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PERSONAL INJURY TRIAL ATTORNEYS

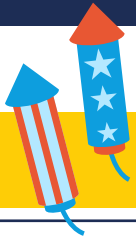
Exclusively handling serious and catastrophic personal injury claims as well as wrongful death claims due to the negligence of individuals or business entities.



The Right Help When You Need It Most!

June/July 2020

- AUTO COLLISIONS
- MOTORCYCLE COLLISIONS
- BICYCLE ACCIDENTS
- TRIP/SLIP-AND-FALL ACCIDENTS
- CONSTRUCTION SITE ACCIDENTS
- ELDER ABUSE CLAIMS
- BRAIN TRAUMA CLAIMS
- WRONGFUL DEATH CLAIMS



FOURTH OF JULY FUN IN THE SUN

(Even During a Pandemic)



My wife, Helene, and I have been blessed with four daughters. Jessica, third on the hit parade, is our artist. She lives in San Francisco, has a bachelor's degree in fine arts, and dyes her hair blue on a regular basis. Even though Jessica lives in an area of California that doesn't necessarily extol patriotism all day long — seems like they've been "anti" since the '60s — the Fourth of July is her favorite holiday.

It was odd hearing that from Jess because I would have assumed her favorite holiday would be more traditional, like Christmas or Thanksgiving, but Jessica says she loves everything about the Fourth. She loves the colors (duh, Dad), the low-stress nature of the holiday, and the fact that "everyone's happy." It is also a great opportunity to get together with the family in the middle of the year. (Ironically, Jess was the only one missing this year because of the pandemic.)

To Jess's point, most of the holidays cluster at the end and beginning of each year, with very little happening in between. But you can't go an entire year without having some form of family fun, so the Fourth of July is the perfect reason to get everyone together. If you think about it, it is a little like the opposite of Christmas: You're out in the sun and not bundled up and typically at a beach or a park instead of tucked inside on a cold or snowy day.

The Fourth is also a time for both family and friends to get together for a big celebration of our wonderful country (244 years and counting). Of course, the United States has

had, and continues to have, flaws, but as probably our greatest president Abraham Lincoln once said, the United States is still "the last best hope of earth."

When the girls were young, we used to host the biggest party of the year at our house on the Fourth. We would sometimes have 40–50 people over, which was always a fun time for me. (Not sure about my wife and even the girls, but, hey, Dad was happy!) I'm someone who enjoys big get-togethers, but Helene prefers far smaller groups. Still, she was always game to mingle with everyone, and I very much appreciated that. Nowadays, our parties usually involve fewer people, which, of course, I rightly agree to, since I literally have had my fun in the sun.

My love for big gatherings is something that comes from my big family. I have four brothers and a sister, and we aren't what you would call a quiet family. We are a pretty loud, Irish Catholic, "I can talk louder than you" kind of family, which also may not have been appealing for the bit more introverted Helene.

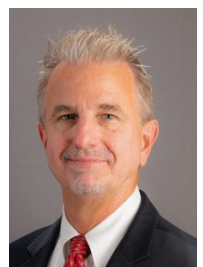
Parties do cost money though, and with the pandemic and shutdown, both finances and social distancing may not have allowed most people to celebrate like they normally would on the Fourth. (Jessica not being with us was an example of that.) However, our three other girls along with a couple of sons-in-law and the cutest granddaughter in the world — no bias here as that is an objective fact! — were able to have a very fun day, even with all that is swirling around us.

The lesson I learned from this Fourth was that you can have fun AND, at the same time, still keep your family safe and be mindful of the community. We had all been quarantining within our own "pod" prior to the holiday. (Our last newsletter extolled the virtues of how our team at Russell & Lazarus have all learned to work from home, which has made the quarantine process easier.)

In the past, admittedly I would sometimes lose that "fun" focus because building and running a law firm can be intense and requires singular focus, at least for me. As I'm getting older though, I'm seeing how the fun part is the more important part because that is the part that helps establish the deeper relationships that really define the quality of our lives.

So, I am hoping that as we wave goodbye in the rearview mirror to the Fourth of July, all of you reading this newsletter also had a fun but safe holiday. I also wish that all your important relationships were strengthened over the long holiday weekend and that the rest of your summer can also be fun, even during these weird and strange times.

—Chris Russell



THE CASE THAT WAS FROZEN ON ARRIVAL

The Woman Who Sued Disney for Copying Her Life in 'Frozen'



This is the story of a woman who just couldn't let it go. It was the fall of 2014 — Dennis Rodman became friends with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Ellen DeGeneres' selfie with Oscar winners at the Academy Awards became the most retweeted image of all time. And an author sued Disney for \$250 million after she claimed that the company stole major elements of her published memoir to craft the movie "Frozen."

"Frozen" was released in November 2013 and saw massive box office success and critical acclaim. It seemed like Walt Disney Animation Studios was finally hitting their stride and catching up to Pixar movies' quality animation and storytelling. Unfortunately, high-profile movie projects

and financiers with deep pockets tend to attract all sorts of hullabaloo in the form of frivolous lawsuits.

Author Isabella Tanikumi, whose only notable work to date is her 2011 memoir "Yearnings of the Heart," sued Disney for an egregious \$250 million after claiming that the winter wonderland adventures of Anna, Elsa, and Olaf were stolen straight from her memoir and her life and violated copyright law. She cited 18 "similarities" to bolster her massive claim. For instance, Tanikumi claimed that both her book and the movie had stories of intense sisterly love, scenes under the moon, and talk about cold hearts.

The tenuousness of the similarities alone would cause most people to dismiss

Tanikumi's claim like they would the ramblings of a red yarn-loving conspiracy theorist. And that's just what the judge who oversaw the case did, granting Disney's motion to dismiss. The judge stated that copyright law protects expressions but not ideas. The themes that Tanikumi believed Disney had stolen from her story were under public domain, usable by anyone without permission.

Only Tanikumi herself knows for sure why she went through all that trouble. Everyone else will just have to speculate what gave her the gall to take on a media juggernaut like Disney in court with next to no viable case. That said, several reviews of her memoir on Amazon mention ties to "Frozen," so make of that what you will.

TEAM MEMBER FEATURE

Meet Hillary Jones

Finding a Passion and Pursuing a Career

The pandemic has influenced all of our lives in one way or another, and for our litigation clerk, Hillary Jones, it's no different. Hillary loves being around other people, and the virus has made that much more difficult. However, she's had plenty of time to hang out with her new rescue pup. Hillary loves animals and the outdoors. She and her new puppy are glued at the hip, going on all sorts of adventures from hiking to walking along the beach.

Even though she's unable to spend as much time as she likes with other people, Hillary still takes immense pride in helping however she can. Hillary has been part of the Russell & Lazarus team for the past three and a half years. "The best part of what I do here is all of it, though that might sound a bit cheesy," she says.

While she loves working at our office, it wasn't originally on her radar.

"I was jumping around from the restaurant world into the more corporate office," Hillary explains. "When I finally decided I needed something more, I started to look at Russell & Lazarus. I'd always been interested in law, and when I learned more about the firm, I was amazed. Everyone here seemed to have so much fun while working, and I loved the way they treated their clients and staff. It was only a couple of days after I interviewed with them that I started here, and I was really happy."

Before picking up a position here, Hillary considered going into law herself. "I had an interest in either working in law enforcement or being an attorney, but I ended up not taking either of these routes. But working with the team here allowed me to dig in my roots and helped my interest and passion grow. I figured out what I wanted to do for a career and went back to school." Hillary plans on becoming a court

reporter, an exciting career that will allow her to continue to follow her passion for law while also traveling. "I'm eternally grateful for everything they've given me. I've been able to go to school full time and continue working here, and they've shown me nothing but support the whole time."

Russell & Lazarus is here to help individuals like Hillary in their pursuit of a career in the law field. No matter what it may be, we're proud to offer the support individuals need along their journey.



CASE STUDY

How Short-Term Profits Created a Tragedy

We all know that the point of business is to make money. However, we see a lot of businesses cut corners to amplify profits and productivity. Often these cuts come at the expense of workers. Our team at Russell & Lazarus recently resolved a high-value claim for our client who was a victim of this type of corner-cutting.

CASE FACTS Our client, who was in his early 50s, worked at a local manufacturing plant that produced construction materials. He was working on a large and powerful manufacturing press machine that formed wood parts. The machine was supposed to have a guard on it to prevent the clothing of workers from being tangled up and pulled into the machine. Unfortunately for our client, the company allegedly purposefully decided to take off that guard in an effort to increase productivity. As he was working with the machine, our client's pant leg got caught on one of the rollers, where the guard was supposed to be, causing his lower body to be rolled into the pressing mechanism, which resulted in crushing injuries to both legs.

THE OUTCOME Normally under California law, a person can't sue his/her employer for an injury sustained while on the job. Instead, they must file for workers' compensation benefits, which most times fall significantly short on compensating injured workers. There are several exceptions to this "can't sue your employer" rule, but they are very narrow. The key was finding the exception. We believed taking off the guard was such an exception.

As a result, we filed a lawsuit, and during the course of litigation, we sent out a 40-page Demand Letter, demanding the policy limits of \$6 million from the insurance carrier. This placed a tremendous amount of pressure on them because we were more than willing to roll the dice and take our chances at trial. The carrier caved soon thereafter and offered the \$6 million, the most we could get under the circumstances.

Although the settlement can't replace what our client has lost and has suffered, it will provide him with income for the rest of his



life, and he no longer has to work. If he had been subject to only receiving workers' compensation benefits, that would not have been the case.

Knowing how to handle substantial and complex cases is what we do best here at Russell & Lazarus, as many law firms would have passed on the claim. We are glad we were able to use our almost 100 years of combined attorney experience to help our deserving client get the best result possible.

A LAW FIRM FAVORITE RECIPE!

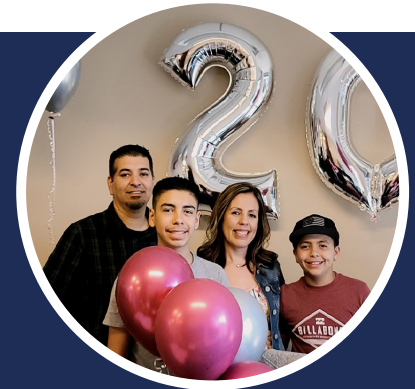
This super easy recipe is delicious and a firm favorite. It is a must-serve at our office potlucks. We are always extra excited when Teri Penniston, our Director of Operations, brings in fresh avocados straight from her tree! Plus, all ingredients can be purchased at Trader Joe's!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 jar Trader Joe's Corn and Chile Salsa
- 4-oz container crumbled goat cheese
- 1 large avocado, mashed

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and stir until cheese and avocado are blended into the salsa. Serve with Trader Joe's Savory Thin Crackers!



ROSIE'S 20TH! CONGRATULATIONS!

Congrats to Rosie for putting up with me for 20 years on this, her 20th anniversary with the firm. Rosie was fresh out of high school when we hired her. She had a different last name, was not married to Mike, did not have her two handsome boys, and was new to the legal business. Now she is the backbone of our pre-litigation department, imparting her wisdom on all who are smart enough to listen. Thank you, Rosie, from the bottom of my heart!

-Chris



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INSIDE this issue



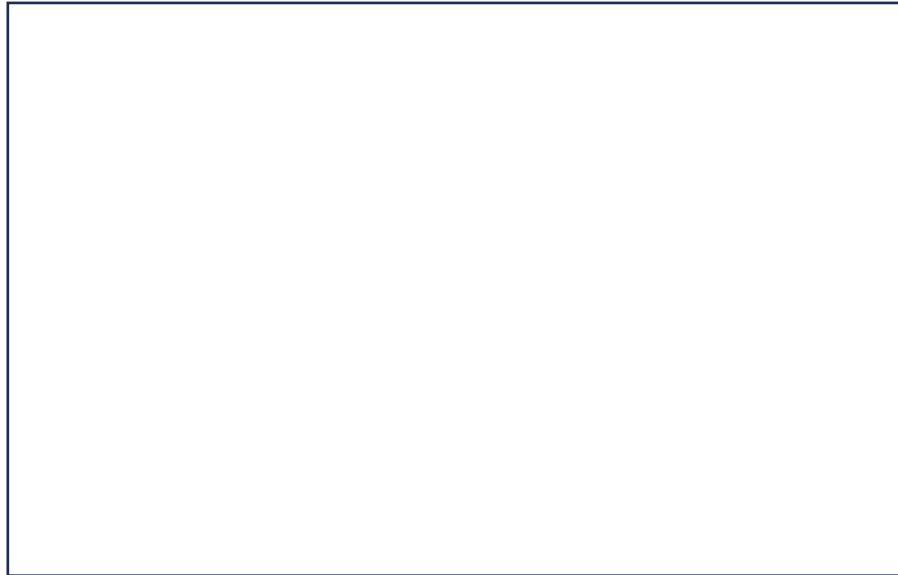
Super Lawyers

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A Law Firm Favorite Recipe!

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Case Results



TESTIMONIALS

I just want to give a big shoutout to the best law firm in California. You guys rock! I would like to start by saying that if you need an attorney, these are definitely the guys. I was about to sign papers in a case where I would have received almost nothing, but a friend of mine told me to call these guys. Within a few weeks, I found out that my previous attorney had not done some of the fundamental footwork, and after reviewing the details of my case, I was informed that it was a very good thing I did not sign the papers with my previous attorney.

As it turns out, some very important details were overlooked, and the guys at Russell & Lazarus left no stone unturned. I was severely injured, and at the end of the day, I was going to receive no compensation whatsoever. I would like to give a big thanks to Samuel Mendez, Mark Lazarus, and their thorough team. I am now receiving what I would consider to be more than fair. Thank you guys so much for all your knowledge and expertise. So glad to have you in my corner. Really appreciate you going the extra mile!

Super happy client and friend forever,

-Colby Conway

2 CASE RESULTS

Our 56-year-old hair stylist client was driving to her home in Laguna Niguel when she was broadsided by an inattentive driver while she was turning left through in an intersection. She injured her neck and upper back. Conservative treatment referred by our office was helpful, but surgery was being considered, although the residual pain was not impacting normal activities ... and then COVID-19 hit. No surgery could take place. We then attended a socially distant mediation, and although the medical bills were only \$50,000, the claim resolved for \$275,000, which was a very strong settlement for a nonsurgical claim.

Our 49-year-old client was driving with his wife on Interstate 405 in rush-hour traffic when they were rear-ended by a driver who was texting. The wife/passenger took the brunt of the impact, sustaining two dislocated fingers, a laceration to her scalp, and neck and low back injuries. Her claim was made more complicated because of a myriad number of underlying, preexisting health conditions that prevented all of the recommended treatment. A well-guided deposition of our client did allow her story to come out, which then allowed us to resolve her claim prior to trial at a mediation, modified due to COVID-19, for a robust \$230,000.