Democrat and Chronicle Democrat and Chronicle 05/18/2014 A: ROC (0-rocbrd_dandc_05-18-2014_b_e_017.pdf.0)
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Kodak scientist wins 'Inventor of the Year'

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Donald S. Rimai was named Distinguished Inventor of the Year at ceremonies held at the Rochester Museum & Science Center.

The award has been given each year since 1973 by the Rochester Intellectual Property Law Association.

Donald Ramai

It recognizes an individual or team of individuals from the local community for their contributions to the useful arts.

Rimai received 111 patents during a 34-year career at Eastman Kodak Co. His innovations in the field of particle adhesion helped facilitate the transfer of smaller particle sizes at commercially acceptable printing speeds and improved uniform gloss applications to images.

"In the technology development process, you have to question your assumptions," Rimai told the crowd of about 100 people at the event. "Each discovery only leads to more questions. Each scientific advancement creates opportunities for the next advancement."

Rimai described his incremental progress over years of studying and improving the electrophotographic process. Most of his successes came from looking at the inherent problems from a different perspective.

"We couldn't lower the water, so we had to raise the bridge," he said.

Rimai was one of three finalists for the award, each of whom gave a formal presentation about their work.

One finalist, **Joseph A. Manico** of Kodak Alaris, has received more than 200 patents during a career that started at Kodak in 1975. His innovations have covered a wide variety of technologies, including digital imaging, film and digital cameras, digital displays and printers.

Manico said other inventors need to be able to describe their work to a non-technical audience. "You need to be able to explain what you're trying to accomplish early in the process," he said. "Few people with a lot of money have a great imagination."

The other finalist was **Terry Wright** of ClearCove Systems, who pioneered a number of improvements in wastewater treatment. He designed systems that not only reduce the amount of energy used in the process but also recapture more natural gas from the treatment process. This can be used to power electrical systems, and also provide municipalities with a source of revenue.

"We started off as a wastewater treatment company, but now we're an energy company," Wright said.

He said that there has been very little advancement in that field over the last 100 years. "It's ripe for innovation," Wright quipped, "for anyone who wants to get their hands dirty."

"Nobody grows up wanting to be a wastewater engineer," Wright said. "You just sort of end up there."

The other nominees:

Drs. Philip J. Fay and Hironao Wakabayashi, researchers at the University of Rochester, have worked for more than 20 years in the development of Factor VIII proteins. Their work has been critical in the development of effective treatments for hemophilia A patients.

Donald W. Hammen invented a valuable technique for generating "perfect" output stacks from scanning devices even when documents are of different sizes, shapes and weight. The innovation is used in several of Kodak Alaris' product lines.

Dr. Mahin Maines discovered an unprecedented approach to mimic insulin action and increase glucose uptake independent of insulin for the treatment of diabetes. She joined UR in 1985 as the first female professor in the basic science departments in the medical school.

Previous award winners included Steve Sasson, inventor of the digital camera; Ching Tang, who pioneered organic light-emitting diodes; and Ernest Wildhaber, a leading authority on gearing mechanisms.

Sean Lahman's column appears in print on Sundays. Follow him on Twitter @SeanLahman, or reach him at (585) 258-2369.