

# THE ALIRIAN

August/September 2025



Michael Burns  
Chair

## Hello ALIRians:

Welcome to the beginning of the fall semester at ALIR. Our incredible Curriculum Committee has put together a record number of classes, eighty-four at last count, across an array of fascinating subjects.

Because of your efforts to spread the news about ALIR, we have more than **forty** new ALIRians this semester. Please

take the time to greet new faces in your classes. Further more, we are not just dedicated to lifetime learning at ALIR, but to the friendships and connections that make us a family.

Finally, our wonderful instructors are the lifeblood of ALIR, and we are especially blessed with the dedication and passion of these special leaders.

PLEASE ENJOY YOUR FALL CLASSES AT ALIR.

The best-educated human being is the one who understands most about the life in which he is placed.

—Helen Keller



SUMMER BARN DANCE

# THE ABC'S OF WHY PARIS CAN WAIT

This poem explains why Geoff and I postponed our May 2025 trip to Paris

**A** is for Airplanes we may never have to board.

**B** is for the Bathrooms we may never have to share.

**C** is for the Cost we might never quite afford.

**A** is for (French) Attitudes that might never have been fair.

**B** is for the Boring pics we might never need record.

**C** is for the Countless Cats who daily need our care.

—Joanne McKinnis

## **HOW TO BE FABULOUS FOREVER:**

Celebrate vitality, style, and confidence at every stage of life

Explore practical wellness strategies for feeling fabulous inside and out

Embrace aging as empowerment—not decline

Share uplifting tips for energy, health, beauty, and attitude

Cultivate positivity, humor, and self-expression

Build community and connection with like-minded people

Try fun challenges, journaling or affirmations each week

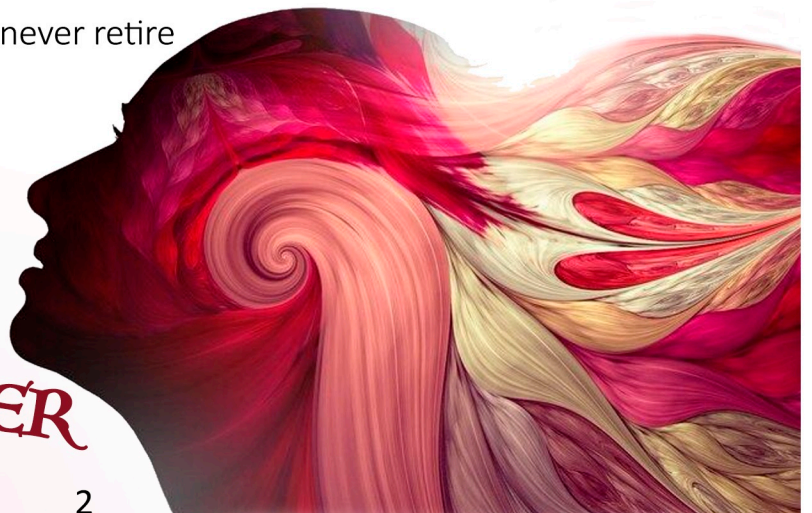
Learn from guest speakers, media clips or personal stories

Highlight fabulous role models from film, literature, and history

Reinforce that joy, creativity, and curiosity never retire

Living Your Best Life at Every Age

**FABULOUS FOREVER**





# Fall 2025 - Spring 2026 Calendar Dates

August 8	Summer semester ends
August 11	Fall catalog released
August 18	Fall registration
September 3	Instructor/new student orientation
September 8	Fall classes begin
October 7	1 <sup>st</sup> Luncheon
October 8	Spring applications available
November 4	2 <sup>nd</sup> Luncheon
November 7	Spring instructor apps due
<b>November 24-28</b>	<b>Thanksgiving break</b>
December 2	3 <sup>rd</sup> Luncheon
December 3	Art Show/Performance setup
December 4	Art Show/Performance
December 5	Fall classes end
January 6	Spring catalog released
January 12	Spring registration
January 21	Instructor/new student orientation
January 26	Spring classes begin
February 23	1 <sup>st</sup> Luncheon
March 4	Summer applications available
<b>March 9 - 13</b>	<b>Spring break</b>
March 25	2 <sup>nd</sup> Luncheon
April 2	Summer instructor apps due
<b>April 3</b>	<b>Good Friday -campus closed</b>
April 15	3 <sup>rd</sup> Luncheon/scholarship awards
April 21	Art/Performance set-up
April 22	Art/Performance
April 23	Last day of campus classes
April 24	Last day of online classes
<b>April 24</b>	<b>NEISD campus closed</b>

## *Semester Beginning & Ending Dates*

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### Spring 2026 12-week classes

January 26 - April 24

### Spring 2026 six-week classes

1<sup>st</sup> Jan. 26<sup>th</sup> - March 6<sup>th</sup>  
2<sup>nd</sup> March 16<sup>th</sup> - April 24<sup>th</sup>

### Spring 2026 three-week classes

1<sup>st</sup> Jan. 26<sup>th</sup> - Feb. 13<sup>th</sup>  
2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 16<sup>th</sup> - March 6<sup>th</sup>  
3<sup>rd</sup> March 16<sup>th</sup> - April 2<sup>th</sup>  
4<sup>th</sup> April 6<sup>th</sup> - April 24<sup>th</sup>

### PLEASE HELP ALIR GROW

There is so much more we want to do for our ALIRian community, but that takes funding.

#### **Please Consider ALIR.**

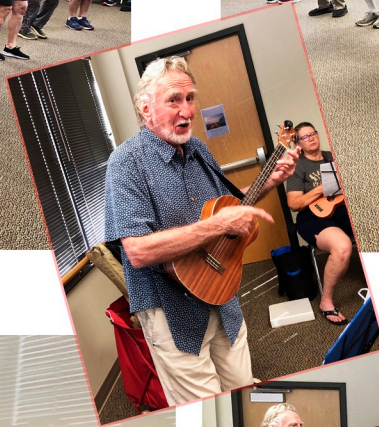
We are a 501.c.3 non-profit educational service for seniors, providing lifelong learning in a social setting, intellectual stimulation and scholarships.

Please donate to the **Bill Howland Memorial Scholarship Fund**. Donations can be left with Willson or checks mailed to Tom Colbourn, Council Treasurer.



# Barn Dance — June 2025

Featuring ALIR'S  
INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN DANCERS — LINE DANCERS — UKULELE PLUCKERS





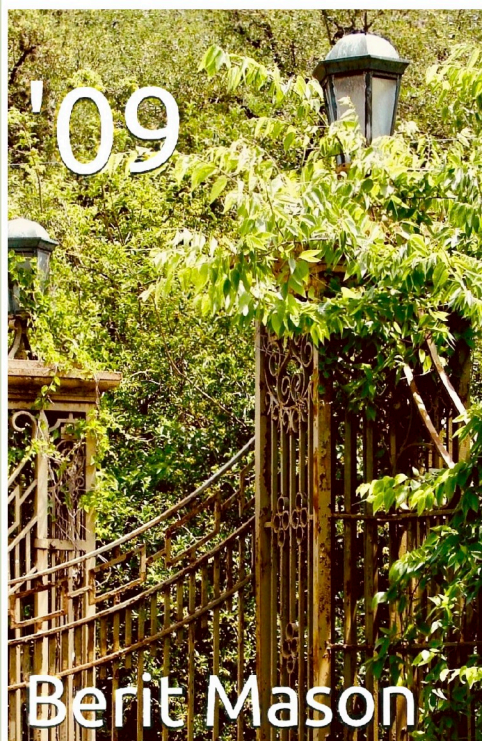
# The Twig Book Shop

306 Pearl Pkwy Ste 106, San Antonio

will host a Sit & Sign with local author

Berit "Pixie" Mason as she debuts her novel, "09"

Saturday, October 4, 2025 at 11:00 a.m.



*"Every town, no matter how big or how small, has a neighborhood so exclusive that gaining entry, for most, might as well be a trip to the moon.*

*In one Texas town, that enclave in Shady Heights, zip code 78209.*

*"Shady" for the great live oaks that protect from the sun, and "Heights" for homes high up, with safe and secure views of the world.*

*Folks living here are "09ers", "09" slang for where the comfortable people live. But changing times and a changing landscape whip right around them, high winds and hurricanes hit as the developers move in, pushing the old order out.*

*The ruling class clings to power---but societal forces are too great, and now they're the ones who give in".*

ALIRian, Berit "Pixie" Mason was born in Greenwich Village, daughter of Random House author, Herbert M. Mason Jr. Berit's mother, Rigmor Hansen Mason, was an artist from Norway.

She grew up abroad, before her family settled in San Antonio. She attended St. Mary's Hall and Alamo Heights Independent School District Schools.

Berit attended Mary Baldwin College in Virginia, graduating from Austin College in Sherman, Texas with a B.A. in Political Science. She interned at CNN Washington at the US Supreme Court. Berit was a TV anchor-reporter in Waco and San Angelo, a reporter for Texas Public Radio and WOAI 1200 AM. She was also a RIAS Berlin Commission German American Exchange Journalist.

Berit was a correspondent for the *Goethe Institute*, the *Sons of Norway Foundation*, the *San Antonio Business Journal*, *San Antonio Report*, *San Antonio Woman*, and the *Scene in San Antonio*.

She is currently secretary of the San Antonio Astronomical Association.

## ALIR MISSION STATEMENT

Academy of Learning in Retirement (ALIR) is an all-volunteer organization which provides opportunities for lifelong learning with social and community engagement.

Your stories, poems and ideas can be published in upcoming newsletters.



**Please send your submissions to:**

Rodney Brown -- rrbrown67@147thhillclimbers.org

5 Barbara Maphet -- bmaphet@luxurypresentations.com



# THE BARRIER ISLAND

A beautiful day. Light breeze. Low Swells roll in.  
Curly white tops. Beached waves roll over. Depositing life.  
Salty water slipping back. Little shellfish burrowing in wet sand.  
Sand crabs scurrying to holes. Warm Gulf water.

Gulls hovering. Bait fish running cuts. Pelicans diving.  
Kids building sandcastles, throwing saucers. Balls flying.  
Sleeping, reading, dreaming adults on towels.  
Sun getting low. Time to go. Breeze picking up. "Could be a blow?"

Beach house standing tall in island's middle.  
Gulf to the South. Big Bay to the North.  
Everyone follows path to concrete stilts.  
Bottom level for storage. Upstairs to big living room.

Bunkrooms on corners. Kitchen on North wall.  
Gulfside viewing windows on South. Large wraparound porch  
partially screened. 'Damned' mosquitoes.  
"Might blow." Put up storm windows. Get ready, just in case.

Bed at 10. Blowing harder. Hmm, electricity fails at 11.  
Look to the South. Surf approaching house.  
Midnight. "Everybody, wake-up". Water creeping up stilts.  
Stairs flooding. Pull down attic ladder. "UP!, Kids first."

Water reaches big room. Crashing waves hit South wall.  
Everybody is in. Attic too small. Wind, waves, constant roar.  
Suddenly wind, waves subside. Skies open, yet,  
heavy clouds surround. Water blown in from South. Big Bay is full.

Calm, ...2, 3, 5, 10 minutes. "Is it safe?" As EYE passes.  
Then it hits. North wind forces bay water back to Gulf.  
Huge wall of bay water crashes into North side. Over the roof.  
House disintegrates. Pieces wash over beach. Skeleton stilts stay.

Storm passes. House gone. No humans left. Some bodies found.  
Once more, island clean, glistening, pristine.

Gulf waters cooling. Pelicans diving. Gulls scavenging.  
Dunes rebuilding. Storm forgotten. New dreamers arriving.  
First task, they decide,

**PLANT TALLER STILTS!**

— Don Gadberry



## DR. JUDITH SOBRE: AN INTERVIEW

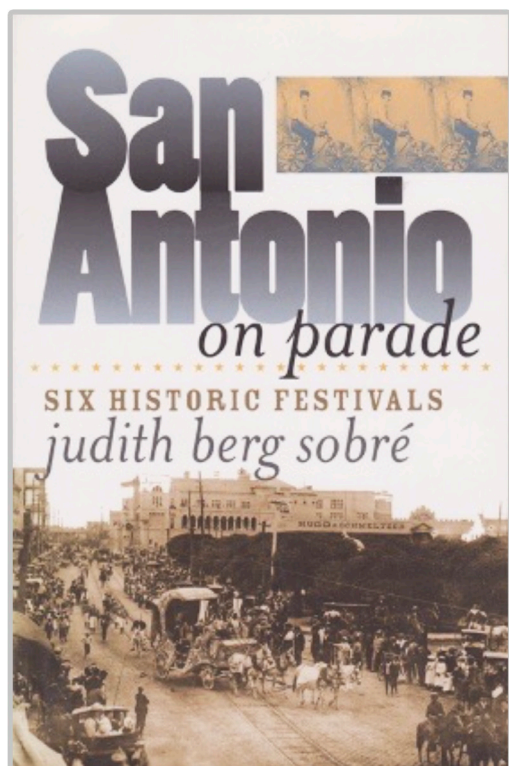
We are excited to share a special feature on one of our most cherished instructors, Dr. Judith Sobre. Judith's curiosity for learning began at a young age, always wanting to "follow the rabbit holes" of adventure. A real autodidact.

Judith loves teaching and it shows. Her teaching philosophy is simple yet profound: *make learning enjoyable*. She engages students in a relaxed environment, which fosters rich discussions and shared experiences.

One of the reasons Dr. Sobre's classes are so popular is her ability to inspire students. Her innovative approach to art history and her shift away from traditional, formal teaching styles have made her classes a favorite. Judith is a storyteller. For example, in her recent ALIR class, *Visual Culture of a Place Through Time: The Iberian Peninsula*, Judith and esteemed friend Gladys Koranek provided historical insight, architectural detail, and beautiful art photos that became an entertaining - art - culture private tour.

While attending New York University, young Judith could not see a future as a housewife on Long Island. Instead, she pondered a Masters Degree in Art History. Better yet, her wise university advisor urged and sponsored her application to Harvard. Judith's studies at Harvard and her access to its renown library inspired many scholarly articles and several books on Medieval Spanish art. At that time, the post-Spanish Civil War period had been neglected in art history studies. Her research included two years in Barcelona, while working on her dissertation. While Harvard's teaching style at the time was formal and considered by some as pompous — "*they allowed me the space to work on my own and to go down my own rabbit holes*".

Dr. Sobre taught at the University of Oregon for six years, then a friend informed her that the University of Texas was planning a new campus in San Antonio: UTSA. The sunshine, springtime (maybe Fiesta?) and a tremendous opportunity to design the art curriculum and department sold Judith on making the cross-country move. A creative team of 75 scholars had the university ready to open in 1975. As one of the founders of the Arts department and the Art History department, Judith pioneered the use of digital imagery in teaching. She became professor emeritus at UTSA, retiring in 2016. Along with many scholarly articles, Dr. Sobre has written several books including *San Antonio on Parade: Six Historic Festivals* (pop culture/tradition).



**TEACHING IS ABOUT CREATING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS WHO CAN CONTRIBUTE TO EACH OTHER'S GROWTH.** Sharing knowledge is one way, and Dr. Judith Sobre invites us to explore our own "rabbit holes", whether you lead a discussion on a Great Courses prepared course, design your own class, or teach with friends as a collaborative effort. ALIR provides the platform. **YOU** can be the storyteller. Thanks for the interview, Dr. Judith Sobre.

—Linda Comeaux

I've learned that it's never too late to improve yourself. — Age 85

I've learned that there are still some things I haven't made up my mind about yet. — Age 91

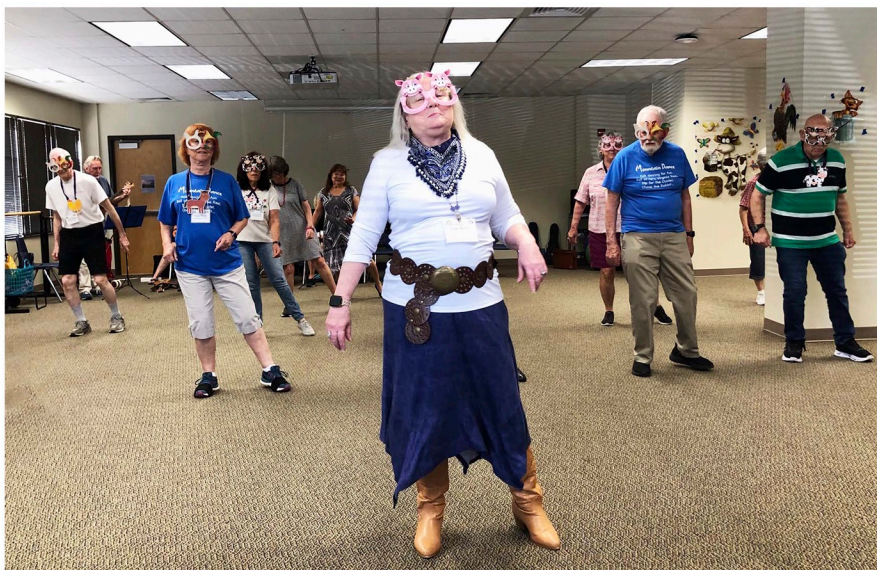
I've learned that everybody likes to be asked his or her opinion. — Age 71

I've learned that I am happy when I'm kind to others and unhappy when I'm not. — Age 88





## ALIR COMMUNITY OUTREACH — MAY 2025



Scan the QR code  
for  
the ALIR website

If you know someone in our ALIR community who needs a card of sympathy, a get-well wish or other words of encouragement (please be specific), notify Paul Cavazos at [cavazos.paul@icloud.com](mailto:cavazos.paul@icloud.com) or Willson Donovan at [ALIR@neisd.net](mailto:ALIR@neisd.net).

*ALIR Remembers*

**David Uhler  
Pamela Ferguson**