

Rotary
Club of
Charlotte



REPORTER

December 11, 2018

SUZIE FORD...JC COUSAR...LARRY HYATT Holiday Edition: How I Got Where I'm At

For those of you who don't know about HIGWIA (How I Got Where I Am); it's one of the most popular programs we do. This week's program featured three people who all own their own businesses plus an all-American theme "beer, guns and real estate."



Each had seven minutes to tell their story. The first Rotarian to share her story was **Suzie Ford**. Suzie Ford, who with her husband Todd Ford – also a Rotarian – owns NoDa Brewing Company. NoDa's website describes Suzie as a details-oriented free spirit, a proud mom, a diet Coke lover who once worked in motorsports marketing and a person who plays Lady GaGa songs far too loud.

Suzie started out by sharing as she said "the back story," which included how this is a second marriage and career for both her and Todd. Both her career in banking and Todd's career as an airline pilot came to a halt in 2009, due to buy outs. Todd had an opportunity to continue as a pilot, but in Cincinnati. Even with the promise of a kegerator if Suzie moved, the thought of four kids and being snowed in wasn't appealing enough. Plus, Suzie

and Todd wanted more control of their future, their destiny and wanted to be together. Tapping (no pun intended) into Todd being a chemistry major and a great home brewer coupled with Suzie's love of beer, operations and people set them on a course to one day operating a brewery.

Suzie explained that after many home beer parties and hearing from friends "you should start a brewery," they did just that. While Old Mecklenburg Brewery was already established their niche is lagers, and Suzie and Todd created ales. With coming right off the 2009 recession, banks thought "we were crazy" to ask for financing. However, Suzie and Todd found a provision where they could self-direct their 401k funds into a business.

When they went to open their brewery a news crew stopped by and Suzie thought this would be good publicity. Instead WBTV did a story on "opening a business in these times" with anchors Maureen O'Boyle and Paul Cameron commenting on air "we wish them nothing but the best!"

Suzie remembers crying and having a brief freak out moment, and then snapping out of it by saying "failure is not an option." Knowing that people wanted local crafted beer from their neighbors kept her going. Because of their tenacity, NoDa Brewing has grown from three to 33 beer styles. In 2014, NoDa Brewing Company earned Best American IPA. With their growth they've also experienced growing pains by not being able to keep up

with sales plus a hop shortage. So, in 2015, they contracted out hops to help with production.

Next up was **Julius “JC” Cousar**, both a native Charlottean and a military veteran. JC is president of Cousar Realtors, a Ceasar Corporation Company. He grew up in Second Ward, about three blocks from Covenant Presbyterian. JC is an alumna of Johnson C. Smith University and fought in Korea.

JC started by saying he attended Carber college, now Central Piedmont Community College, where he wrote a term paper titled “The miracles of Christ.” At that time, Dr. Counts helped get JC a scholarship to Johnson C. Smith University. He also needed a job and got one at the U.S. Post Office. In 1963, he graduated from college but kept his job at the post office. He shared how one day his supervisor asked him “Why do you work so hard?” JC’s reply was “I want to do something special one day.” And that’s when his supervisor told him about real estate, so in 1966 JC got his real estate license. However, he wanted to teach and so he was going to go back to get his master’s and considered Howard University and UNC Chapel Hill. After asking how much more money a year would he earn with his masters and was told \$500, he opened his own real estate office in 1969 in his mom’s house.

JC’s business really took off when Jimmie McKee, the owner of Charlotte’s historic Excelsior Club, which opened in 1944 and a touchstone for generations of African-Americans offered him an office next door. JC would be at the club’s happy hour from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. and sold more houses than he could count.

His business was growing and JC needed help so from 9:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. he taught real estate classes out of his office. He was also the first Realtor® to integrate his company.

He shared that once during the recession a lot of apartment complexes were folding and he had the chance to buy one. He approached Johnson C. Smith University to advertise to house students. When they told him that wasn’t possible he asked for a list of students who would be attending the university and he reached out to their parents to house their students.

It’s no wonder JC has forged such a successful business career.

Last, we heard from another native Charlottean and Vietnam veteran **Larry Hyatt**. During his introduction Ellison Clary shared that he and Larry have known each other for 50 years, ever since they overlapped at UNC Charlotte. Larry is the owner of Hyatt Coin & Gun, a business he took over from his father. Today, the business is one of the largest firearms dealerships in the southeast. These days he’s in the middle of turning the business over to his son Mitch.

Larry opened his remarks with “Nothing like being in a controversial business. Firearms have a good and bad side.”

As a self-proclaimed baby boomer, Larry talked about all the different schools he went to in Charlotte because of the need to accommodate his generation. He shared that his father was a coin collector and that the Boy Scouts had a coin collector badge.

In 1964, when the government decided to take silver out of coins, silver coins became a business. But in 1968, the government ended the ability to redeem silver certificates for coins. Larry said people were flying in from New York and all over and coming to his

business to cash in.

In 1975, the ownership of gold opened after the gold was banned in 1933 by the government and restricted for use by jewelers and dentists. This put Hyatt Coin into the gold bullion business. In 1980, the Hunt Brothers came along and the price of gold that was \$40 per ounce dropped 50 percent in one day to \$20 per ounce.

When the 1968 Firearms Act wiped out the mail-in firearm business, Hyatt Coin went into full force and used proceeds from silver and gold to fund their firearm business. When the 2007 recession rolled around economists was saying don't buy gold but in 2009 and 2010 gold was the highest performing asset in the country. Larry said the lesson to be learned here is that the experts aren't always right.

Larry shared that serving in Vietnam helped him more than college, but after taking a real estate course at Central Piedmont he learned to become a subject matter expert.

He explained that in an advertising course, his professor asked if anyone had ever been interviewed by the media. His answer was "no" and that he wouldn't talk to the media. Her answer "you missed an opportunity for free advertising." That stuck with Larry because at the time firearm dealers would not talk to the media and so he decided he would be their subject matter expert. He sees his job with the media to make sure both sides are heard.

Finally, he closed with admiration for Charlotte and being able to watch it boom whether it's been the airport "mushroom" as he put it to watching South Park emerge from a quail field. He's also grateful having the help of education and the G.I. Bill having no debt when he graduated. Now he looks forward to having his son Mitch in the business since his other son is in Texas, as well as having one of his five grandchildren to carry on the business.

Speaker Write-Up: Kim McMillan; *Head Table:* JC Cousar, Mike Hawley, Suzie Ford, Larry Hyatt, Elly Clary; *Invocation:* Em Syrewicze; *Visitors & Guests:* Wes Sturges; *Photos:* Sandy Osborne; *Greeters:* Bryan Adams & Linwood Bolles

CLUB NEWS

Mark Norman thanked everyone for supporting The Salvation Army Kettle Drive through raffle tickets, ringing the bell, or donating prizes for the raffle. Congratulations to raffle winners **George Edmiston, Bill Constangy, Sam Ryburn, Julie Haack, Chad Lloyd,** and **Margaret Marshall**. Mark will be in touch to confirm your raffle selection and will report on total funds raised next week.

We are up to 44 volunteers (55 needed) to serve breakfast on Christmas morning to clients served by Charlotte Rescue Mission. This project was started in 2011 and has become a club favorite. Sign up is available on the club's website: www.charlotterotary.org. Click on the Service tab and you will see a sign-up box. You can also send an email to the Rotary office: sandy@charlotterotary.org. Volunteers are asked to arrive at the Mission between 6:15am and 6:30am. The dress is a white shirt and black pants – a bow tie will be provided upon arrival.

Two of our valuable members will be out until sometime in January...both had knee surgeries on Monday...**Bert Voswinkel** meniscus repair and **Bill Gill** full knee replacement. Remember these guys as you are walking around without knee pain 😊 .



The photo posted on Charlotte Rotary Club's Facebook shows **Jerry Coughter, Woodson Gardner, Bill Bradley, Em Syrewicze, Glenn Bouley, Mike Ranson** and Tyler Richardson at the **CLUB SOCIAL HOLIDAY EDITION** at Merchant & Trade Rooftop Bar. **Wes Clark** and Mara & **Wil Bosbyshell** stopped by (missed the photo op) Sorry for the short notice on this one...holiday parties bumped our group and there was only one week to let everyone know. Stay tuned for the next impromptu gathering.

Dena Diorio commented as a member of the Leading on Opportunity Council regarding solutions to improve economic mobility in Charlotte in the recent Charlotte Business Journal.

Anne and **Russell Ranson** lost their 14 year old special needs granddaughter, Catherine Moore, on December 5th in Fulton, Maryland. Keep the Ranson family in your prayers. <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/fredericknewspost/obituary-print.aspx?n=catherine-moore&pid=190955196>.



Photo from Icons & Phenoms Awards luncheon which honored professional integrity and community service. Recipients from Charlotte Rotary: **Colleen Brannan, Mac McCarley, David Erdman, Pender McElroy, Mike Crum** and **Alan Simonini**.

Mark Norman arranged for our exchange student, **Kuba**, to participate in the Chef's Choice class at Johnson & Wells last Saturday. Our guy from Poland learned the secrets to creating traditional southern food.

Fried chicken, shrimp & grits, collards and black eyed peas!

MEMBERSHIP

07/01/2018	288
12/11/2018	282
Net Increase:	-6
New Members:	



Approve for Membership (comments to Rotary office by 12/18/18)

Jessica Mallicote

Carolinas Aviation Museum (*Classification: Museum, Aviation*)

Sponsor: Eric Davis

Endorsed: Catherine Bracey and Herb Harriss

Visitors	8
Club Members	111
Total	119 (47.6%)

Guests: Peggie Cousar-Mohammad, Jessica Mallicote, Rick Fogle, Sarah Crowder, Bob Henderson, Joshua Hoyle, Ella Hoyle, Howard Hoyle, III

BIRTHDAYS (12/19/18 – 12/25/18)

12/19 Ed Wadsworth

12/20 Wes Clark

12/25 Pender McElroy

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES (12/19/18 – 12/25/18)

12/19 Norma & Tom Burgess

12/19 Alexandra & Alex Myrick

12/20 Kristi & Jerry Walters

ROTARY ANNIVERSARIES (12/19/18 – 12/25/18)

03 years – Stuart Hair

09 years – John zumBrunnen

13 years – Karen Calder

13 years – Lynn Johnson

53 years – Dal Shefte

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

12/18 Holiday Program – InReach Singers (bring your children/grandchildren)

NOT MEETING 12/25/18 and 1/1/19

01/08 – China's Global Positioning panel with Professor Shelley Rigger (Davidson College) and Tate Nurkin (Asia Strategist)

01/15 – International Rotary Projects panel with Jim Hintz (Peru), Firoz Peera (Global) and John Tabor (Haiti)

01/22 - Egbert L. J. Perry - Chairman, Fannie Mae and CEO of Integral Group

01/29 – Lynn Good – CEO, Duke Energy

Photos from our luncheons and other events can be found on Flickr [Click here](#)

Sorry...I forgot to take pictures in Bert's absence. Maybe next week will be better.



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