



Have office, will travel is Glenn Sprague's motto since the development of his mobile office system that includes computer, printer, mobile phone, modum, paper compartment and hard case.

A better mousetrap?

By Philip A. Sherman
staff writer

Glenn Sprague says he used to drive 8,000-10,000 miles during a busy month as a sales representative for Precision Color in Plymouth.

He needed a portable office on those trips, something more than the lap-top computer he was using. So he packaged the computer with a printer, phone modem and cellular phone.

Sprague and his patent-pending invention were honored with an award in the best electronic/computer category from the Inventors' Council of Michigan.

At the same ceremony, E. Timothy Pawl of West Bloomfield received the council's Inventor of the Year award. He won the award for developing the power-lift trunk floor.

"It's being marketed as a dealer-installed option" for cars, Pawl said. "You press a switch and the floor of the trunk comes up and out to you," alleviating the need for people hauling heavy loads to bend down into the trunk and lift objects out.

This is the same E. Timothy Pawl, owner of Pawl Inventorship, who used to work for Williams International in Walled Lake. "I designed the cruise missile engine" as a senior analytical engineer at Williams, Pawl said.

SPRAGUE AND PAWL are two of seven inventors who received awards from the council's system by at Concordia College, off U.S. 23 near Geddes Road. Sprague's life has changed as a result of his innovation; Pawl seems to have been in the same field all along.

Sprague, a 26-year-old Farmington Hills resident who grew up in Livonia and went to Stevenson High School, left Precision Color after nine years to start

two companies built around his mobile-office invention.

BGS Models and Molds, named after his brother, Bruce, Glenn himself and their shared last name, will develop and manufacture the invention. Mobile Office Systems will handle marketing.

Sprague had just assembled a prototype of his mobile office when he found out about the Michigan Inventor of the Year competition last month at Domino's Farms in Ann Arbor. He had one week to prepare for the competition, which he entered — and won.

"We've been in existence about a week," Sprague said of his companies in early July. Both are operating out of his brother's Westland garage. Sprague and his brother are no strangers to making models and molds for prototypes. Their father, Richard, spent 37 years in Ford Motor Co.'s Design Center.

Depending on the type of computer a client wants in the mobile office, Sprague said the price ranges from \$4,800 to \$8,000 for the self-contained unit.

Pawl, 37, a registered professional engineer, had been working on his power-lift trunk floor since 1985 as part of another project called the Idea Car. Donated by General Motors to encourage innovation in the automobile industry, Pawl said the car has 23 inventions on it; of those, Pawl said he's responsible for 13.

The power-lift trunk fits 80 percent of the cars on the road today and can fit the other 20 percent with minor adjustments, he said. Even working around the recessed wheel well where most new cars carry spare tires, Pawl said his invention takes little space away from trunk storage.

Like Sprague, Pawl's patent for his invention is still pending even though he applied for it in 1986. He said he's been told it takes anywhere from 18-24 months to receive a patent and expects his by the end of the year. Pawl said several of the units are "on test" at GM.



E. Timothy Pawl's invention aims to ease the strain of lifting heavy items from the floor of a trunk.

Home to stay

Shearson Great Lakes post ultimate job for B'ham man

By Tom Henderson
staff writer

Robert Michelotti is an exception to his fast-track brethren in the securities and investment industry. He wants the track to end, not in New York City, center of the financial world, but in Birmingham, center of his family's contentment and his peace of mind.

"This is it. Nobody ever believes when I say that, but I have never been happier to be anywhere than in Michigan," said Michelotti, a senior vice president at Shearson Lehman Hutton who was named this month to head the company's newly realigned Great Lakes Division. "The first thing I did when I heard I was coming here was to write to Ann Arbor for football tickets, and I got 'em."

Maybe they don't believe Michelotti because of his history as a fast-tracker. Holder of a master's degree in finance from Boston University, Michelotti had managed E.F. Hutton sales offices in Indianapolis, Santa Fe, Tucson and Birmingham before the merger of Hutton and Shearson last December.

And maybe they don't believe him because of his age. At 37, he says he is a good eight years younger than his contemporaries in other Shearson Lehman Hutton divisions, with the next promotion meaning by definition a move to New York or one of the company's overseas offices.

"All our moves were with an eye toward coming home, and this is as close as we can get," said Michelotti, who grew up in Muskegon. "This is where we wanted to be. Snow and a two-story house, that's all the kids wanted when we moved out of Arizona."

THE GREAT LAKES Division is one of 17 nationwide. It includes all



Robert Michelotti

of Michigan and Ohio north of Columbus. Michelotti oversees 25 offices, 19 in Michigan, and 1,100 employees.

He says he will do that overseeing with a management style that is anything but dictatorial.

"This is a people business. Sure, you buy the security of a large firm like Shearson Lehman and Hutton, which is a subsidiary of American Express. But what you're really buying is individual expertise. It's the individual who keeps in touch with the customer. Those individuals are the company's mortar and cement. My job is to keep them motivated. To listen to them. To solve their problems."

"Esoterically, I believe in self-actualization. People should do what they want. If we provide the right atmosphere, they'll be self-motivated and do the best job they can. They'll reach their goals because they want to, not because there's

anyone making them.

"I say, 'What do you want to do?' And, 'How can I help you?' Then it's up to them to do it. So far, so good."

So far includes 2 1/2 years in Birmingham, two of them as regional vice president of Hutton, six months overseeing the traumatic post-merger days as Hutton branches converted to Shearson's processing systems, a trauma heightened by the stock market crisis last October.

"There was clearly a lot of turmoil here. We were post-crash, post-merger. We were trying to figure out who we were and where we were going."

On July 14, Michelotti was named head of the realigned Great Lakes Division, which combined the sales staffs of Hutton and Shearson.

"A lot of it's just been getting to know people," said Michelotti, who said that although his division is small geographically, it is economically and strategically one of Shearson's most important.

"It's small but concentrated," he said. "This division is one of the most successful in terms of productivity, sales per employee and net income. One reason is that on average we do a lot of managed assets instead of just trading accounts."

"I'm not sure if that's because of the demographics of the region or because of the training of our employees. It's been the direction of people in this division to go to managed money, looking at the overall picture instead of just being stock brokers."

Michelotti is quick to make sure he isn't claiming sole credit for the division's success. "It's the success of the people we have. Some of the managers we have and the offices we have are wonderful. I've only been here 2 1/2 years, so obviously I have good people."

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