

Memorable mentors

Readers talk about faculty and staff who made a difference



In the past several issues of the magazine, we asked the question “Who do you love?” The responses show that many grads have vivid memories of people who touched their lives during their RIT years. Following are some of the stories; we’ll share others in future issues of the magazine.

Rick Auburn

Rick Auburn, shop/studio technician in the Department of Industrial and Interior Design, was an important part of our training. He was always full of suggestions and ideas on better ways for us to build our models, build our presentation boards or just give us some life lessons. He always went out of his way to help any student as much as he could. He always stands out in my mind when I think back to my days at RIT.

Dell Sargent '94 (interior design)

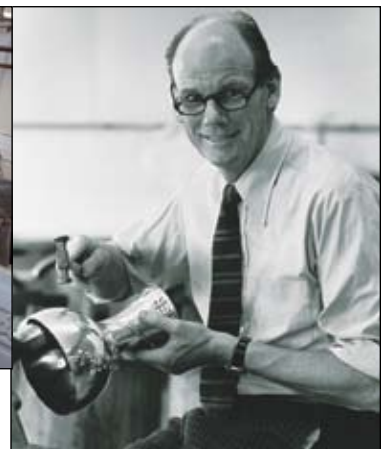
Project Manager

Binghamton University

Physical Facilities Design and Construction



Rick Auburn



Hans Christensen

Henry J. Cassia

Just about all my professors were memorable. I still remember and pass on tidbits of my learning to my students (I have been teaching at the college level for almost 30 years, currently at Monroe Community College). John K. Hartley and John Cook are memorable for their wit and humor in providing us with their experiences in the real world of business, and Paul Van Ness for his gentle and friendly manner in drilling us on statistics and quantitative methods. But the professor who stands out the most was Henry J. Cassia.

Henry taught marketing and advertising (he was a pharmaceuticals rep in his business days). Because of his penchant for stock market investing, he also taught finance: I regret I did not take more courses in finance. It was not so much what Henry taught but his fervor and enthusiasm for the material and his students. He was always “on,” whether in the front of the classroom or chatting with us in the cafeteria above the College of Business at 50 W. Main St.

He had opinions about everything, from the subjects he taught, to politics, men’s suits and colognes, and golf. Henry was the master of the digression and we never knew what he would say next. I believe that I took four of his classes and never received an A, but I wasn’t there for the grade, but for what I could learn from Henry Cassia. His efficiency as a teacher was evident by the fact we discussed his lectures (and his quips) more than any other professor we had. I can still hear his “Noo Yawk” accent and his wonderful cackle of a laugh. He loved to laugh and make his students laugh with him.

A year or so ago, I ran into Professor Cassia at the post office. He still looked the same and I was flattered that he remembered me. And hearing that voice brought back sweet memories.

Barry Goldfarb '68 (business administration)

Rochester

Hans Christensen

One of the most important of life’s lessons came to me from my professor at RIT even before I started my freshman year.

I was visiting RIT as a high school senior with my mother. We were taking a tour of the School for American Crafts and upon entering the metals studio met Hans Christensen, head of the metals program.

Hans explained the curriculum and showed us some of the students’ work as well as a piece he was working on. I was so excited, and then my mother asked a question that made me want to disappear into the floor. “Will my daughter ever get a job and make a good living doing this?” she asked. Hans smiled and responded with that great Danish accent, “Of course she will make a living. It may not make her very rich but if she chooses a career that she really loves she won’t need lots of money; that’s only for people who don’t like their jobs. They need to make lots of money to



Mark Fragale and Katie Linendoll '05



William Gasser, left, chats with a student



R. Roger Remington '58

make up for the lack of satisfaction they get from what they do.”

I chose a career I love and stuck with it, not always easy but I have a great passion for my work. Over the years I have met many people who envy the fact that I love what I do. While they talk of early retirement, I'm hoping that when I'm in my 80s I'll still be designing jewelry.

**Maria Canale '81 (metalcrafts and jewelry)
New York City**

Mark Fragale

I always wanted to break into television, but I never dreamed I would have a chance. When I responded to a campus ad for students interested in working on RIT's *SportsZone*, Mark Fragale offered me that chance. (Many people don't know that Mark came to RIT from Hollywood. His expertise is derived from working on major shows such as *NYPD Blue* and *The West Wing*!)

The studio was an opportunity and a place for me to learn all the facets of television: from the excellent instruction on utilizing the equipment to understanding the process of editing tapes, writing scripts, reporting and eventually becoming the anchor.

My involvement at *SportsZone* led to a co-op at ESPN and after I graduated I was immediately offered a permanent position. Mark was kind enough to introduce me to two alumni: Jessica Gugino '00 (international business), ESPN senior director/affiliate marketing, and Sean Bratches '84 (business administration), ESPN executive

VP/sales and marketing. Both have been instrumental in helping me succeed at ESPN.

I was definitely ahead of the game when I arrived at ESPN, due to my previous experience at RIT. I was even chosen to travel with *SportsCenter's* "50 States in 50 Days Tour." I went on to win an Emmy Award as an associate producer for *SportsCenter*. I recently switched into the Event Marketing Department at ESPN and have been assigned to special events. My most recent project was helping to plan the ESPN 2007 Super Bowl party in Miami!

Mark continues to be a mentor to me, and sometimes I call him to ask an industry question or just to hear his enthusiasm regarding a new project. It really means a lot knowing it doesn't end after you graduate and receive your diploma.

What an incredible opportunity to have a complete studio on campus! It all started with RIT's *SportsZone*. I am so excited to see what the future may bring.

**Katie Linendoll '05 (information technology)
New York City**

William Gasser

William Gasser taught tax accounting for the pro photo program. He taught more than an understanding of tax law, however. He made us think about ethics, as it related to the subject, as well as to life in general. I have never had a teacher who was so passionate about "doing right" as opposed to "being successful."

The year was 1976, my last year at RIT, and Bill's also. Bill was dying of cancer. He had to struggle with pain on many days,

but he persevered because he loved his students. Bill's students loved him, too. I remember participating in a blood drive for Bill that collected the most pints ever at RIT.

Bill was not afraid of sharing his personal faith. This was most meaningful to me. Although I was not raised in the Roman Catholic Church, Bill's sharing his faith and personal ethics made me seriously re-examine my own Christian beliefs, which had been on the back burner for several years. My own faith was strengthened. I got back on track.

Shortly after graduation, I read of Bill Gasser's death. Only then did I learn about all the students he helped, both as a mentor, and with his personal finances. He still stands out as my most memorable professor who delivered the most relevant instruction of my studies at RIT.

**Jeff Brockman '76 (professional photography)
Richmond, Va.**

R. Roger Remington '58

R. Roger Remington '58 (art and design) was chair of the communication design department while I was a graduate student at RIT in the early '70s. Roger's broad knowledge of graphic design and his wry humor provided a creative environment for my colleagues and myself.

My master's project was based on a slide presentation titled "Print: Getting Together." I designed and produced it to generate cooperation between designers and printers. Roger Remington saw the marketing potential of the audio-visual presentation and encouraged me to present it to 3M



Greg Moss

because I had used their print-proofing material, Color Key, to produce some of the slides in the presentation. 3M offered to donate more than \$50,000 of Color Key products and a \$10,000 process camera to RIT if they could use the presentation to market Color Key.

Although I received a small payment for the presentation that I designed, wrote, and produced, the long-term value was the experience that helped launch my career as a designer and producer of multi-media presentations.

Thanks Roger! Your support was timely and inspired.

Darryl Degelman '73 (communication design)
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Greg Moss

I have never been the athletic type, so when I got to RIT and had to fill my P.E. requirements I was frantically looking for an easy way out. I thought I had one when I signed up for juggling.

As an art major I had lots of talented teachers but it is Greg Moss, the juggling teacher, who I think of most often. Not only is Greg a supremely talented juggler, he is a wonderfully kind man who had a way of connecting with students. He taught me how to juggle, gave me a job in the cage passing out basketballs and such, and became my friend.

With all I learned at RIT I went on to a successful career in advertising. That said, the three-ball juggle with the tennis variation (the “Moss Man” devotees know what I’m talking about) is a skill that gets



Jennifer Schneider

me real attention. You’d be surprised how often juggling can come into play in your everyday life.

Johnnie Byrne '91 (graphic design)
Shaker Heights, Ohio

Jennifer Schneider

I have a favorite RIT professor who not only made my life as a distance learner easier, she profoundly impacted my life in many other ways: Jennifer Wadhams Schneider.

I started my M.S. in 1999. I was a single, active duty soldier stationed in Alaska. Dr. Jen both challenged and delighted me throughout my coursework. She was a tough professor, so imagine my surprise when I flew to Rochester and met her in person! In my mind Dr. Jen was very large. In person she’s very petite – excluding, of course, her megawatt smile. I successfully defended my thesis with Dr. Jen’s keen guidance.

While I was working as an environmental inspector in Kuwait, Dr. Jen sent me an RIT alumni T-shirt. How cool is that? Back in America I’ve lived in several different states and Dr. Jen has always kept in touch. She even helped me get published in 2004; a goal I never knew I had!



Thea Leonard '02

like my mentor. I recently started teaching environmental science for Axia College of

Over time we’ve both gotten married and had children. However, I’m proud to say I’ve become very much



Al Lawson '47

University of Phoenix (online).

Thea Jung Leonard '02 (environmental, health and safety management)
Richmond Hill, Ga.

Al Lawson '47

With an eye for beauty and a sense of humor, Al Lawson '47 (printing) instilled a love of typography and history in me and many of my classmates. I came to RIT from a small family printing business and considered myself an accomplished “hand comp” (typesetter). Al taught me to express my creative talents to that craft. Until that time, I had simply set type in order to put ink on paper.

He described the history of the printing industry in a manner that made you feel you were there when the events occurred.

During my business years, I called on Al for advice. He never failed to give me his undivided attention and his advice was priceless. He even came to visit me for an entire day while on vacation (a four-hour drive) to discuss a business plan.

He was well-respected in the industry and traveled extensively as a speaker and as a booster of RIT. Other teachers made a mark on me, but Al Lawson stands out as the best of the best.

Ben Marcus '52 (printing)
Holyoke, Mass.

If you would like to tell us about a favorite RIT faculty or staff member, send e-mail to umagw-ww@rit.edu, or write to Kathy Lindsley, Rochester Institute of Technology, University News Services, 132 Lomb Memorial Drive, Rochester, NY 14623.

Business benefits when workers play



Alex Eggleston '00 (left) and Michael Svac want to unleash the inner athlete in everyone.

In his management positions at Xerox and General Electric (GE), Alex Eggleston '00 (EMBA) was continually charged with getting and keeping people engaged in their work.

It occurred to him that incorporating sports-based team competition with key workplace tasks could be a great way to improve employee morale and performance. When he read that fantasy football was costing employers millions of dollars each week in lost employee productivity, he knew he was onto something.

That idea led to First League LLC (www.FirstLeague.com), founded by Eggleston and his longtime friend, Michael Svac. The company slogan: "Play that Works."

"We take a team concept that everybody can understand and add a sports theme," explains Eggleston. "The structure gives every employee the opportunity to excel and make a significant work contribution – and have fun doing it."

Here's how it works: First League client companies determine their business objectives for the game – how the employee players will make points. Objectives could be increased sales calls, reduced in-process errors or improved product quality – "whatever activities the business deems important to their bottom line," says Eggleston. These become the basis of the customized score sheet.

"Coaches," selected by the business, require minimal training on the Web-based

tool – it's easy to navigate. The coaches "draft" their employee players. Teams, typically five to 10 people, compete in a league structure. "Games" are scheduled based on the length of the "season" as determined by the business.

"Other types of incentive programs tend to start off with a lot of enthusiasm, then taper off. With this, interest builds as the season progresses."

Alex Eggleston '00

Coaches have the responsibility for recording the points earned by each player, and a "commissioner" confirms that the information is accurate. Everything is done online. Participants can track the standings of teams and individuals as the season progresses.

"The league structure is very dynamic," says Eggleston. "Things can change from week to week, and teams have the ability to improve their scores and win games."

First League's patent-pending software keeps track of all aspects of the virtual leagues. "The tool does the work," says

Svac. "The client just plays the game. It can be customized any way they want."

"We tell our clients this is an 'engagement tool,'" Eggleston says. "Other types of incentive programs tend to start off with a lot of enthusiasm, then taper off. With this, interest builds as the season progresses."

Eggleston, a native of New Castle, Pa., and Pittsburgh native Svac met 20 years ago at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, where both were studying safety engineering. Both went to work at Xerox in Rochester on the same day. Job changes took them to different locations, but they often talked about going into business together.

Eggleston says he literally woke up one morning with the First League concept in his head. When he explained it to his friend, "I was on board in an hour," says Svac.

First League began to take shape in August 2005, when Eggleston and Svac began working with System Innovations in Charlotte, N.C., to develop the software. In 2006, the partners began selling the new service application at various conferences and trade shows, and last September First League won the 2006 Innovative Product Award at the annual international Motivation Show in Chicago with 15,000 in attendance.

In April of last year Eggleston left GE to pursue the new business full-time. Clients, who have used the program with groups ranging in size from 65 to 500 employees,

include divisions of Chevron, International Paper, GE, and Johnson & Johnson. Svac says the concept can work with any organization, including schools or service agencies.

"Our challenge is getting the word out," says Eggleston. "It's not easy starting a business, but we believe in this. In today's business world, where everything is a commodity, the only thing that differentiates you is your people. We're tapping into something – an innate competitiveness – that's already there. This could make a positive difference for a lot of people."