

Panasonic, Victor Co. Settle St. Clair Patent Claims

By **Ben James**

Law360, New York (July 15, 2010) -- Victor Company of Japan Ltd. and Panasonic Corp. have reached deals with St. Clair Intellectual Property Consultants Inc., licensing six St. Clair patents and exiting an infringement suit St. Clair filed over digital camera technology in Delaware.

Judge Joseph J. Farnan Jr. of the U.S. District Court for the District of Delaware gave his blessing to two stipulations of dismissal on Tuesday, dismissing the St. Clair's claims against defendants Panasonic, Panasonic Corp. of North America, Victor Company of Japan Ltd. and JVC U.S.A. without prejudice.

The counterclaims of the Panasonic and JVC defendants were also dismissed without prejudice.

An attorney for JVC and Panasonic declined to comment. Ron Schutz, an attorney for St. Clair, said Thursday that the terms of the agreements were confidential.

St. Clair said that the JVC Kenwood Holdings Inc. and those four defendants had licensed St. Clair's digital camera patents, which cover technology used in cameras, camcorders and phones that allow images to be saved in different file formats.

In 2004, Grosse Pointe, Mich.-based St. Clair filed the lawsuit, which named Victor Co., Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. Ltd. (now known as Panasonic Corp.) and others including Nokia Corp. and Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd. as defendants.

St. Clair asserted four patents in the case: U.S. Patent Numbers 5,138,459; 6,094,219; 6,233,010; and 6,323,899. The licensing deals with JVC and Panasonic cover six patents, a group that includes U.S. Patent Numbers 5,576,757 and 6,496,222 in addition to the other four.

St. Clair has been on the legal warpath for years over its digital camera patents, which it acquired from Personal Camera Computers in 1995.

In 2003, a jury found that Sony was liable for infringement and awarded St. Clair \$25 million, and Sony has since licensed the patents, according to St. Clair. In 2004, a jury found that Canon Inc. had infringed the patents and awarded the patent-licensing company nearly \$35 million, though Canon later settled that case for an undisclosed amount, it said.

Also in 2004, St. Clair won a \$3 million verdict against Fuji Photo Film Co. in a suit over the same patents.

Victor Co., JVC and the Panasonic defendants are represented in this matter by Ashby & Geddes PA and Hogan Lovells.

St. Clair is represented by Robins Kaplan Miller & Ciresi LLP and Seitz Van Ogtrop & Green PA.

The case is St. Clair Intellectual Property Consultants Inc. v. Samsung Electronics et al., case number 04-1436, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Delaware.