



David M. Ottenwess has been litigating high-stakes cases for over 35 years. He has reached the pinnacle of his profession by both fiercely protecting his clients and managing great relationships with opposing counsel. He also serves as chair of the Trial Section of the Michigan Defense Trial Counsel.

**Growing up:**

Growing up in Flint, in my friend's group, there was an expectation that everyone would go from high school to the assembly line. I saw that the auto industry provided a safe and stable living, but as I watched my mother raise five children on her own, while working and going to school herself, I knew that I could accomplish more.

## David M. Ottenwess

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My mother showed me the value of education and independence, which still influences me to this day.

**Non-family mentor:**

As a child, my mother got me involved in the Flint Big Brothers Big Sisters of America organization. Words cannot begin to describe how important this individual became to me. He was an incredibly bright and honest person who taught me how to see things from several viewpoints and to appreciate that there are two sides to every story. He set the standard I work to achieve every day.

**Personal accomplishment:**

Starting my own law firm while still being an active and involved husband and father, notwithstanding a very busy trial practice.

**Advice:**

More shocking advice than surprising. While in high school, I told my counselor that I really wanted to go to law school. She laughed, almost reflexively, and told me that kids from the south side of Flint barely make it

through college, let alone become lawyers. Of course, her "advice" became an impetus of sorts to take me in my journey.

**Humbling experience:**

My third medical malpractice trial. I had already won my first two so, of course, I knew everything there was to know about trying a complex medical case. Until I didn't. What a shocker. I was out-hustled, out-lawyered and completely overwhelmed from voir dire to verdict. Fortunately, the verdict was modest, but the exercise was most humbling and taught me so many life and professional lessons.

**I might have been:**

Impossible to say. I just always wanted to be a lawyer. I don't know, stand-up comedian?

**Guilty pleasure:**

My wife's chocolate chip cookie dough. The trick is to eat only enough so she won't notice that any is missing.

**You didn't know:**

I was very shy and introverted growing up. I am a Civil War nut.