

Nancy Preis

**Nancy Preis, Ph.D.
CEO, Sensor Systems, LLC**

Nancy is living proof that a liberal arts degree is not a dead end, but a route to an interesting life. Born in Toledo, Nancy grew up in Old Orchard, attended Toledo public schools, and never got into serious trouble. After graduating magna cum laude from UT with a major in English literature and minimal marketable skills, Nancy worked as a secretary at a hospital in Ann Arbor, MI. At the conclusion of the obligatory youth hostel trip to Europe, Nancy enrolled in the MBA program at UT where she quickly was asked to teach introductory accounting. Conquering her almost complete lack of knowledge of accounting and her stage fright, Nancy decided to pursue a Ph.D. in accounting because teaching was so much fun. During her time at UT, she taught both undergraduates and law students and served in the College of Business Dean's office as an Assistant Dean.

At the University of Michigan, she continued to teach while enrolled in the doctoral program. Emerging into the academic job market in 1979, she accepted an assistant (later associate) professorship at Columbia University Graduate School of Business, New York. She was responsible for teaching the vast numbers of investment bankers unleashed on the world during the 1980's, but as she got no share of their vast fortunes, she takes no responsibility for their indictable acts. While handling a full load at Columbia, she was hired to teach in the credit training program at Chemical Bank, Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs, and a number of investments banks which are no longer in existence (also not her fault).

During a counseling session with a Columbia MBA, Nancy had a life-changing epiphany that investment banking paid substantially more money than teaching and might even be easier. She subsequently was a vice president with the New York office of a British merchant bank, Kleinwort Benson, Ltd. She worked on middle market leveraged transactions, ran the company's analytical team, and provided technical assistance to the senior lending group and equity investment groups. Turns out the hours were worse than teaching, but the work was interesting.

In 1991, Nancy answered a call from an old friend who needed help with an invest-

ment. Bravely leaving the center of the universe in New York, Nancy took off for Florida and the city made famous as God's waiting room. Assuming responsibility for a company with 5 employees and less than \$200,000 in revenues, she built her partner's investment to 170 employees and \$15 million in revenues, made 4 acquisitions of other companies, and continues to run the businesses as Chief Executive officer. The largest, Sensor Systems, LLC, in St. Petersburg, FL, designs and manufactures potentiometers, pressure transducers, and encoders for military, aircraft, and industrial specialty markets. For example, Sensor's products are used in the camera positioning equipment on the Mars Rovers, nose wheel steering in commercial and military aircraft, the guidance systems of missiles, and the Post Office's sorting equipment.

The other two companies are specialty electric motor companies. Motor Magnetics Inc., St. Petersburg designs and builds a wide variety of electric motors primarily for the aircraft market. Fisher Electric Technology, also located in St. Petersburg, makes high power density, high performance electric motors and generators, typically for transportation applications. Nancy learned to read drawings, quote engineering work and production, build product and super-vice manufacturing, and most importantly, how to hire and retain competent engineers.

The liberal arts education was not for naught, as she is vitally interested in the arts and in service. She is a founding trustee and now manages the Baumker Charitable Foundation, which focuses on Northwest Ohio. She serves as volunteer Chief Financial Officer, board member, and factotum for the St. Petersburg Opera Co. and is a board member of The Florida Orchestra. She originated The Art of Healing, a fundraiser for Bayfront Health Foundation. After introducing the Southeast Asian Children's Mercy Fund to Defiance College's McMaster School for Advancing Humanity, Nancy travelled to Cambodia with the college group. She is the founder of the Speaker's Bureau for Sunken Gardens, where she continues to give guided tours. In addition, she volunteers for several other arts organizations and founded Baywood Arts Management, which represents singers and musicians. One of her most rewarding activities has been commissioning two musical compositions in honor of her late mother.

Nancy lives happily in the St. Petersburg area, which no longer deserves its reputation as being the home of the newly-wed and the nearly dead and is now one of the South's most vital art communities.