

A Life Well Lived—Dennis Shapiro

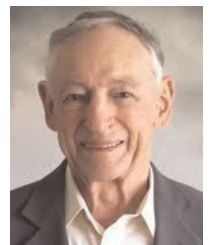
Stuart Lipoff

VP Industry and Standard Activities,
IEEE Consumer Technology Society

■ **DENNIS SHAPIRO PASSED** away on Feb 16, 2021.^{1–3} Because he was so active in so many productive ways within IEEE Consumer Technology Society (CTSoc) you may well have known him in an IEEE context; however, Dennis's life was well lived, above and beyond our Institute, and I would hope we could look to the details of his life as an example road map for the rest of us.

L. Dennis Shapiro was an IEEE Life Fellow and within CTSoc served on our Board of Governors and Chair of The Industrial Advisory Board Committee. He organized and served as the founding Chair of CTSoc's Boston Local Chapter. On behalf of CTSoc, he engaged MIT's Sloan School to do a market research study for CTSoc that has directed our strategy to better serve members. He was engaged on the leadership committees for our flagship International Conference on Consumer Electronics (ICCE) and secured patronage funding for ICCE. His IEEE contributions alone would be enough to be deserved for recognition, but his life story provides a road-map that the best of us can only hope to partially emulate.

Outside of IEEE, he is probably best known for his leadership of Lifeline Systems from 1978 to the sale to Philips in 2006. Lifeline was not just a commercial success, it was a godsend that allowed seniors to enjoy a quality of life living at home. Lifeline Systems' business was the design, manufacture, and marketing of personal response products. It also provided monitoring and other subscription services associated with those products. By means of their central monitoring facility, the company provides 24-hour monitoring to its subscribers, who are primarily elderly individuals with medical or age-related conditions, as well as physically challenged individuals. More recent developments automatically sense falls or other exception conditions that trigger a call for help. Dennis's pathway to assuming leadership of Lifeline in 1978 is an instructive career path with lessons that should be an example for all of us.



He entered MIT as a freshman in 1951 and stayed on for his master's degree, graduating in 1957. While at MIT, he did some teaching and research in the Research Laboratory for Electronics (RLE) with a focus on FM radio topics. After graduating from

Digital Object Identifier 10.1109/MCE.2021.3065557

Date of current version 10 June 2021.

MIT, he became a research and development officer in the Air Force. He reported this as an exciting time, especially in radio and propagation because 1957 through 1959 was the International Geophysical Year. After being selected as a member of the International Geophysical Year team, he was posted to Greenland where he set up an experimental measurements laboratory for ionospheric physics that involved research on the aurora borealis, cosmic rays, radio propagation, and ionospheric absorption. He was near the geomagnetic pole, and it was a great opportunity to learn how all of these phenomena interacted. In 1958, he was sent to Hawaii to set up radio links for high-altitude nuclear tests that he monitored from Johnston Island. He discovered that such explosions caused high-frequency propagation, which the Strategic Air Command relied upon to disappear.

He briefly worked for a small company after the Air Force, then he started his own company called Aerospace Research. They did field measurements and built prototypes chiefly connected to radio propagation studies. He then became interested in very precise timing using LORAN-C transmissions. He won the main contract with NASA to use it for synchronizing their tracking stations. He worked for various government agencies on radar signal processing, particularly adaptive processing using directionally sensitive Doppler techniques and selective and variable analog filters. After Vietnam was settled politically, he employed his radar signal processing expertise and began making very low false-alarm-rate intrusion detectors for the alarm industry. These products were well accepted, and he did business with the alarm companies, like ADT. His experience in the security industry was the perfect foundation to launch Lifeline Systems.

The sale of Lifeline to Philips in 2006 brought Dennis financial independence, and the story could have ended there, but he leveraged his success to pay it forward to more than just his IEEE contributions. Dennis served as a member of the James Madison Council of the Library of Congress serving on its Acquisitions Committee. He was a Fellow and member of the Board of The Manuscript Society, a Fellow and Trustee Emeritus of the Massachusetts Historical Society currently serving on its Adams Papers Committee, a Fellow of the Explorers Club, and a recipient of the FAA's Wright Brothers Master Pilot's Award.

Most recently in 2020, he donated to The Huntington Library (San Marino, CA) his

collection of some 340 rare and priceless items focused primarily on American presidential administrations from the 18th to the early 20th centuries to establish "The Shapiro Center at the Huntington." The gift includes an endowment for innovative programming and the long-term care and growth of The Huntington's premier early-American collections of rare books and manuscripts, which are unique on the West Coast.

This Shapiro Collection at The Huntington is particularly rich in correspondence by John Adams and his son John Quincy Adams, including dozens of Adams-related documents and letters penned by the second and sixth presidents, father and son. "I collected the Adamses," Dennis said, "because I personally connected with their feelings toward family and country, and felt that they were underappreciated. But the wisdom of these two men, made evident in their frequent correspondence, speaks volumes about human dignity and empathy and the deep connection between them." The collection includes, as well, a rich trove of material from Albert Gallatin, secretary of the treasury under Presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Presidential spouses are also represented, including letters by Dolley Madison and Abigail Adams.

Dennis led a balanced life that included hobbies, family, and philanthropy. He was a passionate pilot, sailor, ice dancer, fisherman, skier, ham radio operator, and so much more. Most importantly, Dennis loved his family and adored his grandchildren and is survived by his wife, and we gratefully acknowledge her willingness to share Dennis with the rest of us.

■ REFERENCES

1. "Alumni profile: L. Dennis Shapiro," *RLE currents*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 10–11, Spring 1996. Accessed: Mar. 7, 2021. [Online]. Available: <https://www.rle.mit.edu/media/currents/8-1.pdf>
2. "L. Dennis Shapiro," PBS SoCal. Accessed: Jul. Mar. 7, 2021. [Online]. Available: <https://www.pbssocal.org/about/board-of-trustees/l-dennis-shapiro/>
3. "News release - The Huntington receives endowment gift to establish shapiro center for American history and culture," The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA, USA, Dec. 12, 2019. Accessed: Mar. 7, 2021. [Online]. Available: <https://www.huntington.org/news/huntington-receives-endowment-gift-shapiro-center>