

This year's selection of the prestigious *Tennessee Trial Lawyer of the Year - 2018* - John Griffith - shares his thoughts on the top issues surrounding TTLA.

What were your thoughts on selected as the 2018 Tennessee Trial Lawyer of the Year?

My first thought is "humbled." We have so many outstanding lawyers in TTLA, and for them to even nominate me was an honor in itself. Because of all the great TTLA lawyers and their great verdicts over the past year, I am grateful to simply be included in the same class as these outstanding men and women.

What do you think led to the receipt of this award?

Trying cases. Period. Too few cases are being tried. Too many non-trial non-plaintiff lawyers are trying the occasional car wreck case, getting terrible results, and the insurance companies are using that as their new measuring stick. I am sick and tired of going to mediations and having mediators stuff terrible *Tennessee Jury Verdict Reporter* results down their throats. What we try to do in the face of that barrage of insults, is bring in *OUR* verdict forms... not to brag, but to show them they are wrong. You CAN get a six figure verdict for soft tissue injuries. Juries DO allow \$500,000 or more for neck surgery when the client's harms and losses justify it. You can never settle your case for what a jury might give you at trial. And when you trust them, and they trust you, it is a beautiful thing.

If today you could write a letter to yourself 20 years ago, what would you say as it relates to your trial practice?

First. Time management. Family is always first. In my earlier career, I placed too much emphasis on work, and my family was harmed by me allowing that to happen. I made some big mistakes. Now, I feel like I have a new lease on life and the chance to make it better for my family. There are still scars for earlier mistakes, but you have to address them, vow to do better, and make it right.

Second. As it relates to the practice itself, I would tell myself to immerse yourself sooner rather than later into trial technique and psychological decision making practices. There are many tools that were not available when I first started practicing. These sources are my stable that all of my lawyers must read: *Rules of the Road*, by Rick Friedman; *Polarizing the Case* by Rick Friedman; *Advanced Depositions* by our great friend and resource Phillip Miller; *Reptile*, by Keenan and Ball; *Damages Third Edition* by David Ball; *30(b)6* by Mark Kosieradzki; and there are a few others, but these are the basic building blocks. When you have fantastic, inner circle lawyers like Randy Kinnard telling you they also adhere to these techniques, it is hard to deny their impact. Each of these books has helped me win at trial for my clients. So, I would spend even more time than I have immersing myself in those books early on and would have pushed more cases to trial early when I was more fearful.

Third. Don't settle your really good cases for low amounts out of fear! TRY YOUR CASES!



The TTLA Outstanding Trial Lawyer Award will be given annually to an attorney or attorneys, who within the past year, have demonstrated superior skills as a trial advocate for their clients, have achieved an outstanding result for a client against obstacles, have shown inspired devotion to improvement of the civil justice system or have worked tirelessly to combat the significant threats to the civil justice system. *Criteria: Must have made an extraordinary contribution to the cause of civil justice and adhered to the highest principles of the legal profession. Must be a licensed attorney and member of the Tennessee Trial Lawyers Association.*