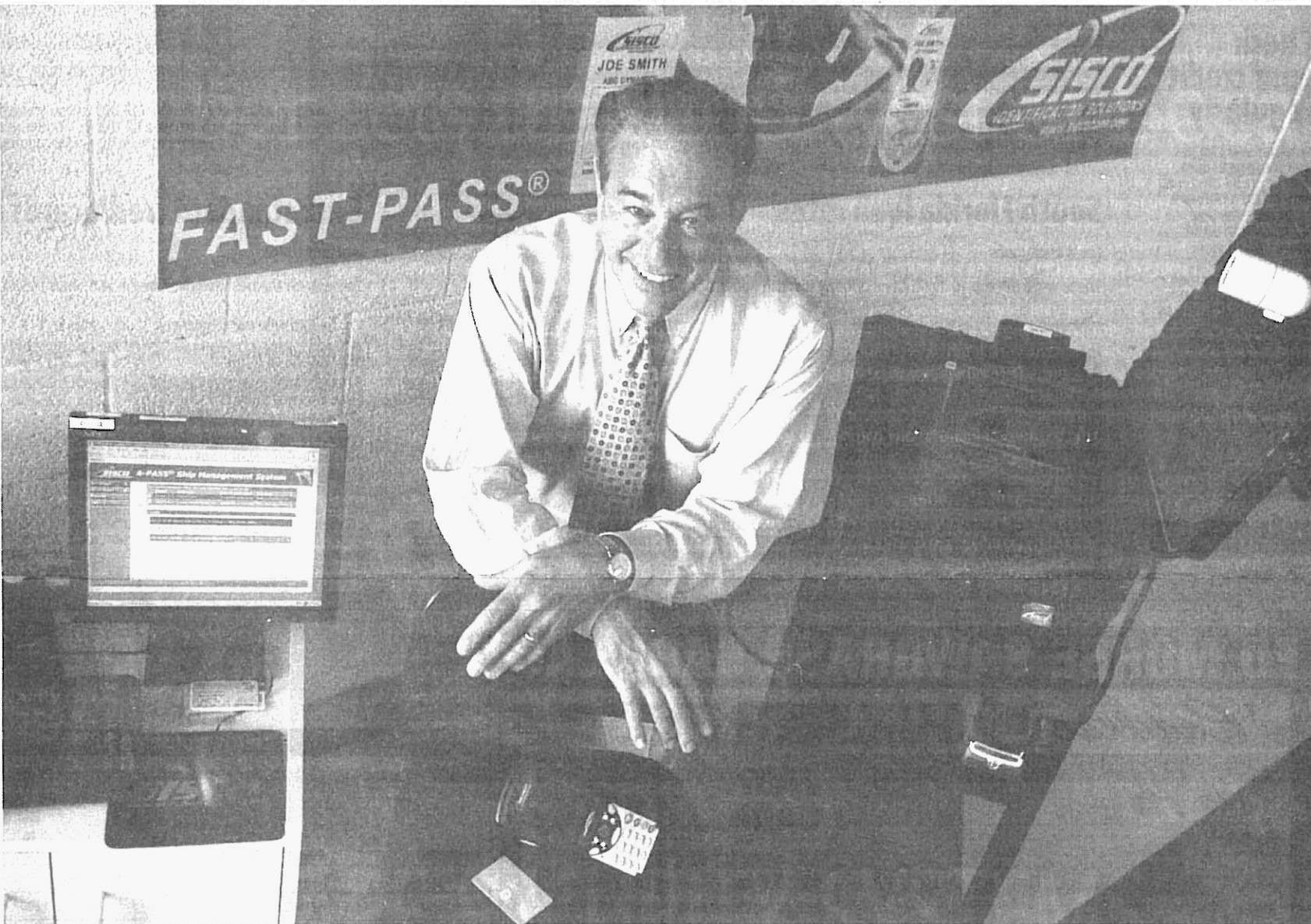


SHIPSHAPE SECURITY SYSTEMS



STRENGTHENING SECURITY AT SEA: After a cruise to Greece, Anthony Zagami devised an access control system that tracks, screens and identifies ship passengers, personnel and visitors. His company, SISCO, is based near Riviera Beach. Staff photo/Scott Fisher

BY PAUL OWERS
STAFF WRITER

Anthony Zagami and his wife, Carol, took a cruise to Greece in 1993. While she was off sightseeing, he settled in for a little rest and relaxation aboard the ship.

As he watched people get on and off, Zagami asked the staff captain how he knew whether those coming and going were actually passengers.

"He said, 'I really don't know,'" Zagami recalled.

That's what prompted the semi-retired native New Yorker to get back into the security business. He developed an access control system that tracks, screens and identifies ship passengers, personnel and visitors.

He created a test for Princess Cruises, which leased the system for six months before deciding to use it on all the ships in its fleet. Since then, seven more cruise lines have contracted with Zagami's company, SISCO, to use the A-Pass system.

Based near Riviera Beach, SISCO now employs 25 people and expects revenue this year of almost \$10 million.

Not only does the system provide security, it lets crew members know precisely how many passengers still are off the ship at a port of call.

"Ships never had that before," Zagami said. "It was always a log-book deduction."

Zagami, 61, describes himself as a "gadget guy" whose main hobby is technology. In 1975, he started a burglar and fire alarm company in New Jersey before selling the accounts to ADT in 1990.

SMALL BUSINESS PROFILE

SISCO

Headquarters: near Riviera Beach

CEO: Anthony Zagami

Established: 1994

Projected 2007 sales: Nearly \$10 million

Employees: 25

Advice: "Be dedicated to an idea. Have enough financing and treat your people well."

He later became a consulting engineer, moved to South Florida and went on that fortuitous cruise.

After practically cornering the market on cruise lines, SISCO started seeking other types of businesses. Schools, hospitals, correctional facilities and commercial buildings also use a version of the access-control system.

The New York Police Department headquarters bought the system in 2000. Other clients include the Broward County School District, the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Miami Children's Hospital and American Express.

SISCO fielded more calls after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in 2001 and again this year after the Virginia Tech University shootings.

"It's a shame, but this business is incident-driven," Zagami said. "Nobody has the budget for this until an incident happens. And then they find the money."

The system costs about \$250,000 per ship. Other businesses pay

\$7,000 or more per location.

The Broward County Sheriff's Office bought the system in 2003. It scans visitors' dates of birth and street addresses. The information remains in the system so repeat visitors don't have to go through the process again.

"It's pretty easy; the whole process takes maybe three minutes," said Elliot Cohen, a spokesman for the Sheriff's Office. "We've never had complaints by anyone."

Aventura Hospital and Medical Center installed the system as a way to cut down on theft. Security Manager Ira Wolf said hospital officials can more easily track visitors and keep them out of restricted areas.

"The bad guys see that they have to provide an ID, and they go somewhere else," Wolf said. "I've been doing this for 15 years, and this is the best thing I've seen."

Paul Owers can be reached at powers@sun-sentinel.com or 561-243-6529.