



We are very fortunate to have among us on the lanes some fascinating personalities. One of those personalities is our friend, Steve Renaud. Steve likes to refer to himself as an "Old Pro," even though he's only got 4 years in age on this website's owner. To say Steve is a fabulous story teller and really interesting and cool guy is quite an understatement...as evidenced by what he gave us when we asked him to do this interview.

For those who don't know, when we conduct an email interview, we usually start by sending the bowler a list of questions to answer, and then proceed back and forth for a bit until we've exhausted all avenues. However, it didn't work that way with Steve. Once he agreed to the interview, Steve began a story that has proven to be nothing short of simply amazing. We never got the chance to ask the questions...but he answered just about everything we could possibly have thought of!

Therefore, instead of the usual question and answer format you'll see with other interviews, we're giving you Steve's own story, straight from him. You will simply thrill at reading these next paragraphs.

I was born Steven Lionel Renaud in Southbridge, MA on July 20th 1964 to Harry George Renaud & Patricia Rita Duquette Lozier. The history in my family is pretty awesome when you look back starting with both my grandfathers. Frank Renaud, Sr. (my great grandfather), also know as The Great Reno, was a vaudeville star who was an escape artist and magician. He had one of the largest handcuff collections in the world. I personally own 1 pair of cuffs that were his. He had ties to Harry Houdini, sharing letters with him and tricks. He also taught another famous escape artist his tricks, I just can't think of the name at this moment.

My other grandfather, Lionel Duquette (my mom's dad), died in world war 2 in Germany. He received the Medal of Honor for single handedly saving his troop from being killed by the Germans. As his company retreated, he stood face to face with the enemy and took matters into in own hands and risked his life to save his fellow soldiers. I'm very proud to carry his name in mine (Lionel); he was very courageous. I'm also thankful for Frank Sr. passing on the showman in me.

My bowling ability and love for the game comes from my grandmother, Evelyn Bartlette Renaud. Her brother, Babe Bartlette, was know as the best candlepin bowler in Southbridge back in the 1940's thru 1956 when he became ill and passed away at 36 years old. Candlepin bowling was in the Bartlette blood as my grandmother Evelyn was and still is a great bowler. Her daughter June Renaud was an incredible bowler nearly breaking Stasia Czernicki's state 3 string record back in the mid 1960's. June retired from the game at a young age to pursue other interests, but her brother Harry would not.

Harry George Renaud, born in 1943, had both the ability and the love for candlepin bowling that lasted almost 40 years. He won many town high average titles, triples and singles as well and was mostly known for his fireball. They say that as soon as the ball left his big hands it hit the pins a split second later. During a money match in 1964, he was bowling with his Idol and hall of famer, Rollie Blondin as they took on Hall of Famers, Dick Smuss & Charlie Jutras out in Ware, MA. Harry was waiting for his 1st

born child as he was hoping he would not get a call from his then wife Pat as they were expecting at anytime. Harry says he blessed his new son that night by winning that match for him and was very excited to soon be dad.

Continuing with my dad Harry, he bowled until around 1972, when he stopped to build a home and raise his family. In 1970, my sister Michelle was born and we moved from Southbridge to Dudley where my dad still lives today. In 1976 my dad started bowling again in the Friday night men's league at the Hippodrome Lanes in Southbridge. That Friday night league could compete with any league or any team you want to throw at it. The heavy hitters were just awesome and there were a ton of 115 to 120 average bowlers where the big guns were averaging 123 to 128.

My dad had the bowling bug again, and his son Steven was about to join his 1st league in 1977 (and was about to join in on the family tradition if you will). When I was born in 1964, it was a rough start for me. At 7 days old, I had to have an emergency operation on a collapsed lung along with a heart murmur and I could not eat because my digestive tube was badly messed up. The operation was a huge one, done at Boston Children's Hospital with no guarantees I would make it. My parents were scared to death, with my dad having the hardest time with the stress of it. It left me with a scar on my right shoulder blade that is about a foot long, my ribs are not normal in that area and actually very weak. It shaped me into who I am today. Yes, for some reason I made it and I'm about to turn 43 years old and I'm writing my good friend Bruce to tell him my story on this Memorial Day, 2007.

As a child, my operation never seemed to play into my life. I was pretty normal, other than the fact I had a big scar on my back. Now, it's 1977-78 and I'm in my 1st bowling league on Saturday mornings at the "Hipp" Lanes, they had a boys league in the morning and a girls league at noon. For me it was instant love; the smell, the noise, that certain sound of the pins! I'm still in love today. Thirty years have now gone by, and to look back at everything, I guess I can only hope to be entered into the hall of fame someday.

I've really given my life to something I truly love. When people ask me what do you do or who are you, I tell them I'm a candlepin bowler and a family man.

Candlepin bowling is the one constant in my life that I've done more than any job. Even my marriage to my wife, Cathy, is going on 17 years...20 together. Candlepin has 10 more years than that! If I could make a living at it, I would. If it paid like any other sport, I would be a millionaire.

My breakout year was 1984, as I bowled in leagues on 6 nights out of 7. I bowled 5 nights at "The Hipp" and Thursday nights in . Both will always be my home, even though neither one are operating anymore (with the Monson lanes closing just a few weeks ago).

In 1985, my dad and I teamed up to bowl our first state championship together. We placed third at [Sammy White's Brighton Bowl](#). This was also the year I joined the WCBC pro tour for the 1st time. I did not do as well as I hoped; I lost rookie of the year honors to John Tyburski and Jim Orlandi both from western MA. My dad, Harry, did win rookie of the year honors in (I believe) 1980, so I was hoping to do the same. That 1984 season I would like to note that I did bowl in 6 leagues that year and had over forty 400 series with 30 of them coming at the Hipp. My best average at the Hipp was a 128 with my Monson being my all time best of 132 for 1 season. The Hipp closed back in 1988.

That year my dad, Harry, won the state singles title at the Sammy White Lanes to go with our third place finish in doubles. It was my dad's first major title after years of trying and coming close...the top 5 on other occasions.

In 1986, the state tournament moved to the old State Bowl in Springfield, where Dan Murphy was cleaning up with the unreal season he was having. Dan was the winner of the all-events title and was leading the singles with 1 shift to go and the defending champ on that shift. As luck would have it, it wasn't the defending champ that would win the singles title, it was his son Steve. I needed a spare or strike in the last box to win and was fortunate to do it. With my dad winning in 1985 and myself in 1986, we completed a sweep and accomplished something no other father son duo have done. We won the State doubles title in 1987 for a very special 3 year run. It's something we're both very proud of.

The 1987-88 WCBC tour thru 1989-90, I had a 3 year run that saw 2 bowler of the year runner ups ('88 & '89) and 5th place finish in 1990. There are only a few guys like Craig Holbrook and Tim Lipke that have had 3 year runs on the tour that match the 3 I had. I'm very proud of that.

But 1989 had to be my best year ever, winning the State Singles title again along with the men's class A teams. I was also runner up to Joe Tavernese for the all-events title, but I did beat Joe to win the singles title. Also, I was runner up on the WCBC Tour for pro bowler of the year honors and was the Western Mass Bowler of the year for the WNECA Tour. I won my 1st WCBC tour event at the Londonderry Bowling Center. I had a 4 week run on the Channel 5 Candlepin Bowling show that led to a seeding in it's \$10,000 True Value Championship, having the 2nd highest score on the year that season with a 437.

I won the high average at the world championships that year with a 132, and we also came in 2nd in the world team event losing to Captain Bill Treeful's team. I also came in 2nd at the Easter Sunday classic, losing to Gary Carrington.

I don't know of anyone that has had a better year than I did in 1989, it was just awesome. [*ed note: gee, that year was quite something for him, wasn't it? Wow...*]

In 1990, I qualified again for the \$10,000 True Value Championship on Channel 5, rolling a 433 score. I was the all-events runner up again for a 2nd straight year, losing to Peter Flynn. I also lost the world singles title to Flynn in 1990, but we won the world team event this time and followed it with a 2nd in 1991 in Sydney, Nova Scotia From 1988 through 1991, the team I was blessed to be part of bowled for the title every year winning that once in 1990.

During the 1991 season, I noticed I was having some control problems, but could not put my finger on it. Then , at the end of the 1992 season my arm was just in pain, something was wrong. I thought resting it would be enough, but it was not. I needed more and before I knew it I blew the whole shoulder along the entire scar from my operation that I had at 7 days old. I never fully recovered from it, and will never be the bowler I was during the 1980's. The doctors even told me I was done. I have an abnormality and nothing can be done. But hey, I was not going to let that stop me...even if I had to change hands and bowl left handed.

[*ed note: for a guy who "will never be the bowler [he] was" during the 1980's, Steve is still great.*]

I went through therapy and received a few cortisone shots in my back and shoulder and started to learn how to bowl all over again, bowling hundreds of practice strings to strengthen the muscles because they were very weak. I had a hard time to driving as my right arm was really bad. I bowled twice a week in my leagues to get practice in and my average went from 130 down to 102. I got it back to around 111, totally changing my style and then 115 and slowly I was getting a little better, very frustrating for sure.

After being out of the loop for a couple years, it's now 1995 and I'm still not even close to being the bowler I wanted or was hoping to be. Tom Olszta asked me to join his team with Jeff Atkins, Gary Carrington, Joe Ashline & Brian McKinley. I wanted to bowl with another team, but that team was full. But Tom and his teammates were nice enough to let me be part of their team, even though I may bowl very little. I decided to bowl with Tommy because if I bowled well I would get my share of strings in. All I wanted was a chance and if I didn't do well then so be it, I'll sit on the bench.

Remind you now, I have yet to recover from my injury. I'm about to join a group of guys that only thinks about winning, no pressure on me to perform and not let them down, my average nowhere near them. I really did not belong on the team but for whatever reason they had, they believed in me. This ended up being my greatest accomplishment in my career as a candlepin bowler. On the very first day of the team event we broke the world team record with a 2139 score and I rolled a 427! I think it's on the poster of records for our game and can be seen on the ICBA website. We finished the week only losing 1 string (which is a record) and we only lost 1 string during the playoffs which was the 1st string against the defending champs of Paul Berger, Bill Treeful, Craig Holbrook, Dave Richards, Dan Myrick & Jack Saniuk.

We got hot again and in the 3rd game I told my teammates to hop on my back because I was going to take them to the championship. It was destiny...I finished that match with 4 marks in a row and a 160 game and a 399 triple. We then bowled Tim Lipke's team for the title, and I was blessed to roll a 412 and

finished the week with the championship and a 130 average bowling nearly every game and match. How I bowled that well is beyond me. But it did show me, if anything, what the heart can do when you love something as much as I do. I have never ever come close to repeating that performance at the worlds and it will go down as my greatest accomplishment ever.

We did repeat the following year as I rolled a 378 to come off the bench but the struggles were starting to get to me. We went for the 3-peat the following year (1997), and was knocked out of the 1st round of the playoffs by a team from Maine. My struggles were so bad I decided I was going to leave the team so they could replace me with one of the younger up coming bowlers that were making news. Those years, 1995 through 1997, were very special to me because the doctors had said I was done. But even though I was not at my best, I still managed a couple more titles with some truly great guys. All the years up to that point in 1997, I bowled the worlds 3 times and was a runner up 3 times. I bowled for the title 6 years in a row and don't know too many others that have done the same.

My struggles really had gotten to me mentally for a while. I was messed up, even drinking to try to forget my problems. And that's not the thing to do around kids. Thank God my wife, Cathy, stuck by me. She really has shown me and taught me what love is about. Cat and I were married in 1990 and we had our 1st son, Steven, in 1991. Brandon came in 1997 and Alyssa in 1999. I'm very lucky man and because of that I have always tried to give back to the game because it's really been so good to me.

I got involved with youth bowling back in 1989 at American lanes (Southbridge) with Leo Talbot. We brought kids to the state championships at Timber Lanes in Abington, MA and to Portsmouth, NH for the ICBA youth championships every November. I have kids that are involved in a travel league and I run and produce my own kids TV series, [Candlepin for Kids](#). We just finished our 4th season!

I just recently started to work at the , where I teach 4 programs on how to bowl. I have more friends because of candlepin bowling and can't thank each and every one of them enough for all the good times we have shared thru the years. I just recently made my 60th television appearance on Candlepin Challenge with Dan Murphy and even though I don't average 130 anymore, I still get lucky once in a while. It keeps me coming back for more.

The kids show is my baby now, and with the help of Dan "Shoebag" Gauthier & Evan Mazzaferro, we have something pretty special going. I'm just really proud to play a small role in the history of our great game of Candlepin Bowling.

One last thing, my son Steven is the reigning all-events champ in MA and if all goes well, I'll get to bowl with him as I did with my dad. Maybe we'll get our names together on that trophy like I did with my dad in 1990. That's the only thing left I want to accomplish...well, maybe add Brandon on that trophy too. He's starting to become quite the bowler as well. It's in the blood and it looks like Steven will carry on the family tradition as he really loves to bowl. My daughter Alyssa has the talent, but she's a dancer first and that's fine by me!

A very interesting website about Steve's great grandfather, The Great Reno (including pictures of the man "in action"), can be found [here](#).