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The Honk That Saved the Hatchery

Who Needs a Smoke Alarm When You Have Goosey?

Forget Lassie. There's a new four-legged … scratch that, a new *two-legged* hero in town. He has feathers, attitude, and one heck of a honk.

Meet Goosey, the pet goose who may have saved a Texas family, along with roughly 100 chickens and turkeys, from a barn fire earlier this year. Chelsea and Bert Gerber, owners of Chelsea's Chickens in Richmond, Texas, say Goosey started honking loudly in the early morning hours of Aug. 3. Bert woke up, realized something was wrong, and discovered the barn was on fire.

He grabbed a garden hose and sprang into action, getting the fire under control before the situation grew worse. The family believes old electrical wiring was likely responsible for the unexpected blaze.

"We got really, really, really lucky — really lucky," Chelsea told ABC News.

Lucky is right, but the Gerbers aren't giving all the credit to luck. They're giving a big chunk of it to Goosey. Surprisingly enough, Goosey wasn't originally supposed to be part of the family. Three months earlier, the Gerbers' daughter, Elena, met him at an expo and promptly decided he belonged at home. When she asked if they could keep him, Chelsea had a pretty simple response: "How do you say no to that?" Apparently, you don't, and now that adorable decision has paid off in a very big way.

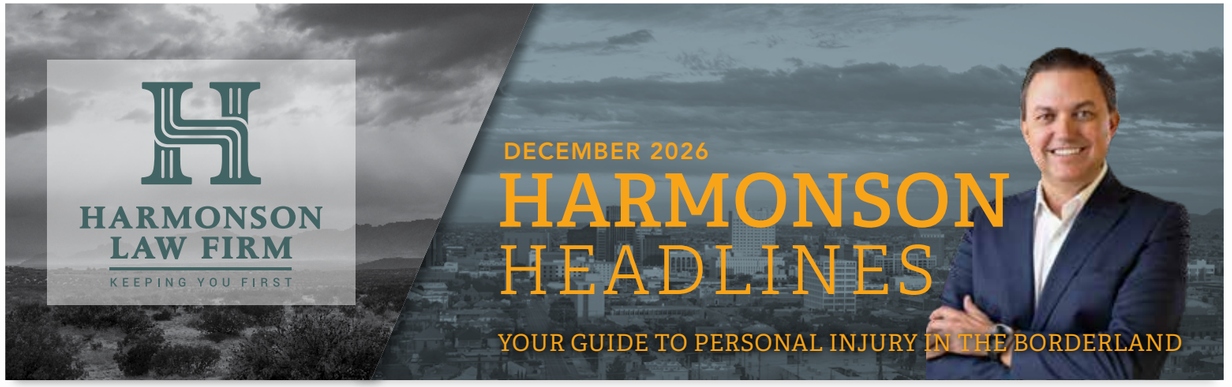


Geese can make surprisingly interesting pets. They have plenty of personality and can even help control grass growth like feather-covered lawn mowers. They can also be remarkably watchful, sounding the alarm when something seems out of the ordinary.

Of course, geese aren't exactly for everyone. Their enthusiastic honking can test the patience of neighbors, and anyone who has encountered an angry goose knows they're not exactly known for their gentle bedside manner. Yet, that same vigilance can make them excellent guardians.

As for Goosey, his hero status is now official. The Gerbers plan to get him a friend, and they have already picked out the perfect name: Lucy.

After all, every hero deserves a sidekick.



Trusting My Gut

THE CHOICES THAT BROUGHT ME HERE



When I look back on the decisions that changed my life, very few of them came with a guarantee that I was making the right call.

I've always been pretty willing to trust my gut. Sometimes, especially when I was younger, that meant going for something without doing a ton of research first. As I've gotten older, I've learned to put a little more homework behind those decisions, but there have still been plenty of times when the answer came down to trusting myself.

One of the first times I remember doing that was with Sheri. We met through friends from college, but she was living outside Austin, and I was in Lubbock. After the first time I visited her, I remember thinking this was going to be hard. Long-distance relationships usually are. I also knew I wanted to see where it went. We spent about three years living apart before she eventually moved to Houston with me when I went to law school. We got married while I was there, and I'm obviously very glad I trusted that instinct.

Law school itself was another leap. I was working in pharmaceutical sales, making pretty good money, and I had an offer from Merck that could have led to a good career. A perfectly reasonable path was sitting right in front of me. Walking away from it meant giving up the easier money and taking out loans instead, but something deep inside of me said I wanted to do more. So, I went. Over 25 years later, that decision worked out pretty well.

Probably the biggest trust-my-gut moment came early in my career. I had been working at another law firm for about eight years and had thought about leaving before, but I had never pulled the trigger. Then something happened one day and made me mad enough to act. I wrote a long email around 10 p.m. that night, drove to the office about 15 minutes later, gathered my things, and left. I had no clients lined up, not much money, and no health insurance. There wasn't an elaborate business plan waiting for me.

I'd do the leaving part differently if I had to do it over again. Walking out in the middle of the night probably wasn't the most mature way to handle it, and I could have gone about that better. I don't regret the decision itself, though. I believed I could make it on my own, and I decided to go for it. Financially and professionally, starting my own practice has been one of the best decisions I've ever made.

Now, I find myself trusting that instinct again. I've started exploring mass tort work as I think about what I want the next 10 or 20 years of my career to look like. I don't plan on leaving the legal game, but I'm looking at work that lets me do something a little different. This time, I've done a lot more homework. I've researched the area, gone to seminars, found some people I trust to work with, and put some money into getting started. I've also made sure I'm not betting the farm on it. If it doesn't work out, I'll be fine.

I don't yet know exactly how this next move will turn out, and I think that's part of the point. You can research something, prepare for it, and ask all the right questions, but you ultimately have to decide whether you believe in it enough to move forward. Looking back at Sheri, law school, my own firm, and now this next chapter, I see the same pattern. If you really want to do something, there's no time like the present. Eventually, you have to trust yourself and take the leap.

–Clark Harmonson

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BEFORE THE FIRST DROP FALLS

THE FORECAST YOU CAN SMELL

We depend on technology for just about everything in our lives these days. We set alarms on our phones to wake us up in the morning, use GPS to get us across town, and check weather apps to see if it's going to storm. Before these technological advancements, people relied on their intuition and senses, something you may have seen firsthand with your grandparents or other relatives.

When you're sitting around with friends or family, it's not uncommon to hear someone claim that rain is coming without ever looking at their phone or the local weather report. They may say they can smell it in the air or their trick knee is acting up. You doubt them, but before you know it, the first drop hits your head.

While rainwater itself doesn't have a scent, many people can smell an earthy aroma called petrichor right before rainfall. This isn't a single scent; it's a bunch of things mixed together.

When it's dry for a long period, plants release oils to delay seed germination. Then, when rain hits the area, those oils get kicked into the air, adding to the scent. Additionally, a compound called geosmin, produced by soil-dwelling bacteria, is released into the air when it rains. We are sensitive to this compound and can easily detect it, which leads us to think we're smelling rain.

It doesn't have to be actively raining in your area to experience these smells. Wind can carry them, and they can travel for several miles, giving you a heads-up that rain may be on the way. And if you notice a particular fresh or sharp scent accompanying it, thunder and lightning may join the rain. This is slightly different because you're smelling the ozone after a thunderstorm creates a downdraft.

As far as your great uncle's trick knee, there's some truth to that, too. Rain can change barometric pressure, which can lead to joint inflammation and pain.

So, the next time someone says their body is saying rain is on the way, trust them. There's likely truth behind their pronouncement, even if it sounds a little wacky.



SETTLEMENT WITHOUT THE COURTROOM

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE MEDIATION PROCESS

Most personal injury cases never make it to trial, but that doesn't mean they disappear or that one side simply gives in. In many cases, there's a point before trial where both sides sit down and make a serious attempt to resolve the case. That process is called mediation.



A mediator is a neutral third party, usually an experienced attorney or former judge. They aren't there to argue for my client, and they aren't there to argue for the defense. Their job is to look at the case from both sides and help everyone see whether there is a number both sides can live with.

Years ago, mediation often started with everyone together in the same room, giving opening statements. A lot of the time, that just meant each side spent 20 minutes making the other side mad before negotiations even started. We've mostly moved away from that. These days, the parties are generally separated, often virtually, and the mediator goes back and forth between them.

The numbers usually start far apart. The insurance company may begin with an offer we won't accept, and we may start higher than they are willing to pay. From there, the mediator works with the two sides to relay offers. They may also ask questions or point out things each side should consider before continuing. Mediation discussions are generally confidential, which means the parties can discuss settlement freely without worrying that those conversations will be used against them later if the case doesn't resolve.

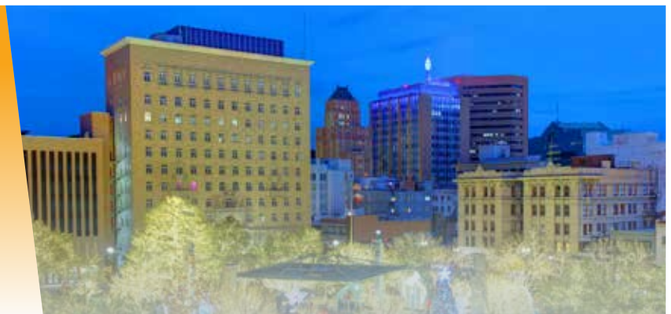
When a case does resolve at mediation, it's based on a compromise. Typically, neither side gets everything it wants. I've heard mediators joke that if both sides leave a little unhappy, they've probably done their job. There's some truth to that. Settling means giving up the chance that a jury might award more, but it also takes away the risk that something goes wrong at trial. Sometimes, accepting a fair compromise is the better decision.

Going to mediation doesn't mean a case has to settle. It gives both sides a chance to take an honest look at the risks and decide whether a compromise makes sense. If it doesn't, we keep moving forward with the case.

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SOLUTION ON PG. 4



A SOUTHWESTERN CHRISTMAS

The Traditions That Make It Ours

By the time Christmas rolls around in El Paso, the whole city starts to look a little different. Downtown lights up, luminarias start appearing in front yards, red chile ristras are still hanging outside, and tamales seem to be everywhere. I've always loved that about the holidays in the Southwest.

Downtown El Paso is always part of that for me. San Jacinto Plaza and the surrounding area light up for the season, and it's a great place to spend an evening with family. You get the decorations and Christmas lights you'd expect, but you also get traditions that feel much more specific to this part of the country.

Luminarias are one of my other favorite December traditions. We put them out around our house, usually lining the front yard with paper bags filled with sand and candles. They're especially common around Christmas Eve, and the tradition has roots in holiday celebrations that used light to welcome and guide people during the Christmas season. I just think they're beautiful. A row of luminarias glowing at night immediately looks like Christmas to me.

The red chile ristras are another part of the season I associate with home. They weren't originally meant as Christmas decorations at all. Ristras were simply a practical way to preserve and dry chiles, but they've also become a familiar sight throughout the Southwest. By late fall and winter, you see that deep red chile hanging outside homes and businesses, and it just fits the season around here.

Then there's the food. I don't eat tamales all that often during the year, but Christmas is a perfect time for them. Making and sharing tamales has long been part of holiday gatherings in the Borderland. Buñuelos, thin fried pastries dusted with sugar and cinnamon, are another treat I always associate with a Southwestern Christmas. They show up during December celebrations throughout the El Paso-Juárez region.

Of course, none of these traditions are specific to El Paso alone, but they do make the holidays feel different here than in other parts of Texas. I wouldn't trade a Southwestern Christmas for anything.

RECIPES WORTH SHARING

Overnight Breakfast Casserole



INGREDIENTS

- 16 slices bread, crusts removed
- 16 slices Canadian bacon
- 16 slices sharp cheddar cheese
- 6 large eggs
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp dry mustard
- 1/4 cup minced onion
- 2 tbsp diced green bell pepper
- 2 tbsp diced red bell pepper
- 2 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- Dash of hot sauce
- 3 cups whole milk
- 1/2 cup butter, melted
- 1 cup crushed cornflakes

DIRECTIONS

1. Lightly grease a 9x13-inch baking dish and cover the bottom with 8 bread slices.
2. Layer Canadian bacon and cheese over bread, then top with remaining bread.
3. In a bowl, whisk eggs, salt, pepper, mustard, onion, peppers, Worcestershire sauce, hot sauce, and milk.
4. Pour mixture over casserole, cover, and refrigerate overnight.
5. Preheat oven to 350 F. Drizzle casserole with melted butter and sprinkle with cornflakes.
6. Bake about 1 hour, until set and lightly browned.
7. Let stand 10 minutes before serving.