



FINNEY INJURY LAW  
- TRIAL LAWYERS -

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 The Fine Art of Keeping a Law Firm Humming
- 2 Family Road Trip Hacks You'll Love
- 2 A Silent Threat: Distracted Driving Claims Lives Every Day
- 3 Guarding Against Dog Bite Injuries
- 3 Hearty Gnocchi Soup
- 4 Alex Remembers Trying, Failing, and Learning About Cars



### The Issues We Face



#### Alex on His Relentless Pursuit of Building Something Special

Last month, I wrote about our firm's in-house crash data retrieval system. The idea dawned on me from my obsession over automotive tools — an obsession that started with my love of cars as a kid.

My dad used to take my brother and me to the auto show every year. We tried to collect posters from everywhere. When I was in high school, I convinced my parents to let me buy a project car — a non-running 1980s BMW 5-Series. I loved German cars! With a cheap tool set and a pursuit of learning, I got it running.

Fast forward two years, and that same persuasive skill led to my acquiring a car that changed my life forever — a 1995 Nissan 240SX.

That was one special car. It had a swapped engine called a SR20DET, and it was quick! But I wanted more. I spent the better part of a year swapping in a Toyota 1JZ engine. I was one of the earliest to complete this engine swap in the United States. It was an inline-6 and created over 500 horsepower.

I taught myself everything. I turned every bolt. I tried, failed, and kept learning. I did hours and hours of research. I learned everything there was to know about this particular engine.

The result was incredible. It was a product of late nights and the relentless pursuit of building something special. I was actively competing in this car in a Pro Amateur Formula Drift circuit — a type of drifting where competitors purposefully power slide their cars around a designated course.

During an event, I would use roughly 14-20 tires. I competed in this car all over the country, experiencing the perfect mix of adrenaline and precision driving. I cold-called and cold-emailed businesses for potential sponsorships. I did all the maintenance and upkeep on the car. I fine-tuned the car's suspension and engine control computer for peak performance.

Bottom line: I was obsessed. That car taught me so much. It taught me the value of dedication. It taught me the value of the pursuit of information. Most of all, it taught me courage.

My toolset has expanded quite a bit since those early days. My love of automobiles translates almost daily into skills I use in my work as a personal injury lawyer. I love learning about the physics of car crash reconstruction and the nuts and bolts of the how and why of each crash. While I do not get to work on a project car much these days, I know the day will come when another fun project car will hit my driveway.

# TRIALS & THEIR TALES

- NEWSLETTER -

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## WINNING ELEMENTS

### Focused Energy: The Key to Law Firm Success

A good friend of mine told me that every six months, you have a new law firm. Meaning the cases you took then, you may not take now. Or the cases that were taking up your time then may not qualify to take up your time now. The practice is dynamic and always shifting. It is very difficult to get a handle on it. Nothing can be set in stone. Everything must be malleable. And focused energy is scarce.

*“Above all, this noise is the desire of our entire team to be the best, to do the right thing, and to stand for those who need it.”*

We try with significant effort to make sound procedures at our office. We work with vendors to help with our processes. We spend lots of time and money every month to make sure our efforts are directed at getting the best results. And we still fail sometimes. It is frustrating.

We do not always have the right answers, no matter how many times we do something. I think that is what drives me crazy some days. We are not making a

product — we are practicing a constantly evolving set of laws. We are trying to predict what text means, what judges will do, and what juries think. I can barely predict how I will drive to work every day. How can I predict what 12 people I've never met will do?

Focused energy is scarce. It is a valuable resource but it is not in abundant supply. The ability to get into a flow state, without interruption, is perhaps the best skill one can acquire. At best, I've seen a couple hours of focused energy per day. That is at the height of productivity when my goal is clear and no one is interrupting. We should guard that space vigorously. We should foster that energy. But more and more, it requires very clear objectives. That is where we fall short at my office. My objectives for the team are too often totally muddled and poorly communicated, if I communicate them at all.

I've found that running a small business is messy. The people you work with matter the most. Are they competent and trustworthy? Who is a problem-solver? If you can get a team of problem-solvers, you can really do well. We are constantly tweaking and reworking to find the right calibration for the business. I think calibrating is the right idea. Sometimes, we will get out of whack and need to be reset.



Calibrating involves the idea of constant monitoring. Sometimes, we can be rolling in one area and need to address another. We have many irons in the fire, so we are moving them consistently to keep the best heat.

So, what is all this rambling? Honestly, I have no idea, but it is an outlet. This rambling is snapshot into my head most mornings. And above all, this noise is the desire of our entire team to be the best, to do the right thing and to stand for those who need it. Those are things we can calibrate to and focus our energy on.

*Chr.*



# Family Road Trips Done Right

## TIPS FOR TRAVELING WITH YOUR CREW

A family road trip is a great way to make memories with the people you love. But along with all the adventure, you can expect challenges. What's the key to making the journey as pleasurable as the destination? Preparation. A little planning will go a long way toward making your road trip easy, fun, and memorable — in a good way.

### Checking for Vehicle Safety

Your trip's safety depends on your car's safety, so a thorough vehicle inspection is essential. This includes checking tires, brakes, lights, and fluid levels. A professional assessment can provide added peace of mind if your car hasn't been to the mechanic recently. And don't forget the emergency kit. At a minimum, you need a spare tire, jumper cables, first-aid supplies, and basic tools.

### Packing Essentials

Road trips can quickly head south (figuratively!) without the necessities. Packing healthy snacks and plenty of water will keep everyone hydrated and satisfied between meal breaks. Bringing pillows, blankets, and loose-fitting clothing will ensure comfort on long drives. And don't forget the entertainment. Create playlists to cut down on disputes over the radio, and bring audiobooks and travel games for when you need a break from the music.

### Planning the Route

GPS devices and smartphone apps make modern travel a breeze with real-time directions and traffic updates. However, some areas of the country have poor cell service. Downloading your route before your trip can avoid the headache of spotty internet service. It's also wise to bookmark any stops you



plan to make. This includes roadside attractions and rest areas for restrooms and meal breaks.

### Setting the Ground Rules

Families often forget to review their rules for car travel. Setting expectations early on can make all the difference. Start by establishing rules for in-car behavior — no screaming, arguing, or distracting the driver. Then, to make it easier to maintain the peace, involve the kids in creating a list of car-friendly activities. Consider implementing a rotation system for seating, snack selection, and playlist control to help keep things under control.

While you likely have a destination goal, road trips are just as much about the time you spend getting there. By following a few tips, you can have a great family adventure.



Dogs are the nation's most popular pets. The canine population has risen nearly 70% since 1996 to almost 90 million, compared with 74 million cats.

Unfortunately, the number of insurance claims for dog bite injuries is rising, too. Claims rose at an annual rate of 8.3% in 2023 to 19,062 nationwide, at an average cost per claim of \$58,545, reflecting rising medical costs and a trend among judges and juries toward larger damage awards, according to the Insurance Information Institute.

Dog bites can cause devastating injuries and leave scars for life. Children are at increased risk because they aren't likely to recognize signs of canine aggression,

# SAFETY FIRST

## Reversing the Rise in Dog Bite Injuries

and their faces are often the first place attacked. The total number of dog bite incidents per year has reached 4.7 million, half of them children between the ages of 5 and 9, according to WebMD.

Missouri holds dog owners liable for damages to victims of dog bites, even if the owner took precautions to prevent the attack or restrain the dog. The owner is subject to a fine of \$1,000 and other damages to the injured person, including medical bills.

However, if the victim is at fault to some degree, through taunting or provoking the dog, the owner's liability will be reduced in proportion to the victim's fault. Also, the owner can only be held liable if the victim was on public or private property legally (rather than trespassing).

Well-informed training and supervision of pets could prevent many of these

injuries. Pet owners should never encourage playful biting or nipping. Use a harness, muzzle, or head halter if your dog is going to be around strangers, and never allow your pet to run outside unleashed. If your dog is prone to aggressive behavior, enlist a professional trainer certified in dealing with aggressive dogs.

Also, adults should keep children away from dogs they don't know and never leave them alone with an unfamiliar dog. Adults and children alike should never approach a dog too quickly or come too close when they are eating or feeding puppies. Pets that appear nervous or overwhelmed may bite someone out of sheer anxiety.

With a little training and education, pet owners can ensure their dogs play their customary role in our lives — as "man's best friend."

# DISTRACTED DRIVING

Distracted driving is a deadly epidemic jeopardizing more motorists and pedestrians with each passing year, federal safety officials say. In 2022, more than 3,300 people were killed by motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers. According to insurance industry data, distracted driving incidents rose 10% between 2022 and 2023.

In recognition of April as Distracted Driving Awareness Month, this is a good time to reflect on what the trend means for you, as either a driver or a pedestrian. The Day of Awareness was mandated by Congress in 2010 after a 9-year-old girl on a bicycle was struck and killed by an SUV driver talking on a cellphone.

Any behavior that takes your eyes or focus off the road, from fiddling with your vehicle's audio control touchscreen to eating or applying makeup, is defined as distracted driving. But texting behind the wheel is an especially widespread

hazard. If a driver traveling at 55 mph glances away for five seconds to read a text, their vehicle will travel the length of an entire football field during that time — ample distance to swerve off the road, cause a crash, or strike a pedestrian.

Pedestrian casualties in the St. Louis area hit a 19-year high in 2021, based on the latest data available, largely because drivers are paying less attention. Many of these casualties took place on labeled crosswalks or in stopped traffic.

Motorists and pedestrians alike should be highly vigilant, remaining aware of oncoming cars and never assuming the person behind the wheel is paying attention. Pedestrians should never cross a roadway outside a crosswalk or against a pedestrian walk signal.

Unfortunately, distracted driving can be hard to prove in personal-injury cases. Many clients who come to us after

## A Deadly Epidemic Is on the Rise

being injured by an inattentive driver are certain the offender was texting while driving. But proving that is very difficult without eyewitness testimony at the time of impact. Our investigators can collect cellphone records and any surveillance video available from nearby businesses, homes, or dashcams. In some cases, crash data may be available from the driver's vehicle safety system. But linking that precisely with the time of the impact is difficult.

If you have been involved in a motor vehicle accident, call us to schedule a consultation. We will gather all possible evidence on your behalf and secure the fairest and most satisfactory outcome possible.



Inspired by AllRecipes.com

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1/2 tsp celery seed
- 4 cups vegetable or chicken broth
- 16 oz fresh gnocchi
- 1/2 cup half-and-half
- 8 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled, divided
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese, divided
- 2 tbsp chopped chives
- Salt and pepper, to taste

### DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add onion and celery seed and cook until onion is soft and translucent, about 4 minutes.
2. Add broth to the pot and bring to a boil. Add gnocchi and cook for about 3 minutes, then stir in half-and-half and 1/2 of the bacon.
3. Remove from heat and add 3/4 cup cheese, then rest until thickened, about 5 minutes.
4. Top with remaining cheese, chives, and bacon as desired.

## YOUR REFERRALS MEAN THE WORLD TO US

There is no greater compliment we can receive than a client telling a friend or loved one about us. If you know somebody who has been injured and needs an attorney who will fight on their behalf and give their case the attention it deserves, please pass along this newsletter and have them call us at 314-293-4222. Thank you for spreading the word about Finney Injury Law.