SOAR celebrated our 30-year anniversary May 23 of this year. It is time to reflect on where we’ve been and where we are going. It is also time to celebrate our accomplishments.

SOAR was established May 23, 1985 by executive action of the Steelworkers’ Executive Board. Its purpose as proposed “is to deal with the social, economic, educational, legislative and political developments and concerns of its members, spouses, the USWA and the labor movement. Additionally, it will strive to improve the communities in which SOAR members live; to advance USWA policies and to engage in political and legislative action directed at bettering our nation and safeguarding and enhancing the economic security and general well-being of all of its members and older and retired persons in general, through educational, legislative, political, civil, social, community and other activities.”

The Steelworkers’ had great expectations back in 1985. Now 30 years later, I believe we have met and exceeded the goal they established. That credit belongs to you and your predecessors! Our chapter leaders have responded on every call, from the first major battle in 1986 with LTV Steel over retiree pensions and benefits through the fight for health care reform in 2010, the defense of Social Security/Medicare and every struggle the union and retirees have faced in between.

SOAR has a rich legacy of which to be proud. The union and retirees in both the United States and Canada are better off due to your hard work and dedication. You should all take a minute and bask in our successes as individuals and as an organization.

Reflect, but don’t get too comfortable! There is much more work for us to do. We need to continue to build our organization. We must find the next generation of SOAR leaders. We have the issues of pension reform, unfair trade and job creation both here in the U.S. and in Canada. In the U.S. we need to continue the fight to protect Social Security and Medicare. In Canada we must continue the defense of the Canadian Health Care Program. In addition, we must continue to educate, agitate and mobilize our members in preparation of the 2016 elections.

Yes, we have much to do. But I am confident SOAR members, as usual, are up to the challenge.

Congratulations and thank you for your 30 years of activism!

Jim Centner, SOAR Director
SOAR Chapter
Connection
Published every other month by SOAR
Jim Centner, Director/Editor
Lee Etta Hairston, Copy Editor
Phone: 866-208-4420
Email jcentner@usw.org
Address editorial material to:
SOAR
60 Blvd of the Allies
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
Deadline for articles is July 25

The McNeil Report
Madonna is 55, her boyfriend is 22. Tina Turner is 75, her boyfriend is 40. JLo is 42, boyfriend is 26. Mariah Carey is 44, her husband is 32. Still single, ladies?? Relax, your boyfriend has not been born yet.

My brain is like the Bermuda Triangle. Information goes in and then it’s never found again.

From Charlie

- Don’t forget that this newsletter is online at http://www.usw.org/act/activism/soar/resources/soar-chapter-connection. Please share it with your chapter members.
- Deadlines to submit articles and photos for the SOAR in Action magazine are June 25 and October 12. District and Chapter articles and photos should be emailed to the SOAR office at the address at the left.
- We’ve been trying to utilize this newsletter for educational purposes and using the SOAR in Action magazine to print chapter articles and photos. This way, our members can view their events in color. If the articles in this newsletter were 250 words or less, we could put more information in it. I know that’s hard to do sometimes, but the longer the article is, the less people will read it. Most newspapers limit their “voice of the people” articles at no more than 250 words. Not always easy to do, I admit - but it can be done. Please try.

Upcoming Events
• June 5-6 Int. SOAR Executive board meets in Pittsburgh
• July 7-10 - ARA Leg. Conf. D.C.

Elaine Sez...

In My Next Life....
I'm coming back as a man. I will be spoiled, never have to be compassionate or say I'm sorry, and I will not have to say thank you! My wife will fulfill all social obligations and be the perfect companion for all my events. Sounds good!

Old Charlie Sez...
Much younger than I, truth be told. But SOAR is much more active at 30 years old.
Robbing Medicare to Pay for the Trade Deal

"Congressional Democrats demanded the expansion of the Trade Assistance Program, Congressional Republicans apparently found the money in Medicare, and the Obama White House, which should be howling in protest, has remained silent."

- Michael Hiltzik
  http://lat.ms/1AlyYs9

"I'd characterize this as money stolen from Medicare."

- Max Richtman, CEO of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare

Telling American workers they have to trade away health care benefits in their retirement in order to get job training when they lose their job now is incredibly mercenary, even by Washington standards.

Report From the Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM)

AAM issues like currency reform and trade enforcement, have been front and center on Capitol Hill lately. Not only is currency manipulation causing problems for our economy and our manufacturers, it’s causing political tension in Congress. And while many legislators agree countries like China and Japan must stop artificially deflating their currencies to gain an unfair advantage, there are only a few stepping up with solutions and even fewer brave enough to back them up.

That’s why your work in your communities is so important. Calling your Representatives or stopping by their offices really does make a difference, because it can influence the way they vote. But in order to do so, brothers and sisters, they have to hear us loud and clear.

I spent the week on Capital Hill visiting congressional offices, explaining how important it is to stop currency manipulation and strengthen the trade enforcement rules America already has on the books. Many of the members of Congress said they are hearing from constituents about trade now more than they ever have in the past. That means more people are paying attention; and that’s just what we need.

So, call your representatives and tell them that we need to keep America working. Then, pass the phone to your kids, and then to their kids. Here’s the number: 202-224-3121. Just ask for your Senators and representative, and the switchboard will do the rest.

Margaret Mead said it best: “A small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Rachel Bennett Steury, AAM Field Coordinator, Alliance for American Manufacturing, 260-633-1060

Emeritus Report

Finally Spring has arrived. Our temperatures are still below normal. I can’t believe Ruth has not turned on the air conditioning yet. I’m grateful for small mercies.

My SOAR chapter recently had their Spring luncheon and it was enjoyed by all who attended. We managed to make a few dollars with the annual draw. This money goes into what we call “our lunch fund.” We are probably having the same problems a lot of other chapters are having and that is, we are not bringing enough young retirees on board to fill the spaces left by those who have left for one reason or another. Let’s all put on our thinking caps to see if we can get the younger retirees to come forward and join SOAR.

District 6 Conference is being held in Sault Ste. Marie in August of this year. SOAR has been invited to attend and will have an information table which gives us the opportunity to meet the active workers members and to discuss getting their retired members involved and to make sure that the retiring member joins SOAR.

They also should be reminded that they are asked to pay the first years dues to the chapter involved. We really need to have an infusion of new members in order to carry on our work.

Hope everybody has a good healthy summer.

Dan McNeil, SOAR Emeritus
Social Security Expands Hours to Better Serve Public

Congress approved resources in the fiscal year 2015 budget to enable Social Security to expand its field office hours. Beginning March 16, our field offices nationwide opened to the public for an additional hour (3 to 4 p.m.) on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays.

Offices continue to close to the public at noon on Wednesdays, so employees have time to complete current work, reduce backlogs, and continue training new employees.

“This expansion of office hours reaffirms our commitment to providing the people we serve the option of top-notch, face-to-face assistance in the field offices even as we work to expand online services for those who prefer that flexibility,” said Carolyn W. Colvin, Acting Commissioner. “The public expects and deserves world-class customer service, and thanks to approved funding, I am pleased we will continue our tradition of exceptional service.”

Keep in mind that most Social Security business doesn’t require a trip to a field office. For example, you can apply for retirement, replace a Medicare card, or report a change of address—all online. Check out our full list of online services at [http://www.socialsecurity.gov/onlineservices](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/onlineservices).

Accurate Accounting for the Social Security Numbers of the Deceased

Although Social Security doesn’t generate death information, we collect it from a variety of sources so that we can accurately administer our programs. Social Security posts roughly 2.8 million reports of death each year. We receive these reports from various sources including family members, funeral homes, financial institutions, and states.

When we receive information about a person’s death, we update our records, including the “Numident” file. The Numident is our database of Social Security numbers assigned since 1936. This information allows us to stop paying benefits to a deceased beneficiary and establish benefits for survivors. Following a person’s death, his or her Social Security number remains in the Numident, but we flag the number as belonging to a deceased person to prevent program fraud. This data is widely used by state and federal agencies to prevent improper payments.

Our records are highly accurate—over 99 percent and the death reporting process has proved very successful over the years in administering Social Security-related programs. Learn more about our death reporting methods and tracking at [www.socialsecurity.gov/legislation/testimony_031615.html](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/legislation/testimony_031615.html).

Plan Today, Retire Secure Tomorrow

Social Security is joining forces with interested organizations to remind workers that effective financial planning today is the key to enjoying a secure retirement tomorrow.

On average, Social Security retirement benefits replace only 40 percent of a worker’s earnings. To enjoy a comfortable retirement, individuals should think of Social Security as your financial foundation. For a secure retirement, you and your clients will also need other reliable sources of income, such as pensions, savings, and investments.

In partnership with the American Savings Education Council, the Consumer Federation of America, the Women’s Institute for a Secure Retirement, and the
U.S. Department of the Treasury, we will reach out to you in the coming months to get the word out that it’s never too early—or too late—to start planning for retirement. You, too, can help Americans plan for a secure retirement by pledging to partner with us at https://vovici.com/wsb.dll/s/e54ag57d64.

One of the best ways to begin sound retirement planning is by creating a my Social Security account. Creating a my Social Security account is quick, convenient, and secure, and you’ll be well on your way to taking charge of your financial future. Get started now at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount.

Quality of Life is Everything

Through our Faces and Facts of Disability webpage, Social Security tells the story of millions of Americans living with disabling physical and mental conditions. The page puts a face to many of these debilitating conditions. This month, we are featuring Ebie’s story. Ebie lived an active, productive life until he became ill, and doctors diagnosed a kidney condition. Without the benefits he receives from Social Security, Ebie couldn’t afford his renal care or maintain his quality of life.

Social Security provides people with benefits that can be a vital lifeline when they are no longer able to work because of a disability. On our Faces and Facts of Disability page, you can read stories and watch videos of people who long to live healthy and active lives, but who are limited by disabling conditions. Our page also provides facts and dispels myths about our disability program.

Learn more about the Faces and Facts of Disability at www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityfacts.

Exercise! You Can Help Your Spouse

There are seemingly endless reasons to exercise. Exercise can help with balance. Exercise can lower your risk of stroke, heart disease and diabetes. Exercise can even help you recover faster in hospital. The latest research from Johns Hopkins School of Public Health reveals that when you exercise you can help your spouse. Yes, that’s right. If you increase the amount that you engage in physical activity, your spouse is more likely to do so as well.

The research further suggests that if you’re hoping to help someone to exercise, you probably should discuss it with both the person and the person’s partner or friend. Apparently, counseling a couple to exercise is more likely to get them to exercise than counseling one of them alone.

Exercise is really important for wellbeing. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends at least two and a half hours a week of moderate activity such as brief walking—20 minutes a day. The health benefits are significant for people of all ages, races and ethnicities and the risks are small by comparison. If older adults cannot engage in that much exercise because of a chronic condition, they should still exercise as much as possible.

Too many Americans do not get anywhere near enough physical activity. You will be doing both yourself and your spouse a favor if you exercise as much as possible.

Diane Archer, just+care
It’s A Bad Deal

The US Senate has voted to fast track the “Trans-Pacific Partnership” (TPP) and the House of Representatives will be, or may have considered the same issue by the time you read this. If the House of Representatives approves fast track, then the TPP will be up for a vote in both the Senate and House without the ability to make any amendments—just an up or down vote.

I would like to make a few observations regarding the destructive effects of this trade deal and the influence that multi-national corporations and the big money interests have over the interest of the middle class and working America.

First of all, I find it ironic that the Republicans have opposed President Obama on everything he has attempted to do, but surprise, now Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader in the senate supports him 100 percent in the effort to get the TPP fast tracked and approved. Keep in mind that the provisions of this trade legislation have been secret and are not transparent. Yet hundreds of corporate representatives have been involved and know the details.

Have you noticed that the media has basically ignored any efforts to have meaningful reporting and debate over the pros and cons of this legislation that is reported to cover 40 percent of trade?

Based on what we do know, this trade deal will cost us good paying jobs and act to depress wages. Notwithstanding claims to the contrary, every trade agreement in recent history has resulted in a loss of good paying middle class jobs and an increase in our trade deficit. History has also shown that labor and human rights have not been enforced and currency manipulations are not controlled. Only Corporate multi-national corporations have benefited and stand to be able to affect our laws under separate private tribunals.

It is also reported that to provide assistance to those who lose their jobs $700 million will be taken from Medicare. If it’s not too late let your senators and congressperson know that the TPP is not acceptable.

William Gibbons, PACE Representative

Don’t Forget To Make Retirement Fun

Being involved with political and legislative action sometimes just seems to take over our lives but it’s so very important to simply remember that we are retired and need to have fun while taking on these challenges.

Our membership cards give the threefold purpose of SOAR. To better the communities in which we live; to further the policies of the United Steelworkers and to participate in political and legislative action. Let’s not forget that while performing these functions we can do them with smiles on our faces and have a good time doing them.

Some chapters take time during their meetings to write letters to their representatives. Some chapters help to assemble newsletters or even stuff envelopes in our office in Pittsburgh. Many chapters are great at fund raising for various worthwhile projects and have a fun time doing it.

It’s not often that I see a photo of SOAR members at rallies or demonstrations or fund raisers and the like without smiles on their faces.

Let’s never forget to whistle while we work for our retirees and our union.

- Charlie
Give Seniors like me a Break – Stop TPP and Fast Track

The Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal is being negotiated among 12 countries, including the U.S., Japan, Vietnam, Australia and Peru. It would have an enormous impact on the American economy and would likely affect prescription drug prices as well as Medicare. That means seniors would be among the many groups on the losing end of the deal.

If Congress gives President Obama Trade Promotion Authority – also known as Fast Track negotiating authority - then TPP would be implemented without open and full debate, enabling these major economic changes to hastily fly through the U.S. House and Senate.

Why does that affect seniors? Because Medicare is being targeted as a possible way to pay for Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA). Since TAA provides displaced workers with job training and support, it is crucial to those who need it. And since pending House legislation would take $700 million from Medicare to pay for TAA, we would be cutting Medicare in order to pay for the adverse conditions brought on by TPP. If Medicare is used as a piggy bank every time the government needs funding for other purposes, both current and future seniors will be in deep trouble.

TPP may also jeopardize the government’s ability to list and price prescription drugs in public programs. Foreign corporations or subsidiaries will then be able to challenge a number of public programs under Medicaid, as well as the Medicare drug discounts negotiated under the Affordable Care Act and the Veterans Administration system, if drug pricing in these programs affect their profits.

Americans already pay the highest drug prices of any industrialized nation, and last year, drug prices rose by 13 percent. Congress should be working on ways to make prescription drugs more affordable, rather than exacerbating the problem.

Barbara Easterling, President Alliance for Retired Americans

Medicare Preventive and Screening Services

Part B covers certain doctors’ services, outpatient care, medical supplies, and preventive services.

However, it’s important to realize that you can’t expect Medicare to pay for a particular preventive service just any old time you want it. Many, if not all preventive tests require a waiting period before you are eligible to have the test. Your doctor or other health care provider may recommend you get services more often than Medicare covers. Or, they may recommend services that Medicare doesn’t cover. If this happens, you may have to pay some or all of the costs. It’s important to ask questions so you understand why your doctor is recommending certain services and whether Medicare will pay for them.

SOAR Vice President and Spouse Demonstrate in Quebec City

In April, SOAR Vice President Harry Hynd and his wife, Margaret, participated in one of the largest Climate Change Demonstrations in Canada which was held in Quebec City. They were applauded for traveling nine hours to join over 25,000 people marching to the National Assembly of Quebec carrying The Toronto Steelworkers flags for this important demonstration to try and save our planet.

Harry Hynd, SOAR Vice President