meetings are held on the **4th Tuesdays at 1:00 PM. Please note that until further notice, we will meet via videoconference using an online Zoom-LIKE platform.** If you cannot connect via the videoconference, you can hear the meeting on your phone using the teleconference number our chapter has used in the past. Link and telephone number information is on Page 2, under “The Romance and Adventure...”

Montgomery County Covid-19 Phone and Website Info

The Montgomery County Covid-19 Call Center Telephone Number is 240-777-1755. Folks at that number can help you find testing centers, get testing results, etc.

The Montgomery County Covid-19 website for the latest news and information, testing sites, registration for vaccination, and alerts is at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/>

For Maryland State information, go to: www.COVIDVAX.Maryland.gov or www.coronavirus.maryland.gov/pages/vaccine

President’s Message

Happy Valentine’s Day! I hope you are all well and successful at getting your Covid-19 vaccinations. I’ve tried but no luck. Once I see the notification email asking me to schedule, the vaccine is gone.

Between trying to get the vaccine, I’ve been busy attending NARFE Maryland Federation and National Executive Board Meetings. At the February 12 Executive Board meeting, it was announced that the NARFE Gala and LegCon (Legislative Conference) in June will take place as hybrid events—some face-to-face activity and also streaming of it for the folks at home. However, the usual visits to the Hill by LegCon attendees will not take place due to Covid.

Speaking of meetings, we have our Chapter meeting on February 23rd. You must not miss it, because it’s about the romance and history of trains here in the D.C. and Maryland area. Details are on Page 2--also a picture of a train in a heart. That picture, circa 1961, is of my father standing on a train in the Union Station yard. My dad was my first valentine, so I thought it appropriate to use that picture to highlight our train presentation and Valentine’s Day. I hope you will attend the February 23rd informative and super interesting presentation.

A quick Valentine’s present for you--my shortcut to homemade cookies. When you’re tired but want homemade cookies, try this:

Chocolate, Chocolate Chip, Drop Cookies

Combine 1 package of chocolate cake mix, ½ cup of cooking oil, 2 eggs. Then mix in a handful of chocolate chips. Drop batter from a teaspoon onto an ungreased cookie sheet and top with ½ of a pecan. Bake at 350 degrees for 10-12 minutes. Cool on sheet about 1 minute, then remove to rack to finish cooling. Yum! *Best wishes, Sarah*

The Romance and Adventure of Trains

Join us as we explore the history of trains and railways. Train enthusiast, Bob Cohen, will regale us with stories of the past trains and railways, including the run-a-way train that crashed into Union Station, the Lindberg locomotive (race between a plane and train), D.C. and Maryland train stations and train lines, electrification of the rails D.C. to NY, and local places to visit to learn more about preservation and restoration projects, and exhibit train rides. Federal employees helped develop the train system in America by processing land grants and money loans and by developing safety regulations and monitoring train safety. Let's take an historical look at what we helped build.

The meeting is February 23 at 1:00 PM.

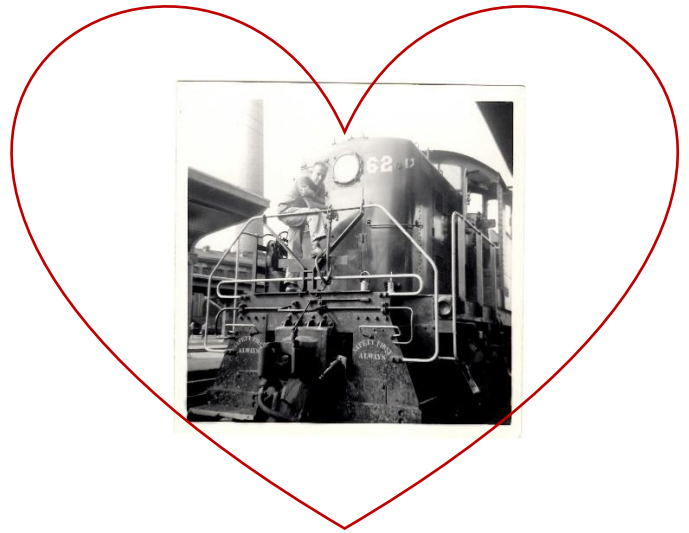
You can easily access the meeting via the videoconference by computer, tablet, or smart phone. There is no app to download; **just click on the link** (best way to connect) or type in: <https://live.unlimitedconferencing.com/live/SarahRichards/myconference>.

Then type your name, select a sound type (may have to do that in two boxes) if you don't like the default one or the sound does not work. Then click on the box that says allow microphone and camera. You'll be able to see and hear us, as well as speak.

This system **does not work on the Internet Explorer** browser. You will need to use Google Chrome, Safari or any other browser.

If you prefer, you can participate with audio-only with any type of phone by calling 301-232-0143 and when asked, key in the pin number 887080 followed by the # sign. You will be connected to the meeting.

If you want to test either the videoconference or the teleconference system prior to the meeting, email NARFEsrichards@aol.com and ask for a test. She's happy to help you get online.



**Happy Valentine's Day!
Happy New Year! Happy....**

The month of February is short but full of celebrations: Valentine's Day, Presidents' Day, Black History Month, Chinese New Year, Ground Hog Day, and more. Be sure to celebrate when you can, especially important to brighten your days during the monotony of the pandemic life. You can celebrate Black History Month with the following virtual programs:

- Separate but Equal, 2/17
- Giants of Racial Justice, 2/18, and
- The Mountaintop, 2/19-28

For detailed information, see "Black History Month Events Happening Online" in the *Montgomery Magazine* at

www.montgomerymag.com/2021/01/29/black-history-month-events-happening-online/.

Special Thanks from the President

Our Chapter Board members deserve special thanks and a big valentine for their continued hard work and dedication to keeping this Chapter functioning and fun! Thank you, Paul, Myron, Jim, Merle, Bob, Minnedore, Linda, Cathy, Rudy and Anita! Also, thanks to Linda Jacks who is not a Board member, but who patiently proofs the newsletters each month! You all have my grateful appreciation. I am in awe of you.

VA Giving Covid-19 Vaccinations

Our NARFE Region II Vice President said that the Veterans Administration hospitals are giving vaccinations to veterans, and the appointments to get the vaccine are pretty quick. He suggests that veterans should call the VA to get an appointment as soon as possible.

Covid-19 Prevention Tips

At the NARFE Maryland Federation virtual meeting on February 1, one of the speakers, Dr. Howard Haft, Executive Director of Maryland Primary Care Programs, spoke and told us that folks who have already had Covid-19 should still get vaccinated to ensure that the antibodies stay with them. He also said we should wear two masks—a surgical one next to our face and a second tighter cloth mask over it. However, he warned that if both masks aren't covering both our nose and mouth and fit tight against our face, two masks won't work well. Fit is super important.

Didn't Get Your Stimulus Check?

It's income tax time and if you didn't get your stimulus check, you can request it on your 2020 taxes. The payments will be added into your refund amount or reduce your current year's tax.

United Seniors of Maryland

The United Seniors of Maryland (USM) annual rally has been cancelled due to Covid-19; however, the USM is tracking and supporting legislation impacting seniors, such as bills that protect against Covid-19 (testing and vaccines for all seniors), senior estate and tax breaks, broad band access for seniors, and tele-health, housing and evictions, etc. NARFE is a partner with USM, and NARFE leadership usually participates in USM weekly action status meetings.

State Taxes--Did you Know?

(Information taken from MD Federation Feb. 13 email)

- Maryland is a high-tax state. A tax rate (state + county) of circa 8% applies to the majority of taxpayers and can be as high as 8.95%.
- Nine states have no income tax.
- Nine other states exempt the total amount of Civil Service annuities.
- Five additional states exempt certain Federal Civil Service annuities from taxation.
- Seniors receive a relatively minor tax break in Maryland.
- Recent changes in Federal tax law have made the tax situation worse for Maryland Seniors.

Want to do something about this inequity? Write to your State legislators asking for them to pass bills that:

- Allow for the itemization of deductions in one's Maryland tax return even if this has not been done in one's Federal tax return.
- Allow for the complete exemption of the pension income of seniors.

The easiest way to send letters to your legislators is to go to the February 13 email from the Maryland Federation and click on their "Yes" button. It will take you to the State Legislative Committee message on the NARFE National website. The NARFE system uses your name and address to identify your legislators in Annapolis and will send your letter to them and to the Governor.

Repeal WEP and GPO!

The Social Security Fairness Act, H.R. 82, was introduced by Representative Rodney Davis, R-IL, on January 4. The bill would repeal both the unfair Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO). WEP and GPO limit some Federal retirees from receiving all of the Social Security they earned. Go to the National NARFE website's Advocacy tab <https://new.narfe.org/advocacy/legislative-action-center/> to learn more and use the easy NARFE system to send emails to your National legislators supporting this bill.

Chapter 1892 Leadership

President.....**Sarah Richards**
301-589-7465.....NARFEsrichards@aol.com
V-Pres/State Leg/MD Fed. SLC Chair.....**Paul Schwartz**
301-260-1903
Secretary..... **Myron Chace**
301-330-4713
Treasurer.....**Jim Bachmaier**
301-946-2280
Membership.....**Merle Biggin**
301-814-6047
Membership Retention.....**Bob Kammer**
301-847-9820
Interim Newsletter Editor..... **Sarah Richards**
301-589-7465
Sunshine.....**Minnedore Green**
240-839-7043
Program Ideas/Past President**Linda Cohen**
301-460-5177
Alzheimer's..... **Cathy Hobbs**
301-924-4633
Historian/Past President**Rudy Volin**
301-598-2209
Photography Team Lead.....**Anita Rhawn**

January Membership Report

The membership report from NARFE Headquarters for the month of January revealed that we had five persons, (Donald Rider, Sanford Gold, Paul Lazar, Steven Riemer, and Dwight Blankenbaker) who renewed their NARFE membership, and Sandra Rothschild was reinstated. Also, we have five prospective members: Jeffrey Trunzo, Elizabeth Delvin-Foltz, Tysan Williams, Jan Broady, and Harry Derderian.

Renewing Membership Online?

Be careful when renewing your Chapter membership online. It is easy to miss the chapter dues area in the new system. Several people have complained that they ended up being National-only members, because they didn't see the place to put our Chapter information and pay the \$7 Chapter dues. National dues are \$48 and the additional Chapter dues are \$7, so both together are \$55. Be sure that's the amount you were charged. If not, you may have lost your Chapter membership. You can call NARFE if you prefer to renew that way. The number for that is 1-703-838-7760, ext. 289.

Free Online Classes/Museum Tours

Seniors Montgomery is hosting free virtual museum tours and online classes (morning stretch, smart thermostats, electronic health records, how to spot fake news, etc.) February 15-19. For more information, go to:

www.seniorplanet.org/Montgomery

Downsizing, Selling, and Moving

Learn how to make those difficult decisions to sell your home and move elsewhere—how to downsize a lifetime of household items with precious memories. Our Chapter meeting in March will have two experts one on real estate trends and sales and another on downsizing. They will help you overcome the inertia and move forward with a happier life. Be sure to attend March 23rd at 1:00 PM via videoconference or teleconference. Instructions are the same as for the February meeting on Page 2.

Free Tax Preparation

For Montgomery County residents with household incomes of \$57,000 or less, call 240-777-1123 to schedule virtual appointments for 2020 free tax preparation or go online to www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/OCA/VITA/VITA.html. This service is provided by the Community Action Agency's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. VITA is currently using a virtual tax preparation model during the COVID-19 emergency. No in-person contact is involved. Virtual VITA allows residents to use an online platform to securely upload their tax documents for the safety of staff and community members. See another site for free tax preparation: Google "AARP at Tax Aide 2021".

Don't forget the Feb. 23 train presentation!

