

This monthly article highlights one of our branch members. We hope that you enjoy knowing a little more about your fellow members and the interesting life they have had. If you have someone you would like to nominate or if you would like to help author an article, please email the editor, Ron Nakamoto, at [ron.nakamoto\(at\)yahoo.com](mailto:ron.nakamoto(at)yahoo.com).

RONALD PAUL (RON) REIS



On May 4, 1970 John Paul Filo, a student at Kent State University and part-time news photographer captured Mary Ann Vecchio crying out and kneeling over a fatally wounded Jeffrey Miller. This single image memorialized the anguish and horror that was the Vietnam war. Filo's photo was printed on the front page of the New York Times and he went on to win a Pulitzer Prize for this moment in history. Sandra Scheuer, walking between classes was one of four students killed as the Ohio National Guard opened fired on the protesting students. I was there and she was one of my students. The University, the faculty and the students were never the same after that tragedy. I am Ron Reis and this is my story.

First, a spoiler alert: this is not going to be a “rags to riches” or “destitute guy saves the world” story. Rather, I begin my tale by simply stating early in life I realized that I had won the parent lottery. Born in San Francisco but raised in Atherton, mostly by my grandmother, I was a neighbor of Shirley Temple Black (yes, the childhood movie star) and certainly was a privileged child.

My parents wanted me to have fun and to play tennis as a kid, so I played tennis ... nearly every day! My father owned a successful moving and storage company in San Francisco and was an outstanding golfer. My mother grew up as a child prodigy, a Hungarian born pianist who knew little about motherhood, but wowed crowds with her Mozart and Debussy. There was likely some genetic influence here: she was the great, great granddaughter of the composer, Felix Mendelssohn. (*Editor's note: Jakob Felix Mendelssohn was a 19th century, German composer pianist, organist and conductor of many known works to include his organ melody “Wedding March” regularly played at many weddings.*) My mother enjoyed a long life and recently passed away at the ripe age of 98. Lucky for me as I am probably blessed with her longevity genes.

Before he instructed at Stanford, I was fortunate enough to take tennis lessons from Dick Gould, the renowned ex-head coach and current Stanford Director of Tennis. Through his encouragement and tutelage, I became a ranked Northern California Tennis player as a young teenager. In my Junior year of high school, I cut my journalism class to play a second-round match in a state tournament against a lanky, then little-known

Freshman from UCLA. This black tennis athlete ended up changing the sport world and yes, he was none other than Arthur Ashe and of course, he easily beat me in straight sets. After high school, I was recruited by Coach Jim Verdieck to attend the University of Redlands in Southern California, where I was basically a tennis geek and German major. Our renowned tennis coach insured his team was in shape by scheduling one league opponent in the morning and another team in the afternoon, yes singles and doubles, then singles and doubles again on the same day! My greatest memory was traveling to Stanford my Junior year and winning one of the deciding matches to clinch a 5-4 victory over my first instructor, Dick Gould – not bad for a school of 1,200 students! One summer I represented the Northern California Tennis Association at a clay court tournament in Vancouver, Canada. They must have been hard up for television airtime that day since our double's final was covered live by the Canadian Wide World of Sports.

Both my youngest brother and father were mild stutterers. I became so interested in their disability that I began an in-depth study my junior year and completed my master's degree at Redlands in speech pathology. As many of you recall, in the late 60's Uncle Sam was drafting most eligible males to fight in the Vietnam War. In the throes of my study, I opted to remain a student with a student deferment from the draft. In 1969 I was awarded a Teaching Fellowship to attend Kent State University in Ohio, at that time proclaimed to be "the largest unknown university in the U.S." Sadly, that proclamation soon changed on May 4, 1970. To this day, due to the trauma I witnessed, I have difficulty discussing the campus shooting. While the school remained shut down, the faculty carried on and completed the academic year by teaching some courses via local TV, which helped the seniors complete their courses and graduate. Kent State allowed me to continue to teach and join their faculty and finish my doctorate in speech pathology in 1973. My PhD dissertation was on the influence of the voice on stuttering. A key finding was that speaking louder and whispering both create more fluency. These results have been used as a springboard for others to view the larynx as a contributing factor to stuttering.

To celebrate my new doctoral degree, I planned to join my parents in Chicago, where my father, then Chairman of Allied Van Lines, was attending a conference. I was very proud when they ticketed me as "Dr. Ronald Reis". That was a mistake. A passenger had collapsed somewhere in the airport and soon I heard "Dr. Ronald Reis, Dr. Reis, please report to" Chagrined, I remember turning to the airline representative and saying, "Unless she's dying of stuttering, I'm afraid I'm not going to be able to assist." Needless, to say they found a MD.

I remained in northeastern Ohio as Chief of Speech Pathology & Audiology at Hillside Hospital, where I ran a department responsible for treating brain injured children and adults with speech and hearing disorders. One of my outpatients who lost his larynx due to cancer, showed up at my office with a bodyguard. I taught him esophageal speech until he was intelligible to others. Later I found out that he had recently been released from prison as Jimmy Hoffa's personal getaway driver.

I met Barbara Jacola, a beautiful and brilliant Italian blonde, at Hillside. She was the hospital's new Marketing and PR Director. As a savvy, single guy and Department head no less, I asked her out. On our first date, I tried to impress her by taking her out to an authentic Hungarian restaurant. Her first impression, to be diplomatic, was not exactly positive as I discovered the restaurant took only cash for which I had very little of at the moment. She ended up paying the bill. But despite the slow start, we hit it off, fell in love, and eloped to Vermont. We have been happily married for some 44 years.

That same year, I accepted a position with the University of Denver, where I taught courses in communication disorders, started a private practice, and did further research in the field of stuttering. The Colorado mountains are beautiful, but the winters were always snowy and cold. After a decade away from California, I was eager to return home and in 1986 made a career change to collaborate with my father and two brothers to join DataSafe, the family's business started in 1946 by my father and a business partner. (Editor's note: DataSafe was a pioneer in the records management industry. Headquartered in South San Francisco, DataSafe offers off-site secure, cost-efficient records storage and retrieval service. The family owned business continues to provide its services to over 1,500 local businesses from five facilities in Northern CA. Clients understand that their critical information is accessible, day or night, and stored safely in earthquake and fire safe facilities.) I retired in 2010 after 24 years, once serving as President of our international trade association. DataSafe, now in its third generation of family, is currently headed by my nephew, Rob Reis.

Barb and I have three children and are fortunate to live in West Menlo Park (Sharon Heights, known for its "newlyweds or nearly dead"). Our daughter, Kristen Klari, who took my Hungarian grandmother's name, came to us 15 years ago with the pronouncement that she wanted to become an artist. Like most parents who identify artist with the adjective "starving", we tried to discourage her from such a fate. Klari, fortunately didn't listen to her parents. With a studio in San Francisco and a gallerist in London, she exhibits her contemporary art around the world, including at Microsoft Research in Cambridge, UK and a host of other facilities in Paris, Brussels, Shanghai, New York City, and at Stanford University Medical Center Hoover Pavilion. Much of our travel begins or ends at one of her solo shows. She has provided us with a grandson (now age 4) and granddaughter (10 months) so we can be found in San Francisco babysitting most weekends. Our oldest son, Peter, produces art exclusively for the cyber currency industry, indeed a real niche. He often uses cut up credit cards and foreign currency as media and has sold his art worldwide. Our youngest son, Michael was a beer geek, and a few years ago was recognized as one of Zagat Bay Area's "30 under 30" in the food and beverage industry. Last year he and his wife, Olivia, opened Redfield Cider Bar & Bottle Shop on College Ave. in Oakland, which is doing very well! We are blessed that all our family lives in the area.



"Puttin' on the Ritz New Year's Eve 2019"

When not playing golf or tennis or serving on a local, non-profit board, Barb and I are usually on a walk in SF most weekends or on international travel (just returned from the Middle East). We also spend time at the Cantor and Anderson museums at Stanford, where Barb is a docent/educator. Life is good!!!

Ron's advice to all: "With the anxieties and challenges of decision making and problem solving I define a successful day if I've made a friend or family member smile or, better yet, LAUGH! And I love bringing my friends into the SIR Br 35 family and will continue to actively recruit new members."