



## Chapter 685 Winter E-newsletter (March 2021)

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(see complete list of officers and this e-newsletter with pictures @ [vanarfe.org/685/685.htm](http://vanarfe.org/685/685.htm))

### President's Message *by Hazel Braxton, Chapter President*

Colonial Chapter 0685 is beginning to exhibit signs of renewal. We are shedding the effects of the pandemic and moving on in a positive direction. On February 9, 2021 the Chapter held its first program meeting since March of 2020.

Although there were only 22 members present at the February meeting, we were fortunate to have the Virginia Federation President, Dr. Constance Bails present for the entire program. In addition to providing encouragement to the Chapter during these tenuous times, Dr. Bails provided news about what other chapters are doing, how the Federation can provide assistance to us, and the status of their upcoming plans for the 2021 year.

The program speaker, Cindy Markham, spoke about life events which made us keenly aware that the Chapter members need to address our life activities such as medical directives and beneficiary plans. As a result, our Program Chair and Service Officer are planning a working session for us to begin or complete our F100s.

John Bails, the VFN Net-Coordinator, has worked tirelessly with Ginny Taylor, Program Chair, Penny Kell, Secretary, and me to get us up to the task of successfully conducting Zoom meetings. Members may make use of this service by signing up for free Zoom classes by sending an e-mail to [jbails@aol.com](mailto:jbails@aol.com) or call 571-220-2860.

The Chapter 0685 challenges you to join our Zoom program meetings, take NARFE classes, request desired programs and prepare for the return to in-person meetings.

## **Virtual Chapter Meeting with Speaker Held for First Time February 9, 2021**

*by Ginny Taylor, Program Chair and Tom Kell, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President*

On Tuesday, February 9, 2021, we had our first zoom Chapter meeting. Connie Bails, VFN President and her husband John Bails, who was instrumental in getting us set up for the chapter zoom meeting also attended. Our speaker was Cindy Markham, Community Outreach Specialist for VirginiaNavigator in the SW Virginia area. An overview of her presentation is as follows:

The VirginiaNavigator family of websites is designed to directly improve or maintain and assist in the health of Virginians, aged 55 or older, family caregivers, people with disabilities and veterans. SeniorNavigator started 20 years ago. The newest addition is VeteransNavigator. It is a non-profit organization and funded by grants.

The second Tuesday of the month is the day Chapter 685 held all of its monthly luncheon meetings before the pandemic, (in-person meeting with a three-course lunch – do you remember way back when?). Our first virtual chapter meeting via Zoom was a success!

No food was served...however, Tom Kell was seen on screen having tea and cookies.

Those who attended heard - and saw - an interesting and informative presentation by Cindy Markham with VirginiaNavigator from the comfort of their home.

After the meeting, Markham emailed meeting participants a flyer with links to these SeniorNavigator websites: [seniornavigator.org/health/advance-care](https://seniornavigator.org/health/advance-care) planning, [seniornavigator.org/health/transitions-care](https://seniornavigator.org/health/transitions-care), [seniornavigator.org/health/oral-health](https://seniornavigator.org/health/oral-health), and [seniornavigator.org/chronic-pain-management-opioids](https://seniornavigator.org/chronic-pain-management-opioids).

The VirginiaNavigator's website, <https://virginiannavigator.org>, says it is “your nonprofit guide to disability, aging and veterans’ services in Virginia.

“In Virginia, there are thousands of programs and organizations that serve older adults, people with disabilities, veterans, caregivers and their families. You can find them all right here on VirginiaNavigator! We’re a statewide nonprofit that helps Virginians access the information and services they need, close to home.”

You can, the VirginiaNavigator website text continues, search more than 26,000 local resources by using the search bar on this website, <https://virginiannavigator.org>, “or you can, explore our family of websites:

- “[disAbilityNavigator](#) is the best way to find disability services in Virginia, including [personal assistance](#), [accessible housing](#), [benefits](#) and more.

- “[SeniorNavigator](#) is the trusted guide to healthy aging in Virginia. Search for [housing options](#), [transportation programs](#), [caregiving resources](#), and other services for seniors.
- “[VeteransNavigator](#) helps Virginia veterans and their families navigate post-military life with resources related to [benefits assistance](#), [health care](#), [employment training](#) and more.

“If the challenges you’re facing are complex, or if you’re just not sure what resources are available, try our free [ServiceNavigator needs assessment tool](#). Answer some basic questions, and we’ll give you a detailed list of all the programs near you that are a good fit.

“We’re here to help you navigate your journey.”

### **Learning Experiences During the Pandemic** *by Ginny Taylor, Program Chair*

Ginny Taylor and her husband Allen took the 10-week New Kent University program in the Fall 2020. They learned about all kinds of resources available to residents of New Kent County. In addition, they learned about the Government and how things are run in New Kent County. One Saturday was set aside for field trips. They went to the water treatment plant, saw some of the parks and recreation areas, visited the landfill, the animal shelter, the library, the maintenance area for the school buses and emergency vehicles, the 911 center, and visited the regional airport where they had lunch. One afternoon after class in the parking lot, they were able to see the equipment and talk with the firemen and EMS staff. All COVID rules were followed during the 10 weeks. There were only 10 people in the class. It is a very popular class and is done only once a year. One year it is done in the afternoon and the following year it is done at night. A graduation picture includes Ginny (green mask) and Allen (red mask) below.



## **Using Zoom to Attend Chapter Events**

*by Deborah Fisk, Electronic Communications Committee (ECC)*

I am a member of Chapter 2265, Midlothian and I serve as Net Coordinator. I also serve as Chair of the ECC and recently as the VA State Legislation Chair. I was pleased to join the ECC last year because electronic communication is of great interest to me and I fully embrace the necessity of online platforms as we move forward in these uncertain times.

As life moves online, our retired generation sometimes faces a digital divide. Because many of us are uncomfortable with technology, we sometimes struggle using modern tools to keep up with friends and family in the pandemic.

For some of us, being isolated means the end to a social life and losing touch with others. However, this does not have to be true. There are many ways to digitally maintain communication with our friends, family, and loved ones during this pandemic, even for those of us who are not particularly tech-savvy. While many of us are familiar with the word Instagram and Facebook, did you know there are many engaging ways to keep in touch remotely and be a part of your community from the safety of your home?

Social media and online conferencing are great platforms for communication. We have seen NARFE Chapters all over our state schedule ZOOM and Go to Meetings, and we have cheerfully watched as we all struggle to master technology and accept the challenge of the much dreaded ONLINE. For some of us, COVID has forced us to learn new things.

We are not certain how long it will be until in-person meetings will be safe, therefore, it is important to find alternative forms of communication to stay in touch with friends, family, and your community. The possibilities are endless, diverse, and easy once you overcome your fear and forge full steam to tackle a basic understanding of technology.

Have you been able to join an online meeting yet? It is exciting to see so many faces that you have been missing all these months. It is like a Rx dose of smiles to be able to idly chat and visit with one another. I would like to challenge everyone to try to login to an upcoming meeting, perhaps just to say hello to old friends and let everyone know how you are doing.

So, build up your confidence, ask someone to help you with equipment choices or technical setup and join us for a future online meeting. We all are seeking human interaction and communication and through the web can be an excellent tool in staying connected.

So, for all of you who have embraced this new technology, wonderful; and I challenge anyone who has been reluctant to try, give it a try, give me a shout out!

The ECC Training continues every Wednesday @ 2:00 pm. Please contact John Bails ([jbails@aol.com](mailto:jbails@aol.com)) or me, Deborah Fisk ([narfe2265df@gmail.com](mailto:narfe2265df@gmail.com)) for more information.

*Editor's Note:* If you are interested in a user guide how to use ZOOM to attend a chapter meeting, please email [jeff.fratter@gmail.com](mailto:jeff.fratter@gmail.com) to request a copy.

### **VFN News** *by Jeanne Garrison, Area 1 Vice President*

The VFN board made the decision to delay the 2021 conference until fall since we are still all trying to stay safe as we progress toward conquering Covid-19. The new dates are Oct 10-13. The election of VFN officers is also postponed.

As our chapter continues without in person meetings the good news from VFN is every chapter now has the opportunity to meet on ZOOM. You can stay home and still have business meetings and even programs with speakers.

For those who are not familiar there will be ongoing training open to all members. For those without computers you may dial in to participate by phone. There will be several numbers listed. Just select the one for New York or Washington D.C. since they are in the eastern time zone. You will be able to hear and speak just no video. With most Zoom meetings attendees are asked to self-mute when they are not speaking. I hope to join everyone on Zoom until we can meet in person again.

### **Membership News** *by Dave Riggs, Membership Chair*

#### New Members

We are pleased to welcome Nancy Self and Michael Stephens, who come to us via transfer. Please greet them personally when we are able to resume our meetings. A reminder that with our chapter unable to meet most of this year due to Covid, this information is based upon statistics provided by the NARFE website. The redesigned website, however, still has not entirely updated membership data. Our apologies if we have additional new members and we have not recognized you. Please let us know.

#### Substantial Membership Loss in 2020, and How to Respond

This is a “good news/bad news” report. First let’s examine the bad news.

Membership totals can be deceptive. Those of us who attended our monthly Tuesday meetings before the pandemic are aware that attendance rose in recent years. As good as this is, it gives us a false perception. It does not account for members who choose not to attend or are unable to attend for various reasons, and these members comprise more than two-thirds of our chapter. And there’s much that transpires behind the scenes.

A disturbing nationwide trend in NARFE is a decline in membership. Our chapter was fortunate in 2019: We started the year with 170 members, and we ended it with 169, for a loss of only 1 member. If you made a tabulation from your newsletters from 2019 you might wonder how we lost even 1 member because, throughout the year in the “New Members” section, we welcomed 14 new members. It’s because these new members merely compensated for our losses, which exceeded our gains. Like other chapters, we lost members via death, transfer to other chapters, and non-renewal. The vast majority of our lost members dropped out via non-renewal. This is unfortunate both for them and for us, as we need a strong membership to represent the interests of federal employees and retirees.

If 2019 was a “good” year because our gains almost balanced our losses, 2020 definitely was a serious warning. We gained only 5 members, in comparison with the previous year’s 14. What’s more, our total membership declined far more last year due to greater losses. At the beginning of 2020 we had 169 members; at the end of the year we had 152. That’s a loss of 10%.

Now for the good news.

A 10% decline in membership is substantial, and we should take it seriously. But it doesn’t have to signal a trend. As mentioned above, 2020 was a warning, not a fixed course. To say the least, 2020 was a “different” year for every organization. The pandemic severely impacted our normal operations. We did not have monthly meetings after March. Nor did we have articles about our meetings that our public affairs officer submits to local newspapers and magazines – articles that have caught the eye of many retirees and attracted them to our meetings. And none of us had our usual, person-to-person interaction with the outside world, to name just a few abnormalities. When we finally enter the “new normal” (whatever that might be) we will resume these and other activities. However, we cannot entirely attribute our losses to the pandemic. Granted, some members might have had financial difficulty and sought cost-cutting measures. But for some reason, many simply lost interest. If you know someone who dropped their membership or is considering it, discuss it with them.

And, of course, we need to mention NARFE and its benefits to Federal employees or retirees we know via email, phone, or whatever means we’re using to communicate at this time. For example, I was in touch with an employee I knew who was approaching retirement last year and sent him a magazine and a few pertinent articles. It was a gentle first step, an introduction. And remember – you also can do this electronically, if you choose. *NARFE Magazine* is on the narfe.org website, going back to 2008, so you have a wide range of articles that you can copy and send to prospective members.

We cannot predict what our future “normal” will be. Chances are that it will involve a mixture of person-to-person and electronic contacts. Whatever it might be, keep NARFE in mind when you meet federal employees and retirees in appropriate situations. The good news is that we have numerous ways of keeping in touch, both now and in the future, and that we can adapt and use them.

*Editor’s Note:* Unfortunately, two more members left the chapter between the preparation and publication of this article.

## **Alzheimer's Update** *by Sandy Bilski, Alzheimer's Chair*

Here we are in the early months of 2021, almost a year since the Covid19 pandemic caused us to mask-up, maintain social distance from people, sanitize surfaces in our homes as well as cars, and constantly wash our hands. (Someone, pass the hand lotion, please.)

Despite our circumstances, I do have a number of things to share with you. The October 24th Williamsburg Walk to End Alzheimer's was definitely different. Although many participants walked in their neighborhoods, Walt and I ventured over to New Town to take a look at the Promise Garden. The atmosphere was so different. It was very quiet there; no crowds, no teams, no sponsors, and only a few people who came to see the garden. We decided to make our own route and walked 3 miles in New Town. During our walk, we saw a few like-minded folks across the street and we all smiled and waved our Alzheimer's flags in acknowledgment of our purpose.

Our team, "NARFE 685," raised \$680. for the 2020 Alzheimer's event. On behalf of the Alzheimer's Association, "Thank you" for your donations. Having raised a minimum of \$500, Sandy Bilski earned a "Champion" medal for the second year in a row.

Other news of note is that researchers at the Glenn Biggs Institute for Alzheimer's and Neurodegenerative Diseases at UT Health San Antonio are working on a large international study along with the WHO (World Health Organization) to study compelling evidence that Covid19 will have long-term effects on the brains and nervous systems of survivors as they age. The study will investigate the correlation between the Coronavirus and cognitive decline, Alzheimer's disease, and other dementia in later life. Decades of evidence from other respiratory viruses, as well as observations of patients in recent months, suggests such infections may increase a person's risk for Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and other brain disorders. Doctors have noted lingering post-recovery conditions, i.e., brain fog, forgetfulness, anxiety, depression, and psychosis. Abnormal brain imaging emerged as a major feature of Covid19. The Coronavirus that causes Covid19 is known to enter cells via receptors in the olfactory bulb, the brain structure involved in the sense of smell, which is why a telltale symptom of the disease is a loss of smell.

Another item of interest. In an email dated 1/29/21, Harry Johns, CEO of the Alzheimer's Association, advised that the FDA has extended the review period to June 7, 2021, for aducanumab, a drug developed by Biogen. The FDA has requested additional data and analyses for its review of the potential treatment for Alzheimer's. If approved, it would be the first available treatment to potentially change the progression of Alzheimer's, not just symptoms.

See below for an article you may not have seen in aarp.org.



## Tony Bennett reveals he is living with Alzheimer's

The family of legendary singer Tony Bennett, 94, announced that he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2016. On behalf of the more than 5 million Americans living with Alzheimer's and their 16 million family members and friends providing care, the Association is grateful for Bennett's transparency in sharing his diagnosis.



## Support For 2021 VFN Annual Conference

Many of you are aware now that the 2021 VFN Annual Conference has been postponed from April 2021 to October 11-13, 2021. We are looking for supporters for the Program Book and would like to remind you to please support your 2021 VFN Annual Conference. Some members left their support money with the Treasurer to be held until the next Conference. That money is still there. Just a reminder of Donor Categories:

Platinum = \$100  
Silver = \$50  
Super Angel = \$25  
Angel = \$20

Cheerleader = \$15  
Booster = \$10  
Supporter = \$5  
Donor = less than \$5

You can donate, anonymously or you can have your name printed in the Program Book under the Chapter name. Please submit money by September 1. Support forms (regular and fillable) are on the VFN NARFE website and should be submitted with money (personal checks are preferred) to Ginny Taylor. Contact Ginny at [gingin46@cox.net](mailto:gingin46@cox.net) for details how to donate.

## Guest Speakers Coming Up in March and April *by Ginny Taylor, Program Chair*

Our speaker for Tuesday, March 9, will be Dr. Cindy Gueli, a historian, author, and historical consultant for TV and film. Her media background includes reporting and producing for television and hosting the web series "Scandalous Washington." Her book "Lipstick Brigade: The Untold True Story of Washington's World War II Government Girls" has been optioned for television. She holds a B.A. from Georgetown University and a Master's in Communications and Master's and Ph.D. in History from American University.

The April 13th speaker scheduled to speak to Williamsburg Chapter 685 is Jaime Reed from the Williamsburg Drug Company. Williamsburg Drug Company wanted everyone to know that if they need a COVID test, they do them every day between 9:30am – 3pm. No appointment is



needed. You just have to drive to their parking lot & call inside and ask for the test. Someone will come out to administer the test. The Rapid test is \$149 & the PCR test is \$229. Williamsburg Drug Company will provide paperwork for insurance reimbursement.

### **Parliamentarian's Corner** *by Mary Swain, Professional Registered Parliamentarian*

Parliamentary procedure is a set of rules for conducting business at meetings and has a long history. It originated in the early English Parliaments and came to America with the first European settlers. It became uniform in 1876, when Henry M. Robert published his manual on Parliamentary Law.

Today, Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th Edition, is the basic handbook of operation for many clubs, organizations and other groups.

### **Message From our CDL**

Websites for Your Congressional Representatives; sign up for their Newsletters:

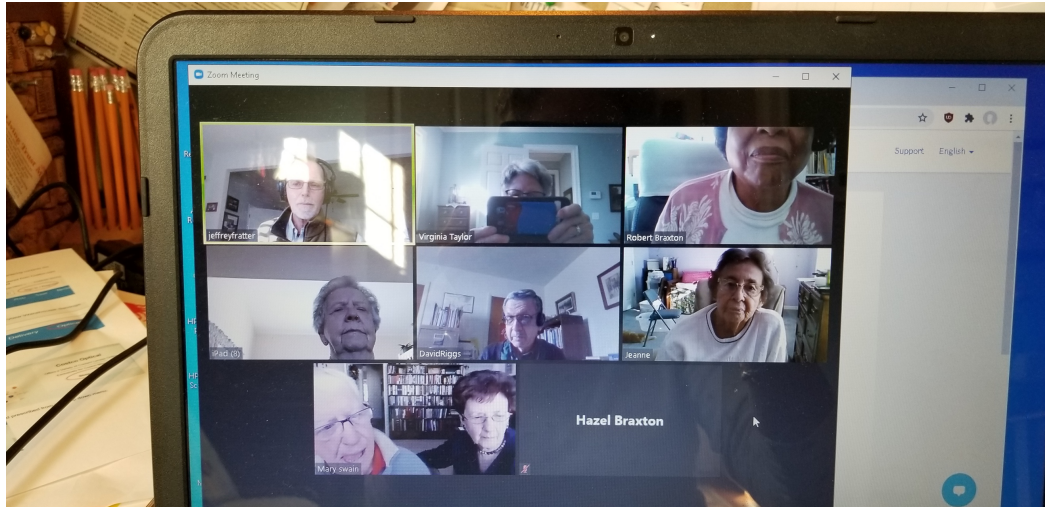
Elaine Luria  
[luria.house.gov](http://luria.house.gov)

Rob Wittman  
[wittman.house.gov](http://wittman.house.gov)

You will find it quite easy to request newsletters at their websites this way. If you do not know who your person in congress is, supplying your nine (5 + 4) digit zip code, will provide that information. Marilyn Riddle, Congressional District Leader (CDL for Congresswomen Luria, (but I can help with you contacting Congressman Wittman.

## Winter 2021 Chapter Events

### February Virtual Chapter Meeting



February 9<sup>th</sup> chapter meeting via Zoom. Twenty-two members attended this chapter event.

### Chapter 685 Board Met January 29, 2021, via Zoom



Participating at the time this photo was taken (and I hope this was everybody) are John Bails &

his Zoom-background-visual aircraft carrier; Tom (“Canon”) Kell, 2<sup>nd</sup> vice president; Jeanne Garrison, Virginia Federation of NARFE (VFN) Area 1 vice president; Hazel Braxton, chapter president; Jeff (“Sleepy”) Fratter; newsletter editor and former chapter president; David Riggs, membership chairperson; Penny Kell, secretary; Marcelline St. Pierre, treasurer; and Virginia Taylor, program chairperson. John Bails, sergeant at arms, VFN, provided technical support for the meeting. He had stepped away just before the photo was taken. Tom Kell is holding a Canon camera, and his Zoom background visual also is nautical: boats at anchor at night. Jeff Fratter isn’t really sleeping. The camera just happened to blink when he did.

## Chapter 685 Board Meets Again by Zoom in February 2021

The chapter's leadership conducted another successful Zoom meeting Thursday, February 25, 2021. Meeting participants, shown above, are John Bails, Zoom host and technical support; Tom Kell, second vice president; Virginia Taylor, program chairperson; Mary Swain, parliamentarian; Hazel Braxton, president; Jeff Fratter; past president and newsletter editor; Mary Grace Dorsey, first vice president; Marcelline St. Pierre, treasurer; Marilyn Riddle, congressional district liaison; David Riggs, membership chairperson; Jeanne Garrison, Virginia Federation of NARFE (VFN) Area 1 vice president; Penny Kell, chapter secretary; and Frances McElroy, chapter service officer.

