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Celebrating Emeriti and Retirees with UCR's New Chancellor S. Jack Hu

By Mitch Boretz



UCR is continuing to rise in stature, and emeriti and retirees can play a role in building the institution's excellence in teaching, research, education, engagement, and healthcare, Chancellor S. Jack Hu said at a reception with UCREA and UCRRA on November 14.

Nearly 100 retirees and emeriti gathered at the Alumni & Visitors Center to meet Chancellor Hu, who joined UCR in July. He said the vision he is pursuing – heightening recognition nationally and internationally for academic excellence, accessibility, and impact – originated with the campus community and the search committee that recruited him, but he pointed out that it reflects his own journey. Starting as a graduate student with one suitcase at the University of Michigan, Chancellor Hu has reached many impressive career milestones, including membership in the National Academy of Engineering and prior appointments as vice president for research at the University of Michigan and provost at the University of Georgia.

Throughout his career, he said, he always felt like he belonged, and he said he has found the same atmosphere at UCR. “Think about my journey. I never felt like an international student. I felt very comfortable with my classmates.”

UCR is exemplary for social mobility, a standing that goes beyond the current headwinds facing diversity, equity, and inclusion programs in academia, Chancellor Hu said. This fall, UCR has its largest-ever freshman class, 6,700 students, and it continues to invest in programs to help undergraduates achieve their degrees. These include the Chancellor's Scholars program, which awards fellowships to undergraduates so they can gain research experience instead of having to work, and the Highlander Early Start Academy, a summer program that ensures incoming students are academically prepared to succeed once the fall quarter starts.

Emeriti and retirees can help with initiatives like this by contributing and volunteering, the chancellor said. “We have a lot of potential we need to support,” he said. “You can support students many different ways, whether it's financial or your time.” In particular, Chancellor Hu called out contributions to the Chancellor's Scholars program (which costs about \$6,000 per student) and mentoring in entrepreneurship by those with relevant experience.

Student success is an important component of the U.S. News & World Report rankings and other prominent yardsticks, the chancellor pointed out. Peer rankings are another criterion, and one where UCR will continue to rise, thanks in part to having recently joined the prestigious Association of American Universities. “We're much better than the perception,” he said.

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Celebrating Emeriti and Retirees - Continued

Research will continue to grow based on longstanding strengths in agriculture, the environment, and other areas, Chancellor Hu said. Although the federal funding outlook is murky, he said UCR should be developing research funding from industry and foundation sources as well as the government. The university also should be driving more large programs in addition to single-investigator projects, he said.

The School of Medicine and clinical care will be another important way for UCR to grow and connect with the community, he said. Our region of California still lags the rest of the state in the number of physicians relative to the population. The School of Medicine enrolled 91 first-year students last year, and its target is 125, he said. Additionally, UCR is working with the private sector to develop a plan for an ambulatory care center, the Canyon Springs Campus. This will be presented to the Regents in 2026 and could open in 2029. This will serve community needs and educational priorities more quickly and affordably than building a teaching hospital, which could be on the distant horizon.

Captured below are moments of the emeriti and retirees celebration where a welcome gift was presented to Chancellor Hu and special recognition was given to Professor Emerita Linda Tomko and Professor Emerita Darleen DeMason for their contributions in establishing the UCR Emeriti Association Graduate Student Travel Award. Professor Emerita Carol Lovatt (not pictured) was also recognized for her contributions.



In Memoriam

We recognize and honor those who have passed that have been reported this 2025 - 2026 academic year.



Helen McQueen Alberts, retired in April 1991
 Jacqueline Beck, retired in November 1992
 Kathleen Jane Blondel, retired in July 2013
 Jane Brown, retired in February 1997
 Robert Capelo, retired in April 1991
 William Carson, retired in March 2015
 William Clark, retired in January 2013
 Geoffrey Cohen, retired in July 2017
 James Conrod
 Donna Cooney, retired in July 2003

Lonny Crinklaw, retired in February 2013
 Donald Farley, retired in December 2006
 Arthur Foster, retired in September 2010
 Jose Antonio Hernandez, retired in April 1991
 Jeanie Humphrey, retired in December 1990
 Marshall Wain Johnson, retired in July 2013
 David Kleckner, retired in July 2018
 Marin Ledesma, retired in December 1998
 Jan Mccorkle, retired in July 2011
 Frederic Metcalf, retired in July 1994

Rodney Moreno, retired in April 2008
 Patricia Skotty, retired in May 1981
 Bobbie Smith, retired in November 1992
 Patricia Smith, retired in July 2016
 Carmen Stark, retired in October 2020
 Fred Strickler, retired in July 2007
 James Thompson, retired in January 2002
 Anthony Urena, retired in July 2015
 Peter Ventimiglia, retired in July 2004
 Bobbie Wallace, retired in August 1998

Stay Connected: Retiree or Emeriti R'Card

UCRRA and UCREA members may request their R'Card using the Interest Form at:
https://ucriverside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3F8XtK5dEs9x45U

- 10% discount at the UCR Bookstore
- Updated R'Card design, new UCR logo, and option to upload a new photo
- Ability to validate status when visiting the library and be eligible to purchase UCR Athletics "All Sports Pass"



UCR Osher Program

UCRRA and UCREA members receive a \$20 discount on the Osher Annual Membership. Details on the Osher webpage at:
<https://palmdesert.ucr.edu/welcome-ucr-osher>

Emeriti faculty interested in teaching for the Osher program may contact the UCR Osher Program Director Johnna Norris at johnna.norris@ucr.edu



UCR Retirees' Association

Andy Plumley
UCRRA President

Hello UCR Retirees' Association Members!

Happy New Year! I hope you enjoyed the holiday season with family and friends. I continue to be amazed by how fast time flies by in retirement.

Your UCRRA board has been hard at work this past quarter. Our Scholarship Committee reviewed many applications for our Undergraduate Scholarship. Our Events & Programs Committee has planned for our Fall and Holiday Luncheons, Retiree Reception, Barn Happy Hours and Walks, Talks & Tours, and is at work planning events and programs for next quarter. Our Membership & Outreach Committee continues to update our website and marketing materials. In the next few months, our Nominations Committee will begin recruiting volunteers to run for our 2026-2027 Executive Board. And finally, Sheryl and I participated in the fall meeting of the Council of UC Retirees' Associations (CUCRA) hosted by UC San Francisco. Much of the meeting was dedicated to meeting with UC Office of the President representatives on issues around Retiree benefits and services.

As always, I hope you explore this publication and get involved in anything that interests you ... I think there is something for everyone. And please contact me if you don't find what you're looking for.

Have a wonderful 2026!

Sincerely,

Andy



UCR Emeriti Association

José Wudka
UCREA President



Dear UCR Emeriti,

In this quarter the Emeriti Association held its usual activities. Notably Professor Conrad Rudolph's Dickson lecture, our Fall luncheon, the annual Chancellor's Reception, our Holiday luncheon, and the event "meditation at the Botanic Gardens", all of which have dedicated articles in this newsletter.

The Outstanding Emeriti committee selected for this year professors Robert Patch (History Department) and Laxminarayan Bhuyan (Computer Science & Engineering Department), who will be presented with their awards during the Winter luncheon on February 6, 2026.

The Graduate Student Travel Award committee made two selections, Tzu-Chia Chen and John Hoang, who will also be recognized at our February 6, 2026 luncheon. The committee was impressed with the outstanding quality of all eighteen applications received.

The Council of University of California Emeriti Associations (CUCEA) held its Fall meeting on October 29-30. We were notified of the realignment of the Retirement Administration Service Center, which will now be under UC Path. The Office of the President reassured CUCEA leadership that this is no way will impact the services received by emeriti and retirees.

The programs for 2025 are now completed, and there is a wide variety of activities and events for 2026.

With UCRRA we will host the Winter luncheon on February 6 where Professor Ronald Loveridge will give a presentation.

The Walks, Talks & Tours has organized a visit to the California Air Resources Board in Riverside on January 22 and later in the year a tour of the recently inaugurated School of Business building on Campus, on February 26.

On March 3 Professor Leonard Nunney (Evolution, Ecology & Organismal Biology Department) will deliver the first Dickson lecture of the year, followed by Professor Chandra Varma (Physics and Astronomy Department) on April 21.

I look forward to seeing you at these interesting and convivial events. But in the meantime, I wish you all a very happy holiday season and a prosperous and peaceful 2026.

Sincerely,

José



Free Use Days to the Student Recreation Center in January

The UCR Student Recreation Center (SRC) is offering complimentary membership throughout January 2026 (January 2–31). UCR retirees and emeriti are encouraged to explore everything the SRC has to offer—from group exercise classes, swimming, lap swim workouts, and rock climbing at The Rock, to chair massages, Outdoor Excursions, MAC gym sports, tennis courts, and more—all at no cost for the entire month. Registration and completion of a liability waiver are required to participate.

Wednesday, October 1, 2025 through Saturday, January 31, 2026



Register on the Student Recreation Center webpage at: https://events.ucr.edu/event/free_use_days_at_the_src_2470

Explore an Activity!

UCRRA and UCREA members are welcome to join in on the club activities and details are noted below.



Uncover the Clues with the Mystery Book Club

Winter Book Activities

Club Leader: Club Members will be taking turns leading these engaging sessions.

When: Tuesday, January 13, 2026

Time: 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. via Zoom

Book Activity: *The Man in the Meth Lab* by Chris Culver

When: Tuesday, February 10, 2026

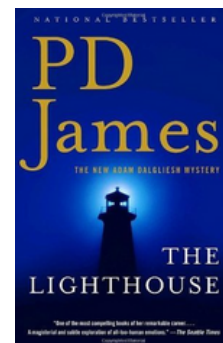
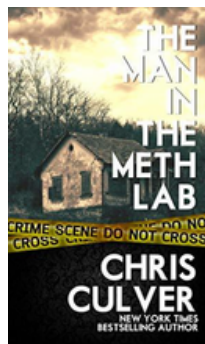
Time: 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. via Zoom

Book Activity: *The Broken Afternoon* by Simon Mason

When: Tuesday, March 10, 2026

Time: 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. via Zoom

Book Activity: *The Lighthouse* by P.D. James



Details: Interested retirees and emeriti who wish to join the book club may contact the Retirement Center by email with the subject line, "Mystery Book Club" at: retirees@ucr.edu.



Walks, Talks & Tours

Activity #1: California Air Resources Board (CARB)

Cost of Entry: Free

When: Thursday, January 22, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

Presenter: Guided Tour from a CARB Representative

Details: The tour will highlight the California Air Resources Board's Southern California Headquarters, with a focus on vehicle emissions testing and related activities located at 4001 Iowa Avenue, Riverside, CA 92507.



Register on the retiree and emeriti webpage at: https://ucrivside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_egEKggpTKEgAnKS

Activity #2: UCR School of Business

Cost of Entry: Free

When: Wednesday, February 25, 2026 from 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Presenter: Guided Tour from a School of Business Representative

Details: Join us on this tour as we explore the new School of Business building which is home to the largest undergraduate business program in the UC system, as well as the A. Gary Anderson Graduate School of Management.



Register on the retiree and emeriti webpage at: https://ucrivside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_77ib33ThwjXdHXU

Connect and Unwind: Emeriti and Retiree Social



Join us at the UCR Barn Stable for a relaxed social gathering. Whether you're newly retired or enjoying your golden years, we invite retirees and emeriti to connect, share great conversation, enjoy a few laughs, and build community. These monthly socials will happen on the dates below from 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. and are a wonderful opportunity to unwind, socialize, and make new connections. No registration required. We hope to see you there!

Thursday, January 15, 2026
Thursday, February 19, 2026
Thursday, March 19, 2026

Beverages
available for
purchase.

Appetizers will
be provided.



Your Next Chapter: Volunteering for American Red Cross

Explore the various volunteer opportunities available such as supporting natural disasters, blood drives, armed forces, event management and more. A representative from American Red Cross will share opportunities and answer any questions.

Thursday, January 29, 2026
1:00 - 2:00 p.m. via Zoom



**American
Red Cross**

Register on the retiree and emeriti webpage:
https://ucriverside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4PzfrJIYzsfHc

Winter Luncheon

Ronald Loveridge
UCR Professor of Political Science



Friday, February 6, 2026
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

In-person at the UCR Alumni & Visitors Center

Register on the retiree and emeriti webpage:
https://ucriverside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bxVzSLHLmddGXMG

Tech-tips Program

Retiree and Former UCR ITS Expert Bart Kats will share insights on various technology topics. Each session takes place on the second Tuesday of the selected months within the quarter from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. and will have a themed topic but is formatted as an open forum for participants to ask questions.

February 10, 2026 How to Use Passkeys for Logins
March 10, 2026 Understanding Web Browser Options



Register on the retiree and emeriti webpage at:
https://ucriverside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5puaWY7vOgYzr4a

Estate Planning



Featuring Fidelity Investments and
UCR's Office of Gift Planning



This session covers wills versus living trusts, avoiding probate, funding a trust, transferring protected assets, and handling distributions after death.

Thursday, February 26, 2026
1:00 - 2:30 p.m. via Zoom

Register on the retiree and emeriti webpage:
https://ucriverside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_00AUskO3mRsoPe6

The Edward A. Dickson Emeritus/a Professorship Lecture Series



"The War on Cancer: Evolution and Our Modern Environment"

Leonard Nunney, UCR Professor Emeritus of Graduate Division

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 from 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. with Reception to follow

Presentation delivered in-person at University Extension Building Room 1101 and Livestreamed via Zoom

Description

Cancer is primarily a disease of old age, so an increase in cancer risk is an unwelcome side-effect of the benefit of living longer. But beyond this trade-off, an important but largely unanswered question is how much of our cancer risk earlier in life is due to our environment, our genes, or simply bad luck. I have been looking at this problem from the perspective of an evolutionary biologist, by first arguing (and then demonstrating) that the ability of animals to reduce the risk of cancer is an evolving trait, and then using this knowledge to identify specific human cancers that appear to have become markedly more common because of our modern way of life.

Register on the retiree and emeriti webpage to receive in-person or Zoom instructions at:
https://ucriverside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_erO4JbgDoLllkjs

Holiday Luncheon Review

By Andy Plumley

On December 5, 2025, we welcomed retirees and emeriti to our annual Holiday Luncheon. About 60 retirees and emeriti gathered at the Alumni & Visitors Center for wine, a scrumptious lunch and great conversations. Our guest speaker was Dr. Alia Tuqan from UCR Health. Dr. Tuqan is a health sciences clinical professor of internal medicine, receiving her medical degree from UC Irvine and completed her residency at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. A board-certified geriatrician, she previously served as the medical director of the UC Davis Healthy Aging Clinic and its Alzheimer's and Dementia Care Programs. What an expert to have and present her talk on "Healthy Aging with Geriatrics"! Highlights from her presentation:



- Geriatrics is a branch of medicine that focuses on the health and well-being of older adults. It's not just about treating medical problems, but also helping people stay independent, active and healthy as they age.
- Geriatricians treat general medical conditions (high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, osteoporosis) and geriatric syndromes (impaired memory, gait and balance problems, frailty, and polypharmacy [multiple medications])
- Effective Geriatrics uses the "4Ms" framework:
 - What **M**atters – know and align care with each specific health care outcome goal;
 - **M**edication – use of medication that do not interfere with what matters;
 - **M**entation – Prevent, identify, treat, and manage dementia and depression; and
 - **M**obility – Ensure older adults move safely throughout the day.
- 85% of adults 65 years and older said they preferred to stay in current residence as long as possible. This means that caregivers, community-based organizations, government agencies and health systems need to support older adults to age in place.

Dr. Tuqan then spoke on the specifics on healthy aging, mobility, physical independence, recommended exercise, and preventing falls.

As has become our tradition, we had a donation drive to benefit our students. This luncheon, we invited participants to donate grocery store gift cards to the UCR Office of Foster Youth Support Services. Some of our students age out of the foster youth program when they attend UCR and may not have a traditional family support system. So, during times of campus closure, they may suffer from food insecurity, particularly during the holiday season. Our luncheon participants donated 43 gift cards and 2 checks totaling **\$1,735!** We truly showed the holiday giving spirit!!



Happy Hour at the Barn

By Andy Plumley

This fall we launched a new program, "Happy Hour at the Barn" and it was a huge success. Since the campus opened in 1954, the Barn has been the center of social activity for students, faculty and emeriti, staff and retirees, and alumni. This fall, UCRRRA and UCREA hosted two socials at the Barn Stable, inviting members to relax, socialize, reconnect, and build new friendships. We had great turnouts where folks connected with fellow retirees and emeriti for an afternoon of great conversation, laughter and community.

This program was so successful, that we will be hosting three more Happy Hours in the winter quarter. So, mark your calendars for January 15, February 19, and March 19, 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. at the Barn. Look for email invitations during the new year. Cheers!



Fall Luncheon Review

By José Wudka

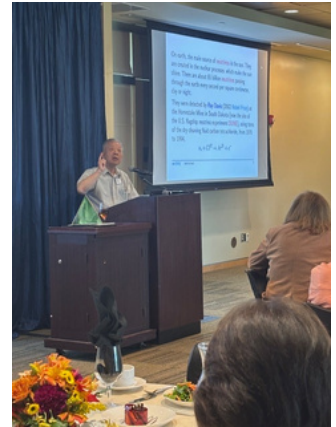
The Fall Luncheon began with a beautiful musical interlude by Classical Guitarist Hermann Hudde. This was followed by UCRRA President, Andy Plumley's announcements. He noted that UCRRA undergraduate scholarships had been awarded; he gave an update on the restoration of the Cottage building on campus that will be the new home of the Retirement Center; and he made comments on the recently-completed CUCRA survey that quantifies the manifold contributions retirees make to the University of California.

Andy also announced that Jorge Sanchez, UCRRA Communications and Outreach Director, had been selected as the recipient of the 2025-26 Mary Johnson Outstanding Retiree Award.

Following this José Wudka, UCREA President, called on Darleen DeMason to present the UCREA Graduate Student Travel Awards to Julia Torres (History) and Hasin Us Sami (Electrical Engineering) – Julia was able to attend, Hasin sent a prerecorded video. José then noted that the Outstanding

Emeritus-Emerita Award committee was still accepting nominations. Finally he provided reminders for the upcoming Dickson Lecture by Conrad Rudolph (on October 21) and made some comments on the CUCEA system-wide survey of emeriti activities.

Following the announcements José introduced the luncheon speaker, Professor Emeritus Ernest Ma from the Physics and Astronomy Department, and recent recipient of the Outstanding Emeritus Award, who gave the presentation "Plato's Fire and Scotogenic Neutrinos". Professor Ma's talk centered on the physics of neutrinos, subatomic particles that are enormously abundant in nature, but also are extremely difficult to detect, despite being ubiquitous. Professor Ma pointed out that one of the most puzzling aspects of neutrinos is their extremely small mass (when compared to that of all other subatomic particles). In the second part of his presentation Professor Ma discussed his paradigm for explaining these small masses. This is based on a (technically involved) connection with dark matter, whose study is another very active research field; the connection with dark matter motivated the adjective 'scotogenic' (from the Greek scoteiuos: dark) he used in describing the model. The connection with Plato is rather circuitous: the proposed interactions between dark matter and neutrinos have a regularity, which is mathematically the same as the one of a perfect tetrahedron (a pyramid with four equal triangular faces). This geometric figure is one of five perfect solids (so-called for technical reasons) which Plato associated with the five substances he believed were the constituents of all we see; in particular, he associated fire (one of these "elements") with the tetrahedron – hence Plato's fire. Plato's 'table of the elements' has long been abandoned, as its connection to the perfect solids, but the mathematics describing the regularity of these solids is perfectly valid, and it is this that Professor Ma has used to construct his model for explaining neutrino masses. After a few questions for Prof. Ma the luncheon concluded.



UC Retiree Travel Adventures Await – Reserve Your Spot!

Travel the world alongside fellow UC retirees and their guests. Our group tours include lodging, a local tour leader, many meals, and most excursions, allowing you to relax and enjoy the experience. When a group includes at least 12 UC travelers, a UC Retirees liaison also joins to support the tour.

You can click on each trip link for detailed flyers with itineraries and activity levels. Activity varies by tour and may include uneven walking surfaces, stairs, hiking, or changes in elevation.

Early registration is encouraged, as trips often fill months in advance and unsold spaces are released to the public about seven months before departure. If a trip is full, you're welcome to join the waitlist, as cancellations do occur.

Explore the 2026 and 2027 upcoming trips on the UC Retiree Travel Program webpage at: <https://cucra.ucsd.edu/travel/>

Questions may be sent to UCRetireesTravel@gmail.com

2025-2026 Distinguished Emeriti Award Recipients By John Ganim

Congratulations to the awardees of the 2025 Distinguished Emeriti Awards, Professor Emeritus of History, Robert W. Patch, and Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Department of Computer Science and Engineering, Laxmi N. Bhuyan. Our distinguished awardees will be honored at the UCREA and UCRRA Winter Luncheon and presented with a plaque commemorating the award.



ROBERT W. PATCH, Professor of History, Emeritus, has continued his distinguished research career on colonial Latin America, which focussed on the Spanish Empire and Mayan civilization. Since he retired about 5 years ago, he has researched and written his latest book, *An Outpost of Colonialism: The Hispanic Community of Merida, Yucatan, 1690-1730* which has just been published by Stanford University Press, the most prestigious venue in the field. This new book further cements UCR's reputation as the leading centre of Mayan history and archeology in North America. His achievement follows on his thirty years of active service, including Department Chair and Director of UC Abroad, distinguished research and dedicated teaching at UCR.



LAXMI N. BHUYAN, Distinguished Professor Emeritus in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, has continued his extraordinary record of publication, mentorship and active grant awards especially from the National Science Foundation, since his retirement in 2021. In retirement, he has directed the research of MA and Phd students here at UCR, as well as remotely, at IIT Bhubaneswar in India, thanks to two grants from the Government of India. He is a Fellow of many scholarly societies, including IEEE, ACM and AAAS, and is a Fellow of the World Innovation Foundation. As his field has changed rapidly over the past decades, he has taken up new research challenges, symbolized by NSF grants for work on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Large-Language models (LLM), especially focussed on energy saving. His service at UCR included an extended term as Chair of his department. Upon retirement, his department established the "Laxmi N. Bhuyan Endowed Fellowship in Computer Science."

2025-2026 UCRRA Scholarship Recipients

By Sheryl Hayes

The UCRRA Scholarship Committee is pleased to announce the selection of four outstanding undergraduate scholars for this year.

Two returning scholars were selected. Citlali Campos has a 3.89 GPA while majoring in Physics and is planning a career in medical physics. Her many activities include serving as a CNAS Science Ambassador and as a high school tutor. The second scholar is Izzy Graham. Izzy excelled academically in her first year and is now exploring her options to determine a major that will best lead her to a future allowing her to serve others, as she does in her church community.

Our third selection is Zoe Minter. Zoe transferred from RCC with two AA degrees, in Political Science and Art History. She also received RCC's Gold Service Award for her hundreds of hours of community service. She is now majoring in Political Science and International Affairs, with a goal to "help to make what once seemed impossible, possible."

Lastly, we selected Lauren Williams, also a transfer student from RCC. Lauren is majoring in Education and Liberal Studies, with the goal of becoming a Special Education teacher. She is currently working as an Instructional Aide at a high school, supporting students with learning disabilities.

Congratulations to our wonderful scholarship recipients! We were able to award a total of \$15,000. The recipients will be recognized at the Winter Luncheon. Thank you to all those who supported our UCRRA Scholarship fund!

Fall 2025 UCREA Graduate Student Travel Awards By Darleen DeMason

The Committee, consisting of Byron Adams, Piotr Gorecki, Dallas Rabenstein and me as chair, was very impressed by the quality of the student applicants and their projects. It was extremely difficult to make our two selections among the 17 applications submitted this quarter. This is the beginning of the fifth year that we have been giving out this award. We look forward to meeting these students at the Winter Luncheon.



John Hoang, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Toxicology, is using his award to present a talk at the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry Europe 36th Annual Meeting in Maastricht, Netherlands this May.



Tzu-Chia Chen, a Ph.D. student in Entomology, is using her award to travel in June to Sequoia National Park to collect specimens for her study of the systematics, ecology, and speciation of subterranean termites in California.



Summary of Conrad Rudolph's Fall Dickson Lecture

By John Briggs



What are "Signature Rocks," and why should they be a subject of interest – indeed of fascination – for anyone who wonders about the westward movement of Euro-Americans trekking the Overland Trail in the generation before the railroad crossed the West? Up close, what was that sudden current of humanity making its way across the arid forbidding lands known as Indian Country? Professor Emeritus Conrad Rudolph took us there – amidst the trappers, explorers, wagon trains, and the people who typically walked the two thousand miles to California and Oregon – by showing us their signatures on the route's landmark formations: Independence Rock, Chimney Rock, Devil's Gate, and numerous other locations.

How then are these signatures to be interpreted? What distinguishes the surviving examples of what were once hundreds of thousands of signatures covering much of those monuments' surfaces? What do they tell us about the magnitude and meaning of that great tide of emigrants that came to define so much of the history of the West? And what do we learn from them about the trekking emigrants' fateful encounter with indigenous peoples?

For three years Professor Emeritus Conrad Rudolph traced the emigrants' paths through Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon, Utah, and the California Sierras, developing ways of finding and interpreting their fading legacy of rock-writing with chisel, axel grease, and whatever they found at hand. Working with co-author Jason Weems, he set down his findings in a book with the title of his talk. After four expeditions and multiple forays into the travelers' two thousand surviving journals and reminiscences of their treks, he has reached a number of conclusions about a "lost world" of emigrant experience that scholars have overlooked.

Some might still wonder why a scholar of medieval art should devote so much effort to what many today call graffiti. How are the old emigrants' signatures different from the defacements on our walls and monuments we moderns see and lament (except for Norman Mailer, who wrote enthusiastically in the 1970s about overwritten New York subway cars turned into icons of urban decay). What can possibly be said about the defacement of the natural world, let alone the over-writing, even the desecration, of indigenous peoples' pictographs? Rather than avoiding such questions, Professor Rudolph's research into the signatures leads him to discover deeper currents of meaning on the rocks. He finds ways the signatures allow him to enter, if sometimes imperfectly, into the early emigrants' experience of their westward path.

We can see into that experience, Conrad argues, by wondering about the motivations of the rock-signers. Among the first strangers in that land of vast spaces and roaming buffalo, were the trappers who signed names and dates. They were most likely "whistling in the dark" in a "dangerous land" where they knew they didn't belong. It was, as the tribes now call it, "Indian Country," a region through which the trappers passed at the risk of their lives. Conrad notes the violent ends of many of their number, including one we know by name who was probably killed within days of "cutting out an immortality" for himself by signing a prominent outcropping.

After the first wagon trains headed west in 1841, a host of motivations became evident as many thousands of writers made entries in "the great register of the desert." As the travelers grew in number, one of the themes of their journals was a sense that they were trespassing. The emigrants were anxious to cross the land because they were uneasy: "They wanted to get through it as quickly as possible." During the period Professor Rudolph studied, there was as yet little if any evidence of a desire to claim the land that they were crossing. The ranchers would come much later. The travelers would make their mark, look for signs of earlier emigrants, leave messages for the next passers-by, but typically avoid (the speaker notes some exceptions) the writing over of the region's relatively sparse pictographs. For an agrarian, bustling people, the great western desert did not welcome settling down.

There was fear, and a sense that in their growing numbers (70,000 in a single year: 1852) they were beginning to exhaust the resources of the land upon which indigenous peoples depended. Whatever the degree that the travelers registered in their journals a sense of responsibility, many expressed, besides fear, an awareness that they were participating in a great and rising flood of emigration from east to west. The speed and astounding magnitude of that movement, sometimes in wagon trains that seemed to extend from horizon to horizon, stimulated a sense of wonder as well as expressions of "vainglory." The rock-writings recorded and stimulated that mixed impression by means of their style, size, number, and their power both to join with and at least temporarily transform the landscape. There were famous names, boasts, dates, political slogans, and fake names amidst the rest.

The vainglory was more than a claim of "Manifest Destiny," though such a claim can still be found (as Professor Rudolph noted) etched in a rock face confirming the historical/political momentum of the Young America movement that made Manifest Destiny its slogan. Something larger than ambition or self-promoting assertion was being manifested. For many of the travelers, the signatures – some registering only a year and no name – were together a "commemoration of the time": of the "movement of a great nation." Despite disease, death, and hardship, many found their participation in that migration "a personally moving experience." In its magnitude, set amidst the awesome scope of unending plains and desert, it thrust upon them and their fellows – in their joining together amidst the grand monuments and the wreckage of their passing – an unsought-for greatness.



Summary of Conrad Rudolph's Fall Dickson Lecture - Continued

Something similar might be said of one other motive to sign on the rocks: the desire of a certain kind of tourist to find and register a presence – and the sharing of that presence with other witnesses – in places that stimulate “sublimity and awe.” Contemplating in detail and context the remaining signatures the travelers left behind, we might begin to access that awe, if only indirectly.

By the time the railroad came in 1869, the way of life that characterized the west's indigenous peoples had been altered fundamentally. Frederic Remington captured the time and its consequences along the emigrant trail in several haunting portraits of lone warriors at “the end of the trail.” The painting chosen for this presentation focused on an indigenous horseman, his horse halted on a wide wagon track, gazing at a cabin-sized signature rock covered with names and dates. (Remarkably, in his fieldwork Professor Rudolph had found that very rock, which Remington had placed and downsized for the purposes of his portrait.) On one side of the trail is a “message stick” stuck in the earth, by which emigrants attached notes to be read by those behind them. On the other side are two buffalo skulls, remains that remind us of the general slaughter of the tribes' sacred and sustaining animal – a destruction that some emigrants' journals mark and lament. The wagon trains' encampments, from which the travelers might have ventured to the signature rocks nearby at the end of the day, were marked by debris and over-grazing, and a lack of game. For those who had long lived where emigrants passed, the changes over a few decades were catastrophic. Remington's warrior pauses alone to gaze upon the melancholy, ominous evidence of massive change. The rocks, now washed and scoured of most of the travelers' traces, continue to tell stories of profound loss as well as soaring hope.

In closing, Professor Rudolph spoke in favor of the effort to create a “systematic database” of the surviving signatures on the West's monument rocks. Since the 1860s, the great majority of those signs have eroded or washed away. Time will eventually melt the rest. What seemed an indelible history fades with them if our memory fails us. A registry would make available for further study an archive of a formative historical experience that is passing from the land. In Professor Rudolph's work, the emigrant trail reopens.



Meditation at the Botanic Gardens

By Cristina Otegui

As part of the Walks, Talks & Tours series, UCR Retiree and Former Senior Lecturer in Comparative Literature and Language, KimDzung Pham lead a group of 15 emeriti and retirees through an educational talk and practice on meditation in the UCR Botanic Gardens Conference Room. The presentation introduced meditation as a mental practice that focuses the mind to promote relaxation, awareness, clarity, and emotional balance. KimDzung explained that meditation trains the brain to remain calm and connected to the present moment. She provided real life examples of her own experience with meditation and its' benefits.

Participants learned proper sitting and standing meditation postures and engaged in live practices including breathing meditation, sitting meditation, walking meditation, and loving-kindness meditation. KimDzung emphasized that meditation practices vary by individual and underscored the importance of integrating techniques in a manner that is personally effective and sustainable. Thanks to KimDzung, participants were able to apply the techniques during the session and found the experience very helpful.

