



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

March 26, 2024

2023-2024 Board Members

President Edwin Peacock

Pres Elect Kim Brattain

Past Pres William Bradley

Secretary John Cantrell

Treasurer Craig Field

Exec Sec Christine Cipriano

Directors 2022-2024

Will Barnhardt

Glenn Bouley

Margaret Donovan

Laura Little

Mark Norman

Diego Ramon

Robert Shaw

Directors 2023-2025

Patrick Baker

Linwood Bolles

Terri DeBoo

Andy Dinkin

Donna Dunlap

David Head

Joel Ford

Membership Terri DeBoo

Foundation Joe Morris

Programs Andy Dinkin



Mike Connor



Charles Dahlgren



Tony Zeiss

HOW THREE BOY SCOUTS BECAME THREE AMAZING ROTARIANS

by **Marilynn Bowler**

To no one's surprise, we had a full house for our How I Got Where I'm At (ouch) meeting. It's always one of our club's favorite programs.

Chris Kemper took the mic to share the history of how HIGWIA came about, and he found it heralds back to 1945 when John Pender was President of our club and decided that learning more about our fellow Rotarians was not only interesting but also very entertaining. He was right! Almost eighty years later this fascinating introduction to some "new" and some "not-so-new" members, whom

we thought we knew pretty well, shows us intriguing sides to each one; some quite poignant; some quite shocking; some hilarious; and some absolutely amazing.

Chris lined up two of our more recent members - **Chuck Dahlgren** and **Mike Connor** - and one of our longtime members (and esteemed past President) **Tony Zeiss**. Each lived up to the challenge of telling us HIGWIA.

CHARLES DAHLGREN. With a sly grin, Chuck caught our attention right off by tossing out familiar words and names which prompted reactions around the room: "Conehead costumes, Wild and Crazy Guy, Groucho Marx, and the start of the Cold War." He took us back to his boyhood in Frederick, Maryland where he grew up as the eldest of four boys. His father was a noted biochemist with Fort Detrick, a chemical and biological warfare agency, and his mother assumed the roles of stay-at-home Mom and legal secretary at a major law firm. Chuck loved sports and participated in all of the typical youth Little League programs inclusive of baseball, football, basketball, and swimming. He was an enthusiastic Boy Scout who not only earned his Eagle Scout ranking but also received The Certificate of Merit Award (which actually appeared in Boys Life Magazine). Chuck continues to live the motto of the Boy Scouts and considers it a vital piece of his success.

As a class leader from an early age, he continued that path through high school (Class Vice President, Co-Captain of both football and baseball teams) and even took to the stage as a thespian, appearing in four plays and was runner-up in the Maryland State Competition. Chuck had a fascinating array of jobs while in high school and college, including as a waiter, cook, Lifeguard, and even as an employee of an aluminum plant ... all of which demonstrates his ability to achieve while multitasking. He earned his Business Degree from Catawba College (Attention, Pat McCrory) which subsequently steered him toward his amazing career in banking and mortgage via Wachovia, Deloitte, Chase Manhattan, Wells Fargo, and Guarantee Rate, achieving his rank as Sales/Loan Administrator, Senior Management, Project Manager, and additional noteworthy positions. Add to that a stint in the Coast Guard Reserves. Each step proved his leadership ability and his dedication to getting the job done in the best manner. Chuck is a proven achiever.

MIKE CONNOR. Growing up in nearby Gastonia, Mike was the eldest of three children whose father owned and operated rental properties while his mother was a teacher. From them he learned the value of a strong work ethic and the importance of academia. He was a Boy Scout and involved in a Masonic group which is where he learned to focus on "service about self" (Sound familiar?). The fact that he went to the Naval Academy speaks eloquently of his intellect, his commitment, and his plan to succeed. After graduating from Clemson, he went to UNC Law School and, while there, met his wife. They moved from Chapel Hill to Charlotte and are the proud parents of three children. With a goal of specializing in Intellectual Property, he has spent his law career to date with Bell Seltzer Park & Gibson and its successor, Alston & Bird, concentrating on personal computing, mobile phones, internet technologies, and medical devices. Mike strongly believes in the importance of spirituality in his life and those Christian beliefs guide how he lives his life. During COVID, Mike began doing more reading and took up running, both of which he continues to enjoy even post-COVID. He's a huge fan of podcasts and especially enjoys those about religion and philosophy. A series on the Old Testament "got him hooked," drawing his attention to the importance of being engaged in his community. That, of course, led him to Charlotte Rotary. Mike concluded his remarks with a list of principles we should all think about. Mike said that during his law career, he has met smart people, made friends around the world, and had some

fun. WE say, Mike IS a smart person, HAS made many friends in Charlotte Rotary, and IS fun to be around.

TONY ZEISS. "Why Am I Still In Rotary" was the topic Chris Kemper assigned to Tony and, in typical **Tony Zeiss** standard, he gave us his "all." Born to a "consummate salesman focused on God" father and a mother who raised eight children with the instruction to "Let your conscience be your guide" and "Pride goeth before the fall," we can see quite easily why Tony took the path in life centered on faith, family, and country. From his youth, he was gifted with an incredible ability to see and feel God's messages. He remembers well, hearing his favorite Bible verse, "Let our light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven." Taking those words to heart, he also found a deep interest in the principle of positive thinking. His Dad recommended Norman Vincent Peale's "The Power Of Positive Thinking" and Tony devoured it. He names Rick Warren's, "The Purpose Driven Life" as his favorite book besides The Bible.

Amazingly, - and this seems to be the trend among our speakers today - Tony was a Boy Scout who earned his Eagle Scout badge in conjunction with the God and Country Award both of which he describes as "life-affirming."

As a student at Indiana State University, he set a goal to become a teacher which he did, and then rapidly moved toward administration. His love of sales and leadership accounts for the tremendous success Tony has earned as an educator. He talks often of his theory on how recruiting others to raise dollars for charities and community projects is not a chore but, rather, a gift he offers to others by giving them the opportunity to do meaningful things.

Tony met Beth in Texas fifty-three years ago and they instantly realized they had a strong connection via sharing the same values and goals, in particular regarding education. Tony has taught at high schools, universities, and Sunday Schools, and has achieved the top level ... he has been a community college president - at CPCC and PCC. Following his retirement from the community college system, he and Beth established the first comprehensive Museum of the Bible in Washington, DC which is now the largest museum in our capital.

To know Tony is to know excellence in leadership, service for others, doing the right things, and the importance of praising God. He wrapped up his presentation with these words, "We love America, and we love American history."

A recording of the meeting can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/927747568>
The program introduction begins at approximately 17 minutes and 45 seconds.