



# TRIALS & THEIR TALES

- NEWSLETTER -

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## FROM LITIGATOR TO LEADER

### *The Challenges of Leading a Law Firm*

There seems to be a significant difference between managing and leading. At least, that is what I am starting to discover these days.

As I have mentioned before, our office seems to be in a perpetual state of growth. Each day, each week, each month, it seems a new problem comes up that we must actively work to solve. It begs the question: Will the problems ever be solved and go away?

I'm pretty certain the answer is no, which is why I have hired people to help handle these issues. Sometimes, it seems like the workday is a game of whack-a-mole, and on other days, it flows seamlessly.

When I think of managing, I think more of catering to the people I work with — addressing their problems, addressing their needs, and making sure they have the tools to accomplish their work. But when I think of leading, something else comes to mind. It may sound harsh, but leading is less about caring for the emotions of the people beneath you and more about what you are trying to show them. Leading seems to be about looking forward, while managing seems to be more about looking inward. I might have this totally backward, but as this law firm grows, this is my experience. Leaders will not always be liked or understood. Their reasons for doing things are different from those of a manager.

In the end, a manager's responsibilities are probably heavier because the manager is responsible for the morale of the people, while the leader is only responsible for charging forward. Can you do both? At this point, I don't think so, but my mind is constantly changing on challenges I encounter in business and life. I'm sure there are phenomenal people out there who are able to lead and manage effectively at the same time. It's becoming very clear I am not one of those people.

Direct conversations with coworkers are difficult. They aren't fun. But they need to take place because if they don't, there will be no leadership. And if a leader abdicates that role, the firm cannot move forward. Moving forward is important because it includes everyone on the team. It means improving not only their lives, but the lives of our clients as well.

There are very few things I know for sure, but one of them is that I will continue to make mistakes. The other is that I will do so from a place of leadership — or that I will at least try. At times, I have let down people on my team, and some have no doubt disagreed with some of my decisions. In other cases, they may not have understood them.

My job is not to ensure people on my team understand everything we do but to earn their trust as we move forward. It is the same with my clients. They may not understand everything we do, but as long as I have their trust, we can do right by them. We can do well for them. And we can take the lead for them and support them in some of the most important decisions they will make.

*"Sometimes, it seems like the workday is a game of whack-a-mole, and on other days, it flows seamlessly."*

Chris



# AUTUMN ANGLING

*Where, When, and How to Hook Fish This Fall*

As cooler temperatures, golden leaves, and holidays roll in, fall is one of the best-kept secrets in fishing. While many pack up their rods after summer, savvy anglers know autumn is when the real magic happens. Fish feed aggressively as they prepare for winter, and the crowds of people enjoying the water have thinned out.

A few tweaks can level up your fishing game this season, whether you're chasing bass, crappie, or trout.

## **TARGET SHALLOW WATERS**

As temperatures drop, baitfish like shad move into the backs of creeks and embayments. Predatory fish such as bass and crappie follow, making these areas hotspots. Focus your efforts on these shallow zones to increase your catch rate.

## **EXPERIMENT WITH DEPTHS**

Fall turnover can scatter fish throughout various depths. Don't hesitate to try different depths until you locate active fish. Using a fish finder can help you identify these productive zones.

## **FISH THROUGHOUT THE DAY**

Unlike summer, when fish are most active during dawn and dusk, fall fish feed more consistently throughout the day. This allows for flexible fishing schedules without the need for early starts.

## **FOCUS ON STRUCTURE**

Fish gravitate toward structures like submerged wood and rocky banks during fall. These areas provide shelter and warmth, and targeting them can lead to successful catches.

## **MATCH THE CATCH**

In fall, baitfish grow larger. Adjust your lure size and color to mimic the prevalent forage in your fishing area. This increases the likelihood of enticing bites.

## **EXPLORE STOCKED WATERS**

Many lakes and streams are stocked with trout and catfish in the fall. These fish are often eager to bite, providing excellent opportunities for anglers.

## **UTILIZE LIVE BAIT**

Live bait can be particularly effective in cooler temperatures. Minnows, nightcrawlers, and shad can more effectively entice sluggish fish than artificial lures.

## **MONITOR WATER CONDITIONS**

Fall often brings changes in water levels due to drawdowns. Stay informed about these conditions, as they influence fish locations and behavior.

# BUCKLE UP FOR LIFE

Proper Car Seats Cut Child Crash Deaths



Many parents pop their small children in and out of car seats multiple times a day while running errands or making routine trips, assuming they are safe.

If you are among those moms and dads, are you sure your child is secure?

Car seats and booster seats only work when they are properly installed and the child is correctly buckled in. And nearly 3 of every 4 car seats are installed or used improperly, according to a national database on nearly 72,000 car seat inspections.

Car accidents are a leading cause of death for Missouri youngsters 12 and under. Some 1 in 5 of those killed or seriously injured in car crashes were

not properly restrained in a safety seat or belt. The most common errors are fastening the seat too loosely into the car, placing the belt clips improperly, or leaving the harness too tight or too loose across the child's body.

Correct use of car seats reduces injuries by 71% for children under 1, and by 54% for children ages 1-4, federal data show. And booster seats are linked to a 45% reduction in injury risk for children ages 4-8.

Also, many parents move their children out of car seats and into booster seats too soon. Missouri law requires all children under 8 to ride in a safety or booster seat until they reach 80 pounds in weight or 4 feet, 9 inches

in height. Youngsters under 4 years of age, or less than 40 pounds, must be in a child safety seat. A child who is 4-7 years old or weighs at least 40 pounds can sit in either a safety seat or a booster seat. Children over 8 years of age, or over 80 pounds or 4 feet, 9 inches tall, can be secured by either a safety belt or a well-fitted booster seat. A driver can be pulled over and ticketed for no other reason than violating these child safety laws.

If you would like help determining whether your child's car seat is safe, check the Missouri Department of Transportation website for information about Car Seat Check events and services in your area.

# The Real Halloween Fright

## DRIVERS IN THE NIGHT

As witches and goblins wander your neighborhood this Halloween, be mindful of the holiday's biggest real-life safety risk: oncoming cars.

The risk of accidents is high as children, teens, and adults in dark costumes roam neighborhoods at dusk or after dark. Already one of the most dangerous days of the year for pedestrians, Halloween this year falls on a Friday, elevating the risk still more. Youngsters are likely to trick-or-treat later into the night, and adults tend to consume more alcohol when they don't have to work the next day. In one recent year, 39% of fatal car accidents on Halloween involved drivers who had been drinking or taking drugs, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Oct. 31 is the second most dangerous day of the year for pedestrians, behind Jan. 1, according to federal safety statistics. Pedestrian deaths are 43% higher on Halloween than on other nights around the same time, according to a study of accident statistics. From 6–9 p.m. is the most dangerous period, when "legions of kids roaming the streets" and adult partiers driving home create "a dangerous witches' brew," according to the study's lead author.

Here are a few steps on staying safe:

- If you will be consuming alcohol away from home, plan ahead for transportation afterward by a ride-sharing service or designated driver. If you've been drinking, don't get behind the wheel of *any* vehicle — not even a golf cart, ATV, or bicycle.
- Dress for safety. Trick-or-treaters and other revellers should avoid all-black attire. Adults should accompany children 12 and under, and costumes should include reflective tape and glow sticks. Also, avoid masks that restrict children's vision.
- If you must drive on Halloween, drive defensively and be on the lookout for dark-costumed trick-or-treaters, as well as impaired drivers on the road.

If you or a loved one is injured, call 911 if you need emergency help. If you are able, take photos at the scene and gather contact information from any witnesses, and seek medical attention immediately, even if you don't think your injuries are serious.

Don't hesitate to call us for guidance if you are dealing with an injury or property damage. We will be glad to consult with you free of charge about your best next steps.



## Creamy Braised Short Ribs

*Inspired by RecipesByJanet.com*

*Enjoy the hearty taste of fall with these flavorful braised short ribs in a creamy herb sauce.*

### INGREDIENTS

- 5 lbs bone-in short ribs
- Ground black pepper
- 1 yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 6 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 tbsp fresh thyme leaves
- 1 cup white wine or broth
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup chopped kale (optional)
- 4 tbsp salted butter, divided
- 8 fresh sage leaves

### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 325 F.
2. In a large braiser, season short ribs with black pepper. Scatter onion, garlic, and thyme over ribs. Pour in white wine or broth and 1/2 cup water.
3. Cover the braiser with a lid and roast for 2 1/2–3 hours.
4. Increase temperature to 400 F. Remove the lid, skim excess fat, and stir in heavy cream, kale, and 2 tbsp butter. Roast uncovered for 10–20 minutes.
5. Heat a small skillet over medium heat. Melt remaining butter and fry sage leaves until crisp.
6. Serve ribs hot with creamy sauce, garnished with sage.

## 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.



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## FINNEY INJURY LAW

- TRIAL LAWYERS -

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*The choice of a lawyer is an important one and should not be based solely upon advertisements.*



## ALEX ON REVAMPING CLIENT INTAKE *The Power of a Smooth Start*

We are in the process of revamping the intake procedure at our firm. Listening to and questioning callers and determining whether we can help them is one of the most important aspects of what we do. It is the client's first communication with us, and it makes a lasting impression. As simple as it may seem, the process can quickly become complicated and cumbersome.

The key to a successful intake call is to obtain enough information to decide whether the plaintiff is viable and has a viable claim. What makes a viable claim? Every case we work on is, at its core, a negligence claim. Negligence is defined as the failure of a fellow citizen, business, or governmental entity to use

reasonable care, resulting in damage or injury to another.

To bring a successful negligence claim, we must prove the following elements:

- **Duty:** Did the defendant have a legal duty in the situation, such as a driver's duty to drive their car with the highest degree of care, or a business owner's duty to salt an icy parking lot in winter?
- **Breach:** Did the defendant fail to perform, such as running a stop sign?
- **Causation:** Did the defendant's breach of duty cause damage or injury to the plaintiff?
- **Damages:** If all these elements are met, what compensation is owed the plaintiff?

We also do our best during intake to make an accurate assessment of the potential client. Is this the type of person we want to stand up for in trial, to serve as their advocate? Is the case worth the financial investment necessary to bring it to trial? We also must determine whether we practice in the area of the law the caller needs. If not, we refer them to lawyers who specialize in that area.

Ultimately, our goal in revamping our intake procedures is to make a positive first impression on every caller. Even if we cannot help them, I want them to feel as if they received top-notch service. While our revamp is currently a work in progress, I hope it will pave the way to a smoother future.