

## **CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA TORCH CLUB MINUTES (January 8, 2020)**

President Dick Held convened the meeting at 7 p.m. John Golbeck introduced guests Carolyn Wilhelm (John's spouse) and Charles Maxin. Carl Sillman introduced his spouse, Kathi. Peter Jurs was welcomed by unanimous vote as a new member. The evening's autobiographical talk was given by Steve Smith.

Lee Stout then presented a program, "Monumental Messes: Statues and Stories, Commentary on Our Past." He discussed controversies surrounding Confederate monuments and how our society is now reconsidering their meaning. Important questions have arisen in recent years, such as: What do these monuments represent? What do they say about our values as Americans? What should be done with them? Allow them to stand? Pull them down? Move them to different locations (even into long-term non-public storage)? Lee noted that these questions have become part of a national discussion after the racially motivated murders of nine worshippers in a Black church in Charleston, South Carolina, and violence between anti-Semitic white nationalists and anti-fascist counter-protestors at the University of Virginia in 2017. The presence of statues honoring Confederate leaders such as Robert E. Lee in New Orleans and "Silent Sam" on the University of North Carolina campus at Chapel Hill have led to a public outcry that in these two cases and elsewhere, has resulted in generations-old landmarks being removed. Lee said that the monument controversy represents a major departure in how Americans see their nation's history and how that story is being told by many historians.

Prior to the 1960s, historians talked and wrote in the manner of "consensus history," that is, they told a story with an accepted body of facts that emphasized great men and major events as part of a panorama of ever-expanding political and human rights and economic progress. It was a history around which citizens could find a common identity and build a unifying national story. However, it neglected the role of women, people of color, and other self-defined minorities. More recently, historians are beginning to examine a new body of previously ignored facts and are telling new stories that do not fit the consensus model. Statues that in previous generations stood as symbols of a romanticized Confederacy dedicated to the cause of states' rights now to many Americans symbolize oppression and dedication to the right to keep slaves. Lee noted that the re-thinking of the role of monuments and even such remembrances as building and street names is not confined to the Civil War era. Controversy has swirled around figures as diverse as Christopher Columbus, Junipero Serra, and Woodrow Wilson as their actions and values are being reconsidered by the current generation of Americans. Monuments have their own story to tell beyond honoring past heroes, Professional historians, Lee explained, generally say it's a local decision as to what part of the past should be honored. Historical context and interpretation should be attached so that people can better understand why these monuments exist.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

The next meeting will be February 12, with Bob Igo scheduled to speak on "Planning in the Centre Region."

Respectfully submitted, Mike Bezilla, recording secretary

## **CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA TORCH CLUB MINUTES (12 February 2020)**

President Dick Held convened the meeting at 7 p.m. By unanimous vote, Charles Maxin and Carolyn Wilhelm were welcomed as new members. Dick thanked Carl Sillman for temporarily assuming treasurer Lee Stout's duties of collecting the evening's dinner money. He also noted that the club is building a database of who invited each member to his/her first Torch meeting. Members who were not present at the meeting are asked to send this information to Dick at [cpaasa@aol.com](mailto:cpaasa@aol.com). Vice President Ming Tien ([mxt3@psu.edu](mailto:mxt3@psu.edu)) reminded the group that he is still seeking volunteers to present programs for 2020-21, during his year as president.

Bob Igo then presented the evening's program, "Planning for Growth in the Centre Region," drawing on his experience as a member of the Harris Township Planning Commission since 2003. Bob noted that the basis for planning is the state Municipalities Planning Code, which empowers local governments to guide the development of land, structures, streets and public facilities in a way that promotes the preservation of natural and historic resources, encourages revitalization of urban centers, and ensures consistency of land use regulation. Centre County has seven planning regions (whose boundaries are those of the county's seven school districts), supported by the overall Centre County Planning Commission, comprised of elected officials representing each of the regions. In similar fashion, the Centre Region Planning Commission is comprised of one member from the planning commissions of each township, State College borough, and Penn State University. Bob noted that such an arrangement may not be as efficient as one centralized body of professional planners. However, it ensures that decision-making rests in the hands of community volunteers who are elected or appointed to their respective commissions.

Bob then focused on population. The university historically has been the most important driver; the student population alone has increased from approximately 16,000 in 1960 to more than 46,000 today. Centre Region population (including students) has climbed from about 35,000 in 1960 to nearly 100,000 today. Current projections estimate the region's total population will be about 114,000 in 2040. Population growth has implications across many areas. In housing, for example, regional dwelling units totaled nearly 35,000 units in 2010; about 4,600 units were added through 2019. Remaining capacity is estimated at a little over 10,000 units. Planning for such growth is therefore essential. So how are we doing so far? Bob pointed to the region's consistently high rankings in national surveys in "livability," entrepreneurial climate, education and similar quality-of-life measures as indications that planning has managed regional growth effectively. But what about the future? Major questions loom, such as: To what extent will Penn State continue to grow? Will tourism emerge as a dominant economic driver? What will the transportation needs be? What are the best ways to reconcile growth and sustainability?

The meeting adjourned at 8 p.m.

At the next meeting, March 11, Mike Bezilla will give a program on "A Railroad History of Scotia."

Respectfully submitted, Mike Bezilla, recording secretary

## CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA TORCH CLUB MINUTES (11 March 2020)

President Dick Held convened the meeting at 7 p.m. Vice President Ming Tien noted that he has four commitments for speakers in 2020-21, during his year as president, but he needs six more. He is open to all topics and urged members who might wish to give a talk to contact him ([mxt3@psu.edu](mailto:mxt3@psu.edu)). Jim Serene called members' attention to a q&a page with Ming in the March/April issue of the *Penn Stater* alumni magazine about his research in transforming cellulose into biofuel. The meeting's biographical talk was given by Art Goldschmidt, who noted that he is in his seventh year as secretary and has been a member of our local Torch Club since 1986. Art also spoke about the upcoming convention of the International Association of Torch Clubs, to be held June 18-21 in Boone, North Carolina. He said financial assistance is available to members who would like to attend and encouraged prospective attendees to contact him ([axg2@psu.edu](mailto:axg2@psu.edu)). (According to the IATC website (<http://torch20.org>), financial penalties for late registration and/or cancellation will be waived in light of covid-19 issues.)

Mike Bezilla then presented the evening's program, "Scotia: A Railroad History," in which he shared some aspects of his years of research and writing about the history of the long-gone iron ore-mining community situated a few miles west of State College. Mike told of how, in the early 1800s, the area around what became known as Scotia was an important source of timber that was made into charcoal to feed many small iron-making furnaces in the Nittany Valley. To a lesser extent it was the source of hematite ore for these furnaces. About 1880, prospectors for steel king Andrew Carnegie pronounced the ore ideal for steel-making using the Bessemer process. Carnegie then acquired more than 500 acres from landowner Moses Thompson. Ore mined at the site - soon named Scotia -- was shipped to Pittsburgh mills via the Pennsylvania Railroad, which built a branch to Scotia from its mainline in Tyrone. The mine had its own narrow-gauge railroad to haul ore from the diggings to the crusher and washer, where as many as eight carloads a day were given to the PRR. By the mid-1880s, Scotia had more than 500 residents. Its fortunes changed drastically in the early 1890s.

Carnegie began sourcing most of his ore from the immense high-grade deposits around Lake Superior, idling Scotia for several years. In 1899, a syndicate of East Coast investors acquired the property, and contracted with the Bellefonte Central Railroad to build a line to Scotia and haul the ore to Bellefonte. There the syndicate's two blast furnaces (Bellefonte and Nittany) reduced the ore to pig iron for shipment to steel mills. In 1910, the two furnaces closed permanently owing to steel companies' growing preference for smelting all of their own ore. Scotia was idled again, and its residents gradually moved away. Meanwhile, the McNitt-Huyett Lumber Co. began timbering several thousand acres around Scotia, moving logs over their own narrow-gauge railroad to a saw mill at Waddle. By 1920, forest reserves were exhausted. Theodore Boal (of World War I's Boal Machine Gun Troop fame) acquired the land for possible use as a training site for the Pa. National Guard. When the state chose Indiantown Gap instead, both the BFC and PRR pulled up their rails. Most of the Boal lands were eventually acquired by the Pa. Game Commission. During World War II, a private company backed by \$770,000 from the federal Defense Plant Corp. resumed mining. The ore was shipped over the Bellefonte Central on a newly constructed branch line. Bethlehem Steel Co. was the consignee. After 35 carloads, the steel company refused further shipments, claiming the ore was of insufficient quality. Scotia's infrastructure was sold as war surplus, and mining there came to a close.

The meeting adjourned at 8 p.m.

At the next meeting, April 8, Gordon DeJong will talk about "Refugees and Asylees in the Trump Era."

Respectfully submitted, Mike Bezilla, recording secretary

**April meeting cancelled due to Covid-19**

## CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA TORCH CLUB MINUTES (13 May 2020)

President Dick Held convened the meeting via Zoom (owing to restrictions on social distancing because of the Covid-19 pandemic) at 7 p.m. Twenty-five members were in attendance. Vice President Ming Tien announced that John Golbeck had agreed to serve as vice president in 2020-21 and Carl Sillman as treasurer. Both were then elected by unanimous vote. Ming reported that no one had volunteered to serve as recording secretary. He indicated that during his year as president, he would ask whoever presented the program at each meeting to prepare a brief summary. This would relieve the recording secretary of that chore, reducing the time it takes to prepare the minutes to less than an hour per month. Ming asked persons interested in serving as recording secretary to contact him ([mxt3@psu.edu](mailto:mxt3@psu.edu)). President Held reported that eight members had each recruited two or more new members. Roy Hammerstedt recruited the most, and at our next meeting at the Ramada his meal will be free, in recognition of his efforts. Phil Park then presented the evening's program on "Cooperation or Consolidation: Local Government in the Centre Region."

Phil noted that the State College borough and the five contiguous townships that comprise the Centre Region occupy 150 square miles in Centre County, which itself is larger in land area than Rhode Island. Each state is the creator of municipal subdivisions within its boundaries and has absolute control on the structure and powers of subordinate local governments. Pennsylvania has created 67 counties as administrative subdivisions to handle various state functions such as local court administration. The counties are further divided into 2561 general purpose local governments to carry out local governance, administer police and zoning powers, provide protection to persons and property, and maintain local infrastructure such as roads and public water and sewer systems. Municipalities are governed by a set of state laws called municipal codes that vary according to the class of government, such as boroughs and townships of the second class. Many of the general powers listed are comparable across classes. The differences arise primarily in how the governing bodies are organized.

Centre Region municipalities have a total population of 96,000, or approximately 60,000 if Penn State students are not counted. Phil pointed out that the student population matters to the member municipalities of the Centre Region Council of Government (COG) because students differ uniquely in their contribution to the local tax base. COG municipalities finance most general government activities through a combination of real estate and earned income taxes. The local tax burden, which approximately reflects the level of services provided, varies from a per capita (excluding students) low of \$317 in Halfmoon Township to \$1088 in State College. Ferguson, Patton and College townships have local tax burdens ranging from \$482 to \$560.

The Centre Region COG was formed fifty years ago to enhance communication and coordination among the municipalities. Although the COG has no power to enact ordinances or levy taxes, municipalities are empowered by state law to do cooperatively many of the functions and tasks they may do individually. Over the years, the COG has grown to be the primary organization sponsoring jointly funded fire protection, emergency planning and response, refuse collection, planning, building-code administration, and library and recreational services and programs. Because of the cooperative arrangements, citizens enjoy a wide range of high-quality services. No other community of more than 85,000 residents has a fire protection service that is primarily volunteer and costs only \$17 per person. All others have paid firefighter staff. The Centre Region COG is contiguous with the State College Area School District. In fact, by many definitions other than municipal boundaries, we are a single community. The question is whether all citizens' needs and priorities are better served through a cooperative arrangement such as COG or by consolidation into a single municipal government, which would require approval by referendum in each municipality.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

The next meeting will be on June 10. Louise Goldschmidt will give a talk on "Is That Thing Really a Mosque?"

Respectfully submitted, Mike Bezilla, recording secretary

## **CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA TORCH CLUB MINUTES (10 June 2020)**

President Dick Held convened the meeting via Zoom (owing to restrictions relating to the Covid-19 pandemic) at 7 p.m. There were twenty-five participants. Ed Buss received the Silver Torch award for his 34 years of devoted service to our Torch Club. President Held said that among Ed's accomplishments during those years were the presentation of seven talks, the recruitment of twelve new members, and service as club president. Ed expressed his deep appreciation and said how much he has enjoyed being a Torch member. Corresponding Secretary Art Goldschmidt was unable to persuade the members to decide immediately on a preferred candidate for IATC Vice President, so he asked them to review the information that he had sent them on May 29 about the three candidates and then express their preference to him by email. ([axg2@psu.edu](mailto:axg2@psu.edu)) He noted that five members have already expressed to him a preference for Susan Breen-Held. Art must report the Club's choice to the IATC BY JUNE 15. John Dillon has agreed to serve as the Club's Recording Secretary in 2020-21.

Louise Goldschmidt then gave a slide show, "Is That Thing Really a Mosque?" as a follow-up to her presentation last year, "What is an American Mosque?" in which she introduced the history of mosques in the U.S. from the early 20th century to the present. This year she took us farther afield, examining (1) two mosques in the Canadian province of Nunavut, which were trailers brought thousands of miles through the Canadian wilderness; (2) an "ecologically friendly mosque" in Cambridge, UK; (3) an egg-shaped Turkish mosque in Cologne, Germany; (4) a mushroom-shaped one in Copenhagen, Denmark; (5) the classic Great Mosque in Cordoba, Spain, part of which has been transformed into a Christian church; (6) the Great Umayyad Mosque of Damascus, originally a church which has been transformed into a mosque; and (7) the amazing mud-built mosques of Mali in western Africa. Louise concluded that although mosques can take an amazing variety of forms, they all maintain their unity of purpose, which is to serve as places for Muslim worship.

The discussion that followed the presentation noted the tendency of Islam to factionalize as Muslims moved farther from their original center. Other discussion topics included the resemblance between striped arches of the Cordoba mosque and the Cathedral in Aachen (which can also be found in Cairo); the fact that the Cologne mosque developed from an older structure; the migration of Muslims to Europe, Africa, and East Asia; the architectural features that are essential to every mosque; and whether Christians and Muslims ever managed to worship in the same building. Louise described mosques built by the Afghan camel drivers in Australia and the Saudis in Fidel Castro's Cuba. She said she considers the modern mosques in Malaysia and Indonesia to be especially beautiful and would like to give a future talk about them.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m., concluding the 2019-20 year.

The first meeting of the new year is scheduled for September 9, 2020.

Respectfully submitted, Mike Bezilla, Recording Secretary

## 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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