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**Treasurer's Report**

As of August 24, 2025, the Blue Ridge Torch Club had a balance of \$4,418 in its account.

**Remembering the Patriots of 9-11**



**Coming In October:**  
*Joline Matheson: Hypnosis and the Power of Suggestion*

**BLUE RIDGE TORCH CLUB Dinner, Tuesday, September 9, 2025**

**Ambiance Banquet Restaurant (Cash Bar opens 5:30) Dinner at 6:00**  
**"Rwanda: Gorillas and Genocide" presented by Dennis Spriggs**

Many of you have heard of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda in which the Hutus, in an attempt to eradicate the hated Tutsis, killed over 80,000 people in 100 days. The 2005 movie, "Hotel Rwanda" described the killing spree.

The mountain gorillas also faced genocide. The Rwandan authorities had made plans to convert much of the Volcanos National Park into cattle farming, hastening the demise of the entire gorilla population. They changed plans when they realized that gorillas were worth more alive than dead, and more than the cattle they were planning to raise.

Dennis and his wife Alice visited Rwanda in 2006, where they visited the Genocide Museum and observed bullet holes in Hotel Rwanda.

In this trip they climbed one of the mountains in Volcanos National Park to find the critically endangered mountain gorillas. During this excursion, an adult gorilla grabbed Dennis by the leg, ostensibly intent on understanding the fur of this strange ape-like creature.

Dennis's talk will touch on both topics -- the attempted genocides and the experience of visiting the magnificent gorillas in their natural habitat.

He will have lots of pictures in his talk.

Dennis is a Ph.D. Chemical Engineer and author. He spent four years in academia, 15 years in the chemical industry, and 40 years as a self-employed consultant for 40 years. He is currently a resident of Riverview.

**Dinner Menu** for this Torch dinner: Dinner begins with a Greek salad; entrees include a choice of chicken skewers, beef skewers or vegetarian dish. Finally there will be an assortment of desserts from which to choose.

**Prices** are \$45 for members and \$50 for guests. Please pay with check or cash at the door or with your building representative. For reservations go to [blueridgetorchclub.org](http://blueridgetorchclub.org). Click on the red icon "Register for the September Meeting". The deadline for RSVP or cancelation is Thursday, September 4. Those who cancel after the deadline will be responsible for payment.



## President's Column

The Blue Ridge Torch Club of Virginia will have its first monthly dinner/speaker meeting of the new season on Tuesday, September 9, 2025. For the next two months, September and October, our meetings will be held at an exciting new venue. The September meeting will be at the Ambiance Banquet Restaurant. We are excited about this new venue. We look forward to your reactions.

When you make your reservation, be sure to indicate whether you need transportation or are available to provide transportation. Your Torch Officers will ensure that all guests are accommodated. Parking at Ambiance is convenient with easy access to the facility.

Our featured speaker will be Dennis Spriggs, a resident of Riverview. He is relatively new to the Torch Club, yet has already given a talk. You may remember his talk on the theory and evidence of human evolution. We look forward to his next talk on the mountain gorillas of Rwanda.

If you are interested in giving a Torch talk in 2026, kindly submit a summary proposal to our VP, Crash Konwin at kkonwin@aol.com. We are beginning to collect the Torch Club dues for the new season. Dues remain \$80 for a member of a household, and \$40 for a second member in the same household. You can pay at the September 9 Torch Dinner or pay through your building representative. We would appreciate, though, if you pay by the October Torch dinner.

Of the 51 Torch Clubs in the United States, we are currently ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in number of members. If you are interested in joining, a Membership Application is included at the end of this newsletter. You may fill out this application and slip it under the door of your building representative, or find the application on the blueridgetorchclub.org website and fill it out there.

We look forward to another entertaining season!

**Just a reminder:** September Torch Club dinner will be held at the Ambiance Banquet Restaurant at 44184 Ashbrook Marketplace Plaza ([www.ambianceva.com](http://www.ambianceva.com)), Ashburn. It is located at the Ashbrook Marketplace, just off Ashburn Village Parkway, right on just other side of Harry Byrd Highway (Route 7).

## Goodbye Old Friend

We lost a dear friend this summer. John Downey, beloved husband of our Past President Nancy Downey for nearly 58 years, passed away peacefully on July 14. He and Nancy have been members of the Torch Club for more than 8 years.

Originally from Minnesota, John worked most of his life in the hospitality industry in Minneapolis. They moved to Lansdowne 2011 to be closer to their children and grandchildren. John was very active in LWVA; he loved golf, bowling, backgammon, and hiking. He was a member of the Notables and acted in several memorable roles as part of the Drama Troupe. And who can forget his lyrics interpretation in the Jim Lehrer Torch Talk presented by Mike Leavitt a couple of years ago. John, you will be sorely missed. Nancy, we are truly sorry for your loss.





## September Holidays and Celebrations

**National V-J Day (Victory over Japan Day)** September 2: This day recognizes Allied Forces' victory over Japan during World War II. Officials announced the surrender of Japan to the Allies on August 15, 1945, and the official signing of surrender, which officially ended the war, took place on the deck of the battleship USS Missouri on September 2, 1945.

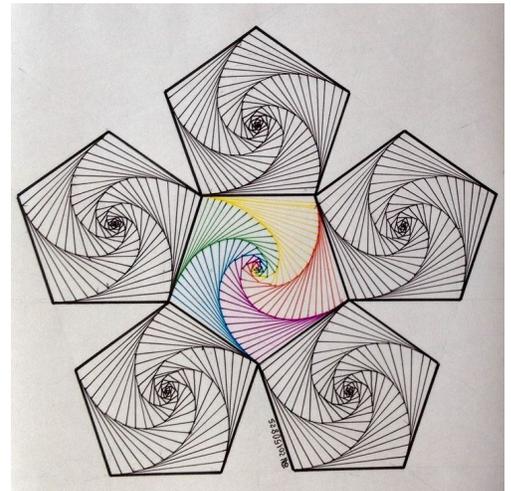
**National Newspaper Carrier Day**, September 4: This holiday recognizes the day in 1833 that the New York Sun's publisher, Benjamin Day, hired the first paperboy. Mr. Day placed an ad in the Sun calling for applications by "steady men" to sell their newspapers. Barney Flaherty answered the ad, and although he was only 10-years old, he so impressed Day with his maturity and sincerity, that Day gave him the job.



Flaherty's hawking his sales pitch on the New York corner attracted passersby, and soon other boys joined him. Eventually, the chorus of "Paper! Get your paper, here!" could be heard on street corners everywhere.

**National Patriot Day and Day of Service and Remembrance**, September 11: This is a day to memorialize the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and flight 93, including the people inside the planes and buildings and the first responders who risked their lives. Three days after the attack, President Bush declared September 14 a National Day of Prayer and Remembrance, and in October of that year Congress voted to declare September 11 National Patriot Day and Day of Service and Remembrance. In 2017, President Trump proclaimed Sept 8-10 as National Days of Prayer and Remembrance.

**Math Storytelling Day**, September 25: Dr. Maria Droujkova, founder of the Natural Math Community (Naturalmath.com), created Math Storytelling Day in 2009 to be celebrated on her birthday, September 25. Her idea was to promote teaching math through stories, that is, using real-life situations, puzzles, and even imaginary adventures as a fun and creative way to think and learn about mathematics.



### Blue Ridge Torch Officers wish everyone a great September

- Wayne Kaiser, President: [wkaiser2367@gmail.com](mailto:wkaiser2367@gmail.com)
- Ken "Crash" Konwin, Vice President: [kkonwin@aol.com](mailto:kkonwin@aol.com)
- Jim Grefer, Secretary/Newsletter Editor: [greferjames@gmail.com](mailto:greferjames@gmail.com)
- Fred Bishopp, Co-Treasurer: [fredbishopp@hotmail.com](mailto:fredbishopp@hotmail.com)
- Joline Matheson, Co-Treasurer: [jnjmat@gmail.com](mailto:jnjmat@gmail.com)
- Dona Wolf, Past President: [donawolf@aol.com](mailto:donawolf@aol.com)

## Current Members

Charlene Ahmed

Syed Ahmed

Ray Beery

Barry Berger

Fred Bishopp, Jr

Murray Bradley

Page Bradley

Brenda Brohard

Steve Creskoff

Kay Curley

Tom Devaney

Nancy Downey

Madelon Eisenberg

Hosny El-Khordagui

Jerry Frola

Joe Gibson

Rosa Gibson

Jim Grefer

Steve Gross

Trudy Gross

Carol Hall-Veit

Kenton Hamaker

Peggy Hamaker

Neelam Henderson

Wes Henderson

Kathleen Hughes

Fran Hurley

Wayne Kaiser

Maria Kelly

Peggy King

Ken "Crash" Konwin

Judith Kory

Eva Leavitt

Michael Leavitt

Barbara Leone

Joline Matheson

Doug McCollum

Sue McCollum

Sue Merk

Joyce Mitchell

Pat Monahan

Elsa Moustafa

Andrew Norton

Bill Phillips

Pat Phillips

Memory Porter

Jeannie Raddatz

Michael Raddatz

Travis Sample

Ann Schmitt

Catherine Shepard

Hugh Sockett

Dennis Spriggs

Janet Taliaferro

Anne A Thomas

Anne H Thomas

Bill Thomas

Dave Thomas

George Viener

Britt Wilford

Terry Wilford

Dona Wolf

**"It is its soul that makes a nation great or small,  
noble or ignoble, weak or strong...  
The life of a nation is secure only while the  
nation is honest, truthful, and virtuous."**

**- Frederick Douglass**

From Mr. Douglass's speech in honor of the twenty-third anniversary of  
Emancipation Proclamation; Washington DC, April 16, 1885



**BLUE RIDGE  
LEESBURG  
TORCH CLUB**

Ignite Your Mind, Fuel Your Curiosity

# Submit an Application to Join Our Club

**Name \***

First

Last

**Email \***

**Address**

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

— Select state —

City

State

Zip Code

**Membership Type \***

- Individual Member \$80
- Household Member \$40 (additional household member)

**Education/ Career**

You can find this application at [blueridgetorchclub.org](http://blueridgetorchclub.org) and click on the line "Submit an Application to Join our Club."

**Club Participation**

- Giving a Torch Talk
- Serving as a Club Volunteer
- Writing a Paper

**Interests**

- History
- Science
- Biographies
- Current Affairs
- Other

**Questions/Comments**

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**Custom Captcha \***

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