



# THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW ASSOCIATION OF CHICAGO

Proudly Presents The

**2017 Creator Of The Year Award**

**To James McCambridge**

The IPLAC Creator of the Year Award is given to honor the creative achievements, primarily in the Chicago metropolitan area, that are eligible for patent, copyright, or trademark protection. This year, IPLAC is proud to recognize James McCambridge, currently Innovation Consultant with Wahl Clipper Corporation based in Sterling, Illinois, as the winner of the 2017 IPLAC Creator of the Year Award, for his achievements in the area of patents.

Jim McCambridge is a prolific inventor with 55 utility and design patents just in the US. Most of these inventions have several foreign counterparts, resulting in over 100 total patents. Over his long inventive career, Jim can lay claim to US Patents from the 3,000,000 to the 8,000,000 series and he has several applications still pending. Jim's inventive career began with Central Quality Industries in Polo, Illinois, where he developed his first patent, No. 3,775,951, related to a float ball shutoff feature for a vacuum cleaner that is still used in "Shop-Vac" style vacuums 40 years later.

After working for Central Quality Industries for 25 years, Jim joined Wahl Clipper Corporation in Sterling Illinois, where he has been actively developing new products for the past 27 years, even now, while he is officially "retired." Wahl Clipper is famous for developing the first popular electric hair clipper, and the company is a strong supporter of patents. One wing of the factory in Sterling was built based on damages received from a patent infringement litigation victory. Wahl still manufactures millions of clippers and trimmers every year from this factory. Now, Wahl engineers, inspired by Jim's many innovations, develop 21st Century enhancements of their products in a designated Wahl Innovation Center located in Sterling.





Jim is affectionately known at Wahl as "Mr. Gizmo" for his creativity in applying creative problem-solving skills in developing and patenting new commercial products, including a miniature hair trimmer sold under the trademark "Peanut" that has been a top seller for Wahl for the past 20 years. The Peanut clipper is popular with home stylists as well as professionals for its high power to weight ratio that reduces arm and hand fatigue. While at Wahl, Jim also co-invented a revolutionary high-velocity hair dryer, several massagers, curling irons, organizers for professional hair stylists, blade adjusting tools. In addition to these hair-care related products, Jim's innovation has spread to non-traditional Wahl products like soldering iron tips, drills, woodworking tools, and even hair sample grinders for use in drug testing. Jim also employed his early background in vacuums to assist Wahl in the development of clippers with vacuum capability, which is appreciated by anyone who has trimmed their hair over the sink and has been faced with cleaning up the mess. These and other innovative products developed with Jim's assistance were commercial successes that helped give Wahl Clipper Corporation the international presence it enjoys today.

Jim's lifetime achievements have also contributed to economic development in Illinois, where many of Wahl's more popular products are still manufactured. Jim is proud of the diversity of his inventions and the fact that 50 of these were granted after he was 50 years old.

A few comments about Jim from co-workers: Even though Jim retired, he is passionate about inventing and he still works part time. He cares about his patents and is a perfectionist; he is persistent and will not give up until he makes it work. He is fun to work with and a good mentor. One can be sure to learn from Jim and his knowledge of Wahl's products, both old and new. Jim has been with Wahl Clipper for so long that one can always learn some of Wahl Clipper's history from him. Jim is able to take a product "full circle" and add new innovation when needed to bring out a "new generation" of a particular unit. Jim could be termed the "MacGyver" of Wahl Clipper. He is able to put together an innovative product from what he has handy.

