

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA TORCH CLUB MINUTES (9 Sept 2020)

The Torch Club of State College met on Zoom on Sept. 9, 2020, with conversation among members beginning at 6:30 p.m. and the night's speaker, Art Goldschmidt, beginning at 7 p.m. Art's subject was the life of former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

President Ming Tien opened the meeting, which had 27 participants, as tallied by Zoom. Ming announced that monthly meetings will continue via Zoom until spring, with the hope that the year will end with a return to an in-person meeting at the Ramada Inn.

Vice President John Golbeck introduced his guest, Bill Arden. Bill moved to Pennsylvania five years ago; his background includes 35 years in technology management, 10 years of college teaching, and two years of teaching astronomy, a subject that is a personal interest.

Here is Art's summary of his talk, which he said was his first scheduled presentation to the club since 2012. Art began his talk with a brief account of his family background, especially his father's work in the United Nations Organization from 1950 to 1970. He then gave historical background on Egypt's political status as a mainly Muslim country with a small but influential Coptic Christian minority, including the family from which Boutros Boutros-Ghali came. Boutros Boutros-Ghali was named for his grandfather, Boutros Ghali, who was prime minister from 1908 to 1910, when he was assassinated by a nationalist. Egypt, although legally a privileged province of the Ottoman Empire, had been occupied by British troops since 1882, and many Egyptian nationalists hated Boutros Ghali for cooperating with the British.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali was educated at Cairo University and the University of Paris, where he earned a doctorate in international law. As a young man, he spent a year as a Fulbright Research Fellow at Columbia University, taught international relations at Cairo University, and wrote articles for *al-Ahram*, Cairo's most respected daily newspaper. Art, as a young graduate student, met Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his newspaper office, benefited from his professorial advice, and learned much about modern Egyptian history from members of his family. Many years later, when it was Africa's turn to have a UN secretary-general, Boutros-Ghali, although not favored by the U.S. government, was chosen by the Security Council late in 1991. With the Cold War over, he wanted to make the UN more influential as a peacekeeper and with a trimmed-down, more efficient secretariat. He clashed with the Americans, notably Madeleine Albright, who headed the U.S. delegation during the Clinton administration, over the UN's role in Somalia, Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and the Oil-for-Food deal with Iraq. He became the only UN secretary-general not approved for a second five-year term, thanks to a U.S. veto in the Security Council. After he left the UN, Boutros-Ghali presided over an organization of French-speaking countries called La Francophonie. He died in 2016 at the age of 93.

A number of questions from members, and Art's responses, followed.

Not brought up during the meeting but posted by Treasurer Carl Sillman in an email to all members on Sept. 8: "It is the time of the year to renew your membership. . . Dues are \$60.00 total for the year 2020-21 (\$80.00 for the family membership), which supports both the local club and the International Association. I would appreciate it if you could send your dues (check made out to Torch Club of Central Pa.) to me at 1898 Rattlesnake Pike, Julian, PA 16844."

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, Oct. 14, at 7 p.m. on Zoom. Gordon DeJong will speak on refugees and asylees in the Trump era.

Respectfully submitted, John Dillon, recording secretary

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA TORCH CLUB MINUTES (14 October 2020)

Larry Ragan told hearers to mute unless they need to speak and to use “chat” to talk to someone else. President Ming Tien called the meeting to order at 7:05 and announced that John Dillon will speak on 11 November on “Ripe for Disruption -- the Rapid Decline of Local News.”

Marylee Taylor introduced the speaker, Gordon De Jong, who was honored in June by the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population for his lifetime contributions to the discipline. She then told about his contributions to the Sociology Department and to the State College Choral Society. Gordon explained that US immigration policy has traditionally been based on four basic principles, or preferences: (1) family reunification, (2) needed skills, (3) humanitarian concerns, (4) population diversity. Trump’s administration has totally eviscerated refugee asylee immigration policies and practices. Gordon began by detailing three categories: refugees (people not yet in the US who are unable to return to their country of origin), asylees (people already in the US or arriving at a US port of entry who seek admission), and refugees with temporary protected status (who seek admission because armed conflict or natural disaster make prevent them from returning to their countries of origin). The relevant laws are civil, not criminal. Aliens may later transition to permanent refugee status. Immigration issues can be traced back to Biblical times. Modern US policies arose from the displaced persons crises after World War II, the UN Geneva Convention (1951), and US laws, which the Trump administration has flouted.

Gordon opened the floor for members’ experiences, and several talked about their immigrant ancestors’ problems and the “Samaritans” in southern Arizona. He showed a graph comparing the annual immigration ceiling set by the president with the immigrant numbers admitted since 1980, noting the sharp drop beginning in 2017, followed by a table showing where refugee arrivals came from (Democratic Rep. of Congo always led), a table showing origin of affirmative and defensive asylees (Peoples Republic of China first), tables showing the age groups, sex, and marital status of refugees, and a table showing what actually happens at the Mexican border (single adults decreasing, more but smaller families seeking entry), evidencing falling labor demand and stricter enforcement. The rising number of unaccompanied minors is troubling, as our system does not accommodate them. Out of 1127K immigrants to the US in 2017, refugees were 120K and asylees about 25.6K. There were many more “legal temporary” entrants: tourism, business, workers and families, students, and diplomats. “Illegal” immigrants were estimated at 300K; no statistics are kept on emigrants from the US. The Trump administration has reduced the annual refugee ceiling from 100K to 18K in 2019-20, imposed a travel ban on specific countries, severely limited Muslim refugees, extended control enforcement to interior states, instituted a zero-tolerance border enforcement policy for asylees, separated immigrant children from their parents, ended Obama’s DACA executive order, challenged state and local sanctuary laws, increased vetting and lowered approval rates, restricted green card eligibility and enhanced deportation, deprived certain naturalized immigrants of their US citizenship, reduced the number of cases processed daily at the border, forced asylee applicants to return to and remain in Mexico, required asylum seekers to apply for asylum in their first country of transit (usually Mexico), sent asylum applicants to Honduras, El Salvador, or Guatemala rather than their home country, and restricted “birth tourism.”

Extreme vetting is used to deter entry of terrorists into the US, designed for adults or families, not unaccompanied minors. The refugee screening process since 9/11 requires proof of identity, criminal background checks from home country records, proof of sponsorship, in-person interview with US consular official, check consolidated database linked to FBI biometric ID system, check at origin airport and again at US port of entry for fingerprint and digital photo match with criminal and terrorism databases. Staff training has been upgraded, and the government has invested in databases and screening technology. Vetting failures are rarer, but Gordon argues that existing processes are already weeding out terrorists, that government should prioritize efforts at domestic counterterrorism over visa vetting, and that in 2002--16 around 230K more Americans were killed in non-terrorism homicides than by terrorism of all kinds

An animated discussion followed, and the meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM. Attendance: 25 screens at peak.

Respectfully submitted, Art Goldschmidt, Corresponding Secretary

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA TORCH CLUB MINUTES (11 November 2020)

President Ming Tien called the meeting to order at 6:58 PM. Art Goldschmidt introduced Jim McNeely (Region 2 Director); John Dillon introduced his guests: Jan (his wife), Jerry Cannon (a prize-winning journalist), and John Nichols (a retired PSU journalism professor). McNeely reported that major changes are occurring in the IATC Board (no specifics).

John Dillon, speaking on "**Ripe for Disruption -- the Rapid Decline of Local News**," noted that the public does not know that local print journalism has declined and drew attention to the recent Congressional report by Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA). Advertising revenue, size of staffs, and number of readers have all fallen since 2006, resulting in the closure of 2,100 newspapers and the spread of "News deserts" that lack newspapers, local TV stations, and even digital news. The former top weekly in PA, *Middletown Press and Journal*, which won a prize in 2018, closed in this July. Although local TV gained viewers during the pandemic lockdown, its revenue and staff remain flat. A graph shows how the audience for national networks has declined. Cable retransmission fees, instituted recently, have helped save local TV stations. Classified advertising revenue has fallen 70% since 2000. It is much cheaper to advertise via the Internet. Facebook, A--, A--, and Google control 60% of the digital advertising business. This will reach two-thirds by 2023. Sen. Cantwell's report urged good faith negotiations, collective bargaining for the reuse of content, and rules to level the digital playing field. Most people won't play to get news, read only headlines, and briefly skim the news. They won't pay for "fair use" of copyrighted work. Online news hires don't make up for print journalism layoffs. Print media will soon die. Yet the public perceives local news as important and expects good news reporting. Local reporting drives accountability. It sparked such scandals as Watergate, the Boston Archdiocese sex abuse, and locally the Sandusky Affair.

Dillon's colleague Chris Rosenblum compared the CDT staff of 1995-96 of 31-32 journalists with that of today: 8. All editing design of headlines and national news is done by the McClatchy publishing center in Charlotte, NC. Fulltime reporters now covering Centre County: 5 in the CDT, StateCollege.com 1, Gazette 1-2, and WPSU 2. Do we live in a "news desert?" Stories that take much time and research to write are no longer written. Do local residents have a shared knowledge, enough for "grassroots democracy?" Comparing 2020 with 2005, PA ranks #11 in declining newsroom employment and the number of stories produced annually. Local papers survive by: creating regional editing and page design hubs, closing newsrooms, selling their downtown buildings, consolidating or closing printing presses, reducing press runs, and pushing digital subscriptions, podcasts, and sponsored events, and eliminating print editions for some days of each week. Both of the Salt Lake City newspapers are going entirely online. Two-thirds of all dailies are owned by 25 companies, which are in turn being bought up by Hedge Funds, which extract capital and minimize investment. In 2013 Warren Buffett said newspapers will work out okay; last year he sold all of them, saying "newspapers are toast." Digital news outlets, like *Spotlight PA*, try to fill the gaps, but we have fewer sources for community news. Nonprofits may take control. A few big newspapers will survive, relying more on digital subscribers. Even local TV news faces an aging audience and a general decline in appointment viewing habits. He ended with a quote from James Madison.

In the enduring discussion Larry Ragan asked if there is any good news, Dave Mudgett was concerned about the polarized US public and expressed disenchantment with the liberal slant of mainstream journalism, Dick Jones cited a New York Times article about a paper that purports to cover local news but shows a right-wing bias, Gordon DeJong asked about the PSU training of journalists and where its graduates find jobs, Larry Ragan saw a trend toward vanity publishing and blogging, Dean Snow, now in Florida, uses the CDT to follow local news, expects it to move toward online publishing, but thinks the Sunday edition may still get enough advertising to survive, Dave Mudgett notes that the *Wall Street Journal* has a strong paywall; however, online papers that lack one will not make enough money, even as they seek to attract readers. John Golbeck asked for comments on Marshall McLuhan's view of "cool" vs. "hot" journalistic media and how digital media draw shorter reader attention than print. European cities seem to have more newspapers than US ones. John Dillon said that both have the same problems, but writers' unions in Europe may account for the apparent difference. Lee Stout asked if there are more advertising and public relations majors than print journalism ones; John Dillon said that enrollment caps kept down the former group of majors. Alternative print weekly and monthly magazines are vanishing fast. Roger Williams observed that reporters and readers care little about council meetings, but fifty

years ago State College supported two dailies. Dave Mudgett ascribes this to the loss of local control, hence the failure to tell readers what events are taking place. Jim Serene misses the CDT's vanished skilled local reportage and the rise of CNet. Emilie Allan noted confusion between news and opinion. Neither print nor visual media provide factual information. Roger replied that readers must demand better information and greater objectivity. Emilie felt that Facebook spreads "fake news." Roger replied that US journalism used to be more partisan than it is now; only when wire services were set up could newspapers provide objective reporting. John Dillon replied that publishers have responded to opportunities to make more money, but that American readers still have a variety of types of news sources.

Ming Tien adjourned the meeting at 8:25 PM. 27 persons attended.

Next meeting will be on 9 December. David Mudgett will speak on "The Steel Guitar from Hawaii to Nashville to the World."

Respectfully submitted, Art Goldschmidt, Corresponding Secretary

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA TORCH CLUB MINUTES (9 Dec. 2020)

President Ming Tien opened the meeting at 7 p.m. on Zoom after a half-hour of socializing among members. No guests were introduced. John Golbeck nominated Bill Arden for membership. Bill has attended past meetings. He moved to Pennsylvania five years ago; his background includes 35 years in technology management, 10 years of college teaching, and two years of teaching astronomy, a subject that is a personal interest. Bill's nomination was approved by a show of members' hands on their Zoom screens.

Dave Mudgett gave the evening's presentation. He is a professor emeritus in Penn State's College of Information Sciences and Technology, musician, and Ming's neighbor. His presentation, "Steel Guitar: From Hawaii to Nashville to the World," combined Dave's extensive knowledge of the subject, historical photos and music and video clips, and, finally, some songs played by Dave on his guitars.

Here are highlights of Dave's presentation:

The Spanish guitar was introduced to Hawaii in the mid- to late 19th century by European sailors and Spanish cattle herders. Hawaiians adapted it, with their own tuning, use of a steel bar to slide along the strings, and playing it on their laps. The "steel guitar" refers to the bar used to play it. Joseph Kekuku was one of the first to play it this way; he took it to the mainland in 1904. Hawaiians playing the steel guitar at the 1915 Pan-Pacific International Exhibition in San Francisco made it famous, and the Hawaiian music craze took off. In 1931 the first practical, mass-produced electric guitar, made of cast aluminum, was introduced, further propelling Hawaiian and steel guitar music popularity. To demonstrate the sound, Dave played his antique Bakelite electric guitar, a type introduced in 1934. By the end of the '30s, Hawaiian music's popularity was fading, but the steel guitar was being adopted by musicians playing country, blues and Western swing music. Electric guitars, especially steel, were popular with Western swing bands performing before large, loud crowds because they could be heard. The genre hit its peak in the late '40s and early '50s.

Big band swing music began to dominate mainstream popularity in the '30s and '40s. Hugely influential was band leader Alvino Rey, who made the steel guitar a central part of his band's sound. He added pedals to change the guitar's tuning and added strings and necks. The console steel guitar, with legs, also was developed. Nashville was slow to adopt the steel guitar, but over time the Dobro/Resonator guitar became common, thanks in part to Hank Williams and his band in the late '40s. The pedal steel era began in the '50s and continued into the '60s, with musicians Buddy Emmons and Jimmy Day leading the way. Dave labeled Emmons "the most important pedal steel guitar player ever," with pioneering innovations to the instrument.

In the 1960s and '70s, country rock spread from Los Angeles to Texas to the East Coast, with the steel guitar sound featured. By the 1980s pedal steel use was mature; "New Traditionalist" bands led by Ricky Skaggs, Randy Travis and Vince Gill, among others, kept the sound going. Outside the mainstream, a style called Sacred Steel began in the 1930s and continues today, primarily associated with the Church of the Living God and beginning with a church in Nashville and one in Indianapolis. Since 2000, the steel guitar has flourished – less used in commercial country music but heavily used in Americana music, rock, blues, jazz, and other genres. Dave said he's confident it will be around for a long time.

A number of questions from members – including asking Dave to play a few tunes – followed.

Twenty-three members attended the presentation.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, Jan. 13 at 7 p.m. on Zoom. Bob Carline is scheduled to speak on "creating wood sculptures."

Respectfully submitted, John Dillon, recording secretary

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA TORCH CLUB MINUTES (13 Jan 2021)

President Ming Tien opened the meeting at 7 p.m., following 15 minutes of socializing among members on Zoom. According to the Zoom count, 32 attended. There were no guest introductions.

Bob Carline was the evening's speaker, presenting on "Creating Wood Sculptures." One casualty of the Zoom meeting: Bob said he had planned to put one of his sculptures on each table at our Ramada meeting room for members to examine and enjoy. Instead, he had photos in his presentation.

Bob began with a salute to his mentor, Bob Butler, who introduced him to carving hardwoods. Bob Butler died in 2004.

Highlights of Bob's presentation:

Carvers use either softwoods – basswood is the most popular – or hardwoods. Pennsylvania has a good supply of both. The type of wood dictates the tools a carver uses. First steps include preparing the wood: taking out the core to prevent cracking, coating the wood so it dries slowly, and allowing three to four years of drying before using.

Two templates – side and top views – are cut from the log with a bandsaw to get the rough form that will then be carved with gouges. Files get rid of gouge marks, then sandpapers smooth the piece. Finishing is done with finishing oil, very fine sandpaper, pumice, and a coat of fine wax or furniture oil.

Wood sculpting involves craftsmanship, as described above, and design, which can range from realistic to fully abstract. Bob said he began his hobby doing exact, realistic sculptures in softwood that he painted. When he moved to hardwood, he evolved to more abstract work, with design goals of either showing motion or emotion. With fish and bird subjects he found motion not hard to show. Showing emotion in animals proved harder, but Bob offered photos of his work that achieved that. These included two cranes with their necks entwined, and a woodcock hiding her chick.

Bob said his sculptures take between 15 and 40 hours to complete; he showed a barn owl sculpture that took about 40 hours. Factors that affect the time to do a sculpture include whether the design is new, the availability of a model, and whether he can find a good set of photos of his subject that includes side, top, front and back. Bob often creates a clay model before beginning to sculpt the wood. He once used a frozen fish as a model, returning it to the freezer after each modeling session.

Responding to members' questions, Bob said:

- He uses clay models to experiment with and decide on what he wants to carve
- He likes cherry and walnut woods best because of their very nice finishes.
- He started his hobby in the early 1980s with softwoods and moved to hardwoods in 1990. He found the hobby does not have a steep learning curve.

The meeting ended at 8 p.m.

Our next meeting is on Wednesday, Feb. 10 at 7 p.m. Rob Hendrickson will speak on "the conflict between political correctness, First Amendment speech and academic freedom."

Respectfully submitted by John Dillon, recording secretary

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA TORCH CLUB MINUTES (10 Feb. 2021)

Held on Zoom, 7 p.m., with 27 attending

President Ming Tien opened the meeting at 7 p.m. following 15 minutes of Zoom socializing. Guests attending were Linda Hendrickson, wife of the evening's speaker, Bob Hendrickson, their son Michael and his wife, Jen.

Bob's topic was "Politically Correct Speech versus Free Speech and Academic Freedom." Bob retired from Penn State in 2013 as a professor emeritus after a career in higher education that saw stops at a number of universities around the country. His career included administrative positions and faculty work in higher education programs and policy studies. His hobbies include wine making and building models of historical ships. Bob compared free speech rights as protected under the Constitution with academic freedom, a contractual right defined as the freedom to inquire or teach "in the pursuit of truth wherever that may lead without interference from religious and political ideology or administration." It applies to faculty and students. Public institutions come under First Amendment protection requirements, as well, and many private institutions have embraced those protections in employment contracts.

Bob highlighted a number of famous cases, including that of Arthur Butz, a professor at Northwestern University. Butz was a Holocaust denier who made his claims in a 1977 nationally televised debate. Northwestern endured pressure to end his tenure, but he remains on the faculty. The first hate speech case was *Doe v University of Michigan* in 1989. Bob discussed the history of hate speech codes and numerous court decisions, all finding such codes vague and having a chilling effect on inquiry, free speech and academic freedom. Still, hate speech codes continue at higher education institutions, with counseling and reeducation as enforcement tools. Bob offered examples of current hate speech issues, including at Michigan State, UCLA and USC. Banning speakers on campus also is an issue, including recently at Penn State. There are parameters for institutions to deny speakers access to university facilities, with the substantiated risk of violence being paramount. A 2014 report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression at the University of Chicago listed five principles the university would adhere to in maintaining free speech and academic freedom. These principles can serve as a guide for other institutions:

1. It is NOT the proper role of the University to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable or even offensive.
2. Maintaining a climate of civility and mutual respect cannot be used to stifle free speech.
3. Universities may regulate time, place, and manner of speech so it doesn't disrupt the activities of the University.
4. Deliberations cannot be prevented because some or most of the community members find it offensive, immoral or wrong-headed.
5. Those who object to a speaker may not obstruct or interfere with the rights of others to listen and participate.

A robust discussion among members followed Bob's presentation, hitting on subjects including safe spaces on campus, trigger warning in classes, the ability of those in power to censor others, pros and cons of speech on social media, and censorship by social media companies.

Our next meeting is March 10, 7 p.m., on Zoom. The speaker will be Charles Maxin on "Cholesterol, Hyperlipidemia and Treatments – a Physician's View."

Respectfully submitted, John Dillon, recording secretary

Hendrickson Torch Free Speech Talk Bibliography

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- Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School Dist., 393 U.S. 503 (1969).
- Healy v. James, 408 U.S. 169 (1972).
- Perry Educ. Ass'n v. Perry Local Educ. Ass'n, 406 U.S. 37 (1983)
- Grayned v. City of Rockford, 408 U.S. 104 (1972) time place & manner restrictions on speech.
- Keyishian v Board of Regents. 385 U.S. 589 (1967)

For a discussion of First Amendment speech rights see: Hendrickson. The Colleges,.... p.184 (see citation above)

Speaker Ban Court cases and articles:

- Pulcini, Brad. Free Speech and Controversial Speakers: Public Institutions' Legal responsibility and Recommendations for Response. 93no.4 College and University p 25. 2018.
- Smith v. Collins. 439 US 916. 1978. Skokie, Ill. Case
- Texas v. Johnson. 491 US 397. 1989. • Padgett v. Auburn University. <https://campus-speech.law.duke.edu/campus-speech-incidents/padgett-v-auburn-university/>
- Harvard calls off Course amid petition campaign.
<https://www.insidehighered.com/print/news/2021/01/27/harvard-calls-course-amid-petition-campaign>

Penn State article. <https://www.centredaily.com/news/local/education/penn-state/article236559998.html>

Some Hate Speech code cases invalidated by the Courts as vague:

DeJohn v Temple Univ. 537 F. 3d 301 (3d Cir. 2008)
Doe v. University of Michigan. 721 F. Supp. 852. (E.D. Mich. 1989)
Broadrick v. Oklahoma. 413 U.S. 601. 1973 (vague language in Statute)
Dambrot v. Central Michigan University. 55 F. 3d 1177 (6th Cir. 1995)
Bair v. Shippensburg Univ. 280 F. Supp 2d 357 (M.D. Pa 2003)
College Republican v. Reed. 523 F. Supp. 2d 1005 (N.D.Cal.2007)

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA TORCH CLUB MINUTES (10 March 2021)

Technical difficulties delayed the start of the meeting on Zoom until 7:25 p.m. Twenty-seven members attended.

Dr. Charles Maxin spoke on “Cholesterol and blood pressure – treat or not to treat.” Charles graduated from Penn State in 1970 with a degree in chemical engineering and was accepted to Jefferson Medical College. After a residency in Wilmington, Delaware, he and his wife, Tuffy, moved to State College in 1977. In 1972 he did a cardiology rotation in Glasgow, Scotland, an industrial city where many suffered from rheumatic heart disease. Charles explained the famous Framingham, Massachusetts, study that identified factors predisposing people to cardiovascular diseases, strokes and heart attacks. The study was begun in 1948 (in the 1940s one in two Americans died from cardiovascular diseases) and continues. Framingham had a population representative of the U.S., and Harvard cardiologists were nearby.

In 1957 hypertension was defined as a blood pressure reading of 160 over 95. The study found a nearly fourfold increase in coronary heart disease per 1,000 patients with hypertension. Normal blood pressure was later defined as 120/80. The study also found that treatment reduces the risk of heart attacks and stroke. Charles explained the details of the Framingham risk score that calculates the risk for heart disease, stroke or TIA, arterial aneurysm, and peripheral vascular disease over 10 years. It applies to patients between 20 and 79 with no history of cardiovascular disease. Treatment options include diet, weight control, exercise and statins. And, he added, don’t forget your immunizations. He also pointed to the ASCVD Plus Risk Calculator app for smart phones.

Numerous questions followed Charles’s presentation. Among the topics discussed were the use of aspirin, blood thinners and anticoagulants; reliable blood pressure cuffs (Rely-on sold at Walmart was recommended); statins and their side effects; and the correct frequency for cholesterol and other checks. Following the presentations and discussion, president Ming Tien said he wanted to look into having the June meeting in person at the Ramada for those who have been vaccinated, with the meeting streamed to those who could not or did not want to attend in person. Ming said he would send out a Doodle poll to find out who has been vaccinated as a way of indicating how many in the club might be able to attend in person.

The meeting ended at 8:16 p.m.

Our next meeting, via Zoom, is on April 14. Jim Ultman will speak on “Pandemics Past and Present – What We have Learned.”

Respectfully submitted, John Dillon, recording secretary

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA TORCH CLUB MINUTES (14 April 14, 2021)

Meeting on Zoom

Speaker: Jim Ultman, "Pandemics Past and Present – what Have We Learned." (The meeting was recorded.)

Vice President John Golbeck opened the meeting at 7 p.m. following 15 minutes of socializing on Zoom. There were 25 participants, by Zoom count. Jim Ultman's wife, Deena, was welcomed as a guest. John said the Doodle poll results showed four members interested in meeting in person at the Ramada for the May meeting, but 12 interested in meeting in person for the June meeting. Art Goldschmidt will get the Ramada's information about a June meeting.

John introduced Jim and provided details from his bio. Jim retired from Penn State in 2006 as a distinguished professor of chemical engineering and bioengineering. For the minutes, Jim provided these highlights of his talk:

- Corona viruses are enveloped by a membrane containing messenger RNA (which provides the code to produce new virus) and covered by spike proteins (that allow the virus to penetrate cell membranes).
- When inhaled, corona virus is predisposed to attacking the lungs, as is the seasonal flu (influenza) virus, which has a similar cellular makeup.
- The COVID-19 virus has no synthesis apparatus to replicate itself. Instead, it must enter a host cell using its spike protein and then utilize the host cell's synthesis apparatus to replicate.
- Only within the past 20 years have pandemics from corona virus occurred. In contrast, seasonal influenza pandemics have been with us for about 130 years. The worst of these was the 1918 Spanish flu that wiped out about 3% of the world's population.
- Comparing the annual mortality in the U.S. of COVID-19 per 100,00 people (as of the beginning of April) to that of the 1918 Spanish Flu and the seasonal flu:

Seasonal Flu 10; Spanish Flu 660; COVID-19 160

Comparing the case mortality in the U.S. of COVID-19 per 100,00 people (as of the beginning of April) to that of the 1918 Spanish Flu and the seasonal flu:

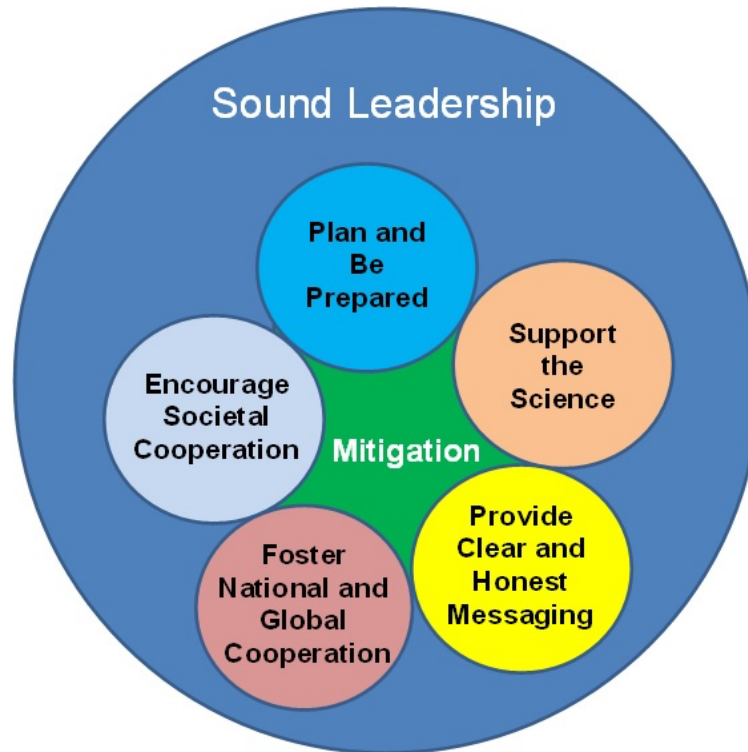
Seasonal Flu 0.1%; Spanish Flu 2.5%; COVID-19 1.8%

From these statistics, it is clear that COVID-19 has an impact that is becoming comparable to the Spanish Flu but is by far greater than seasonal flu.

- Examining the global distribution of the impact of COVID-19, it is surprising that highly developed nations are often at greater risk than some underdeveloped nations. A couple of reasons that may contribute to this are: The older populations in underdeveloped countries are less susceptible; populations in countries with poorer public health have been exposed to many more microorganisms and have therefore acquired a greater innate immunity; there is less regional and international mobility in underdeveloped countries so transmission is slower.
- Examining the pandemic treatment and mitigation methods during the Spanish Flu and COVID-19, one finds that it is the application of science and technology that puts us in a much better position today than in 1918. In particular, we now have sophisticated blood tests, antiviral drug candidates, clinical ventilators and CAT/MRI imaging capabilities. Most importantly, we now have six commercially available vaccines with the potential to prevent disease transmission throughout the world.
- Five of the six available vaccines work by relatively new technologies: After they are injected, man-made particles (either mRNA molecules or genetically modified, harmless viruses) migrate into host cells where they orchestrate the synthesis of many copies of the virus spike protein. This, in turn, stimulates

the host immune system to produce immune cells, most importantly antibodies against the spike protein. These antibodies prevent invading COVID-19 viruses from entering host cells, depriving them of the ability to replicate.

- So, what have we learned from pandemics past and present:



Discussion and questions from members followed. Jim made these points in response to members' questions:

-- National and global cooperation on combating pandemics increased in the aftermath of the Spanish Flu epidemic and World War I.

-- Research into universal vaccines is going on now in anticipation of more viruses that could cause future epidemics or pandemics.

-- We need a strong, worldwide monitoring effort looking for future viruses.

In closing, John asked Jim to share something about himself that others may not know and is not on his bio. Jim replied, "I love to tinker. If you've got something that's broken, give me a call."

The meeting ended at 8:30 p.m.

The next meeting will be on Zoom on Wednesday, May 12, at 7 p.m. Scott Flipse will speak on "Indoor Air Quality."

Respectfully submitted, John Dillon, recording secretary

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA TORCH CLUB MINUTES (12 May 2021)

Via Zoom; 21 participants

Speaker: Scott Flipse on “Indoor Air Quality”

Recording secretary Art Goldschmidt said he has signed a contract for the June meeting in the Terrace Room at the Ramada for members who are vaccinated. Vice president John Golbeck welcomed members. President Ming Tien could not attend. John said an effort was being made to make the June meeting hybrid – in-person at the Ramada and live-streamed to other members. The club will sign a contract for meetings beginning in September and going into next year at the Ramada. John called for speakers for the upcoming season, with priority for those who could not get a slot this year. Interested members should contact him at JHG5@psu.edu. He urged members who have not yet stepped up to contact him about speaking.

John introduced our speaker, Scott Flipse, who was attending from the D.C. home of his daughter, Rachel, where Scott had re-tiled the basement. Scott is a 1970 graduate of State College High School. He graduated from Penn State with a BS degree in architectural engineering. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, he worked as an emergency room physician in Punxsutawney and Williamsport before retiring. He has designed and built five high-performance houses. A healthy indoor environment is a priority in high-performance houses, he said.

Scott showed a PowerPoint presentation. The highlights:

- Indoor air quality is a part of indoor environmental quality that also includes light and lighting, views, noise and acoustics, and thermal comfort.
- Outdoor air is monitored by the EPA; common air pollutants have been decreasing since 1980. Indoor air, of course, begins as outdoor air.
- The Corsi Code notes that in an average life expectancy of 79 years, 69 are spent indoors.
- An air barrier in a house has a big impact on indoor air quality. A 1950s house, for example, has a much higher air volume turnover than houses built more recently with air barriers. But there are no residential indoor air standards, only voluntary ones.
- Indoor air pollutants include biologicals (infectious agents and allergens), VOCs, radon, nitrogen dioxide, particulates, water vapor (too much or too little) and carbon dioxide.
- The top indoor air pollutants most associated with decreased longevity are PM 2.5 (small particles closely associated with combustion), second-hand smoke, mold and moisture, radon, formaldehyde, acrolein, ozone and nitrogen dioxide.
- An optimum indoor relative humidity range of 45%-55% keeps much bad stuff – biological and chemical – at bay.
- A 2016 Boston study of two office environments looked at nine cognitive domains of workers and found all were significantly better in green and green-plus office environments – in particular, crisis response, information use, and strategy.
- Scott’s general recommendations for improving indoor air quality include hard surfaces, a HEPA vacuum, using low VOC products, running fans and avoiding combustion. Not having pets and not wearing shoes indoors are on the list but not something everyone would do.
- Scott also discussed the aspects of controlled ventilation systems in high-performance houses.

Questions and discussion followed, including how the optimum humidity range keeps viruses down, the technology or radon mitigation and control, companies that do indoor air quality checks and mitigation, the pros and cons of air flow in old houses, and gas ranges (popular for cooking, bad for indoor pollution).

Scott closed by mentioning the green building mantra: "Build tight, vent right."

The meeting ended at 8:06 p.m.

The next meeting will be at the Ramada on Wednesday, June 9, at 5:30. Dinner in the Terrace Room will be served at 6. Roger Williams will speak on "'Frederick Watts and the Founding of Penn State."

Respectfully submitted, John Dillon, recording secretary

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA TORCH CLUB MINUTES (9 June 2021)

Attending at the Ramada: 20

Attending via Zoom: 11

Speaker: Roger Williams, "Frederick Watts and the Founding of Penn State"

Following dinner, President Ming Tien opened the meeting at 7 p.m., noting that it was the club's first in-person meeting since March 2020 and calling the occasion "a real joy." Ming called for a vote on the slate of officers for the 21-22 meeting year. Incoming president John Golbeck and vice president Larry Ragan each were elected unanimously. The remaining incoming officers were elected by acclamation: recording secretary John Dillon, corresponding secretary Art Goldschmidt, and treasurer Carl Sillman. Art reported that there will be no International Torch Club annual meeting this year. Our next meeting will be on Sept. 8 at the Ramada. Ron Smith will speak on "The Myth of the Women's and Men's College Sport Amateur." Peter Jurs introduced his guest, Lewis Steinberg. Lewis is a State College native and a graduate of Penn State and the University of Pennsylvania law school. He practiced law in Lock Haven for 45 years. Among his activities in State College Lewis has served on the board of trustees of Schlow Library and been involved with the Penn State Global Connections program. Lewis was then voted in as a member.

Here are highlights of Roger's presentation:

-- Frederick Watts's family history in Pennsylvania goes back to 1760 when his grandfather emigrated from Wales and bought a large tract at the confluence of the Juniata and Susquehanna rivers. His father, David, was a prominent lawyer and a trustee of Dickenson College. Frederick Watts was born in 1801.

-- After reading law under his uncle, he returned to Carlisle and built a large practice and strong reputation. He also developed a love of agriculture while living on his uncle's farm. His reputation as a leader grew. He was Dickenson College's secretary and a trustee, 1824-33; president of the Cumberland Valley Railroad, 1841-73; and an agriculture innovator, building a model farm and introducing insect-resistant Mediterranean wheat and the McCormick reaper.

-- Watts's "second act," 1851-89, built on his reputation as a leader in agriculture and his push to establish the Farmers' High School of Pennsylvania. The Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture played a large role in advocating for the school. The Pennsylvania State Agricultural Society, founded in 1851 with Watts as president, quickly became successful and influential, also pushing for the school. Watts drafted the bill and outlined the plans for the school. Its trustees chose Centre County for its site in 1855 and the school opened in 1859 with four instructors and 69 students.

-- Watts became president of the Board of Trustees in 1855, starting a 19-year tenure. Construction began in 1856, with a barn of Watts's design finished late that year and a five-story college building completed in 1859. Watts hired Evan Pugh, a 31-year-old Ph.D., as president in 1859 with the goal of developing "the best ag. College in the world."

-- Watts, Pugh and allies pushed for the federal Morrill Land Grant College Act of 1862, emphasizing the importance of teaching agriculture and the "mechanic arts" (engineering). Pugh's death in 1864 at age 36 was a shocking loss and was followed by three troubled presidencies in seven years. The school struggled with debt, falling enrollment and varying curriculum experiments. Women were admitted in 1871.

-- Watts was appointed U.S. commissioner of agriculture by President Grant in 1871 and left for Washington. The old guard of trustees began to fade. President James Calder renamed the school the Pennsylvania State

College, ignored engineering and downplayed agriculture. Trustees and other ag interests pushed back. The school's troubles continued.

-- In 1882 George Atherton was hired as president, beginning a 24-year run in which the institution was stabilized, engineering and agriculture strengthened, and the school set up for success in the 20th century.

-- Watts's term as U.S. agriculture commissioner, 1871-77, had numerous successes, including developing the department as a scientific agency. His successes were capped at the first U.S. "world's fair" in 1876 in Philadelphia, where American agriculture progress was showcased during a six-month run that drew 10 million visitors.

-- Watts retired in 1877 and died in 1889. A family member wrote, "He was simply worn out and went quietly to sleep without an illness."

Questions, answers and discussion followed the presentation.

The meeting ended at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, John Dillon, recording secretary