

News & Notes

March/April 2005

SOUCIE & BOLT

PERSONAL INJURY LAWYERS

Attentive Driving. It's a Life or Death Decision

"I feel like our lives were perfect until 2:50 p.m. on June 23," said Christina Schmit. "Cassie was only six and a half years old. She was making mud pies with her friend, sitting on the lawn in front of her grandmother's friends house, wearing red shorts and a red shirt. And then he walked right by the truck, got in his truck and ran her over. She never had a chance."

Tests showed the driver was not drinking. He was not taking

drugs. He was not even talking on his cell phone. He was thinking about the plumbing supplies he needed to fix a neighbor's home and he just was not paying attention to the little girl sitting quietly on the lawn 20 feet in front of his truck. Parked half on the grass and half on the road in the quiet cul de sac, he simply drove forward over Cassie Schmit, and ended her life.

It was not only Cassie's life that ended on that sunny June day. An only and much loved child, her mother and father have found that grief does not end after some prescribed time period when you lose a child.

"I cry every day," said Christina. "Losing a child is not something you get over. It just goes on and on."

The first grandchild, Cassie was adored by her grandparents and especially by her younger cousin Christopher, who stills asks where Cassie is and wants to talk to her.

The first lawyer the Schmits contacted spent a little time reviewing the accident and said they did not have much of a case. A coworker recommended Fred Soucie.

Before Fred reviewed their case, he asked her family to help him

get to know Cassie and who she was as a person. Together they watched some videos of her and talked about

her love of Mexican dancing and the Cinco de Mayo parade. Her parents shared with Fred about their little girl. After seeing the family's grief and hearing about Cassie's life, Fred spent several months working on the case and decided the insurance company's position denying fault was wrong. He believed the family should seek justice. He took testimony, fought for Cassie's family in court, and obtained a favorable settlement.

"Cassie was never just a 'case' to Fred," Christina said. "He was our friend and her friend. He and his paralegal Shannon would do anything for us – except the one thing we all wish they could do – bring Cassie back. If you ever really need a lawyer and a good friend, call Fred Soucie."

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Christina Schmit, Cassie's mother

"My whole approach to representing a family that has lost a loved one is to honor the memory of that person," said Fred Soucie. "If I can help the family by doing that, then I feel like my work has been well done."

Asked about what she wished people would learn from her daughter's tragedy, Christina paused and said, "Please pay attention when you drive. It means everything."

Christina also talked about her family and how they've stuck together through this. "Hold onto the people you love when tragedy happens. Let them scream and cry, but hold on. Be there for them. They need you."

Our hearts and prayers go out to this family and to everyone who loved Cassie. Please drive carefully.

... because bad things happen to *good* people

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Safety Tips for Drivers

Here are a few tips to help you prevent an accident and minimize injuries and fatalities if one does occur.

Cutting in front can cut your life short

If you cut in front of another vehicle, you may create an emergency-braking situation for the vehicles around you. When passing, look for the front of the vehicle in your rear-view mirror before pulling in front and avoid braking situations!

Buckle your belts

Seat belts are your best protection in case of a crash. Your seat belt will keep you from striking the steering wheel or windshield, and from being ejected from the vehicle. Wearing a seat belt is the single most important thing you can do to save your life.

Watch your blind spots

Large trucks have blind spots around their front, back and sides. Watch out! If you can't see the driver in the truck's mirror, the driver can't see you.

Inattentive drivers

Inattentive drivers do not pay attention to driving or what is going on around them. They can be just as dangerous as aggressive drivers when they drive slowly in the passing lane, ignore trucks brake lights or signals, and create an emergency-braking situation. They also create dangerous situations when they attempt to do other things while driving, such as use cell phones. If you need to attend to another matter while driving, safely pull over in a parking lot or rest stop.

Aggressive drivers

Speeding, running red lights and stop signs, pulling in front of trucks too quickly when passing, and making

frequent lane changes, especially in the blind spots of trucks, can create a dangerous and potentially fatal situation on the road.

Avoid squeeze play

Be careful of trucks making wide right turns. If you try to get in between the truck and the curb, you'll be caught in a "squeeze" and can suffer a serious injury.

Never drink and drive

Alcohol impairs coordination and affects a person's ability to make crucial driving decisions.

Information provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.
www.sharetheroadsafely.org

As always, if you know of someone who has been injured or killed in an accident, car collision, electrical or power line incident, or other circumstance that requires expert legal help, please call us at 763 427 8888.