



Mechanical Engineering
Academy of Distinguished Alumni

Michael S. Reese

Mechanical Engineering Hall of Fame, 2017

BSME, The University of Texas at Austin, 1970
BS Industrial Design, Art Center College of Design,
1974

Founder & President (Retired)
Reese Design

Michael Reese was born in Jacksonville, Texas and grew up in the oil fields of east Texas. He showed a fascination for design and engineering at an early age and made many of his toys in the shop of his father's garage. When he was twelve, he designed and built a go-kart powered by a lawn mower engine. Michael's family moved to Houston in 1962.

While in high school, he designed and built several 1/12th scale model cars and entered them in the Fisher Body Craftsman's Guild competition sponsored by General Motors. In 1964, he won a top award including a national scholarship. He followed the advice given to him by Chuck Jordon (GM's assistant head of styling) and earned a degree in mechanical engineering from The University of Texas at Austin.

After graduating in 1970 with a BSME, he married his sweetheart, Pam, and started a job with General Dynamic's Convair Division in San Diego, California. While at GD, he worked on the development of the DC-10's passenger door mechanism and a performance enhancement program for the F-111 fighter jet.

In the fall of 1971, Michael pursued an industrial design degree at Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles. He graduated with distinction in 1974 and accepted a professorship in the College of Architecture at Georgia Institute of Technology. At the same time, he started his consulting design business, Reese Design. His first client was Texas

Instruments and he had the privilege of working on such ground-breaking projects as their first digital watches, hand-held calculators, and the "Little Professor" (a children's math learning aide).

His next big break came in 1977 when he was given the opportunity of creating an interior for a Boeing 707 private jet. One aircraft project led to another, and over a 21-year period Reese Design developed an international clientele of private aircraft owners. Their projects ranged in size from Boeing 747s and Airbus A-340s to Blackhawk and S-76 helicopters.

In 1998, Michael retired from Reese Design at age 51 to pursue other interests. He and his wife created The Reese Foundation, whose mission is to support the arts, education, and the environment. They have been actively involved in numerous conservation projects and have supported local arts and educational organizations. Michael continues his creative endeavors in his art, automotive, and architecture projects. In 2016, Michael received a prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from Art Center College of Design.

He and his wife have a wonderful daughter and son-in-law, Shelly and David, and two extraordinary grandchildren, Reese and Weston. Today they divide their time between their home on Lake Austin and their ranches in the Texas Hill Country and in Colorado. Michael is forever grateful for the foundation and springboard that his engineering education at UT Austin provided him.