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Clark's Recent Fiction Picks

The Effects of Getting Outdoors on Our

Drowsy Driving Crashes Are More Common Than You Think

Sudoku

Not Your Mom's Corned Beef and Cabbage

Can You Rely on Lifeguards? The Reality of Pool Safety Laws

Pit Stops Along the Alaska Railroad You Can't Miss

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All Aboard the Alaska Railroad!

Why Traveling Alaska by Train Beats the Cruise Ship

While Alaskan cruises get all the buzz, traveling the Last Frontier by train offers an equally breathtaking — and perhaps more intimate experience. With panoramic views, unforgettable pit stops, and access to remote regions, the Alaska Railroad delivers a journey unlike any other.

Imagine gliding through the rugged wilderness in a GoldStar Dome car, where glass ceilings offer a 360-degree view of snow-capped peaks and glistening glaciers. For the adventurous, the outdoor viewing platform lets you immerse yourself in the stunning scenery while breathing in the clean, crisp Alaskan air. Whether you choose the premium GoldStar class or the more budgetfriendly Adventure Class, you'll be awed by Alaska's natural beauty.

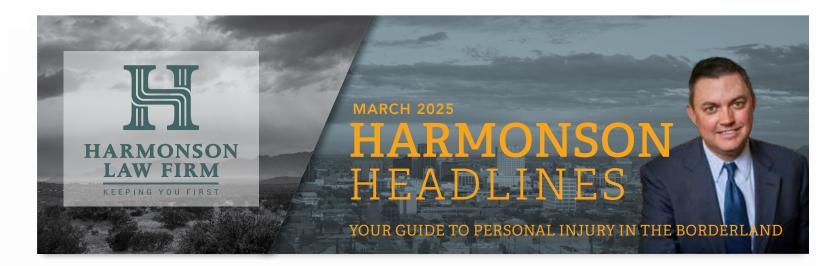
The Alaska Railroad operates year-round with five seasonal routes, each brimming with wonder. The Coastal Classic is any traveler's dream, winding from Anchorage to Seward along the Turnagain Arm waterway. Highlights include spotting bald eagles and hopping on a boat at Resurrection Bay to explore Kenai Fjords National Park, famous for its orca whale sightings.

For those drawn to Denali's majesty, the **Denali Star** is your ticket. This flagship route connects Anchorage to Denali National Park, offering stops like Talkeetna, a charming artsy town and basecamp for climbers scaling Denali. It's a 12-hour journey of aweinspiring landscapes and rich history.

> The Glacier Discovery route takes you south from Anchorage to Girdwood, Whittier, and the Spencer Glacier. Whittier is a standout destination with its sleepy charm and world-class Alaskan fish. This train provides remote access to places you can't reach by car, making the trip a unique experience

And if you're looking for an offbeat adventure, the Hurricane Turn and Aurora Winter trains cater to locals and intrepid travelers alike, offering stops by request and transporting you into the heart of Alaska's untamed backcountry.

With the Alaska Railroad, the journey is as memorable as the destination. Whether you're marveling at wildlife, enjoying a sit-down meal, or booking excursions to explore iconic landmarks, every mile of track is packed with adventure.



The Power of a Good Story

THE FICTION BOOKS THAT KEPT ME UP LATE (AND WHY YOU SHOULD READ THEM, TOO)

THE BELOVED #1 NEWYORK TIMES BESTSELLER

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INCLUDES AN EXCERPT FROM CLOUD CUCKOO LAND

There was a time when I was on a big kick of reading business books guides on leadership, growth, and all the usual titles that promise to make you more efficient, more successful, more everything. And don't get me

wrong, I got a lot out of them. But after a while, you hit a point where you realize that reading doesn't always have to be about improvement. Sometimes, you just want a good story.

Lately, I've been leaning into fiction, and I have to say, it's been a refreshing change. So, in honor of Read Across America Day on March 2, I figured I'd share some of the books that have kept me up late at night or had me sneaking in a few extra pages whenever I had the chance.

One of the best books I've read in the past year is "All the Light We Cannot See" by Anthony Doerr. You've probably heard of it, maybe even seen the Netflix adaptation. But if you haven't read it yet, trust me, it's worth your time. It follows a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths cross in occupied France during World War II. Doerr's writing is beautiful — so much so that once I finished it, I immediately went looking for more of his work. That led me to "Cloud Cuckoo Land" and "About Grace." His books pull you into these layered, intricate worlds, and you come out the other side feeling like you've actually lived through them.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, I've also been reading Don Winslow, a crime writer who knows how to tell a gripping

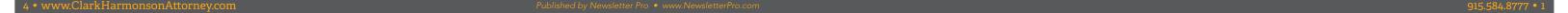
story. His "City on Fire" series is about an Irish gangster in New England, and if you're into crime dramas, it's exactly what you'd hope for violence, betrayal, and a woman who sets off a war between rival criminal empires. Then, there's Winslow's sprawling "Power of the Dog" series.

It dives into the world of Mexican cartels and has one of the most intense casts of characters I've come across in a while. Winslow doesn't write lighthearted stories, but he writes ones you can't put down.

> And then, of course, there's Graham Greene, an older but still incredibly relevant writer. If you haven't read "The Power and the Glory," you should. It follows a "whisky priest" in Mexico fleeing from a government that has outlawed Catholicism. It's one of those books that makes you think about faith, redemption, and human flaws — something Greene was a master at exploring. Another one of his classics is "The Quiet American," which is set during the collapse of French colonial rule in Vietnam. It's about an English journalist, a CIA agent, and a love triangle that turns deadly. But underneath all that, it's a book about politics, war, and how dangerous it is when people get involved in conflicts they don't fully understand.

Fiction isn't just about escape — it's about perspective. There are lessons to be learned in every great novel, whether it's about resilience. power, or simply the way people interact with each other. So, if you're looking for something to read, these are my suggestions. Whether you're into historical fiction, crime thrillers, or literary classics, I think there's something here for everyone. And if nothing else, they're all good enough to make you stay up too late turning the pages, which, in my opinion, is always the sign of a great book.





GETTING OUTSIDE CAN HELP YOU FEEL BETTER

Many of us neglect our mental health because we've desensitized ourselves to stress, instead teaching ourselves to "white knuckle" through the day. However, if you knew a better way to manage your stress, you could loosen the reigns more, right? Well, when was the last time you spent some time outside? Whether it's going on a hike, tending to your garden, or riding a bike, research reveals the positive effects on your mental health of spending time outdoors.

IMPROVED OVERALL MOOD

Everyone occasionally falls into a "funk." And while it's normal to experience that mood at times, it shouldn't be a constant feeling. A 2010 study revealed that exercising in nature for just five minutes improved self-esteem and overall mood. Experiencing nature often makes people feel grounded and more connected to the Earth, leading to feelings of happiness and a sense of purpose. A separate study revealed that participants who went on nature walks had increased positive emotions after the walk

POSITIVE BRAIN STIMULATION

When you spend time outdoors, taking in the sunlight and fresh air, your body releases the feel-good hormone serotonin in return. Many antidepressant medications work by inhibiting reabsorption of this key neurotransmitter. Additionally, sunlight activates melatonin release, which helps regulate our internal clock. The more sunlight we get each day, the more our bodies know when it's time to go to bed.

ENHANCED FOCUS AND ATTENTION

Whether at home or in the office, our brains can go a mile a minute, focusing on everything except the task at hand. While you're supposed to be working on a PowerPoint presentation, your brain thinks about the new tire you need and the pile of dirty dishes in the sink. A 2020 study found that spending time in nature can calm the mind, allowing for enhanced focus. Further studies on outdoor play settings stated that children with ADHD were calmer after playing in green spaces than in other settings.



WHEN COFFEE ISN'T ENOUGH

HOW TO TELL IF YOU — OR SOMEONE ELSE — IS TOO TIRED TO DRIVE

Fatigue can creep up on anyone. A new parent struggling with sleepless nights, a truck driver clocking in long hours, or a driver on a monotonous road trip can all experience drowsiness behind the wheel. Sleep deprivation doesn't just result in grogginess — it can lead to serious crashes and fatal consequences.

Sleep Awareness Week in March is an important time to highlight the dangers of sleep deprivation. In 2022 alone, 693 deaths were linked to drowsy driving-related wrecks, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

WHEN AND WHERE DO DROWSY DRIVING ACCIDENTS HAPPEN?

Drowsy-driving crashes are most likely between midnight and 6 a.m. or late afternoon when the body's natural sleep-wake cycle drops. These crashes often involve a single driver veering off the road at high speeds with no signs of braking, frequently on rural roads and highways.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF DROWSY DRIVING?

Identifying the warning signs of drowsy driving could help prevent a serious accident. Common indicators include:

- Failing to drive in a straight line: Drivers may briefly nod off, causing their vehicle to drift.
- Inconsistent speeds: Drowsy drivers may slow down unpredictably and speed up suddenly.
- Last-second exits or lane changes: Delayed reactions may lead to sudden, unsafe movements.

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Near-miss accidents: Frequent close calls indicate an inability to stay focused on the road.

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If you suspect another driver is falling asleep behind the wheel, increase your distance and report them to authorities to help protect others on the road.

WHAT ARE THE WAYS TO PREVENT DROWSY DRIVING?

Regularly getting adequate sleep is the only real solution to prevent drowsy driving. However, if you start to feel fatigued while driving, consider these precautions:

- Take a break: Pull over in a safe, well-lit area and rest if you feel drowsy.
- **Don't rely on coffee:** Caffeine can only temporarily improve alertness but won't prevent "microsleeps" brief, uncontrollable lapses in consciousness. At 55 mph, just five seconds of microsleep means you've traveled over 100 yards asleep.
- Check medications: Many prescription and over-the-counter drugs can cause drowsiness. Always read warning labels before driving.

HOW CAN YOU GET LEGAL HELP AFTER A CRASH?

If you or a loved one has been injured due to a drowsy driver's negligence, you may be entitled to compensation. Contact our team today to discuss your legal options and protect your rights. Staying vigilant and well-rested is crucial — not just for your own safety, but for everyone on the road.

Not Your Mom's Corned Beef and Cabbage

INGREDIENTS

- 1 (4 lb) corned beef brisket with spice packet
- 3 qts water
- 1 onion, quartered
- 3 carrots, cut into large chunks
- 3 celery stalks, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 lbs red potatoes, halved
- 1 small head of cabbage, cut into eighths

DIRECTIONS

- In a large pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat, combine corned beef, spice packet contents, water, onions, carrots, celery, and salt. Bring to a simmer (skimming off any foam on top).
- 2. Cover pot, reduce to low heat, and let simmer for 3 hours until meat is fork tender.
- 3. Add potatoes to the pot and let simmer uncovered for 30 minutes or until potatoes are all dente.
- 4. Add cabbage along the edges of the meat and on top. Cover and let simmer until cabbage is tender, 20–30 minutes.
- Place meat on a cutting board and let rest for 10–15 minutes. After meat has cooled, slice against the grain.
- 6. Add to a large serving bowl, ladle vegetables and broth over top, and serve

Inspired by AllRecipes.com

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR POOL SAFETY?

New Water Parks in El Paso Bring Fun — and Serious Safety Risks

The sun is finally out, and families in El Paso are eager to dive into the city's newly opened water parks and pools. While these public parks are meant for family fun, they also come with serious risks. Tragically, last year, a mother lost her child to drowning at a newly opened water park here in Texas. Now, she faces criminal charges for negligent homicide while also pursuing legal action against the park, arguing that the lifeguards were more concerned with kitchen duties than protecting the swimmers.

WHO IS LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR POOL SAFETY?

While parents expect lifeguards and pool staff to monitor safety, Texas law often places the ultimate responsibility on parents when it comes to watching over their children. Even in situations where lifeguards are present, the legal system tends to hold parents accountable if a child is injured or drowns. In the case of last year's drowning, the mother has been arrested and charged, which shows just how serious these legal consequences can be.

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WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO PREVENT TRAGEDY?

The No. 1 rule for pool safety is **never to take your eyes off your children.** Drowning can happen in seconds, and it's often silent. Do not rely solely on lifeguards — they are there as an extra layer of protection, not a replacement for parental supervision.

If you have young children, you should:

- Stay within arm's reach of infants and toddlers in the water
- Keep constant visual contact with older children and avoid distractions like phone calls, social media, talking with others, etc.
- Avoid alcohol while supervising children in the water.
- Know CPR and basic water rescue techniques in case of an emergency.

THERE ARE LEGAL CONSEQUENCES FOR INATTENTIVENESS.

When a drowning occurs, legal action is often taken — sometimes against the facility, but more frequently against the parents or guardians of the child. This means that even if a lifeguard was inattentive, you could still face criminal charges.

At the end of the day, law or not, you always want to ensure the safety of your children. If you or a loved one has been affected by a pool-related accident, it's crucial to understand your legal rights. Contact our team today for guidance on how to navigate these complex cases.

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