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Treasurer's Report

As of April 28, 2025, the Blue Ridge Torch Club had a balance of \$4,923.

International Firefighter's Day



Coming in June: *Torch Club Annual Picnic for Members and significant others.*

Torch Club Dinner May 13 Clubhouse Auditorium

BYOB Doors open 5:30 and dinner at 6:00

Speaker Hosny Khordagui "Plastic Journey From Crude Oil to Nano Particles in Our Bodies"

Dr. Khordagui will address the following aspects of plastic in our environment: how plastics are manufactured, who are the main global producers and consumers of plastics, what is the fate of plastics in the environment, and what are the impacts of plastics on marine and terrestrial life.

He will identify the main sources of micro and nano plastics and their detected levels in air, water and food. He will discuss how micro and nano plastics accumulate in our bodies and organs, and potential detrimental health effects.

Not all is lost, however, as Dr. Khordagui will ultimately identify the means by which we can reduce plastics exposure, especially by focusing on our drinking water.

Dr. Khordagui received his Ph.D. in Environmental Chemistry from the University of Michigan. He had a long career in Environmental Research, especially in the study of water resources for Egypt and other Arab countries, the United Nations, and the European Commission.

Retired in 2015, he and his wife Dr. Elsa Moustafa, an Economist from the University of Michigan, moved to Potomac Ridge in 2020. Both are actively involved in international environmental and economic associations. Drs. Khordagui and Moustafa are also antique and art collectors and music lovers.

Menu for Dinner: Dinner begins with a Spring Salad. Entrée choices are Shrimp Scampi with pasta, or Chicken Alfredo with pasta, or a Vegan Option. For dessert we have Mango Mousse.

The price is \$40 members and \$45 guests. Pay cash or check at the door.

To make a reservation, use our website www.blueridgetorchclub.org, click on the icon "Reservation for May" or call Anne Thomas at 571-291-3206 or Dona Wolf at 571-333-2500.

Cancellations must be made by **Thursday, May 8** or individuals will be responsible for payment.



Summary of April Torch Talk: The History of Zionism

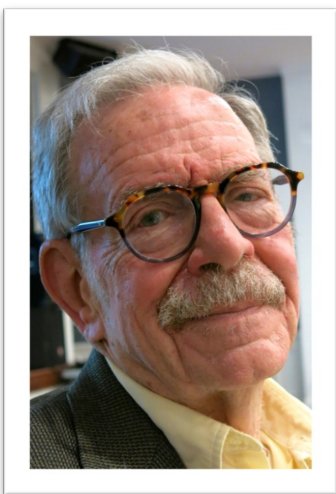
Mike Leavitt's talk covered biblical times to the rebirth of Israel. Early in his presentation he introduced and developed the understanding that the Jewish people are more than a religious community; they're a people with a culture, a language, a history, and a religion. This approach is essential to understanding how Zionism developed from its Biblical and spiritual foundation, where Zion (Jerusalem) and the land of Israel were so important to its blossoming as a national political movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Zionism developed as "Jewish nationalism" in an era when other European peoples were creating their own national identities. During this period, a variety of distinct approaches to Zionism came into existence. Mike discussed the differences among political, cultural, religious, and revisionist Zionism and the roles each played in the Zionist movement in the first half of the 20th century, leading up to the rebirth of the State of Israel. The tense relations between the Jewish settlers and their Arab neighbors before World War II were outlined. The role of the Holocaust was considered in focusing Jewish and non-Jewish views on the essentiality of a homeland for the Jewish survivors of the European genocide. The presentation concluded with a brief history of the United Nations' role in the recreation of the State of Israel, the ensuing war, and the population exchanges of Arabs and Jews that resulted.



Summary of March Torch talk: Russia and the International Trade Regime

Steve Creskoff talked about his time working in Russia as a World Bank project team leader from 2004-2006. His role was to help the Russian Federation conform its laws to join the World Trade Organization and the World Customs Organization's Revised Kyoto Convention.



Steve had interesting stories about cultural and political differences that presented obstacles to the success of his mission. When he was at the first meeting to start his mission, his Russian counterpart screamed at him that she had no interest in the World Trade Organization, an obvious problem. However, later he happened to see a Russian movie, a comedy called "Ivan the Terrible" where a hapless bureaucrat was instructed that he had to shout, scream and threaten people with execution if they were to believe that he was "Czar". This gave him insight into the management approach of his Russian counterparts.

Steve showed slides portraying life in Russia at that time. He then concluded with a summary regarding Russia's current economic, demographic and political profile that emphasized Russia's emphasis on military investment, declining population and heavy reliance on income from natural resources. Attendees had many questions regarding Steve's experience living and working in Russia. For anyone interested who missed his talk, Steve is scheduled to give a similar lecture at Reston Library May 12.

President's Column

We have another important meeting coming up on May 13th. It is our Annual Meeting at which time we will conduct club elections, induct at least one new member; provide brief updates on finances and membership; and hear our last Torch Talk for the program year.

Speaker: This month, Dr. Hosny El Khordagui will speak about the journey of plastic from our consumer goods to nano particles in our bodies.

Picnic: Our Annual Picnic on June 10th will be our last meeting of the 2024-2025 program year. Like previous picnics, this will be held in the Clubhouse and offer outdoor-grilled hot dogs, hamburgers, cheeseburgers, and veggie burgers along with a buffet of salads, side dishes, and desserts. The picnic traditionally is MEMBERS ONLY and their significant others.

Membership: We were delighted to induct five new members to our Torch Club in April, bringing our current membership to 61. Anyone interested in being a Torch member (which comes with lower dinner prices and an invitation to the Christmas Party and Annual Picnic) must submit an application by June 4th. Applications are considered at Executive Committee meetings on the



Left to right: Pat and Bill Phillips, Maria Kelly, Charlene and Syed Ahmed, Joline Mathison, and Dona Wolf

first Friday of the month. Application forms may be requested from Membership Chair Joline Mathison in Riverbend or Dona Wolf in Riverview. Their contact information is listed in the Torch newsletter.

Elections: The Torch Club's new year will commence September 9th with new officers. We will hold Officer elections at this month's Torch dinner on May 13th. In a separate article in this newsletter, we provide a information about each of the candidates for Torch Club offices as recommended by the Nominating Committee. If you would like more information about those candidates, please contact them directly.

International Firefighters Day, May 4 2025:

This solemn day was established by Australia in 1999 to honor the sacrifice of five firefighters of the [Geelong West](#) Fire Brigade who lost their lives fighting a massive brushfire in Linton, Victoria, Australia. In the U.S., we use this day to honor the sacrifice of the 343 firefighters who died in the horrific 9/11 attack.

As Memorial Day is a day to ponder the sacrifices of our military men and women to keep us free, Firefighter's Day is a day to reflect on the sacrifices of our firefighters to keep us and our homes safe.



Torch Club Nominations for 2025-27 Officers

The Nominating Committee of Nancy Downey, Mike Leavitt and Brenda Brohard, announced its slate of candidates for club officers for the program next year. No other candidates were nominated from the floor at the April dinner meeting, but additional nominations may be made at the Annual Meeting in May. Here are the nominees:

For President: Wayne Kaiser – Potomac Ridge

Wayne has been a member of the Torch Club for four years. His experience with the Lansdowne community, however, goes back to when he helped develop the Xerox Training Center as the first commercial property in Lansdowne long before the Lansdowne Resort and the Inova Loudoun Hospital. He has lived in Potomac Ridge since 2021, and just recently served as the Potomac Ridge HOA Board President. Wayne also may already understand the duties of the President as his partner Brenda Brohard served as Torch Club president from 2021 –2023.

For Vice President: Ken “Crash” Konwyn – Riverview

Crash is a relative newcomer to the Torch Club but lived in Riverbend with his wife Lynn for three years before buying their condo in Riverview two years ago. He is a graduate of the Air Force Academy, retired as a USAF Colonel after 27 years of service, and has worked for Booz Allen for 20+ years. His hobbies and interests are baseball, travel, astronomy, simulation, and Space.

For Secretary/Newsletter Editor: Jim Grefer – Potomac Ridge

Jim has lived in Potomac Ridge for four years and a member of Torch for two years. After being elected as Club Secretary in 2023, he volunteered to take on the additional responsibility of Newsletter Editor, producing a monthly newsletter for members and prospective members. He enjoys the duties and is willing to carry on this task for the next two-years. When not writing articles or finding pithy quotes for the newsletter, Jim can be found singing with the Notables and belting out a song whenever he is given a chance, or an audience.

For Treasurer: Fred Bishopp – Riverbend

Fred and his wife Peggy King have lived in LWVA for at least seven years. Fred is an active golfer and represented LWVA on the Lansdowne Conservancy for several years. Fred is well versed in financial matters as he was a commercial realtor for many years.

For Assistant Treasurer: Joline Mathison – Riverbend

Joline, although a newcomer to LWVA and the Torch Club, she “jumped right in” to serve as Torch Membership Chair during the 2024-25 program year. She received her PH.D. in Developmental Psychology from Syracuse University, taught Psychology for 34 years at Worcester State University, where she also worked in the Counseling Center. She is active in Riverbend’s HOA and Chairs its Communications Committee.

Please review the above information about these candidates for Torch office, and feel free to contact them if you have any questions about their candidacy.

New Members

The following five new Torch members were inducted at our April 2025 dinner meeting:

Charlene Ahmed – Blue Ridge: Born in West Point, NY, Charlene lived in a military family and moved around during her early years, but has lived in Danville, VA for the last 45 years. She and husband Syed moved to Lansdowne in October 2024. Currently renting a condo in Riverview, they bought an apartment in Blue Ridge and will move in May. Charlene has an MSN from UVA, and worked as a registered nurse with a clinical nursing specialty. She volunteered with the Medical Reserve Corp of Virginia and will continue doing the same in Loudoun. She has a son whose family lives in nearby Westminster, MD. Her interests include walking and exercising at the LWVA gym and reading history and biographies. She and Syed both enjoy world travel.

Syed Ahmed - Blue Ridge: Born and raised in India, Syed studied medicine in India, Pakistan, London and the U.S., earning his MD in Cardiology at Dow Medical College (Pakistan). He continued his post-graduate medical training at New York Polyclinic Hospital (NYC) and the Lahey Clinic in Boston. Besides practicing medicine, Dr. Ahmed has published numerous research papers on cardiology and is an Assistant Clinical Professor at Duke's School of Medicine. He is especially interested in World War I and World War II histories, and the Partition of the Indian subcontinent at the end of British rule. He and Charlene have five children between them, scattered around the U.S. and in Portugal.

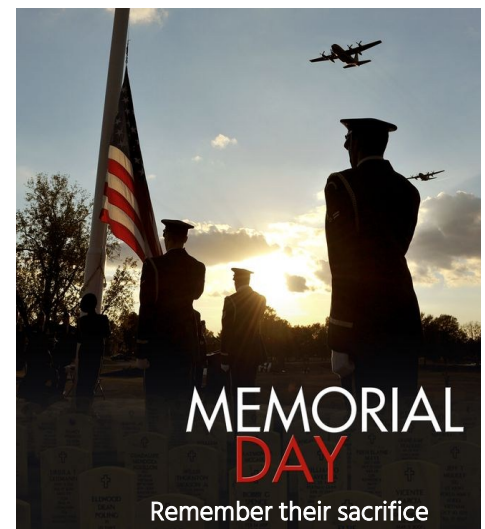
Maria Kelly - Riverbend: Originally from Connecticut, Maria moved around a lot growing up but spent most of her adult life on Long Island. She has Master's degrees in Linguistics from New York University and an MS in Education from Adelphi University. She worked for many years as a teacher. Maria moved to LWVA 14 years ago to be near her family. An avid bird watcher, she has focused on birds in the Western Hemisphere, traveling from Alaska to Argentina with birding groups, visiting 10 countries to find birds not outside our own backyard. Maria also has a keen interest in Modern Dance and attends every performance possible.

Patricia Phillips - Riverview: Pat and her husband Bill are new residents of LWVA, moving just a few months ago to Riverview. Pat earned her MBA from National Lewis University. She worked for the Department of Defense as a civilian program manager at Fort Belvoir in Virginia. She and Bill have three children, all living in Northern Virginia, with son Patrick living with them. Pat likes reading, with a special interest in history, exercising at the gym, and walking.

William Phillips - Riverview: Bill grew up in Philadelphia and left college to join the Army. After his military service, he returned to college and earned a BS in accounting at Drexel University and later his MBA from Marymount, Virginia. His career ultimately took him into computer sciences where he worked as a civilian at the DoD's Government Software Center in Fort Belvoir. Bill is interested in sports and current affairs, and particularly enjoys writing. He has joined the Lansdowne Woods Writers Workshop. He and Pat like traveling and hope to do more of it.

The Torch officers wish you a sincere and solemn Memorial Day

- Dona Wolf (RV), President, donawolf@aol.com
- Anne A. Thomas (PR), Vice President, anneathomas@gmail.com
- Jim Grefer (PR), Secretary & 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, brendabroard@gmail.com
- Dave Thomas, Photographer, datmat@aol.com
- Joline Matheson, Membership Chair, jnjmat@gmail.com



Current Members

Charlene Ahmed	Kenton Hamaker	Andrew Norton
Syed Ahmed	Peggy Hamaker	Bill Phillips
Ray Beery	Neelam Henderson	Pat Phillips
Barry Berger	Wes Henderson	Memory Porter
Fred Bishopp, Jr	Kathleen Hughes	Jeannie Raddatz
Murray Bradley	Fran Hurley	Michael Raddatz
Page Bradley	Wayne Kaiser	Travis Sample
Brenda Brohard	Maria Kelly	Ann Schmitt
Steve Creskoff	Peggy King	Catherine Shepard
Kay Curley	Ken “Crash” Konwin	Hugh Sockett
John Downey	Judith Kory	Dennis Spriggs
Nancy Downey	Eva Leavitt	Janet Taliaferro
Hosny El-Khordagui	Michael Leavitt	Anne A Thomas
Jerry Frola	Barbara Leone	Anne H Thomas
Joe Gibson	Joline Matheson	Bill Thomas
Rosa Gibson	Doug McCollum	Dave Thomas
Jim Grefer	Sue McCollum	George Viener
Steve Gross	Sue Merk	Britt Wilford
Trudy Gross	Joyce Mitchell	Terry Wilford
Carol Hall-Veit	Pat Monahan	Dona Wolf
	Elsa Moustafa	

It is necessary that we learn and remember the great sacrifices made by others for our freedom, and be willing to sacrifice for freedom for our children and our children’s children.

Jim Grefer, American