

Steve Watrel, P.A.

Pregnant Mother Obtains a Million-Dollar Policy Limits Settlement in Trucking Collision



Anna Smith (name changed), a pregnant mother of one, was driving with her husband and her two-year-old daughter to the Avenues Mall. A tractor trailer ran a stop sign on Phillips Highway, causing the car to partially under-ride the trailer. Tragically, Ms. Smith's husband suffered irreversible brain damage and later died. Distraught and in financial need, Ms. Smith retained the Law Firm of Steve Watrel, P.A., a law firm with years of experience handling trucking cases.

Not every lawyer who handles car collisions can translate that know-how to trucking collisions. That is because truck-

ing collision cases are unique and more complicated than the average car collision case. For instance, trucking cases require an in-depth knowledge and experience of numerous federal regulations, the trucking industry, and commercial vehicle insurance. Also, these cases require a law firm that has the financial resources necessary to take on the insurance company, which typically tries to starve out the injured party by months or years of delay in payment.

Most importantly, Mr. Watrel understood the importance of moving fast. Within one week of the accident, Mr. Watrel had

an engineering crew inspect, measure and photograph the scene of the collision. While the evidence was still visible, the crew observed and analyzed the skid marks left behind by the tractor trailer's tires and by the Smith's car. The evidence showed that the truck driver was going too fast and could not have stopped at the stop sign. It also showed Ms. Smith was traveling under the speed limit and made an attempt to avoid the collision. While the evidence was being gathered, Mr. Watrel and his investigators were busy locating eyewitnesses to corroborate Ms. Smith's version of what happened.

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Policy Limits Settlement in Legal Malpractice Case

Robert Jones (name changed), a 54-year-old husband and father, was admitted to Shands at the University of Florida Hospital in Gainesville for a complicated spinal procedure. The surgeon, deciding to forgo the use of certain monitoring equipment useful for this type of surgery, operated on Mr. Jones's spinal cord unsuccessfully, leaving him a quadriplegic.

Mr. Jones's wife hired a large law firm to represent her in a suit against the hospital and the surgeon. The law firm, awash with too many cases, did very little to help Mrs. Jones. They felt it was more profitable for their bottom line to settle her case quickly. They gave her case to an inexperienced, young attorney, and pushed her to settle with the hospital for \$100,000.



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VERDICTS AND SETTLEMENTS

From nursing home abuse cases to motor vehicle accidents, the firm of Steve Watrel has fought for and won both significant settlements as well as jury awards for clients who have been injured wrongfully.

\$3.1 million settlement for a retarded resident of a mental hospital who was paralyzed by an aide who threw him into a wall.

\$1.7 million verdict for a motorcyclist who suffered cracked vertebra and broken kneecap when struck by a car fleeing the police.

\$1.1 million settlement for the husband of a deceased nursing home resident who died from sepsis related to stage IV bedsores.

\$1.1 million settlement for the adult children of parent who died at a nursing home from sepsis related to stage IV bedsores.

\$700,000 settlement for adult children of parent who died from infection in a nursing home.

\$700,000 settlement for adult children of parent who died from medication error.

\$500,000 settlement for adult children of parent who died from bedsores, malnutrition and dehydration.

\$500,000 settlement for adult children of parent who died from abuse and neglect at a nursing home.

\$500,000 settlement for adult children of nursing home resident who died from fatal urinary tract infection.

\$235,000 verdict for 82-year-old woman who suffered broken hip after being knocked down by a malfunctioning electronic door at hospital.

\$225,000 settlement in trial for woman who had neck surgery due to motor vehicle collision.

\$164,000 verdict for woman who suffered disc bulge in trucking accident.

\$150,000 settlement for abuse of a nursing home resident who was punched in the face by an agency nurse.

\$125,000 policy limits settlement for woman who had neck surgery due to injury in automobile accident.

\$125,000 settlement for minor child who suffered a broken leg in an automobile accident with a drunken driver.

\$116,000 settlement for man who underwent shoulder surgery as a result of being rear-ended by a company dump truck.

\$80,000 settlement for woman who fell and fractured left foot and arm while attending wedding reception.

\$70,000 settlement for shoulder injury by adult who was injured in auto collision.

\$70,000 settlement for adult who suffered a herniated disc in automobile accident.

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Pregnant Mother Obtains a Million-Dollar Policy Limits Settlement in Trucking Collision

Mr. Watrel used his significant knowledge of trucking cases and his resources to force the trucking company's insurance carrier to pay the full one million dollar policy limit for his client's wrongful death claim. When the carrier finally realized that it could not outspend or outlast Mr. Watrel or his client, it folded and tendered the money.

"Preparation, experience and knowledge of many different laws and regulations are key to winning a trucking accident case," says Mr. Watrel.

At first, the trucking company, Modlin's Trucking in Green Cove Springs, Florida, fought hard, trying to claim that Ms. Smith was speeding and therefore partially to blame for the collision. But when Mr. Watrel presented them with the evidence that his team of experts gathered at the crime scene, the trucking company agreed to settle for a million dollars.

Mr. Watrel's tenacity, experience and thorough investigative skills also led him to another defendant in this case. In addition, to suing the trucking company, Mr. Watrel sued and settled with a local business that was located on the corner of the intersection where the accident occurred. That business had a delivery truck illegally parked on the street corner, preventing a clear view of the intersection.

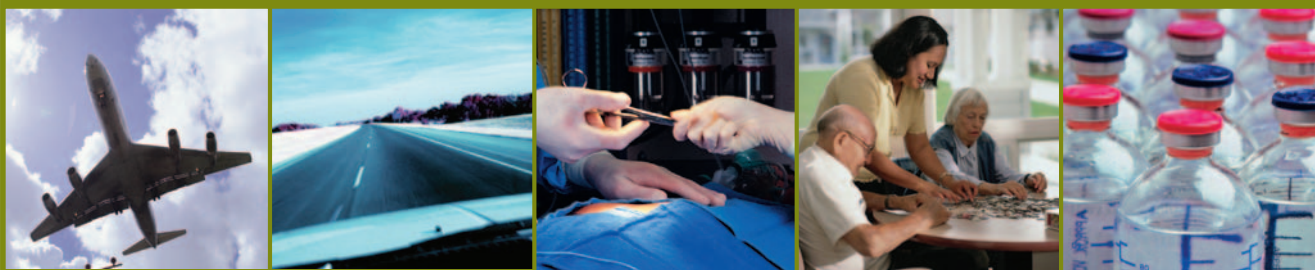
"When you care deeply about each case and each client, you make sure you never overlook anything in order to attain maxi-



mum recovery. I put 110 percent behind every case I handle," explains Mr. Watrel.

After some time has passed since her great tragedy, Ms. Smith - now a mother of two - is finally able to rebuild her life. She used some of the money she recovered to fulfill her dream of going to college. A talented artist, Ms. Smith is currently enrolled at the University of North Florida working toward a degree in architecture. But most importantly, she is grateful that her children will never suffer financially due to this tragedy.

"After a client like Ms. Smith suffers such a horrible loss, she does not need a lawyer who adds to her troubles by not caring about her family or her case," says Mr. Watrel. *"That's why my motto is to treat every client with respect and kindness, while at the same time fighting as hard as possible for their rights."*



PRACTICE AREAS

Steve Watrel focuses on getting compensation for clients whose injuries involve:

- ▶ Automobile accidents
- ▶ Trucking accidents
- ▶ Motorcycle and bicycle accidents
- ▶ Nursing home abuse, neglect and improper care
- ▶ Medical malpractice
- ▶ Wrongful death
- ▶ Dog bites
- ▶ Slip and fall
- ▶ Insurance company disputes
- ▶ Pedestrian accidents
- ▶ Aircraft
- ▶ Railroad
- ▶ Defective and harmful products
- ▶ Defective drugs and pharmaceuticals
- ▶ Other accidents involving injury or death

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Steve Watrel also can refer you to attorneys specializing in cases involving workers' compensation, corporate law, family law and wills, among others.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE: ACTUALLY 2000 MILES

Steve Watrel Attends Famed Gerry Spence's Trial Lawyers College

After over a dozen years in practice and many multi-million dollar settlements and verdicts, Steve Watrel is still dedicated to staying on the cutting edge in order to better serve his clients.

Each year lawyers from all over the country apply to attend the famed Trial Lawyers College, located in Dubois, Wyoming. Legendary trial attorney Gerry Spence, who according to many experts is the greatest trial lawyer of all time, runs this selective institution.

Gerry Spence, the lawyer who successfully defended Randy Weaver in the Ruby Ridge incident, handled the case of *Karen Silkwood v. Kerr-McGee*, and provided commentary during the O.J. Simpson trial.

Among a sea of candidates and a rigorous evaluation process, Steve Watrel was selected as one of only 48 in the nation to attend a month long seminar in the summer of 2003. He headed back to Trial Lawyers College again in 2004 and 2005 for graduate seminars to further enhance and hone his trial skills.

Mr. Spence's seminars include instruction in how to communicate with jurors through the use of storytelling and psychodrama techniques. The seminars are designed to enhance trial skills in order to effectively present cases on behalf of clients.



Steve Watrel with Gerry Spence and Milton Grimes

"A lot of attorneys do not go to court because they are afraid. They are afraid they will not be adequate, afraid the jury will reject them and afraid of what their peers will think of them if they lose. I've learned the best strategies for success, how to connect on an emotional level with the jury and more," explains Mr. Watrel. "Gerry teaches us that trial work begins with you. You have to first be real and honest before you can expect the jury to be real and honest." But how do you become "real"? That is what the Trial Lawyers College helps attorneys achieve through its unique methods and techniques.

Mr. Watrel has applied these skills to many of his cases, including William Senterfit's car collision case. Mr. Watrel (see page 5) along with a trained psychodramatist, used psychodramatic techniques to better connect and understand his client, his life and his current pain, thereby enabling him to better impart this information to a jury. "If you don't understand your client fully, as many lawyers never do, then the jury won't either," says Mr. Watrel.

"You have to be able to step into their shoes and see what makes them tick," he says. "The process creates a bond of trust between a lawyer and his client at a level that is hard to comprehend unless you have experienced it."



Malpractice Myths By Bob Herbert

Op-Ed Columnist - New York Times - June 21, 2004

The power brokers obsessed with tort reform really have the jargon down.

They travel the country with overheated stories about runaway juries and jackpot justice. The way they tell it, sinister lawyers and opportunistic plaintiffs are on the hunt, preying on virtuous corporations, hospitals and doctors in search of that big payout from the lawsuit lottery.

President Bush has been complaining about "junk and frivolous" lawsuits for years. So it's interesting to hear the following from the Center for Justice and Democracy, a consumer advocacy group:

"It may be hard to understand why 'tort reform' is even on the national agenda at a time when insurance industry profits are booming, tort filings are declining, only 2 percent of injured people sue for compensation, punitive damages are rarely awarded, liability insurance costs for businesses are minuscule, medical malpractice insurance and claims are both less than 1 percent of all health care costs in America, and premium-gouging underwriting practices of the insurance industry have been widely exposed."

In looking at medical malpractice cases, I've been amazed by the cold-blooded attitude so many people have taken toward patients who have been seriously, and sometimes grotesquely, harmed. Referring to a Wisconsin woman who had both of her breasts removed after a laboratory mix-up mistakenly indicated she had cancer, a doctor from South Carolina told a Congressional subcommittee:

"She did not lose her life, and with the plastic surgery she'll have breast reconstruction better than she had before."

Last week I interviewed a woman in Minerva, Ohio, whose abdominal aorta was somehow ruptured while a doctor was performing a tubal ligation. In a discussion of her malpractice suit, the woman, Deborah Rayburn, said the foul-up was not immediately detected. When it became clear that she was in serious trouble, another doctor was called in. "He ended up cutting me open," she said, "and he clamped the aorta."

Ms. Rayburn, who has two children, was unable to work for 18 months. The surgery left her with a scar from chest to groin, and she said she still experiences frequent abdominal pain.

When Ms. Rayburn filed suit, she said, she was made to feel as though she had done something wrong, as if seeking compensation was in some sense an affront to the system.

As a trial date approached, she said, she felt pressured by all the parties involved to agree to a settlement, which she did. She would have preferred to go to trial, she said, not because she was looking for a big payday, but because all the details of her case would then have come out publicly.

And that is one of the essential points that is overlooked by the tort reform zealots: the problem when it comes to malpractice is not the amount of money the insurance companies are making (they're doing fine) or the rates the doctors have to pay, but rather the terrible physical and emotional damage that is done to so many unsuspecting patients who fall into the hands of careless or incompetent medical personnel.

What is needed is a nationwide crack-down on malpractice, not a campaign to roll back the rights of patients who are injured. This is another utterly typical example of the Bush administration going to bat for those who are economically and politically powerful against those who are economically and politically weak.

Despite claims by the insurance industry, there is no evidence that soaring malpractice premiums are the result of sharp increases in the amounts of money paid out for malpractice claims. And, tellingly, industry executives are generally careful not to say that the tort reforms sought by the Bush administration will result in premium reductions.

This is all about greed. What tort reform will lead to, not surprisingly, is an unwarranted burst of additional profits for the insurance industry, which is why the industry is sinking so much money into its unrelenting campaign for "reform."

It would be helpful if the nation's many good doctors would blow the whistle on the insurance industry and its exploitive practices, and on the members of their own august profession who violate that essential maxim, "First, do no harm."

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Why Hire the Law Firm of Steve Watrel, P.A.?



“My firm’s motto is ‘Personal Injury Handled Personally.’ When you spend the necessary time preparing and listening to your client, it is truly amazing what results you can obtain.”

1. We’re a Law Firm NOT a Law Factory

Steve Watrel opened his own practice in 1993 because he was tired of seeing clients and cases handled without any care or expertise at some of the larger law firms. With volume practices, some firms force clients to settle, accepting smaller awards in order to meet their quotas. Also, in such firms, the seasoned lawyers pass off cases to inexperienced attorneys and paralegals to handle.

Mr. Watrel saw a need and filled it. He knew that clients wanted the best possible representation and sophisticated resources, without sacrificing personal caring and attentive service. Clients want to have their questions answered in a timely fashion, they want personal attention and they want respect. Mr. Watrel has given his clients just that.

He handles each case personally, treating it as if it is the only one - with old-fashioned service. He never forces anyone to settle, always going for the maximum recovery and the best outcome for his client. And being a trial lawyer, if the case goes to trial, he handles the trial himself.

2. Staying Small, Winning Big

The advantages of the firm’s small size are significant. Today, Steve Watrel provides what few large firms can: personal and expert attention to every client, from start to finish.

From nursing home abuse cases to motor vehicle accidents, the Law Firm of Steve Watrel, P.A., has fought for and won both significant settlements as well as large jury awards for clients who have been injured wrongly.

3. Personal Injury Handled Personally

Old-fashioned service is what the Law Firm of Steve Watrel, P.A., always delivers. Mr. Watrel cares about

each client and each case, giving his all no matter how large or small the case may be. Gone are the weeklong waits to hear back from your lawyer. Gone are the untrained lawyers handling the case. What Mr. Watrel’s clients get is an experienced, powerful advocate who listens and answers every question.

It should come as no surprise that Steve Watrel, P.A., has a track record of 80-85% client repeat/referral rate. That’s a powerful endorsement that speaks for itself.

4. The Versatility Clients Need

Some firms have an unwritten policy that every case needs to be settled and can never go to trial. Other firms are trial happy, dragging matters on no matter what, risking their clients’ ultimate well-being. What makes Steve Watrel, P.A., so special is that we only do what’s in the best interest of the client. We have no preconceived strategy. In over a dozen years in practice, Steve Watrel has handled numerous cases, resolving them both around a negotiating table and in a courtroom. Always giving his very best to each case and each client, he has recovered millions of dollars. From large six-figure recoveries to significant multi million-dollar settlements and verdicts, Mr. Watrel always fights for the maximum possible recovery.

5. Experience, Experience, Experience

Experience is everything. With over 3,000 automobile collision cases under his belt and numerous nursing home, wrongful death, trucking accident and medical malpractice matters and more, the Law Firm of Steve Watrel, P.A., goes after maximum recovery in each and every case.

Mr. Watrel, a seasoned personal injury plaintiffs’ attorney, has a proven track record of excellent results and satisfied clients.

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Policy Limits Settlement in Legal Malpractice Case



Mr. Jones, who eventually ended up in the care of a nursing home, died of septicemia nearly five years later. His wife again sought the advice of an attorney, this time turning to the Jacksonville-based law firm of Steve Watrel, P.A.

When Steve Watrel conducted his extensive investigation and research into Mr. Jones's death, he discovered the mishandled case against Shands. After looking into what the former law firm had done for Mrs. Jones, he clearly saw malpractice on its part.

"I spend many hours gathering the facts and making sure no stone is unturned in the pursuit of justice for my clients. I consider it a huge responsibility that my clients put their trust in me," says Mr. Watrel.

His careful work and discovery led him to find that Mr. Jones, prior to his surgery, never signed the standard form acknowledging that the doctors are not agents of the hospital. Meanwhile, the former law firm never even discovered this while representing Mrs. Jones.

During the legal malpractice case, Mr. Watrel showed that the law firm did very little for Mrs. Jones's case, even neglecting to take the surgeon's and the anesthesiologist's depositions. As a result of Mr. Watrel's tenacious and careful work in her case, Mrs. Jones recovered a policy limits settlement.

In addition, Mr. Watrel sued the nursing home for its negligent care of Mr. Jones, recovering a significant sum for negligent care of Mrs. Jones's husband. He showed that the nursing home did not give Mr. Jones adequate care, thus causing his bedsores and infections, leading to his untimely death.

"My firm is a law firm, not a law factory like some larger firms," says Mr. Watrel. *"I make sure each client gets personal and caring attention from me and my staff while at the same time getting the most sophisticated resources and superior legal representation."*

Large Six-Figure Settlement in Nursing Home Case

An 81-year-old woman died of renal failure after two years at a nursing home. Her children noticed how quickly their mother deteriorated during the time she spent at the nursing home and decided to hire the Law Firm of Steve Watrel, P.A., to investigate the cause of their mother's untimely death.

Mr. Watrel discovered that his client's mother had fallen four times at the nursing home, that she shattered an elbow and suffered a head injury. He also found that the nursing home staff were not elevating her legs, and that the elderly woman had suffered from thrombosis, dehydration, septicemia and psychotic episodes.

Finally, Mr. Watrel learned that the nursing home failed to monitor the mother's medication, which possibly led to renal failure and her death.

Although the nursing home initially denied responsibility, Mr. Watrel had too much evidence to the contrary. Mr. Watrel's persistence, investigative and legal skills were instrumental in showing that the nursing home was chronically understaffed, did not follow its own plan of care, and tried to cover up its abuse and neglect.

Because of Mr. Watrel's efforts and experience with nursing home cases, the nursing home settled with the deceased woman's family for a significant six-figure sum.

Large Six-Figure Settlement in Car Collision Case



William Senterfit, a 31-year-old computer specialist, was driving to his girlfriend's house in Jacksonville. While Mr. Senterfit was driving across an intersection, a Pinkerton's Security vehicle ran a red light and hit Mr. Senterfit's car. Mr. Senterfit suffered multiple injuries, resulting in shoulder and neck surgery.

Unfortunately for Mr. Senterfit, he had also suffered from shoulder pain prior to the collision. Pinkerton Security, in defending its claim, tried using Mr. Senterfit's prior medical issues to say that the car collision was not the sole cause of his current medical problems.

Fortunately for Mr. Senterfit, he hired the Law Firm of Steve Watrel, P.A., to represent him in recovering funds for his injuries

caused by the car accident. Mr. Watrel, using the in-depth knowledge and skill gained from years of successfully handling personal injury cases, swiftly and accurately navigated his client's prior medical records with the help of a physician. Mr. Watrel, who has handled over 3,000 automobile and motorcycle accidents in his career, was able to show that the pain and resulting surgeries were caused by the Pinkerton Security vehicle crashing into Mr. Senterfit's car.

Mr. Watrel's successful handling of the case resulted in a large six-figure settlement for Mr. Senterfit.

"With the help of the best experts, top-notch resources and a thorough understanding of legal and medical issues, my firm is able to fight for maximum recovery in each and every case," says Mr. Watrel.

Why You Need a Living Will

1. The publicized case of Terri Schiavo underscores the need for all of us to have a living will. Ms. Schiavo suffered severe brain damage in 1990 following a heart attack. The brain damage left her unable to care for herself and she spent 13 years relying on a feeding tube for nutrients and fluids. Since Ms. Schiavo did not have a living will, her husband and parents spent years and thousands of dollars not only paying for her care but fighting each other in court over her future. The Schiavo case is a tragedy for everyone involved. If you are ever injured or suffer an illness that requires you to be on life-sustaining measures, you want to make sure that your wishes are carried out as to whether you want to be kept alive artificially. If you do not have a living will, your loved ones could end up in a bitter dispute over whether to keep you alive.

2. Rather than potentially put your family through such a difficult and heart-wrenching decision, you should have a living will. It will tell your loved ones and medical care providers what they should do if you should ever end up on artificial life-sustaining measures.

3. It is easy just to say, "Well, that would never happen to my family," but the reality is what happened to the Schiavos is all too common, it just does not get the publicity that the Schiavos received because of the politics involved.

4. This form can be copied or retyped for use. Keep the original with your attorney or in a safe place, such as a safe or safety deposit box. You should give copies of it to medical care providers so that they have it on file.

5. We recommend that you execute a Last Will and Testament and Durable Power of Attorney as part of your estate planning process. This way your loved ones will be protected and your wishes will be executed upon your death.

Living Will

Declaration made this _____ day of _____, 200_, I _____, willfully and voluntarily make known my desire that my dying not be artificially prolonged under the circumstances set forth below, and I do hereby declare that, if at any time I am both mentally and physically incapacitated,

(initial) _____ and I have a terminal condition; or

(initial) _____ and I have an end-state condition; or

(initial) _____ and I am in a persistent vegetative state

and if my attending or treating physician and another consulting physician have determined that there is no reasonable medical probability of my recovery from such condition, I direct that life-prolonging procedures be withheld or withdrawn when the application of such procedures would serve only to prolong artificially the process of dying, and that I be permitted to die naturally with only the administration of medication or the performance of any medical procedure deemed necessary to provide me with comfort care or to alleviate pain.

It is my intention that this declaration be honored by my family and physician as the final expression of my legal right to refuse medical or surgical treatment and to accept the consequences for such refusal.

In the event that I have been determined to be unable to provide express and informed consent regarding the withholding, withdrawal, or continuation of life-prolonging procedures, I wish to designate, as my surrogate to carry out the provisions of this declaration, _____.

I understand the full import of this declaration, and I am emotionally and mentally competent to make this declaration.

Additional Instructions (optional):

Signature _____

_____ of _____, Florida
Witness

_____ of _____, Florida
Witness

STATE OF FLORIDA

COUNTY OF DUVAL

Sworn to and subscribed before me this _____ day of _____, 200_, by _____, who is personally known to me or who has produced _____ a Florida driver's license or _____ as identification.

Notary Public _____

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