

# Cameras, tapes come to Oakland courts today

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

The great camera experiment starts today, 3 1/2 months early. Oakland County courtrooms will be open to news cameras, TV cameras and news tape recorders for the first time.

Chief Circuit Judge Richard D. Kuhn takes the approach that any problems can be discussed and worked out.

"Our mutual cooperation will ultimately serve to enhance the public's understanding and awareness of the legal system," Kuhn told editors, reporters and photographers in a briefing last week.

THE MICHIGAN Supreme Court in August announced that on Feb. 1 all state courts of record — excluding juvenile division of probate courts — could permit electronic and photographic news coverage.

The high court then expanded its order to allow Oakland and four smaller courts to start Oct. 15 on an experimental basis. Other experimental counties are Ingham, Grand Traverse, Marquette and Wexford.

The experiment covers not only Oakland's 14 circuit judges but its probate (non-juvenile cases) and district courts as well.

Most attention is likely to be focused on circuit courts, where major criminal cases and civil suits are tried.

TRAFFIC PROBLEMS may arise.

The order sets a limit of two video cameras per courtroom, but the metro Detroit market has five TV stations.

The stations must "make their own pooling arrangements without calling upon the court to mediate any dispute relating to those arrangements." If they fail to work out a deal, "the judge shall not permit the use of film or electronic media coverage."

Ingham County could have traffic problems, too, because many public cases affecting state government are tried there.

The order places a limit of two press photographers per courtroom.



Judge Richard Kuhn  
'mutual cooperation'

They in turn are limited to two cameras apiece and two lenses per camera. Because press photographers can move in and out unobtrusively, even though the rule limits them to "fixed position," they appear less likely to have problems.

THE HIGH court order makes it easy to shut down cameras and recorders.

Cameras and tapes must be shut down at the demand of a crime victim, a witness, the parent or guardian of a minor witness.

A prosecutor may object to pictures on behalf of a witness.

The judge has a duty to remind witnesses that cameras and tapes are in the courtroom — a procedure likely to increase the number of requests for no pictures.

The media must apply for court permission to cover a case. But if a judge says no, the news agency has no right to appeal to a higher court.

No coverage of "bench conferences" between lawyers and the judge is allowed. Nor may jurors be shown.

# County garden honors vets

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

A 20-foot sculpture will be the centerpiece of a Veterans Memorial Garden that will go up in the Oakland County Service Center complex in Pontiac.

It's Oakland's "official tribute to the men and women who have served honorably in the defense of their state and country within the last 150 years of Michigan's statehood," said the County Board of Commissioners in a resolution endorsing the concept.

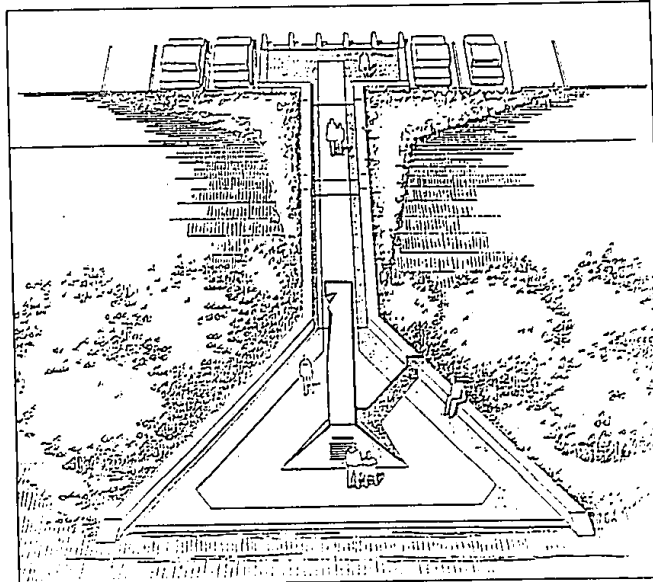
THE SCULPTURE will be visible from northbound Telegraph Road. It will go in adjacent to the south parking lot facing the courthouse.

The board last week approved \$22,000 for fabrication of the three-sided stainless steel sculpture. It authorized a contract with JoAnn D. Snyder, widow of sculptor Donald Snyder of Birmingham. Mrs. Snyder entered her husband's sculpture in a contest sponsored by the county.

The contest was open to military veterans. Snyder served in the U.S. Marines during World War II.

THE BOARD placed a \$95,000 cap on the project, which will include a foundation and pedestal, 165 square feet of granite, reinforced concrete walls, excavation, grading, landscaping and a plaque.

Part of the sculpture's cost will come from \$10,000 in the budget of the Cultural Affairs Committee's sequenential project. The board also transferred \$18,800 from the 1987 budget's contingency fund.



Artist's aerial view of Veterans Memorial Garden, looking north toward the Oakland County Courthouse.

# Williams wins U.S. pact, loses in court

It was a good-bad news week for Williams International Corp., the defense contractor in Commerce Township. It won another defense contract but lost a state Supreme Court decision involving punishment of anti-nuclear protesters.

U.S. Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., announced Williams received a \$5 million contract for continued work on new chemical protection and electrical generating systems for armored vehicles.

"Added in committee at Levin's request," said a news release from the senator's office.

It was one of eight items affecting Michigan in the new defense budget approved by the U.S. Senate. Two other items affect industry: \$707 million for the M-1A1 tanks to be built in Warren; \$14 million for KMS Fusion Inc. of Ann Arbor. The others were funds for military installations.

THE STATE Supreme Court, in a 4-3 decision, reversed Oakland Circuit Judge James Thorburn's decision involving anti-nuclear marchers jailed for contempt for activity at the Williams plant on W. Maple west of Haggerty roads.

The marchers — Covenant for Peace and others — for years have demonstrated at the gates of the plant where engine for low-flying cruise missiles are made.

In a case brought by Williams, Judge Thorburn in 1984 found the marchers in civil contempt, issued a permanent injunction against trespassing and obstructing the gate, and jailed several until they promised to obey the injunction.

The marchers' attorneys argued that the contempt was criminal, not civil, and the court's sentence had to be limited to 30 days in jail and a \$250 fine. They argued the indefinite sentence and required promise were excessive.

The court majority agreed. The opinion was written by Justice Michael F. Cavanaugh and signed by

Charles L. Levin, James H. Brickley and Dennis W. Archer.

Dissenting was Chief Justice Dorothy Comstock Riley, joined by Justices Patricia Boyle and Robert Griffin.

"WE HOLD that the trial court erred in imposing a coercive sanction upon appellants for their trespass upon Williams' land. . . (It) was beyond the power of the trial court to impose an indefinite, coercive sentence upon them."

The majority called Thorburn's legal tactic "also of questionable value," explaining:

"Unlike the present defendants who have, as a matter of conscience, refused to make the promise, many people subject to such coercion might naturally make the required promise to avoid incarceration. They then either will keep their promise or violate it.

"If they do not keep their promise, another contempt proceeding will have to be instituted. The trial court will face the same problem. . . Hence the civil remedy of requiring a promise to purge the contempt is largely ineffective and may serve only to call into question a court's authority."

"(A) more effective sanction for such past misconduct is a definite sentence for criminal contempt. . ."

Dissenting, Riley said, "Under these circumstances, a coercive sanction is clearly warranted. . . particularly in light of the appellants' ardent belief in the propriety and moral necessity of their contumacious acts, which in turn led to their adamant refusal to agree to the injunction by the terms of the permanent injunction of the future."

Riley said the decision "unnecessarily deprives the trial court . . . of an effective means of enforcing its orders and Williams International with the assured benefit" of an injunction.

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