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THE LESSONS WE BRING HOME FROM SUMMER

Why Slowing Down May Be Summer's Greatest Gift

This summer, I spent a week in Georgia with my son and his baseball team for a tournament. We flew there, but once we arrived, it felt like we lived in the car. The tournament was held across several baseball complexes, and we drove about an hour and a half each way from our hotel to the fields every day. By the end of the week, we had logged well over 1,000 miles just driving to and from the games. We also caught a Mets game in Atlanta.

The entire team stayed at the same hotel. After long days at the ballpark, the players, parents, and siblings would all head out to dinner together before getting ready to do it all again the next morning. It was a busy week filled with baseball, but when I look back, the games themselves aren't what I'll remember most.

The conversations I had with my son during those long drives are what really stood out. Without the usual distractions of work, school, and our everyday routines, we simply talked. We chatted about baseball, of course, but we also talked about school, friendships, the future, and life in general. Somewhere during one of those drives, he asked me what I enjoy most about being a lawyer. That simple question led to one of the best conversations we've had in a long time. It reminded me how valuable uninterrupted time together really is, and how those conversations often happen when we're not rushing to the next thing.

That week reminded me that summer offers us something we don't always have during the rest of the year. It gives us permission to slow down.

For many of us, life quickly becomes a cycle of work deadlines, school schedules, appointments, practices, and endless to-do lists. We spend so much time thinking about what's next that we sometimes forget to appreciate what's happening right in front of us. Summer has a way of changing that. Whether it's an evening walk, a family vacation, dinner outside, or simply a long conversation in the car, slowing down allows us to reconnect with the people who matter most.

Summer also reminds us that experiences are often more valuable than possessions. Years from now, I doubt my children will remember every gift they received or every



new gadget they owned. What I hope they'll remember are family vacations, baseball tournaments, beach days, backyard barbecues, and the countless laughs we shared along the way. Those experiences become the stories our families tell for years, and they're worth far more than anything money can buy.

As a husband, father, and trial lawyer, I know how easy it is to become consumed by work and daily responsibilities. There's always another phone call to return, another email to answer, or another task waiting to be completed. Summer reminds me that while our work is important, our relationships deserve our time and attention, too. The emails will still be there tomorrow. Opportunities to spend uninterrupted time with the people we love become harder to find as our children grow older.

As September arrives and we settle back into our routines, I hope we don't leave all of summer behind. Let's continue making time for meaningful conversations, putting our phones away once in a while, slowing down whenever we can, and appreciating the ordinary moments that often become our favorite memories.

I hope you and your family had a wonderful summer, and I wish you a happy, healthy, and enjoyable fall. May the months ahead bring new opportunities, lasting memories, and plenty of time with the people who matter most.

-Brian O'Connor

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STAYING CONNECTED IN A BUSIER LIFE

WHEN PARENTHOOD REWRITES THE RULES OF FRIENDSHIP

Becoming a parent changes many things in a person's life, and friendships are no exception. At first, the changes may be subtle. Texts sit for days because someone opened them during naptime and forgot to respond, or plans get pushed back because one person is juggling daycare pickup while the other's life runs on a different schedule.

When those types of things keep happening, it can feel personal, but it's usually because parenthood changes how much time and energy a person has. The friend who was always available for late-night parties and last-minute plans is much harder to reach when they start dealing with the early mornings and constant interruptions that come with having kids.

Still, a friendship change doesn't mean it was weak to begin with or that anyone is to blame. It may just mean it needs a different direction. Some friendships can

survive with new expectations, but others may need to go quiet until schedules become less chaotic.

One of the healthiest approaches to this type of change is to stop judging the friendship by how it used to look and start finding easier ways to stay connected. A long-standing weekly dinner may become a quick phone call, or weekend plans might become a walk around the neighborhood with strollers.



It's also helpful to be honest about the time you have available. Reaching out to let the other person know your time is stretched thin is better than disappearing without a word and hoping they understand. And instead of pretending you can keep up like before, it's usually better to name what you can actually manage, whether that's a short walk, a quick call, or a plan made a few weeks out.

New friendships may happen differently, too. For many parents, the easiest connections come from seeing the same people again and again in ordinary places like the school pickup line or the local park. That repeated contact gives people a chance to become familiar without forcing it.

As a parent, it's good to remind yourself that friendships don't have to stay frozen in their old form to still be meaningful. They just have to match the life you're living now.

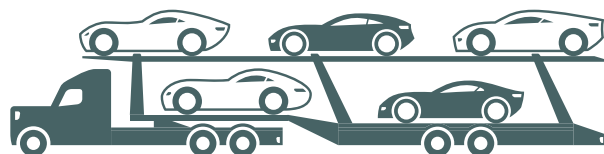
THE MILLION-DOLLAR RIDE HOME A SHORTCUT WITH FELONY CHARGES

Most of us could understand someone needing a ride home after getting out of prison. Choosing to steal a semitruck loaded with high-end sports cars to solve that problem is where things headed off track.

According to Arizona authorities, a 23-year-old man in Cochise County took a tractor trailer carrying 10 Chevrolet C8 Corvettes valued at over \$1.25 million. The excuse he gave deputies was that he had just been released from prison and needed transportation home. That may explain the destination, but it didn't explain the method.

How It Started

Before the suspect ever got behind the wheel, there was a moment where things could have gone differently. He met the truck's driver at a truck stop and started chatting with him about the expensive cargo. From there, he built enough trust with the driver to lower his guard.



When the driver tried to get back in the truck, things changed quickly. Authorities say the suspect grabbed him, threw him out, and drove off with the entire load. At that point, this was no longer an issue of getting home. And if someone is going to take a vehicle, it's hard to imagine a less subtle choice than a semi hauling more than a million dollars' worth of Corvettes.

How It Escalated

Once the truck was on the road, things only got worse. When a deputy tried to pull the vehicle over, the driver didn't respond right away to the lights and sirens. Instead, he kept going and began driving recklessly, which forced other drivers off the road.

Driving a stolen semitruck is one problem. Doing it while being pursued by law enforcement and putting other people in danger is another. Each decision the suspect made layered on top of the last, turning a bad idea into something much more serious.

Where It Ended

Eventually, the driver stopped and was taken into custody. He now faces multiple felony charges, including robbery and several counts tied to the stolen vehicle. The semi and its cargo were recovered without damage, and the original driver was able to continue his delivery.

The Corvettes may have made it to their destination, but the suspect's shortcut home turned into a much longer legal detour. As travel plans go, this one had a few very obvious flaws.



TAKE A **BREAK**



Refreshing Gazpacho



INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs tomatoes, quartered
- 2 Persian cucumbers, peeled and chopped
- 1/2 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, roughly chopped
- 2 tbsp red wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 small baguette, quartered
- 6 cherry tomatoes, halved
- 2 tbsp thinly sliced basil

DIRECTIONS

1. In a food processor or blender, combine tomatoes, cucumbers, red bell pepper, garlic, vinegar, and water.
2. Blend until smooth, then add olive oil and blend again.
3. Season with salt and pepper to taste, then cover and refrigerate until chilled.
4. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat.
5. Add baguette pieces, face down, and toast until golden and crisp, about 1–2 minutes.
6. Remove from pan and let cool.
7. Divide soup into even servings and top with basil, olive oil, cucumbers, or tomatoes as desired. Serve with the toasted bread for dipping and enjoy!

THE SNACK THEATERS TRIED TO BAN

HOW POPCORN TOOK OVER THE MOVIES

It's hard to imagine a movie theater lobby without the smell of popcorn, but for decades, many theater owners wanted nothing to do with it. Early in the film business, movie theaters tried to emulate the classier feel of live theater, complete with decorative interiors and expensive carpeting. A buttery snack that left crumbs everywhere didn't exactly fit that image.

Popcorn itself was popular long before theaters came around. By the late 1800s, people were eating it at fairs, sporting events, and other public gatherings. Charles Cretors' steam-powered popcorn machine, patented in 1893, made the snack easy to sell on the go. So, when movie theaters became popular in the early 1900s, popcorn vendors were ready. They just had to stand outside the theater doors.

Theater owners quickly discovered that people were perfectly willing to sneak in snacks purchased from street vendors, even if the theaters themselves refused to sell them. Unfortunately for those owners, the popcorn still ended up on the carpets they were trying so hard to protect. Theaters also complained about the noise. During the silent film era, constant crunching and rustling weren't exactly helping the viewing experience.

Everything changed once theater owners realized how much money they were leaving on the table. By the late 1920s and early 1930s, some discovered they could sell popcorn for much more than what it cost to make. Then came the Great Depression. Movies remained one of the few affordable forms of entertainment, and popcorn was cheap enough that customers could afford a bag with their ticket.

At first, theaters allowed popcorn vendors to rent lobby space. Before long, though, many owners cut out the middleman and bought their own popcorn machines. That decision helped reshape the movie theater business. By the late 1940s, popcorn had become so tied to the moviegoing experience that most theaters sold it, and audiences fully expected it to be part of the night.

Decades later, popcorn is still the treat most associated with the movies, and it continues to be a huge moneymaker for owners. That's not bad for a snack that theaters once tried to keep outside.



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WHERE RELATIONSHIPS MEET LIABILITY

THE COST OF CROSSING A LINE IN SOMEONE ELSE'S MARRIAGE

Marriage can be the most challenging adventure any of us will undertake. While it can be a rewarding and loving experience when you have the right partner, not everyone is so lucky.

According to the experts, nearly half of all marriages end in divorce or separation. Infidelity is often a leading cause for divorce, but in most states, the betrayed spouse has no avenue for reparation from the cheater and their affair partner. North Carolina is one of the few states that allow alienation of affection lawsuits, and a prominent political figure has just found herself embroiled in a scandal.

At the beginning of the year, Heather Ammel filed a lawsuit against former U.S. Sen. Kyrsten Sinema for deliberately interfering in her marriage by seducing and having sex with her husband, Matthew, despite knowing he was married. Matthew worked as a security guard for Sinema and regularly joined her on trips to events, festivals, and concerts. Heather claims that Sinema sent racy pictures

and messages outside the bounds of a normal working relationship during 2023 and 2024. She also claimed the former senator encouraged Matthew to bring illicit drugs on a work trip.

Heather and Matthew separated in November 2024, and Heather alleges that Sinema's actions were the final straw for their marriage. Matthew and Sinema currently reside in Maricopa County, Arizona.

Sinema has since filed a motion to dismiss the complaint, arguing that their relationship occurred exclusively outside North Carolina. She also stated that their romantic relationship did not start until May 2024, five months before Matthew and Heather separated.

Alienation of affection cases are few and far between, as the betrayed spouse has to prove that a third party is responsible for the failure of the marriage. However, they often lead to big verdicts and settlements when they go to trial, especially when prominent names are involved.