

THE DAVID RANKEN, JR.

LEGACY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

The Cable Guy | Meet Tom Jokerst

Except for band and biology, school didn't hold much interest for Tom Jokerst (Communications Electronics and Computer Technology 1969),

but the oscillating fan, the toaster and the television set on his family's farm in southern Illinois did. He was taking them apart and putting them back together at a very young age. His curiosity about electrical devices grew even deeper when he began playing guitar in high school and learned to manipulate amplifiers to modify his sound.

"It was pretty clear I wasn't cut out for the traditional college path," said Jokerst, who explored other technical colleges before deciding upon Ranken. "The technical training was excellent but I was more impressed with the instructors. They were seasoned professionals who had successful careers in the military or at Boeing and McDonnell Douglas. They reinforced in me what I learned at home: work hard, work with integrity and take pride in my work."

Jokerst said this philosophy has served him well both

» Scariest Safari Moment:

"I've been charged by a black rhino and a herd of buffalo but nothing beats riding in a taxi at night in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) at top speed while dodging donkey carts, tractor trailers, pedestrians, bicycles and other cars."

in his life and career. Just as he was graduating from Ranken, the electronics industry was moving from vacuum tubes to solid state devices. He had several

job offers but Jokerst chose to take the summer off to play guitar with The Jorrells, a soul band in Illinois. After a summer on the road, living off soda and Slim Jims, Jokerst went back to school and earned an associate's degree in electronics technology from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale in 1971.

It was time to get a real job and Jokerst received two job offers: one from General Telephone & Electronics - then the country's largest independent telephone company, and the other from Cable Information Systems (CIS) - a New York-based cable company that was building the cable system in Carbondale.

"I made my career choice literally by flipping a coin," he said. It landed on cable. Jokerst started out as a video engineer and became the system's regional chief technician. Over the next five years he helped the company build new cable systems, maintain existing systems, and design, construct and implement operations.

"I was on the ground floor of a new industry," he said. "I had plenty of room to explore my interest and skills."

After leaving CIS, Jokerst moved to Continental Cablevision where he was responsible for the technical integrity of cable systems in Illinois, Iowa and Missouri. By then, his innovative ideas and skills at implementing and deploying cutting edge broadband services were



Photo: Tom Jokerst, a graduate of Ranken's Communications Electronics and Computer Technology program.

"Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another." - G. K. Chesterson

The Cable Guy (cont.)

TOM JOKERST



well known within the cable industry and he was in demand as a consultant across the country. He was asked to serve a two-year stint as an executive-on-loan with Cable Television Laboratories in Boulder, Colorado, where he evaluated standards for the cable industry and competing approaches to digital video compression methods.

In 1994, Jokerst was asked to join Charter Communications, a St. Louis-based start-up, which, at the time, had no customers and no revenue.

"It was my job to create the structure and build from scratch the engineering, technical operations, purchasing and inventory management functions," said Jokerst, who helped the company become the fourth largest cable operator in the United States with 4.7 million customers in 25 states.

He was lured from Charter Communications by Broadbus Technologies in 2002 to help develop video-on-demand solutions for cable and telecommunications service providers. Jokerst would still be working today if it weren't for his eyesight. He has a retinal atrophy disorder that is defying diagnosis. All the doctors know is that the disease will likely rob Jokerst of his sight entirely.

Jokerst left the cable industry and now makes the most of the vision he has left by pursuing passions he

had put on hold. He is taking piano lessons in his St. Louis home from legendary organist Ernie Hayes. He is setting up a ham radio operation and traveling to Africa any chance he gets. Jokerst was a big game hunter, having gone on several safaris in Zimbabwe and Tanzania since the early 1990s. To take his shot, Jokerst had to position the scope of the gun at the outer edge of his eye where he still had a little vision remaining.

"I was never a trophy hunter. The most important thing you take away from the hunt is the experience, not the animal."

Jokerst gives Ranken credit for much of his good fortune and is the reason he has chosen to become a member of The Legacy Society, which recognizes alumni, friends and benefactors who have made a provision in their estate to support Ranken and its mission.

"I think it's important to give back," said Jokerst. "I don't have any children of my own to put through college so maybe I can help someone else's kids get through."

For more information about becoming a member of Ranken's Legacy Society contact Ken Meyer, director of planned giving at (314) 286-3649 or kameyer@ranken.edu.

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Golden Graduates

Each year the Ranken Alumni Association hosts a special event prior to the College's graduation ceremony. The annual Distinguished Alumni Awards are presented and our graduates from 75 (diamond), 50 (gold) and 25 (silver) years ago are not only recognized at the event but they lead the precession of students into the graduation ceremony and are introduced to the audience, opening the ceremony.



2011 Golden Graduates

Pictured: front row (L-R): Lucian Haney, Stephen Schniedermeier, Cedar Beel, Joe Trupiano, Robert Downey, Dave Meinell, Tom Heck and Bill Roth
back row (L-R): Tom Wood, Brian Coonrod, Joe Wibbenmeyer, David McKee and Jeff Scott. Tom Wood and Jeff Scott were the 2011 Distinguished Alumni Award winners.



2010 Golden Graduates

Pictured: front row (L-R): David Meier, Charlie Doolin, Victor Heislin, William Snodgrass and Bob Barham.
back row (L-R): Robert Muehling, David Brod, Stephen Jagosh, William Birdsell and Clarence Schneider.

David Ranken, Jr. Legacy Society

Add YOUR Name to our list of members:

- » William Baiotto, PMT '48 †
- » Howard & Judi Bolton
- » Lynn & Ruth Burgess, IEE '58
- » Marvin † and Barbara Darnell, AMT '58
- » Charles Disbrow, Trustee
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- » Ben Ernst, President (retired)
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- » Earl † & Myrtle Walker, Trustee
- » Russell Webbink, IEE '48 †
- » Tim & Carmen Willard, Vice President for Development (retired)

† Deceased * New member

Planned Giving Advisory Board



Special Thanks to the Planned Giving Advisory Board!

Members of the Planned Giving Advisory Board attended the fall meeting on September 28, 2011.

Pictured L-R: Ken Meyer, Director of Planned Giving, Ranken Technical College; Jayne Corley, Corley Law Firm; Charles Disbrow, Ranken Technical College Trustee; John R. Malesevich, Investment Representative, Edward Jones; Doug Mueller, CPA/PFS, Partner, Anders Minkler & Diehl LLP. Not Pictured: William S. Comfort, Sr., Financial Representative, Maher, Rosenheim & Comfort, L.L.C.; Angela Pearson, CTFA, Vice President, Senior Trust Officer, M&I Wealth Management

The Planned Giving Advisory Board provides advice in the area of wills and bequests, gift annuities, life insurance gifts and other deferred giving opportunities for alumni and friends of the College.



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Questions? Please contact Alumni Relations at (314) 286-4895.

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