

# Terahertz Pioneers

## *A Series of Interviews With Significant Contributors to Terahertz Science and Technology*

**A**S A TRIBUTE to individuals who have contributed significantly, and over many years, to the terahertz community, and as a guide and inspiration for those who are just beginning their professional association with this field of study, these TRANSACTIONS have included, on a regular basis, a series of biographical interviews with technical researchers who have appreciably impacted the THz community in a positive manner. In order to go beyond a strict technical review and to take better advantage of the information and commentary only available through a direct discussion, these articles take on a less formal style than the research articles that can be found within the remaining pages of the TRANSACTIONS. The Editor-in-Chief has taken some leeway in this regard, for the benefit of communicating more fully the character, experiences, and historic circumstances that have shaped our community and set the directions for our collective research. As a further means of assuring that the true flavor and circumstances of the contributions are expressed in the text, all of the articles are compiled after a face-to-face interview. The final text is shared with, and often helped considerably, by comments from the subject of the article. The Editor-in-Chief, with the support of the IEEE MTT Administrative Committee, has chosen to incorporate these biographical articles within the more formal technical journal because of the diversity of disciplines that make up the THz community and the prior absence of a single unifying publication with sufficient outreach to extend across the whole of the RF and optical THz disciplines. The Editor-in-Chief hopes you will enjoy the short diversion of reading these articles as much as he himself enjoys the process of composing them.

We again ask for a bit of indulgence this month, in that our THz Pioneer, Professor Michael Bass,<sup>1</sup> has not spent a career in the pursuit of THz science or applications. However, his thesis work on optical rectification under Peter Franken<sup>2</sup> remains, after more than 50 years, the most relevant precursor work on THz generation through dual-source optical mixing,<sup>3</sup> direct optical mixing with excited crystal vibrational modes,<sup>4</sup> and via frequency component mixing in ultrafast optical pulses passing through nonlinear crystals.<sup>5</sup> Dr. Bass was recently honored with the R. W. Wood prize for this latter development, which although it predated the technical hardware necessary to perform experimental verification, set the theoretical groundwork for what was to become an explosion of interest some 30 years later.<sup>6,7</sup>

Please join with me in reading about Dr. Bass's career in optics, and his various interests in laser applications. I am sure we can all learn something new from this pioneer of THz generation.

PETER SIEGEL, *Editor-in-Chief*

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<sup>1</sup>I met with Michael Bass during a short lull in graduation exercises on the campus of University of Central Florida—now the second largest university by enrollment in the United States. Our discussion included many topics of general interest in addition to those contained in this short article. As it turned out, we had much that was common in our backgrounds, despite the gap of one generation. Michael grew up in the “Atoms for Peace” movement, whereas my own experience was in the *heat* of the Cold War. However, we both spent our youth in NYC, were the only ones in our families to have an interest in science, share an enjoyment of science history, and appreciate the twists and turns that often accompany, and in fact dictate, the choices that ultimately sum up a career.

<sup>2</sup>Peter Franken passed away in March 1999, after a distinguished career at the University of Michigan's Randall Laboratory, and as head of the University of Arizona's Optical Sciences Center from 1973 to 1983. Franken served as President of the Optical Society of America in 1977, and is referred to by the Optical Society of America as a father of nonlinear optics (<http://www.osa.org/en-us/history/biographies/peter-franken/>).

<sup>3</sup>Fritz Zernike and Paul Berman working at Perkin Elmer Corporation, CT, USA, reported 3 THz signals from two neodymium glass lasers beat together in a quartz crystal in 1965: F. Zernike, Jr. and P. Berman, “Generation of far infrared as a difference frequency,” *Physical Rev. Lett.*, vol. 15, no. 26, pp. 999–1002, Dec. 1965. They were working from Bass's and Franken's experiments at dc: M. Bass, J. F. Ward, G. Weinreich, and P. A. Franken, “Optical rectification,” *Physical Rev. Lett.*, vol. 9, no. 11, pp. 446–448, 1962.

<sup>4</sup>Elegantly demonstrated by Richard Pantell at Stanford in 1974, who very early on, made a fully tunable THz generator from 300 GHz to 3 THz using LiNbO<sub>3</sub>: M.A. Piestrup, R.N. Fleming, and R.H. Pantell, “Continuously tunable submillimeter wave source,” *Appl. Phys. Lett.*, vol. 26, no. 8, pp. 418–421, Apr. 1975.

<sup>5</sup>Although the pioneering papers on THz generation through the interaction of fast pulse optical lasers and nonlinear crystals, did not directly reference Bass's and Franken's papers on optical rectification, they do indeed owe much of the framework for their observed nonlinear optical effects to these pioneering researchers. (e.g., J. R. Morris and Y. R. Shen, “Far-infrared generation by picosecond pulses in electro-optical materials,” *Opt. Commun.*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 81–84, 1971, and K. H. Yang, P. L. Richards, and Y. R. Shen, “Generation of far-infrared radiation by picosecond light pulses in LiNbO<sub>3</sub>,” *Appl. Phys. Lett.*, vol. 19, pp. 320–322, Nov. 1971, and D. H. Auston, K. P. Cheung, and P. R. Smith, “Picosecond photoconducting Hertzian dipoles,” *Appl. Phys. Lett.*, vol. 45, pp. 284–286, 1984).

<sup>6</sup>See, for example, other articles in this series: P. H. Siegel, “THz Pioneer David H. Auston—Working collectively to combine complementary knowledge, perspectives and talents,” *IEEE Trans. THz Sci. Technol.*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 5–8, Sep. 2011, and P. H. Siegel, “THz Pioneer Daniel R. Grischkowsky—We search for truth and beauty,” *IEEE Trans. THz Sci. Technol.*, vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 377–382, Jul. 2012, or Ch. Fattinger and D. Grischkowsky, “THz beams,” *Appl. Phys. Lett.*, vol. 54, pp. 490–492, 1989, and D. H. Auston and M.C. Nuss, “Electrooptic generation and detection of femtosecond electrical transients,” *IEEE J. Quantum Electron.*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 184–197, Feb. 1988.

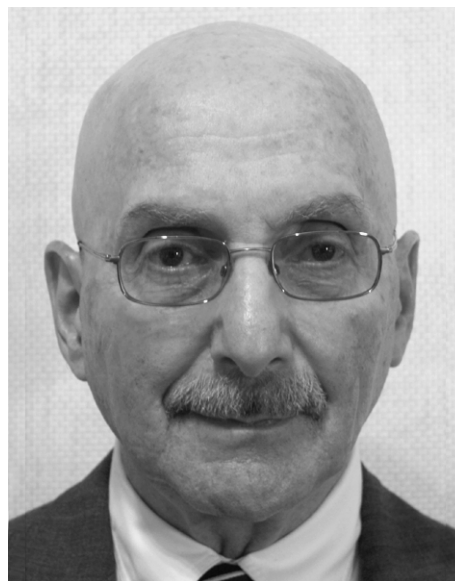
<sup>7</sup>Konstantin Vodopyanov at University of Central Florida, was one of the first to publicly credit Michael Bass and his co-authors for laying the foundations of THz generation through short pulse electro-optical techniques: K. Vodopyanov, J. Schaar, X. Yu, M. Fejer, J. Harris, V. Kozlov, Y.-S. Lee, G. Imeshev, M. Fermann, D. Bliss, and C. Lynch, “Tunable THz source based on quasi-phase-matched GaAs,” presented at the *2nd EPS-QEOD Europhoton Conf.*, Pisa, Italy, Sep. 10–15, 2006, and K. L. Vodopyanov, J. E. Schaar, P. S. Kuo, M. M. Fejer, A. Lin, J. S. Harris, V. G. Kozlov, W. C. Hurlbut, D. Bliss, and C. Lynch, “THz source based on resonantly-enhanced difference frequency generation in periodically-inverted GaAs,” presented at the *33rd Int. Conf. on IRWWM-THz 2008*, Pasadena, CA, USA, paper M4K5.1383, Sep. 15–19, 2008.

# Terahertz Pioneer: Michael Bass

## *“The THz Light at the End of the Tunnel”*

Peter H. Siegel, *Fellow, IEEE*

**A**S A YOUNG MAN growing up in the Bronx, NY, in the 1950s, Michael Bass<sup>1</sup> was able to take full advantage of the museums and other unique multi-cultural offerings of a major metropolis. The extensive New York City subway system cost a nickel a ride, and the trip from the Bronx to the American Museum of Natural History on 83rd street in Manhattan, took less than an hour. Michael found himself visiting the museum frequently and developing an early interest in science. While attending the prestigious Stuyvesant High School,<sup>2</sup> a public secondary school then on 15th street in Manhattan—which boasts four Nobel laureates as alumni—Michael remembers being very impressed by an exhibit at the United Nations building in NYC in the spring of 1955. The exhibit was part of the U.S. “Atoms for Peace” initiative.<sup>3</sup> There he saw a functional cloud chamber,<sup>4</sup> which focused his science interests on physics. In 1956 he enrolled in Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University) in Pittsburgh, PA, to formalize a career in science.



MICHAEL BASS

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<sup>1</sup>I met with Michael Bass during a short lull in graduation exercises on the campus of University of Central Florida—now the second largest university by enrollment in the United States. Our discussion included many topics of general interest in addition to those contained in this short article. As it turned out, we had much that was common in our backgrounds, despite the gap of one generation. Michael grew up in the “Atoms for Peace” movement, whereas my own experience was in the *heat* of the Cold War. However, we both spent our youth in NYC, were the only ones in our families to have an interest in science, share an enjoyment of science history, and appreciate the twists and turns that often accompany, and in fact dictate, the choices that ultimately sum up a career.

<sup>2</sup>Established in 1904, Stuyvesant High School was open to all NYC (New York City) residents through an examination process. Originally an all-boys school, it became co-ed in 1969, and moved to its current location in Battery Park City (Chambers Street, Manhattan) in 1992 ([www.stuy.edu](http://www.stuy.edu)).

<sup>3</sup>U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower initiated this international program with a speech at the United Nations Headquarters General Assembly on December 8, 1953, entitled, “Atoms for Peace.” This resulted in several widely publicized international United Nations conferences on the peaceful uses of atomic energy and a huge worldwide exhibition in Geneva, Switzerland in 1958. *Reference:* Richard Hewlett and Jack Holl, “Atoms for Peace and War 1953–1961”, Eisenhower and the Atomic Energy Commission, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, c. 1989, 690 pages.

<sup>4</sup>Invented in 1911 by Scottish physicist Charles Wilson, the cloud chamber was filled with saturated water vapor (later alcohol) which condenses on the ions that travel through it. Wilson received the 1927 Nobel Prize in Physics (along with Arthur Compton) for this invention. ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cloud\\_chamber](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cloud_chamber)).

At Carnegie, Bass happened to hear a seminar on interference (or crossover) spectroscopy [1] by renowned University of Michigan physicist, Peter A. Franken [2].<sup>5</sup> Bass had the courage to approach Franken after the lecture, and they immediately hit it off. After graduating from Carnegie, Bass was offered a graduate student stipend at University of Michigan, and he proceeded to Ann Arbor, MI, in the fall of 1960 where Franken was advisor to first year graduate students.

After acing some tough classes in his first semester at Michigan, Bass was told by Franken to start looking around for something that might serve as his thesis project. Bass bumped into one of Franken’s students, Alan Hill,<sup>6</sup> then only a junior in college, who was working with the newly available optical masers. Alan was using a commercial red ruby laser ( $\approx 6943 \text{ \AA}$ ) focused onto a quartz crystal to try and generate

<sup>5</sup>Peter A. Franken is referred to as the father of nonlinear optics by the Optical Society of America. He was best known for his groundbreaking work on optical harmonic generation in crystals, which of course would lead to the work on optical rectification that is the basis of our THz Pioneer article. He left the University of Michigan to head the University of Arizona’s Optical Science Center in 1973, and he passed away in 1999.

<sup>6</sup>After a long career at Phillips Laboratories, Kirkland Air Force Base, Albuquerque, NM, USA, Alan founded Plasmatronics, Inc. He maintained a close affiliation with Texas A & M University and has a nice presentation about his work with Peter Franken and Michael Bass at Michigan entitled, “*Memories of the Discovery of Optical Harmonics, Peter Franken, and some thoughts about the future of nonlinear optics,*” presented at the Nonlinear Optics International Conference: East–West reunion in September 2011 (*available from the author*).

the second harmonic at 3472 Å (ultraviolet) through the crystal nonlinear susceptibility  $\chi$ ; the nonlinear dependence of polarization,  $P$ , on field strength,  $E$ ;  $P = \chi E(1 + \alpha_1 E + \alpha_2 E^2 + \dots)$ .

When  $E$  is a sinusoidal function, the polarization will contain components that are dependent on the fundamental, as well as the higher harmonics generated by the interaction of the field with the atoms in the crystal. Crystal quartz is particularly useful for this experiment because of its birefringent properties, which can be used to provide different harmonic responses depending on the orientation of the impinging electric field. In the Franken and Hill experiment, a simple prism was used to spatially separate out the red and UV signals, which were then focused onto a photographic film. The first observation of second harmonic generation through this groundbreaking experiment in nonlinear electro-optics, which had to be recorded from a single pulse of the ruby laser,<sup>7</sup> was published in 1961 [2]. For reference, the second harmonic conversion efficiency was approximately  $10^{-8}$  [3].

It had been only a year since Ted Maiman had produced the first optical maser [4], and Bass was fascinated by a device that could put out “that much light.” He told Franken he would work on anything that utilized the lab’s ruby lasers. Franken told him that Hill, still an undergraduate, needed to return to his studies in the fall, and that he, Bass, could take over the harmonic generation project.

Bass started out his experiments by moving on to the logical next step in exploring nonlinear interactions—a mixing experiment.<sup>8</sup> He took two ruby lasers with slightly different output wavelengths [5]<sup>9</sup> and superimposed them through a half-silvered mirror-type beam splitter. Bass then focused the beams onto a triglycine sulfate crystal (chosen because of its superior 2nd harmonic output conversion efficiency), and then used a slit prism spectrometer to spatially separate the output wavelengths. The lasers were fired synchronously (within 50  $\mu$ s), and multiple exposures (500  $\mu$ s typical) were collected on a photographic plate that followed the spectrometer. The film recorded the 2nd harmonic outputs of both lasers with the sum frequency exactly in the middle, as expected [6]. Similar exposures using only one or the other of the two lasers showed only a 2nd harmonic spot—no mixing signal—confirming the interpretation of the experimental results.

It is interesting to note that the difference frequency of the two Ruby lasers in Bass’s experiment would have appeared at

<sup>7</sup>The early commercial ruby lasers were excited by a strong Xenon flash tube. They were air cooled, or cooled by a flow of gas evaporated from a liquid nitrogen tank, and were powered by a large (kilovolt) discharge capacitor bank. They could only flash a small number of times before the silver coatings became damaged or destroyed. Energy levels reached 3 J with power of more than 3 kW in a 1 ms pulse made up of relaxation oscillation spikes, and more than 30 MW/cm<sup>2</sup> in a focused spot!

<sup>8</sup>As in the traditional electronic circuit analogy, if one substitutes two sinusoidal fields,  $\omega_1 t$  and  $\omega_2 t$ , into the polarization equation, the  $E^2$  term will lead to  $\sin^2(\omega_1 t)$  and  $\sin^2(\omega_2 t)$ , which by identity give terms containing  $\cos(2\omega_1 t)$  and  $\cos(2\omega_2 t)$ , harmonics of the two pump frequencies, as well as cross terms:  $\cos([\omega_1 + \omega_2]t)$ , the sum, and  $\cos([\omega_1 - \omega_2]t)$ , the difference or idler.

<sup>9</sup>It is interesting to note how this was accomplished in the days when ruby lasers were not easily tunable or single mode. Bass was able to get the two lasers to output different wavelengths by cooling one of them with liquid nitrogen. This generated a shift of approximately 10 Å from the nominal  $\approx 6945$  Å output to  $\approx 6935$  Å.

about 620 GHz. However, in 1961, there were no off-the-shelf detectors at the Michigan lab for measuring such short wavelength RF energy, and Bass focused only on the optical sum detection. It would take another four years before Fritz Zernike and Paul Berman, working at Perkin Elmer Corporation, Danbury, CT, USA, reported difference frequency generation from closely tuned optical sources when they measured 3 THz signals from two neodymium glass lasers beating together in a quartz crystal [7].

The next series of experiments that Bass undertook was to look for steady induced polarization, the equivalent of the dc term in the nonlinear harmonic generation process.<sup>10</sup> This “*optical rectification*” process, the result of an intense high frequency field interacting with the crystal lattice in a nonlinear manner, is very similar in its mathematical formulation to the linear electro-optic phenomenon known as the Pockel’s effect, wherein a dc (or very low frequency) electric field modifies the optical polarizability of the crystal. In fact, a quantitative relationship between the Pockel’s effect and the predicted results of high intensity second order field interactions in nonlinear crystals had just been published by J. A. Armstrong and Nicolaas Bloembergen<sup>11</sup> and colleagues at Harvard University [8]. This paper used a rigorous quantum mechanical approach to derive formulae that could directly predict the dc component of the polarization induced change in a sample exposed to intense coherent optical signals, from the inherent properties of the crystal itself, and the magnitude of the Pockel’s coefficients.

Bass, Franken, and colleagues John Ward and Gabriel Weinreich, tried the ruby laser on potassium dihydrogen phosphate (KDP) and potassium dideuterium phosphate (KD<sub>d</sub>P) crystals, known to have a very strong linear electro-optic effect. Using a very carefully calibrated capacitively coupled mounting arrangement for the crystal, Bass was able to measure the voltage developed across the crystal as the laser beam interacted with the KDP at different polarization directions. Through the Armstrong and Bloembergen formulation, the relationship between the observed voltage and the dc polarization effect coefficients could be derived. The predicted values, based on the crystal parameters and measured dc Pockel’s effect in KDP, agreed extremely well with the measurements [9]. The very important discovery and proof of optical rectification was confirmed.

Bass and Franken went on to the investigation of several other crystalline materials, including zinc telluride, and a very rigorous mathematical formalism for quantifying the optical rectification coefficients [10]. More importantly a method was now available for predicting, measuring and understanding not only this observed second order nonlinear effect, but many other higher order phenomena that resulted from intense electro-optic field interactions [11].

From the point of view of the THz community, the optical rectification effect would have enormous positive consequences. When the electric field coupled to the crystal is

<sup>10</sup>Again referring to the  $P$  versus  $E$  relationship, the second order term in  $E$  will give rise to a  $\sin^2(\omega t) = (1/2)[1 - \cos(2\omega t)]$ . The first term here is the dc or permanent induced polarization from the applied field.

<sup>11</sup>N. Bloembergen is a 1981 Nobel laureate in Physics (with Arthur Schawlow and K. Siegbahn) for laser applications in spectroscopy.

derived from an extremely short (picosecond) pulse, rather than the millisecond pulse available from the ruby laser in 1961, the spectral (Fourier) content associated with the pulse falls into the THz regime. Beating of the various components composing the optical pulse produce a difference frequency polarization which is nonlinearly related to the electric field produced by the laser through the susceptibility,  $\chi$ ;  $P_{\text{THz}} = \chi E_{\text{laser}} E_{\text{laser}}^*$ . Broadband THz energy is created at the laser field concentration point and propagates in all directions, but only the energy which is confined to angles near normal incidence to the crystal boundaries gets out. It is helpful to think about the induced nonlinear polarization as creating a localized oscillating dipole field in the crystal that responds on a picosecond time scale and thus radiates THz energy. The magnitude and frequency content of the accessible THz signal is directly related to the frequency content of the pulse, the nonlinear susceptibility of the crystal, the phase matching conditions for the various difference frequency components, the material index and absorption properties at both the optical and THz frequencies, the geometry of the sample and dispersion effects [12]. The most successful work has focused on LiNbO<sub>3</sub> crystals pumped with Nd:YAG lasers at 1064 nm [13]. Typical conversion efficiencies of  $10^{-4}$  are now obtained with this technique [14]. Very recent results [15] however, report a remarkable 3.7% optical-to-THz conversion efficiency for single cycle pulses in cryogenically cooled lithium niobate samples excited at 1030 nm with a 680 fs pulse!

With the eventual realization of intense femtosecond laser pulses, and the ability to understand and enhance their nonlinear interaction with various crystals, it was possible to generate extremely broad coherent THz signals with intensity sufficient to perform a remarkably wide range of spectroscopic and imaging applications (see, e.g., the many up-to-date references in [16]).

From the perspective of Michael Bass in 1962 however, it would be another 10 years before the phenomenon of optical rectification as applied to ultra-short pulse (picosecond) lasers, would be shown to be a potential generator for broad band THz energy [12], [17], and more than 25 years before this tool began to be gainfully employed for active research [18]. In both of these later innovations, the groundbreaking work of Franken and Bass was largely overlooked, and with the extreme excitement building around the development of the laser, even Bass himself quickly moved on to other topics.

Although lasers were still much of a scientific curiosity in 1962, there was one aspect of these early ruby-based devices that attracted very obvious commercial application. Albeit, the lasers only lasted for 30 or 40 pulses before the silver output coatings began to slough off, however they produced an extraordinary amount of energy, several joules, which directly translated into heat when they were focused onto absorptive samples. They could already be used to punch small holes in metals, crystals and many other materials. Maiman coined the power term "Gillette" to describe how many stacked razor blades the focused beam would burn through.<sup>12</sup> While at Michigan, Bass recalls a visit from a local manufacturer in Ann Arbor who was

interested in whether the ruby laser might make a good tool for producing the series of clean holes needed for quality baby bottle nipples. After a quick demo, the manufacturer was convinced of the efficacy, and went out to purchase, and then design a multi-beam optical divider for drilling simultaneous holes from a single laser pulse to replace the hot-wire piercing technique currently in use, [19] for example. The coatings became better and this application continued though using longer lasting lasers!

After graduating from Michigan in 1964, Bass took a post-doc appointment at University of California, Berkeley, USA, to work with Erwin Hahn<sup>13</sup> on spin echoes (also known as Hahn Echo signals [20]). Hahn wanted to do the optical equivalent of his RF spin echo experiments, and he needed a clean coherent source. The ruby laser was just not sufficiently narrow band at the time. Bass tried unsuccessfully for two years to get the ruby laser up to the task required to perform Hahn's experiments. He eventually did find the problem (thanks to a suggestion by Art Schawlow<sup>14</sup>) in the stimulated emission of isotopic chromium ions in the ruby [21]. It was also a time of great political unrest at UC Berkeley, and labs were being constantly closed off while student protests raged. Bass became disenchanted with the academic lifestyle, and decided to try his hand in a more commercial environment. Before leaving Berkeley however, he got involved in a national education project to help develop lab experiments that could be used for the dissemination and teaching of laser theory and techniques [22]. He found this activity an extremely enjoyable and positive experience, and as such, it would help pull him back to academia a bit later in his career.

Bass and his wife Judith, moved to Watertown, Massachusetts in 1966, where he took up a position at the Raytheon Research Division in Waltham. Raytheon already had a strong framework in laser research. Its staff had demonstrated the elliptical pump cavity that made solid state lasers commercially successful, developed the first high power continuous wave CO<sub>2</sub> laser under David Whitehouse<sup>15</sup> and demonstrated a 100 W argon ion laser through Roy Paananen.<sup>16</sup>

Bass took up work on solid-state lasers at Raytheon, and he is credited as one of the co-inventors of the YAP laser (yttrium aluminum perovskite-YAlO<sub>3</sub> active medium) in 1970 [23]–[26]. The Nd:YAP laser has an advantage over the Nd:YAG laser in that the neodymium absorption and emission lines are polarization dependent, allowing additional applications.

Along with colleagues Marvin Weber and T. F. Deutch, Bass also developed an operational modality and pumping technique for the dye laser [27]–[29] that ended up being crucial to the demonstration of the first continuous wave dye laser by Pe-

<sup>13</sup>Erwin Hahn discovered spin echo in nuclear magnetic resonance experiments in 1950. They play a critical role in modern MRI through the  $t_2$  spin-spin relaxation time constant.

<sup>14</sup>1981 Nobel Laureate in Physics, and at this time a professor at nearby Stanford University.

<sup>15</sup>Whitehouse started out his life as a radio broadcast actor, but changed careers to become a well-regarded physicist at MIT and then at Raytheon, where he pioneered high power CO<sub>2</sub> laser development including a 1 kW, 40 ft long device for the Aberdeen proving grounds in the late 1960s.

<sup>16</sup>See, for example, R. A. Paananen, "Progress in ionized-argon lasers," *IEEE Spectrum*, vol. 3, no. 6, pp. 88–99, Jun. 1966.

<sup>12</sup>John Johnson Jr., "Theodore Maiman, 79; harnessed light to build the world's first working laser," *NY Times*, Obituary, May 11, 2007.

terson, Tuccio, and Snavely [30] at Kodak Research Lab in 1970. Perhaps in a prescient moment, Bass was also one of the first to observe picosecond pulses in Nd:YAG lasers [31]. Towards the end of his time at Raytheon, Bass worked extensively on laser damage mechanisms [32]–[34] which would later lead to a strong interest in laser materials processing.

Towards the middle of the 1970s, many U.S. companies began reining in the scope of their research facilities to focus more on internal product development. Raytheon was one of these, and so when Larry DeShazer from the University of Southern California (USC), came to ask if Bass would like to relocate to Los Angeles in order to help head up a new Center for Laser Studies that Larry was forming, Bass did not hesitate to accept the invitation. Perhaps the hard winters in Massachusetts and the *warm* memories of his time at UC Berkeley in California, working on the laser education panel, played a small role in the decision to return to academia. As he had correctly anticipated, and adeptly avoided, his research group at Raytheon was dissolved three years later.

Bass arrived at USC in 1973, and immediately began to build up the laser center as Associate Director. He started bringing together personnel as well as grants and contract money. The concept was to draw in faculty from various departments with overlapping interest in laser studies and applications. Funding would come from soft money grants, but the center had a small level of startup money and some equipment inherited from an existing laser damage studies lab.

One of the first new projects to come into the center had its origins at the USC Medical Center. A resident gastroenterologist, Richard Dwyer<sup>17</sup> (still practicing as a laser endoscopist in Los Angeles with affiliations both at USC and at UCLA Medical Centers), came over to talk to Bass about the possibility of using lasers for wound cauterization to treat bleeding ulcers. At that time (1973), fiber-optic endoscopes were available to look at the gut, but there was no way to perform an on-the-spot clinical procedure once a problem was found. Bass off-handedly suggested the possibility of perhaps using an optical fiber to transmit the laser energy down the endoscope [35]–[37] and use it to cauterize.

Shortly after their initial discussion, Dwyer showed up in Bass's office with six caged rats! Bass negotiated some time on one of his USC colleagues' argon ion lasers that same day, and they tried some cauterization experiments. This soon led to canine experiments [38], [39], and eventually to work on human subjects [40]–[42]. For the first of these experiments, Bass had to gerrymander a fiber onto the outside of the endoscope casing [35]. The technique worked however, and Dwyer at least, went on to a long, and pioneering career in laser endoscopy [43]. Eventually, better fibers became available and the Nd:YAG laser proved a better source for this type of cautery.

Bass became director of the Center for Laser Studies in 1976 and expanded into a large number of varied projects. In particular, he picked up the laser damage studies he had begun at Raytheon and broadened these out to surfaces and films,

metal mirrors, and other optical elements, semiconductors and dielectrics, and infrared wavelengths [44]–[51]. Other work included new lasing media, Q-switching techniques, dye lasers, detectors and calorimetric studies, and high power interactions with metals and crystals [52]–[64]. He also became very interested in commercial laser applications (a philosophy which he maintained throughout his career with more than two dozen long term industry consulting arrangements), and worked with industrial partners on problems in laser drilling and cutting, welding, material coatings, and generalized heating effects. Overall, more than 70 papers and 12 Ph.D. dissertations came out of his work at USC.

The staff at the USC Laser Center grew to around 8 with 20–25 students in tow. They included Elsa Garmire (who followed Bass as the center director, and is noted for her work in laser art as well as her research in laser science), Eric van Stryland (OSA president in 2005), Milton Birnbaum (YAG laser expert), Susan Allen (chemical vapor deposition), Jean-Claude Diels (pulsed lasers), and Stephen Copely (materials science and laser manufacturing). During this period Bass held additional positions as chair of the USC Research Council in 1980 and 1981 (a role he would later capitalize on at University of Central Florida), and department chair in Electrical Engineering and Electrophysics from 1984 to 1987.

Of particular interest to THz researchers might be Bass's work on flexible infrared waveguides [65]–[70] for applications including endoscopy. He, Elsa Garmire, and their students, developed a low loss, overmoded ribbon-like guide that could be made from sandwiched metal or metal and dielectric sheet (an early and clever form of flexible parallel plate waveguide).

In 1987, Bass's former USC Center for Laser Studies student, M. J. Soileau, then the newly hired Director of the Center for Research in Electro-Optics and Lasers (CREOL) at the University of Central Florida (UCF), came looking for recruits. (CREOL was to become CREOL, the College of Optics and Photonics.) He sought out Bass for an open position as Dean of Engineering. Bass was intrigued by the possibility of being associated with an institute (CREOL) that had significant long-term base funding (the USC Center for Laser Studies survived only on faculty grant funding—there was no independent endowment for the center). However, he had his eye on another open administrative position at UCF, Vice President of Research—a role he had experienced and enjoyed for a short period at USC.

Bass decided to move across the country for the fourth time, and in December 1987 he relocated to central Florida. He was aided financially by his good fortune in having been one of the few to recognize the potential of a home in the Pacific Palisades region of Los Angeles on his arrival in the early 1970s, an area he chose because of the coastal climate (commuting the 35 odd kilometers to USC by car back then did not take up a significant portion of the work day!). By 1987 the commute time had more than doubled, but so had the real estate values in Pacific Palisades. Bass was able to trade his house in Los Angeles for two in central Florida!

The affiliation with CREOL turned out to be a great fit for Bass, but the position of Vice-President of Research at UCF was not quite as snug. The university changed Presidents four

<sup>17</sup>Dwyer, age 71, still practices laser endoscopy in southern California. After his association with Michael Bass, he went on to pioneering research work in many areas of laser therapy, as well as maintaining a private medical practice.

times in the 5 years Bass held the post, and in 1992, he finally gave it up in frustration, and went back to full time research and teaching. During his time as an administrator at UCF, Bass undertook lots of outside commitments (perhaps as a respite from the internal politics). He served as President-Elect and President of the Laser Institute of America, General Chair of the 1989 OSA Annual meeting, Editor-in-Chief of the *Handbook of Optics*, and a board member for the Society Objectives and Policies committee of the Optical Society of America (OSA), during the critical period when OSA was considering a merger with SPIE.

On the technical side, Bass continued to work on solid-state lasers and laser crystals,  $Q$ -switching, nonlinear absorption mechanisms and upconversion [71]–[82]. Around 2001, he started to get interested in combinations of semiconductor lasers and upconverters for visible display technologies [83]–[87]. This later led, along with colleague Dennis Deppe, to the formation of a company, bdDisplays, LLC, to develop applications.

At age 62, Bass got very involved as an expert witness in a big patent case, and decided to take advantage of an early retirement package at UCF in order to focus more time on this and other outside activities. He became an Emeritus professor working half-time on his many grant and industry-funded research projects at CREOL, and he continued to teach at a reduced course load, but maintained a favorite: “History of Physics: Cultural Connections and Other Issues,” a widely popular class which he continues to offer today.

Bass also took on several major professional tasks, including Associate Editor for *Optics Express*, Editor-in-Chief for the third edition of the *Handbook of Optics* (which was to be a massive 5 volume series), and Associate Editor for OSA’s 100th Anniversary Commemorative Book—the *OSA Centennial History Book*, due to be released in 2016. He continues to publish extensively (more than 80 papers between 2001 and 2014) on a wide range of topics in lasers and optics. His most recent interests have brought him back to medical technology, where he has been exploiting his upconverter techniques to locate nanocrystals as they interact with both normal and cancerous cells by detecting the up-converted optical luminescence for bioimaging applications [88]–[90]. Ever mindful of the importance of tying academic research to commercial application, his list of patents has been growing rapidly since his semi-retirement!

In 2006, Bass attended a conference in Pisa at which he happened to hear a talk by UCF colleague to be, Konstantin Vodopyanov, on pulsed optical difference frequency generation of THz power in GaAs [91]. In this, and a later talk [92], Vodopyanov credited Bass with one of the key developments in the THz field—his pioneering work on optical rectification way back in 1962! Up to this time, Bass had not appreciated how widespread this almost forgotten concept (forgotten by him at least) had spread.

Although it has been over 50 years since his first attempt at using nonlinear crystals to generate difference frequency energy, the THz light at the end of the tunnel is now clearly visible. In 2014, Bass was finally recognized for his pioneering role in THz generation through optical rectification, as the recipient of the OSA’s R. W. Wood prize.

Michael Bass continues to teach, to do research, to consult and to work with students, staff and faculty at the University of Central Florida, while he lights the way forward for all of us who care about optical science and technology.

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