

*Pan Am  
Remembers...*



*Elena Reisner*

I will forever remember Mrs. Reisner and Prepositions, thanks to my wonderful teacher. I had some bad experiences when I first started school, that left me feeling insecure, and I really didn't care much for teachers in general. Mrs. Reisner made her mission clear, she was going to do whatever it would take to get her students to understand. The Prepositions class sticks out the most in my memory. She jumped "out of the classroom", "under the desk", "on the chair", "in the closet", etc., etc., etc... Picture this, she was an older woman, in great physical shape I might add, short gray hair, well groomed and adorable, jumping on top of one of the students' chairs, crawling under her desk, and jumping out of the classroom, all for the sake of our understanding. What an amazing teacher! I am one of the seeds Mrs. Reisner sowed in her lifetime; I write poetry, songs and stories professionally. Her teachings will live on in my creations. I am so grateful that she cared.

Suzanne Morales (1972-1973)

The mere mention of Mrs. Reisner's name brings an unstoppable feeling of peace to my heart. She was always such a peaceful, loving, and peace loving lady. Her wisdom and love was always evident in her demeanor, and that love would always come across to every life she touched. On a personal level, her lessons helped me not only significantly improve my English speaking and writing skills, but also encouraged me to develop a taste for English literature. I will always remember that she kindly corrected me when I called a place mat a "plate mat". May she rest in peace, and may God raise her in the resurrection of the saved!! That is my hope and prayer.

Ariel Chávez II (Class of '73)  
Brownsville, Texas.

Always a smile, that's how I remember Ms. Reisner.

Linda Trejo-Todd

Mrs. Elena Reisner taught English while I attended PPAS, class of 1982. I did not have the privilege to have her as my direct instructor but my older brother Noe Ortiz Jr. did as a Sr. classman, class of 1980. She was so loved by everyone and I remember him telling me one day that she stood on top of a desk to get everyone's attention during class. She was a fire cracker!

In my curio cabinet we have the gift she gave us for our wedding day. My wife had so many invitations from her side of the family but I did not have very many since my family lived so far away but she was one of my invitees and I was so grateful she came. Of all the gifts we received, I have to say the crystal candy dish is our favorite and a great memory we will always cherish.

She had a way with the little details, and I remember the feeling as I walked on campus that I needed to be very professional and a perfect gentleman as I felt she was near. This feeling was all from respect. My dad, Rev. Noe Ortiz Sr. liked her very much and spoke very highly of her. They worked together at PPAS.

I am sure she is with the Lord now and will be missed by all, especially me. The family will be in my prayers for their great loss.

Regards,

Jonathan Ortiz

I remember how nice a lady she was during my time at Pan Am and will say a prayer for her and the family. Dr. Riesner and Mrs. Elena Reisner were the first two people I met when my brother James and cousin, Samuel arrived at Kingsville one hot, muggy night for our start of school at Pan Am. Because we arrived so late at night, they put us up in their house and I slept on their couch in the study. Everything about Texas was so new and different for the three of us New Yorkers, but Dr. Reisner and his wife's welcome made us so comfortable that first night in Texas that it was a good start to our years at Pan Am. I will remember the two of them fondly.

Shirley Sanchez Fish  
Class of 1962

I give thanks to the Lord for letting me meet and learn from Elena Mackay Reisner. She taught me about the missionary work, the great commandment, God's great commission and my great omission, about how I was called to tell others about God's plan so they won't say "I did not know the Lord." Her father wrote since the beginning of last century about the actual problems of Latin America in his book: *That Other Spanish Christ*.

Hugo Gomez Jr. and Hugo Gomez Sr.

Mrs. Reisner and I go way back. When the Reisners were missionaries in Mexico, they lived next door to us on a street called Arenal. Elena took delight in reminding me that when I was a baby she used to baby sit me. She said she remembered the first word I learned. I would push myself up as tall as I could in my highchair and holler, "Meat!" As kids we called the Reisners "Sherry and Elena." I'm sure there are many lives that were made better by Elena. I know mine was, particularly the three years I spent at Pan American. They were a great couple and will be missed by all – until we meet them again in heaven!

*P.S. My brother, Dan, reminded me that we also called Sherry and Elena "Little Spirit" and "Big Spirit." "Little Spirit" was Sherry and Elena was "Big Spirit." Dan comments that "These two daughters of John ("Juan") A. Mackay have certainly lived up to their "goodly heritage."*

*My oldest brother, Winn, writes: "As I recall it, Julie (older sister) saw Dr. Reisner walking down the hall and exclaimed "He looks like a little spirit!" The name stuck and then we decided that if he was "Little Spirit" then Elena must be "Big Spirit." I remember them being very nice and patient with us rowdy kids.*

*My sister Julie says that she used to go over and wash dishes at Elena's house because it was fun to wash dishes there – not fun at our house.*

*My sister Marian says that when she was born, Elena wanted to take her home because my mother already had four kids and didn't need another!*

Jim Erdman (Class of '64)

There are so many good memories I treasure of Mrs. Reisner, let me share a few with you, and with all the many teachers and alumni who might one day read them: I first came to PAN AM our Eagles' Earie, as she once called it, back in 1971.

I knew no English then, so she was a great influence in me being and staying motivated to grasp English as my second language. Coming from Honduras, a tropical country I or my parents didn't think that I would need any Winter clothes; it was Mrs. Reisner who gave me my first brand new reversible Black and Green Winter Jacket, which kept me warm the three following years that I lived at Pan Am.

I always remember the delicious fruit punch, which she prepared when they had gatherings for all the students at The Reisners' House... Then my senior year back in 74, she was my English teacher, and she was our English Adviser for the Year Book, which that year, was completely done by the students. She gave me credit for my English class for the many hours we spent at the School's Print Shop working on our *JUNTOS* Year Book.

The last time I got to visit with her was back in 1990, my wife Carolina and I were driving back to Honduras coming from Little Rock, Arkansas, and she asked us to spend the night in her house, so we could rest for the rest of our trip back home.

I have always said that most of what I do today is due to the great influence which Pan Am had on my life while I lived, studied and worked there, and specially Mrs Reisner, was like a mother for me. Her memory will live for ever in my heart. May our good Lord comfort the hearts of his dear children, and may we all take the great legacy she leaves with us to our different countries, and people we come in touch with.

Leopoldo Rodríguez Ardón - Class of '74

*P.S. Words are not enough to say how much I thank Mrs. Reisner for her influence in my younger years, and great legacy she leaves with us, as she has parted for her eternal rest. The best thing I can do today to be faithful to her legacy is to be a useful citizen in my own country Honduras, and to continue to be salt and light in this dark time. Presbyterian Pan American School has been the basic academia I have had in my life to do what I do today. Please extend my gratitude on this occasion to all those who support it, and to all those who still believe in "Training Christian Leaders for all Americas" I can testify to this with my own life, and so can many people in my beloved Honduras, and even overseas. To God be the Glory, and the honor forever more.*

I attended PPAS in 1964-1965 and the time spent there was the most wonderful time of my life. Of course, it was the first time for many of us being away from home and Mrs. Reisner was always there to comfort us.

Some very loving people touched me and Mrs. Reisner was one of them. I would just like to say that she was the kindest, most tender person I have had the pleasure of knowing. I know that many thousands of friends can say the same things about her and were made better by having known her.

May the LORD bless the family.

David Trejo

I remember Mrs. Elena Reisner. She was my English teacher. Making learning fun, we learned about nouns, verbs, adjectives, not ending a sentence in a preposition, double negatives, and other good and bad usages of the language. She was our teacher in other areas of campus life. She taught through religious literature, hymns, and prayer. We learned proper behavior and dress in chapel and church. She made time to direct us in the production of plays...very dramatic! She encouraged and taught correct posture, dress, and table manners. As seniors we dressed and had tea at the President's House. She was a wonderful role model who continued to teach by example.

Later in life, she was also my friend. I worked with Mrs. Reisner in 1990 when she invited me to return as the Girls Dorm Parent. We worked hard and long hours that year. Throughout the following years, I saw her and shared personal time in church, school, and women circle held in her home. I knew her for many years and she never stopped teaching,...or that is how I saw her. She was my teacher, my friend.

Rita Naranjo Gonzalez, Class of 1960

Mrs. Reisner was a wonderful teacher. I remember when she was teaching us the concept point of view and she got under her desk and asked what she could see. No one ever explained the concept of limited or omniscient point of view more clearly. She wasn't afraid to do anything that would help us grasp a concept more clearly. I will also always remember her desserts: the best in the world. I will always be grateful for the opportunity to cross her path.

Ana E. Martinez '74

I remember Sunday family nights and her "world famous" chocolate brownies with peppermint ice cream...I remember that she had lived in Montevideo, Uruguay when her parents were missionaries there, just as I had with my missionary parents...but I'll *always* remember Mrs. Reisner as the person who showed me that I was a person of worth, that I had more to offer than just being the class comedian. She made me feel special, important somehow, and showed me that I had a gift and appreciation for reading and writing. I visited Pan American on several occasions, and always made a point of stopping in to visit Mrs. Reisner, and to thank her for the interest she'd taken in me during my years at Pan American...she changed my life!

Paul Morales '74

It is always sad when our good friends and loved ones depart from our view. She was a great friend and gracious host. I spent time with her and the family in her home on several occasions. My love to the family. "God be with you till we meet again."

Santos Vasquez Canales  
PPAS student

Para Ruth y John,

Un hermoso verano, hace 50 años, llegué por primera vez a Presbyterian Pan American School.

Esa semana conocí a la Sra. Reisner. Yo sería mesera en el comedor y ella nos llamó a todos los que trabajaríamos allí para instruirnos como realizar nuestro trabajo.

No tuve el honor de que fuera mi maestra pero disfruté muchas veces de esas obras de teatro que ella producía y dirigía para aquellos sábados sociales. Y también disfruté de noches sociales en su casa.

Con el tiempo la llegué a admirar por su porte, sencillez, humildad, trabajo, dedicación y amor que tenía por la escuela y sus alumnos.

Se por sus alumnos que fue una excelente maestra, una fina dama y mujer muy cristiana.

Los que tuvimos la dicha de conocerla siempre la recordaremos con cariño y respeto.

Sus hijos deben sentirse muy orgullosos de su madre. Siempre tendrá un lugar en nuestros coazones.

Mi madre, Ofelia Gutiérrez López, también conoció a la Sra. Reisner y la admiraba mucho. Ella ha sentido mucho la partida de la Sra. Reisner y manda condolencias a sus hijos.

Con afecto,

Elba Nilda Salazar Gutiérrez

Class 1962

Matamoros, Tam., México

The School Year of 1957-58 was a very exciting and memorable year for students as well as for the Reisners. This was our first co-ed year at Pan Am and it was also the first year for Mr. Reisner as the president.

Mrs. Reisner was a very unpretentious lady. She had a very soft voice that would calm us when we asked for advice. She was always available and her doors were always opened to any of us who wanted advice. She would always help us solve our problems by giving us examples. What a lady!

One of the things that I have never forgotten is how she made the senior girls' year memorable. She sent each one of us (there were only five senior girls and 5 senior boys) an invitation to a tea in our honor. I still have this invitation because this was my first tea. Since then, I have attended many teas, but not one of them holds a candle to the one that spring of 1958. I am shedding tears as I reminisce about that wonderful year. She left a great impression on all of us simply because of her demeanor.

Mrs. Reisner lived a Christian life and as a wife and mother she truly exemplifies what a true Christian person should be. She was an excellent wife and mother. Ruthie and little Jim were our little friends. I wish I could see them now. I know that they are very proud to have had such great parents.

Elma Flores Cook  
Class of 1958

Reno '66 and I, '61, fondly remember Elena Reisner, not only as an excellent teacher but as a tender, gentle, soft spoken Spirit. She loved the Lord, and she loved Pan American High School. Our love and Blessings to Jimmy (who lives in Plano and wish we could meet up with him again) and Ruthie and her lovely family. Elena will always have a special place in our hearts. Those were special days at Pan Am and she was part of the many individuals that made it so. Say hello to Jesus, Elena, and to my daddy who has been with HIM since 1975.

".....but the most important of all, is LOVE".

LOVE,

Graciela de Lugo Lauro '61

I, Reno Lauro, or as Mr. Reed would call me, Bonaventura, would like to add my personal recollection of Mrs. Reisner. I had come to PPS on July of 1964, without a single word of English in my vocabulary. After a grueling summer of intensive English, she became my teacher. I would for ever remember my papers, red with corrections, but a 90 or 95 below the 5s and 15s I would score on spelling. I was encouraged by her caring guidance that below my ignorance of spelling lurked a real thinker writing, in content, valuable thoughts worth exploring. From here I would ever remember the recitation of Chaucer in the original Gaelic language.

I will miss her and miss more not having had the opportunity to chat with here in my later years with the English she so patiently guided me to learn.

My most heartfelt condolences to Ruth and Jimmy. I will miss her.

Bonaventura Reno Lauro  
PPS '66

I, Rosario de Lugo Batlle (1959), also would like to reiterate what Grace and Reno have expressed. I came to Pres Mex in 1955 when I was only a frightened 13 year old. She kept me under her wing when my family moved to New York City. I am forever grateful for the things I learned from her and the people who blessed me, and for what God has done with my life because of Pres Mex under Dr. Berta Murray and Pan Am under Sherwood and Elena's guidance.

My heartfelt condolences to Ruth and Jimmy.

Rosario de Lugo Batlle '59

I first met Mrs. Reisner when she came to visit Miss Murray at Pres-Mex. Then when I came to Pan American School in 1961-62, I really enjoyed getting to know her. She encouraged me during my studies at Texas A&I. She was kind and understanding. I remember her gentle voice and encouraging words. Because of having met her, I am a better person today.

Mary Jimenez Burgess  
Pembroke Pines, FL 33026

My name is Tricia Gonzales Mendieta. I am the daughter of Carmen Lopez Gonzales, and I have very fond memories of Mrs. Reisner. As most of you know, my mother breathes Pan American School, and my brothers and I spent many a summer there. Dr. and Mrs. Reisner were grandparents to the three of us and always treated and loved us as their own. We would go in and out of the office and their home as if it was ours. She always made us feel welcome in her home on campus and even when she moved into Kingsville. I can remember her taking us to Vacation Bible School and then back to her house for those delicious cookies. She was firm when she had to be, but always had a loving smile. She will be deeply missed and will forever have a special place in my heart, right next to Dr. Reisner.

Mrs. R. was a cheerful person, always smiling, stern when necessary, but always available to listen. Her love, compassion, cheerfulness, and prayers provided the comfort, assurance, inspiration, and guidance we needed. Mrs. R. was “MOM” away from home; we loved Mrs. R.

One evening while a few of us sat in Mrs. R’s dinning/living rooms for a meeting we heard “a child scream outside”. It shocked us, the children were supposed to be in their rooms. Mrs. R. raced through the front door with us at her heels, yelling, “Jimmy,” “Ruthie.” Nothing; after about a minute of yelling we heard screaming behind a shrub. A student shined a flashlight behind the shrub, only leaves and branches. Then, without warning, a branch moved and we heard a scream. Much to our surprise and relief, a frog was screaming; a snake was having it for supper. As we went inside, we met the children who asked what the yelling was about. We had a good laugh and forgot about class.

When the Lord calls our loved ones home, he leaves a gift of memories in exchange. Therefore, rejoice when your heart is empty and fill it with those happy memories to help you through this sorrowful time. As Solomon wrote in Proverbs 15:15, “A cheerful heart has a continual feast.”

Respectfully,

Hector “Leonel” Alvarez  
Class of 1960

Your mom always loved English literature. She was energetic in her Senior English classes sharing her love for literature. She'd always say read, read, and read now, because this is the time in your life that you have the most time to read. She loved Shakespeare, Chaucer, Peyps, Carlyle and so many others. She had us memorize lines from "Hamlet:" To be or not to be,..."

I was happy to join her in the Drama Club production of the Wizard of Oz as either "Inky, Blinky or Slinky." And I had a small part in "The Taming of the Shrew." It was always a lot of work, as we made the props, the costumes and memorized lines. Then we'd have people come from Kingsville and other towns just to see our performance.

Your mom would come to hear our Chapel talks. She'd share some positive points to encourage me to keep on. This was helpful to me to have her encouragement. Now I'm giving Bible talks at least 3 times per week.

Your mom loved the Bible.

Tom Johnson  
(Pan Am 1964-1968)

The only thing I can say is that I regret not being able to say "good-bye" to Mrs. Reisner. She was my teacher, my boss, but most important my friend. She was one very special lady to me and my family, always there for us when we needed her. She gave me my bridal shower, my first baby shower, and never forgot my birthday. I will treasure those special picked birthday cards she sent me every year that always made me feel she had written them especially for me. She came to visit her friends in Kingsville and I was not around to see her and I am very sorry for that. I will always feel that I never thanked her enough for all the things she did for me. She was a very special lady and I will always think of her as one of the best friends I ever had.

Carmen L. Gonzales  
Class of 1968

*And, special "Presbyterian Friends" remember.....*

Elena was an inspiring speaker and guest at many Presbyterian Women's meetings when I was a young married woman with six children to raise. I was blessed to hear many sensible words of wisdom from her over the years. On one particular occasion she spoke of mothers who "worked outside of the home." She gave us permission to be good mothers, good Presbyterian Women and good Christians in spite of the negative waves we were getting from some of our Sisters. I worked for 40 years and I am proud of the job I did and I give Elena lots of credit for the peace I rested in.

Regards,

Cecilia Barnard

What a wonderful teacher she was. Our Presbyterian Women Gatherings at Mo Ranch would always include the Bible Study for the year taught by Elena. Her workshops filled up fast. She was a joy and we have missed her laughter and presence for several years. She touched my heart.

Sincerely,  
Sandeem Finkel

I have a lot of fond memories of Elena and Sherwood Reisner both, since I lived in Falfurrias and my family attended the First Presbyterian Church, when they came there a long time ago. My husband, Calvin and my fondest memory is Nov. 27, 1952, when Dr. Sherwood Reisner married us. Both Sherwood and Elena were dear friends of ours for years and we thought the world of them.

Elena was special, a good friend and just someone you could talk with anytime. Always enjoyed her All-Bran Refrigerator Rolls when she made them for a church function, and she was always willing to share her good recipes.

When our daughter, Loretta, got sick and before she died, Elena sent her birthday and get well cards with words of concern and encouragement. We cherish all our memories over the years of Elena and Sherwood and will never forget them.

Grace L. Jordan Bast

When our two daughters, Miranda and Heather were little ones, Claudia and I were invited out one evening and we were in need of a babysitter. Elena enthusiastically volunteered for the job. While we were finishing our dinner, Claudia (being the normal Mom away from her babies) felt it necessary to call and check in on Elena and the girls. The first time she called there was no answer, so she thought she may have accidentally dialed the wrong number. She tried again a number of times and there was still no answer. By this time I could see the sweat running down her forehead and the concerned look on her face that told me that we were through eating and needed to leave. I drove as fast as I felt I could get away with and we arrived shortly (not soon enough for Claudia) at our house. Claudia rushed in as quickly as she could to see Elena calmly sitting on the sofa watching a program on TV. Claudia asked her if everything was OK and she replied "of course, why do you ask?" Claudia then told her that she had been trying to call her for the last 10 minutes and there was never an answer. Thinking maybe there was a problem with our phone line, we dialed the special number that would make your own phone ring (before we had cell phones) and sure enough, it rang loud and clear. We happened to look over at Elena and with a sheepish look on her face she replied "Now I know where that cricket is hiding that I've been hearing for the last 30 minutes."

On another occasion, while Sherwood and Elena were babysitting our daughters, this time in their home, they were sitting down to have some chips and sandwiches for lunch. Elena told the girls that she was going to say grace before they ate. Without skipping a beat, our oldest, Miranda said "Oh, that's OK, we don't pray over sandwiches!"

These are two very special memories that Claudia and I wanted to share with the family relating to Elena. She loved telling the story about "praying over sandwiches," and she will always have a special place in the hearts of the Conard family.

Scott and Claudia Conard

## About Elena Reisner, More Than a Friend

I am at a loss to say exactly how extraordinary Elena Reisner was. She was like no other person that I have ever known and impacted my life with qualities that I would not have experienced from any one else. The qualities were not passing because they exist to this day and I will be forever grateful. I am reminded of her daily with lovely things in my home, English china cups, recipes in my recipe box, a funny Maxine refrigerator magnet about computers and most of all notes in my Bible taken during her sermons and Sunday School lessons. I attended her Sunday School classes for years, listened to her talks to the women at Mo-Ranch and watched as the women were enthralled with her presentations, wanting to express their appreciation, etc., only to be greeted by a humble person who shied away from their gratitude. She was an actor, too, one Elena during her animated presentations, another in her graceful simplicity.

Elena was my friend and for that I will always be grateful.

## Dorothy Genz

The picture below was our "Afternoon Circle." It was started by Mrs. Reisner because she wanted to have tea with us at 4 P.M. so we would be done by then and we had the nicest tea party afterwards. These meetings were held at Mrs. Reisner's home. It was her last Bible Study group before she moved to Plano, Texas and then on to Virginia.

We have very fond memories of her as she enriched our knowledge of the Bible. Sweet lady she was. We will never forget her.

## Rosalinda Alvarez



*Back Row: Mrs. T. English, Mrs. Joyce DeKock, Miss Hazel Kramme, Mrs. Rosalinda Alvarez, Mrs. Elena Reisner*

*Front Row: Mrs. Molly South, Mrs. Ling-Rong Lin*



*“...but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”*

*Isaiah 40:31*