

A Publication of Fonvielle Lewis Foote & Messer

# LAW TALK

## TOO MANY LIMITATIONS

### The Crash of Regional One

By Jim Messer, Partner

In the 1973 movie “*Magnum Force*,” Clint Eastwood coined the phrase “a man’s got to know his limitations.” In aviation, not knowing one’s limitations can be the difference between life and death. Sadly, on July 13, 2004, a pilot and his employer forgot theirs.

#### *The Helicopter Crash*

It was 4:52 a.m. in upstate South Carolina when a radio dispatcher called for a helicopter air ambulance service. The call was answered by Regional One, a helicopter operated by the Med-Trans Corporation. The dispatcher explained a young woman had been injured at the I-26 rest stop. Dawn was still an hour and one half away.

The pilot took off from Spartanburg at 5:02 a.m. and landed at the rest stop at 5:23 a.m. Ten minutes after arriving, Regional One took off and climbed over the darkened pines of the Sumter National Forest. Less than 500 yards later the helicopter collided with trees and crashed to the forest floor. In the burning wreckage there were no survivors.

#### *The Investigation*

Familiar with our firm’s extensive aviation litigation experience, particularly helicopter air ambulances litigation, we were retained by the helicopter flight paramedic’s widow.

Firm Partner Jim Messer, a former Army helicopter pilot and Firm Investigator Bob Parke, a certified flight instructor, immediately flew to the crash site. Extensive investigation would eventually lead to the cause of the crash, but the first order of business was to conduct a ground inspection.

After the site had been cleared by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) the entire area was photographed, including the damage to the trees caused by the downward spiral of the helicopter. The same day, a helicopter air survey was conducted to memorialize the final path of the flight and crash. Finally, a survey firm was

hired to complete a topographical survey of the flight from the pick-up point to the first tree strike. Witness interviews pointed to pilot error, but mechanical failure had to be ruled out.

Because of the complexity of rotary-wing incidents we hired a helicopter procedures expert, an airframe and power plant expert, an aviation accident reconstruction firm and a forensic meteorologist. The inspection of the helicopter wreckage, and the survey of the location of the major parts of the wreckage, pointed way from mechanical failure. The expert’s opinions confirmed the initial premise – pilot error caused the crash. Later the NTSB would also confirm our conclusion.

Suit was filed against Med-Trans. Aware that we represented the flight paramedic’s widow, the flight nurse’s widower contacted us requesting we represent him as well. His claim was added to the suit and the formal legal investigatory process, or discovery, began. The more we looked the more we found that the pilot error leading to the crash began years before the fatal flight from Spartanburg.

#### *Pilot and Company Background*

The Bell 407 is a strong but small helicopter able to carry one pilot, one patient and two support personnel. The helicopter is so small that when the patient is placed onboard, their feet extend into the cockpit next to the pilot. Air ambulances often fly at night and in poor weather. This means the ability to fly without outside reference, or instrument flight, is critical to safe operation. Discovery revealed the pilot, although instrument rated, had never flown in instrument conditions nor had he been trained in an instrument simulator. This lack of company training kept him from being a proficient instrument pilot.

Next we learned the company required its pilots to have 1500 hours of turbine engine operation time, that is, 1500 hours operating a sophisticated helicopter. Inexplicably, the



Jim Messer, Partner

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## *The Helicopter Crash of Regional One (continued from cover)*

crash pilot had only 500 hours of turbine time, a violation of the company's own protocol. Worse, the pilot had limited flight time in the Bell 407 and so little night flight experience in the six months prior to the crash that he was just days away from being barred from night flight.

Despite these shortcomings, the pilot remained on duty. Lacking instrument expertise and night experience, flight into marginal weather conditions would eventually result in a catastrophe.

### *Shopping For A Flight*

By the early morning hours of July 13, 2004, the weather was so bad the National Aviation Weather Forecast Service issued a special warning for fog, mist and rain. As a result, the Greenville Med-Trans operation went "condition red" and would not accept flight requests. Three other helicopter services were located in the area; Palmetto Health Richland in Columbia, South Carolina; Providence Life Reach, also in Columbia and Regional One in Spartanburg, South Carolina. By morning only three services remained.

At 4:40 a.m. the first alert went out to Palmetto Health Richland. Newberry County requested an air ambulance to pick up a patient at the I-26 rest-stop. Palmetto's Careforce helicopter took off, but bad weather forced it back to the pad in four minutes.

In what is known as shopping, Newberry County contacted Providence Life Reach requesting a flight, but Life Reach monitored the progress of Careforce and refused. The shopping continued when dispatch called Med-Trans One in Greenville, but it shut down at midnight.

The final call was to Regional One at 4:52 a.m. Despite three helicopters who had declined the flight because of dangerous weather, Regional One accepted the mission.

### *The Scene of the Pickup and the Crash*

The forensic meteorologist's post-crash radar and satellite analysis showed a flight through poor visibility, fog and misting rain – exactly what the weather service predicted. Witnesses saw fog in the tree tops as the helicopter approached. During landing the pilot used a high power searchlight which, according to the procedures expert, would significantly degrade night vision for up to thirty minutes. When the helicopter took off, it headed out over the pitch black of the Sumter National Forest. Witnesses confirmed the helicopter was headed toward Spartanburg, but the pilot never climbed more than just above the trees. Sadly, the ground

survey confirmed the flight route took Regional One across rising terrain. When the hills rose to meet the level flight of the helicopter, it struck the trees and crashed. What appears to have been an attempt to fly under the weather came to a disastrous end with all occupants consumed in the post-crash fire.

### *Med-Trans Denies Responsibility*

Since the helicopter pilot caused the crash, the average person would think that the case was over – not Med-Trans. The deceased flight nurse and flight paramedic had been employed by the Spartanburg hospital. They were never employed by the air ambulance company, never took orders from the company and never received a paycheck from the company. Nonetheless, in an attempt to escape responsibility, Med-Trans alleged that both of the deceased crew were "statutory" employees of their company. Because employees in South Carolina are prohibited from suing their own employer, the company was trying to limit the clients to workers compensation benefits. Claiming the case would take years to get through the appellate courts, the company tried to intimidate the clients. When Med-Trans discovered we were well-versed on the law, and had steadfast clients, a settlement conference was requested. Mediation in Greenville, South Carolina, led to a large, but confidential, settlement for both clients. Although each lost their spouse, they could now move on with their lives.

### *Aftermath*

The NTSB eventually released their report showing he pilot's failure to maintain terrain clearance caused the crash. The agency determined contributing factors were inadequate weather and dispatch information relayed to the pilot. In a later hearing, the NTSB noted there were 55 emergency medical aircraft crashes in the three-year period ending in January 2005 – 21 of which were fatal. The NTSB recommended changes in procedures and the installation of terrain awareness systems on aircraft, but it did not have the authority to require changes. The Federal Aviation Administration refused to require the changes, and instead asked the industry to voluntarily adopt recommendations. Med-Trans Corporation declined comment on the recommendations.

The crash, litigation and NTSB findings did result in the formation of the South Carolina Association of Air Medical Services, an alliance of 12 programs serving the Carolinas and Georgia. Now, when a helicopter service refuses a call because of weather, all other services are immediately notified. And that is important, because a man has got to know his limitations. ⚖️

## Georgia Collision Results in \$250,000 Verdict

*By Jim Messer, Partner*

Tim Dugan was nearly home when a car suddenly pulled out in front of him in Donalsonville, GA. He tried to avoid the collision, but it was too late.

The impact caused immediate neck pain and he sought treatment in Donalsonville, but it was only when he was referred to a physician

at Archbold Hospital in Thomasville, GA, that he was diagnosed with a herniated disk in his neck.

Our firm immediately filed suit against the driver of the automobile and then joined her husband in the case under Georgia's family purpose doctrine. The trial, held in Seminole County, resulted in a verdict against the husband and wife for \$250,000. ⚖️

# REPORT CONFIRMS THAT TOUGH TEEN DRIVING LAWS *SAVE LIVES*

A nationwide push to bump the minimum driving age to 17 and tighten teen restrictions recently got a boost from a federal report offering strong evidence that tough licensing laws save lives.

State laws that prevent 16-year-olds from driving alone, require more time behind the wheel and limit teen passengers are working to cut fatalities, according to the report released in July by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The report showed that states with the toughest teen licensing laws reduced deaths for 16-year-olds by up to 21 percent. Even less rigid laws, such as those that simply impose night or passenger restrictions, reduced fatal crashes among 16-year-old drivers by 11 percent, according to the report.

These so-called “graduated driver licensing” laws differ in each state and this study showed which programs were most effective in reducing risk. The study was conducted at Johns Hopkins, where researchers used data from 1994-2004 in 36 states with graduated driver licensing programs and seven without. Standards for teen drivers included:

- Being at least 15½ to get a learner’s permit
- Waiting three months before getting an intermediate license
- Driving while supervised for at least 30 hours
- Turning 16 before applying for an intermediate license
- Receiving a full license at 17
- Limiting nighttime driving
- Restricting the number of passengers


Comparing states with five program components to states without graduated driver licensing programs, the researchers reported an 18 percent difference in fatal crashes involving 16-year-old drivers. Programs with six or seven components saw a 21 percent reduction.

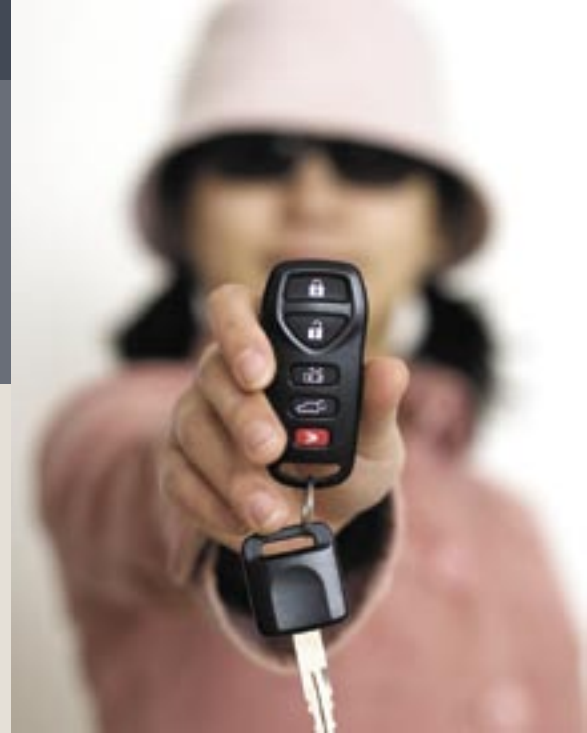
The researchers also found a 16-21 percent drop in fatal crashes when programs included an age requirement and a waiting period of at least three months before allowing teens to apply for their intermediate license. They concluded that the most comprehensive graduated driver licensing programs result in the best reduction of fatal crashes of 16-year-old drivers.

“This study strongly underscores the effectiveness of graduated licensing laws,” said Nichole Nason, NHTSA administrator. “To states searching for solutions to the tragic problem of fatal crashes involving teenagers, it provides extremely valuable new information.”

Research shows that young drivers are twice as likely as adult drivers to be in a fatal crash. Drivers who are 16 have crash rates that are three times greater than 17-year-old drivers, five times greater than 18-year-old drivers and twice the rate of 85-year-old drivers, according to the NHTSA.

Higher crash rates come from a lack of driving experience and inadequate driving skills, excessive driving late at night, risk-taking behavior, poor driving judgment and decision making, drinking and driving and distractions from teenage passengers.

State legislatures are being asked to look at this latest research and toughen their laws. 



## STATE OF FLORIDA LICENSING RULES

Consent of a parent or guardian is required for a minor to be licensed. At any time the person who consented can revoke the consent, and the permit or license will be cancelled.

### To get a learner’s license you must:

- Be at least 15
- Pass a written test
- Complete a traffic law and substance abuse education course

### After getting a learner’s license you may:

- Not drive unless supervised
- First 3 months — not drive after sunset
- After 3 months — not drive after 10 p.m.

### To get a license you must:

- Be at least 16
- Hold a learner’s license at least 1 year
- Drive at least 50 hours, 10 of them at night, while supervised
- Pass a driving test

### After getting a license you may:

- Younger than 17 — not drive between 11 p.m. and 6 am unless supervised
- 17 — not drive between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. unless supervised

### Restrictions end:

- At 18

Crashes or violations may delay getting a full license.

Source: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety

# Serving Our Community

## FIFTH ANNUAL BATTLE OF THE BELTS

FIRM AWARDS HIGH SCHOOLS \$2,000 FOR BUCKLING UP

Across the nation, communities unfortunately face senseless tragedies when young people die or are critically injured in vehicle crashes because they choose not to wear a safety belt.

Leon County had a particularly painful year in 2002 when fatal motor vehicle crashes claimed the lives of four teenage students who were not wearing seat belts. At that time the Tallahassee Police Department (TPD) and Fonvielle Lewis Foote & Messer partnered to introduce the Battle of the Belts, a friendly competition between high schools to educate students and adults about the importance of safety belts and encourage their use in young drivers.

As personal injury lawyers, too often we see the results of how poor decisions lead to detrimental outcomes, and welcome the chance to support TPD in one of its many proactive programs. Being in an accident and not wearing a seat belt affects more than just those in the vehicle. The careless behavior causes higher insurance premiums and exorbitant short-term and long-term hospital care, as well as pain and suffering for the family and friends of those injured, disabled or killed.

Our efforts with Battle of the Belts and other community initiatives are critical to help educate and save the lives of both teen and adult drivers, according to TPD Chief Walter McNeil, who was joined at this year's awards ceremony in May by Captain Argatha Gilmore, Division Commander TPD Traffic Unit, Hal Lewis of FLF&M and (then) Leon County Schools Superintendent Bill Montford.

Vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among teens in the United States. In 2004, Florida reported 37,355


crashes involving teens ages 15-19, with 26,179 injured and 282 killed. Since the Battle of the Belts program began, the number of teen fatalities involving teenage drivers in Leon County has declined with three fatalities in 2003 and two in 2004, according to the TPD. As of May 10, 2006, the reporting date for the 2006 Battle of the Belts, there was one reported fatality in Leon County of a driver under 21. That driver was impaired and was not wearing a seatbelt.

Maclay Upper School was the 2006 winner of the "Highest Buckle-Up Rate" with 95.3 percent of students surveyed

wearing a safely belt. The "Most Improved Buckle-Up Rate" award went to Leon High School, with an increase from 70.98 percent to 86.03 percent. Fonvielle Lewis Foote & Messer gave each school a plaque and \$1,000 toward their Junior-Senior Prom or graduation related activities.

Battle of the Belts is a friendly competition between the 10 area high schools to challenge each other, drivers and passengers to always buckle up. TPD traced seat belt use of those entering and leaving the school campuses for one day in April and again in May.

We hope that this effort will continue to increase awareness and help alter student behavior, as well as encourage parents and faculty to always buckle their seat belt and ask all passengers to do the same.

Our law firm consists of proud parents of 16 children, including six teenagers who are of driving-age. Research shows that when a driver is unbuckled, the majority of the time their children will not be buckled up either. We encourage all parents to set a good example for their children by buckling up every time they get in a car. Since 2002, our law firm has donated a total of \$11,000 to local high schools in support of seat belt safety. 

**"2006 HIGHEST  
BUCKLE-UP RATE"  
WINNER:  
Maclay Upper School**

**"2006 MOST IMPROVED  
BUCKLE-UP RATE"  
WINNER:  
Leon High School**

# Serving Our Community (continued)

## BUCKLE-UP, IT'S THE LAW

It is against the law in Florida to operate a motor vehicle unless the driver and every passenger are wearing a safety belt, according to TPD Chief Walter McNeil. Failure to buckle up contributes to more fatalities than any other single traffic safety related behavior. The Florida Highway Patrol reports that there were 3,515 fatalities on the state's roads in 2005, an all-time high, and an increase of 348 deaths over the previous year. Many were ejected and died from severe head trauma or internal injuries. More than 66 percent of those who died in safety-belt-equipped vehicles were not buckled up.

In 2005, there were 36 deaths in Leon County as a result of vehicle crashes. Of those, 58 percent were not wearing safety belts. Seat belts are proven to be the most effective way to avoid death or serious injury in a crash. Air bags are designed to work jointly with seatbelts, not replace them.

Any person who violates Florida's Safety Belt Law commits a nonmoving violation with a fine of \$76.50 for both the driver and passengers. A child seat violation is \$120.50. Last year, the TPD issued 1,636 citations to those not wearing safety belts.

### 2006 Florida Statute "The Florida Safety Belt Law" states:

It is unlawful for any person:

- a) To operate a motor vehicle in this state unless each passenger and the operator of the vehicle under the age of 18 years are restrained by a safety belt or by a child restraint device pursuant to s. 316.613, if applicable; or
- b) To operate a motor vehicle in this state unless the person is restrained by a safety belt.

It is unlawful for any person 18 years of age or older to be a passenger in the front seat of a motor vehicle unless such person is restrained by a safety belt when the vehicle is in motion.



Source: Tallahassee Police Department Traffic Unit Battle of the Belts News Release, May 17, 2006

## GRADS PARTY SAFELY DURING PROJECT GRADUATION

The community and countless volunteers came together at the end of the 2006 school year to make sure students had a safe and special sendoff during Project Graduation.

Organizers wanted to make sure students in Wakulla and Leon counties lived to remember this very special time. Students were encouraged to make healthy and safe choices by attending the planned activities, which included food and prizes.

For the fifth consecutive year, the \$4,500 Fonvielle Lewis Foote & Messer Responsible Choice Awards were divided among

45 graduates who attended. All students at nine participating high schools who attended Project Graduation had the chance to win a cash award of \$100 each for making the choice to party all-night in a safe supervised environment.

The events were hosted by parent volunteers and operated strictly on community donations. Since 2002, our firm has donated \$33,500 to area high school students and schools through these awards and partnership with the Tallahassee Police Department and the Battle of the Belts high school seatbelt usage competition.

## KUDOS TO THE 2006 PROJECT GRADUATION COORDINATORS

Thanks to the parent volunteers who coordinated the 2006 Project Graduation Committees at their schools. It would not have been possible to provide 2,200 graduates with a safe, supervised, all-night celebration without the leadership, dedication, commitment and months of hard work from these parents and their committee members. We invite you to join us in personally thanking these individuals for their tireless contributions!

### CHILES HIGH SCHOOL

Sue Howcroft & Nancy Varn  
456 graduating seniors

### FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL

Jennie Dekle  
136 graduating seniors

### GODBY HIGH SCHOOL

Karen Trammell  
236 graduating seniors

### LEON HIGH SCHOOL

Linda Yon & Kim Crum  
412 graduating seniors

### LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL

Lynne Troelstrup  
350 graduating seniors

### MACLAY UPPER SCHOOL

Joanne Prescott & Dee Ann Smith  
73 graduating seniors

### NORTH FLORIDA CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Tom Phillips  
72 graduating seniors

### RICKARDS HIGH SCHOOL

Kim Brown  
215 graduating seniors

### WAKULLA HIGH SCHOOL

Captain Jim Griner  
217 graduating seniors

# GETTING A TICKET DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN IT WAS YOUR FAULT

By David Fonvielle, Partner

Our client initially was not going to contact an attorney after receiving a ticket in an auto accident and being told by police it was her fault. Annette Cary had run into the side of a tanker trailer in the dark as it backed across her lane of traffic on Woodville Highway. The investigating Highway Patrol trooper thought she should have seen the trailer in time to avoid hitting it.

It was early and still dark the morning of the accident when Mrs. Carey drove to work from her home in St. Marks. She knew the Tallahassee route well since she had traveled it for the past several years. All she remembers about the accident is that someone suddenly ran in front of her, and then seeing something else in the road. Her next memory was of being attended to in her wrecked car.

Knowing she was a cautious and careful driver, her friend suggested she talk to us about the accident. There didn't seem to be a question about her falling asleep at the wheel since she saw the person run in front of her immediately before the accident. So how could she have not seen the trailer in time to stop?

I assigned our chief investigator, Bob Parke, to the case and asked him to determine if there was any explanation for the accident other than Mrs. Carey being distracted. Bob was able to find another Wakulla County resident who had passed through the same area within a few minutes prior to Mrs. Carey that morning. The witness told Bob that as he approached what later became the accident scene, he suddenly saw a semi trailer backing out onto the Woodville Highway and had to swerve to miss it. Although it was dark, this witness did not see any lights on the trailer. Bob Parke was able to determine that the trailer observed by this witness was the same one Mrs. Carey ran into a minute or two later, about 150 yards down the road.


By the time Mrs. Carey approached the scene, the tractor had backed the tanker trailer out of one driveway and was backing it down Woodville Highway

in a northerly direction and into another entrance to what used to be the St. Marks Refinery. As she approached, the tractor portion of the rig would have been facing her in the opposing southbound lane as it backed towards the entrance to the Refinery and across her lane of traffic.

Of course, the truck driver and flagman who was walking with the truck as it backed up the Woodville Highway testified the tractor and trailer had its lights on at all times. The flagman also testified that although he walked with a flashlight in his hand to direct traffic, that he was directly in front of the headlights of the tractor as it was backing up the highway. He admitted seeing Mrs. Carey's headlights as she approached and running in front of Mrs. Carey's car immediately prior to the collision.

A reconstruction by our accident specialist revealed that as the tractor backed the trailer up the Woodville Highway and across Mrs. Carey's lane of traffic, it was angled such that, if its headlights were on, they would have been shining directly into Mrs. Carey's windshield. This would explain why she didn't see the flagman, who was directly in front of the tractor's headlights, and why her skid marks began just as she passed the glare of the headlights. If the tractor's headlights had not been on, then the explanation for the accident was obvious, especially since there was a serious conflict in testimony about whether or not the flagman actually had a flashlight.

We presented our case to a Wakulla County jury and at the conclusion of our case, settled it for a confidential amount. The important message here however, is that had our client decided not to get a second opinion about what happened that morning, she would never have known that this accident was not her fault.

If you or a loved one are in an accident and you don't agree or don't understand why you were determined to be at fault by law enforcement, be sure and get a second opinion from our law firm. 



# WHEN INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND POLITICS *Don't Mix*



David Fonvielle, Partner

Don't tell Sheryl Allen that lightning doesn't strike twice. In the past five years she has been a tragic victim two times – first when a negligent driver hit her during a holiday parade and again when a high-ranking politician stripped her of compensation for the debilitating seizures caused by the accident.

She's not alone. Two dozen other families across the state in 2006 faced similar mistreatment by powerful legislators who chose to ignore the claims of those who have died or were seriously injured at the hands of state or municipal employees.

Under Florida law, only legislators can approve payment of claims against state and local governments for more than \$200,000. This past session, lawmakers thumbed their nose at all of the victims, even though in each case a judge or jury ruled in their favor, or the municipality or state agency agreed to settle the claim.

"This is a tragedy and it's a miscarriage of justice," Sen. Walter "Skip" Campbell, D-Fort Lauderdale told the *St. Pete Times*. "These victims have been mishandled by the government which caused significant and severe injuries and they've been mishandled on the back end when the Legislature doesn't want to pay."

In the case of Sheryl Allen, the City of Tallahassee agreed that it was negligent when one of its drivers hit her with a parade float as he rounded the corner where she was helping students board a school bus. She was knocked off her feet, hit her head on the concrete curb and was rushed by ambulance unconscious to the hospital. Today she has seizures and can no longer drive a car, function as a bookkeeper for the family business or undertake positions of responsibility like supervising young adult activities. The city said it would pay Allen

\$975,000 and agreed to help our law firm through the legislative process of getting it approved.

Her claim went through all the proper channels, including approval by Senate and House committees, but hit a concrete roadblock when Senate President Tom Lee got a hold of it. He announced that lobbyists and trial lawyers make too much money off claims bills and therefore wouldn't allow passage of any such bills.

Personal injury lawyers are not overly compensated in these types of government cases, as Senate President Lee publicly asserts. The law, in fact, limits our fees to 25 percent even though attorneys' fees in other litigated personal injury cases currently are typically 40 percent.

"He must have some personal agenda, what else does he have to gain?" Wendy Smith told the *Times* in blaming Senate President Lee. Her 18-year-old FSU freshman died from dehydration during football practice because trainers did not offer water or rest. Lawmakers ignored her \$1.8 million settlement.

She, Sheryl Allen and all the other victims are simply an incidental and apparently necessary casualty to Senate President Lee's effort to keep lobbyists and trial lawyers from being paid.

There is something wrong in America when this level of bitter, uncaring and irrational attitude comes from the very individuals whom we elect to represent us. No one elects politicians to carry out personal vendettas, but that is exactly what Senate President Lee and others who follow his lead are doing. If I thought he had a conscience, I would say he should be ashamed of himself, but perhaps it is us who should be scolded for allowing this type of individual to represent us. And for encouraging lightning to strike twice. ⚖️

# FORMER FHP SENIOR INVESTIGATOR JOINS FIRM

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*Administrator*

Robert L. Parke, C.L.I.  
George W. Bedingfield, Jr.  
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Claire C. Davis, C.L.A.  
*New Case Coordinator*

Sherri L. Clark  
Jennifer Deneuté  
Janis B. Early, C.L.A.  
Brandy Gerrard  
Michelle Holly-Ashley  
Paula C. Kelley  
Connie J. Laughlin  
Janice L. Patterson  
Angela C. Scott  
Rose M. Starkey  
*Paralegals*

Accounts of our cases are presented in this newsletter to illustrate our areas of practice. Every case is unique and the results of one case do not indicate the quality or value of any other case.


The hiring of a lawyer is an important decision that should not be based solely on advertisements. Before you decide, ask us to send you free written information about our qualifications and experience.

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& Messer

George "Chip" W. Bedingfield Jr., a certified law enforcement officer with 17 years experience investigating traffic homicides, DUI cases and crashes with the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP), joined our firm as an investigator this year, bringing tremendous experience and expertise. He joins Robert L. Parke, the firm's certified legal investigator and a former St. Petersburg, Florida police officer who has worked with David Fonvielle since 1984.

A 1989 FHP Academy graduate, Mr. Bedingfield has worked in Lee County, Tallahassee and Lake City

investigating thousands of traffic crashes, obtaining hundreds of DUI convictions and assisting in homicide and felony cases. He has been recognized as a Traffic Accident Reconstructionist and became a Senior Homicide Investigator while supervising troopers and enforcing laws within the State of Florida.

Chip and his wife are the proud parents of two children. He is a member of the FHP reserves and his hobbies include mountain biking, road cycling, motocross, baseball, softball, golf, tennis and camping. Please join us in welcoming Chip Bedingfield. 

THE LEGAL TEAM OF  
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FOOTE & MESSER  
WISHES YOU A  
HEALTHY AND SAFE  
HOLIDAY SEASON!



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