

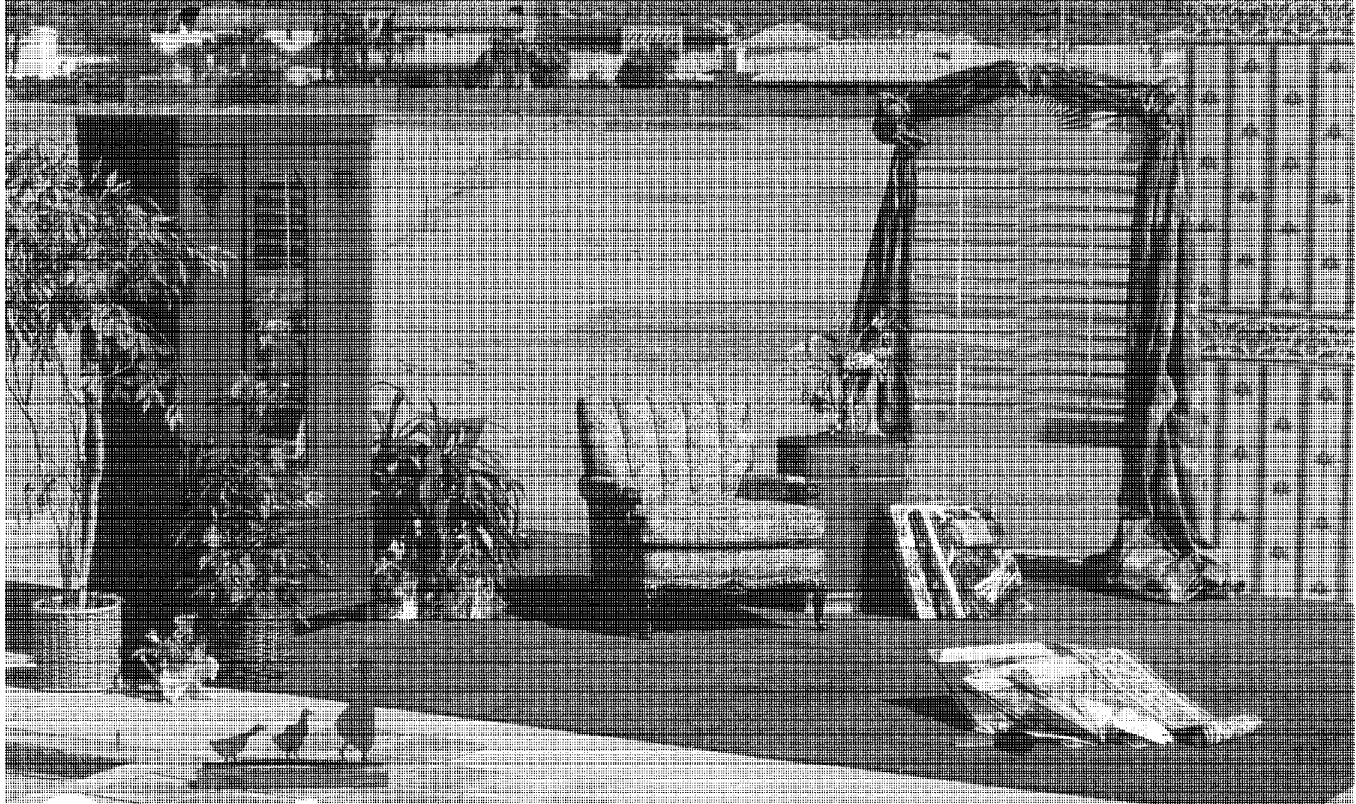
Ahwatukee Foothills • Chandler • Gilbert • Mesa

TEMPE

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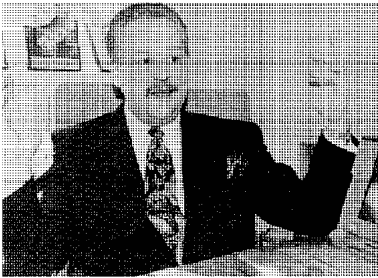
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VISIONARY



"I see things completed that never existed and I remember them... I remember the future," says Lon S. Safko, President and Founder of Safko International, a Tempe-based company. Safko may seem like a science fiction character, however, this computer engineer is a visionary who has created technology that is changing the quality of life for the millions of disabled Americans. Safko has invented a sophisticated and user friendly computer system that enables the disabled to master today's latest technological devices and the new workplace.

Safko's mission started in the winter of 1985, when a salesman visited him at the Apple Computer Store where he was general manager and told him this moving story. Leon, an engineer in his early 40s, had a close friend who was a quadriplegic, completely paralyzed from the neck down. It was Thanksgiving and Leon felt that his friend should not be alone. He invited him to spend the holiday with him and his family. At the end of the Thanksgiving day, Leon was pushing his friend's wheelchair to his van, when the wheelchair Leon was lowering down his front

steps became unbalanced. Leon held firmly to the chair so that his friend would not fall down the concrete steps. In doing so, Leon lost his balance and fell over the top of the wheelchair, breaking his own neck and instantly becoming a quadriplegic himself. When Lon Safko heard of this tragic and ironic accident, he said, "I'll create a system to help Leon."

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VISIONARY

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Safko began his design of the world's first voice activated environmental control system for the disabled in December 1985. By the following February, he had completed the SoftVoice Computer System for the physically disabled. This vision saved a patient's life at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Yakima, Washington.

Safko has dedicated the last decade to the research and development of the *SenSei* System, the most thorough computer system in existence for the over 43 million disabled in the U.S. Safko says, "My typical customer is someone who used to spend his or her days helpless and bored. Consider Elizabeth Jimenez, who is the victim of multiple sclerosis. She used to pass her entire day in front of the TV watching the same channel. Now she uses the *SenSei* computer by a motion of her head and a puff into a tube at her mouth to control 256 electronic devices in her home." (*SenSei* means master or teacher in Japanese)

The most advanced computer technology can be applied on the *SenSei* System, which operates on Apple Macintosh equipment. Safko asserts, "This computer system is providing a link between the disabled and the high tech world." *SenSei* enables the

"Disabled people aren't handicapped. They have a disabling condition, but they're still out there doing everything that everybody else does."

disabled to control tasks most of us take for granted, such as turning on lights and appliances, controlling heat and air conditioning, making and receiving telephone calls and operating remotes for stereos and VCRs. Safko adds, "Our customers can also control bed and emergency call systems."

Safko has created a system that will improve the quality of life for the millions of disabled Americans and has given more freedom to family members and other providers who have heretofore been responsible for their continuous care. Also, it helps the disabled to have better opportunities in the job market.

Helped by Safko's *SenSei* System, Leon was able

to regain his independence and become re-employed as a mechanical engineer. Safko declares "Disabled people aren't handicapped. They have a disabling condition, but they're still out there doing everything that everybody else does."

Safko was raised in Ossining, New York and completed his education in the New York metropolitan area. Safko, who is a selected member of the American Mensa Society (Top 2% High IQ Society), began his entrepreneurial career in 1982 by forming a company called Civil Consultants which provided the world's first computer applications for civil engineers. In 1985, he sold the company and became general sales manager for two Apple Computer retail outlets. Safko International, Inc. was founded in March 1986. During 1987, Mr. Safko undertook a brief sojourn from his company to design an artificial intelligent computer system for the U.S. Department of Energy and the Westinghouse Electric Company, on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Washington State. Shortly after the completion of this project, Westinghouse Electric Company offered Safko support for research to develop the SenSei Computer System.

