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Treasurer's Report

On April, 2026, the Blue Ridge Torch Club had an operating balance of \$\$4,960.

Happy Easter



Coming May 12:

Joe Dockery: "The Evolution of Chiropractic Treatment"

Coming June 9

Annual Torch Picnic

BLUE RIDGE TORCH CLUB Dinner, Tuesday, April 14, 2026

Ambiance Banquet Restaurant Doors open at 5:30. Dinner at 6:00.

Mike Leavitt: "Climate Change Skepticism"

Climate skepticism isn't a single, uniform viewpoint — it spans a wide spectrum. At one end are those who question whether warming is even happening; at the other are people who accept the science but doubt the scale of human influence. While there's a strong scientific consensus that human activity is driving major changes to our climate, people arrive at their doubts in very different ways. Some challenge the underlying data, others are skeptical of climate models, and still others dispute how serious the projected impacts will actually be. Recognizing this diversity matters. It helps us pinpoint where the real disagreements lie — and, more importantly, it creates space for more honest and constructive conversations about solutions, policy, and how we engage with the public on this issue.



Mike Leavitt has a Ph.D. in Political Science from Northwestern University and a Master's Degree in Jewish Studies from Baltimore Hebrew University. Mike retired from the CIA after a career that included university teaching, work with nonprofit and profit research organizations, and service with several government agencies. He has been President and Treasurer of the Blue Ridge Torch Club, where he has been a member since 2010. He and his wife, Eva, have lived in Northern Virginia for 53 years and in Potomac Ridge since 2004.

Menu for April Dinner. Dinner begins with Mixed Greens Salad (Tomato, Onion, Green Pepper, Cucumber, Lemon Vinaigrette). Entrees are Shrimp Scampi Penne Pasta with Lemon and White Wine Sauce or Boneless Pork Chops with Olives, Basil and Tomatoes. Seasonal Veggies and Basmati Rice. A vegetable dish will be made available.

Price is \$45 for members and \$50 for guests. Please leave a check with your building representative, or a check or cash at the door. For reservations go to blueridgetorchclub.org. Click on the red icon "April 14th Meeting." The deadline for RSVP or cancellation is Thursday, April 9. Those who cancel after the deadline will be responsible for payment.

President's Message, April 2026

As we enter into another exciting month at Torch Club, I want to take a moment to thank each of you for the energy, ideas, and dedication you bring to our organization. Your participation makes our club a vibrant space for sharing your interests, experiences, and thoughts through a Torch Club presentation and discussion.

Last month's presentation by Hugh Sockett, "The Way We Live Now", sparked particularly lively discussions, and it was encouraging to see both long-time members and newer participants contributing their insights. This spirit of curiosity is at the heart of the Torch Club tradition.

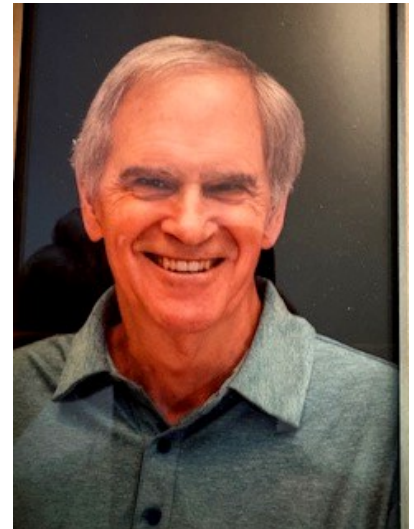
This month, we look forward to an engaging talk by Michael Leavitt, "Climate Change Skepticism." I encourage everyone to attend the dinner meeting, invite guests, and take part in the lively discussions afterward.

Our club thrives because of the commitment of its members. Whether you are presenting, organizing, or simply contributing your insights, your involvement strengthens our community. I thank the speakers, of course, but also those who volunteer their time to assist in organizing our meetings, greeting members and guests at the dinners, help recruit new members, and help to make name tags and dinner stands,

Your efforts sustain the vitality of our club. If you know someone who enjoys thoughtful discussion and life-long learning, please consider inviting them to attend a meeting as a guest. Introducing others to the Torch Club experience helps keep our chapter vibrant and growing. Let's continue to support one another, explore new ideas, and uphold the Torch Club tradition of intellectual exchange and fellowship.

Thank you for being an important part of our club. I look forward to seeing everyone at our next gathering and continuing the rich tradition that defines the Blue Ridge Torch Club.

Wayne



Take Checks to Your Building Representative

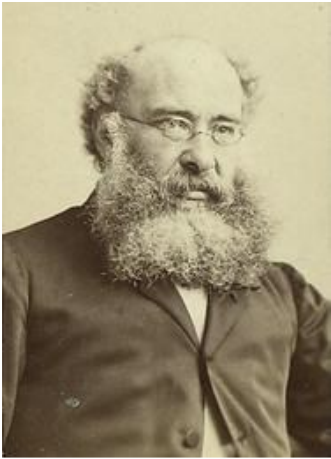
The line at the Torch Dinner will go more smoothly, and you will get to the bar and your table more quickly if you drop your check under the door of your building representative a couple of days before the dinner.

Here are your representatives:

Riverbend	Fred Bishopp	711	Magnolias	Barry Berger	MS 206
	Joline Matheson	106	Potomac Ridge	Brenda Brohard	221
Blue Ridge	Joe Dockery	221	Riverview	Kent Hamaker	906

March Torch Talk

Hugh Sockett's presentation, *The Way We Live Now*, drew three themes from the novel by **Anthony Trollope (1875)** and a social analysis by **Richard Hoggart (1995)**, both with the same title. Both books focused on English life, politics and culture, and tackled the moral issues of their day.



The themes selected from **Trollope** were Financial Corruption, Greed, Deceit, and Anti-Semitism. His target for the first theme was two-fold: the corrupt and decadent British aristocracy, and the financial swindler, Melmotte, who sold shares in a non-existent company. Trollope describes how Melmotte attracted greedy speculators, but was admired by all classes, which Trollope abhorred.

Scholars disagree as to whether Trollope was himself anti-semitic, though it was the prevailing tendency in British culture of the time, that someone is 'suspected of being Jewish' carried with it the implication of financial criminality.



Hoggart's central theme is that Relativism has damaged public and personal life. Relativism is the view that there can be no authority derived from social or moral rules as each individual, culture and society is different; i.e. we stand only in relation to each other. So for example there is no Golden Rule, you just have your own morality. Similarly with truth. If it's true for you, that's your truth.

However, Relativism makes people insecure. We don't know what to believe. We become prey to persuaders and propaganda, especially from newspapers, television and advertising, which can shape our beliefs, and our view of ourselves. Everything is relative. Hoggart distinguished Popular Culture (Country and Western), which arises from local tradition, from Mass Culture (The Price is Right), which is imposed on us for profit. These media do not respect our audience as people, and they have led the drastic collapse in public taste.

The presentation was followed by a half hour of questions and discussions as Hugh posed the questions: What has changed? What is better? What is worse?

March Inductees to the Blue Ridge Torch Club

Sheila Cramer is a native of Washington, DC. She worked for the federal government most of her career, first in the Social Security Appeals office and then the General Services Administration. After retiring she became a consultant to the American Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) agency.

Twenty five years ago she and her husband looked at a place in Leisure World, but decided to move to Florida. After his death she moved back north. She has four sons, one of whom lives locally, and, at his urging, she took another look at Lansdowne. She moved to Potomac Ridge during COVID.

Sheila has been a community activist all her life, serving as president of civic associations and PTA's and working for abortion rights and civil rights. She has been involved in the right to die movement as secretary of the Hemlock Society. She has a variety of interests including genealogy. She has been recovering from a spinal fracture, but is now looking forward to being active in Torch Club.

Sam and Jenny Mayberry are from the Midwest. Jenny received her degree in marketing at Eastern Illinois University, while Sam earned his degree from Illinois Wesleyan. They both had careers in the grocery and food supply industry, Jenny in sales and Sam in merchandising. They moved around the U.S., and ended up in Seattle, where they lived for nine years. When they retired they wanted to live closer to their three daughters, all of whom are on the East Coast. They finally decided on the Leesburg area. They also have a son in Singapore whom they have visited several times.

They moved into Riverview in 2024 and enjoy the community as well as exploring Leesburg. Jenny is involved in a variety of fitness activities and volunteers with the Red Cross. Sam still works as a consultant and travels widely for his job. When they are both in town they enjoy coming to Torch club.



L to R: Sam and Jenny Mayberry, Sheila Cramer, and Joline Matheson

Torch Club Officers wish everyone a happy Passover and Easter

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



April: A Month of Sunrises

By Jim Grefer

Each morning, about an hour or so after I wake up, the sun rises outside my balcony in the eastern sky. A rainbow of colors shines along the horizon, reds and oranges reflect off the Potomac River, light glistens off the sea of trees for as far as I can see. This morning, I also noticed white blooms from the flowering trees below.



Every sunrise is beautiful, and each one enhances my appreciation for life, nature, and the wonders of the planet Earth.

To further respect and appreciate Earth, on April 22 each year, the world observes **Earth Day**. Originally proposed by peace activist **John McConnell** at a 1969 conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (**UNESCO**), Earth Day is an international celebration of the Earth and of peaceful existence among nations.

The idea of an *Earth Day* was surely welcomed in the U.S. following a confluence of internationally publicized environmental events. In January 1969, a catastrophic blow-out of a Union Oil's Santa Barbara platform spilled three million gallons of oil over 11 days, killing tens of thousands of birds and animals, and coating 35 square miles of California coastline. Later that same year, the Cuyahoga River, Cleveland, Ohio, caught fire due to decades of oil and chemical dumping from local manufacturers. The river had caught fire many times before, but this time a *Times Magazine* writer captured the scene, published the story, and gave it international publicity.

Both catastrophes occurred just months after astronaut **William Anders** had published his astonishing picture **Earthrise** taken from the lunar orbit of the Apollo 8 Mission. This never-before scene of the blue ball that was Earth rising from the moon's horizon, captured everyone's imagination, and raised awareness of our smallness and fragility in the universe.

The goals of Earth Day are to teach the science of Earth's environment, generate environmental awareness—especially of pollution and environmental destruction—and to rally political action for the environment.

But Earth Day is not the only celebration of nature and the environment this month. April 10 is **Arbor Day**. It began with **J. Sterling Morton**, a farmer and editor of the *Nebraska City News*, who organized Nebraskans to plant one million trees on April 10, 1872. On Arbor Day, we celebrate and appreciate the safety, health, and beauty of trees, and we are encouraged to plant a tree.

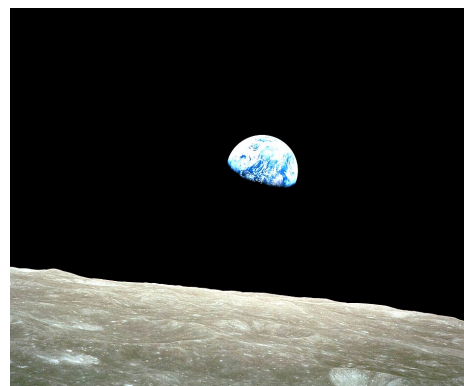


On **National Audubon Day**, April 26, we celebrate the birds and wildlife of America through the hundreds of illustrations painted by **John James Audubon** in the early 1800s, many of which were published in his book "The Birds of America." Audubon Day helps us to appreciate nature and wildlife with his art.

April 3 is the birthday of **Jane Goodall**, whose life with the chimpanzees and her discoveries that they use tools, display emotions, and have complex social systems, made us rethink the concept of cognitive intelligence in animals, and helped to save their homes and habitats.

April 17 is the birthday of **Bruce Kershner**, who defined "old growth forests" and discovered that old growth forests store 80% more carbon than managed forests, contribute to biodiversity and the health of their habitats, and have more value to the planet standing than being cut down.

Today, we often take our clean, safe, and lovely environment for granted. But by reflecting on our history of environmental catastrophes, and with the help of brave, intelligent, and charismatic people, we can now appreciate and enjoy the beauty and elegance of each morning sunrise over the Potomac River.



Current Members: April 2026

Charlene Ahmed

Syed Ahmed

Barry Berger

Fred Bishopp, Jr

Murray Bradley

Page Bradley

Brenda Brohard

Christine Caldwell

Sheila Cramer

Steve Creskoff

Kay Curley

Tom Devaney

Beckham Dickerson

Tina Dickerson

Joe Dockery

Marylynne Dockery

Nancy Downey

Madelon Eisenberg

Hosny El-Khordagui

Jerry Frola

Joe Gibson

Rosa Gibson

Lyn Green

Jim Grefer

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

Jenny Mayberry

Sam Mayberry

Doug McCollum

Sue McCollum

Joyce Mitchell

Pat Monahan

Elsa Moustafa

Andrew Norton

Bill Phillips

Pat Phillips

Memory Porter

Ann Schmitt

Catherine Shepard

Hugh Sockett

Dennis Spriggs

Anne A Thomas

Anne H Thomas

Bill Thomas

Dave Thomas

George Viener

Janet Walker

William Walker

Britt Wilford

Terry Wilford

Dona Wolf

“Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.”

Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space

Carl Sagan 1994