



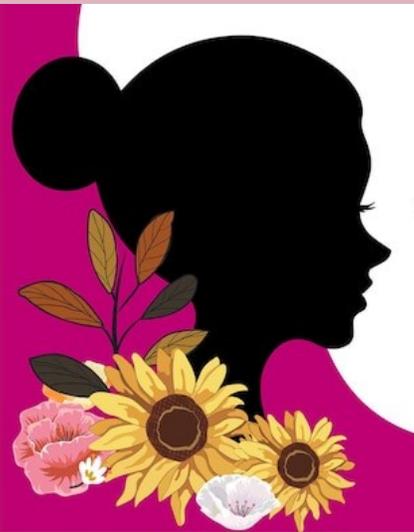
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### Treasurer's Report

As of January 31, 2025, the Blue Ridge Torch Club had a balance of \$4,287.

## International Women's Day



Coming in April: Mike Leavitt  
"The History of Zionism"

### BLUE RIDGE TORCH CLUB Dinner, Tuesday, March 11, 5:30 PM BYOB Happy Hour 5:30 and Dinner at 6:00

#### "Our Man in Moscow" speaker Steve Creskoff

Steve spent his career as an international trade lawyer in more than 50 countries. He worked in private law practice, for US Government, and for international organizations such as U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank and the United Nations.

Between September 2004 and February 2006, he was Chief of Party for a World Bank consulting project in Moscow. This project was designed to help Russia change its laws to conform with requirements of the World Trade Organization and the World Customs Organization agreements.



His talk, illustrated with photos, will cover some of the revealing and amusing experiences he had working in Russia and discuss where we are today in US-Russia relations.

**Menu:** Dinner begins with an Antipasto Salad. The entree choices are: Grilled Sirloin or Roasted Lemon Garlic Chicken or Vegetarian Dinner. Price is \$40 for members and \$45 for guests. Please pay at the door with cash or check.

There will not be a cash bar, but members and guests may BYOB.

Use our website to make your reservation or cancellation by Thursday, March 6 at [www.blueridgetorchclub.org](http://www.blueridgetorchclub.org). Please make one reservation for each person. Also, please reserve again and indicate your entree selection even if you reserved last month.

For further information contact Anne A. Thomas at: [anneathomas@gmail.com](mailto:anneathomas@gmail.com).

## President's Column

Mother Nature played havoc with our Torch Club schedule by providing us with our first real snow in several years and cancelling our dinner on February 11. Hopefully we will have much better weather for our re-scheduled dinner on March 11 with the same dinner menu and Torch Talk - Steve Creskoff on "Our Man in Moscow." Please make your reservations by Thursday, March 6. And remember, BYOB.

The following speakers / programs have likewise been rescheduled to include: April 8th, Mike Leavitt on "The History of Zionism"; May 13th, Hosny El-Khordagui on "Plastic: From Crude Oil to Nano-Particles"; and on June 10th, our Member-Only Annual Picnic.

**Elections:** In March we will begin the process of seeking and nominating candidates for 2-year terms in the Torch Club to serve from July 2025 thru June 2027. The chair of the Nominating Committee will be Immediate Past President Brenda Brohard with Past Presidents Nancy Downey and Mike Leavitt. They will present a slate of candidates to our membership at the April Torch meeting, with elections at our annual meeting in May.

Officers to be elected are President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer (or possibly Co-Treasurers), with additional persons responsible for the Torch newsletter, reservations and hospitality, and membership. Detailed information about the duties of these officers will be available in March. We have wonderful and talented members in our club and many who would serve as great candidates for these officer roles.

With luck, we will say adieu to Old Man Winter and usher in a warmer and more welcoming early spring. See you in March.

## National Celebrations in March

March has no national holidays in the U.S. Well, none that get us a day off from work. But the month is not without its celebrations. Here are just a few notable national celebrations just for fun.

**International Women's Day March 8:** Begun in the early 20th century by the women's labor and universal suffrage movements, it has been a worldwide advocate for women's rights, freedom from domestic violence, and women's suffrage.

**St. Patrick's Day March 17:** St. Patrick is a national hero in Ireland for his work evangelizing for Christ, and "driving the snakes" (converting pagans to Christianity) out of Ireland. St. Patrick's Day is celebrated in Europe and the Americas, but in Ireland it is a national holiday.

**March Madness March 26 to April 7:** NCAA college Men's and Women's basketball tournaments. Both tournaments begin with Selection Sunday, in which the team field is revealed on March 16, to the National Championship game on April 7, in which the best two teams compete for the trophy.

## The Torch, Winter Issue 2025

Jim Grefer

One of the benefits of Torch Club membership is the Torch Magazine, published by the International Association of Torch Clubs (IATC) thrice yearly and sent to all Individual members and their Household partners.

The Winter 2025 issue has just arrived. The cover stories provide a debate regarding the War in Ukraine. The debate considers whether Russia was justified to invade Ukraine.

On the pro side, Parker English asks his readers to consider the possibility that Russia may have been justified to invade Ukraine in preemptive self-defense from the threat of NATO expansion. After all, since 1997, all the countries in Russia's western border except Ukraine and Belarus, had joined NATO.

English further proposes that Russia may be more justified in its invasion of Ukraine than the U.S. was justified in its invasion of Vietnam. Russia claimed that Ukraine was in violation of the Minsk 1 and Minsk 2 treaties, which had ended the Donbas War in 2014. President Zelensky was lobbying vigorously for NATO membership, which, purportedly, was a threat at the western border of Russia.

U.S. involvement in South Vietnam occurred while the country had been in violation of the 1954 Geneva Accord, which required the South to share government with the Communists in the North, but had instead requested U.S. military support for its Civil War. The U.S. escalated its involvement in Vietnam under false pretenses regarding the Gulf of Tonkin incident.

English concludes that, for these reasons and more, Russia's invasion of Ukraine was more justified than the U.S. invasion in Vietnam.

On the other side, Paul Scott Stanfield of Nebraska Wesleyan U. argues that Russia was neither morally nor philosophically justified to invade Ukraine. Russia's "preemptive self-defense" is a questionable excuse, mostly "a name aggressors gives their aggression." Moreover, as a practical matter, every nation in the world should push back on aggressor nations to prevent itself from becoming a target of aggression.

Stanfield also reminds us that America did not go to Vietnam to take over the country, and while its actions in Vietnam may not have been wise, we did not actually invade Vietnam but were asked by the South Vietnamese government for support.

Thus, Stanfield concludes Russia's invasion of Ukraine was not justified and was rightly sanctioned.

Other stories in the Winter Issue include a theory of Neanderthal predation forcing the evolution of modern humans, a "demographic and statistical" look at the exponential growth of Christianity, and more.

If you haven't taken time to thumb through the Winter Issue, we encourage you to do so.



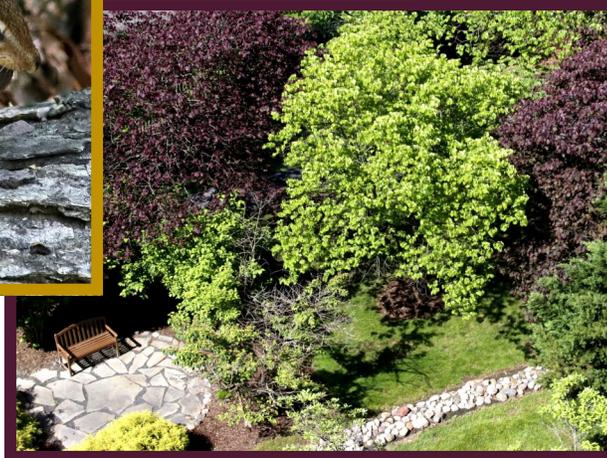
## Welcome to Spring!

Though it has been a relatively mild winter, we all feel like we've been stuck indoors for months. We haven't had much snow, but we've had that made the air seem dusty and gray.

We're all glad Spring is on its way.

To celebrate, here are a few shots from past LWVA Springs.

Many thanks goes to Dave Thomas for these great pictures.



## The Blue Ridge Torch Officers Wish You Happy St. Patrick's Day!

- Dona Wolf (RV), President, donawolf@aol.com; 571-333-2500
- Anne A. Thomas (PR), Vice President, anneathomas@gmail.com: 571-291-3206
- Jim Grefer (PR), Secretary & Newsletter Editor, greferjames@gmail.com: 571-215-5053
- Judy Kory (RB), Co-Treasurer, jjkory@comcast.com: 703-858-2448
- Kent Hamaker (RV), Co-Treasurer, kdhamakerjr@gmail.com: 703-237-9371
- Brenda Brohard (PR), Past President, brendabroard@gmail.com: 703-409-2944
- Dave Thomas, Photographer, datmat@aol.com
- Joline Matheson, Membership Chair, jnjmat@gmail.com



# Current Members

Ray Beery  
Barry Berger  
Fred Bishopp, Jr  
Murray Bradley  
Page Bradley  
Brenda Brohard  
Steve Creskoff  
Kay Curley  
John Downey  
Nancy Downey  
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  
Peggy King  
Ken 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  
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

To complicate things in new ways, that is really very easy.

But to see things in new ways, that is difficult; that is why genius is so rare.

Gertrude Stein