

'Bonbagel' Just The Latest Adventure For Orleans' Shabazian

by Ellen C. Chahey

Mike Shabazian of Orleans was born and raised in Manhattan, so he has definite opinions about bagels.

"I get offended by bagels that are not sliced evenly, when one half is a chip and the other half is a loaf of bread," he said.

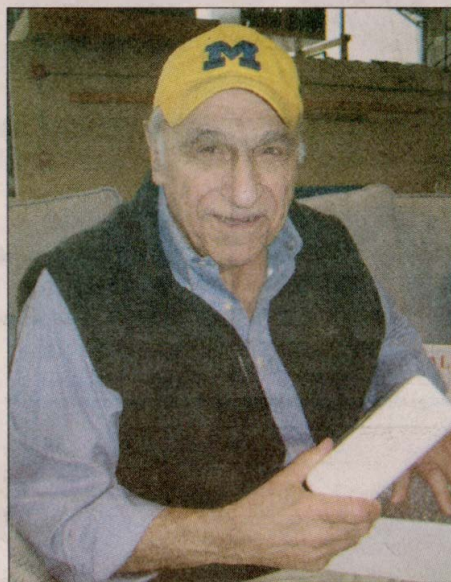
So he invented and patented the Bonbagel, a new kind of bagel slicer, one that will be sold on Amazon starting in September.

That's just like Shabazian, who describes himself as a "type triple-A." In his so-called retirement, he runs a "non-geek-speak" tech support service called PCMAC Assist, and also a consulting service for small- to medium-size businesses.

His pre-retirement life was no less full of big commitments and achievements. He was a captain in the United States Air Force, where he learned to fly and then became a flight instructor. He earned an MBA at California State University at Sacramento. He still has a pilot's license and his own plane and has more than 1,000 "Angel Flight" medical transports to his credit.

After his Air Force service, he moved on to a long career with IBM. He started in sales but wound up serving, around 1980, on what he called "a top secret skunk works" that was creating the original PC.

The skunk works was so clandestine that he had to have, in his home, a locked office in which there was a private telephone line. One day, when his mother was visiting, he needed to go out and forgot to lock



Mike Shabazian. ELLEN C. CHAHEY PHOTO

the door. The private line rang, and Mom answered it.

A man with a vaguely European accent asked for Shabazian and, using code, said that he wanted to talk about the "acorn." Sensing that her son was involved in something he wasn't telling her about, she confronted him, when he got home, with a blunt question: "Are you a spy?"

He credits his parents with his way of being in the world.

"My mother was a tough, get-it-done type and a good Armenian cook. My father was an elegant, sophisticated philosopher who taught me chess when I was 5 and

took me to the New York Public Library and dabbled in woodworking."

After he left IBM, Shabazian became president of the US division of Computerland, a \$1.2 billion computer retail chain, and then went on to senior-level positions with several other tech firms. He also became an associate professor at the University of New Hampshire, where he taught information technology, production management and entrepreneurship to undergrads and graduate students.

Shabazian loves to teach, and that's why he enjoys his present tech support service so much. His clientele, mostly seniors, "often tell me, 'you're so patient,' and I like to bring some serenity and tranquility to [their interaction with technology]. I love helping seniors!"

"I'm a salesman," he says of his educational philosophy, "and [in that job] you learn to listen. Also [as a teacher] you learn to say, 'I don't know the answer to that; I'll get back to you.' To BS your students cuts down on your effectiveness as an educator."

It seems almost silly to ask Mike Shabazian what he does in his spare time. Can he possibly have any?

But the answer is that he works with wood. He shows photos of beautiful, one-of-a-kind clocks, backgammon sets and cribbage boards. He built all the cabinetry in his house and also constructs his own design of Adirondack chairs and footstools to go with them. His wife paints some

designs that he makes into jigsaw puzzles. All of his woodwork is reserved for friends and family.

Asked if his connection with technology makes him a reader of science fiction, he said no. "I enjoy watching the History Channel" instead, he said.

He also likes to cycle on the bike trail to Wellfleet, and while his wife and the rest of his family love the beach, he's more of a lake person himself. They moved here in 2015 because his wife, Elaine, who grew up in Rumford, R.I., came to the Cape often as a child and loved it.

So, in his life in Orleans, Shabazian has "a great wife, a great life, a great community, and great customers," he said. He can even get two favorite foods here: stuffed grape leaves at Friends, and — naturally — bagels at Jo Mama's.

Which brings us back to the Bonbagel bagel slicer.

Its two-piece design accommodates bagels of varying thickness and can even re-slice the slices so you get four slices out of one bagel ("one quarter of the calories!" Shabazian boasts). Except for the imported blade, it will be made in the USA (in Providence) and is very safe because that blade is deeply embedded in one of the slicer's halves.

Shabazian's big challenge now?

"My wife won't use it," he said with a grin. "She says she'd rather cut them herself."