



In the Newsletter

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Treasurer’s Report

On August 31, 2024, the Blue Ridge Torch Club had \$3,310 for Torch operations.

U.S. Naval Academy 179th Anniversary October 10



Membership dues are payable at or before the October Torch dinner meeting.

November’s Torch Talk will be: “Women’s Suffrage and the League of Women Voters”

Torch Club October Dinner Meeting

In our October 8 talk, Jim Grefer will present “The Economic Causes of Southern Secession and the Civil War”.

More than a century and a half after the American Civil War, our country is still heatedly debating its causes. What we teach children and adults about its causes varies widely among regions of the country. The effect is widespread disagreement and discord about it. Much is the result of emotional distress attached to some theories; much is due to the desire for an overly simple answer.



In surveys by Pew and Gallop, the two overwhelmingly popular theories are states’ rights and slavery. But what exactly are states’ rights? Which states’ rights were debated? Could this abstract concept lead to war? If U.S. leaders were not pushing to end slavery in the 15 slave states, how would slavery have led to war?

This will be our discussion at our October dinner event. Using detailed historical narratives, data, and charts, Jim will delve into these theories and provide evidence we can use to judge what was—and what was not—the real causes of the war. The answers may surprise you.

Jim is a retired economist who, with his wife Helena, moved to Potomac Ridge three years ago. He studies American history and writes and teaches an economic history class for the Encore Learning Program in Arlington, VA. He is currently on the PR Budget and Finance Committee, the PR Replacement Reserve Committee, and is editor of the Torch Club newsletter. Jim is an avid tennis player and sings on the LWVA choir, the Notables.

The President's Column

We're off to a good start for the Torch Club this fall with a talk on the History of American Breakfast Cereal by Bill and Anne A. Thomas. You probably had already assumed that the Kelloggs and the Posts were archrivals for the breakfast market in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries America.

Continuing in this historical vein on October 8th Jim Grefer will share his views, and the results of surveys by Pew and Gallop, on the popular theories of states rights and slavery as the causes of the Civil War.

Menu: the Torch dinner at the Clubhouse will feature Shrimp Scampi served with linguini, or Meatloaf and mashed potatoes. This month, we will have a served salad rather than the salad bar offered last month.

Please RSVP at: Blue Ridge [Torch Club October 2024 Dinner Reservations](#).

We have several other interesting Torch Talks lined up for later this year, but we still have one or two spots open for willing speakers. Please contact me for more information.

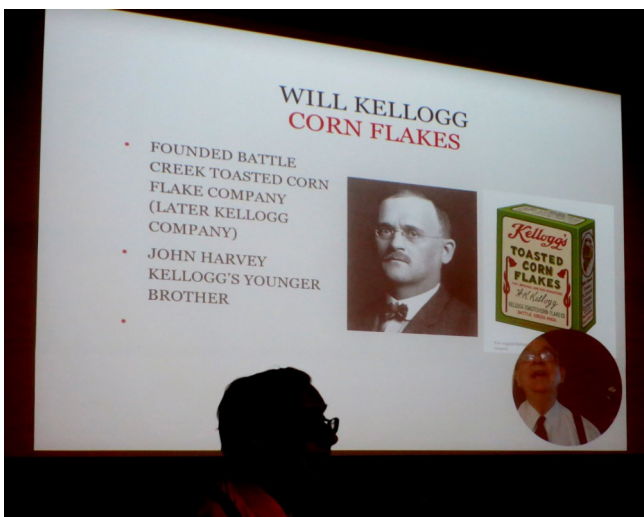
We have been neglecting one of our long-held traditions in the Torch Club during the last year, namely the monthly books exchange by members. With our change in venue from the Belmont Country Club to Marie's at the Clubhouse (last December), a variety of meeting formats (recall Mike Leavitt's musical interlude and homage to Tom Lehrer), and other priorities, we have unwittingly omitted this feature from our meetings.

"Bring a Book – Take a Book" allows any member to bring an already-read or otherwise unwanted but good read (not wrapped) to our Torch dinners and deposit on a table at the back of the room. In the past we have had as many as 10 – 12 donated books on the table. Anyone who brings a book, may take another one from the table. At the end of the evening, anyone at the dinner may adopt any of the books remaining. Books left-over will be given to our LWVA library or donated to a donation center. If you have already read the book you received at our holiday party last December, please consider sharing that with other members.

The History of Ready to Eat Breakfast Cereal—A Uniquely American Invention by Bill and Anne A. Thomas

In 1863 James Caleb Jackson was the first to invent a ready to eat cereal – granula. It was of limited commercial success as it was very hard and had to be soaked in milk to soften it.

Starting in the 1890s more cereals were invented. John Harvey and Will Kellogg developed Wheat Flakes followed



by Corn Flakes. Henry Perky invented Shredded Wheat. C.W. Post invented Grapenuts. Alexander P. Anderson invented Puffed Rice and Puffed Wheat. The talk centered on the Kelloggs and C. W. Post, who both had factories in Battle Creek, Michigan. It is a fascinating story of how Battle Creek Michigan became the home of two giant cereal manufacturing companies.

You can find the slide presentations on our website: Blueridgetorchclub.org under the Videos tab.

New Torch Club Members in 2024

Every month we welcome new members to the Torch Club. Part of the induction process is to introduce them in this newsletter. In keeping with this tradition, here are short bios of three new inductees.

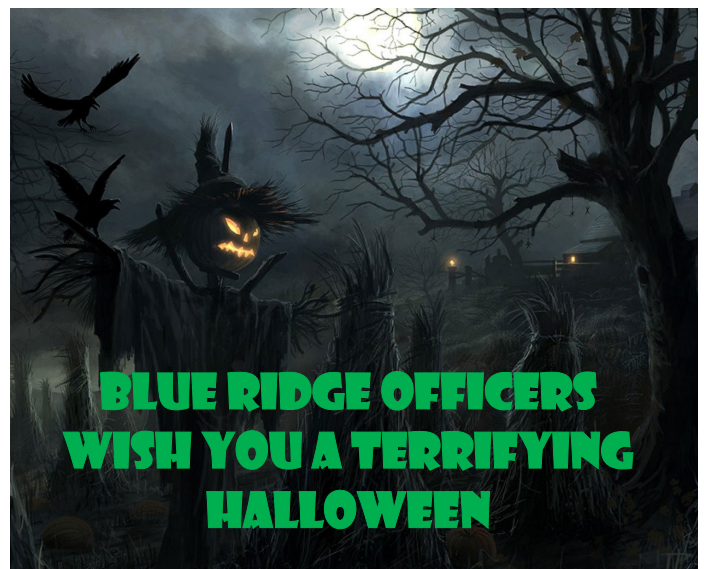
Michael Raddatz—Riverbend—Michael grew up in a middle-class family in the Central Valley of California. After spending 10 years in the U.S. Navy “pushing nuclear submarines around the Pacific”, he worked as an engineer for more than 30 years with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. After government retirement, Michael was employed in the civilian nuclear industry for 10 years as an independent contractor. Taking a break from work, Michael moved to the Island of Tortola in the British Virgin Islands where he spent 4 years “sailing and drinking beer” while managing a charter yacht company. By his own admission, he was deported from Tortola as an “illegal alien” and then spent the next few years exploring South America with his brother before sailing back to the U.S. He is now retired and living in a loving relationship with his wife Jeannie. (Editor’s note: We should encourage Mike to share some of his many ‘youthful’ adventures, if not in a formal Torch Talk, perhaps over a few beers in Marie’s one evening.)

Ken Konwin—Riverview—Ken “Crash” Konwin, was originally from Chicago and later attended the Air Force Academy, was commissioned and served years in the U.S. Air Force. He was a career pilot and held other duties in acquisition management. After reaching the rank of colonel, Crash retired from the service after 27 years. In the 20 years since that time, he has worked in the private sector, and is currently employed with Booz Allen (but hoping to retire again soon). Married to his wife for 17 years in October (Happy Anniversary!), Crash and Lynn lived in Ashburn for many years before renting a condo Riverbend for three years, and then buying their new home in Riverview more than a year ago. Crash is interested in baseball, travel, astronomy, space, and simulation.

Dennis Spriggs—Riverview—Dennis and his wife Alice moved into Riverview in 2023 after living in the Leesburg area for many years. Dennis received his doctorate at UVA in Chemical Engineering, was a professor of Chemical Engineering for four years, worked in the chemical industry for many years, and has been a self-employed consultant of biofuels technology and process efficiency since 1985. In addition, Dennis is an author of several books on the origin of the universe, of different species on our planet, and on the elements of human nature. He describes himself an “an inveterate world traveler, avid birder, full of curiosity, and stands in awe of our natural world.”

Blue Ridge Torch Club officers:

- Dona Wolf (RV), President, donawolf@aol.com
- Anne A. Thomas (PR), Vice President, anneathomas@gmail.com
- Jim Grefer (PR), Secretary and Newsletter Editor, greferjames@gmail.com
- Judy Kory (RB), Co-Treasurer, jjkory@comcast.com
- Kent Hamaker (RV), Co-Treasurer, kdhamakerjr@gmail.com
- Brenda Brohard (PR), Past President, brendabrohard@gmail.com
- Dave Thomas, Photographer, datmat@aol.com



Current Membership Roll

Ken Aumack	Neelan Henderson	Bonnie Olenn
Shirley Aumack	Wes Henderson	Memory Porter
Carolyn Battle	Kathleen Hughes	Jeannie Raddatz
Frank Battle	Fran Hurley	Michael Raddatz
Fred Bishopp, Jr	Wayne Kaiser	Barry Riordan
Chris Blake	Hosny Khordagui	Betty Riordan
Penny Blake	Peggy King	Elizabeth Rubio
Murray Bradley	Ken Konwin	Travis Sample
Page Bradley	Judith Kory	Ann Schmitt
Brenda Brohard	Eva Leavitt	Catherine Shepard
Steve Creskoff	Michael Leavitt	Hugh Sockett
John Downey	Barbara Leone	Dennis Spriggs
Nancy Downey	Joline Matheson	Janet Taliaferro
Jerry Frola	Sue Merk	Anne A Thomas
Joe Gibson	Anne Miller	Anne H Thomas
Rosa Gibson	Jack Miller	Bill Thomas
Jim Grefer	Joyce Mitchell	Dave Thomas
Carol Hall-Veit	Pat Monahan	George Viener
Kenton Hamaker	Elsa Moustafa	Britt Wilford
Peggy Hamaker	Chris Nicoll	Dona Wolf
	Andrew Norton	

**“There is a child in every one of us who is still a
trick-or-treater looking for a brightly lit porch”**

Robert Brault
Philosopher and author