

## Clarence W. Kearney, CPA



*Partner  
Malin, Bergquist & Company LLP  
PICPA member since 1973*

### Why He Is in the Spotlight

Clarence W. Kearney, CPA, is a motorcycle enthusiast, and has been so since his days as a youth in Jefferson County. But contrary to the stereotype, he is not a rough-and-rugged, rebellious biker. Instead, he's taken his love of motorcycles and Erie, and applied it toward endeavors benefiting his local community.

Kearney, a partner with Malin, Bergquist & Company LLP in Erie, grew up in Brockway, a sparsely populated town in northwestern Pennsylvania. He learned how to drive trucks and motorcycles at 13. Growing up in a small town with limited activities, Kearney and his cousin developed an interest in cars, and he spent his teenage years racing in abandoned strip mines.

"Every day after school for a while, I'd race my dad's '52 or '53 Chevy pick-up," Kearney said. "As long as I brought it back in one piece, I was able to race it. My mother told me that as long as I didn't get in trouble or hurt anyone, I was able to keep doing it."

When Kearney graduated from high school in 1965, his intention was to move to Chicago and attend DeVry Institute to become an electrician. A high school teacher convinced him to

go into business and accounting. Kearney's family didn't have much money, so his teacher helped him get a partial scholarship to Erie Business Center, and then Gannon University. "When I left home, my dad gave me \$5," Kearney explained. "That's all he could give."

He drove to Erie with his girlfriend Sandy – now his wife (pictured in photo to the left) – and has been there ever since.

Kearney went three decades without owning a motorcycle until he visited a client last year who is a Harley-Davidson dealer. That is when he got back into "hogs" all over again. During that bike drought, he served on the boards of several nonprofit organizations, including Hamot Health Foundation, Sertoma Club of Erie, Emergycare Ambulance Service and Life Star Helicopter, and the Kahkwa Club. With his purchase of a Harley-Davidson Fat Boy, he added another charitable program to his community endeavors: Roar on the Shore.

This past summer, Erie held its first Roar on the Shore, a four-day weekend of everything motorcycles: a parade, celebrity bikers, showcases, and rock bands. Much of the proceeds benefitted the John Kanzius Cancer Research Fund. Kearney serves as the program's treasurer.

Many professionals, including CPAs, populate the motorcycle community, which, in turn, supports many charitable organizations through rallies and other events.

Roar on the Shore was exciting for the long-time CPA, who rode with actor Peter Fonda (*Easy Rider*, *3:10 to Yuma*) in the parade through downtown Erie. This summer, Roar on the Shore plans on submitting much of the proceeds to Erie Shriners Hospital for Children.

"We raised \$56,000 in our first year, and we're confident we will more than double that this year," Kearney said.

"We're advertising in major motorcycle magazines, and people will come thousands of miles for this. In fact, we're hoping to have some drag races this year."

Kearney and his wife, who also is a CPA and PICPA member, are grateful to the Erie community and what it has offered them. The couple recently purchased a large insurance policy that will be transferred – along with a portion of their estate – to the Hamot Second Century Fund, a health care delivery system that reaches more than 1 million people in parts of Pennsylvania, New York, and Ohio. They were recently acknowledged for their generosity in a Hamot publication.

"The Erie community has been terrific to us," Kearney said. "We donate not for the recognition, but because we love our community. Everything I do in my life, I do with integrity. It's about relationships and people."

### Personal Profile

**Education:** Bachelor's degree from Gannon University

**Favorite movie:** "Wild Hogs was a riot. It's a gut-buster, and it's a pretty clean movie for the most part."

**Where would you like to ride your motorcycle?** "I'd really love to ride it in Sedona, Ariz. Just a beautiful place." ■



*From left to right: Kearney with Kelly and Susan Lapping, actor Peter Fonda, and William Brown.*