



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

March 4, 2025

2024-2025 Board Members

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Lori Keeton

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Membership John Cantrell

Foundation Joe Morris

Programs Luther Moore



D. Craig Horn, President, Churchill Society of North Carolina

by **Susie Masotti**

Charlotte Rotary Club was pleased to have Craig Horn, President of the Churchill Society of North Carolina serve as our speaker this week. He was introduced by long-time Rotary Member, **Catherine Bracey**.

Catherine shared that Craig was born and raised in Iowa, and after a brief stint as a drummer with The Tracers, he joined the Air Force, where he served as a Russian linguist during the Cold War. He used his skills to listen in on the Russians and report conversations back to the Department of Defense. Later Craig sold his food business and relocated to Union County, NC where he successfully ran for NC House of Representatives District 68 and held office for five terms. Craig led the efforts to move public education into the digital age and was recognized by the NC Technology Association as the Public Leader of the Year and was later recognized as one of 25 "Ed Tech Heroes" for his work promoting a digital education environment to provide quality education to every student. He was the only elected official in the country to make that list. He served as Wedington's mayor from November 2021 to December 2023.

Through a chance meeting of Lady Mary Soames, youngest daughter of Sir Winston Churchill, at a conference in Boston, Craig has enjoyed a decade-long relationship with the Churchill family. He is a recognized expert on Winston Churchill, President of the Churchill Society of North Carolina and a long-time board member of the International Churchill Society. He was honored to travel with the Churchill family and deliver a eulogy for Lady Mary Soames. With all this, he still finds time to serve as a proud Rotarian and is President-Elect of the

Rotary Club of Waxhaw-Weddington!

Craig thanked everyone in attendance for asking him to serve as today's speaker. Craig began his remarks by stating that any success he has had has come from saying "Sir, Yes Sir" when he served in the Military. That attitude took him across the world as a linguist, to Raleigh to serve the state of North Carolina, to serving as Mayor of his hometown and for many years serving to remember and help educate people about his hero, Sir Winston Churchill. To this day, Craig is often asked "What Would Churchill do" and he answers that Churchill's daughter had once said to him, don't ever try to think of what my father would do – no one could predict what he would say or do.

In 1950 Churchill was named "Man of the Half Century" by Time Magazine. Craig asked the Editor, why he was not named the Man of the Century - his reply was that ultimately the 20th century became about technology and with a changing world, the Man of the Century was awarded to Albert Einstein. However, Churchill was a renaissance man! When statesmanship enters the conversation, his name is mentioned. In 1953 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for Literature for his mastery of the spoken and written word. He liked to say that as a politician, his family lived "pen to mouth" (his written work bringing in the lion's share of his family's income).

Churchill was a soldier, politician, painter, and a brick layer. He fought on the front lines of five wars – the Boer War, Cuba, India, Sudan and South Africa. Not only did he fight, but he also fought on the front lines and participated in hand-to-hand combat. In Sudan he led the last cavalry charge of the British. He was always under fire and was never injured.

To study Churchill is to study Statesmanship. His motto was to study history and to remember that the best practice was to practice what you preach and preach what you practice. He described democracy as the art and science of running the circus from the monkey cage.

Craig stated that truly great leaders are the best speakers. The one word that kept Northern Europe going was "Churchill." As the Speaker of the Century, he had five rules that he always followed:

- Begin strongly – he believed you had just 90 seconds to grab your audience's attention. No jokes.
- Focus your message - Your audience should be able to tell what your speech is in the first sentence.
- Paint a picture of the mind's eye – so they can see what you're saying.
- Talk to your audience – not at them. Be willing to listen and to change.
- End with Emotion – any winning must be deserved. Deserved victory is the touchstone of every thought, word, and deed.

Craig gave examples of leaders that, like Churchill, used phrases such as Eisenhower who was known to always have white match books (because he was a chain smoker) and if you were taking too long to convey your message, he would fling a match book cover at them and say if you can't

write it on this, it's not worth hearing. President John F. Kennedy, on his inauguration day, asking "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country" is another example of fine leaders who used their words to inspire others. Craig considers Churchill's March 5, 1946, speech in Fulton, Missouri to be his best where he uttered the phrase "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent." Which is the ultimate "painting a picture" example.

He was filled with wit – Lady Astor, who was a US citizen who moved to the UK and became the first US Citizen to join the House of Commons, and not a Churchill fan was exasperated with him after an exchange and stated that if he were her husband she would poison his tea, to which he replied if I were your husband, I would drink it. Churchill believed that you had to deserve victory, not earn it. Craig has a poster in his home of Churchill with the statement "Deserve Victory" which reminds him of the line from Saving Private Ryan that Tom Hanks uttered to Matt Damon – "Earn this" and he takes it personally. The price of greatness is taking things personally.

He ended by letting the audience know that not only was Churchill an athlete, but participated in the Olympics in Polo and Fencing, two sports in which he was world-renowned.

Craig took a few questions from the audience:

1. What was Churchill's reaction to being pushed out by Roosevelt and Stalin? His wife Clementine stated that it was a blessing in disguise, to which Churchill responded well then, it's well disguised. Churchill tried to put a good face on it, but he was devastated.
2. How many books have been written about Churchill, what are some of your favorites, and what is your favorite movie? Craig replied that the number of books about Churchill is in the thousands, there are 1,115 biographies alone (the most about any individual ever written). He shared three books (and had them with him) that he would recommend – **Churchill** by Paul Johnson, **Churchill's Citadel** by Catherine Carter and **Churchill A Life by Martin Gilbert**. He is not always a fan of how Churchill is portrayed on film (especially on "The Crown") but he would say the one that he likes the best is "Darkest Hour" with Gary Oldham portraying Churchill. Craig and his wife were invited to the premier with the family. While the family was just as impressed with Oldham, the woman who played Clementine nailed the role and the family was thrilled. The quote in the movie attributed to Churchill, "he has mobilized the English language and sent it into battle" was a true quote, but it was written by Edward R. Murrow. It was written when Kennedy bestowed honorary citizenship on him.

On a personal note, Craig was a wonderful speaker and provided video of Churchill speaking. There is no way I can capture how wonderful his presentation was on paper, and I highly encourage you to view the video in its entirety. It's worth the time!

A recording of the meeting can be found here:

Without slides: <https://vimeo.com/1062910982>

With slides: <https://vimeo.com/1062907118>

Your introduction begins at about 27 minutes and 40 seconds.