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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

President’s message: Our club remains in good hands.....	2
Past club presidents receive pins for their service.....	3
Member’s Moment: Kent Bermingham.....	3
Responding to the Evite from Secretary Seelbach.....	4
Schedule of Torch Club speakers and their papers for 2022-23.....	4
Board of Directors of the Torch Club of Columbus, Ohio, for 2022-23.....	4

### **Presentation by Stephen A. Sterrett on May 4: “The Challenge of Consensus on a Humane, Pragmatic Policy on Drug Abuse”**

Drug overdose deaths in the United States quintupled from 20,000 in 1999 to more than 100,000 in 2021 – a clear sign that the four decades old War on Drugs is a failure. Taking those figures as a point of departure, Stephen A. Sterrett will argue for more compassion and innovative public health measures to deal with substance use in his Torch paper, “The Challenge of Consensus on a Humane, Pragmatic Policy on Drug Abuse.” He will present the paper at the Columbus Torch Club meeting on May 4.



**Steve Sterrett**

Steve questions why government agencies continue to prosecute substance use with punitive law enforcement tools that haven’t worked, rather treating the situation as a public health crisis. “It’s not the whole story, but a critical component is the power of money, race and politics,” he says.

In his Torch paper, he traces the social history of drug use in the United States, the changing definition of addiction, and the growth in the last 30 years of the harm reduction movement. He commends the efforts of Columbus, Franklin County and community partners to incorporate harm reduction practices in their efforts to deal with substance abuse.

While Steve supports the decriminalization of marijuana use, he offers an important warning to policy-makers about who will control the marketing and sale of the products.

Steve has been a Torch member since 2002 and is editor of the club’s monthly newsletter. His previous Torch paper, “Race Matters,” was presented in October 2015 and received the Paxton Award from the International Association of Torch Clubs as the “2017 Best Torch Paper of the Year.”

### **Biography of Steve Sterrett**

For more than four decades, Steve Sterrett, 74, worked in journalism, public relations, and community  
(Continued on page 2)

## **Biography of Steve Sterrett**

(Continued from page 1)

development. Steve was raised in Toledo and earned his undergraduate degree in political science from Heidelberg University in 1970. He worked as a newspaper reporter and communications professional before joining The Ohio State University in 1978.

He worked for Ohio State for 31 years, the last 15 as community relations director of Campus Partners, the university's non-profit community redevelopment corporation. In 2009, Steve was one of the founders of the Weinland Park Collaborative (WPC), a partnership of nearly two dozen agencies and institutions working with the residents of the Weinland Park neighborhood to improve the quality of their lives and the community. After retiring from the university in 2010, he has worked as a consultant under a grant from The Columbus Foundation to coordinate the activities of the WPC. He became fully retired in 2019.

He and his wife, Karen, have three grown children and five grandchildren.

## **President's message: Our club remains in good hands**

As our Torch Club year comes to a close, I want to thank everyone for their support and encouragement as I navigated the waters as president this year. I learned so much about the workings of Torch and, can assure you, our Columbus club is in good hands with a dedicated and conscientious Board of Directors.

I look forward to working with our incoming president, Rai Goerler, as he takes the helm this summer. Rai and his Program Committee have assembled another great year of programs when we all return in October.

In the meantime, have a good summer. I always think June is the best month of summer with the beautiful greenery and fresh colors that spring rolled out for us. I'm looking forward to enjoying it. See you in the fall!



**Susan Tilgner**



**Dorothy Driskell, immediate past president of the International Association of Torch Clubs, presented Torch Club president's pins to past presidents of our club at the meeting April 6. Left to right with their year of service are John O'Meara (2008), Nancy Wardwell (2021), Rich Davis (2017), Francille Firebaugh (2012), David Hammond (2011), Dorothy Driskell (2013), Lee Vescelius (2007) and Jeff Caswell (2016).**

## Member's Moment: Kent Bermingham

*Presented by Constance A. Oulanoff on April 6 from the following notes:*

Kent Bermingham was born and raised in Michigan. He attended the Adelphi Academy during his junior and senior high school years.

After graduation, he joined the United States Army. He served two years at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C., where he was recognized as "Soldier of the Month." While in the Army, he also participated from 1963 to 1965 in Operation White Coat at Fort Detrick, Md. The operation was a part of the army's biological and germ warfare center, located in Frederick, Md. Participants agreed to be human "guinea pigs" and to be infected with the disease called tularemia (also known as rabbit fever). Such experimentation with humans is outlawed now.

The year he completed his participation in Operation White Coat, he married Jean. They now have three grown children and four grandchildren.

After Kent's military service, it was time to attend a university. Kent received a B.S. degree from Washington Adventist University in Tacoma Park, Md. Following that, he was awarded a fully funded Ford Foundation Scholarship to law school at Howard University in Washington, D.C. He eventually received accreditation as a certified public accountant.

Kent's professional experiences are very extensive. From 1969 through 1998, he was vice president or president of the Patrick Petroleum Company, Jennings Petroleum Company, Amfuels Corporation, Washington Adventist Hospital in D.C., Worthington Foods, Milestone Medical Care in Columbus, and Milestone Benefits Agency in Powell, Ohio.

His outside activities were as a board member or trustee of St. Andrews University, North Community Counseling Center, Flint Institute of Arts in Flint, Mich., Worthington Arts Council, Powell Liberty Historical Society, and the American Society of Overseas Research. With the latter, he joined a volunteer team investigating medical heart procedures in China.

Kent's hobbies are archeology and genealogy. With St. Andrews University, he went to Israel, Jordan and Egypt in the summers. In Zedea, Israel, his team dug down deep at the Wailing Wall. They were able to find a continuous wall dating back to the Iron Age. In Jordan his team discovered and exposed the top of an ancient temple.

In regard to genealogy, Kent restores and beautifies cemeteries that have been totally neglected. He spends his own money to build fences, weed and restore gravestones in Powell and near Travers City, Mich. All in all, he already has restored 700 gravestones. His new project is to create a database of all registered Native Americans. Kent also has an antique booth in Powell.



**Constance Oulanoff presented Kent Bermingham for the Member's Moment at the April 6 meeting.**

## Responding to the Evite from Secretary Seelbach

Club secretary Thom Seelbach has sent you via electronic mail an Evite to attend the Torch Club meeting on May 4. Respond promptly to the Evite so he will have an accurate count of meals needed. You also may respond to him at tseelbach@gmail.com or (614) 499-3090.

The directions for responding to the Evite are:

1. After you click on the email from Evite, it will bring up a new window on the Evite website. You must click your response in this new window for Evite to register your response.
2. The guest count is the actual number of attendees. If only you are attending, the count will be 1. The cost for a guest is \$30. A potential member may attend one dinner meeting without charge.

If you need a ride to a Torch meeting or are willing to provide transportation, please contact the club's Fellowship Committee through its chair, Diane Selby, at (614) 571-4226 and Dianeselby@gmail.com.

## Schedule of Torch Club speakers and their papers for 2022-23

October 6, 2022: **"Walking the Way: El Camino de Santiago de Compostela"** by the Rev. Dr. Susan Warren Smith

November 3, 2022: **"Climate Change in Ohio"** by Jennie McAdams, Franklin County Public Health

December 1, 2022: **"An Irregular Christmas,"** a holiday gala with Nate Terry, composer and publisher, Major 7 Publishing

January 5, 2023: **"OSU's Most Famous Murderer: Professor James Howard Snook"** by Raimund Goerler

February 2, 2023: **"Recent Advances in Medicine"** by Dr. Gary Hinzman

March 2, 2023: **"The Columbus Economy"** by Bill LaFayette

April 6, 2023: **"The Sort-of-Great Columbus Trivia Quiz"** by Joe Blundo

May 4, 2023: **"The Challenge of Consensus on a Humane, Pragmatic Policy on Drug Abuse"** presented by Steve Sterrett

### **Torch Club's monthly meeting agenda**

4:30-5:30 p.m. Board of Directors meeting  
5:30-6:15 p.m. Cocktails and conversation  
6:15-6:35 p.m. Business matters  
6:35-7:30 p.m. Speaker  
7:30-8:45 p.m. Dinner and table discussion

Meetings are conducted in The Ohio State University Faculty Club, 181 S. Oval Drive.

## Board of Directors for Torch Club of Columbus, Ohio, for 2022-23

President – Susan Tilgner

President-elect – Rai Goerler

Immediate Past President – Nancy Wardwell

Secretary – Thom Seelbach

Assistant Secretary – Diane Selby

Treasurer – David Lenz

Assistant Treasurer – vacant

Fellowship Chair – Diane Selby

Membership Chair – Dorothy Driskell

Nominating Chair – Nancy Wardwell

Region 5 Director – Nancy Wardwell

Newsletter Editor – Steve Sterrett

Website Editor – Rai Goerler

Director-at-Large – Christina Atzberger (2024)

Director-at-Large – David Hansen (2024)

Director-at-Large – Paul Niswander (2023)

Director-at-Large – Dorothy Driskell (2023)