Seufert Law Offices, PA

We'll Get You Through It

From the Captain's Log
US Life Saving Service: PORTSMOUTH

Our USCG has a long lineage, initially formed in 1790 as the Revenue Marine Service. Its job was to make sure duties were paid on exported and imported goods. It had "revenue cutters" that would enforce these tariffs. Eventually its name was changed to the Revenue Cutter Service. In 1915 it was merged with the U.S. Lifesaving Service to become what we know as the USCG.

The U.S. Lifesaving Service, formed in 1848, built various duty stations around the U.S. and its mission was to save distressed mariners at sea. The idea originated in our sister State of Massachusetts as a volunteer society and blossomed to the US Life Saving Service. One of these stations was Wood Island Life Saving Service in Portsmouth Harbor, built on land donated by the State of ME to the U.S. Navy in 1827. Various structures were eventually erected by the U.S. Navy until the current structure was built in 1908, and recently rebuilt. Wooden dories were kept in covered sheds and launched into the sea by row men to get to the foundering ships, and bring their sailors back to safety. Into the teeth of storms and hurricanes they would row, so the service's motto was coined "You have to go out. You don't have to come back."

Wood Island Lifesaving Station has a unique "marine railway launch" that has a carriage that sits on railway tracks extending from the covered boathouse down into the sea. The dories would thus launch down the tracks into the maelstrom. Over the years the storms took their toll and the bulwark around the station was torn away and tracks twisted like pretzels. In the mid-1950's the USCG station was relocated over to the NH side of the harbor and Wood Island Station was left to decay. Over the years bits and pieces of debris fell into the harbor and salvaged by passing sailors. Fearing demolition, eventually a non-profit was formed to save the Station and in August 2024 the Station reopened as a museum to the brave souls that manned it in the day. Serviceman perished in their duties, but many distressed sailors owe their lives to the Service. ●

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Phantoms of the Roads

A "phantom driver" is a driver who is the cause of an auto accident, but their vehicle doesn't make contact with any other vehicle. Perhaps this phantom driver abruptly pulls onto the highway quickly and cuts across lanes of traffic and other drivers have to brake hard to avoid a collision and themselves get rearended, but the phantom just drives away. Following the chaos of a crash, the phantom driver is long gone. Some phantom drivers exit the area without realizing what occurred; others know full well but take the coward's way out and drive on in hope of avoiding possible consequences.

Typically, accidents caused by phantom drivers are regarded in the same light as a hit-and-run — an extremely serious matter. Phantom driver accidents are frequently referred to as "miss-and-runs."

Phantom drivers are still legally liable for all injuries and damage resulting from the accident. Obviously, tracking them down is challenging, but all is not necessarily lost:

- First, call 9-1-1 to report the crash.

- • If you or someone with you is physically able, jot down all details — for instance, what led to the crash, vehicle make and model, color, distinguishing features, any digits of the license plate, etc.

- • Take pictures of vehicle damage, noticeable injuries, tire marks, and so forth.

- • Gather information from any eyewitnesses.

- • Notify your insurance company within 24 hours.

- • Last but not least, contact our firm for skilled, thoughtful assistance. Phantom driver incidents can quickly become complicated. We will handle all the legal aspects of your case and help you deal with any insurance issues. Depending on the accident location, there might be video recordings of the incident, which only a personal injury attorney can obtain. ●

Winter's Coming — Consult the Good Book

The Old Farmer's Almanac has a rich history dating back to 1792 and the George Washington administration. Originally titled *The Farmer's Almanack,* it faced stiff competition initially, as almanacs were big business in the 18th and 19th centuries, featuring agricultural insights, celestial information, weather forecasts, horoscopes, and so forth. This literary genre trailed only the Bible in sales and readership.

The Old Farmer's Almanac quickly shot up the charts, separating itself from the pack with its helpful but fun style: witty sayings, puzzles, recipes, lighthearted short stories, farming tips, and its crowd-pleasing long-range weather forecasts. Inexplicably, these forecasts were omitted for the first (and last) time in 1938. The outcry was fierce. Sales and circulation numbers plummeted, and an editor was sacked.

In 1942, the FBI apprehended a German spy in Long Island, New York, who was carrying the *Almanac* in his coat pocket. The government concluded that the weather forecasts were being utilized by the Germans for strategic purposes. The *Almanac* seemingly indirectly violated the "Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press." The government and *Almanac* management conferred and agreed that the Almanac's "weather forecasts" were actually "weather indications," and penalties were avoided.

The *Almanac* boasts a "super-secret formula" for its weather prognostications. Astronomical cycles here, solar activity there, a dash of sun/moon gravitational effects, a pinch of true meteorology, and some seasoning comprised of persimmon seeds, pig spleens, and woolly bear caterpillars. Standard stuff.

The *Almanac* claims (with a wink) a forecasting accuracy rate of roughly 80%; neutral observers say the vague forecasts check in at 50%. Either way, they blow away the percentage of a certain February groundhog. •

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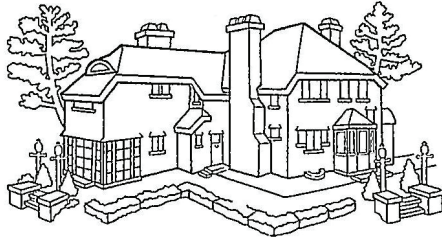
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Beware: Scam Targets Bankruptcy Filers

According to the National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys (NACBA), a recent scam occurred in which con artists targeted people around the country who had filed for bankruptcy or who were just getting started in the process.

As part of the ruse, the scammers used software to trick Caller ID systems into displaying caller info that appeared to be that of the consumer's bankruptcy attorney. Victims of the scam would then be instructed to immediately wire money to satisfy a debt that supposedly was outside of the bankruptcy process. In some cases, unsuspecting consumers were even threatened with arrest if they didn't comply with the instructions to wire money.

Complicating matters, the scam calls typically were made in the evening or during non-business hours, leaving little chance that a victim could contact his or her attorney to verify the legitimacy of the call.

Here's the key thing to keep in mind. No attorney or staff member Seufert Law would ever call and ask a client to wire money to satisfy a debt, and they also would never threaten you with an arrest because of a debt that hasn't been paid.

If you happen to ever receive a call like the one described above, hang up and then let us know. And, under no circumstance should you ever give out any personal or financial account information to the caller.

Having to go through a bankruptcy is difficult enough; don't make things worse by falling victim to a scam. ●