

# 75 Years of Service

This article represents 75 years of being established as an Association from 1921 to 1996! It was first published in the February and March 1996 issues of the *Retirement Life*. I have retracted it from the magazines and present it as a stand-alone historical document to reflect on NARFE history. Frank Impinna

Although the National Association of Retired Federal Employees was founded on February 19, 1921, the events responsible for its formation evolved some 50 years before.



*NARCE members enjoy an outing September 6, 1942 in Broadwater, Maryland.*

with it, he initiated the first Civil Service Commission. Grant's merit system, while initially successful in its implementation of competitive examinations and employment probationary periods, lost its appropriations in 1874. After three short years, the original merit system ceased.

Presidents Rutherford B. Hayes and James A. Garfield both supported reform; however, no system changes were established during their respective administrations. Tragically, Garfield's assassination in 1881 proved to be a major catalyst for civil service reform. Charles J. Guiteau, a disgruntled aspiring government appointee, shot Garfield on July 2, 1881. Afterwards, it was widely reported that Guiteau had daily visited the White House and wrote frequent letters to the president. These letters requested a position, preferably a consul position in Paris. When his requests were ignored, Guiteau (who supported Vice President Chester A. Arthur, considered by many to be a spoils system advocate) shot Garfield.

However, when Arthur took office following Garfield's death, he proved to be a strong proponent for civil service reform; on January 16, 1883, he signed into law the Civil Service Bill, which provided for a Civil Service Commission, competitive examinations open to all citizens, and protection from arbitrary dismissal.

Over the next 40 years, significant civil service changes and reforms would take place, but none of these would address civil service retirement. The retirement issue became increasingly important by the turn of the century when the reluctance of federal officials to dismiss elderly, dedicated employees resulted in a superannuation problem. In 1899, the Civil Service Commission recommended adopting a retirement plan based on employee contributions. These efforts were aided and influenced by the United States Civil Service Retirement Association, a group of federal employees founded in 1900 to work toward establishing a retirement plan.

Prior to 1871, federal government employment was dominated by a "spoils" system, meaning that staff, including rank-and-file workers hired during an administration, could be terminated upon the election of a new president. Fitness for the office was often not considered for appointments and dismissals; past and future partisan support played a much more important role. Consequently, this "spoils" system was highly susceptible to corruption.

President Ulysses S. Grant launched the first federal merit system in 1871;



*Association staffers process membership records, circa 1950.*

After decades of labor, the first civil service retirement law was signed by President Woodrow Wilson on March 22, 1920. The act provided for compulsory retirement for employees with 15 years of service who reached the retirement age (which varied according to occupation). It also provided annuities for employees disabled after 15 years of service. The law went into effect on August 21, 1920. That day, celebrations were held in Washington, D.C., by those retiring at the Navy Yard, the War Department, the Government Printing Office, and any other department where a significant number of employees chose to take advantage of the new law. Within two months of the enactment, over 5,000 employees, some over age 90, retired.

### ***The Founding of NARFE***

It was apparent from the beginning that the legislation did not provide enough retirement funds. The maximum allowed annuity, \$ 720, was received by a few retirees; most received amounts insufficient for survival. That inadequacy brought together a group of 14 federal retirees on February 19, 1921, in Washington, D.C. The meeting was held a few blocks from the White House, in Room 404, 1423 New York Avenue, an imposing red brick building that houses a bank.

The men present had all long served their country: Theodore F. Swayze, Jacob W. Starr, Benjamin W. Reiss, John B. McCarthy, R. J. Henderson, William E. Ward, James Haslam, Samuel D. Howells, Frank Reamer, R. W. Medkirk, Charles Bingham, G. Edgar Jones, Jasper D. Conner, and Robert Armour.

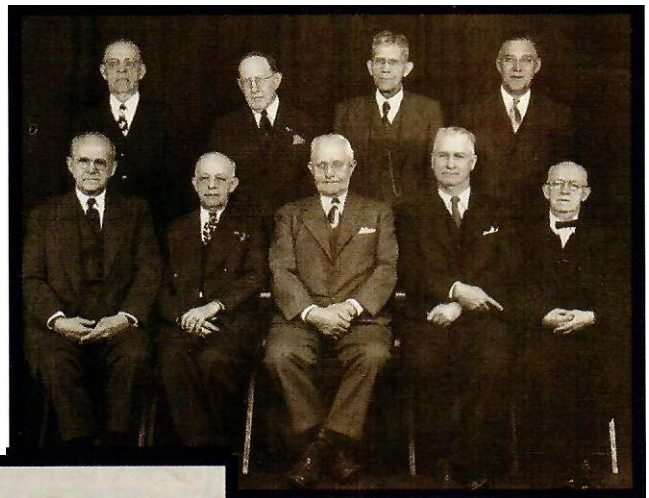
Swayze was called to the chair; he requested the purpose of the meeting. Starr responded that he had met and spoken with a number of federal retirees who received annuities far less than the maximum \$60 per month. He also stated that he secured a list of all federal employees who retired by the end of 1920 and that it "was apparent that many were receiving as low as \$15 per month."

Following Starr's remarks, Swayze called for an election of officers. Starr, who had served as president of the Civil Service Retirement Association, was unanimously elected president.

Jacob Starr was born on January 9, 1840, in Lumberton, New Jersey. During the Civil War, he served in the 99th Pennsylvania Infantry Division and left the military on July 7, 1865, with the rank of captain. Little is known of his activities immediately following the war.

He entered government service (in the War Department) no later than 1880 and worked as a clerk in the Adjutant General's office for at least 40 years before retiring in 1920.

At that historic first meeting, two other offices were filled. Robert Armour was elected secretary and George Simmons was chosen treasurer. Like Starr, both Armour and Simmons were unanimously elected. (An interesting



*Executive Committee members was taken on March 27, 1947. Seated from left: Lewis H. Fisher, Max Abel, Elmer Johnson, Frank Craver, and John L. Bateman. Standing, from left: William W. Keeler, Monie Sanger, Ernest G. Dodge and Clarence Swain.*



note: Simmons was elected treasurer, but the minutes do not show that he was present at the first meeting. No explanation for this discrepancy has ever been found.)

The discussion then turned to determining a name for the new organization. After

several minutes of debate, the topic was set aside for a future meeting when more participants might be present. Legislative prospects were then addressed. After considering the myriad of bills under congressional consideration,

those in attendance decided that, although this new organization may sympathize with other groups' goals, it would be best served to work solely for "the betterment of the status of retired federal employees." That matter was resolved, the next meeting was scheduled for February 26; each member paid \$1 for dues and advertising costs, and the meeting adjourned. As the 14 members left the building, a light snow began to fall. Remarkably, "I think we made a good start."

From that first meeting until October 1922, the Association met every Saturday, with no meetings held during the summer months. The second meeting showed a marked increase in attendance, with over 50 members present. The increase in membership continued; the minutes of the November 26, 1921, meeting show that responses to postcard membership invitations dropped to an average of 50 *per day*, and responses were received from "about every state in the Union and from at least four foreign countries." This new association obviously hit a chord among retired federal employees.

At the second meeting, a committee was established to draft the new Association's constitution and bylaws. Theodore Swayze, H. A. Coughlin, and Thomas P. Keene were presented with the task. Two weeks later, at the March 12, 1921, meeting, the completed document was presented; included was the organization's name: the Association of Retired Federal Employees.

The constitution and bylaws established rules for the election of officers and the powers and responsibilities of those officers. An initiation fee of \$1 and quarterly dues of 25 cents were also established. The \$1 initiation fee made an individual a full member if retired; if still federally employed, the same fee entitled the individual to associate membership. Provisions were made for chapter establishment.

Chapters-called "auxiliary associations"- could be chartered in "any city or town having five or more annuitants." These "auxiliary associations" were required to remit to the national organization a per capita "tax" of 25 cents per member.

The officers' extensive work on behalf of retirees led to salary implementation. At the January 14, 1922, meeting, the secretary and treasurer were voted salaries of \$30 per month; that amount was increased to \$50 per month by September 1922. Although no salary was established, the Association's members occasionally voted to present the president a \$100 "gift."

During the several years immediately following the enactment of the Civil Service Retirement Act of 1920, there occasionally appeared newspaper articles highlighting the inadequacies of many annuities. Some of the articles mentioned the new organization formed to protect those annuities and lobby for additional and fair benefits. However, most of the exposure The Association of Retired Federal Employees received was through the organization's own efforts. For example, the Association printed and distributed leaflets outlining its goals and activities. One original concept became a reality on April 17, 1922, when the Association held a "Mass Meeting and Concert" in the Department of the Interior's auditorium. The main focus of the meeting was to discuss efforts to increase annuities. Among the speakers: Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall and Commissioner of Pensions Washington Gardner.

Despite the Association's hard work, however, improvements in the retirement law were not quick in coming, and the organization's goals were not always well-represented or well-known. A 1922 *Washington Star* newspaper article, entitled "Pensioned U.S. Clerks Unite," referred to the Association as an "I Knew Him When" club. It goes on to describe the Association as providing an "environment conducive to the spinning of 'way back in Blank's administration' yarns," allowing its members to "band together and do their remembering on an organized basis." Toward the end of the article, it was mentioned, almost in passing, that the Association was also pursuing an amendment to the Retirement Act that would increase annuities.

### ***The Original Chapters***

Although its goals were often misunderstood and legislation to improve the average annuitant's situation was slow in coming, the Association continued to grow. By April 1922, there were three "auxiliary associations." However, this concept had its difficulties.

While recognizing from the beginning that it could have members from throughout the United States, the Association was founded and run by Washingtonians, and the success of the Association in Washington, D.C., was a primary concern. Even though the potential for chapters ("auxiliary associations") was recognized in the original constitution and bylaws, the association had a great deal of trouble making the idea a functional reality.

The original constitution required chapters to pay a per capita "tax" to the National Association, which could certainly have put a strain on the chapters' finances. A January 6, 1923, amendment to the constitution and bylaws was even more damaging. The amendment read: "Provided that where an Auxiliary organization is formed in a city or town, all members of the Parent organization residing within the jurisdiction of said auxiliary shall automatically become members of said auxiliary, and their membership in the Parent organization shall cease." Although this amendment would be in effect in less than two months, it highlighted the territorial conflict that existed between certain chapters and the organization in Washington, D.C. This conflict lasted for years. As late as 1927, Kansas City

auxiliary meeting minutes noted a complaint to the National Association about the Washington office's solicitation of Kansas City area annuitants.

Despite these problems, however, the organization continued to grow. There were seven auxiliary associations by early 1923 (other than the Kansas City auxiliary and one in Denver; documents do not mention specific locations). By October of that year, membership had risen to over 6,500. This increase led to other changes. At the Executive Committee meeting on October 4, 1924, First Vice President John M. Kline (who would later be elected the organization's president) suggested adding the word "National" to the Association's name. Two months later, the amendment was adopted, and the Association of Retired Federal Employees became the National Association of Retired Federal Employees (NARFE).

These early years also saw the founding of the Association's "magazine." October 29, 1921, George B. Hunter, a Washington businessman, offered the Association \$100 "for the privilege of soliciting advertisements for a Yearbook to be published in the interests of the Association." This proposition was accepted, and member Colonel Hill suggested titling the "Yearbook" *The Annuitant*. The first edition was distributed September 16, 1922, and its contents included a roster of Association members. *The Annuitant* sold for 25 cents a copy. A week later, the Association authorized the printing of second and third editions, scheduled for June and December 1923. George Hunter continued to work with *The Annuitant*, but concerns arose that *The Annuitant* would not be ready in time for the planned publishing dates. So, at the March 5, 1923, Executive Board Meeting, Bryon J. Price, Capt. Armour and James Falbey were appointed to take charge of the publication. Although nonmembers (including George Hunter) would continue to solicit advertisements for the publication, the Association took over the bulk of the duties.

### ***The First Victory***

Members of the Association were, of course, also diligently working to increase annuities. Many bills were introduced during these early years, and although some changes were made to the Retirement Law, no major legislation was enacted during the first four years of the Association's existence. That would soon change. In early 1926, an introduced bill called for raising the maximum annuity from \$720 to \$1,000 and increasing employee contributions from 2.5% to 3.5%. However, as soon as the legislation was introduced, it was apparent that those already retired would not be entitled to the increase. The officers of the Association pointed out to the House Civil Service Committee that the legislation, as written, discriminated against present retirees, and an amendment to extend the increase to present retirees was introduced.

The bill also included provisions for employees not completing 15 years of service to work past the mandatory retirement age. The bill, as amended, was passed by Congress. President Calvin Coolidge signed it into law on July 1, 1926. It was the first legislation endorsed by NARFE that became law.

Even though the original goal of the Association, to obtain an increase in the annuity amounts provided by the Retirement Act of 1920, had been achieved, it became clear that there was a need for continued protection and further legislation. Although the Act of 1926 raised the maximum annuity by \$280, the average annuity was only \$759. It became obvious to the officers and members that this Association would be necessary for quite some time. Once this decision was made, a concern was raised regarding establishing headquarters and a place to hold meetings.

. During the Association's early days, meetings were held wherever sufficient space could be found at minimal cost. In 1921, a number of meetings were held at the original meeting place, 1423 New York Avenue. This location was also used as the headquarters. As membership and meeting attendance grew, more space was needed. By the beginning of 1923, the Association rented at \$5 per quarter, the Grand Army of the Republic Hall at 1412 Pennsylvania Avenue. This was used solely for meetings; as early as February 1923, there is a reference to the Association headquarters location at 200 New Jersey Avenue. This space was used for free until October 1930.

As previously stated, the primary legislative goal during the 1920s was the basic annuity increase, but that was not the only goal. There were concerns about annuities for widows, and there was also talk about the possibility of establishing, through legislation and other means, a home for federal retirees.

Jacob Starr and the other officers lobbied hard for a variety of new legislation; however, the July 1926 Retirement Act amendment is the only legislative accomplishment Starr lived to see. Jacob Starr died January 29, 1927, at the age of 87. His contributions to NARFE did not go unnoticed. A resolution at the February 5, 1927 meeting outlined his dedication and importance to NARFE and all federal retirees. This resolution also declared that it was "to be retained in the room of the President of the National Association of Retired Federal Employees as long as this Association shall continue to exist." [Editor's note: After an exhaustive search, the original resolution was found. It has been framed and now hangs in the president's office.]

Starr's successor was John Montgomery Kline Sr. Kline, who was born July 29, 1847, in Milroy, Pennsylvania. Like Starr, he fought in the Civil War. Kline enlisted in the Union Army at age 16, and in June 1864, was taken prisoner at the battle of Cold Harbor. He spent the rest of the war as a prisoner.

Upon his release, he re-enlisted and served in the South during the Reconstruction. He was later assigned to the Department of the Pacific and traveled on the first train to cross the continent over the Union Pacific Railroad; he also served in several western campaigns.

Kline spent most of his civilian working years with the Treasury Department, retiring from federal employment in August 1921 after 53 years of service. He joined NARFE in April 1921 and was elected first vice president of the Association on July 7, 1923.

During his time in office, one of Kline's main concerns was enacting legislation providing annuities for widows. He would spend most of his lengthy presidency (14 years) lobbying for such legislation.

Noteworthy federal retirement gains and Association development occurred during Kline's tenure. On May 29, 1930, the maximum annuity was increased from \$1,000 to \$1,200. Once again, the original amendment provided only for future retirees; however, thanks to the work of NARFE officers, the legislation was modified to include current retirees, as well. The legislation also introduced the "high-five" year average annuity formula.

After more than 12 years of negotiating with legislators for a number of bills for widow annuities, surviving spouse annuities were granted by law in 1939. Revisions were made to the new law that same year that extended coverage to postmasters and allowed employees to make voluntary contributions, thereby increasing their annuities.

Two of the reasons the Association had such a difficult time obtaining bill passage during these early years were its small membership and the primarily local composition of that membership. During the terms of Presidents Starr, Kline, and John B. Dickman, membership reflected a slow decline, from 6,509 in 1923 to 4,274 in 1944.

There were also perennial difficulties with chapters. Despite continuous revision to the constitution and bylaws, the 10 or 12 auxiliary associations in operation were never really successful. At a March 1935 executive committee meeting, it was determined that all the auxiliaries had "been a failure," and the motion to discontinue them was adopted. Although there were members from all across the United States, the majority were concentrated in Washington, D.C., and the Association lacked the organizational structure that chapters could have provided. That structure would have been helpful in the fight for legislative enactment.



*Chester A. Arthur signed legislation that laid the groundwork for today's civil service.*

There were other significant developments during John Kline's presidency. July 27, 1929, marked the first time that two people ran for the same position during a NARFE election. John B. Dickman Sr. ran against Frank Hatley for the treasurer position; Dickman won four votes to one. At that time, officers were elected by the executive committee, not the general membership. After the balloting, Hatley moved that Dickman's election be made unanimous; this motion was adopted. Until this point, every officer had been elected or reelected without opposition, a tradition that would continue far past this first run-off. The next election in which two members ran for the same position did not again occur until March 3, 1945.

The Association found itself relocating offices in a fairly frequent manner. In the Summer of 1930, the offices at 200 New Jersey Avenue were no longer available for free, so the Association moved to a room in the Tempo Building at 18th and D Streets. In 1937, NARFE moved again to offices at 820 7th Street, located near the National Mall. Within the next four years, the Association relocated to 918 F Street again.

*The Annuitant* also underwent some changes during the term of President Kline. In March 1928, the decision was made to reformat the publication as a quarterly magazine. Until then, *The Annuitant* had been published semiannually in "book form."

In April 1941, after 14 years of service, Kline, at the age of 94, declined the nomination for president "due to age and illness." In his place, the Association elected John B. Dickman. Kline was appointed president

emeritus. John Kline died September 22, 1944, aged 97.

John B. Dickman was born on August 20, 1859, in Dayton, Ohio. In 1880, he came to Washington, D. C., and began his employment with the Government Printing Office, where he remained until 1924. He was very active in government and civic organizations, dedicating himself to improving working conditions not only for his fellow federal employees but also for community causes.

Noteworthy legislation enacted during Dickman's tenure occurred on January 24, 1942. This legislation extended retirement coverage to almost all federal government employees, instituted a new method for computing annuities, and provided optional retirement on reduced benefits at age 55 with 30 years of service and unreduced benefits at age 62 with 15 years of service.

President Dickman died on January 7, 1945, at age 85. The election of a new president was put off until the first meeting in March, which had been the traditional election period. At this meeting, Robert H. Alcorn was unanimously elected president. '

## ***The Father of Retirement'***

Alcorn holds a particularly unusual place in NARFE's history. He was born July 24, 1872, in Roanoke County, Virginia. In the early 1890s, he learned the molder's trade, and in 1910, came to Washington, where he took a job at the Naval Gun Factory. Soon after starting his employment there, Alcorn became very interested in the government employees' campaign for retirement legislation. In 1914, he was delegated by the molders to the Naval Gun Factory Joint Retirement Committee.

In their struggle for retirement benefits, one of the original difficulties government employees had was the fact that many groups representing various offices, branches, and services were working separately. In 1917, many groups formed the Joint Council on Retirement to rectify this, a consolidation that Robert Alcorn had been instrumental in bringing about. He headed this group until 1944, conducted studies of retirement systems in other countries, and established the Retirement Federation, a general council representing all civil service employees.

Alcorn also published *Retirement News*, where he answered many retirement questions. He was constantly in demand as a speaker on retirement matters. All of these activities became a full-time career for Alcorn, who left his position at the Naval Gun Factory to devote his time first to developing a federal retirement system and later for retirement law liberalization.

His early departure from the Naval Gun Factory left Alcorn ineligible for an annuity, making him the only NARFE officer elected despite the fact that he was not an annuitant. This fact illustrates Robert Alcorn's commitment to the federal retirement cause and his willingness to fight for benefits he would never receive. Later in his life, NARFE and other groups with which Alcorn was associated would try to raise funds to help support him, as he had no annuity or pension on which to rely.

Robert Alcorn's relationship with the Association went back to the very beginning. Not only had he worked closely with some of the founding members in the fight for a fair retirement, but he often spoke at the Association's meetings, offering his opinions and advice on the status of certain pending legislation. When he left the Joint Council on Retirement in 1944, he joined NARFE. A year later, he was elected president. Unfortunately, his tenure was brief. Due to ill health, Alcorn resigned from his office on December 1, 1945, "for [his] own protection and welfare." He remained active in NARFE's affairs and other related matters for the rest of his life, whereby he lived up to his nickname, "The Father of Retirement." He died September 18, 1957, having contributed many of his years to the welfare of the federal employee.

Upon Alcorn's resignation, the executive board elected Elmer Johnson, who retired from the Government Printing Office in 1933 and joined NARFE shortly after Johnson's administration, which lasted until 1952 and is credited with bringing about a great many changes in terms of legislation and the Association's size and structure.

One of the most important changes that NARFE underwent was the Association's incorporation. In January 1947, Lewis H. Fisher, general counsel, suggested that if the Association became incorporated, it might have a better standing and that incorporation as a "fraternal, nonprofit organization... would relieve individual members of financial responsibility for the corporate acts of the group." His motion was carried out, and one month later, the articles of incorporation were filed with the District of Columbia with one important change: the National Association of Retired Federal Employees became the National Association of Retired Civil Employees (NARFE).

In the first three months of Johnson's administration, the Association grew by over 3,000 members. Growth would continue throughout Johnson's term, climbing from approximately 8,000 in 1945 to over 65,000 by the time of his resignation in 1952. This growth made it necessary to find a new headquarters that would be large enough to accommodate the new staff needed to support the larger membership. In January 1947, the Association moved to 1246 20th Street, which had twice the floor space of the headquarters at F Street but consisted only of two rooms.

One of the reasons for the membership growth during this period was the re-implementation of the chapter concept. In early 1947, the officers examined the possibility of establishing chapters across the country. Keeping in mind the failure of the "auxiliary association" concept, by March 1947, an article providing for chapters was added to the constitution and bylaws. The provisions for chapters in this new article were much more flexible than the provisions in the 1920s, thereby allowing a greater degree of organization and financial freedom. Soon after this article was published in the April 1947 *Annuitant*, the first applications for charters- arrived: Washington, D.C., Topeka, Kansas, and Los Angeles, California were the first three.

This new article also contained a section providing for a national convention. The section began: "As soon as there shall be twenty chapters in actual operation, the National Association may proceed to operation on a convention basis, such conventions to occur biennials, the first being held in Washington, D. C.," Between conventions, the Executive Committee, consisting of the elected officers and five members appointed by the president, were to conduct the Association's business. By July 1949, annuitants in Kansas City, Missouri received a charter and became the Association's twentieth chapter. Chapter 6, in Chicago, Illinois, however, was inactive at the time, 'and as the article required 20 chapters "in actual operation," it was not until a charter was granted to annuitants in Long Beach, California, that plans for a convention commenced.

The First NARCE National Convention was held on June 16-17, 1950. Until this time, most of Chapter I's (Washington, D.C.) activities were combined with the regular duties of the national office. Then, Chapter I assumed

most of the convention preparation duties and became an entity separate from headquarters.

The convention, held in the auditorium of the Natural History Building (now known as the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History), was opened by Ernest Green Dodge, general convention chairman and executive committee member. Activities for the first day included sightseeing trips, a social at the National headquarters, and an address by Ohio Sen. Robert H. Taft. On the convention's second day, they featured national officer reports, a speech by Texas Rep. Homer Thornberry, and an informal banquet at the Raleigh Hotel. National officer elections were also conducted on the second day.

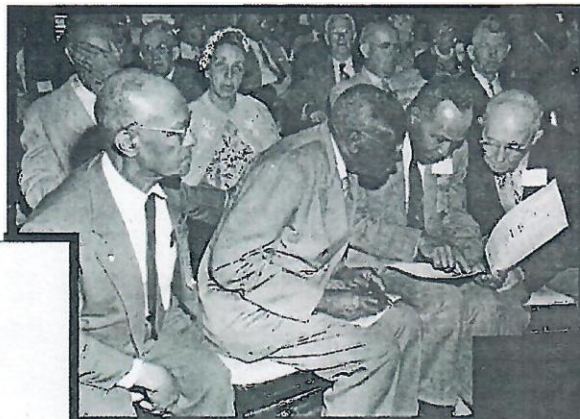


*Left: Members attending the 1960 National Convention in Tulsa, Oklahoma get acquainted,*

*Above: Chapter 17 (St. Petersburg, Florida) Second Vice President Edward J. Marshick, member Lewis F. Sinsabaug, and Postmaster General Summerfield attend a 1956 post office groundbreaking ceremony.*

President Elmer Johnson was reelected, as were First Vice President Lewis H. Fisher, Second Vice President Carolyn T. Manning, and Secretary Emery Thompson. The only officer's change was the treasurer position: Ernest Green Dodge replaced William W. Keeler.

*Below: A familiar site: President Tom Walters on the Capitol steps.*



*Center: Delegates at the 1960 National Convention review resolutions that will shape the Association's legislative and organizational policies.*



*Above: President Lud Andolsek testifies on NARFE's behalf before a congressional subcommittee*

Twenty-seven chapters were represented at the first convention. Jose M. Luna of Chapter 18 (Manila, Philippines) came to the most significant distance; he flew at his own expense, from Manila to Washington. The convention was considered an outstanding success, and Washington, D.C., was chosen as the site of the next meeting. Washington would serve as the convention site until 1962. Delegates wanted the chance to visit their congressional representatives, and the national convention presented this opportunity.

Legislation of value to federal retirees remained NARCE's focus. In April 1948, legislation had been passed that increased all annuities by 25%; however, the increase could not exceed \$300 per year. An optional survivorship law was also enacted. In 1950, another law supported by NARCE was passed; the new law allowed a lump sum payment to a designated beneficiary, any credit left in a deceased government employee's retirement fund.

NARCE began analyzing its method of operations. To make the Association more effective and efficient, NARCE followed the path set by the post-1947 success of chapters and instituted the state federation concept. California became the first federation on August 25, 1950; it held its first federation convention in February 1951.

Later that year, the executive committee began appointing field vice presidents. The United States and its territories were divided into 17 regions in October. The first three field vice presidents were Alfred H. Hasse in Region IV (Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia), Walton Ralph Edmonds in Region XI (Nebraska, Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma), and Jose M. Luna in Region XVII (Philippine Republic).

President Johnson did not run for reelection at the second national convention, held June 16-18, 1952. Upon the announcement, he was made president emeritus and was not required to pay dues for the remainder of his life. After a lifetime of service, Johnson died on October 29, 1967, at 96.

Frank J. Wilson was elected NARFE president at this convention, Walton R. Edmonds was first vice president, Carolyn M. Shelse was second vice president, Emery J. Thompson was secretary, and Ernest Green Dodge was treasurer.

Wilson was born May 19, 1887, in Buffalo, New York. He grew up in that city and attended the University of Buffalo Law School. In 1918, he became the chief New York State investigator of the United States Food Administration. Two years later, he was appointed special agent of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, where he spent 26 years. Wilson was assigned to law enforcement work for the Treasury Department for much of that time. He played a key role as the investigation's leader, eventually putting Al Capone behind bars. Wilson provided an in-depth account of the investigation in the October and November 1954 *Retirement Life* issues. Wilson's work in this capacity was well respected, and he finished his career as chief of the United States Secret Service, a position from which he retired in 1946. After his retirement, he joined NARCE, and in 1951, was appointed supervisor of chapters.

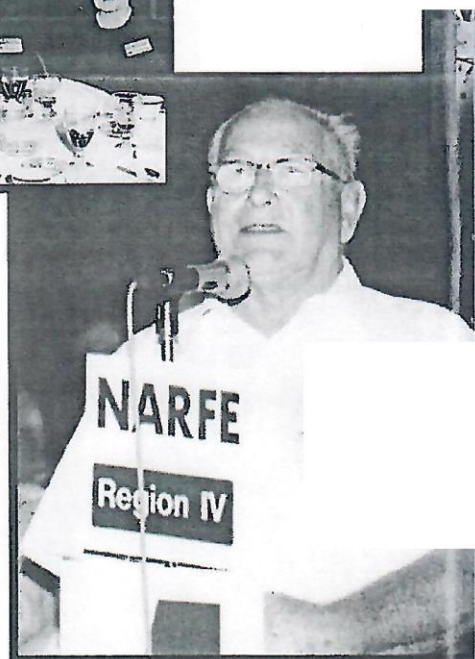
Wilson was asked to serve as general chairman of the 1952



*Above: For more than 40 years, Retirement Life has been NARFE's most effective communicator:*



*Center: At a 1966 National Postal Union dinner, President Clarence Tarr (standing, far right) met future Presidents Tom Walters (standing, second from left) and Lud Andolsek (seated, center) and future First Vice President Jack Goldberg.*



*Right: National conventions allow all delegates to express their points of view.*



National Convention. This convention, like that in 1950, was held in the auditorium of the Natural History Building. It was much larger than the first convention, with 196 chapters representing the gains in membership and chapters made in the previous two years.

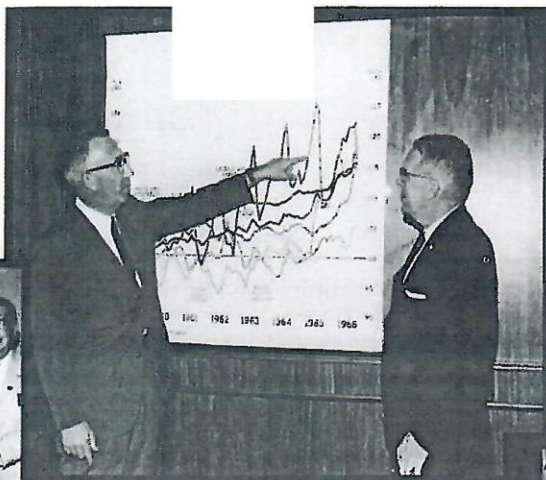
One month after Wilson's election, a law was passed providing temporary annuity increases of 25%, not to exceed \$324. (In 1954, the increase became permanent.) Two other pieces of important legislation were enacted. The first law authorized the Civil Service Commission to take over assets of life insurance companies whose policies civil service retirees carried for many years. The second law provided an additional federal income tax exemption of up to \$240 per year for retirement income. The laws translated into approximately \$15,000,000 worth of annual benefits for civil service annuitants.

One year later, President Dwight Eisenhower signed a law providing for annuity increases of 12 % on the first \$1,500 and 8% on amounts above that. In July 1956, Public Law 854 was enacted; this law provided annuity increases for future retirees and required the government to match employee contributions to the retirement fund. Public Law 854 was a huge accomplishment for NARCE and all federal retirees. according to an article in Retirement Life, "a most important step in retirement legislation, as it established the retirement fund on a solid financial basis." In July 1958, legislation passed by NARCE resulted in a 10% annuity increase for all retirees. (In July 1961, NARCE scored a later legislative victory. by obtaining funding of increases from the retirement fund rather than from annual appropriations.) The major concerns of the 1950s, especially the latter part of the decade, were the high cost of living and expensive health insurance. The legislative gains mentioned above, while not alleviating the financial pressures of the average annuitant, certainly helped a great deal.

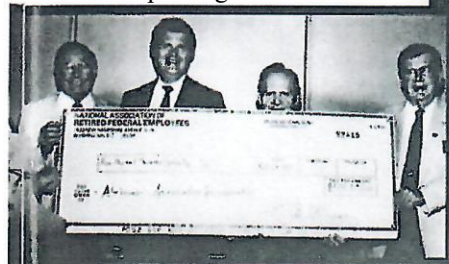
### Membership on the Rise

To match its legislative success, NARCE continued to make great gains in membership. The Association grew from 65,000 in 1952 to over 100,000 by 1960. This feat was accomplished through particularly successful membership campaigns and the work of individual members, such as George F. Unangst. A member from Illinois, Unangst, from November 1, 1956, to June 1, 1957, recruited 621 new members.

Chapters numbered 750 in 1960, and federations numbered 26 (compared with one at the beginning of the decade). In December 1956, NARCE experienced another "first." While on a trip to Athens, Greece, First Vice President Walton Ralph Edmonds helped organize a "club" of



*NARFE presents its first \$500,000 for Alzheimer's research. From left: President Steve Morrissey, New Mexico Federation President Kirby Kline, Alzheimer's Association President Edward F. Truschke, Past President Lud Andolsek and Vice President "Rip" Ripple.*



former federal employees. This "club," a NARCE affiliate, set a precedent for chapters established in areas other than the U.S. and its current former territories.

### From The Annuitant to Retirement Life

Beginning with the October 1952 edition, *The Annuitant* commenced publication six times per year. Previously, the periodical was published quarterly. In 1953, *The Annuitant* adopted a slogan printed on each cover: "Published Bimonthly by the National Association of Retired Civil Employees (As essential to civil service employees as city councils are to cities)." Not surprisingly, this slogan was discontinued after three issues.

The Association also began a series of contests and awards. In December 1953, *The Annuitant* announced the "Annuitant of the Year Award." In the August 1954 issue, NARCE announced the "Oldest Known Member" contest results.



*Left: In 1988, NARFE presents its first*

The winner was Noel Robillard, age 92, of Olga, North Dakota. Robillard received a five-pound box of candy. This same issue of *The Annuitant* was the first lime-paid advertising incorporated since the 1920s. It is also the last time the periodical was printed as *The Annuitant*. Beginning with the October 1954 issue, the periodical was printed in magazine form and named *Retirement Life*. Since that issue, the magazine has been published every month, that's 498 issues.

As the organization grew, additional office space was again needed. In October 1953, NARCE purchased a building for the first time. The first organization-owned headquarters was purchased at the cost of \$77,500 and was located at 1625 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.

Another significant change occurred at the 1958 National Convention. Delegates voted to limit any individual in the president's office to two two-year terms. Although the delegates at this convention exempted President Frank Wilson, he decided not to run for reelection in 1960. Wilson remained active in NARCE affairs, especially those of Chapter I, until his death on June 22, 1970.

Joseph L. Spilman was elected NARCE president at the 1960 national convention. He entered government service as a messenger at the age of 18, earning about \$360 per year. While earning promotions in his federal career, Spilman worked his way through Georgetown University Law School. He later served as assistant director of the Bureau of Inspections and Classification Audits, a position he held until he retired in 1958. That year, he joined NARCE and was elected first vice president. In 1960, Spilman was the convention's general chairman and was elected president. An unusual and unfortunate event then occurred. One month after his election, Spilman died on July 6, 1960. He never had a chance to assume office. The National Executive Committee elected Glenn R. Simcox, who had just been elected first vice president, to fill Spilman's term. Simcox was born on September 12, 1886, in Iowa. On New Year's Day, 1909, he arrived in Washington, D. C., and accepted a stenographer position with the Civil Service Commission. Three years later, he was transferred to the Department of Agriculture. For several years, he worked as a secretary for two congressmen. Simcox then moved to the Agriculture Adjustment Administration as a chief clerk. He ended his government service in 1945 when he retired from the Army's Adjutant General Office.

He immediately joined NARCE Chapter 7 (Arlington, Virginia) and served four terms as its president. In 1956, he was elected first vice president. Simcox stood five feet five inches tall and was not sensitive about the matter. He repeatedly told stories about how one of his former supervisors referred to him as "the little runt with the curve-stern pipe."



In 1958, NARCE conducted a door-to-door membership campaign. Here, George H. Fra1lke11 (right) signs up Wilford M. Nott as Mrs. Nott looks on.

### ***FEHBP is Formed***

One of NARCE's primary legislative goals was fulfilled; arguably, one of its goals feats was accomplished when, in October 1960, Congress passed the Retired Federal Employees Health Benefits Act. This new law established the Federal Employees Employer Health Benefits Program (FEHBP), a model for employer-sponsored health insurance. The federal government was required to contribute a specified portion of health benefit costs for all federal employees and retirees. To this day, FEHBP coverage is regarded as vital to Annuitants' well-being.

Around this time, NARCE also lobbied for legislation designed to aid foreign service annuitants. Bills were passed to repeal the withholding tax on alien annuities, increase by 10% all foreign service annuities, and liberalize foreign service annuitants' general retirement provisions.

For decades, the idea of a facility for federal retirees was considered. In 1961, the Association announced plans to begin construction of a federal retirement/home community. The plans were called off, however, when it became apparent that NARCE could be called upon to provide sole financial support - a commitment the Association could not make.

NARCE was branching out in more ways than one. New chapters and federations strengthened the organization. The 1962 National Convention branched out, too. The convention was not held in the nation's capital for the first time. It was held June 4-6 in

Tulsa, Oklahoma. Members wanted a change of scenery, and Tulsa was considered a central location. Simcox was reelected president.

Nineteen sixty-two proved another successful legislation year. All annuities were increased by 5%; the ceilings placed in 1952 and 1955 annuities were removed; and future automatic annuity increases were provided. The last legislative victory was wrinkled: the increase would match cost of living increases only if the Consumer Price Index (CPI) growth during the previous calendar year was at least 3%. No cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) were triggered, but it did provide the foundation for the present COLA formula.

Due to slumping membership in the first year or two of the decade, Simcox started a membership drive called the "Eight Hour Club." The drive requested participants to devote eight hours a month to membership recruitment. The program's goal was 150,000 members by the end of 1963. Meanwhile, the number of regions was reduced from 17 to a more efficient nine.

At the 1964 National Convention, held June 8-10 in Des Moines, Iowa, Clarence M Tarr was elected president. Tarr was born October 24, 1901, in Auburn, Illinois. At the age of 20, he entered the Postal Service as a substitute in the Postal Service. He held

various positions in the Postal Service and retired in 1959. He joined NARCE in 1960, and in early 1962, he was elected Illinois Federation president. Tarr served in his new position for only a few months. At the 1962 National Convention, he was elected secretary.

As in previous administrations, legislation concerning annuity adjustments was passed during Tarr's tenure. Effective December 1, 1965, a new law called for a 6.1 % increase for all annuitants who retired after October 2, 1965. The law provided an 11.1 % increase for annuitants who retired before that date. The law also established a permanent and automatic cost-of-living adjustment based on a different CPI than was used in the 1962 legislation.

Once the CPI increases by 3% and then holds or increases during three months, the highest percentage registered during that period would be the effective COLA for three months. (In other words, if the CPI increases 3.1 % in April, 3.4% in May, and 3.0% in June, then the COLA effective September 1 would be 3.4%.) This new compilation's first adjustment resulted in a 3.9% COLA effective January 1, 1967.

Under Tarr's direction, the Association made other important gains. In May 1965, increased membership necessitated purchasing a new headquarters building. NARCE moved into 1909 Q Street, N.W., a five-story building considerably larger than its former office—the price: \$200,000. A good deal of the financial burden was alleviated by the sale of the previous headquarters for \$140,000 - nearly twice the amount NARCE paid for property in 1953. By 1968, there were over 1,000 chapters and 44 federations. Individual members excelled at recruiting. On May 22, 1968, Smith W. Allison of chapter 29 (Portland, Oregon) signed up his 1,002<sup>nd</sup> member.

Following his two terms as president, Tarr maintained a career with the Association. When his second term expired, he was appointed administrative assistant to incoming president Tom Walters. In October 1970, when Vice President Othie Burk died, Tarr was elected to serve the remainder of Burk's term. In 1972 and 1974, he was reelected vice president; in 1976, he retired from official Association duties. Tarr served 14 years at headquarters and died on January 25, 1988, at age 86.

NARCE's Tenth National Convention was held June 10-12, 1968, in San Francisco, California. It was there that Thomas G. Walters was elected president. Walters was born in 1896 in Franklin County, Georgia. After attending Gibson-Mercer Academy and the University of Georgia, he taught school until entering the Army during World War I. One of his students described him as "an excellent teacher and a snappy dresser." Indeed, Walters was known for wearing a rosebud on his lapel daily.

Following the war, Walters returned to Georgia, where he took a position as a rural letter carrier. He became a prominent member of the National Rural Letter Carriers Association in 1938, he was elected a member of that organization's Executive Committee, and, in 1943, he became its president. Walters served in that office for three years and resided in Washington, D.C.

In 1948, the Government Employee Council appointed him as operations director; he held that position for 10 years. In 1958, he was selected by the U.S. Civil Service Commission as a staff assistant in the Bureau of Retirement and Insurance. Six years later, Walters retired from federal service, although he did not abandon his activity in employee or retiree matters.

In 1966, he was appointed legislative director of the American Federation of Government Employees and was still serving in that capacity when he attended the 1968 NARCE National Convention. At that convention, he was elected president.

Walters' connections on Capitol Hill and in various federal commissions, coupled with his familiarity with the legislation process, made him an ideal choice as the Association's president. Among the legislation enacted during his administration: a 1% increase in the periodic cost-of-living adjustments to compensate for the delay between the actual increase and receipt of checks; continuation of survivor benefits in case of remarriage; and provision of survivor benefits to retirees' second spouses.

Walters was the first Association president to appear before the Democratic and Republican National Convention Committees. He organized a meeting of the Association's Executive Committee with the president of the United States, signed up President Lyndon B. Johnson as a member, and served on the 1971 White House Conference on Aging Executive Board.

Another of Walters's accomplishments was organizing the first NARCE Legislative Conference, held in June 1969 in Washington. The conference's purpose was to get NARCE members and other employee organizations together to discuss legislative issues of mutual interest. Attendees then met with Members of Congress and discussed the issues. Although the first conference was considered a great success, Walters is remembered more for his actions at the second Legislative Conference, held in June 1971. Several months before that rally, Walters asked members who had at least 15 years of government service and monthly annuities of less than \$350 per month to send him letters regarding their situations. He received almost 14,000 responses.

During the 1971 Legislative conference, Walter and other members appeared before a House Post Office and Civil Service Subcommittee hearing on problems of federal employees. When asked for statistics for federal retirees receiving insufficient annuities despite extended service, Walters presented 150 letters to the subcommittee, then placed the remaining 13,000-plus letters in bags and baskets on the evidence table. It was an effective demonstration.

A major change occurred during the Walters administration. In the early 1960s, there was debate over whether or not to change the Association's name from the National Association of Retired Civil Employees to the 1924 name: the National Association of Retired Federal Employees (NARFE). At the 1970 national convention, held June 14-17 in Buffalo, New York, delegates voted to change the name again. The name change became effective on November 30, and NARCE became NARFE.

Tom Walters left an indelible imprint on the Association. After his two terms as president expired, Walters remained active in NARFE and other organizations until his death on March 4, 1977.

At the 1972 national convention, held September 24-27 in Fort Worth, Texas, Arthur L. Sparks was elected president. Sparks, born in Atlanta, Georgia, 1897, served in the U.S. Army in both World Wars. Between tours, he served with the U.S. Coast Guard. His federal service included positions with the Post Office, the Veterans Administration, and the Department of the Army, from which he retired in 1961. He spent 20 years with AFGE

and served over two years as a national representative for that group. Before being elected NARFE president, Sparks served two years as NARFE's director of field operations.

### ***The Woodruff Building Fund***

One of Sparks' concerns was the lack of adequate office space at the Association's headquarters. Even though NARFE occupied the building for only seven years, it had outgrown the facility. In response to what Sparks described as "wholly inadequate, unsuitable, unsatisfactory and unsafe" conditions at headquarters, NARFE initiated the Joseph Woodruff Building Fund. The fund was named for Joseph G. Woodruff, a member who suggested forming a voluntary fund to provide more adequate quarters and made the first contribution to the fund.

The response to this voluntary fund was highly favorable, and by September 1973, less than eight months after its establishment, the fund passed the \$60,000 mark. Although the sum was only a small portion of a new building's final cost, it was a start, enabling the Association to purchase the building at 1533 New Hampshire Avenue, N. W., for \$500,000. The new headquarters, into which the Association moved in September 1973, contained approximately 4,000 more square feet than the previous facility.

During Sparks' term, some of the legislation supported by NARFE included increased annuities for pre-1969 retirees and survivors, increased government contributions for health benefit premiums, and a reduction of the marriage requirement for survivor benefits from two years to one.

Sparks chose not to run for reelection in 1974. During his tenure, NARFE secured a new headquarters building, the Woodruff Building Fund continued to grow, and membership increased by over 26,000 to more than 200,000. Sparks died on October 24, 1975, a little more than one year after leaving office.

His successor, John F. McClelland, was elected at the September 1-4 convention in Portland, Oregon. McClelland was born March 9, 1916, in Natural Bridge, Virginia. He began his employment with the Railway Mail Service in October 1941. He served in the Navy from 1942 to January 1946 and from 1950 to 1951. He retired from the federal government in July 1972 after serving as administrative vice president of the American Postal Workers Union during the last several years of his career. In 1972, he was elected NARFE's director of field operations.

One month into McClelland's first term, an important piece of legislation was enacted that restored full annuities to retirees who had lost their designated survivor spouses and had not remarried. His two terms would be difficult in terms of legislation. Due to rising inflation and in an attempt to stem recession, President Gerald Ford, in early 1975, proposed a 5% ceiling on cost-of-living adjustments for the entire year.

### ***Legislative Attacks Commence***

Attacks on federal annuities as a means to save federal dollars became all too common after this proposal, and NARFE would spend more and more time protecting the earned benefits obtained during the Association's 50 years of existence. Consequently, less time was left to lobby for additional benefits. Over the next several months, legislation proposing benefit reductions, changes in the CPI formula, and a two-year suspension of the cost of living adjustments were introduced in Congress. At this difficult time, congressional proposals were made to combine federal annuities with Social Security or to limit the amount of Social Security federal annuitants could receive. Although NARFE, during McClelland's administration, was able to fight off the merger with Social Security, a 1977 law eventually eliminated the 1% annuity adjustment and established a COLA formula providing semiannual adjustments, a reduction from the quarterly adjustments.

There were increasing attacks on federal retiree and employee benefits during the 1970s by both the media and politicians. NARFE revitalized the "Federal Retiree of the Year award to combat the negative press." Unfortunately, the award did not have the desired public relations effect. Despite the legislative trails, NARFE continued to increase membership. By the time of the 1978 national convention, held September 3-7 in New Orleans, Louisiana, members numbered over 300,000, and chapter numbers over 1,500. At the convention, Michael C. Nave was elected president.

Nave, born in 1905, served over 41 years in the Chicago Post Office, retiring after holding positions as superintendent of delivery and collections and superintendent of incoming mail. He also served 12 years as an officer of the National Association of Postal Supervisors, four national treasurer, and eight national president.

Nave assumed NARFE's leadership at a time when the organization was facing many legislative threats. NARFE was also not financially strong enough to fight those threats effectively. One of his accomplishments during this time was the "anti-merger" fund, voluntary contributions used to combat the threatened merger of civil service retirement with Social Security. The response was overwhelming – contributions totaled over \$1 million.

There was also a change in the civil service structure. In early 1979, the U.S. Civil Service Commission was dismantled and replaced with two separate offices, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Merit System Promotion Board. OPM became the agency most involved with federal retirees. Due, in part, to the anti-merger fund and a concerted effort on officers and members throughout the country, NARFE held off the merger with Social Security and attempted to limit COLAs to one per year. The 1980 National Convention was held September 14-18 in

Albuquerque, New Mexico. Nave was reelected. In the early 1980s, members had general optimism that, with President Ronald Reagan in the White House, federal retirees wouldn't face COLA reductions and other benefit reductions presented by the previous Carter administration. As it happened, Ronald Reagan reneged his campaign promises; by August 1981, federal annuity COLAs were limited to one per year.

In March 1981, NARFE purchased the building adjacent to the headquarters for \$860,000. An impressive surge in membership necessitated the addition. In September 1981, Nave announced his plans to resign as president, citing health concerns and a lack of "strength ... desire and enthusiasm." By the time he left office - December 31, 1981 - NARFE membership stood at over 480,000.

At the November 1981 meeting, the National Executive Board elected Andolsek president. Lud Andolsek was born in Denver, Colorado. Still, it grew up in Minnesota, where he attended Eveleth Junior College and St. Cloud University. He began his federal career, one that spanned 41 years, with the National Youth Administration. He also held positions in the Veterans Administration, as administrative assistant to Rep. John Blatnik, as chief clerk of the House Public Works Committee, and ended his service with 14 years as a member of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, of which he was vice chairman during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. He was elected secretary at NARFE's 1980 convention.

### ***NARFE's Defense Fund***

During Andolsek's first year in office, NARFE established NARFE-PAC. The need for a political action committee (PAC) was evident if members were to keep the benefits for which they worked so long and so hard. The members responded positively, contributing over \$125,000 by April 1982. The average contribution amounted to almost \$20. NARFE-PAC quickly became one of the nation's largest PACs.

Despite the money available for legislative purposes, and after six years of successfully working against the merger of civil service retirement with Social Security, the two were combined in March 1983 with the creation of the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). Although the legislation only applied to new retirees, it was still a loss. In response to the merger, COLA reductions, and other benefit revisions, NARFE filed suit against the government in July 1983. The action sought to recover \$5.3 billion in retirement benefits reductions and to invalidate the changes in annuity benefits on the grounds that the changes were "Unconstitutional and violating due process of law." In August 1984, the lawsuit was dismissed by a federal judge; NARFE appealed. The case was never won.

Andolsek was reelected at the 1982 National Convention, held October 18-21 in Denver, Colorado, and again in 1981 at Baltimore, Maryland. Under his leadership, the Association continued to fight for federal retirees with an ever-growing PAC fund and started contributing to other efforts. In 1985, NARFE partnered with the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Association (ADRDA; now known as the Alzheimer's Association). NARFE has contributed over \$2 million to Alzheimer's research.

At the 1986 National Convention, held September 7-11 in Reno, Nevada, delegates elected H.T. "Steve" Morrissey president. Morrissey was born November 9, 1927, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He volunteered for Army service in 1943 and was honorably discharged in 1947. He attended Michigan State University, where he was a member of the school's national championship football team.

His federal service consisted of 25 years as a federal law enforcement officer, during which time he received numerous awards for outstanding service. He served as a chief enforcement officer for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) throughout the country and twice as division chief at ATF's Washington, D.C., headquarters.

The Association's computer operations were in-house during Morrissey's first term. He was reelected at the 1988 National Convention in Lillie Rock, Arkansas.

June 2, 1988. Congress passed the Medicare Catastrophic Expansion Bill, imposing a "senior-only surtax." This legislation increased premiums for Medicare Parts A and B based on income. Seniors with decent incomes and private insurance – including FEHBP – were penalized.

The Medicare surtax galvanized the membership, and NARFE, in coalition with other senior organizations, led the way toward its repeal. When the Medicare surtax was repealed on October 4, 1989, seniors nationwide hailed the effectiveness of grassroots lobbying. Indeed, while some legislators – notably Sen. John McCain – championed the cause in the Halls of Congress, senior voters across the country played a vital role in the law's repeal.

At the 1990 National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, Harold Price was elected president. Price worked for the Dependents Education System of the Department of Defense as a teacher, principal, and superintendent. He also served as a director of the Education Curriculum Center. He retired in 1979.

In NARFE, he held various positions, including the Oregon Federation presidency. Elected Region IX Field Vice President at the 1988 National Convention, the Executive Board elected him secretary when Gordon Brown resigned in 1989. When Vice President "Rip" Ripple resigned later that year, Price was elected to fill that position. During Price's administration, Vice President Al James Golato and OPM Assistant Director Curti Smith negotiated an agreement by which the agency would allow NARFE to solicit recent federal retirees as members.

Delegates at the 1992 National Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, elected Charles W. Carter as president. A veteran, his more than 30 years of government experience included a tenure as a national vice president of AFGE.

In 1988, Carter was chairman of the Legislative Conference Logistics Committee. He also served as the Colorado Federation's

president and held several federations and chapter offices.

NARFE's current president, Charles R. Jackson, was elected at the 1994 National Convention held in St. Louis, Missouri. Jackson worked with the Illinois State Police and served in the Army during World War II. His federal employment consisted of 23 years with the Postal Service, 14 of which were spent as director of training for Iowa, Arkansas, and Missouri. Before his presidential election, Jackson served two terms as Region V field vice president. In addition to various chapter and federation offices, he was chairman of the 1989 Federation Presidents' Meeting and president of the Missouri Federation.

Federal retirement benefits continue to be scrutinized by some politicians and, now, the media. In the ongoing budget agreement, federal retiree COLAs were delayed three months.

Despite these challenges – or because of them – the National Association of Retired Federal Employees, with its more than 450,000 grassroots lobbyists, 150 service centers, and community activists, will continue to lead the way to an honorable and dignified retirement.