

Torch Club's First President's Notes

BLUE RIDGE TORCH CLUB CELEBRATES A TEN-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

In late 2006 and early 2007, George Du Bois, a long-term member of the Frederick Torch Club in Maryland, with help from other Frederick Torch Club members Anne and Dave Thomas, began sowing the seeds for a new Torch Club in Loudoun County. Working with staff at the George C. Marshall International Center (Dodona Manor) and the Balch Library, George identified a group of historians, docents, scientists and others he thought might be interested in forming their own local dinner club to share ideas and thoughts through member talks. Lunch meetings were held at the Tuscarora Mill in Leesburg to explain the history, organization and goals of the International Association of Torch Clubs (IATC), then numbering about 70 clubs scattered around the country.

As a growing number of people expressed interest in forming a new club, dinner meetings were held in January and February at the Magnolias in Purcellville. To help launch this new effort, Torch Club members came from Frederick and Hagerstown, Maryland to give talks previously made to their own clubs. In March, sufficient member interest indicated that officers were needed to organize the new group. Anne Thomas nominated Dona Wolf to be the new president, just seconds before Dona would have nominated Anne for the same job. Several others quickly volunteered to serve in other administrative capacities, and the new Blue Ridge Torch Club of Virginia was on its way to being born.

The new officers decided that a more suitable dinner location with larger, well-lit space and lower cost meals was needed. After sampling several local restaurants, La Pergola in Leisure World was chosen as the ideal venue. On May 8, 2007, national IATC president Anne Sterling chartered our Torch Club with 23 members, and we became official. Charter members still active include Ray Beery, Murray and Page Bradley, Anne and Dave Thomas, and Dona Wolf, with George DuBois as our Honorary Founding Father.

In the 10 years since chartering, our Torch Club has grown to 44 members, even as membership has changed significantly. Club members participate actively in regional and national levels of IATC, have hosted the Region 3 annual meeting, published several papers in the Torch Club magazine, had two finalists for the prestigious Paxton Award, and each year send delegates to the IATC convention.

The club is still committed to pursuing its primary goal of “providing a place where ideas flow together, sometimes clash, and often explode into new patterns of thought; where varied disciplines meet face-to-face and share social and intellectual adventure . . . in a place where active minds become more active and personal growth emerges for those who participate.”

We look forward to the next 10 years of our Blue Ridge Torch Club as we interact with a wonderful assembly of thoughtful and interesting members.

Dona Wolf, Blue Ridge Torch Club's First President