



MONAST
LAW OFFICE

Workers' COMPanion

November 2018

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THE WARM THANKSGIVINGS OF DAYS LONG PAST

LOOKING BACK ON THE FAMILY GATHERINGS OF MY YOUTH

Growing up as a young kid in Joplin, Missouri, Thanksgiving was always a big deal to my family. My mom was raised on a farm and would already be out of bed and toiling away in the kitchen in the wee hours before the sun even barely began to rise. I'll never forget the feeling of lazily waking up on the morning of the holiday to the smell of a bird in the oven, permeating every inch of the house. By the time I was rubbing the sleep from my eyes, she was well into the feast's preparation — she often started at 4 a.m.

I would always make my way into the living room, still in my PJs, to plop down in front of the TV for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Back then, there were only three channels on the tube. My memory may be faulty, but it seems to me all of them broadcast only the parade all morning long. That wasn't a problem, because there was nothing else I'd rather be doing on those cool, crisp days off school, heading toward Christmas.

Family and friends would filter in before noon, bringing with them more food and that warm feeling that comes whenever you gather with loved ones. When I was younger and my siblings all lived nearby, my brother Bryce and his wife, Sheila, would be there, with my niece Kobi and nephew Chad in tow, as would my sister Kathy, her husband, Buddy, their boys, and my oldest brother, Allen, and his family. It would be a gathering of 16 or more people, all coming together to break bread and just enjoy one another's company. Later on, in high school and after we moved to Ohio, my good buddy Eric Dougherty would usually make an appearance, just one more stop on his four-meal Thanksgiving circuit around town.

There was always goofy stuff going on. One year, Sheila forgot the gravy ladle, so she just bent an ordinary tablespoon. Throughout the day, we'd keep one eye on the Packers/Cowboys game. When the feast was done, my nieces and nephews and I would stamp out into the rain or muddy frost and play a little football ourselves, burning calories to make room for Round 2 with the turkey.

I always felt blessed to have a family whose Thanksgiving centered on community rather than hidden, passive-aggressive conflicts or loud political arguments. Inevitably, conversation would turn to funny stories of our shared pasts, and we'd all laugh together. Even later, after my oldest brother, Allen, died in a car accident, or when my mother was ill and in the hospital, our gatherings never became sad. We were just thankful for one another, and we tried to spread that spirit in whatever way we could. If someone we loved was going through a tough time or had to work on Thanksgiving Day, we'd send them a care package of food and a note to offer some token of support.

Those Thanksgivings are some of the happiest memories from my childhood — well, except for the time around the heyday of the hippies when I ate so many "flower-flavored" Pez candies I got sick as a dog! What else is the holiday for other than getting together with the people we care about and eating until the couch looks very inviting?

Here's hoping you and yours get your fill and then some this November, and that you find peace alongside your family. Blessings to you and happy Thanksgiving!



- Jim Monast

HOW TO EXTEND THE LIFE OF YOUR NONSTICK COOKWARE



The nonstick pan is a kitchen staple. It's useful, convenient, and easy to clean. But after a few months of use, it always seems like food starts to stick to it and "easy to clean" becomes a thing of the past.

The life span of nonstick cookware is generally supposed to be about five years, depending on use, but as many can attest, that rarely seems to be the case under real-world conditions. However, there are steps that you can take to significantly extend the life of your nonstick cookware.

If your nonstick cookware is starting to show signs of wear, you can repair existing damage — as long as that damage is minor, such as small scratches or blemishes. Using a 50/50 mix of baking soda and water, gently scrub the surface of the pan with a cloth or sponge. This helps even out imperfections. Rinse and dry. Then, wipe a small amount of cooking oil over the surface of the pan, wiping away any excess. Repeat this seasoning process regularly for even better results!

If your nonstick cookware is flaking or chipping, it's time to replace it. Those flakes and particles will get into your food and your body. While modern nonstick surfaces, such as Teflon, are technically considered safe, Teflon flakes are, of course, unappetizing in all situations.

Another way to extend the life of nonstick cookware is to avoid using cooking spray.

These sprays often contain additives that cling to nonstick surfaces, even after washing. Instead, use a purer form of fat, such as butter or coconut oil — or don't use anything at all!

And during cooking, always use soft utensils, such as wood, plastic, or silicone. Never use metal utensils, which will scratch nonstick surfaces. Another tip is to keep nonstick cookware off of high heat. High heat shortens the life span of nonstick surfaces. Save this cookware for low and medium heat only. For high-heat cooking, rely on stainless steel or cast iron.

When it comes to cleaning your nonstick cookware, skip the dishwasher. While many nonstick pots and pans are labeled "dishwasher safe," regular exposure to scalding hot water and detergent will shorten the life of the cookware. To keep your pans in good shape, hand wash them using dish soap, warm water, and a soft brush or sponge. Following these simple steps will keep your nonstick cookware looking great for years to come!

CASE STUDY

GEORGE 'UNCLE BENNY' D.

You know, there are people you just can't get rid of — and wouldn't want to!

George "Uncle Benny" D. has been a client, off and on, for as long as I've been in practice. An over-the-road driver by profession, Benny's first injury was with the now-defunct Signal Delivery. He had three injuries with them (1979, 1981, and 1982), was treated, recovered, and returned to work for several years before settling those claims, changing employers, and then getting hurt twice more within nine months!

Although it's debatable whether certain people are merely accident-prone, it is clear some work is just inherently dangerous, and this is undoubtedly the case with truck driving. In 1995, Benny was getting out of his rig when his foot caught on the fuel tank, and he fell. As he grabbed onto the tank to break his fall, his foot remained caught, breaking his right ankle and snapping his ligaments.

Following surgery and several months of painful recovery, Benny returned to work. In September, as he was on the exit curve from I-71 onto I-270, his load shifted, and his tractor-trailer flipped over. He was pinned in the wreckage and lost consciousness. He awoke in the Grant Trauma Center, having been life-flighted from the accident. The most significant of his various wounds, eventually, were his closed head injury and post-concussion syndrome. These left Benny with seizures and black-out spells, both of which occur without warning.

The combination of daily debilitating headaches, occasional double vision, sensitivity to light and sound, and the ongoing breakdown of his foot and ankle (which required several more surgeries)

caused Benny to develop significant depression. Benny attempted vocational rehabilitation often, but his memory and concentration worsened. Formerly an avid pool player and bowler who loved entertaining family and friends, Benny lost interest in many activities he used to enjoy. Oddly enough, one activity he seemed to enjoy was attending hearings in his claim! Perhaps this was because it compelled him to get out of the house and permitted him to dress up. Benny has always been one of the most stylish men I've ever known — and it still makes me smile remembering how the ladies in the Industrial Commission hearing area noticed this sharply dressed man!

Benny's psychologist ultimately convinced him to file for permanent total disability. We had this awarded to him without the need for a hearing. I'm honored to know this man and humbled to have helped him secure his financial future.



Do I Have to Use Sick Days For My Work-Related Injury?



After a serious workplace injury, you will probably need a few days off from work. But whether you have to use up your paid time off (PTO) depends on the circumstances.

The intent of the workers' compensation system in Ohio is to cover all costs related to an injury you sustain at work or an illness you develop because of your job. The benefits you receive depend on the seriousness of the injury and how much time you're forced to take off from work.

Luckily, when you break it down, it's fairly simple. If you only miss a few days of work after an accident, charge that time to your PTO to stay afloat. But if that injury leads to eight or more days off the job, you qualify for temporary total compensation benefits from workers' comp to replace your lost income. But there are qualifications to this situation.

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) defines temporary total disability as "the temporary inability of the injured worker to return to their former position of employment." If your claim for workers' compensation benefits is approved, your injury-related medical bills will be paid no matter how long you miss work.

However, temporary total compensation benefits — or reimbursement for PTO already taken — won't start until the eighth day you're off work. If you miss two weeks of work,

you'll only be compensated for the second week. If you're away over 14 consecutive days, you'll be compensated for all the days you have missed, **including** the initial week.

If you're approved to return to work under modified conditions and your employer cannot accommodate you, you can remain on temporary total compensation benefits as your condition continues to improve. It's important to note that getting these benefits doesn't mean you'll receive 100 percent of your wages. Instead, you'll receive between 66 2/3 and 72 percent of your wages, depending on how long you're off. When you return to work, temporary total compensation benefits end. However, you may be eligible for wage loss benefits if your injury causes work restrictions that lead to a reduction in earnings.

Still, it can be challenging to navigate the complexities of workers' comp on your own. Call us at 614-334-4649 to make sure you have access to all the benefits to which you're legally entitled.

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ANSWER

ABBY'S APPETIZERS

SPICY, CREAMY SWEET POTATOES



INGREDIENTS

- 5 pounds sweet potatoes
- 1 cup canned coconut milk
- 1 tablespoon Thai red curry paste
- 1/2 cup dark brown sugar
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oven to 375 F. On a large sheet pan, bake potatoes until very soft, approximately 75 minutes.
2. Let potatoes cool until they are safe to handle, then peel and mash.
3. In a small saucepan over low heat, combine coconut milk and curry paste. Once mixed, add the mixture, salt, half the sugar, and half the butter to potatoes.
4. 30 minutes before serving, heat oven to 425 F. Spread potatoes in a baking dish, cover with foil, and bake for 20 minutes.
5. Uncover potatoes and dot with remaining butter and sugar. Broil until brown, crusty, and delicious. Serve hot.

Inspired by The New York Times

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DODGING THANKSGIVING AWKWARDNESS

CONVERSATIONS APPROPRIATE FOR THE DINNER TABLE



Thanksgiving conversation is often a minefield of topics: political divides, your English degree, and Aunt Marjory's insistence that you meet her neighbor's cousin's dog walker's uncle's son who's a fantastic up-and-coming podiatrist.

Between constantly passing the potatoes and dodging your relatives' questions, Thanksgiving can be an exhausting holiday. But it's a day to be grateful for what and whom you have in your life, so why do so many people leave their annual gatherings feeling overwhelmed and misunderstood? This year, when the conversation begins steering in an awkward direction, try these conversation starters for a more relaxing and fulfilling holiday.

1. What's your pet been up to? Maybe Fluffy learned a new trick or Oscar is undergoing some intensive grooming next week. Whatever the case may be, people love to talk about their pets.

2. What Thanksgiving dish can you not live without? Without going culinary critic on your grandma's meal, gush about your favorite dish. Just like with pets, people love discussing foods and recipes. You may start a fun debate or a recipe swap with this question.

3. Dad did *what* as a kid? Getting to know your relatives, friends, and significant others better will only strengthen those bonds. You'll likely hear some interesting stories you can share with others and forge a stronger connection with your relatives.

4. Stupid human tricks, anyone? Let's see those double joints! This one might not be for the squeamish at the dinner table, but it's a fun, goofy activity that's best shared over a glass of after-dinner wine.

5. How about we get coffee? Sometimes part of the stress of answering your relatives' questions stems from holiday pressures. It may force you to address your bank account, love life, and general life choices. If you really do want to talk about your job or your love life with relatives, suggest meeting up again without the holiday atmosphere. While you're all in one place trying to enjoy a piece of pie, plan a family winery tour, beach day, or camping trip. Family situations will always be a little stressful, but without the pressure of the holidays, you might feel more relaxed.