

# ALUMNI CIRCUIT

## A MESSAGE FROM THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

I want to wish everyone a Happy New Year. The start of another year at NJIT will bring a new semester. It is always great to see new students walking around our campus. I also enjoy talking to these students and asking them why they decided to come to NJIT. Here are some of their comments.

- *I decided to come to NJIT because its small class size allows for a closer bond between professors and students. Personally, a professor knowing your name is more motivation to succeed and learn more.*
- *I decided to choose NJIT because it is a STEM school and offers all courses that I am interested in. I chose the Martin Tuchman School of Management because I need to learn how to own my own business that can become successful.*
- *I chose to attend NJIT because I have several family members and friends who have graduated from this university and their lifestyles are my goals. I know NJIT promises me a bright future and I plan to take full advantage of such an opportunity.*

We get a very diverse set of students here at NJIT and the spirit and excitement about being on the NJIT campus continues to grow. Many NJIT alums have been active in helping out during the recruiting process. This has included being on the campus for the Open House sessions. It is an exciting opportunity to talk to prospective students and their families and help them better understand what a great selection NJIT would be for them.

NJIT is not only expanding its student population, we are also expanding the scope of resources across the campus. The Martin Tuchman School of Management has recently opened two new business laboratories.

The Raymond Cassetta Financial Analysis Laboratory is now open. This is a great addition to NJIT and features a lab equipped with Bloomberg terminals that students can use to understand the financial performance of companies. This lab has been supported by Ray Cassetta '70, chairman of the Martin Tuchman School of Management Board of Advisors.

The Business Data Analytics Laboratory is also open. "Business with the Power of STEM" requires that our students understand and utilize digital technologies and analytics in their education and this lab will give them that opportunity. This facility is being supported by Romolo Marcucci '00, a member of the Martin Tuchman School of Management Board of Advisors.

The Alumni Association has launched "Highlander Connect." This is a career-planning initiative to focus on providing assistance to our current students. We have always been active in this process, but we want to better structure our involvement and offer more comprehensive programs in this all-important area. This process has started and we are active with students across many of the schools at NJIT. We are engaged with alums who are offering their time to help work with students on their career-planning activities. This coming



PHOTO: CHRISTINA GROVETTO

spring, we also will be continuing programs like the Speed Networking Event and Speaking of Careers to assist the student population. We also are engaged with the Career Day events on campus and it is great to see so many alums back on campus representing their companies in the recruiting process. It is also great to see so many alums coming back to the campus to help in the evaluation of student projects and showcases. This is a valuable contribution to the personal and professional development of our students.

Every single NJIT alum has experiences that are worth sharing with our students. I challenge each one of you to step forward and get involved in helping our students. As always, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or if you want to get involved in NJIT activities.

I hope to see you at an alumni event soon. ■

Jack W. Wagner '74  
President, NJIT Alumni Association

## STEM STORYTELLING— ONE COMIC BOOK AT A TIME



Naseed Gifted '01

Like many young people his age, Naseed Gifted '01 was infatuated with comic books; however, they rarely portrayed heroes that resembled him. His desire to infuse more diversity in the world of comic books sparked the creation of *P.B. Soldier*, a science fiction graphic novel series that has as its hero an African-American man named Nat Cummings, a skilled computer hacker who uses his abilities to help pay for college tuition until

his activities are discovered and he becomes listed as an international terror threat. Cummings becomes a double agent who attempts to bring down a system from the inside without letting those he cares about fall into harm's way.

A two-time Glyph Comic Awards and Urban Action Showcase nominee, Gifted heads the independent comic book publisher PBS Media, which in August 2016 launched a crowdfunding campaign through Kickstarter to raise \$8,500 for the production of the next comic book in its series that helps teach STEM disciplines to young people. The goal of the campaign was to raise money for the production of Episode 3.0, the sixth installment of a 13-book arc. Funds will go toward the actual production of the book, including

printing and distribution, and payment to line artist and colorist Abel Garcia. In addition, some of the proceeds will be donated to the Central High School Pre-Engineering Academy in Newark—a program that Gifted has taught and led for the past 13 years.

## FROM ENGINEER TO TEACHER

At NJIT, Gifted's main focus was obtaining a degree in electrical engineering—a passion since the 10th grade after being exposed to robotics through the U.S. FIRST Competition. The experience afforded several opportunities: His team won the Chairman's Award and had the opportunity to meet then-President Bill Clinton at the White House. He appeared on *20/20* and the USA Network's "In a Minute" commercial and the team was featured in *The Star-Ledger*. He also worked alongside a group of engineers from Bell Labs in Whippany. All of this piqued his interest and—most importantly—several of the engineers looked like him.

"This furthered my passion to pursue engineering as a career path and provided me with the confidence that I can do it," Gifted said. "The entrepreneur and writer in me initiated at NJIT. I started my first business, PBS Unlimited, with several other NJIT students, and wrote poetry as well as performed at poetry slams. These experiences helped later provide the tools to build another company, PBS Media, and become a writer of the comic book series *P.B. Soldier*."

Gifted's involvement in the community and membership in the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) aided in his transition from engineer to teacher. The training he received at NJIT not only allowed him the ability to change careers, but gave him what he calls the "growth mindset."

"As a member of NSBE, we always facilitated workshops to expose students to the STEM fields and took high school students on field trips to engineering conventions and mentoring," Gifted said. "So one day I asked myself, how can I expose more students



to the opportunities afforded to me by pursuing a career path in STEM and positively impact the community? Hence, becoming a teacher was born. As engineers, our guiding principle is problem-solving and I continually apply the engineering process to all aspects of life. That's what has allowed me the ability to navigate the waters of change. Also during my time at NJIT, the networking opportunities and friends I acquired have proven to have a long-lasting impact on my future endeavors."

## LIFE LESSON

Gifted cites his senior project—the presentation, preparation and research to create something that (at the time) was new and innovative—as his most memorable moment as an NJIT student.

"To take an idea and make it real was a driving force that motivated me to push forward," he recalled. "This is also the first time I truly learned the concept of 'Fail Forward'—to give something your all and find out that sometimes your all was not good enough. So you need to persevere in pushing forward in order to make progress. This was a life lesson that I will never forget."

What is his lasting impression of NJIT?

"NJIT is a place where ideas can become reality through hard work, consistency and dedication," he said. "You have all of the equipment to make anything that you dream of come to life."

Gifted also is the founder of New Jersey's Black Comic Book Festival "Khem Comic Fest" and travels across the country as a panelist for "Full Spectrum: Why Color in Comics Matters and Using Comics to Teach STEM." *P.B. Soldier* titles are available at pbsoldier.com, Amazon, iTunes and Peep Game Comix. ■

## HIS ROAD TO SINGAPORE



*David Nagrosst '12 is head of Datacenter Colocation and Solution Sales-Asia Pacific for a major global hybrid solutions and data center colocation provider in Singapore.*

Although an ancient regional proverb says that "All roads lead to China," the career path traveled by David Nagrosst '12 has taken him to another country in Asia. As head of Datacenter Colocation and Solution Sales-Asia Pacific (APAC) for a major global hybrid solutions and data center colocation provider in Singapore, Nagrosst is the leader of a team whose international responsibilities span two continents and five countries.

"I was already started on my career in information technology while attending NJIT, but I did not imagine just how much it would grow and develop. I also didn't imagine that I would be working halfway around the world in Singapore," he said. "I am quite lucky and fortunate."

Prior to his present position, Nagrosst had multiple roles with his current employer; the one immediately prior was managing a highly specialized Solutions Sales team focused on the U.S. East Coast. Nagrosst completed an associate degree in computer science and decided to take a hiatus from further studies to concentrate on his career. But as his career developed, Nagrosst realized that he could gain greater understanding

of many different aspects of his profession in the classroom, and he wanted to learn more. This is when he decided to pursue his bachelor's degree at NJIT, where the combination of coursework and learning from industry-leading experienced professors increased his fluency in the language and knowledge of business, and provided beneficial insights into the connections between business and information technology.

"At the time, I did not see the full value or benefit of a degree, but this changed with experience," Nagrosst recalled. "While I already possessed a great deal of technical and practical skill prior to attending NJIT, the classes helped crystallize, sharpen and round out my knowledge with theory and a deeper level of comprehension. The elective tracks that were part of my program at NJIT in addition to the core curriculum supported me in branching out to learn about management, marketing and financial analysis, among other valuable topics. As a part-time student, I attended all of my classes in the evenings and on weekends, which were often taught by adjunct professors who had real-world practical experience."

While attending NJIT, Nagrosst



lived in Morristown, N.J., and worked in New York City. For his commute to work, he drove up to an hour and a half from Morristown to New Jersey Transit parking in Newark, took the train to New York, and after work on days he had classes picked up his car to find parking near the NJIT campus and then made the long drive home.

"It was well-worth the sacrifice!" Nagrosst said. "I very much enjoyed the time at NJIT and still keep in touch with many friends and professors. I enjoyed learning and immediately putting my new learning into practical use for my work. I also have fond memories of enjoying a cold beer at the pub on campus after, and even sometimes before, evening and weekend classes."

One of his most memorable moments as a student was a summer

project that required him to develop a system using the LAMP stack for locating a faculty adviser by study area. He led a small team to successfully execute the project and presented it onstage to an audience of 300 students, faculty and company representatives. He also selected an interesting elective in electronic poetry and art (taught by Humanities Professor Christopher Funkhouser) that challenged him creatively.

"On the personal side, I enjoyed making new friends, many younger than me, and getting to know them and offering advice and guidance from my life experiences," Nagrosst said. "NJIT offers a highly diversified, tough and valuable education. The people you meet come from all walks of life, income levels, races, and from many parts of the world. I consider the NJIT student body a cross-section of the world that

has one thing in common — the drive and motivation to achieve, grow and learn. The students who attend NJIT tend to be the scrappy go-getter type, and when presented with an obstacle will defeat it and simply move forward and get it done! Nothing will stop us! We are a resilient bunch."

For a short time, immediately after graduating from NJIT, Nagrosst left the company he was working for, to which he subsequently returned with new personal insights. "I do not regret leaving, since it gave me an important perspective on what I need from an employer and on being a leader," he said. "It also taught me the value of a good leader, which is what I strive to be every day."

After working with the company for nearly nine years, Nagrosst welcomed the opportunity to relocate

to Singapore to challenge himself with building and growing the business in APAC by leveraging the skills, knowledge and relationships he developed in the U.S. — and at NJIT.

What advice would he give to those considering a job with an international firm, a career path he definitely endorses?

"Read a lot about the country you intend to relocate to, understand the culture, visit it at least once or twice and, perhaps most importantly, network and talk to other expats already residing there," he recommended. "It is also a good idea to join online groups, and to connect with knowledgeable individuals active on sites such as LinkedIn. If you are just at the start of your career or still in school, try to intern internationally. Above all, don't be afraid. You have much to offer the world." ■

## ENGINEERING ALUM'S CAREER TAKES FLIGHT



*Michael Anderson '13 is a design engineer at Scaled Composites, an aerospace company in California.*

"Legos were, of course as it is for every engineer, my favorite toy," said Michael Anderson '13, a mechanical and computer engineering graduate who certainly has come a long way from connecting those plastic blocks, as well as building and flying remote-controlled airplanes as a youngster. Today, he is helping build the biggest airplane in the

world (by wingspan) for Paul Allen's Stratolaunch venture at the California-based aerospace company Scaled Composites. The plane, nicknamed Roc after the mythical bird of prey, will provide a platform for air launches into space.

"What Scaled Composites does is rapid prototyping of one-off aircraft, so we never really build more than one of anything, as opposed

to Boeing and other commercial aircraft manufacturers, where they build hundreds of thousands of airplanes," explained Anderson, who is on a team of less than 100 engineers working on Roc. "We design, analyze and build it all basically ourselves. Engineers are expected to take part in all aspects.

"In aerospace, especially, this doesn't happen," he continued.

"Usually, there is a design engineer, there's an analysis department, there's a manufacturing engineering department, and those people rarely talk to each other and even more rarely do each other's jobs. I get to do it all."

Anderson attributes his getting the position to his participation in a Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) competition. He was president of the organization's NJIT chapter and worked on an engineering team to design and build an unmanned aerial vehicle for the SAE's annual international aerodesign competition. His team's project, the Flying Highlander, an oversized model airplane with a three-foot wingspan, took fourth place.

In addition to his SAE involvement, Anderson served on the Recruitment Committee for Albert Dorman Honors College. The college awarded him a full scholarship to attend NJIT and named him Outstanding Honors College Student for the 2012-2013 academic year. He lived on the Honors College floor in Redwood Hall as a freshman and throughout his college career enjoyed spending

time with his Honors College colleagues.

"We did a lot of classes together, did a lot of homework together ... It was a great little community."

The Honors College experience is one the Hammonton, N.J., native shares with three of his four brothers, although he is the only engineer

in the bunch. He noted that his Honors College classes challenged him to not just learn formulas, but also how and why things work, which is proving important to his assignment at Scaled Composites.

"I would totally recommend NJIT and especially the Honors College to anyone," said Anderson, adding

that his education at the university prepared him well for his career.

He perhaps has even been ahead of the curve when it comes to engineering knowledge, thanks to his time at NJIT. His boss at Scaled Composites recommended a textbook for him to read titled *Control System Design: An Introduction to*

*State-Space Methods*. The author was Bernard Friedland, distinguished professor of electrical and computer engineering-intelligent systems at NJIT, and one of Anderson's instructors. ■

*Author: Julie Jacobs is a staff writer/editor at NJIT.*

## ENABLING TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE DOD



As chief scientist and de facto chief technology officer for Program Executive Office Ammunition (PEO Ammo) located at Joint Center Picatinny Arsenal in New Jersey, Paul Manz '84 is responsible for the transition and insertion of enabling technologies across a diverse munitions and armaments portfolio valued over \$3 billion. He also oversees PEO Ammo's annual research and development budget totaling over \$160 million. It's an assignment in which he supports senior Army and Department of Defense (DOD) leadership on a variety of critical armaments issues, one that requires harnessing the specific expertise and multidisciplinary acumen of his government colleagues and industry/academia partners to solve challenging problems on behalf of our nation's warfighters

and the U.S. taxpayer.

"I definitely enjoy my job, the subject matter and the folks I work with at Joint Center Picatinny and across the greater tactical warfare community," Manz said.

Leveraging his primary areas of study in electrical engineering, semiconductors and communications, Manz immediately landed a job after graduation

working for the Army's Electronic Technology and Devices Laboratory at Fort Monmouth in New Jersey. He also became engaged to his wife, Elizabeth, to whom he has been married for over 30 years. He noted that his BSEE degree provided him with an excellent foundation for the many things he has experienced and worked on over the last three decades.

"I think the most useful takeaways for me were the rigorous approach to problem-solving that I learned at NJIT, as well as the broad nature of the curriculum and knowledge I gained during the 139 credits of coursework I needed to graduate. Yes, I still remember that number after all these years," Manz recalled.

"Actually, one of the things I find most interesting is that I'm still

able to apply my early career EE-centric subject matter knowledge and concepts, enabled by my NJIT technical degree, to a variety of critical topics and capability gaps in my current world of advanced armaments. Semiconductor devices and the trusted-foundry supply chain needed by precision-guided munitions and the use of 'truth data' over a system-of-systems network to overcome problems in GPS degraded/denied environments are just two examples."

Did he ever envisage doing this while he was an NJIT student?

"This job specifically? Not in a million years," Manz said. "I don't think anyone in their late teens/early twenties knows exactly where life will take them. I can say that with experience as someone in their fifties. With that said, I think the choice I made to attend NJIT and that made after graduating ended up being good ones. Over my 32-year career as a DOD civilian and acquisition professional, I have been fortunate enough to be exposed to a variety of multidisciplinary subject matter across the entire materiel-development life cycle from science and technology through production and deployment. My career has spanned numerous diverse areas, such as joint munitions and armaments, battle command, fire support, software and information technology, enterprise architecture and interoperability, systems engineering and electronic devices. Again, I definitely enjoy my job at Joint Center Picatinny, which is a great place to work, with great

people and challenging subject matter, as well as being trusted, empowered and supported by senior Army and DOD leadership to do the right things when they need to be done."

Manz and his son, a high school junior, recently attended an NJIT Open House.

"The campus, curriculum and infrastructure improvements made over the last many years are awesome," Manz said. "The sampling of faculty and student interactions throughout this daylong event also showed me that NJIT is still on the top of its game and continues to be a great place to get a great education at a reasonable cost."

His most memorable moment as an undergraduate student was "probably supporting NJIT's on-campus Octobertech and Miniversity events as an upper-classman, much like those students my son and I recently encountered at the Open House."

"I translate the memorable enjoyment of passing along lessons learned and helpful hints to incoming freshmen from way back when to my present-day enjoyment of similarly mentoring younger members of Joint Center Picatinny's highly professional workforce and exposing them to new career-enhancing learning experiences," Manz said. "My lasting impression of NJIT is its demonstrated positive reputation for giving students the right education and 'tools' they need to succeed upon graduation and throughout their future careers. I'm just one data point, but I think NJIT did very well by me." ■



# CLASS NOTES

## MAL & FRIENDS

**NJIT Magazine** invites new correspondents to join Mal Simon in sharing news about class members and alumni organizations. Professor emeritus of physical education and athletics, Mal was director of physical education and athletics, and men's soccer coach, for 30 years. In 1993, he received the Cullimore Medal for his service to the university.

If you would like to be a regular correspondent, don't hesitate to send an e-mail to the editor of **NJIT Magazine**: [crovetto@njit.edu](mailto:crovetto@njit.edu)

*First, the latest news from Mal –*

It is my good fortune to have met many fine young men and women in my 60-plus years at NCE and NJIT and to have kept in touch with them as alumni. This relationship has enforced my belief that students who are active in extracurricular activities as undergraduates enjoy a special connection with others in their respective activity that aids them in successfully completing their academic program and staying involved with each other and their alma mater after graduation.

An example of such a group of students is the 1983 soccer team, the last team I coached. They were the culmination of the 1980 team, which saw the largest number of students (65) in NCE/

NJIT history trying out for the opportunity to play for the school. The number and quality of these student-athletes really challenged the returning players for their positions. It was the first time I had to make cuts, which I didn't like to do but had no choice because of economics. When the dust had cleared, 19 freshmen made the 35-member team. Academically, 16 of the 19 freshmen (84 percent) completed degrees in their respective majors and are currently practicing their professions. What's more, they loyally support their alma mater and represent NJIT with honor and distinction.

The accompanying photo, taken during the 1983 team's preseason



*Efrain Borja '77 and me in the summer of 2016, presenting clear proof of how well the Vermont Wall "conditioning program" for the 1983 Soccer Team worked out.*

training program in Vermont, shows the group relaxing after completion of a stone wall in front of my home in Warren, Vt.

There have been some spurious accusations that the building of the "Vermont Wall" could be considered "slave labor" or a violation of NCAA rules. The truth is that it was part of a well-planned conditioning program. Lifting the large boulders and carrying them from the rock walls around the 10-acre boundaries to the front of my house was excellent aerobic and anaerobic exercise. Additionally, the planning and actual construction of the wall was an excellent learning exercise for the fledgling architectural and engineering students. Indicating the quality of their work, there is a photo of Efrain and me taken when he was visiting us this past summer.

Following are noncensured

comments made by some of the original team members about their experiences as NJIT soccer players:

Ricky Baptista, president of New States Contracting, Freehold, N.J.: "One of the best decisions I made was to play soccer at NJIT. Not only were the values of sportsmanship and teamwork reinforced as life lessons that benefited me in the business realm, but the friendships made are lifelong."

Paul Bette, senior program manager and director of Sungard Availability Services, New Egypt, N.J.: "Unlike today, we did not have much of an on-campus life, but being on the soccer team made up for it. Road trips to away games were memorable. We had a great group of talented players with a mix of personalities and many of us have remained friends after 30 years."

Guy Cilento Jr., senior software



*Goalkeeper Tahsin Karasay '75 in action at the net in a 1974 contest with Montclair State.*



*The 1983 soccer team taking a break in Vermont. Front row (l to r): Dave Buck '84, Ricky Baptista '85, '97, Guy Cilento Jr. '84, Paul Bette '85, '90, Pete Stauffenberger, Fred Mowczan '85, Ray Paulius '85, Arvind Tikku '85, Rich Fifoot '86, Andy Muldowney '85, Armen Bedrossian '87, Hani Shouga '87, Rocco Orlando '88. In front, center: Uton Dixon '89. Top row (l to r) Sam Armijos '85, Dave Jansson '84, me, Ronel Dorvil, Henri Bernadotte and Efrain Borja '77, assistant coach. Missing from the photo is Nelson Gralha '85.*

engineer for CTGI, Oakton, Va.: "Some of the special experiences were playing soccer for the coach who coached my father's National Championship Team in 1960, the Florida winter trips, and making great friends for life."

Andy Muldowney, director of highways, RBA group, Parsippany, N.J., comments: "Not like the Harvard team, all we wanted to do was play poker on road trips and go to fraternity parties on Thursday nights."

Ray Paulius, design principal/

COO, V. Paulius & Associates, Allendale, N.J., remembers: "The team's unique camaraderie and chemistry, both multicultural and self-deprecating, preseason camp at Cruz Farm, and flying on Peoples Express to play RIT and being acknowledged publicly by the pilot."

Arvind Tikku, principal of Ikon 5 Architects LLC, Princeton, N. J.: "Being part of the soccer team and developing friendships helped me in my transition from high school to college and from college to the professional environment."

Nelson Gralha, project manager, Epic Management Inc., Piscataway, N.J., remembered the trip to play Keene State College in New Hampshire when I miscounted the players on the van trip home. Assistant Coach Efrain and I were driving the two vans and each assumed that **John Maia '86** was in the other van. The mistake was discovered when we arrived back in Newark. John had decided to stay in Keene with a coed he met there. A few phone calls straightened out the error and fortunately a happy ending followed, as John later

married the coed, Helene. They now live in Millburn, N.J. John has worked for the Passaic Valley Sewage Commission since 1987. He is still waiting for the \$15 meal money each player received for the trip home.

Dave, aka Daveed, Ferrer played on the team for three years but did not have eligibility for the third year. He had joined the Navy, and while waiting to be inducted was soccer writer for *The Vector*. Known for the mischievous wit of his articles,

Dave saved his best for his last story. It appeared after we lost our final game to Scranton. Dave's headline was "We Did It for Mal."

Efrain, aka Sergio, Borja was assistant coach in my last two years of coaching and succeeded me in 1984. Armen Bedrossian, Hani Shouga and Rich Fifoot were freshmen on the 1983 team and played three years for Efrain. Efrain, who has to be NJIT's unofficial soccer ambassador since his move to Blaine, Wash., recently met with Armen and Hani in California and took a few minutes for a photo. Armen and Hani both moved to California soon after graduation and had not seen Efrain since 1987. Armen is currently chief technology officer for a startup. He and his wife, Lala, live in La Crescenta, Calif., Hani is director of client services and sales for World Wide Technology. He and his wife, Nisreen, whom he met while on vacation in his homeland of Jordan, live in Mission Viejo, Calif.

Remembering the brutal knee injury he sustained in his first season, Rich Fifoot says that being told he would not play again motivated him. He focused more on school and the countless hours of rehab got him back in great shape. He lost one semester of school because of his injury and graduated in four and a half years with a degree in chemical



*A meeting on the field (l to r): Hernan Borja, Jose Dias '85, Tahsin Karasay '75 and friend.*

engineering. Starting right out of college in management with Procter & Gamble in Mehoopany, Pa., Rich moved on to higher positions that included quality and production manager for UltraCare in Marion, Ohio, and plant manager for Playtex products in Dover, Del., Currently, he is plant manager for Anchor, an Oldcastle company in Bristol, Pa.

I remember Rich's father, an enthusiastic fan who attended most of his son's games. Rich's nephew, Eric Huyler, is an NJIT freshman and is on the lacrosse team. Rich and his partner, Sheryl Silverman, live in Swedesboro, N.J., and enjoy traveling extensively in the Caribbean and Europe.

Tahsin, aka Tom the Turk, Karasay '75 is making a name for himself in local and national soccer, and in Connecticut railroading. A First Team All New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware goalkeeper for NJIT, Tahsin is player/manager with the Guilford, Conn., Black Eagles, which competes in the United States Adult Soccer Association (USASA) leagues for players over the ages of 40, 50, 55, 60 and 65. For the past 16 years, they have competed in the Veterans Cup, which is a USASA-sponsored national tournament held every July in a different part of the United States.

The Black Eagles have been to New Hampshire, West Virginia, North Carolina, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Washington, California, Virginia, Florida and Colorado, and next year will go to



*Recently reunited in California (l to r): Armen Bedrossian '87, Efrain Borja '77 and Hani Shouga '87.*



Nashville, Tenn. Their over-40 team won its group twice, the over-45 team once, the over-50 team three times, and the over-55 team once. Tahsin has also organized and plays in an annual memorial tournament in Florida for Pedro DeBrito, one of their players who died in a car accident in 2014 and who played professionally with NJIT's Hernan "Chico" Borja. During one of the tournaments, Tahsin ran into Hernan and Jose Dias '85 in Miami, Fla., and convinced them to play in last year's tournament.

Tahsin was a project engineer for Amtrak, rebuilding Amtrak's largest mechanical factory in Beach Grove, Ind., from 1979 to 1984. He came to Connecticut with Amtrak in 1984 as assistant division engineer responsible for tracks and structures maintenance and construction between New Haven and Boston, and Springfield, Conn. He then moved on to Amtrak's high-speed rail project as assistant to the vice president for high-speed rail.

Tahsin left Amtrak after nearly 25 years to work with Metro North Railroad in New Haven, Conn. He is currently assistant deputy director of the New Haven Line, which runs from the New York state border to New Hampshire. He says that generous funding from the Connecticut Department of Transportation makes the New Haven line a premier commuter service. Tahsin lives in the small, quaint shore town of Westbrook.

**Jeff Caputi '83** was another of the outstanding goalkeepers that NJIT was blessed to have in the nets. Jeff is an environmental engineer and vice president for Brown and Caldwell in Upper Saddle River, N.J., where he has worked since 1990. His responsibilities include remediation of contaminated sites, and he is currently working on the Gowanus Canal Superfund project in Brooklyn, N.Y. Jeff and his wife, Teresa, live in Ramsey, N.J.

After a one-year hiatus, the NJIT Florida Soccer Alumni Reunion is back on track for Friday through Sunday, March 10-12, 2017, hosted by **Fabian '75** and Jeanie Hurtado. The reunion will be held in the Cape Canaveral, Cocoa Beach and

Port Canaveral areas. Activities are anticipated to start at 7 p.m. on Friday with dinner at the Fishlips Waterfront Bar and Grill in Port Canaveral.

Those who wish may skip the dinner and take a five-hour gambling cruise that starts at 7 p.m. and returns to Port Canaveral at midnight. After breakfast on Saturday, alumni will have their choice of a bus tour of the Kennedy Space Center, shopping at the Ron Jon Surf Complex in Cocoa Beach, or relaxing on the beautiful sandy beaches. At 1 p.m. lunch will be held at one of the popular Port Canaveral waterfront restaurants.

Evening activities will consist of dinner at 6 p.m. at the Hurtados' clubhouse followed by a private party with dancing and musical entertainment from 8 to 11 p.m. On Sunday morning, those who wish may join Fabian and Jeanie for church at Merritt Island or play golf at the Cocoa Beach Golf Club.

Reunion reservations in advance are required. For additional information and to make reservations, please contact Fabian at fabianh3@hotmail.com or 407-334-9832.

Keep sending me your stories at mjs@njit.edu ■

## 1962

**Ronald Panitch** (Mechanical Engineering), partner at the law firm Panitch Schwarze Belisario & Nadel, has been named to the 2016 list of *Who's Who Legal: Trademarks*, a directory of legal leaders that is published annually and is intended to be a reference source for people or corporations looking for the best legal talent in the world. In practice since 1966, Panitch provides his firm's clients with experience in intellectual property law. He has been named a "Best Lawyer in America" every year since 2006 and also has been named the Best Lawyers "Lawyer of the Year" for the Philadelphia metro area in intellectual property law. He also has been honored by the Philadelphia Bar Association for 50 years of service and with a lifetime achievement award from the Philadelphia Intellectual Property Association.

After finishing his travel book *Around the World in 80 Years*, **Jay J. Stemmer** (Civil Engineering) turned to fiction and action/adventure. The first was *Angel of Life*, which was recently followed by *Angel of Death*, a continuation of the story. The last in the trilogy, *Angel of Rescue*, will be out in Feb. 2017.

## 1973

**Nicholas DeNichilo** (Civil Engineering, M.S., '78) has been elected by The National Academy of Construction (NAC) as a member of its 2016 class. DeNichilo, president and CEO of Mott MacDonald, was inducted Oct. 20 at the NAC annual meeting in Napa at the Silverado Resort and Spa. DeNichilo has helped lead Hatch Mott MacDonald, which has now split into Hatch and Mott MacDonald, to numerous awards for high-profile projects such as the Calgary West Light Rail Transit Line, the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement and the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. As a practicing engineer specializing in water and wastewater, he has served as project manager for numerous projects. DeNichilo is a recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award from NJIT. He also is the recipient of an American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) OPAL Award for lifetime achievement in leadership as well as the ASCE Parcel-Sverdrup Civil Engineering Management Award, among many honors.

## 1977

**Martin Pietrucha** (Civil Engineering) has been named the new undergraduate coordinator for the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Penn State University. Pietrucha has worked in the department for 26 years and has served as the director of the engineering systems program since 2014. Pietrucha also acted as director of The Thomas D. Larson Pennsylvania Transportation Institute for seven years. Before his position at Penn State, Pietrucha was a program

officer for the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies.

## 1983

**William Killeen** (Construction & Construction Engineering Technology), president and CEO of Acrow Bridge, a leading international bridge engineering and supply company, was recently appointed to the President's Advisory Council on Doing Business in Africa (PAC-DBIA) by U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker. The council's objectives are to connect American businesses with African partners, support existing and new American investment in Africa, expand access for American businesses to finance their exports to Africa, and reduce barriers to trade and investment in Africa. Killeen joined Acrow Bridge in 1977, and has been president and CEO since 1995. He has been a licensed professional engineer since 1987 and recently completed a six-year appointment to the board of directors of the Corporate Council on Africa.

## 1984

**Paul Manz** (Electrical Engineering) is Chief Scientist for the U.S. Army's PEO Ammunition located at Picatinny Arsenal, N.J. As one of the elite few, Manz recently received the National Defense Industrial Association's prestigious Firepower Award recognizing his significant contributions to the defense of our country. Manz also was recently selected as the DOD's Top Engineer for 2016 (out of a technical workforce of over 40,000!) and received recognition from the Office of the Secretary of Defense during an awards ceremony held at the Pentagon.

## 1990

**Ralph Arcurio** (Engineering Science) has been recognized as the recipient of the Inventor of the Year Award from the New Jersey Inventors Hall of Fame. Arcurio, a technical manager for the polymer science team at Sun

Chemical, was honored with the award for his development of new reactive hydroxylated and carboxylated polymers for use as adhesion promoters. For more than 31 years, Arcurio has been with Sun Chemical, where he has developed and commercialized numerous polymers for surface and laminating packaging inks and coatings. He holds four patents and seven patent applications pending.

## 1996

**Sandra Caceres** (Civil Engineering) has been appointed public works director of Aberdeen Township. Caceres brings 19 years of experience in the field of civil engineering to her new position, including 10 years working directly in the engineering and public works departments for municipalities throughout New Jersey. Her responsibilities have included design and construction management of capital projects; control of project costs and schedules; development and oversight of annual operating and capital budgets; road grant application preparation, submittal and reimbursement; responding to residents' concerns on road conditions; review of planning and zoning board applications; managing escrow accounts; invoicing; and building department reviews and permitting.

She most recently served as acting superintendent of Public Works/Township Engineer for Hillside Township in Union County. Before that, she served as a project manager for Maser Consulting, PA in Mt. Arlington, a multidiscipline engineering firm serving public and private sector clients. Previously, from 2006 to 2014, she served as assistant township engineer for Cranford Township.

Caceres began her career in 1996 as a design engineer for CME Associates, Parlin, where she worked on behalf of Aberdeen and Clark townships. After five years at CME, she went on to serve as a development manager, project manager and senior civil engineer for several private sector firms

before going in-house at Cranford. She holds a number of professional certifications including Certified Public Works Manager (CPWM), Professional Engineer (P.E.) and Certified Municipal Engineer (C.M.E.).

## 2001

**Michael Reis** (Business Management) joined Ameritas in September as vice president of retirement plans sales and relationship management. He works to enhance relationships with financial professionals and help them help clients achieve their retirement objectives. Reis brings a wealth of experience to the position and has held leadership roles with various national financial service companies. He also has held a number of sales and management positions.

## 2004

**Vikrant Arora** (Computer Engineering), AVP and chief information security and risk officer of New York City Health + Hospitals (NYCHHC), was selected as the Information Security Executive® of the Year Award winner for the ISE® Northeast region. Arora is a credentialed business leader with over 10 years of global experience in developing enterprise security and risk-management programs, delivering security "business value" and communicating risk to the BODs. Arora has successfully helped government, education and health care sectors to become more resilient against future attacks and shift corporate culture accordingly. In his current role as the senior director of security and risk management at NYCHHC, Arora is focused on addressing business risks and regulatory compliance associated with emerging technologies, clinical systems and advancements in cybercrime. Before joining NYCHHC, Arora worked with NBC, Pfizer and Dimension Data advocating development of a "risk-aware" culture and "risk-based" business model. Arora is CISSP, CISM and

SANS GCFA certified and was nominated for the 2011 North East Security Executive of the Year.

## 2005

**Marjorie A. Perry** (Management) president and CEO of Newark-based MZM Construction and Management Company, Inc. and a member of the NJIT Board of Overseers, has been appointed to the board of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce. During her two-year term with the chamber, Perry will be involved in transportation and economic-development initiatives.

## 2006

**Sean Kearney** (Mechanical Engineering) has been promoted to global senior mechanical engineering manager at Honeywell. Kearney has 10 years of experience with Honeywell/Metrologic based in Mount Laurel, N.J. Most recently, Kearney held the position of optical engineering manager. Over the course of his four years as department manager, Kearney has fostered an energized and motivated team to deliver both optical engineering excellence and innovation. Kearney and his team were instrumental in developing the JUMPSTART program, which continues to expand and drive innovation throughout greater Honeywell. Kearney also maintains his affiliations with SPIE as an education and outreach committee member as well as a contributor to the SPIE visiting lecturer series.

## 2007

**Daniel Halajian** (Architecture), senior project manager at Hunter Roberts, has been named one of *Commercial Observer's* top 15 architects, engineers and construction professionals under 35 years old. Halajian has worked for nine years at Hunter Roberts Construction Group and is now a senior project manager responsible for the overall construction operations of RXR

Realty and Youngwoo & Associates' 550,000-square-foot renovation of the Pier 57 building. Halajian oversees 12 executives on the project and 150 contractors on the site.

## 2011

**Brandon Rockwell** (EMBA) was appointed vice president of business development for Par Pharmaceutical in November 2016. Par Pharmaceutical is the fourth-largest generic pharmaceutical company in the U.S. and is a subsidiary of Endo, a leading global specialty pharmaceutical company. Rockwell manages a cross-functional department of 17 employees globally, which consists of business development, portfolio management, project management and strategic API sourcing. He joined Par Pharmaceutical in 2007 and has played an integral role in setting the strategic direction of the company through the acquisitions of Edict, Anchen, JHP and the integration of Qualitest into Par. Rockwell has 10 years of experience in the pharmaceutical industry, having held various prior positions in business-development, project management and information systems. Prior to working at Par, he was an IT systems administrator for MYOB and a systems engineer for TrueFit Solutions.

## IN MEMORIAM

**James Herbert Leverett '51**  
**Robert "Bob" R. Klein '59**  
**William F. Bischoff '62**  
**Richard DiBrino '68**  
**Joseph C. Muscari '68**  
**Joseph Timothy Buscia '79**  
**Gregory Gilhooly '15**



# RETURN TO THE



# MIDDLE KINGDOM

From Oct. 14-17, 2016, NJIT President Joel S. Bloom and his wife, Diane Bloom, assistant professor of education at Kean University, accompanied by Donald H. Sebastian, president of the New Jersey Innovation Institute, and Charles R. Dees Jr., senior vice president for University Advancement, met with various university and business leaders and alumni in China. In the words of Senior Vice President Dees, following is an account of their “very productive” travels to the Middle Kingdom, where NJIT currently counts 460 alumni.

## FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14

Due to the 12-hour time difference,

we arrived in Beijing at around 4:30 p.m. on the same day that we left the U.S. We met with J. Pan.

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15

Today we had lunch with Peng Hou, CEO and chairman of CTIE. At Union Mobile Pay E-Commerce Co. Ltd., we met with Bin Zhang, founder and CEO, as well as employees of the company. Ying Wu '88 was an early investor in Union Mobile Pay, which has 1 billion subscribers and 1,000 employees. Later that day, we attended an alumni reception at Wish Restaurant.

## SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16

We met with Beijing University

of Technology President Liu Gonghui. NJIT signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the university that will foster opportunities for academic and cultural exchange in teaching, research and other activities.

## MONDAY, OCTOBER 17

We rode the train to Janan City, which is located in the Shangdong Province, home of Shangdong Qiandao University, where we met with Jang Chen, chairperson of Shangdong Jianbang Holding Group. He expressed an interest in constructing an NJIT building on their campus. ■

*Top Left: On Oct. 16, President Bloom met with Liu Gonghui, president of Beijing University of Technology.*

*Top Right: President Bloom and Ying Wu '88, chair of China Capital Group*

*Bottom Left: Bin Zhang, founder and CEO of Union Mobile Pay E-Commerce Co. Ltd. exchanged gifts with President Joel S. Bloom at the company's headquarters in Beijing.*

*Bottom Right: From left: Dr. Diane Bloom, President Bloom; Peng Hou, CEO and chairman, CTIE; Donald H. Sebastian, president and CEO, New Jersey Innovation Institute; and Charles R. Dees, Jr., senior vice president for University Advancement*



# NOTES FROM



# HAVANA

*This fall, the Florida Gulf Coast Alumni Club sponsored a trip to Cuba. In the following narrative, George Post '61 shares his experiences as part of the NJIT group who toured this fascinating country.*

On Nov. 5, 2016, 20 NJIT alumni, administrators, faculty, significant others and friends departed Tampa International Airport for an eight-day tour of Havana and its surrounding area. Drs. Joel and Diane Bloom happily were part of the group. The tour was organized by the Florida Gulf Coast Alumni Club.

A complete itinerary was arranged that included walking tours of Old Havana with its historic plazas and impressive,

although deteriorating, collection of colonial-era residences and government buildings. A highlight of the tour was attending a performance of Danza Teatro Retazos, an incredible group of interpretive modern dancers. The members are organized to promote dance under the Ministry of Culture of Cuba.

In keeping with the tour participants' interest in science and engineering, a morning was spent at the University of Havana to discuss the learning and research programs at both institutions. The group also met with the Havana development department to learn about planning, restoration and urbanization in Old Havana. Venturing outside the city, we visited

the whimsical studio of Jose Fuster, one of Cuba's most important ceramists and painters. Since a visit to Cuba is not complete without learning about its famous cigar industry, the group traveled to the center of Cuba's prime tobacco-growing regions to visit a farm and experience the cigars.

We had the pleasure to see Havana as it begins a period of transition that must surely occur as more Americans visit the island. The time in Havana was an opportunity to bond not only among the group participants, but also between the group and the Cuban people. Without exception, all had a great time and returned with lasting memories. ■

*Top Left: Members of the delegation who toured Cuba in November.*

*Top Right: On day two, the group visited the Cathedral of Havana San Cristobal, one of the oldest in the Americas.*

*Bottom Left: Learning about the local cuisine at Café Ajiaco on day three of the tour.*

*Bottom Right: Paul W. Klein '64, '68 and Betty J. Perlmutter in front of a 17th-century stone fort at Cojimar that was built in 1645 as the easternmost defense point of Havana across from a monument to Ernest Hemingway. It is a twin to the fortification built on the other side of Havana.*