

SAILING TO INVENTION

Louis Kamensky, a self-described isolationist, loves to escape to his summer house in Wellfleet, on Cape Cod, which he calls “the nicest place in the world.” The house is situated on a tidal marsh, and Kamensky and his wife like to stroll along the beach, encircled by water, sun and sky.

They love to sail, too, and on his office wall is a photograph of his wife on the deck of a sailboat, smiling shyly out at the camera from



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beneath a white floppy hat. “We’ve always had our best times on a sailboat,” Kamensky says, sitting in his office and glancing wistfully over his shoulder at the image of his smiling wife. “It’s a great escape.”

Though he sometimes likes to escape from people and crowds and the racket of cities, Kamensky has dedicated his life to helping people – helping them stave off deadly diseases. In 1963, while working for IBM, Kamensky discovered a process known as flow cytometry, a medical technology used to analyze cells and diagnose diseases such as AIDS. Flow cytometers, machines that read slides and analyze cell columns, are used in hospital labs across the country.

Kamensky, a humble, self-effacing man, refuses to take credit for discovering flow cytometry, even though his peers credit him for doing precisely that. “I guess I developed it,” he reluctantly concedes. “But in science no one really makes discoveries alone.”

Throughout his career, Kamensky, who holds a doctorate in physics, has started, managed and sold biotechnology companies. The company he now runs, for instance, CompuCyte Corporation, is up for sale, and a Swiss firm is expected to buy it. In 1976, he sold his first flow cytometry company, Biophysics Systems, to Johnson & Johnson, where he then worked as a vice president for research and development.

But it’s not business that thrills him. It’s pure science. And if he had his way, he’d sit alone in a lab, working to create the biotechnology instruments that would help people improve their health. “I’m more interested in the science,” he says, “but I’ve always been forced to run things...When I worked at Johnson & Johnson,” he adds wryly, “my bosses always knew when they couldn’t find me...I was on a sailboat.”

Now, at seventy-one, his love for science and his knack for inventing diagnostic tools have not abandoned him. At CompuCyte, he built a device that can diagnose heart attacks more quickly and more accurately than the traditional diagnostic test, the electrocardiogram, which succeeds in diagnosing heart attacks only half the time. CompuCyte’s device can diagnose a heart attack with more than 80 percent accuracy within the first couple of hours, giving patients a better chance to live.

He also developed a device called a pathfinder that helps technicians read pap smear slides more accurately, resulting in early detection of cervical cancer. And he’s working on an instrument that will help detect bacterial blood infections in infants.

After he sells CompuCyte, he intends to stay with the company. He wants to continue to develop diagnostic tools that will help combat diseases. “I’ll continue to mentor young scientists, which I enjoy,” he says, “and to make contributions to clinical research. Yes, it feels good to help people.” And he prepares to leave the office early on this summer day, for his oasis of calm in Wellfleet. ■

— Robert Florida

Louis Kamensky ’52 received the Weston Medal at NJIT’s Fall Awards Ceremony in October.

PHOTO: COURTESY L. KAMENSKY

ICONS NORMA CLAYTON

CURIOUS CLAYTON

When she was a young girl growing up in Orange, New Jersey, Norma Clayton would watch as her father, along with friends, worked on his car. She'd stand on her toes and peek under the hood, as the men tinkered with the engine. Later, when she turned seventeen, her father told her he'd buy her a car, but only under one condition: that she first learn how to change the oil, the plugs, fix a flat — maintain the car. She agreed, happily.

"I have always been fascinated by how things work," Clayton recalls. "Once when I was fif-

teen you can't look beyond that," Clayton remembers her mother saying, "you won't succeed." She looked beyond it, and success is hers.

But it didn't come without struggle. Her high school offered limited math classes, so when she started at NJIT, professors worked with her day and night, helping her to catch up. And she rode her bicycle from her home in Orange to campus to save on bus fare, since her family was not well off.

Women were few on campus then, and she was the only black woman studying engineering. She took classes every summer, without a break. It was a grind, but after five years she



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teen I broke my mom's radio. I put it back together, and parts were left over. I realized that manufacturers put things in products that we don't need. I was curious, and it opened up a whole new world for me." Her curiosity has served her well.

Now, at age forty-three, Clayton is the first black and the first woman to reach the rank of senior manufacturing executive at the Boeing Company. And last year she was named Black Engineer of the Year by *U.S. Black Engineering and Information Technology* magazine. As vice president of quality for Boeing's aircraft and missile systems division, it's her job to "ensure that when Boeing delivers a plane to a pilot, that pilot has a flawless product," she says.

How did she become the first black, and the first woman, to reach the top ranks of one of America's top corporations? "I attribute my success to my mom," Clayton says. "My mother was the first black woman to become manager where she worked — a French bank in New York. She taught me to look beyond color. If

graduated with a degree in industrial engineering. She went on to work for General Motors, RCA and GE Company before moving to Boeing in 1995.

She works hard, but has a life outside of work. Married with two children, ages twenty-five and eleven, she is active in her church, where she mentors young people. She works with various women's groups, helping girls who want to be engineers. And when she feels lost and disoriented, she always knows where to turn.

"I go to my spiritual healer, God," she says. "I look to Him for direction. In the pyramid of life, God is first, then my family, then myself. If you can keep those three things in balance," she says, "you'll always be happy and healthy." ■

— Robert Florida

Norma Clayton '81 received an alumni achievement award at NJIT's Fall Awards Ceremony in October.

PHOTO: COURTESY, BOEING COMPANY

ICONS PAUL TINNIRELLO

TECHNOLOGY GEEK

When he was growing up, Paul Tinnirello was into electronics. He whiled away his youth hanging out at electronics stores. At home in his room, he spent endless hours building radio transmitters. Once, when he was fifteen, he won a contest for building the best radio.

"I was born and raised a tech head," Tinnirello says. "My dad had an electronics business, and I was always into gadgets."

In high school, he took a keen interest in math and went on to study mathematics at Kean University. He later studied computer information science at NJIT, getting a master's degree in 1982.

Today, at fifty-two, he's more of a technology geek.

As executive vice president and chief information officer for A.M. Best, one of the country's largest insurance rating companies, Tinnirello is in charge of technology infrastructure for the firm. With nearly two hundred people working for him, he manages everything from developing software, hardware and e-commerce applications to handling Internet issues and making sure the telephone system works.

"I like applying technology to our business needs," he says. "That's really the most interesting aspect of my job."

A columnist for *eWEEK* magazine (formerly *PC Week*), he also writes books on software development and project management. His most recent volume, *New Directions in Project Management* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2001), published this fall, is the second in a series.



Married with one daughter, he recently became a grandfather. "It's hard to adjust," he jokes, "to the fact that I'm that old."

He no longer builds radios; now, in his free time he builds computers. He buys his own components – mother boards, drives and cases – and puts them all together. "Never let hardware be an issue that prevents you from enjoying computing," he says, his software bias shining through. ■

— Robert Florida

Paul Tinnirello '82 received an alumni achievement award at NJIT's Fall Achievement Awards Ceremony in October.

PHOTO: COURTESY, P. TINNIRELLO

ICONS GENE TREMBLAY

OF DREAMS AND PASSION

When Gene Tremblay was a freshman at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, his fervor for his favorite subjects caught the eyes of college administrators, who opened doors for him.

"[But] I was immature, interested in ice hockey and my fraternity," Tremblay says. "It was a tough engineering school, my grades were poor and they threw me out," he adds with a steady gaze.

Once in a physics class, he recalls, he solved a problem in a way the professor had never seen before. The professor was at first baffled, then intrigued, and asked him to put the problem up on the board. Tremblay explained to the class how he had solved the problem, after which the professor told him, "Good job."

"They encouraged me to have a quizzical mind," he says, "and the emphasis was on creativity, imagination and true learning. They taught me to estimate in my head, using all the



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It was a sobering experience that turned the boy into a man – one who would go on to help run one of America's most distinguished investment firms.

After flunking out of RPI, Tremblay returned home to live with his family in Westfield, New Jersey. His father, a Newark engineer who had four children, told him he blew it. "I got three more to support," Tremblay recalls his father saying. "You want to go away to college? You pay for it."

Since he hadn't any money, that wasn't an option. So he went to work for a local tool-making shop, laboring dully alongside men whose favorite words tended to come in four letters. The crudeness of the work was not lost upon him.

A year later he applied to NJIT (then NCE). It was close by, inexpensive and the only school he could afford. He did well. The school, unlike RPI, did not rely upon rote memorization. The professors encouraged students to think for themselves, to get the answers any way they could, with books open before them.

tools [books] available. And that translates directly into what I'm doing now – investments."

He graduated in 1964 with a degree in electrical engineering. He worked for GE Company for three years in a manufacturing management program. During his last assignment, he met someone with an M.B.A. Different from the others who worked at GE, he intrigued Tremblay. On a lark, Tremblay applied to Harvard University's M.B.A. program.

He got in, graduated with distinction, he says, and took a job with Wellington Management Company, L.L.P. in Boston. With assets of \$300 billion, Wellington acts as an investment adviser to more than six hundred institutional clients and two hundred mutual funds. Tremblay, one of sixty-nine partners today, is in charge of global research. He spends a lot of time managing the analysts who decide where the money should be invested.

"It's my job to attract and motivate the best talent in the world," he says, sitting in an office

whose tall windows offer panoramic views of downtown Boston.

The roaring economy of the nineties enriched Wellington, and Tremblay, a direct beneficiary, lives a good life. He resides in Wayland, a suburb of Boston, with his wife, Susan. He also does considerable charity work on behalf of wilderness preservation — he loves the outdoors.

“My soul is in the mountains,” he comments. He has climbed many, including most of Mt. Everest. He has a beach house on Cape Cod that he loves, but the house he owns in Jackson Hole, in a valley ringed by mountains, is his favorite.

After he graduated from Harvard, he and his wife cashed in their bank account — \$252 — and in an old Chevy drove cross country. Penniless, they camped out at Jackson Hole. He vowed then that if he ever could, he’d come back and buy a house there. That dream house now sits framed on his office shelf — a photograph of a log house in a valley, dwarfed by immense mountains.

As a student, he always loved fast sports cars, but couldn’t afford one. Now he has many, including a classic 1957 Porsche Speedster — “my all-time favorite car.” He belongs to the Porsche Club and races cars for fun. He also fly fishes, bicycles and skis.

A happy man who loves his work, his hobbies and his family (he has two grown children), he laughs often, the free open laugh of a contented man. When he mentions his wife’s name, his eyes brighten and his voice fills with affection. His son is a champion snowboarder and industrial designer and his daughter is a banker. She was recently married, and Tremblay is eagerly awaiting grandchildren. He jokes that his “granddog” is a step in the right direction.

If there’s any one aspect that sums up Tremblay’s character, and his life, it’s passion.

“If you ask my partners around here,” Tremblay says, “they’ll tell you I have a passion for everything I do. Once I get into something, I really get into it. And I’ve been lucky. Not many people get to have their dreams come true. I have, and I’m grateful for it.” ■

— Robert Florida

Gene Tremblay '64 received an alumni achievement award at NJIT's Fall Awards Ceremony in October. Photo, previous page: Mr. Tremblay (right), with a friend at Jackson Hole.

PHOTO COURTESY, G. TREMBLAY

ENGINEERING ATTORNEY

Ron Panitch studied engineering but became a lawyer. Why? While at NJIT in the early sixties, he joined Tau Delta Phi. He met some of the older members — alumni — who were lawyers. They told Panitch that a law degree coupled with his engineering degree would serve him well.

So after he graduated from NJIT he moved to Washington, D.C. and took a job at the United States Patent and Trademark Office. At

says. “The partners turn to me for creative solutions to sticky problems.” One of his clients is the company that introduced the Super Soaker® water gun, one of the best-selling summer toys of all time, according to the *New York Times*. He prevents other companies from making counterfeits. “It’s fun,” he says. “We do a lot of toy work.”

Panitch, now sixty, grew up an avid baseball fan, rooting for the New York Giants (now the San Francisco Giants) from his home in Irvington, New Jersey. Now a resident of Elkins



night he took classes at Georgetown Law School. After receiving a J.D. he worked for eighteen years with the Philadelphia patent law firm Seidel, Gonda, Goldhammer & Panitch, P.C. He left that firm in 1983 to form Panitch Schwarze Jacobs & Nadel, P.C. with three colleagues.

Two years ago, Panitch negotiated a merger with the country’s ninth largest law firm, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer and Feld, L.L.P. The firm now has one thousand lawyers, and Panitch is the partner-in-charge in Philadelphia. He continues to focus his practice on patent, trademark and copyright law.

He spends most of his time, he says, settling conflicts that would otherwise wind up in court. “I’m called upon to effect settlements when the litigants are going at it,” Panitch

Park, Pennsylvania, he has since switched his allegiance to the Philadelphia Phillies. He pitches now for his firm’s softball team, which made the playoffs this year. “But we got blown out big time in the second round,” he says.

Panitch and his wife Susan, married for thirty-eight years, have four children and seven grandchildren. His favorite thing to do, outside of work, he says, is to be with his grandchildren, “doting on them in any way that I can.”

Thoughts of retirement are not in his mind. “Why retire?” he asks. “I’m having too much fun.” ■

— Robert Florida

Ron Panitch '62 received an alumni achievement award at NJIT's Fall Awards Ceremony in October.

PHOTO: GREGORY OGDON