



THIS WEEK'S SPEAKER

March 2, 2021

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HOW I GOT WHERE I'M AT Highlighting Members:



**Reginald "Reggie"
Johnson, City of
Charlotte, Fire Chief**



**Andrew "Andy" Ross,
Arcos Properties,
Founder and Managing
Principal**

By Elly Clary

Two Rotarians who share geographic and inspiration influences presented their HIGWIA insights. For Charlotte Fire Chief Reggie Johnson and real estate executive Andy Ross, the District of Columbia and strong ambition shaped, in Rotary parlance, "how I got where I'm at."

From Fairfax County, VA, Johnson started working at 16 at a super market. He had to drop out of Clemson University to return to suburban DC grocery work,

then hooked on with the Peace Corp before landing with the Fairfax County Fire-Rescue Department.

Ross overcame a family crisis as a child in Durham. Later, he enjoyed a taste of real estate in Saturday visits with his grandfather who was turning old tobacco farms into single-family residential projects. He recalled that exposure in his first job in the DC area.

Johnson fell in love with fire service. “It is the best job in the world,” he said. “I still feel that way.”

Fueling Johnson’s professional growth was a role with public safety communications and a collaboration with Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. At the University of Maryland Global Campus, he earned a bachelor’s in Management Studies and a master’s in Emergency Management.

At his chief’s behest, he took a class for aspiring fire chiefs. “When someone in management suggests you do something,” Johnson said, “the answer should be ‘yes.’”

He was looking for a new opportunity in 2019 when the Charlotte Fire Department top spot opened. He became Charlotte’s first African-American fire chief.

He’s proud of his department’s top ranking with the Insurance Services Office and high marks with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International.

Married 25 years, he calls wife Angela his rock. A plaque in his office reads simply: Forever, Friends, Family, Faith.

Ross spent a year at Appalachian State University before transferring to UNC-Chapel Hill. There he figured out his identity with the help of strong fraternity ties. After graduation, those connections helped him find a real estate brokerage gig in DC and surrounding counties.

“It wasn’t glamorous,” he said. Indeed, he wore out his shoes walking around several counties searching for someone to lease restaurant space in a dying shopping center. He succeeded and filled the other vacancies, too. Ultimately, the center sold for a solid profit.

“I learned a good lesson about real estate,” he said. He added that to precepts passed on by his grandfather and many other mentors.

Now with native Charlottean wife Katherine and son Hunter, Ross lives in Myers Park. He is founder and managing principal of Arcos Properties where he continues to mix persistence with real estate.

“I deal in investment sales, office buildings, development sites and industrial buildings,” he said.

He outlined his modus operandi: “We’ve got an issue that needs to be solved. This is an asset. What is it? What has it been? What could it be? What are the steps that need to be taken to get it there?”

What are the goals we're going to meet for all the parties involved and the stakeholders along the way?"

His job, he said, is "reconciling all those interests."

*A recording of the program is available here: <https://vimeo.com/519164676>
HIGWIA program introduction begins at the 11:10 minute mark.