HARMONSON LAW FIRM
KEEPING YOU FIRST

NOVEMBER 2026
HARMONSON HEADLINES
YOUR GUIDE TO PERSONAL INJURY IN THE BORDERLAND



Building Something That's Mine

WHAT I'VE LEARNED FROM RUNNING MY OWN FIRM

When I opened my own firm, I knew there were really two sides to the job. The first was the client work and the legal work. That always comes first. The second part was running a business, and that meant thinking about budgets, marketing, finances, staffing, and all the other things that come with keeping a firm going.

I had always been interested in that side of things. My dad was an entrepreneur, and that independent streak runs strong in my family. For me, having my own firm meant having something that was mine. I liked being able to call my own shots and build it in a way that made sense to me.



What I never wanted was a huge organization. I like being small. I could probably make more money if I hired a lot more people and tried to grow as big as possible, but I know myself well enough to know that is not what I want to spend my time doing. Instead, I started thinking early about how a small firm could work smarter.

At the office where I practiced before going out on my own, things could be pretty disorganized. If you needed a medical record or something else from a file, it wasn't always easy to find. So, when I started my firm about 14 years ago, one of the first decisions I made was to put everything in secure cloud storage and use cloud-based case management. It seems pretty normal now. At the time, it was a much bigger change.

SCAN TO SHARE YOUR CASE — WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

I've taken that same approach ever since. I don't need to hire somebody for every job if I can find a good service that already does that one thing well. I use outside help for things like gathering and summarizing medical records, and I have backup help answering phones when we need it. It lets me add capabilities without building a huge staff or pulling me away from my focus on clients.

I've also spent a lot of time learning the business side. For a while, my kids made fun of me because I listened to so many lawyer podcasts. I've read plenty of business and marketing books, too. When you are competing with what I call the 800-pound gorillas, you have to find ways to compete without trying to become one yourself.

Of course, the firm hasn't stayed exactly as I pictured it when I started. When Hadley came on and we started handling more medical malpractice cases, that became a much bigger part of our work than I expected. There is a real need for it in El Paso, and not many lawyers here take those cases.

After doing this for more than a decade, I think one of the things I am most proud of is that we have helped thousands of people in this community. I never set out to build the biggest law firm. I wanted the independence to build something that was mine and do good work with it.

I've had other solo attorneys ask me for advice about going out on their own, and I always tell them some version of the same thing. It's a leap of faith, but if you have a game plan and it's something you really want to do, you can do it. I'm proof that you don't have to have everything figured out before you start.

–Clark Harmonson

THE SCIENCE BEHIND ONE OF OUR MOST MYSTERIOUS REFLEXES

WHY YAWNING SETS OFF A CHAIN REACTION

The night is coming to a close. You're sitting around, watching TV with the family, when someone lets out an inconspicuous yawn. They tried to be subtle, but you still caught it, and before you can even process what's happening, you start yawning yourself. What just happened? There's no way yawns are actually contagious, right?

As odd as it may sound, yawns are one of the most mysterious bodily actions. Scientists cannot agree on why we yawn. Some argue that humans stop breathing deeply as we grow more tired, causing a buildup of carbon dioxide that our body then expels. That excess carbon dioxide causes an increase in adenosine, a chemical compound that could trigger a yawn. However, other experts argue that yawning helps cool the brain, stretches internal organs, or helps liven the body up.

So, if we don't know why we yawn, we couldn't possibly understand why it appears contagious, can we? Here are a few competing theories.

Some believe that social mirroring is to blame. When we see others scratch their face, laugh, or cry, we feel compelled to match their actions. Yawning may just be another example. This is widespread throughout nature. When animals see others engage in specific behaviors, they may think those behaviors are useful to them as well, so they start mimicking them. A study from Washington University's Center for the Study of Itch found that mice began scratching themselves within five seconds of watching videos of other mice scratching.

It's also worth noting that humans are not the only ones who yawn. Thousands of species yawn across mammals, birds, reptiles, and even fish. Researchers have even put more effort into observing mammalian and avian yawns to find a correlation between brain size and yawn duration. Those with larger or more complex brains seem to have longer yawns.

We still don't know a lot about the human body, and yawns continue to stump us. Maybe one day we'll find a specific theory that explains it!



FROM CLAIM TO

TWO PATHS A CASE CAN T

People sometimes use "filing a suit" and "filing a claim" like they mean the same thing. They don't.



In a typical car wreck, I actually start with a claim. That means we are working with the other driver's insurance company to try to resolve the case without going to court. First, I want to confirm there is coverage and gather evidence showing the other driver was at fault. Then my client gets the medical treatment they need while we build a case.

Once treatment is finished, we gather the medical records and bills, put together a demand, and try to reach a fair settlement. In my experience, probably 80% or more ordinary car wreck cases can be resolved this way. If we can resolve the case fairly, without adding the time and expense of litigation, that is usually better for the client. If we can't reach a fair settlement, then litigation becomes the next step.

One thing that surprises a lot of people is that we generally don't sue the other driver's insurance company. We file a lawsuit against the driver who caused

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SOLUTION ON PG. 4

COURTROOM

TAKE AFTER A WRECK



the wreck, and the insurance company typically hires an attorney to defend that person.

Once a lawsuit is filed, the process gets more formal. There can be written discovery, depositions, experts, and added case expenses. Filing a suit doesn't mean the case will automatically go to trial. We can still reach a settlement during litigation, but if we can't, the case can eventually go before a jury.

There are also cases where I may want to file suit much sooner. A serious 18-wheeler crash, catastrophic injury, or death can create an urgent need to preserve evidence and start formal discovery. Medical malpractice cases also tend to end up in litigation much more often.

The goal isn't to file a lawsuit for the sake of filing one. A claim may be enough to get a fair result. When it isn't, filing suit gives us another way to keep the case moving and pursue what the client is owed.

RECIPES WORTH SHARING

Butternut Squash & Black Bean Enchiladas



INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups peeled and diced butternut squash
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1/2 tsp kosher salt
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 3 cloves garlic, pressed
- 1/2 medium onion, diced
- 1 (15 oz) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 tsp cumin
- 2 cups enchilada sauce, divided
- 1 cup shredded Jack cheese
- 8 flour tortillas

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large bowl, mix squash with oil, salt, pepper, garlic, and onion.
2. Spread onto a large baking sheet and roast in 450 F oven for about 20 minutes, turning halfway.
3. Return roasted veggies to the bowl and combine with black beans and cumin.
4. In a 13x9 baking dish, spread 1/4 cup of enchilada sauce to keep tortillas from sticking.
5. Fill each tortilla with the squash mixture, fold, and place in baking dish. Repeat until all filling is used.
6. Pour remaining sauce over tortillas and top with cheese.
7. Cover with foil and bake in a 350 F oven for 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake an additional 10 minutes to melt cheese.



A BAD OUTCOME ISN'T ENOUGH

The Hurdles Behind a Malpractice Case

When medical treatment goes wrong and someone is seriously hurt, it can seem obvious that there should be a malpractice case. In Texas, it's not that simple. These are some of the hardest cases I handle, and there are legal hurdles built into them that you don't see in an ordinary injury case.

One of the biggest is the expert-report requirement. In a Texas state-court medical malpractice case, the person bringing the claim generally has 120 days after each defendant files an original answer to serve an expert report. That report has to explain the applicable standard of care, how the doctor or provider failed to meet it, and how that failure caused the injury.

That's a lot more than finding another doctor who thinks something went wrong. You need a qualified medical expert who can support the case in the way Texas law requires.

If the required report isn't served on time, the court can dismiss the claim with prejudice and order the claimant to pay the defendant's reasonable attorney fees and court costs. A deficient report may get a 30-day opportunity to be corrected, but there is very little room to approach these cases casually.

Even when the medical evidence is there, these cases are expensive to prove. Experts have to review records, give opinions, and sometimes testify. In a serious case, expenses can run into the tens of thousands of dollars or much more. That's one reason I have to be selective. I get several medical malpractice calls a day, and I end up turning down most of them.

Texas also limits what an injured person can recover for noneconomic damages, such as pain and suffering and mental anguish. The cap against physicians and other institutional health care providers is generally $250,000 per claimant.

Economic damages, including medical bills, lost wages, and lost earning capacity, aren't subject to the same cap. That can make a major difference when deciding whether a case is practical to pursue. The reality is that a terrible medical outcome doesn't automatically mean there is a viable malpractice case.

None of this means these cases are never worth pursuing. If you believe a medical mistake seriously harmed you, have a malpractice attorney take a close look at what happened. In Texas, malpractice cases simply have to be approached carefully from the start.

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Solution

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The Fairy-Tale Side of Europe You've Been Missing

Storybook Streets and Colorful Canals Await

When people go to Europe, certain cities seem to be on everyone's itinerary. They dream of traveling to London, Paris, Dublin, Rome, Berlin, and other prominent locations. While these cities have plenty for visitors and locals, they are tourist-heavy. If you want to get a real feel for these countries and live like a local, you have to head somewhere more remote. Here are three destinations to consider visiting on your next European vacation.

BURANO, ITALY

Venice is a must-visit for anyone traveling to Italy, but many miss out on a unique destination just 45 minutes away. Often called Italy's most colorful island, Burano is a beautiful village full of colorful buildings that line the streets and canals. It's fairly small, easy to walk around, and it has great places to grab a bite to eat. There's something special hiding around every corner, and you'll love looking back at all the pictures you'll take there.

BEILSTEIN AND COCHEM, GERMANY

If you've ever wanted to step right into a fairy tale without having to pay admission to a theme park, look no further than Beilstein or Cochem. These are some of the most awe-inspiring destinations in the world. Tight cobblestone streets bend around corners, and in the distance, you're just a short drive away from the towering Burg Eltz Castle. With tons of green forests and pastures surrounding the area, along with some of the best Riesling you can find, you won't want to leave!

CASTLE COMBE, ENGLAND

When you picture medieval England, you likely envision something that looks just like Castle Combe. It's often referred to as the prettiest village in England, and you can learn an incredible amount of history by walking Castle Combe's streets. St. Andrew's Church has welcomed visitors since the 13th century, and the scenic By Brook offers a peaceful spot for a stroll. When you're ready to eat, treat yourself to a meal at the Michelin-starred Bybrook Restaurant.

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