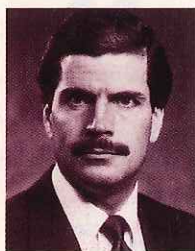


Fast Forward

- **A tape for all reasons**
Consumer research indicates that more than 88% of U.S. households now have a VCR, and that almost 60% of that group record programs to watch later. But specific uses vary, and the time seems right for a little niche marketing. This month, 3M's Scotch Select Series, brainchild of accomplished marketer **Lee Kennedy**, hits the shelves, offering an eight-hour, high-grade "collections" tape, specially coated for archiving, as well as one designed for taping (the soaps?) over and over, and a durable kid-friendly tape packaged with stickers and other

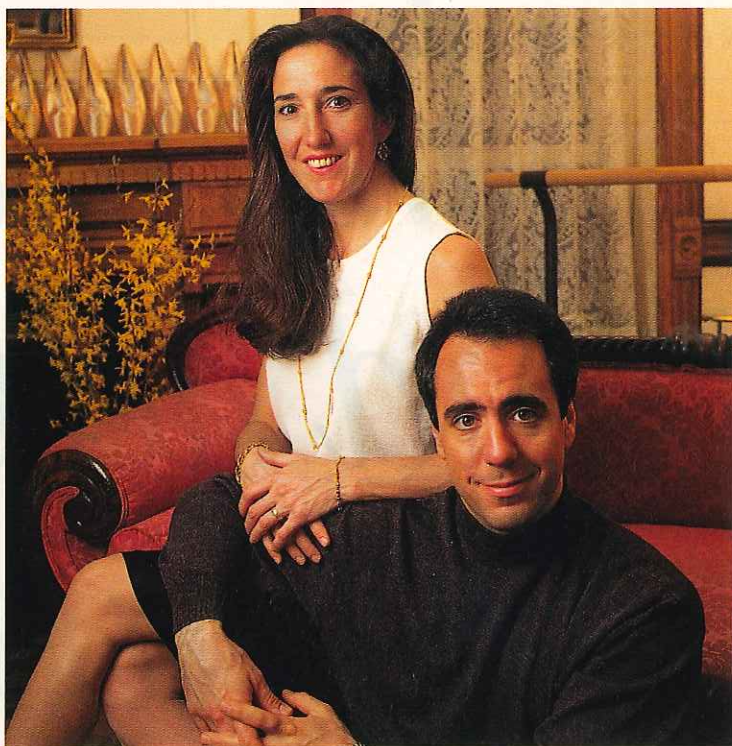


Kennedy: A triumph of niche marketing?

"fun features." No word yet from the networks on improved programming....

- **Achtung, Bill Gates** As a schoolboy, **Marco Borries** made his first profits selling handmade Christmas ornaments. At 16, he founded a software company. Now, the 26-

Making Pointes for Profit



Pas de deux: Eliza and John Minden have perfected the art of the ballet shoe.

NEW YORK

Eliza and John Minden are putting a new spin on an exotic niche created in the 1830s, when ballerina Marie Taglioni rose to dance on the tips of her toes — reinventing ballet, and making the perfect "pointe" shoe the object of every female ballet dancer's desire.

For more than 150 years, cobblers accommodated ballerinas with pink satin-covered constructions of burlap, newspaper and glue — and dancers went to great lengths to get them to fit, pounding them with hammers and dipping them in shellac, cracking the shanks by slamming them in doors. After all of these time-consuming modifications, a typical shoe would last as little as 20 minutes.

Then, in the mid-1980s, Eliza Minden,

a Yale graduate and amateur ballet dancer, had the idea of making pointe shoes out of resilient, athletic-shoe material. "After all the advances in athletic gear," she says, "it was amazing that nothing had been done with a ballet dancer's most important

Their clients include dancers from the Joffrey Ballet and the Kirov.

piece of equipment." Minden and her husband, John, discussed dancers' needs with sports-medicine specialists and such renowned dance coaches as David Howard. Minden then took what they had learned and added all that she had gleaned from working at her family's manufacturing plant in Connecticut.

Eventually she began taking her sam-

ples to dance studios, quickly creating a demand for the durable, comfortable shoes. In 1993, Minden's husband, John, officially joined the business and they launched Gaynor-Minden, Inc. (adding her family name). From a New York showroom, they now equip an international clientele, including ballerinas from the Joffrey Ballet,

the Dance Theatre of Harlem, even the Kirov. Big ensembles find the product cuts pointe-shoe bills, which can run to a half-million dollars a year.

"They are the wave of the future," says Howard. "The old shoes are going the way of vinyl records."

— Stephanie Woodard



Eugene Tsui's structures borrow nature's designs.

Arthropod Architect

EMERYVILLE, CALIF.

The way architect Eugene Tsui sees it, if you want to build a house that will last, forget about the post-and-beam, cut-and-butt approach — and look no further than your own backyard for the beginnings of a blueprint. "Nature is the supreme architect," says Tsui, head of Tsui Design and Research, Inc., of Emeryville, Calif.

Take the Berkeley house (in photo) he designed for his parents. Inspired by the shape of the tardigrade, a microscopic arthropod that lives in damp moss, the house features nary a right angle. Tsui claims that the house can withstand any earthquake, flood or fire that California can throw at it.

With four professional degrees in architecture and city and regional planning, Tsui developed his approach over 20 years of studying biology, zoology, entomology and structural engineering. Nine of his

structures stand today. Another, for the New Watsu School of Massage in Middleton, Calif., is under construction.

A multimedia exhibition of his work — 20 projects ranging from chairs to plans for elaborate fantasy structures — will be at NASA's Ames Research Center in Mountain View, Calif., through mid-September. Later this year, his book, *Evolutionary Architecture*, will be published.

But what is it actually like to live in an organism-inspired dwelling? When the owner of one of Tsui's houses in Oregon moved in, he was a lawyer. Three months later, he decided to become an artist, crediting Tsui's design for giving him the courage for the career change. "This approach to architecture," says Tsui, "is more life-enhancing for people."

— Montith M. Illingworth

year-old's Star Division GmbH, based in Hanover, Germany, is neck and neck with Microsoft, according to the *International Herald-Tribune*. Borries's Star Writer is the second-best-selling Windows word processing program in Germany and the best-seller for DOS and OS/2. Payoff innovation: Several of the package's applications — a word processor, spreadsheet calculator and graphics package — share as much as 60% of their "source codes," saving space on a computer's hard disk and random-access memory. The software has caught the attention of IBM, which in March agreed to sell it worldwide under the name IBM Star Office.



Wold: Staying urban

- Downtown Diversifier**
When most of her competition moved out to the suburbs, **Robin Wold**, 43, toughed it out in downtown Chicago. Now she's expanded her 15-year-old Robin's Food Distribution (RFD), the largest woman-owned food-service distributor in the United States, to include subcontracted food deliveries. This, along with new contracts with Amtrak and the