

# Inventors Council

OF MID-MICHIGAN

PO Box 311, Flushing, Michigan 48433

Web Site: [INVENTORSCOUNCIL.ORG](http://INVENTORSCOUNCIL.ORG)

The Inventors Council is an independent, non-profit 501 C-3 corporation formed to help inventors pursue their dreams of bringing new and innovative products to market. Our goal is to help fellow inventors succeed in the most efficient and least costly manner possible by providing education and business networking.

Founded by Robert (Bob) Ross in 1995

We meet monthly at Walli's Restaurant, 1341 South Center Road Burton, Michigan. Just Two blocks south of I-69, Exit 139

VOLUME EIGHTEEN

NEXT MEETING THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8-15, 2015 7:00PM

NUMBER TEN

## Thursday October 8 2015 Meeting

We will be talking tonight about patents which some members have and the real value of them.

We will also be talking about selling your company and we will show some of the issues for those of us trying to do it..

It will be a hands on learning night.

Come and network and learn from others.

## Thursday September 10 2015 Meeting

We talked about how to create a development file for your invention ideas.

Some inventors showed what they were working on and we looked at some ideas some people had.

Our networking is great, but some are still afraid to share their ideas. Don't share, but no one can help you if you don't ask for it.

It was a hands on learning night.

Come and network and learn from others.

## Wiper Man Robert Kearns Won His Patent Fight with Ford, but That Didn't Mean He Was Out of the Woods (excerpts of articles)

Robert Kearns, the inventor of intermittent windshield wipers, who won multimillion-dollar judgments against Ford and Chrysler for using his idea, has died. He was 77.

When the case finally came to trial, the whole family had rallied to Kearns' side. On hand in Detroit were ex-wife Phyllis, the six kids and Kearns' girlfriend, Jean Ryan, 59, a retired government cartographer he met eight years ago at a meeting for divorced Catholics.

Almost from the start, the case began fueling new debate about the country's 200-year-old patent laws and the wisdom of having jury trials for such complex matters. In the end, Kearns' award was "shockingly low," says Washington, D.C., attorney and longtime patent expert Harold Wegner, echoing the view of many. "It's ludicrous for perhaps intelligent but uninformed individuals to decide such complicated issues."

With interest, if the judge awards it, Kearns' \$5.1 million award could double, and he has additional suits pending against a score of other automakers as well. But the case has already cost him \$650,000, financed with a small inheritance and his various jobs, and he is still faced with \$3 million in outstanding legal debts. Appealing the Ford decision would forestall any award for now and mean further expense.

"I've always told people that my greatest fear is that I would be \$12 short of getting to trial," he says. "Now it looks like I'll be \$1.2 million short," which is the estimated cost of an appeal.

ICMM  
Home of the Happy Inventors



## MARKETING

Hints from the Fog

by Mike Ball, President



"There's no precedent for a hero like Bob Kearns who's willing to go the distance," says son Dennis, vowing to stick by his father. As for Dad, the inventor insists that money never was the point anyway. "I've done too much hurting," Kearns says. "I want to protect other inventors by showing the little guy can win."

The jury failed to reach agreement on how much Kearns should be awarded; another jury later ordered Ford to pay him \$6.3 million, trimmed by a judge to \$5.2 million. To settle the case, the company later agreed to pay \$10.2 million and to drop all appeals.

Chrysler was ordered to pay Kearns \$18.7 million plus interest; the Supreme Court rejected the company's bid to overturn the award in 1995.

"I don't think the goal was the magnitude of the money," Kearns said when the Ford case was ended. "What I saw [as] my role was to defend the patent system."

Later, though, Kearns' lawsuit against General Motors Corp. was dismissed, as were his lawsuits against foreign carmakers. Much of the money he was awarded went to legal expenses.

Kearns was disappointed because the courts didn't bar the companies from continuing to use the wipers.

U.S. District Judge Avern Cohn, who presided over five of Kearns' trials, said Kearns was frustrated because he wanted to be a major manufacturer. "He was feisty, determined and he established the fact that he made a contribution to the auto industry that was unique," Cohn said.

Kearns was born in Gary, Ind., and grew up in suburban Detroit. He was a member of the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency, during World War II. After the war, he earned engineering degrees from the University of Detroit and Wayne State University and a doctorate from Case Western Reserve University.

Kearns is survived by two daughters; four sons; a brother; and seven grandchildren.

A Patent gives you the right to defend your claim in court. It did not order the manufacturers to stop manufacturing and selling his "invention" and the legal fees cost him everything. Was it worth it? That depends on how you feel about it. Three law firms quit the case before he prevailed, but he wanted to appeal the million dollar verdicts so he would not settle.

Kearns was right, but you can always be dead right. So who is the winner if you die proving your point.

Be careful to compromise and be a winner without being a hero.

## Invention Review Panel

For objective evaluation and priceless feedback, share your invention ideas with an educated group of inventors, business owners, engineers and authors!

Our Panel will sign a non-disclosure agreement to guarantee your ideas are kept secret while we provide you with the input needed to make decisions, no matter what stage of the invention process you're at!

There's a \$25.00 Donation for a Review. The Panel meets at 6:15pm before each meeting. Call Panel Chairman Rick Mason at 810-659-7935 for an appointment.

Review Panel Members  
Marty Sovis Rick Mason  
Jim White

**Bob Ross 1919 - 2004**  
*Inventors Education Column*

## *Inventors Resources*

**Michigan Inventors Clubs**  
Inventors Council of Mid-Michigan  
[Inventorscouncil.org](http://Inventorscouncil.org)

**Muskegon Inventors Network**  
[Muskegoninventorsnetwork.org](http://Muskegoninventorsnetwork.org)

**Grand Rapids Inventors Network**  
[GRinventorsnetwork.org](http://GRinventorsnetwork.org)

**Jackson Inventors Network**  
[Jacksoninventors.org](http://Jacksoninventors.org)

**MidMichigan Innovation Center**  
[www.mmic.us](http://www.mmic.us)

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