



Leading the Way to Lifelong Learning

Conductor

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President's Corner

Nancy Johnson,
President



Because your Board didn't meet over the December holidays, I have nothing new to write about. Rather than leave a blank space on the front page of *The Conductor*, I've decided to recommend a Gentrain-worthy biography I have just finished reading.

A little background: As I have done for the last decade or so, I will be taking a short course at Oxford this June. In recent years, I have become drawn to the Tudor dynasty, and the course I have chosen is called "The Forgotten and Misunderstood Tudors."

The Tudors in question are Edward VI, Lady Jane Grey, and Mary I. These monarchs reigned (or in Jane's case, was quickly deposed) between 1547-1558 - a period marked by some of the most radical political and religious conflicts of the Tudor era, as England struggled between Catholicism and the emerging Protestant faith.

My "Tudor Tutor" (the rhyme and alliteration always make me smile) has assigned four books as pre-course reading. My first delve into the stack was *Mary Tudor: England's First Queen* by Anna Whitelock. Although Whitelock is a scholar and academic, she organizes her book into very short chapters, making it much easier to read and absorb than most works of this nature. And because it is based on modern scholarship, *Mary Tudor* gives a balanced portrait of its subject that goes far beyond the "Bloody Mary" image of popular history.

I don't have space to recount more than a few highlights, but Mary--the only surviving child of Katherine of Aragon and Henry VIII--was highly popular with the people. She was doted on by her father and exceptionally well-educated by her mother, whose fervent Catholicism remained a lifelong influence. Her happy childhood came to an end after her father became besotted with Anne Boleyn. After Henry's annulment from Katherine, Mary was declared illegitimate and stripped of her rights to the succession. No longer a princess, she was then sent to be a servant in the household of her baby sister Elizabeth.

Her father's eventual successor, Edward VI, came to the throne after his Henry's death in 1547. Because he was only nine, Edward was at first guided by a regency council heavily weighted with Protestant reformers. Five years later, Protestant worship had become mandated throughout England. When Edward learned that Mary was still having Catholic mass celebrated for her in private, he ordered her to stop. Mary, at great personal risk, refused. Though she considered fleeing the country, she remained in England - an act modern day historians often cite as an example of her remarkable courage.

When it became clear that Edward was about to die, he left handwritten instructions for his succession. With no close male heirs, he bypassed the "illegitimate" Mary and Elizabeth and chose to leave the throne to his cousin, the Protestant Lady Jane Grey. Despite this, many of the English people believed Mary, as the eldest of Henry's children, was the rightful ruler. Though she had no legal claim and almost no chance of success, she quickly gathered her followers and marched to London from her home in East Anglia. England had never had a woman reign in her own right before, so in addition to being courageous, Mary had to become an innovator--paving the way for future English queens.

Among her other strong qualities, many modern historians find that she was intelligent, determined, a persuasive speaker, and a competent administrator. Others note that her determination could be viewed as stubbornness. Her marriage to Philip II of Spain was unpopular, creating fears that England would become subservient to Spain. In foreign policy, Mary's loss of Calais, the last English possession in France, was a major blow to national pride. Her failure to produce an heir, despite two phantom pregnancies, weakened her public credibility and contributed to a succession crisis.

I'll close by asking: What have you been reading lately? If it's something you think your fellow Gentrainers might enjoy, **send me a note at admin@gentrain.org**. If there is space, we can publish your recommendations in a future edition.

Gentrain Society Board Meetings

The next Gentrain Society Board meetings will be held on campus on February 18 and March 18 at 2:45 pm in MPC Social Sciences 104. **These Meetings are open to all Gentrain Society Members.**

Membership Report

Merry Nolte, Membership Chair

Welcome to our new Gentrain member, Michele Littell. But a note to procrastinators: if you have not yet renewed your membership, this is the last Conductor you will receive.

Special Events

Michael Sovereign, Rene Kimzey, Co-chairs

Looking forward to Special Events in 2026 with the very special folks in the Gentrain Society.

We are negotiating with Casa Serrano for a gathering including a Docent tour, wine and hors d'oeuvres and possibly a talk on the Ladies of Larkin House. Additionally, we are working on a visit with "Jack London" including refreshments to be held in the Monterey Library event room. **It would be helpful to know what afternoons the membership prefers-- weekdays or weekends. Email kimzey4@gmail.com with the subject line Gentrain.**

The extremely high cost of bus transportation has curtailed our long trips, so we are focusing on the culturally rich local scene for now. Happy 2026!

Scholarship Report

Vikki Logan, Scholarship Chair

This year the Gentrain Scholarship Committee has awarded two scholarships to outstanding women that are in the MCCSN program at MPC and also enrolled in the BA nursing program at CSUMB!

Coincidentally, both women are single mothers: This is a quote from **Brooke Skiera**, "My passion for nursing grew from my early life experiences and was amplified over time. Both of my parents were Registered Nurses (Cardiology, Hospice, ICU and Pediatrics), and I enjoyed growing up hearing stories of lives they had helped. Not every story had a happy ending, but they all made an impact. In my eyes, my parents were Superheroes who helped those most in need. I am forging a new life for my daughter and myself. I appreciate life on another level with gratitude in my heart daily. I also reserve my judgment towards others. One can never truly know what someone is facing. The best you can do is approach each situation with compassion and support."

This quote is from **Catherine Kleinsorge-Latham**, "I am a single mother to an amazingly intelligent and resilient eight-year-old little girl. Being so close to realizing my dream is surreal. I have gained insight and experience over the last two years that has only reconfirmed that I am pursuing the career that I was meant for. The MCCSN program has given me a strong foundation of nursing knowledge that is helping me to improve my practical skills and critical thinking while in the clinical setting. My problem solving abilities and

organizational skills have improved and have extended into my personal life, helping me to be a better student and mother. I am truly blessed to have such wonderful instructors."

Recent Memorial donations:

In memory of Linda Marcellini; given by Randy and Tina Anderson, Barry and Vivian Beiswenger, Robert Marcellini.

In memory of Bob Zobel given by Tom and Vikki Logan.

The Gentrain Book Club

Gerard Kapolka

The Great Books discussion group resumed on January 7 to finish our discussion of Dickens' *Little Dorrit*. Beginning on January 14 we began discussing Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*. We welcome any new members, and you don't have to join the group at the beginning of the readings to participate. **We meet on Zoom on Wednesday evenings at 7 pm.** The discussions last about an hour. If you wish to join our group, email me, Gerry Kapolka, at gtkapolka@gmail.com to receive a reading list and Zoom invitations. We welcome all newcomers.

Webmaster Report

Mary Alice Rennick

The basic structure and navigation of our website have been stable for some time, but there have been a few modifications. In particular, there are links to Breaking News just below the opening video, immediately followed by links to the next three upcoming classes and other events. You are encouraged to check the site frequently.

During the next few months, the website team will evaluate the overall value of the site and decide whether to make any significant changes to it. **If you have any suggestions regarding features to add, remove, or modify**, please contact any board member or webmaster@gentrain.org.

Wednesday Lectures

Gentrain Wednesday Lectures are held in LF 102 from 1:30 to 2:30 pm. Visitors are welcome; no charge or registration is required.

Wednesday, January 21, 2026 - 1:30 pm
An Interview with Mrs. Elmarie Dyke,
Aka "Mrs. Pacific Grove"

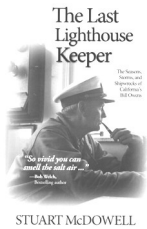
A Staged Reading by Carol Marquart Starring Andra McDonald and Suzanne Alvin

Elmarie Hurlbert Hyler Dyke (Citizen of the year in 1975) will give her first and only television interview on KPEG TV on June 3, 1975. She will offer stories about important people she knew such as Ed Ricketts and Pacific Grove mayor, Julia Platt. Elmarie will also highlight her important civic contributions which

include but, are not limited to, the recreation of The Feast of Lanterns and her willingness to volunteer for just about everything. Included in this interview are Elmarie's opinions and recollections about life in "The Last Home Town," between the years 1913 and 1975. Don't miss the chance to learn why Elmarie Dyke earned the name, "Mrs. Pacific Grove," and why she knows we will miss her.



Wednesday, February 4, 2026 - 1:30 pm The Last Lighthouse Keeper



The Last Lighthouse Keeper tells the extraordinary life of Bill Owens, for 32 years a keeper with the United States Lighthouse Service on California's coast. While raising six daughters at light stations with his wife Isabel, Owens experienced the Great Depression, World War II, dirigible disasters, storms, and plane crashes. At Point Conception, he encountered shipwrecks and rum runners. At Point Sur, isolation and hardship. At Point Arena, Japanese submarines and wartime beach patrols. And, finally, at Point Cabrillo, a stormy conclusion to a career threatened by the coming of automated lighthouses. Drawing from days of face-to-face interviews with Bill and Isabel in the 1980s, Stuart McDowell crafts a riveting portrait of a man, a family, and an era of lighthouse men never to be seen again.

McDowell is the author of two books, *The Sinking of the SS Montebello* and *The Last Lighthouse Keeper*. His writing has also appeared in the Epoch Times. A retired educational psychologist, he completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Oregon and San Diego State University. He earned his post-graduate degree at Cal State University, Long Beach.

Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2026 - 1:30 pm The Birth of Christianity

The accounts of Jesus' teaching, his crucifixion and his resurrection were passed on orally and then written about by many different people who often differed on fundamental issues. There was no central authority to resolve these differences. Jesus was seen by his followers as Christ, the Anointed One. But what did that mean? By 200 C.E., a new religion had developed throughout the Roman Empire. It wasn't official and it wasn't unified. There were many schools of thought. Yet the followers of Jesus were no longer simply a sect of Judaism but a religion for all people. They had birthed Christianity. What was this new religion and what did it stand for? How had it succeeded through such turmoil? Historically speaking, how do we know what we think we know about Jesus and his disciples?

Steve Henrikson is a teacher of history and philosophy whose career has spanned six decades in private schools

on the East Coast and in California. His undergraduate degree is from Carleton College and graduate degree is from Northwestern University.

Wednesday, March 4, 2026 - 1:30pm The Poet in a Democracy: Robinson Jeffers and His Relevance Today

Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts will explore the poetry and life of Robinson Jeffers, whose stark, powerful verse challenging the political and cultural norms of his time is even more relevant today. Known for his philosophy of "inhumanism" and his fierce critique of our country's engagement in World War II and human arrogance, Jeffers offered an uncompromising poetic voice during some of America's most turbulent decades. More importantly, his poetry resonates deeply in these unsettled and challenging times. Through commentary and selected readings, Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts will highlight how Jeffers' poetry provides guidelines for living in this time of ecological and political crisis.



Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts serves as president of the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation, where he also coordinates the annual Prize for Poetry. A poet, translator, and Professor Emeritus at Monterey Peninsula College, he taught literature and humanities for over three decades. He also served as Poet-in-the-Schools for the Carl Cherry Center. He is the author of the poetry collection *White Fire* and co-translator of two works included in UNESCO's Collection of Representative Works.

MPC Spring Gentrain Program

January 27, 29 - February 3, 5, 10, 12, 17, 19

Gentrain 12/412: AGE OF PROGRESS (1815 - 1870 AD)

The course is an examination of the Industrial Revolution and some of its most important consequences, positive and negative. It also looks at the second generation of Romanticism in music, art and literature, in part as a response to industrialization, and the way the disillusionments of Romanticism led into the age of realism in the arts.

February 24, 26 - March 3, 5, 10, 12, 17, 19

Gentrain 13/413 THE END OF INNOCENCE (1870-1918 AD)

The course gives a portrait of Europe leading up to and including World War I. It is also the age of "isms": impressionism, realism, naturalism, cubism, futurism, Marxism, and Freudianism. It culminates with World War I and the Russian Revolution.

**The Gentrain Society of MPC
2025 - 2026
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Name: _____

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Invitation to Join

Dues: \$35 per year, \$50 Couples
Send your check payable to the *MPC/Gentrain Society*

Name: _____

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___ **I would like to learn about volunteer
opportunities.**

Please clip out and send to:
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**Welcome
2026**