

# Grand Learning



## MEET OUR INSTRUCTORS FALL 2021



**Who's Who?**  
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## **Aibinder Joseph**

Joseph Aibinder, B.S., M.S. J.D., is a Sun City Festival resident and Del Webb scholar who served as a Connecticut high school science teacher, a college advanced placement instructor, an adjunct professor at the University of Connecticut, and as a NASA Endeavor Teaching Fellow. I spent my working career as a Product Director at IBM and AT&T developing new products and technologies. My avocation in retirement is volunteering at a local elementary school and as a chess coordinator and science teacher at Festival.

## **Andrews Bill**

Bill and his wife Mary Kay, reside on Casa Blanca Way during the winter months, spending the summer at their residence in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, the home of Arnold Palmer, Fred Rogers (Mr. Rogers) and the banana split. Bill served as a professional geologist, initially beginning his career in the Appalachian coal fields as a mining geologist and mining engineer for a major coal company.

His career eventually brought him to New England, where he and his wife resided in Connecticut for nearly thirty years. Bill worked as an adjunct professor and hydrological engineer, evaluating water resources, contaminant sources and environmental remedial actions throughout the northeast U.S.

Since his retirement, Bill has expanded his interests into the study of the French and Indian Wars and of course, western geology.

## **Axelrod Phil**

Phil Axelrod is a retired insurance underwriter who has been living in Sun City Grand since 2002. He served in the U.S. Navy as a boiler man on the USS Skywatcher and as a nuclear power plant operator on the USS Enterprise. He is interested in politics on the local and national levels and is a past president of the Sun City Grand Republican Interest Group.

## **Bland Carol**

Carol Bland taught literature and writing for many years and retired as Director of Teacher Training and Development. She has received Great Books Leadership Training and has created and led several Great Books groups.

## **Bruno Vinnie**

Vincent Bruno is a Beatles Scholar and 60's Rock Historian.

Recently retired as Director of First Year Programs at LaGuardia Community College (City University of New York). He holds an MPA from Baruch College and as an adjunct professor for the past 25 years he has taught courses in numerous disciplines including Humanities, Business, Mathematics and Cooperative Education. In addition, for the past 17 years he has lectured extensively on The Beatles at universities, colleges, libraries and community centers. As A Beatles scholar and storyteller he looks to both embrace not just their legacy but to present an entertaining, interactive and informative session for both the casual listener as well as the hard core Beatles fan. He currently resides in Arizona and New Jersey.

## **Callahan Dr. Ruth**

Ruth's doctorate is in the work of Franz Kafka and Jewish mysticism. She taught at Glendale Community College for nearly 25 years, her classes including Mythology, Banned Books and Censorship and Modern Fiction. She developed and taught Holocaust Studies at GCC and in Prague for seven years.

She is retired and is fortunate to travel often with her husband, spending a month each summer in a tiny Austrian village on the Danube — watching the cruise ships go by!

## **Cleere            Jan**

Jan Cleere is an award-winning author of six historical nonfiction books about the early West. She travels around the state as a lecturer for the Arizona Humanities program Arizona Speaks. Jan also writes a monthly column, "Western Women," for Tucson's Arizona Daily Star newspaper. Her freelance work appears in national and regional publications.

## **Costa            Holly**

I've studied at the Land of Medicine Buddha in Soquel, California, receiving formal instruction from Venerable Tenzin Chogyi and others on subjects including Cultivating Emotional Balance, Cultivating Compassion, Compassionate Boundaries and Non Violent Communication, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, and Mindful Leadership. I am currently studying to become a certified teacher of Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT™), a credential received through Stanford University's Compassion Institute.

## **Cowles            Lesley**

Lesley has been educating and delighting students in our area for several years. Her teaching style is appreciated by all those taking her classes. She has taught at the Sun City Grand art club, Grand Learning, Sun City Festival and West Valley Gallery in Surprise. Lesley recently completed training as a Creative Aging Instructor.

## **DiLiberto        Sal**

Salvatore DiLiberto is a retired educator from Denver, Colorado. For over 35 years he has held various teaching and administrative positions at the secondary level and most recently, in higher education, at the University of Colorado at Denver. He has been an instructor for Grand Learning since 2003.

## **Dion            Terri**

Terri Dion is a traveler and resident of Sun City Grand. She has visited all 50 states, the 7 continents and more than 100 countries. Since retirement, she continues to travel while teaching travel and geography classes for active adults. She created the Grand Learning International Travel and Learn Program and managed it for several years. Terri's professional background is in Human Resource Management, including developing strategic education programs. She taught in the corporate environment, the City University of Seattle MBA program, Grand Learning, and other Lifelong Learning Programs throughout the Phoenix area.

## **Dirksen        Larry (with Patrick Watts)**

Larry Dirksen has worked as a Sound Designer and Audio Engineer on numerous productions for the Music Club and the Drama and Comedy Club since moving to SCG in 2006.

Patrick Watts is a singer and guitarist who does live sound for his folk group, The Salty Dawgs. He has been producing live sound for the Music Club and the Drama and Comedy Club since 2016.

## **Duffin            Rex**

Rex Duffin is Vice President of Sun American Mortgage, and has been with the company for over 30 years. In his spare time he is an avid pilot and pickleball aficionado.

## **Durham        David**

David has played guitar and sung for over 60 years. In SCG he was the moving force behind the formation of the Acoustic Instrument Group (Music Club). He has performed in numerous SCG shows, including the variety show, showcase of music, Celebration of Music, Hootenannies, and Cimarron Night Club. He has directed and produced a Showcase of Music, the Hootenanny shows, and the Music al Fresco at the SCG Amphitheater.

## **Faser                      John**

John “Johnny” Faser is a Library Paraprofessional at Northwest Regional Library in Surprise. Originally from North Dakota, he and his wife Suzie moved to the Valley in 1999. A self-proclaimed “dog person,” his hobbies revolve around music and nature. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Minot State University.

## **Fox                              Charlotte**

Charlotte Fox is a widowed survivor who faced many challenges and unintended consequences when her husband died unexpectedly. She wrote the workbook *And Then There Was One* because of her experiences and those of many others she met through her journey.

## **Fox                              Cynthia**

Cynthia Fox moved to Sun City Grand in June, 2019 from New Hampshire where she was instructing dog teams in scent detection. Prior to that, she was an elementary and high school teacher for 23 years. Cynthia has raised service dogs for Canine Companions for Independence and continues to participate in NOSEWORK trials with one of her two golden retrievers.

## **Garmley                      Nancy (with Jude Williams)**

Jude and Nancy have taught elementary school through college classes for many years. Their focus has always been on literacy. They are both avid readers and have been a part of the SCG Writing Group for over six years.

## **Gibbs                              Jeff**

Jeff Gibbs has extensive experience in regional and community planning and recently authored a book on planning and development in the Desert Southwest. He recently completed three years as a contributor to the Arizona Republic on planning and development issues in the Phoenix West Valley and is a frequent instructor in Grand Learning with class offerings focusing on growth and development issues in the Valley of the Sun.

## **Jamis                              Dr. Edelita**

My name is Dr. Edelita Jamis. I am an Internal Medicine doctor certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine and the American College of Lifestyle Medicine. I was a diabetic myself, and I reversed it. I am currently running the Lifestyle Medicine program to reduce and discontinue medications safely by addressing the root cause of chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes.

## **Judge                              Nancy**

Nancy Judge moved to SCG nine years ago from Washington state. She was a speech and language pathologist in the Medical Lake School District, the University of Washington and the Olympia School District. She has loved to read and cook since kindergarten.

## **Kauth                              Jim**

Jim is the Management Representative at Sun City Grand and oversees all the landscaping and irrigation. He is a Certified Landscape Water Manager (CLWM) and a Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor (CLIA) with the EPA and the Irrigation Association. There are only (95) people in the United States and (5) in Arizona who are certified as Water Managers. In 2020, he was a delegate at the Congressional Water Summit in Washington, DC and a keynote speaker at several water summits in Arizona including many hosted by SCG.

## **Keep Brian**

Brian Keep has been in the insurance industry since 1986. He started his career at Allstate on Long Island, New York, and held many positions ranging from Operations Management to Territorial Manager. Brian moved to Baltimore, Maryland to work with Zurich North America developing call center sales centers for Auto, Home, Life, and Small Business and was recruited by a Morgan Stanley startup group to develop the first online homeowners company. Brian has held several positions since with Agencies and Companies over the past years involved in Life, Medicare, and other insurance products.

## **Kellogg Maestro Cal**

Maestro Kellogg is an accomplished orchestral and opera conductor and has conducted internationally and nationally with such groups as: Antwerp Philharmonic, Baltimore Symphony, Seattle Symphony and Teatro d'Opera di Roma, San Francisco Opera and 16 season seasons with the Washing Opera at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. He was named Music Director of the West Valley Symphony in 2009, quickly becoming an audience favorite for his engaging and warm personality and his extensive knowledge of the repertoire.

## **Komassa Carol**

Carol Komassa is an experienced instructor (*Sun City Festival, Sun City Grand, ASU, The Botanical Gardens in Phoenix, West Valley and Festival Photo Clubs, two Nature Centers, art museums and libraries*) and is a *Maricopa County Certified Master Gardener*, helping individuals 1-1 with their landscapes and SW Desert Gardening. She owns her own business - *Carol's Floral Affair* - and offers Flower Arranging Classes. She is also a *Monarch Conservationist*, educating children and adults, helping to save the species through raising and saving techniques plus growing host plants for Pollinators.

## **Lassman Joel**

I was born in a Displaced Persons camp in post-war Germany and with my family, immigrated to America in 1949 settling in Spokane, WA. After my graduation from high school, I was appointed to the United States Naval Academy and after graduation, served in the U.S. Navy for 20 years. After I retired, I taught for 18 years both as an elementary special education teacher and middle school math teacher. I currently live in Sun City Grand with my wife of 40 years and we have one daughter. I am also a board member of the Phoenix Holocaust Association.

## **Laursen Larry**

After graduating with a MS in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Michigan I spent 32 years working on a wide variety of plastic applications in research, engineering and manufacturing at a large multinational chemical company. The applications included food packaging products, process equipment, aircraft and electronics.

## **McCollum Bernadine**

Bernadine is a long-time volunteer for the Hassayampa River Preserve and, an avid hiker, and a lover of most plants in Arizona.

## **Montijo Nydia**

Since January 2017, Nydia Montijo has been the Community Outreach Coordinator at the Foundation for Senior Living (FSL). She has a Masters of Public Health in Community Health Practice and 40+ years of non-profit health & human services experience, with more than half of those working on older adult issues. She has had hands-on experience as a family caregiver for both her parents, while also being the Administrator of an older-adults long-term care facility. Her presentations are in large part based on those experiences, as much as her professional development.

## **Moss D.D., Ph.D. Rabbi Doctor Sheldon**

Rabbi Sheldon Moss D.D., Ph.D. has been a Rabbi at a local congregation since 2005. A gifted speaker, author, teacher and community builder he is also President of the local Ministerial Association. He was ordained by the Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion in 1977, where he was also awarded a Doctorate in Divinity degree in 2003. His book on the synagogue Havurah movement, the decentralization of large synagogues into surrogate extended families, is used throughout the United States and Canada.

## **Nykamp Mary**

Mary Nykamp received her B.S.W. Cum Laude from ASU and her J.D. from the U of A. She is a partner in the law firm of Jeckel & Nykamp, P.L.L.C., located in Sun City since 1974. Mary practices primarily in the areas of trusts, wills, estate planning, probate, guardianships and conservatorships. She has taught numerous classes on these topics and is a popular speaker throughout the Valley.

## **Perkins Laura Lee**

Laura Lee Perkins, MS has been awarded 5 Artist-in-Residencies for U.S. National Parks, 13 grants and produced 5 professional CD recordings and 14 books. Perkins is a professional flutist, educator and spiritual writer.

## **Reamer Allen**

Allen Reamer was fortunate to be born into a long line of artists. He has also been fortunate to know what he wanted to do at a young age and be able to do it. He received a B.A. in art, a Masters of Fine Arts degree in sculpture. His post-graduate work is in art history and education. Allen developed and taught a great variety of studio art and art history courses for thirty-two years before coming to Arizona. During this time he was the president of the District of Columbia Art Education Association for ten years and very active for a decade with the National Art Education Association in the areas of curriculum and assessment. He has been a member or chair of a number of art related boards and has gratefully been recognized in a variety of ways including art teacher of the year, a fellowship to China, and upon retiring, letters from a number of politicians. Since coming to Arizona in 1999, he has been able to produce art and teach art history and studio art from the moment he arrived. Allen has taught for the Oscher program since its inception. He exhibits with the Neu Art Group in Arizona.

## **Regen Larry**

Larry is a professional Harmonica player: in 2009 he was the only "HARP" player to make the finals of the Phoenix Blues Society Best of Arizona competition. He is a preferred instructor for the Arizona School of Music and also teaches as required by other institutions and is available to teach private lessons to advanced students. Larry has performed throughout the US, Canada Europe and Mexico, and is now semi-retired and living in Glendale AZ. He is still doing recording sessions and performances as requested.

## **Rosenberg David**

Rabbi was trained as an engineer in his younger days and has also served communities in Sun City West. His interests are varied. Rabbi went to UC Riverside, graduate school at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena in Ancient Languages. His life's work has been to research and find sources for Biblical narratives...where did it all come from? He has taught at various places at the college level. Studied at Claremont Colleges in CA - early Christianity and Early Judaism.

## **Rothschild Steven**

I was a NYC School Teacher for 35 years and also a Day Camp Owner in Rockland County. In addition my love for sports equals my love for Al Jolson. My Jolson Connection began way back in 1959.

## **Saunders      Dr. Bonnie**

Bonnie Saunders has a Ph.D. in history from the University of Connecticut, with an emphasis on U.S. foreign policy, especially in the Middle East in the 20th century. Her dissertation on a CIA plot to overthrow the government of Syria in 1957 was published as a book in 1996. She has taught the Great Decisions program and other foreign policy related adult education classes since 1977 in Connecticut and Arizona.

## **Schnoor      Donna**

Donna began teaching yoga 17 years ago, she is registered as an E-RYT500 advanced yoga teacher. She is a native of Arizona and offers classes, workshops, certifications, and teacher trainings in the West Valley, specializing in bringing yoga to the older community. Donna's themed classes offer a unique fusion of alignment, anatomy, and strength while delving into the deeper meaning of Yoga. She specializes in therapeutic classes that target particular areas of the body or ailments, offering techniques and postures for healing. All her classes are conducted with a healthy dose of humor while cultivating a calm and centered mind.

## **Shepp      Michael**

Michael Shepp is the home solar instructor with the Rio Salado College in Surprise. He's been teaching Solar classes for 5 years to Arizona seniors through the University along with organizations such as PORA. His class is titled "Everything you must know before you ever allow a solar salesman into your home". Knowledge is absolute power. Michael retired from the E. I. Dupont Corporation after 38 years of employment.

## **Sorensen      Ken**

Not quite an Arizona native, Ken Sorensen moved here with his family as a young child. He grew up in Glendale and attended high school and junior college there. As Ken married and started a family, he worked in construction equipment related jobs until an economic downturn hit the Valley of the Sun. Being unemployed, Ken and his young family made the sacrifices necessary for him to return to school. He completed both his bachelor's and master's degrees and began teaching high school; a life-long dream. Ken is certified to teach both history and English and, during a 30-year career in education, has taught high school in two states. He also taught junior college at both Mesa and Chandler-Gilbert Community Colleges for 12 of those years. Ken has always taught with a humanities approach believing that if we understand who people are and what their motives are, we will more likely understand what they have written.

In the summer of 2005, Ken won a scholarship to attend Exeter College in Oxford, England for a summer term of graduate studies. That experience changed his life. Ken was able to experience things he had read about and taught all his life. In 2013, Ken was honored to be elected Teacher of the Year by the Mesa Arizona Chamber of Commerce following a student's recommendation. Ken is an avid reader and has an extensive collection of books. He also enjoys woodworking and has made children's furniture, inlaid clocks, and finely crafted pens and pencils. Ken lives in Gilbert with his wife Susan. They have seven children and many grandchildren.

## **Spata      Tony**

A registered Professional Engineer in multiple states (including Arizona), Tony has participated on building code and standards committees, is a frequent speaker at industry events and has authored numerous articles for trade publications. He has addressed issues including: advanced ventilation strategies for improved indoor air quality, application of electronic & wireless lighting controls, LED lighting, benefits of adaptive energy efficiency strategies, and remote monitoring & control of building systems.

## **Swan Helen**

As a past author, Helen has specialized in non-fiction. Her first book, "Alone After School: A Guide for Latchkey Children and their Families", was published in 1984. After publishing this book, she was a guest in the Donahue Show and CBS News with Maria Schriver. Other publications included research articles about child sexual abuse and a professional manual for adoptive parents of children sexually abused. Helen also has experience as a teacher. Immediately after graduating with an education degree from Purdue University, she taught junior high and high school student for two years. During the next thirty years Helen taught various child abuse courses for teachers and professionals at Ottawa University and Washington University in St. Louis.

## **Swartz Ginger**

Ginger Swartz holds a BA in English with a dual minor in Literature and Journalism. She earned an MA in Literature, Language and Human Communications, from Regis University in Denver, CO. Her experience as a writer, poet, journalist and writing instructor provided her with the incentive to share her love of literature. Her rock and roll obsession provides a base for her "Bob Dylan Untangled" programs.

## **Turner Jim**

Jim Turner grew up in Tucson and taught his first Arizona history course in 1976. He received his masters degree in U.S. History from the University of Arizona in 1999 and was historian for the Arizona Historical Society from 2001 to 2009 where he worked with more than 65 history museums statewide. He retired to write "Arizona: A Celebration of the Grand Canyon State" one of Pima County Library's Southwest Books of the Year "Top Picks" in 2011. He became an editor and author for Rio Nuevo Publishers in 2009 and has co-authored "The Grand Canyon from Rim to River" (2010); and authored "The Mighty Colorado River from the Glaciers to the Gulf", (2016); and "Four Corners USA: Wonders of the American Southwest" (2018)

## **Van Cott Ed**

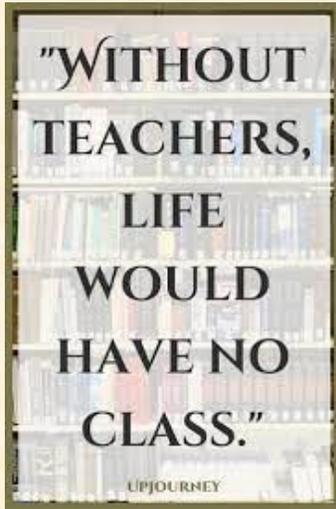
Ed Van Cott has an engineering background and 63 years of golf experience including being a player, major tournament volunteer, local tournament competitor, developer of group play procedures, ball picker, golf group statistician, Golf Committee member, and golf course operations and maintenance employee. His recent interest has led to a collection of interesting and unusual views of this difficult to play but fascinatingly enjoyable sport.

## **White Pat**

I am an identical twin and my husband, two sons and I moved to Goodyear, Arizona, in 1994 from Mendota Heights, MN. I was infected with Arizona's Disease "Valley Fever aka COCCI" in September 2005 and am still battling it 17 years later. I stopped counting the CME's that I have earned just on Valley Fever (VF) when I reached 125 CME's. My lecture will help you to protect yourself, spouse, family, friends and pets. You will know more about VF than most of the doctors in Arizona when you leave my class.

## **Wiener Rabbi Irwin**

A career spent in Education and Youth programming. Involved in Inter-Faith activities and has served as president of the Sun Lakes Interfaith council. Active participant in Life-cycle events and has written spiritually oriented liturgies. Currently, and for the last 18 years, spiritual leader of the Sun Lakes Jewish Congregation. A published author and writer for several publications.



**On the cover (l-r)**  
**(Just a few of our instructors)**

- **Vinnie Bruno, Mary Nykamp, Joe Aibinder**
- **Carol Komassa, David Durham, Ken Sorensen, Jan Cleere**
- **Terri Dion, Donna Schnoor, Laura Lee Perkins, Jim Turner, Bonnie Saunders**
- **Dr. Edelita Jamis, Lesley Cowles, Brian Keep**



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