

Paul Revere's Social Networking

By Kulvinder Singh of Sacramento South Asian Bar Association

A group of attorneys of South Asian origin hosts an annual convention each year in June. The organization, NASABA, or the North American South Asian Bar Association met just before Independence Day in Boston. While there for the conference and to meet people, I had the opportunity to visit historic Faneuil Hall, North Church and USS Constitution also known as 'Old Ironsides.'

In the 1770s, Paul Revere was working as a silversmith in Boston's North End. He knew businessmen and merchants who dealt with individuals at every level of Boston society and culture. He formed several clubs and joined others. As a teenager, he and six friends formed a society of church bell ringers. As an adult, he joined the North Caucus Club, a group formed by Samuel Adams' father to choose candidates for local government. In 1774, when the British began to seize and assemble munitions and supplies, Revere formed a club that was responsible for monitoring their movements. Revere also belonged to the Masonite Lodge through which he was friendly with revolutionary activists James Otis and Dr. Joseph Warren.

In the year preceding the American Revolution, Revere was a courier for the Boston Committee of Correspondence and the Massachusetts Committee of Safety. He traveled to Philadelphia to the Continental Congress and spread the word of the Boston Tea Party. So, not only did he know people, Revere also knew gossip, rumors and news from every level of Boston society.

In April 1775, Revere got word that the British troops were receiving orders to capture rebel leaders and disarm colonists. He and his friends devised a warning system – two lanterns shining from the steeple of the Old North Church, then the city's tallest building, indicate that the British are advancing to Boston by sea, or one candle if they are coming by land. Either way, they would know when and where to flee and take up arms.

Why would Revere be entrusted to illuminate the church steeple, with the famous "one if by land, two if by sea" warning? It was because of his network. Revere was friends with the vestryman of the church, John Pulling, through the North Caucus Club. However, the Old North Church was Anglican and the rector strongly supported the Crown. Revere also knew the sexton, Robert Newman, through his silversmith shop and Newman had a key to the church.

Revere's connections were crucial that fateful night to get the word to Lexington to rebel leaders Sam Adams and John Hancock. Chased by redcoats, Revere was off at midnight at the same time that a man named William Dawes went galloping off in the other direction to muster the militia to the west of Boston. Revere's ride stirred up an army. From the towns that Dawes alerted, only a handful of people showed up. Why? Because Revere was a connector. He knew

everybody, and so was able to storm into one village after another, banging on all the right doors and calling out all the right people by name.

Historians may attribute Revere as being the right person at the right time, but it took a person at his level of involvement and active interest in his community to be at the center of events. He served as a connector, linking up with the world, a person with a special gift for bringing people together. It was the tipping point. His life was such that his ability to span many different worlds, a function of something intrinsic to his personality, some combination of curiosity, self-confidence, sociability, and energy, helped him succeed. After the revolution, Revere continued to serve this new country by having his shop forge the copper bolts and breasthooks that were needed for the USS Constitution, which is now a museum across the river from the Old North Church.

Success in any field, especially business, is about working with people, not against them. In America, we are brought up to cherish John Wayne individualism. What many people lack are the skills and strategies of building relationships. Reaching out to people is a way to make a difference in other people's lives as well as a way to explore and learn and enrich one's own. Connecting is one of the most important business and life skill sets I am learning.

On June 27, 2010, at Faneuil Hall, arguments for the reconsideration of the 1923 U.S. Supreme Court decision re Bhagat Singh Thind, 261 U.S. 204, were heard. South Asian attorneys were questioned by a panel of three Federal Judges, two of South Asian Punjabi origin, Judge Amul Thapar and Judge Vijay Gandhi. Roseville attorney Kulvinder Singh attended that session and started his walking tour of Historic Boston immediately afterwards. His firm website is www.singhlawoffice.com and telephone number is (916) 939-5151.