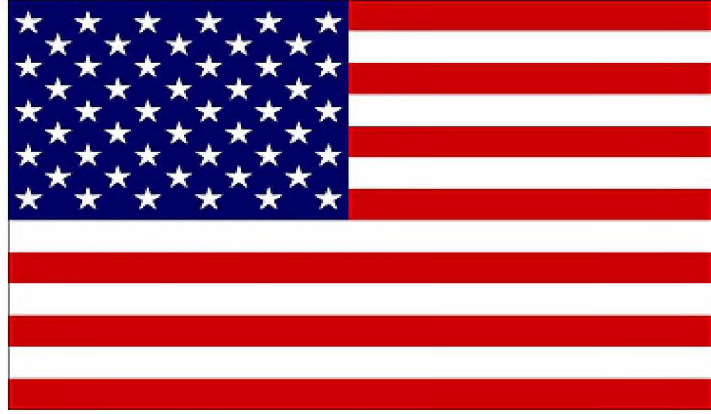


Law and Disorder

Stateside



Kansas City Chiefs football star Derrick Thomas, died after being thrown from his SUV in a crash while speeding in a snowstorm. His mother, Edith Morgan, said that Thomas's neck was broken because the SUV's roof collapsed a few inches -- not from rolling down the highway because he wasn't wearing a seatbelt -- and sued General Motors. Her lawyer begged jurors to award more than \$100 million in damages, perhaps more -- he "did not want to put an upper limit on it." GM pointed out that Thomas's oversized SUV was exempt from federal roof crush standards, yet it met them anyway. The jury sent a message: of that \$100 million, it awarded Morgan ...nothing.



Tanisha Torres of Wyndanch, N.Y. sued Radio Shack for misspelling her town as "Crimedanch" on her cell phone bill. She didn't even ask them to change it; she just sued. "I'm not a criminal," she whined. "My son plays on the high school football team." Yeah, that makes sense. The name "Crimedanch" is a common joke; police in the area confirm it's a high-crime area. Still, Torres claimed she suffered "outrage" and "embarrassment" at having to see that spelling on her private phone bill. The suit seeks unspecified damages.



Homecomings Financial, a subsidiary of General Motors, accepted a change of address notice from identity thieves for the account

belonging to Robert and Suzanne Korinke. The thieves ran up a \$142,000 debt, and the Korinkes notified Homecomings of the fraud the moment they discovered it. Homecomings sued them two years later, saying the couple's "negligence" is what "caused the injury to Homecomings," not the fact that the company accepted a change of address from fraudsters -- and then gave them all the money they could drain. The victims got the company to drop the suit, which demanded \$74,000 plus attorney's fees, after shelling out \$5,000 in legal fees -- an outcome the couple's lawyer called "really lucky".



Mary Ubaudi of Madison County, was a passenger in a Mazda car that got into a wreck. Ubaudi demanded "in excess of \$150,000" from the automaker, claiming it "failed to provide instructions regarding the safe and proper use of a seatbelt." One hopes Mazda's attorneys make her swear in court that she has never before worn a seatbelt, has never flown on an airliner, and that she's too stupid to figure out how to fasten a seatbelt.



Stephen Joseph of San Francisco, runs a non-profit group whose goal is to ban the "trans fats" used in many processed foods and which are indeed very unhealthy. But to help gain publicity for his cause, Joseph, an attorney, chose one food that uses trans fats -- Oreo cookies -- and sued Kraft Foods for putting the stuff in the snack. The resulting

publicity over "suing Oreos" was so intense that Joseph dropped the suit after just 13 days. He never even served the suit on Kraft, showing that he had no interest in actually getting the case heard in court. What real cases got pushed aside during his abuse of the courts to get publicity for his pet organization?



Shawn Perkins of Laurel, Ind. Perkins was hit by lightning in the parking lot Paramount's Kings Island amusement park in Mason, Ohio. A classic "act of God", right? No, says Perkins' lawyer. "That would be a lot of people's knee-jerk reaction in these types of situations." The lawyer has filed suit against the amusement park asking unspecified damages, arguing the park should have "warned" people not to be outside during a thunderstorm.



Caesar Barber, 56, of New York City is 5-foot-10 and 270 pounds. He says he is obese, diabetic, and suffers from heart disease because fast food restaurants forced him to eat their fatty food four to five times per week. He filed suit against McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's and KFC, who "profited enormously" and asked for unspecified damages because the eateries didn't warn him that junk food isn't good for him. The judge threw the case out twice, and barred it from being filed a third time. Is that the end of such McCases? No way: lawyers will just find another plaintiff and start over, legal scholars say. ●

