

Fieger Times

News from the law firm Fieger, Fieger, Kenney & Johnson

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Since 1950

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Fieger appointed to film board

Geoffrey Fieger is known throughout the nation for his skills in the courtroom, and now he has the key to Hollywood.

Governor Jennifer Granholm appointed Fieger head of the Michigan Board of Film and Recording in March. The board, formerly known as the Michigan Film Office, is responsible for promoting Michigan as a place to make movies and record music.

Granholm, who was selected by Fieger as his attorney general candidate when he was running for governor, appointed Fieger because he fit the role so perfectly.

Fieger has appeared on the show "Power of Attorney," and as an almost-nightly commentator on cable news programs like "On the Record with Greta Van Susteren." His brother, Doug, has



FIEGER



GRANHOLM

produced hit rock 'n' roll records with The Knack, and his sister, Beth, writes for television shows like "Mad About You." Both of Fieger's siblings live in Los Angeles.

The first thing Fieger did when he learned of the appointment was promise to call Michael Moore, the Flint-based creator of "Roger & Me" and "Bowling for Columbine." He also plans to talk to Jeff Daniels, star of Hollywood hits like "Dumb & Dumber" and director of

"Escanaba in da Moonlight."

"Geoffrey Fieger brings an awful lot of interest and yes, controversy," Granholm told the Associated Press. "He certainly will not allow the commission to be dormant."

Fieger files \$100M suit against top firm

Attorney Geoffrey Fieger announced recently he has filed a \$100 million legal malpractice lawsuit in Oakland County Circuit Court on behalf of his client, Sue Ann Marie Ansari. The lawsuit alleges that Attorney Edward Gold and the Butzel Long law firm of Detroit allowed a \$180 million marital estate to shrink to \$2 million before any legal action was taken to protect Mrs. Ansari's marital assets.

In September, 2000, Ansari hired Attorney Gold to represent her in a divorce action against her husband, Dr. Shapoor Ansari.

The main asset was a \$180 million stock portfolio account at Olde Stockbrokers. From the very beginning of the case, Mrs. Ansari alerted her attorney that the marital

estate's money needed to be protected against losses in the stock market.

The attorney and his law firm did nothing for over a year. From September, 2000-October, 2001 the value of the stock account shrank from \$180 million to \$2 million. It was only at that point that Gold went into court to protect Mrs. Ansari from financial ruin.

The lawsuit alleges that as a result of Gold's negligence, Mrs. Ansari lost more than \$80 million, which should have been awarded to her as her half of the marital estate.

The lawsuit is one of the largest legal malpractice cases ever brought in the United States on behalf of a single injured party.

Fieger, Fieger Kenney & Johnson

Attorneys

Geoffrey Fieger

Tania Rock, asst.

Jerry Kenney

Sherry Johnson, asst.

Ven Johnson

Shannon Ogden, asst.

Todd Weglarz

Rebecca Walsh

Bill McHenry

Paul Broschay

Arnie Matusz

Robert Giroux

Tammy Reiss

Victor Valenti

Jeffrey Danzig

Lloyd Johnson

Joseph Bird

James Harrington IV

Jack Beam, of counsel

Barry Fayne, of counsel

Receptionist

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Jeff Cope

Building Mgr.

Tom Baulch

Information Systems Mgr.

Eric Humphrey

Info. Systems Asst. Mgr.

Eric Donahue

Couriers

Gerald Curtis

Jennifer Witkowski

In Memorium

Bernard Fieger

June Fieger

Harrington makes impact as firm's youngest attorney

For many years, Fieger, Fieger, Kenney & Johnson had a moratorium on hiring young attorneys. The case loads at the firm are too large, the pressure too great and expectations too high to take a chance on a rookie. When James J. Harrington IV graduated from law school, that all changed.

"We broke with tradition because he's an exception to the rule. He's a very bright, highly energetic people-person who we believe will serve our clients well," Partner Ven Johnson said.

Harrington started at the Fieger Firm three years ago as a law clerk for Bob Giroux, and worked full time while attending University of Detroit-Mercy Law School at night.

Harrington said the early hands-on experience was invaluable training for the Bar Exam and his career.

"Law school doesn't place enough of an emphasis on exposing students to the real-world practice of law. It puts the students at a disadvantage for the Bar Exam as well as the practice. The Bar Exam is being written by Michigan practitioners now instead of academics so it's focused on issues practitioners are faced with on a daily basis," Harrington said.

"Once the students become attorneys, some enter the practice without ever having set foot into a courtroom for a motion hearing or ever attended a deposition. That has to change."

After passing the Bar, Harrington was hired at the firm last May, where he currently is the youngest attorney. He has recently settled most of the files he was given upon his arrival, and is working under Jerry Kenney on several high-profile cases, including one in which a woman was raped in her college dorm room as a result of the dangerous and defective conditions on the university's premises.

Harrington has come to consider Kenney as one of his mentors.

"Jerry is not only an outstanding attorney but an amazing human being as well. He's humble and exceptional at what he does," Harrington said. "The respect other practitioners have for him is unbelievable. I would consider my law career to be a success if I could earn half of the respect that the legal community has for him."

Harrington earned his undergraduate degree at Adrian College, where he played football for four years. He worked his way up the depth chart to become captain and earn league honors by his senior year. Harrington tackles his career with the same determination.

"At Adrian, we had a motto: 'Work hard, improve daily and expect to win.' I apply those same principles to my practice every day. Geoff's given me



JAMES HARRINGTON IV

"We are in a position every day to help people who have had horrific things happen to them because of someone's negligence."

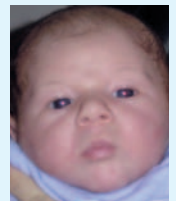
— James Harrington, Esq.

a great opportunity, and that's all I ask for. It's an exciting place to work."

Congratulations!

Tania Rock, Geoffrey Fieger's assistant, is a proud parent. She and her husband, Shawn, had their first child, Dillon at 9:05 a.m. Dec. 17 at University of Michigan Hospital.

He weighed in at 6 lbs. 15 oz., 20-1/2" long.



DILLON

NEWS BRIEFS

Johnson settles suit for liability that resulted in tragic crib death

Ven Johnson recently resolved a highly emotional crib death case against Million Dollar Baby, Inc. after four years of litigation. The "highly favorable amount" of the settlement remains confidential. In the case, 7-month-old Nicholas Krinn was put to bed in his crib with a bottle. When his mother came back to check on him 20 minutes later, the baby was stuck between the mattress and bed frame. The accident occurred because the faulty way in which the crib was designed allowed the bed frame to pop out of position, crushing the baby.

The Consumer Protection Safety Commission and the U.S. Government had been recommending to the crib manufacturer for 20 years to get rid of the faulty design.

"Unfortunately Million Dollar Baby was a company that didn't listen, which of course cost Nicholas his life," Johnson said.

Ven Johnson and the Fieger Firm were called to assist on the case by Fort Wayne, Ind. attorney Tom Mangus with Roby, Hood, due to the national implications of this product liability action.

\$10M settlement reached in sexual assault case

Ven Johnson and Paul Broschay negotiated a very favorable result for a client who obtained a \$10 Million settlement against Northpointe Pioneer Inc., of Farmington Hills. The outpatient counseling facility committed 30 acts of sexual assault against her under the pretense of "therapy."

The jury verdict was obtained three years ago and after numerous post-trial motions and guarantees of a protracted appellate track, the Fieger Firm headed into extended negotiations and succeeded in obtaining a highly significant settlement for the client.

Woman scalped on the job seeks damages in case

Ven Johnson recently filed a product liability case against American Axle after faulty equipment scalped a woman at work. Johnson's client got her hair caught in the machine, which tore her skin from below her eyebrows to the top of her neck. She survived.

The Fieger Firm also is seeking damages from ASE Industries.

"ASE sold American Axle the conveyor for millions of dollars without safety measures on the machine which would have cost pennies, but saved this woman from tragedy," Johnson said.

The case is expected to go to trial early fall in front of Daphne Means Curtis in Wayne County Circuit Court.



JOHNSON

PRESS NOTES

Settlements OK'd in city-vehicle accidents

An article April 2 in the **Detroit Free Press** discussed two of Attorney Bill McHenry's recent settlements:

"Detroit City Council approved settling two lawsuits filed by the families of Detroit residents who were struck — one fatally — by city employees who had been drinking and were driving city vehicles. Wednesday's vote settled a lawsuit for (\$4.9 million) that had been filed by Cornelius King, the father of Karen Sykes. The 39-year-old woman was killed in 2002 when a water department truck hit her on Gratiot and Wilfred. Police said the driver, Cortez Jones, had been drinking. Jones was fired shortly after. The second lawsuit was settled for (\$6.5 million.) In that 2002 case, Gerald Cawthon, 18, was walking near



McHENRY

Conant and Alpha streets when a water department car driven by Howard Long ran into him. Cawthon was paralyzed."

Fieger represents victim's family in Ball State shooting

The Fieger Firm made headlines in the **Muncie Free Press**, in Muncie, Indiana on Feb. 10, where Geoffrey Fieger is representing the family of a Ball State University student who was shot by a university police officer.

On the Record with Greta

Geoffrey Fieger is a frequent commentator for "**On the Record with Greta Van Susteren**" on FoxNews.

On Feb. 9, as authorities released surveillance tape of the kidnapping of 11-year old Carlie Brucia, Geoffrey Fieger commented on why her alleged killer was on the streets in the first place. Other commentators included Jim Hammer, San Francisco assistant district attorney; Bernie Grimm, criminal defense attorney, and Ted Williams, criminal defense attorney.

Fieger also provided legal assessment

and analysis of the latest developments in the Michael Jackson alleged child molestation case. On Dec. 30 he was joined by Jim Hammer, San Francisco assistant district attorney, and Steve Kron, a defense attorney.

Fieger to double office space

"It's the nerve center for some of the nation's most high-profile legal cases and a monument to the career of one of the country's best-known attorneys.

Now, the headquarters for Fieger, Fieger, Kenney & Johnson PC, on 10 Mile Road east of Evergreen Road, is getting a whole lot bigger. By December, the firm best known for defending assisted-suicide advocate Jack Kevorkian will have more than doubled its office space, with the completion of a 20,000-square-foot, \$10 million addition.

The add-on to the existing 15,000-square-foot structure, under construction since August, will include a studio where firm principal Geoffrey Fieger can air television appearances and a mock courtroom to train attorneys and students. The offices will occupy a quarter-mile stretch.

'I'm a victim of my own success,' Fieger quipped."

— **Daily Oakland Press,**
March 23, 2004

Fieger speaks about law and reality TV

As featured guest at ACES meeting, Fieger recalled 'Jenny Jones' trial

SOUTHFIELD — In 1995, the Jenny Jones Show aired an episode that would go down in history. In the fateful segment, Scott Amedure confessed his secret, same-sex crush on co-worker Jonathan Schmitz.

"When the Jenny Jones Show ended the reality continued for 72 hours, until Schmitz bought a shotgun and shot Scott Amedure in the face," Attorney Geoffrey Fieger recalled during a recent talk.

Fieger was featured speaker at the January meeting of ACES, the State Bar of Michigan section on Arts, Communications, Entertainment and Sports Law.

Fieger talked for about two hours on the topic of "Reality Television," based on his experience with the sensational "Jenny Jones Murder Trial," officially known as *Graves v. Warner Bros.* In that case, Fieger represented the estate of Scott Amedure. Fieger said Amedure was coerced to go on the show and profess his affection for Jonathan Schmitz, a man with a proven history of homophobia and



Geoffrey Fieger discussed the legal implications of reality television as keynote speaker at a recent meeting of ACES.

mental illness.

In his speech at the Southfield Marriott, Fieger said reality shows pose unique risks for individuals participating in them, and are certain to spur more violence and lawsuits in the future. Fieger argued that major production companies, which promote reality shows because they are popular and cheap to make, exploit everyday people for profit, preying upon their naiveté. In *Graves v. Warner Bros.*,

jurors agreed.

"The one consistent thread of conviction of every juror in the mock trials and the actual trial, was the sense that if not for the show this would not have happened," Fieger said. "Jurors relied on another common belief ... that the types of people who appear on reality shows will do anything for attention and are highly suggestible by the producers."

In 1999, jurors found Schmitz guilty of second degree murder in Oakland County Circuit Court, and he was sentenced to 25-50 years in prison.

Fieger then won a civil suit against Warner Bros. for \$25 million, which was dismissed on appeal in March (see story below).

Meanwhile, *Graves v. Warner Bros.* set a precedent on case law involving reality television.

The ACES meeting was hosted by President Jeff Richardson, and attended by ACES members such as Thomas Silvia, Dan Matson, John Willems, Richard Herman, Ed Nahhat, Hilda Gurley-Highgate, Ara Berberian and Barbara "Bunny" Kratchman from ArtServe Michigan.

Law students from the University of Michigan also were invited to attend.

Student Amy Lehman said she and her classmates have come across *Graves v. Warner Bros.* in their texts.

"We've studied it in torts. It's already in the books," she said.



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Appeals end in Jenny Jones Trial

The Michigan Supreme Court issued a statement March 20 refusing to hear an appeal in "The Jenny Jones Murder Trial."

In 1996, at the end of the sensational 6-week long *Graves v. Warner Bros.* trial, a jury awarded the family of Scott Amedure \$25 million.

But attorneys for the show and Warner Bros. appealed the verdict, and lower courts reversed it. The latest ruling by the state Supreme Court means the family will likely receive nothing.

The story behind the photo

How Geoffrey Fieger met Michael Jackson

The last issue of the Fieger Times carried a photo of Geoffrey Fieger shaking hands with the King of Pop.

The photo piqued the curiosity of Detroit News columnist Neal Rubin. Here's what he wrote in his column Feb. 22, 2004:

One of the people in the photograph at right is among the most flamboyant performers in America. The other is a singer.

The picture showed up in the winter issue of the Fieger Times, the official semi-regular newsletter of Fieger, Fieger, Kenney & Johnson. Two people on the mailing list immediately forwarded it to me in hopes I'd call Geoffrey Fieger and ask the question on everyone's lips:

C'mon. Is that really Michael Jackson?

Yes, Fieger says. And the guy has huge hands.

They met six years ago, when Michigan's best-known attorney took a break from his busy schedule to run for governor and spend a few months saying inappropriate but occasionally riotous things about John Engler.

Fieger resurrected the photo this month because people — among them Greta Van Susteren of Fox News, on the air with "On the Record" — keep asking him about Jackson's legal problems. Fieger has not spoken to Jackson about his defense, but he does have insight into important things such as the entertainer's undershirt.

"He wore a heck of a lot of makeup," says Fieger, who's in Cleveland preparing for a trial. "It got all over his shirt collar."

To Fieger's perceptive eye, it seemed like far too much goo to apply regularly. "You couldn't take a shower every day. You'd spend the rest of your life doing your makeup." And in support of that hypothesis, he enters into evidence Jackson's white undershirt.

"I could tell," he says, "this was not a fresh T-shirt."

Again, I should point out that their meeting was in 1998. But it's not like Jackson has become any less peculiar since then, and as soon as Martha Stewart's trial is over, he'll be reclaiming his spot atop the celebrity defendant list. So I asked Fieger to tell me more.

He says they were introduced by former Detroit cable TV mogul Don Barden, who wanted one of the three local casino licenses and trotted out Jackson to help him get it. They unveiled an improbable plan that included a theme park and, if memory serves, a team of magic elves spreading rose petals through the streets of the city.

Barden was ultimately rejected, but that's all water under



Geoffrey Fieger says he met Michael Jackson six years ago while Fieger was running for governor and Jackson was helping Don Barden make a bid for a gambling casino in Detroit.

the Zug Island bridge and has nothing to do with Fieger's impressions of Jackson.

They spent an hour together, he says, and Jackson struck him as "a bright guy. He was there for quite a complex business deal, and I got the impression he understood the ins and outs of the proposal he was making."

You don't see that side of Jackson when he's explaining why it's OK to share his bed with small boys. Nor do you realize, Fieger says, that he's not as waif-like as his slender frame and soft voice make him appear on television. "He's a much bigger guy than you'd imagine, every bit of 6 feet tall. The other thing you don't get is that he's a man — a 45-year-old man with a man's beard."

And a man's hands. A very large man's. "Next to Dennis Rodman's," Fieger says, "they're the most disproportionately large hands I've come across."

As for where those hands are alleged to have wandered, Fieger says it weakens the prosecutors' case considerably when the chief witness is on record saying nice things about the man he's now accusing.

Then again, he says, Santa Barbara, Calif., is a highly conservative locale, and Jackson's televised interviews haven't done much for his image. Plus — putting himself in the jury's position — there's this observation, gained from Fieger's close-up view and based on a more personal experience with Jackson than most others will ever have:

"When you get down to it, he looks strange."

Neal Rubin appears Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday in the Detroit News.

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Fieger reality show trumps ‘Apprentice’

Instead of “The Apprentice,” it’s “The Intern.”
Instead of Trump Towers, it’s The Fiegerdome.
And instead of “The Donald” it’s “Fieger Time.”

In Detroit’s very own version of the hit reality television show “The Apprentice,” six hot shot law students vied for one chance to work for Geoffrey Fieger in “The Intern.” The show aired on WXYZ Channel 7 news in May. If you missed it, tune in to the next edition of “Fieger Times” for a complete recap.

Fieger, Fieger, Kenney & Johnson

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