

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Why We Do What We Do [page 1](#)
- The Origin of New Year's Day [page 2](#)
- My Wife, the Woodworker [page 2](#)
- Our Pledge to You [page 3](#)
- Citrus and Avocado Salad [page 3](#)
- Photo of the Month [page 4](#)



PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Kate Refine (left) with our client Carolyn Robertshaw (right)

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WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

There are certain moments in our work that remind us of why we represent the vulnerable. Oct. 31, 2018, was one of them. On that day, our client, Carolyn Robertshaw, returned to her home after spending nearly three years living in nursing homes.

We were initially called to help Carolyn on Feb. 20, 2016. Twelve days earlier, in Lemont, Illinois, a truck had crashed into Carolyn's Toyota Prius as she was traveling to her dentist's office.

Carolyn was in the hospital with absolutely no memory of the crash. The only other witness was the truck driver, who alleged that Carolyn had run a red light and struck the truck as the company driver was turning left under a green arrow light. When we initially met, Carolyn was way behind the insurance and trucking companies. She needed legal help.

When we are first hired in a serious injury case, we start with the basics. We obtain the police report, locate the vehicles, contact and interview witnesses, review the scene, and get our experts the evidence they need to review as soon as possible. After our initial investigation, we realized the trucking company's version of the crash did not add up. We filed Carolyn's case, obtained subpoena power, and gathered as much information from the company as possible.

The insurance company and the trucking company stonewalled us repeatedly, delaying the production of evidence. When we started taking depositions of the trucking company's representatives, the facts became clearer. The company had failed to adequately train the truck driver. She'd had no prior commercial driving experience; in fact, the date of the crash was her first day driving the truck solo. She had taken a wrong turn off the Stevenson Expressway and was attempting to turn around, but she was not fully capable of handling the challenges associated with operating a commercial vehicle.

When I first spoke with the trucking company's insurance representatives, the message was clear: the insurance company was never going to pay Carolyn anything because, allegedly, she had caused the crash. What did we learn in our investigation? Here are a few highlights:

1. All the trucking company's telephone calls on the day of the crash were recorded. Even though our law firm notified the trucking company to preserve all recordings on the date we were hired, the company representatives deleted them right before our depositions of company employees.
2. The insurance company originally told us the policy limits for the trucking company were \$1 million. Then, suddenly, they were \$3 million. We asked for a certified copy, which then revealed liability limits of \$5 million.
3. In the police report, the company truck driver never mentioned anything about turning left on a green arrow.
4. At his deposition, the owner of the truck company pleaded the Fifth Amendment, refusing to answer questions about whether or not he had signed a federal form affirming that the company had minimal safety mechanisms in place to train its workers and protect the general public.
5. Our team of experts determined that in order for the truck driver's version to make sense, Carolyn would have had to be traveling at over 200 mph in her Toyota Prius prior to the crash.

In essence, our investigation revealed that the lion's share of fault for the crash pointed to the trucking company, not Carolyn. We were prepared to try the case. Our legal bags were packed, the witnesses were prepared, and our client was ready for her day in court. Right before trial, the insurance company offered Carolyn the full policy limit — \$5 million — to settle her case. With this settlement, she was able to return home and live independently.

We are so grateful to Carolyn for entrusting us with this sensitive matter. Thank you, Carolyn! I am so proud of the work done by our team. Pat Cummings, Jon Svitak, Brittany Peterson, and Kate Refine each worked tirelessly to bring this case together. We stand ready for our next trial, and we look forward to helping Carolyn in the future.

-Joe Shannon

The month of January kicks off by welcoming the new year — there are countdowns, fireworks, and of course, the ball drop in a freezing-cold Times Square. But why? Why do we start our calendars when much of the U.S. is in the dead of winter? Why January? The short answer is Julius Caesar and Roman politics.

The calendar had long been a political tool in Rome. Depending on who was in power, Roman pontifices would add or subtract entire weeks from the year, manually adjusting the term limits of elected officials. As you could imagine, this caused a lot of chaos, because months frequently slipped out of time with the changing seasons. After becoming emperor, Julius Caesar brought about some much-needed reforms.

Inspired by the Egyptian solar calendar, Caesar fixed the Roman year at 365 days and instituted the leap year to keep months aligned with the solstices. He moved the new year from the spring to the day that elected officials traditionally began their year-long terms, Jan. 1.

This choice carried spiritual significance, since January was named for Janus, god of doors and gates. What better month to celebrate new beginnings? Under Caesar and subsequent rulers, the Roman Empire expanded its reach, carrying its calendar with it. While much of Europe adopted Caesar's calendar, New Year's Day remained a hot-button issue for centuries.

Thanks in part to the spread of Christianity and to the colder conditions in Northern Europe, there was a lot of resistance to the January start date. Religious leaders saw it as a pagan holiday, and much of Europe chose to restart the calendar on March 25, during the Feast of Annunciation. Much of Catholic Europe officially recognized January 1 as the start of the new year after Pope Gregory reformed the solar calendar again, correcting certain mathematical errors made in Caesar's day. There were still holdouts, however. In fact, England and its American colonies continued to celebrate New Year's Day in March until 1752.

So there you have it — we were very close to having our fireworks celebrations in lovely spring weather. Ultimately, the ubiquity of the Gregorian calendar won out, as the demands of our increasingly interconnected world made a shared calendar a necessity. So if you struggle to start your New Year's resolutions this winter, blame Julius Caesar.

OUR PLEDGE TO YOU

At our law firm, we have very high expectations for ourselves and how we treat our clients. Here's what our clients should expect from us once we are retained:

1. We will treat you with respect.
2. We will treat you how we would like to be treated.
3. We will shoulder the stresses and burdens of dealing with insurance companies so that you can focus on your physical recovery.
4. We will be an aggressive advocate for you.
5. We will deliver straightforward advice.
6. We will make every attempt to move your case toward resolution as quickly as possible.
7. We will try your case before a jury, if necessary.
8. We will provide you with reasonable expectations regarding outcomes.
9. We will return your calls within 24 hours.
10. If we can't help you, we will try to help you find someone who can.



MY WIFE, THE WOODWORKER

My wife, Sam, recently signed up for a woodworking class taught on the northwest side of Chicago. After just two classes, she came home with a beautifully stained, masterfully crafted, multiwood cutting board.

This wasn't the first time she took on a project like this. A couple of years ago, she constructed a three-tiered wooden bar cart for storing our glassware. Last year, she built a new headboard for our bedroom. When we first moved into our current home, she refurbished an old coffee table. We routinely pass on buying furniture and fixtures — Sam says, "I can just make that myself." I am inspired by the way she takes on these projects.



Whether you're making a new coffee table or trying a new recipe, the first step is to take the initiative. Starting a new project requires imagination and ingenuity. When I see the blueprint Sam is working toward, it's remarkable to me how she even gets started.

Having that vision — that blueprint — from the start is important. Likewise, some of the most important work we do at our firm happens at the very beginning of our client's case. We would never get to trial if we did not first believe we could put in the work to take on big insurance companies.

You also have to be willing to learn. The discipline required to learn a new skill is useful, both professionally and recreationally. None of Sam's projects are ever the same. In the construction of each, she learns something new. The same can be said for each client we represent. Every case is different, and we are constantly learning better ways to advocate for our clients. As lawyers, we strive to serve and protect our clients to get them the results they deserve. That is our finished product.

As Sam knows, sometimes it can be energizing to create something tangible — like a sconce or a flowerbox. Regardless, we should always work to broaden our horizons. So, in the spirit of the new year, keep your eyes open for something new, and sign up.

-Jon Svitak

CITRUS AND AVOCADO SALAD

Ingredients

- 1 blood, cara cara, or navel orange, sliced 1/8-inch thick and deseeded
- 1 Meyer or regular lemon, sliced 1/8-inch thick and deseeded
- 4 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1/4 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 bunch arugula
- 1/2 cup fresh mint leaves
- 1 avocado, cut into wedges
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Directions

1. Heat oven to 425 F.
2. In a rimmed baking sheet, toss citrus slices with 1 tablespoon oil and season with salt and pepper. Roast citrus until lightly charred and caramelized, about 10-15 minutes. Let cool.
3. Meanwhile, in a large mixing bowl, combine onion and lemon juice. Season with salt and let sit for 5 minutes.
4. Add citrus, arugula, and mint to onion mixture. Drizzle with remaining oil, season with salt and pepper to taste, and toss thoroughly.
5. Add avocado, combining very gently to not crush avocado.

Inspired by Bon Appétit

JANUARY 2019 DATES OF CONSEQUENCE

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| January 5 | Resurrection High @ St. Francis Girls Basketball |
| January 6 | Feast of the Epiphany |
| January 7 | St. Joan of Arc classes resume |
| January 14 | Marquette University classes resume |
| January 19 | Woodridge Wolverines @ Lisle Lions Basketball |
| January 23 | Wisconsin @ Univ. of Illinois Basketball |
| January 28 | Duke @ Notre Dame Basketball |

Every Saturday morning throughout the year, St. Joan of Arc Men's group meets from 7-8 a.m. in the St. Joan of Arc Parish Center. Please join us.