



BLUE RIDGE TORCH CLUB OF LEESBURG VIRGINIA

Celebrating 19 Years in Lansdowne

July 2026

In the Newsletter

IATC Convention	Pages 2-3
Torch Club Inductees	Page 3
Why Independence?	Page 4
Torch Membership	Page 5
IATC What's New	Page 6

Treasurer's Report

On June 04, 2026, the Blue Ridge Torch Club had an operating balance of \$5,289.

**Happy 250th
Fourth of July**



President's Message for July 2026

Our Club picnic was a nice way to end the Torch season. We do this every year for our members and their significant others to remind ourselves that the Torch Club, at its heart, is not just a speaker-dinner club, but a social club. To celebrate this, we had good food, great company, and a lot of fun. Our hosts Donaliece Carey, the Activities Committee Chair for LWVA, and her crew had the clubhouse auditorium perfectly set up. Wali Ghouse, one of the owners of the Fountain Grille, which could possibly be LWVA's next restaurant, and his crew, pleasantly and efficiently served us hamburgers, hot dogs, macaroni and bean salads, and much more.

We inducted two new members into the club. A good time was had by all. July and August, then, mark our summer break. As we look forward to next season and our next formal presentation and dinner in September, we will continue our newsletter over the summer to keep our members connected.

A special thank you also to Christine, as she has volunteered to be the Membership Committee Chair for the upcoming season, replacing Joline Matheson. As Chair, Christine will accept new membership applications, conduct new member inductions. She will provide Torch International (IATC) with new member data and contact information, as well as keep the Blue Ridge Torch Club membership roster current for all club activities.

A reminder that on September 8, one of our new members, Christine Caldwell, will talk about the national impact of the 9/11 attack on FAA operations and travel policies, and on October 13, Joyce Mitchell will give her talk on bio-genetics. Christine and Joyce are excellent and interesting speakers.

Another reminder: Now is a good time to renew your annual Torch Club membership to cover the July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027 program year. There are two kinds of memberships, Regular (individual) and Household (2nd member living in the same household). Current annual member rates will continue to be \$80 for Regular and \$40 for Household.

You may drop your check under the door of your building representative.

- Riverbend: Fred Bishopp 711 or Joline Matheson 106
- Blue Ridge: Joe Dockery 221
- Magnolias: Barry Berger MS 206
- Potomac Ridge: Wayne Kaiser 221
- Riverview: Kent Hamaker 906

Enjoy your summer!

Wayne

What Happens at a Torch International (IATC) Convention

By Anne Thomas

The 2026 Torch International Convention brought Torch members and guests together in Winston-Salem for a vibrant gathering filled with ideas, leadership, history, fellowship and celebration. (Note: IATC is being rebranded as Torch International.)

From the opening session to the final farewell, the convention captured the very best of Torch: thoughtful presentations, meaningful connections, shared learning and the joy of spending time together.

This year the Convention was held in Winston-Salem, North Carolina – home to the Winston-Salem Torch Club and home of Torch International president Art Bloom. This was my husband Bill's first Torch International Convention and my third. I loved meeting people from all over the country and getting to know the club's officers and the movers and shakers of the Torch Clubs. But best of all were the wonderful talks, excursion to learn about Winston-Salem (more on this later) and the gala awards dinner.

The convention opened with Mike Wakeford's talk: "Discover *Winston-Salem: Moravians, Museums and Modern Vision*." We learned that the Moravians are a religious protestant sect established in 1457 in what is currently the Czech Republic. They sent out missionaries and established Salem in 1753. More history can be found at <https://www.ncpedia.org/moravians>.

On Friday morning, we had a choice of two talks. We attended "Research and the Historical Novel: How Discovery Shapes Character and Character Drives Discovery" by Charles Lovett. He described his research into 1906 New York City for his latest novel *Escaping Dreamland*. The next talk was *A Conversation from Two Career Politicians: About the Environmental Protection Agency and Good Old Days of American Politics*. Following these talks, there was presentation by the Torch Magazine production staff – Michael Washburn, Editor; Joel Stegall, Managing Editor; and Linda Paskey, Creative Director.

Friday afternoon was a tour of Winston-Salem. We toured old Salem university campuses: Wake-Forest, University of Carolina School of the Arts, Winston-Salem State University, Carolina University, and Salem College, the nation's oldest educational institution exclusively dedicated to women. Winston-Salem is a truly intellectual city. We learned about R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company when they were head-quartered in Winston-Salem. There are several mansions associated with Reynolds families.

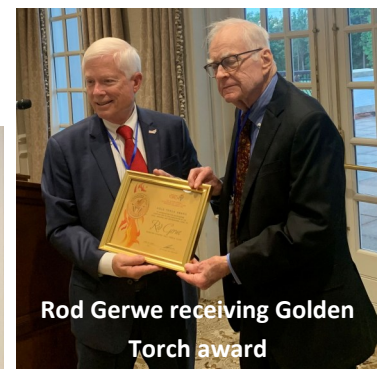
Friday night was the gala dinner. Since there was no convention in 2025, awards were given for both 2025 and 2026. Tim Spaeder and Rod Gerwe received the Golden Torch Award for outstanding service. Parker English and Paul Scott Stanfield received the 2025 Paxton Award for their article "The Great Debate: An

Exchange on Ukraine." (in the Winter 2025 Torch Magazine) Danny J. Krebs received the 2026 award for his article "An Update: 21st Century Personal Transportation & Beyond." (In the Spring 2025 Torch Magazine).

All Torch Magazines can be found at Torch.org under "Club and Member Access." The password is Torch1924.



Receiving the Paxton Award: From the left, Parker English, Danny J. Krebs, and Art Bloom, IATC President.



Rod Gerwe receiving Golden Torch award



Tim Spaeder receiving Golden Torch award

New Blue Ridge Torch Club Inductees

Brian and Linda Allen moved into Riverview in November 2024, after 30 years living in Williamsburg. Linda came from a military family and was born in Okinawa, but has lived most of her life in Virginia. She attended James Madison University, graduating with a degree in Mathematics and a concentration in Computer Science. Her career focused on software engineering and project management. In her last position she was document project manager for a program that designed driver's licenses for many states in the U.S. and provinces of Canada.

Brian's family was also military and moved around a lot. He did his undergraduate work in Computer Science at Christopher Newport University and later earned an MBA from Golden Gate University. His career was in design, implementation and optimization of information systems.

They have a son in Washington, D.C. and a daughter in Arlington. One of their main interests is travel, and the easy access to Dulles Airport was one of the big attractions of this area when they decided to move. Next year they plan to visit Japan.



New members Brian and Linda Allen being inducted.
Also Joline Matheson, Torch Club co –Treasurer and
Wayne Kaiser, President

What Happens at a Torch International (IATC) Convention (continued from page 2)

On Saturday morning we attended a talk on *Cru-sades, Reformation and the Feilitzch Family*.

Later Saturday morning we attended a session on the State of the Association. You can read details of that in the article *News to Report From the Convention*. Following that were sessions on how to grow, run, and planned giving to help fund the Torch Foundation.

Saturday afternoon we were on our own and went to Old Salem Museums and Gardens to an organ recital using the original Moravian Church's organ. We also learned about Peter Oliver's 226-year celebration of his freedom. Oliver was a slave owned by the Moravians who freed himself (using his own money) and who became a beloved member of the Moravian community.

It was a packed-full convention. We had so much fun meeting other Torch members. For example, while at the gala, Mike Procaro from the Frederick club, educated me on neutrinos and how they can penetrate 10 feet of lead.

We had final dinner and magic show and in the morning returned home exhausted, but full of a great convention experience.



Torch Club members just having fun



IATC Convention Souvenirs

The Declaration of Independence Is More Than a Statement of Ideals by Jim Grefer

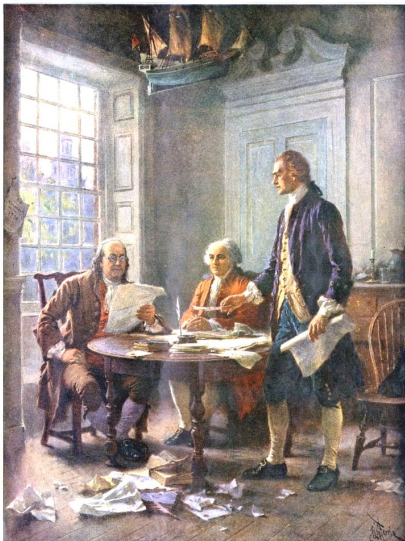
“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, they are endowed by our creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

This may be the most spoken, written, analyzed and taught sentence from the Declaration of Independence. It is a profound philosophical statement of American principles.

A deeper look into the Declaration reveals, however, that most of the document is not in the prelude. It is a catalogue of twenty-seven grievances against the British King and Parliament. This makes the Declaration read more like a twenty seven count indictment than a mere statement of principles.

Ten of the grievances were about Britain’s actions to weaken or even eliminate Colonial political representation. Another four weaken judicial independence. To the Colonists, these appeared as violations of the British Constitution.

Recall that, for over a century, Britain had granted the American Colonies a great deal of political autonomy, largely because production and trade was fruitful, and American colonists were mostly British citizens anyway. Over those decades, the colonists had developed and built their own governing institutions. As a result, rules and laws, trials, property rights, and free speech were advanced primarily by the colonists themselves, with some oversight by British appointed colonial governors.



In 1763, the French and Indian War had left Britain broke and in debt. To reduce costs and increase imperial control, the British took greater control of colonial governance and taxation of the colonies. Their thinking was that these were legitimate administrative reforms. To the colonists, however, they were departures from long standing tradition of local governance

The grievances were not only about taxes. The colonists objected to British interference, even suppression, of local legislative assemblies and judiciaries, and to the growing presence of standing armies in their cities.

The Colonists petitioned the Crown officially with the “Declaration of Rights and Grievances,” and the “Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress,” declaring their loyalty to Britain, outlining their grievances, and seeking redress. The King and Parliament, however, responded in ways that

convinced the Colonists that their grievances would no longer receive meaningful consideration.

The colonists came to think the Constitutional order and processes had broken down. The grievances in the Declaration of Independence accused rulers of becoming distant, unaccountable, and arbitrary, and whose governing decisions were made without considering the consequences of their decisions on the colonists.

Today, 250 years later, Americans debate similar questions. The issues differ. But the essence of the complaints are the same. Are our government leaders accountable for their actions? Do they understand the consequences of their decisions? Do they operate in the public good, or for their own enrichment? Do they heed their political constituents, or their financial benefactors? Do the votes of the citizens matter, or are they manipulated by political redistricting, electoral rules, and arbitrary voting restrictions?

On our 250th anniversary, it is great to ponder the philosophical ideals about how we were created equal and endowed with unalienable rights. But, we are also reminded that the Declaration of Independence challenges government to be more connected, more accountable, and more responsive to us, **the People**.



Current Members: June 2026

Charlene Ahmed	Joe Gibson	Doug McCollum
Syed Ahmed	Lyn Green	Sue McCollum
Brian Allen	Jim Grefer	Joyce Mitchell
Linda Allen	Carol Hall-Veit	Pat Monahan
Barry Berger	Kenton Hamaker	Elsa Moustafa
Fred Bishopp, Jr	Peggy Hamaker	Andrew Norton
Murray Bradley	Neelam Henderson	Bill Phillips
Page Bradley	Wes Henderson	Pat Phillips
Brenda Brohard	Kathleen Hughes	Memory Porter
Christine Caldwell	Fran Hurley	Ann Schmitt
Sheila Cramer	Murray Johnston	Catherine Shepard
Steve Creskoff	Wayne Kaiser	Hugh Sockett
Kay Curley	Maria Kelly	Dennis Spriggs
Tom Devaney	Peggy King	Anne A Thomas
Beckham Dickerson	Ken "Crash" Konwin	Anne H Thomas
Tina Dickerson	Judith Kory	Bill Thomas
Joe Dockery	Eva Leavitt	Dave Thomas
Marylynne Dockery	Michael Leavitt	George Viener
Nancy Downey	Barbara Leone	Janet Walker
Madelon Eisenberg	Joline Matheson	William Walker
Hosny El-Khordagui	Jenny Mayberry	Britt Wilford
Jerry Frola	Sam Mayberry	Terry Wilford
Rosa Gibson		Dona Wolf

Torch Club Officers wish everyone a Happy 250th Birthday of America

- Wayne Kaiser, President: wkaiser2367@gmail.com
- 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



"I have no fear that the result of our experiment will be that men may be trusted to govern themselves without a master."

Thomas Jefferson letter to David Hartley, Paris July 2, 1787
(regarding what would later be called Shay's Rebellion in Massachusetts)



IATC News to report

- New torch logo
- No dues increase
- 5% increase in membership after 10 years of decline
- Streamlining how the Board works
- Marketing campaign to promote Torch
- Two new clubs were just formed: Palm Beaches, FL and Madison, WI



Torch Magazine

If you did not receive the winter edition of the Torch Magazine, verify that your address is correct by checking with our membership chair, Christine Caldwell at Chrstn.caldwell@comcast.net and verify that you are listed as a “Regular” member. Household membership is for the additional members living at the same address.

The Spring issue of Torch Magazine will be coming soon and the content and design are fabulous.

You can access the latest Torch Magazines at <https://www.torch.org/current-edition.html> with password: Torch1924.

We met with the new team that produces Torch Magazine. We have a great editor and a great graphic designer and hopefully you’ll like the new look. Torch is always looking for new papers and would like more women to submit articles. The Board is looking into ways to get the Torch Magazine into libraries and sent to corporations by offering subscription memberships.