

Rotary  
Club of  
Charlotte



# THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

May 14, 2024

## 2023-2024 Board Members

President Edwin Peacock

Pres Elect Kim Brattain

Past Pres William Bradley

Secretary John Cantrell

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Exec Sec Christine Cipriano

### Directors 2022-2024

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### 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



Dave Fleming,  
Author, "Who's Your Founding Father?"



Scott Syfert,  
Author, "The First American Declaration  
of Independence?"



Moderator - Charlotte Rotary Past President,  
Dr. Tony Zeiss,  
President Emeritus, Central Piedmont Community College

## *Zeiss/Syfert/Fleming ~ Mecklenburg History At Its Best*

by **Marilynn Bowler**

Much like Captain James Jack who rode furiously to deliver the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence to the Continental Congress in 1775, **Dr. Tony Zeiss** strode to the front of our Rotary meeting on May

21st to deliver a fascinating recap of the historical "MeckDec" document with all its intrigue. He introduced our guest speakers who are two of the foremost authorities on the subject and who have both published books filled with incredible research and facts.

Scott Syfert, author of THE FIRST AMERICAN DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE? and David Fleming, author of WHO'S YOUR FOUNDING FATHER? were seated comfortably in the front of the packed audience in the hotel ballroom, ready for **Tony Zeiss** to lead the interview-style program. We knew it would be interesting and informative, but we had no idea what was in store for us. The trio of history buffs brought to life the scenario that took place 249 years ago ... an event that will be celebrated on May 20, 2025, when its 250th anniversary occurs.

A little background on Scott Syfert and David Fleming which qualify both men as MeckDec authorities:

Scott is a co-founder of the prestigious May 20th Society and a founding member of the Charlotte Trail of History Board. He is currently Board President. A corporate attorney with Moore & Van Allen, he comes by his affection for all things Charlotte via his mother, Pam Syfert, who was Charlotte's highly respected (and beloved) City Manager from 1996-2007. In addition to his MeckDec book, he has also written EMINENT CHARLOTTEANS: TWELVE HISTORICAL PROFILES FROM NORTH CAROLINA'S QUEEN CITY. **Tony Zeiss** called Scott "one of Charlotte's most enthusiastic promoters of its history."

David spent thirty years writing for SPORTS ILLUSTRATED before moving to ESPN Sports. During that time, he wrote feature articles and cover stories on a diverse roster of sports figures and is considered a thought-provoking and innovative wordsmith whose interests also include history and science. He's frequently interviewed in the media and was described by **Tony Zeiss** as "a true Mecklenburg Patriot."

Both men share not only an incredible interest in preserving the true story of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence and confirming its actual place in the history of our country but also share a unique affiliation with the London School of Economics.

As Scott and David spoke, clearly as colleagues and cohorts, we were amazed at the years both have spent in research on the subject and the depth of their commitment. Based on their reviews of eye-witness accounts, authentic affidavits, and even scribbled handwriting on the back of a long-ago-stored document, delving deeply into the writings found within the British archives, they've collectively put together a body of evidence that validates that Mecklenburg was, indeed, the first to declare independence from Great Britain ... beating out Thomas Jefferson's claims otherwise.

Both authors' books are filled with lively writing and true facts about the historic document.

Scott and David live and breathe all things related to the "Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence." (You will see and hear that when you access the audio/visual attached to this Rotary Reporter.)

Once again, **Tony Zeiss** has taken us back in time to learn and enjoy the fascinating role our own Mecklenburg County played in the history of America.

A recording of the meeting can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/949176525>  
The program introduction begins at approximately 26 minutes 30 seconds.