



Jackie Lamb
President

The Renaissance Society
of Sacramento

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Renaissance Website:
<https://csus.edu/rensoc>

Key Dates

Saturday, August 1

Harvest Day
Horticulture Center
11549 Fair Oaks Blvd
8am - 2pm

Friday, August 7

Backstage Tour of Harris
Center with EDM
10am

August 14

Fall 2026 Discovery Day
& Open House, 10am - 1pm

Monday, August 17

Program Sign-up Opens

Friday, August 21

RS Tech Training-Teaching
on Campus

August 31,

Fall Semester
Programs begin

THE RENAISSANCE RECORDER

California State University, Sacramento

Lifelong Learning Since 1986

President's Message

Well, very soon each of us will be looking over the Program Guide in anticipation of enrolling in seminars, SIGs, etc. The catalogue will be opened up on August 10th so mark your calendars. We are planning a **Discovery Day on August 14th** where you can attend an hour-long session to become familiar with all aspects of the Renaissance Society. After the presentation the Open House will be opened. These programs will be held in the Student Union starting at 10:00. Many of the Program Leaders, each of our committees, campus and external partners, all will have tables where you can visit. A member recently said to me that our organization is like an octopus in that we offer so many other activities besides the events for learning. It is so true. Our focus is not just on learning but it also includes “doing”.

There has been a growing awareness that senior citizens experience social isolation and loneliness as retirements occur, kids and grandkids have many of their own activities, close friends become ill, etc. Therefore, the Board of Directors and our Committees will present the membership with events, volunteer opportunities, and more In Person classes this semester. Please join in when you see something that you would enjoy!! As we move forward with ways to connect with each other and you have ideas for ways we can CONNECT with each other, please let me or other Board members know.

This Fall Semester we will be offering 9 one-time speakers and 3 classes at Eskaton in Carmichael. These will be open only to members and will be offered Monday through Thursday. Friday classes will again be on campus. We heard your desire for more In Person opportunities so in addition to the Eskaton program we have added an additional Speaker Series on Friday morning at 10 on campus.

Your leaders are excited for the semester to begin and look forward to meeting you at one of our events.

Help Spread the Word About the Renaissance Society

by Kathy Hart

Did you know that the Renaissance Society has a public Facebook page? Launched on **December 29, 2021**, our Facebook page was created to build awareness of the Renaissance Society and showcase the outstanding programs available to people who value lifelong learning.

Since then, our dedicated volunteer social media team has created and shared **more than 1,500 posts** highlighting classes, events, special programs, member experiences, and the many opportunities to **Learn, Connect & Share**.
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(Help Spread the Word - Continued from page 1)

Over the past five and a half years, our Facebook community has steadily grown to **more than 500 followers**. Now we have an exciting goal: **to triple that number!**

How can you help? It's simple. One of the easiest and most effective ways to introduce others to the Renaissance Society is to **like our Facebook page** and **share a post** with your own friends and family. Every share helps expand our reach and introduces more people—both near and far—to the enriching experiences our organization offers.

Many people who would enjoy the Renaissance Society simply haven't heard about us yet. Your recommendation can make all the difference.

Please take a moment to visit our Facebook page, give it a "Like," and share a post that inspires you: <https://www.facebook.com/rensocietysac>

Thank you for helping us grow our vibrant community of lifelong learners. Together, we can introduce even more people to the friendships, learning opportunities, and experiences that make the Renaissance Society such a special place.

Education Led the Way for Cindi Matsumoto

By Judy Lewis



When Cindi Matsumoto's dad and his family were released from the Tule Lake detention camp after World War II, they lived on a 40-acre plum farm in Ophir, California, near Newcastle.

By the time she started first grade, Cindi, her younger brother and their parents had settled in Rancho Cordova.

Education has kept Cindi busy for many years, starting with an AA degree from American River College. She earned a BA in psychology from U.C. Davis. Next came a nursing degree from Sacramento City College, then a Master's Degree in Nursing from U.C. San Francisco. Back at U.C. Davis at the age of 50, Cindi became a Ph.D. nursing science and leadership student and graduated during the COVID pandemic. She was employed by U.C. Davis Medical Center until her retirement in 2024.

When she retired, longtime friends gave her a membership to the Renaissance Society as a gift. This has become somewhat of a tradition, and as other members of her friendship group retire they have been gifting memberships to their acquaintances.

Cindi has made herself useful as part of the tech team hosts for Fred Chapman's *Travel and Adventure* class on Friday mornings, as well as assisting with Forum presentations.

She and her wife, Carla Leek, couldn't resist purchasing their retirement home early when they found a location near Placerville with a view of the South Fork of the American River in 2001, framed by the Sierras in the background. They delight in the hiking opportunities that their new travel trailer provides them.

In 2021, three couples organized a trip to Italy using the Sacramento-based concierge travel company Experience Italy, and shared their adventures with Renaissance members.

Because of her long drives to Sacramento, Cindi fills her freeway time with books on tape. And she's been thrilled to check off one bucket list item—season tickets to the A's games in West Sacramento.

Cindi also serves on the Board of the Alliance Education Foundation and feels privileged to review scholarship applications from amazing students, including those studying nursing.



Correction: **In Memory of Jean Cawood**

Last month's newsletter included incorrect information about Jean Cawood. We sincerely apologize to her family and friends.

Jean Cawood passed away on June 15, 2026, after a brief illness. She was an active presenter and led the Great Books seminar for more than 30 years, continuing in that role until her death.

Condolences may be sent to her husband, Gary, and their family at: 8736 Shelborn Ct. Fair Oaks, CA 95628



In Memory of Bob Seyfried

by Kathy Hart

Robert "Bob" Seyfried passed away on June 16, 2026, at the age of 92, from complications of a stroke he suffered in 2025.

Bob was a passionate lover of classical music, especially the works of Beethoven, and for more than 21 years shared that passion with hundreds of appreciative adults through his highly popular classes at the Renaissance Society. His enthusiasm, charm, and remarkable depth of knowledge made his classes consistently among the most sought-after offerings.

Committed to encouraging the next generation of musicians, Bob established a voluntary grant program through his classes to support deserving classical music students at Sacramento State University. Through the generosity of class members, more than \$80,000 was awarded over the past 21 years. In tribute to Bob's vision and dedication, this tradition will continue through the ongoing support of the class members.

Bob's love of music enriched countless lives, and his legacy will live on through the students he helped, the music he shared, and the many friendships he inspired.

His enthusiasm, charm, and wealth of knowledge will surely be missed.

Thank you, Bob, for all you gave to so many.



The Truth About Information

By Darryl Freeman

My perspective on navigating life was cultivated in a family of educators. Both of my parents were secondary school teachers, and one of my aunts was a high school principal. We have so many former and current professors, teachers, and educators in our extended family that we jokingly refer to education as our "family business."

Our family's philosophy has always been grounded in a simple but profound idea:

"We all have an enormous responsibility to bring to the attention of others information they do not have, which has the potential of causing them to rethink long-held ideas." — Howard Zinn

Whether the information concerns the "hard sciences"—mathematics, biology, chemistry, and physics—or the "soft sciences"—history, sociology, and political science—the willingness to share evolving knowledge is essential to both individual growth and the progress of society.

For members of the Renaissance Society, lifelong learning is more than an enjoyable pastime; it is a commitment to intellectual curiosity. Many of us have spent decades watching accepted truths evolve. Medical advice changes. Historical narratives are revisited. Scientific discoveries overturn previous assumptions. Ideas once considered controversial become commonplace, while others quietly disappear into history's footnotes. Perhaps one of the greatest lessons that comes with age is recognizing that knowledge is not static.

Today, however, we face a challenge unlike any previous generation. The information highway—through the internet, social media, political rhetoric, journalism, and even educational institutions—is overflowing with information, misinformation, and disinformation. The sheer volume of competing "facts" can make it difficult to distinguish objective truth from carefully crafted opinion.

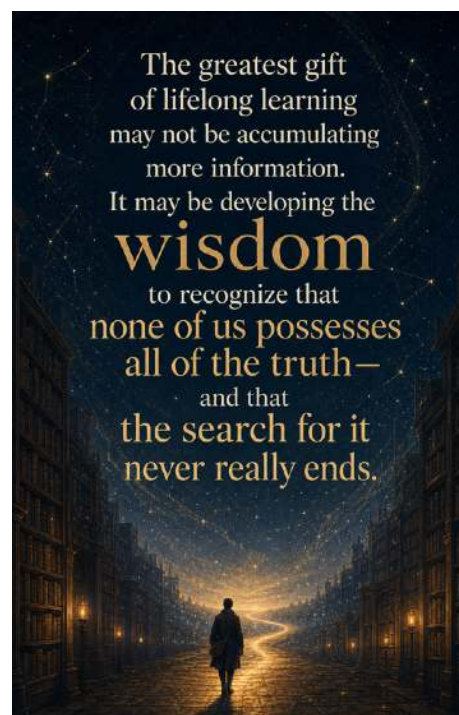
Even Artificial Intelligence, the newest and most celebrated information tool, cannot guarantee "the whole truth and nothing but the truth." The quality and perspective of the information it provides often depend upon the questions we ask and the sources upon which it relies.

We all live, to some extent, within social, political, religious, and cultural bubbles that shape how we interpret the world around us. Human nature inclines us to seek information that confirms what we already believe. If we ask questions solely to validate our existing opinions, we should not be surprised when the answers merely reinforce our biases.

The pursuit of truth requires something more difficult—and more rewarding. It requires intellectual humility and a willingness to challenge our own assumptions. Seek out differing perspectives. Read beyond your most trusted sources. Ask questions that make you uncomfortable. Be willing to change your mind when the evidence warrants it.

One of the unexpected gifts of aging is discovering how many things we were absolutely certain about at age twenty-five that turned out to be incomplete, oversimplified, or simply wrong. Experience teaches us that wisdom is not measured by how strongly we hold our opinions, but by how willing we are to revise them when presented with credible new information. Determining credible is the challenge.

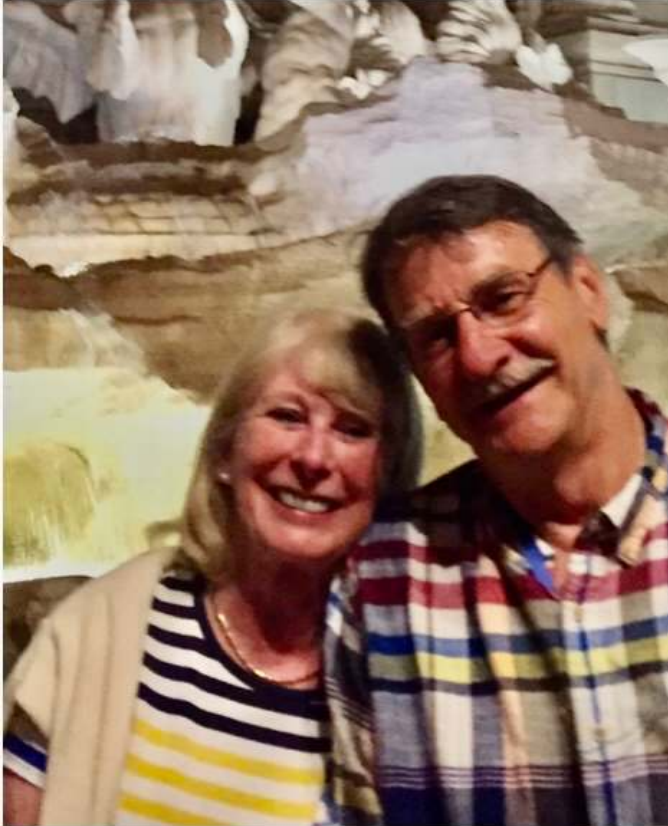
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Evelyn and Rob – a chance meeting through Renaissance Society

by Susan Wheeler

Ten years ago, Evelyn and Rob found more than lifelong learning at Renaissance Society. They found each other.



Each had joined Renaissance after retiring, eager to keep their minds active, explore new ideas, and meet new people. In their mid-60s, they were looking for a community that valued curiosity and connection.

In Spring 2015, their paths first crossed in a class called *Philosophy and Ethics in Everyday Life*. The discussion portion of the class had chairs arranged in a circle facilitating interactive discussions. This gave participants the opportunity to share perspectives and explore one another's thinking. They each remember being impressed by the class members' contributions. Although they enjoyed their conversations in class, the relationship didn't begin there.

About six months later fate intervened. Rob attended The Forum and received a call about a family emergency. When he rushed to the exit, he bumped into Evelyn who was just entering the room. She said, "Didn't we meet last semester in the philosophy class?" He responded that he had to leave for a family emergency.

Hoping to see her again, he returned to the Forum the following week to apologize for bumping into her and leaving so abruptly. Sitting in the last row, he scanned the room and the entrance for her. As the Forum began, he turned his attention to the speaker and glanced one last time at the entrance. He discovered her standing right behind his row intending to sit next to her neighbor who was three rows in front of Rob. When she saw Rob she sat down in his row, smiled and offered him a share of her cookie. After the Forum, he walked her to her car and asked if he could call her. These simple gestures marked the beginning of a friendship that has now grown into a happy committed 10-year relationship.

As they continued taking Renaissance classes together, one Medieval English history course inspired the affectionate nicknames still used today: "Robert, the Wise" and "Evelyn the Fair." The more they got to know one another, they discovered complementary personalities and a wealth of shared interests. He calls her his "college sweetheart."

Today, they remain active members of Renaissance and continue to enjoy classes. They usher at Sac State's theater arts plays and musicals and Evelyn also mentors Gerontology students giving back to the community that helped bring them together.



Summer Programs Update

By Kathy Hart

The Renaissance Society Summer Programs continue to be a tremendous success, with strong attendance and enthusiastic feedback from members. These engaging behind-the-scenes experiences have provided unique opportunities to learn, connect, and explore the people and places that make our community so special.

Over the past several weeks, members have enjoyed a variety of memorable programs, each offering exclusive access and fascinating insights. Thank you to our hosts, volunteers, and participants for making this summer another outstanding season of lifelong learning.

To see highlights from these events, including many more photos, visit the Renaissance Society Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/rensocietysac>.

The summer isn't over yet! One final Summer Program is scheduled for August with El Dorado Musical Theatre (EDMT), featuring a special backstage tour of the Harris Center. As an added bonus, EDMT has generously offered Renaissance Society members a discount on tickets to see 42nd Street. Complete details are included in the Weekly Update email.

Be sure to invite your friends to Discovery Day & Open House on August 14. It's the perfect opportunity to introduce others to the



Renaissance Society, meet fellow lifelong learners, and discover the exciting classes and activities planned for the fall semester. We look forward to seeing you there as we celebrate another great year of learning, connecting, and sharing!

Dr. Robert "Bob" Benedetti

By Maryellen Burns



Every Renaissance Society has a handful of instructors whose classes become more than lectures. They become conversations, shared journeys of discovery, and opportunities to see familiar places through new eyes. For many of us, Dr. Robert "Bob" Benedetti was one of those rare teachers.

I had the privilege of working with Bob as the technical host for two of his Renaissance Society series. My role was to help coordinate research, manage the Zoom presentations, troubleshoot the inevitable technical challenges, and occasionally present portions of the classes myself. Those hours gave me a front-row seat to something remarkable—not simply Bob's extraordinary scholarship, but his generosity as a teacher.

Many people knew Bob through the distinguished academic career that preceded his retirement. Born in San Francisco and raised in the Bay Area, he graduated from Amherst College with degrees in English and political science before earning both his master's degree and doctorate in political science from the University of Pennsylvania. After teaching at New College in Sarasota, Florida, where he eventually became provost, he returned to California to join the University of the Pacific. As Dean of the College of the Pacific from 1989 to 2002, he helped reshape the university's general education curriculum, strengthened its commitment to the humanities, and later led the Jacoby Center for Public Service and Civic Leadership, encouraging students to connect scholarship with meaningful public engagement. He also served as a research associate with Sacramento State's Center for California Studies, where his interests increasingly turned toward the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

Those accomplishments alone would have marked a distinguished career. But retirement simply opened the door to another chapter.

Bob became a beloved instructor at Sacramento State's Renaissance Society, teaching courses on the Constitution, American political parties, democracy, and eventually the history and culture of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. It was in those Delta courses that many of us discovered the breadth of his vision.

Bob encouraged us to see the Delta as far more than a landscape of waterways, levees, farms, and small towns. To him it was a cultural region shaped by thousands of years of human experience—a place where Native peoples, immigrants, agriculture, labor, commerce, literature, art, environmental change, and public policy all intersected. His classes introduced students to the writers, artists, historians, photographers, and community leaders who had documented that rich story, while reminding us how much remained to be explored.

His scholarship reflected that same vision. As co-director of the Delta Narratives Project, Bob helped bring together historians, archivists, and community organizations to preserve and share the Delta's remarkable cultural heritage. Later he edited *Imagining the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta*, continuing his effort to encourage Californians to think of the Delta not simply as a water system, but as one of the state's great cultural landscapes.



During the last several years of his life, Bob was still planning, researching, and writing. Even as his health declined, he remained committed to expanding his work on the arts and culture of the Delta and was developing what would become another book and a new series of classes. Like so many who knew him, I wish I had been able to see his outline or hear more about where he intended to take that work.

There is a part of me that hopes to continue, in however small a way, the mission he began. No one could replace Bob Benedetti, but perhaps we can continue asking the questions he taught us to ask and telling some of the stories he believed were too important to lose.

Communities, Bob often reminded us, are held together by the stories they tell about themselves.

Thanks to his teaching, scholarship, and quiet encouragement of others, all of us who studied with him—have many more stories to tell.

Program Leader Spotlight

Meeting the Moment by Andi Murphy

Program Leader Michael Hersher

Protest songs and folk music have traditionally run along parallel tracks, and have drawn ever nearer together these days to build a solidarity that helps deflect the assaults of government overreach. They reinforce the human values that have shaped our belief systems and reflect our discomfort when life deviates from those principles. In the folk singing classes he leads, Michael Hersher conveys how tradition, culture, and current events intersect in a way that is approachable and, in difficult times, reassuring. His recognition of this makes his classes popular amongst Renaissance Society learners. Singing about it creates a sense of community and acknowledgment that those values are true and shared.

Music was always in Mr. Hersher's background growing up, and while he wouldn't go so far as to say he was steeped in it, his upbringing was definitely folk music adjacent. He accompanied his parents to political events that tended to feature folk singers, and he grew to recognize the importance of messaging through music. He has followed folk music through its progression from the Weavers and Pete Seeger through to the Laurel Canyon years of Joni Mitchell, CSNY, and Jackson Brown.

He joined the Renaissance Society eight years ago, and has been leading classes for the last six. In addition to leading the folk singing SIG, he has also taught classes on the history of the Constitution, presented on the history of protest songs, and has put together a Peter, Paul, and Mary tribute show that has performed several times. If you missed that show, they will be performing again at the Unitarian Church on July 12. He also composes parody songs that are topical and easy to sing along with in a group.

Mr. Hersher senses that what keeps his group engaged is the sense of community it builds through singing, along with a sense of nostalgia, and the opportunity to meet others in a setting that emphasizes fun. For those on the fence about joining, he advises to just join in and not worry about being "good enough". Nobody stands out in a negative way when everyone's voice is raised. A good tambourine player never goes amiss either....

For those who might be interested in leading a group of their own, he noted that there is no fixed template. One can start slow, with maybe just a few sessions instead of an entire semester, attend orientation to learn about the process, learn the technology, identify a tech support person to help you, and probably most important, find an experienced mentor to advise you. Other than that, he reminds you that the audience is very forgiving, and if you love the topic, your enthusiasm is contagious!

