

Inside

How Do You Eat an Elephant?
Page 1

Eco-Friendly and Kid-Friendly Activities
for Earth Day

Calculating the Cost of a Wrongful Death
Page 2

What Are Our Clients Saying?

Sesame Zucchini Noodles
Page 3

The Lawyer Who Took on a Multibillion-
Dollar Company
Page 4



Something in the Water

Why Rob Bilott Took on DuPont

Rob Bilott never should have agreed to represent Wilbur Tennant's case.

The cattle farmer had presented evidence of the strange malady plaguing his cattle to lawyers, politicians, and veterinarians in Parkersburg, West Virginia, but no one took Tennant's case seriously.

But when Bilott saw the evidence for himself, it was clear that something was wrong.

The videos and photographs Tennant had collected showed cattle with patchy fur, growths and lesions, white slime coming from their mouths, and staggering gaits.

Tennant told Bilott that the abnormal behavior and physical deformities had started after his brother Jim sold his property to DuPont, a chemical company with a big presence in Parkersburg. Jim's property bordered on Wilbur's, and a stream running from Jim's property provided water for all the cattle and wildlife in the area. Since the sale, the stream had become frothy and discolored, and the animals that drank from it were sick, malformed, or dead, including 153 of Tennant's 200 cows.

When Bilott stumbled upon a letter from DuPont to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the real horror story began to emerge — one

that went far beyond the boundaries of Tennant's farm and into the drinking water of every American.

The letter mentioned a mysterious chemical called PFOA, and Bilott requested documentation from DuPont to find out more about it. However, the company refused, so Bilott requested a court order. Soon, dozens of disorganized boxes filled with thousands of 50-year-old files arrived at Bilott's firm.

He was worried he wouldn't be able to find anything incriminating or even conclusive in the mess of documents, but soon, his time as an environmental lawyer helped him see the bigger picture. It became clear that DuPont had orchestrated a massive cover-up regarding their use of PFOA. PFOA is used in the manufacturing of Teflon, and the company had knowingly exposed workers and the Parkersburg water supply to it.

Bilott filed a class-action suit as a medical monitoring claim on behalf of the people of Parkersburg, and, as of 2011, a probable link between PFOA and six health conditions, including two types of cancer, has been found. Because of the medical monitoring claim, plaintiffs can file personal injury lawsuits against DuPont. So far, 3,535 people have. If it weren't for Bilott and Tennant, the public might have never known the dangers of PFOA.



April 2020

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Life's a Game

How Not to Dwell on the Future



To say I have a stressful life would be putting it mildly, especially during the COVID-19 global pandemic. I'm a personal injury attorney who has clients counting on me, and I run my own firm where employees rely on me for their livelihoods. Then at home, my wife and I are raising two kids, a 13-year-old with severe disabilities and an 8-year-old. At this point, stress is my best friend. But to be fair, I think a lot of Americans feel this way. A 2019 Gallup poll found that 55% of Americans report feeling stressed every day. That's 20% higher than the global average! No wonder April is Stress Awareness Month.

Based on the Gallup poll, I don't think anyone needs to be made aware of stress. Instead, let's use April to think about how we can better manage stress. I think it's good to have a physical outlet to manage your stress. Personally, I love to golf. It's a calming activity that puts my mind on something else for a while, instead of dwelling on whatever has been stressing me out. I also know a lot of people who meditate, run, read, or lift weights when they're feeling stressed.

There are a lot of ways to manage stress, even beyond physical activity. A lot of my biggest stress management strategies involve changing my mental approach to whatever is stressing me out. My first approach to dealing with stress is to not dwell on the future. That's where stress lives. We certainly have to think about and plan for the future, but if you're always worried about the big tasks looming in your future, you will inevitably feel stressed. Instead, I follow the old saying, "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time." Basically, I schedule my stuff.



"My first approach to dealing with stress is to not dwell on the future. That's where stress lives."

If I need to accomplish a huge task by a certain time, I don't focus on the whole task and the looming deadline — that's overwhelming. Instead, I start by breaking everything down into smaller chunks and looking at what I can do today to make progress toward completing the bigger task. Then I take on another small task the next day. By breaking the project into smaller tasks, the whole thing gets completed by the deadline with far less stress.

Not every stressful task can be broken down into bite-sized chunks. Sometimes, something particularly stressful flips your whole life around. When this happens, I remember a piece of advice someone gave me years ago: Life's a game and sometimes the rules change. There are some people who experience a life-altering event and all they can do is feel sorry about themselves or long for how life could have been. That's where their stress and depression comes from. They aren't playing the game anymore. Instead, they're just worried about how the rules have changed. In order to get past this, you have to learn how to play by the new rules.

When my son Nathan was diagnosed with autism, it flipped my whole life around. Raising a child with autism comes with a lot of stress. I could have gotten hung up and wished for the life I'd imagined, but that wouldn't have been good for me or my family. Instead, I remembered that life is still a game, only now I'm playing by the new rules of being the father of an autistic son. The rules are different than what I expected, but I can still win and enjoy a good life with my family.

Stress is largely a mental challenge. When we change our mindset, we usually find that what was stressing us out isn't as huge as we first thought. And when shifting our mindset doesn't help? Well, there's always meditation and a game of golf.

Marc L. Shapiro



Keep It Green

The Best Eco-Friendly and Kid-Friendly Activities for Earth Day

It can be tough to figure out how to switch up family game nights. Kids can be very attached to their electronics, making it hard to get them invested in anything else. With Earth Day coming up this month, you have the perfect excuse to put down the phones and get outside to save the planet. If you're looking for ways to spend time with your kids on Earth Day, try these eco-friendly family activities!

Pick up trash and make art with it. You can teach your kids a lot about downcycling and upcycling through recycled art. Downcycling is when waste is recycled to become a new product, but there's a loss of quality as a result. Upcycling is the opposite: Whatever you recycle becomes a product with a higher value.

One way to upcycle is to create recycled art. Use old newspapers or magazines to create collages or papier-mâché bowl sculptures around balloons, jars, or your own custom shape with chicken wire. You can also use old plastic or glass bottles as beautiful hanging planters or create a memorable wind chime from jar lids, tin cans, plastic silverware, and old rubber bands.

Plant a garden. Gardening is one of the most rewarding ways to spend time outdoors. Your kids can learn about caring for another living thing and grow their own vegetables and fruits! A great way to start is to find out what's in season in your area. If you don't have an outdoor garden, you can pick out some indoor plants or create a hanging garden with recycled bottles!

Build a compost system. If you have a garden, the next best thing you can do is start composting at home! Did you know that you can compost your cardboard products? Instead of waiting for the recycling truck every other week, you can use your spare green and brown waste to create incredibly nutritious soil for your garden! Green waste includes vegetable and fruit scraps, eggshells, nutshells, coffee grounds, etc. Brown waste includes cardboard, dead leaves, paper egg cartons, wine corks, and more. Get a bin and maintain a green-to-brown ratio of 1-to-2. Layer, water, and turn the compost to keep it healthy. It can take anywhere from two months to a year, depending on what you put in and how often you turn it.

We hope you and your family have fun with these planet-loving activities! Stay clean!



Calculating the Abstract



The Challenges of a Wrongful Death Case

In January 2020, the basketball world was stunned when a helicopter crash in California killed NBA legend Kobe Bryant along with his daughter and seven other people who were on their way to a youth basketball game. It was a devastating loss. Unsurprisingly, not long after the crash, Bryant's widow, Vanessa Bryant, filed a wrongful death claim against Island Express Helicopters, the company that operated the helicopter involved in the crash.

It can be difficult to put yourself through a wrongful death case when you're in mourning. No matter the outcome, filing a lawsuit cannot bring back the loved one you've lost. However, when that loss is the result of another person's negligence, surviving family members are entitled to damages. These include damages for the survivors' pain and suffering, as well as damages for loss of care or companionship. There are also economic damages to consider.

If you lose a spouse who provided income to the household, the financial burden of losing that income can add to the strain of losing your loved one. This is why wrongful death claims allow survivors to claim damage for future potential lost earnings. Unfortunately, proving these earnings can be incredibly difficult. If someone earns a regular paycheck, their tax returns can be used to calculate how much they could have earned in the future. However, not all income comes in the form of a regular paycheck.

In the case of Kobe Bryant, though the NBA legend was no longer playing basketball, he was involved in many projects that could have resulted in potential earnings. How do you calculate what these earnings might have been? This same question comes up when the victim is a real estate agent, a car dealer, an attorney, or some other individual whose income varied from month to month.

Being able to claim these economic damages can help alleviate the financial burden so you can focus on mourning with your family. Calculating future potential earnings requires skill. If you need to file a wrongful death claim, call (239) 649-8050 and speak with an experienced attorney who can help you get the damage you deserve after your loss.



Sesame Zucchini Noodles

When you're craving takeout but want to keep your dinner healthy and refreshing, reach for this comforting, flavorful recipe instead of the phone



Ingredients

- 4 medium zucchini
- Salt, to taste
- 3 medjool dates, pitted and softened in warm water for 5 minutes
- 3 1/2 tbsp creamy, unsweetened almond butter
- 3 tbsp coconut aminos
- 3 tbsp pure sesame oil
- 3/4 tsp fresh ginger, grated
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 3 scallions, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup chopped almonds

Directions

1. If you have a spiralizer, use it to cut zucchini into noodles. Otherwise, use a peeler. Salt zucchini. Allow zucchini to "sweat" out water for 1 hour, wrap in a paper towel, and squeeze the water out.
2. In a food processor, blend dates with almond butter and aminos until smooth.
3. Add sesame oil, ginger, garlic, and vinegar and pulse until sauce is smooth.
4. In a pan, sauté zucchini noodles until heated and slightly softened.
5. Toss zucchini noodles with prepared sauce and top with scallions and almonds.

'Complete Professionals'

What Are Our Clients Saying?

"Great people! They helped us out in a very rough time. Someone was always there to answer the phone and any questions we had. I would highly recommend them."

-James Wait



"Loved my experience working with the people here at Marc Shapiro of Naples! They were complete professionals and I would definitely recommend them."

-Ariel Martinez



"My experience with the offices of Marc L. Shapiro was a very good one. My expectations were met and exceeded. Very professional and helpful. I wouldn't think twice about using their services again."

-John Wyatt



How Are We Doing?

Feedback from our clients lets us know how we're doing. Please tell us about your experiences by leaving a review on Google or on our Facebook page at [Facebook.com/AttorneyShapiroLaw](https://www.facebook.com/AttorneyShapiroLaw). Your support empowers us in our mission to help as many people as possible.

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