

Treasures

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Client Crystal



One thing I love most about being a personal injury attorney is getting to meet so many wonderful people as clients. I treasure the opportunity to help them in their battle against insurance companies after a car accident, the workers' compensation carrier after a work accident or the Social Security Administration in their battle for social security disability benefits.

An added benefit to helping clients is enjoying spending time with them at our firm client events. Recently, we held our Client Appreciation Picnic at Philippe Park in Safety Harbor. The weather was wonderful, the Sonny's BBQ was delicious, but seeing all you who came was best! Those who didn't make it, I will see you at next year's picnic.

In this Christmas and New Year season, I feel blessed to have been able to help so many people over the past 28 years. Thank you for your trust and confidence in referring your friends and family! I also renew my resolution to be the most approachable attorney you know. Stuff people drive me crazy and stuff lawyers drive me insane. For those who have endured my stories and jokes during mediation or office conferences, I resolve to find funnier jokes and tell better stories. I resolve to wear a suit and tie less and wear a smile more. However, that suit and tie is ready when battle is needed.

Thank you for being a client! My clients are truly treasures!



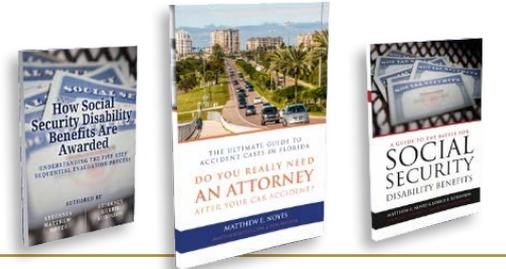
New Gems For 2019

As we bring in the New Year, there are few new changes for 2019.

Auto Accidents: There are some times that someone involved in a car accident does not need an attorney. I know, that sounds weird coming from a car accident attorney and in light of the endless television commercials telling everyone to call this office or that office. That is why I wrote my latest book, *Do You Really Need An Attorney After Your Car Accident?* My book explains how someone can handle their minor car accident case without having to pay one-third to an attorney. To get your free copy of my book, simply call or email me or my team.

Social Security Disability: In 2019, if you are receiving social security disability benefits, you will see an increase in your benefits. Most recipients will receive a 2.8 percent increase in the cost of living adjustment (COLA). This is the largest COLA increase in seven years. The Social Security Administration estimates the average monthly benefit for all disabled workers will increase from \$1,200 to \$1,234 in 2019. Also, the definition of substantial gainful employment is increased from \$1,180.00 per month to \$1,220.00 per month. This means that you can earn a bit more without losing your social security disability benefits. If you want to learn more, call or email me for your free copy of one of my social security books.

Workers' Compensation: Someone who is injured at work is entitled to two-thirds of their average weekly wage if their injury prevents them from working during the recovery stage. However, there is a cap on these benefits. In 2018, that weekly cap was \$917.00. For work accidents after January 1, 2019, the maximum benefit will be \$939.00. Arguable, this does not pertain to most injured workers, but the high earners who get hurt often suffer great wage loss because of these caps.



Community Chest

One person cannot help everyone, but everyone can help one person.

Feed the world. Make sure no child goes to bed hungry. Those are big dreams. We should strive for those, but not lose sight in what we can do by dreaming smaller (see other side). Each Thanksgiving, my family remembers our Mom by trying to change the world for families even if it is just for one day. This year, in celebration of what would have been our Mom's 90th birthday, we distributed Thanksgiving care packages to 90 families with the ingredients for a family Thanksgiving dinner including the turkey. As we passed out the care packages, we encouraged the families to invite someone over to dinner who may need a place to dine. It has been a wonderful family tradition for the last 15 years since Mom passed away suddenly from cancer.



I tell you this not to toot my horn, but to keep Mom's memory alive and to give an example of dreaming small. It doesn't have to be 90 dinners to change the world. It can be one dinner to a family in need or inviting a lonely neighbor over for dinner or donating two cans of soup to the local food bank. All these small dreams are the minutes on your way to bigger things and these simple moments change the world.

Jewel of a Joke

After being away on business for a week before Christmas, Tom thought it would be nice to bring his wife a little gift.

"How about some perfume?" he asked the cosmetics clerk. She showed him a bottle costing \$100.

"That's a bit much," said Tom, so she returned with a smaller bottle for \$50. "That's still quite a bit," Tom grouched.

Growing disgusted, the clerk brought out a tiny \$25 bottle.

Tom grew agitated, "What I mean," he said, "is I'd like to see something real cheap."

So the clerk handed him a mirror.



Legal Nugget

Hosting a Christmas party or New Year's Eve party? Could you be liable if one of your partygoers drink too much and cause a car accident? In Florida, only if a host serves alcohol to someone under the legal drinking age of 21 would the host be responsible for the minor's negligence. Under Florida law, a person who willfully and unlawfully furnishes alcoholic beverages to a person who is not of lawful drinking age may become liable for injury or damage caused by or resulting from the intoxication of such minor. Nevertheless, be safe!

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Focus on Community Riches

Merry Christmas! Happy Hanukkah! Happy Holidays!

I know it is crazy during this time of year so I truly appreciate you reading this edition of *Treasures*. I wish you and your family a wonderful loving holiday season. May you remember what my Mom taught me many years ago – you have two hands for a reason, one is for reaching out when you need help and the other is for extending help when you can. If you need help over the holidays, reach out. If you see someone in need (emotionally, financially or otherwise), extend a giving hand if you can. That's what the season is all about.

As we start a New Year, resolutions are often made. This reminds me of Josh Wilson's song, *Dream Small*. Initially, when I heard the title, I was taken back because we are also taught to dream big. However, these lyrics are powerful:

Dream small

Don't bother like you've gotta do it all

It's visiting the widow down the street

Or dancing on a Friday with your friend with special needs

These simple moments change the world

*Of course, there's nothing wrong with bigger dreams
Just don't miss the minutes on your way, your bigger things, no
'Cause these simple moments change the world*

Too many times, we make big goals and lose sight of opportunities along the way to reaching the big goals. I encourage you to listen to this song before making your New Year resolutions.

Treasure the season and all those who make your holidays a treasure! Take a moment in the chaos of the season to look around and see the treasures in your life and throughout the Tampa Bay community.

Matt

Recipe Riches

Champagne Cupcakes

YIELD: 12
TOTAL TIME: 1 HOUR

INGREDIENTS

- 1 box white cake mix, plus ingredients on back of box, **replace the water with champagne
- 2 sticks of butter, room temperature
- 1/2 cup vegetable shortening
- 4-6 tbsp champagne
- 4-5 cups powdered sugar
- gold sprinkles
- homemade gold sparklers (gold wire and gold tinsel), for decoration

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven according to the directions of the package.
2. Line a muffin pan with muffin liners.
3. Prepare and bake the cake mix according to the directions on the package, however substitute the water for champagne, so if your box calls for 2/3 cup water use 2/3 cup champagne. Divide the batter evenly among the muffins cups.
4. Bake according to the suggested time - roughly 20-25 minutes.
5. Remove the cupcakes and place them on a cooling rack to cool.
6. When the cupcakes are cooled, prepare the frosting.
7. In a mixing bowl, combine the butter and vegetable shortening and beat using an electric mixer until smooth, 1-2 minutes.
8. Add in the champagne, starting with less and adding more for stronger flavor if desired.
9. Begin to add the powdered sugar, about 1 cup at a time, mixing by hand first, then with the electric mixer. Continue adding powdered sugar until the frosting tastes good to you.
10. Place the frosting in a large piping bag fit with a 1m piping tip. Push the buttercream down into the bag. Pipe the buttercream onto the cupcakes, starting in the center of the cupcake, swirling out, and then swirling back into the center, progressively stacking the frosting as you get to the center.
11. Top with gold sprinkles and gold sparklers.

