



David Zwanetz

With a loud “CRACK!” the surly Howard County police officer brought his heel down hard in the middle of the skateboard, snapping it cleanly into two useless pieces. The 14-year-old skater punk, David Zwanetz, watched in disbelief as the board that took months of re-gripping golf clubs to earn enough to buy, was reduced to splinters.

David wasn’t a bad kid, it’s just that the skateboarding opportunities near the Columbia, Maryland Lakefront were irresistible to a 14-year-old. The cop on duty didn’t seem to care as he kicked the remains of David’s hard-earned

skateboard into the bushes with a smirk, and sent him home.

His grandparents had immigrated to the United States from Italy and Russia in the early 1920’s, eventually settling in Philadelphia. After moving to Howard County, David grew up in a blue-collar household and was the first person in his immediate family to attain an education beyond college. He learned to prioritize education, hard work, and sacrifice to obtain one’s goals.

Once, when David was barely 9 years old, his grandfather pulled him aside, looked him straight in the eye and said, “We came from Russia to give you a chance. Your father moved to Maryland to advance our family and to give you an opportunity. If you do not take advantage of that it will be a disgrace to our family.” That chance conversation left an indelible mark in his mind.

Immediately after the skateboarding incident, David went to his father and explained what happened. His father said flatly, “No one is going to listen to you. You’re a punk kid skateboarding where you’re not supposed to, and this cop broke your skateboard. There’s nothing you can do about it.”

The next sentence out of his father’s mouth lodged in David’s mind like a splinter: “The only way for you to fix this problem is for you to become educated and become an attorney and make sure this doesn’t happen to other people. That’s it. That’s all you can do.”

Little did he know, this statement would determine the course of David’s life and career from that point forward.

Although he battled dyslexia on a daily basis, David excelled in English, Fine Arts, and sports during his high school years. He spent much of his time drawing, painting, and traveling the east coast playing hockey for the Howard County Huskies and the Chesapeake Chiefs. In the off seasons, David trained and played hockey at Notre Dame University in Indiana.

After graduating high school, David focused on British Literature at Salisbury University, and remained on the Dean's list from 1998 to 2001. David studied Fine Arts and Italian Literature for a semester at the University of Florence, in Florence, Italy in 1998. He was inducted into the National Literary Honors Society in the year 2000. While in Italy, David studied and excelled in Tae Kwon Do, fell in love with combat sports, and soon returned to the United States to train and compete in both Taekwondo and American Boxing.

David began his legal studies at Widener University School of Law in 2002. During law school, David realized that Widener's Italian American Legal Society was lacking. He contacted the Order Sons of Italy in America (a 650,000 member worldwide Italian American organization), and was granted permission to start his own OSIA branch at Widener.

David created the first ever law school based branch of OSIA and was duly recognized by several national publications. During his last semester, David was admitted early to the Delaware Bar, to participate in the Delaware Volunteer Legal Services where he focused on assisting victims of domestic abuse.

Upon completion of law school, David returned to Howard County to prepare for and take the Bar exam. While awaiting his results, he tended bar and managed at Historic Ellicott City's Cacao Lane. Ten days before David is sworn in as an attorney, tragedy struck and he lost his longtime girlfriend to a tragic car accident not 5 minutes from their home.

Despite a learning disability, a less-than-perfect upbringing, and suffering personal tragedy, David was admitted to the Maryland Bar on December 15, 2005.

David quickly progressed in his time with Shapiro, Zwanetz & Associates trying a multitude of criminal cases throughout Maryland. In fact, David has the rarified distinction with Jason Shapiro, of together trying and getting dismissed all charges against a client accused of First and Second Degree Murder, and Manslaughter. This case, tried jointly by Mr. Shapiro and David, is the only murder case dismissed in its entirety by the Office of the State's Attorney in this century.

Possessing a fighter's spirit from early childhood and honed from years of combat sports, David began training daily at Crazy 88 Brazilian Jiu Jitsu in 2007, under the tutelage of Julius Park, and started competing immediately. A few short years later, he placed 2nd in the World Championships of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu as a Blue Belt. David, now a Brown Belt, still trains daily, teaches, and competes.

Today, David is an active participant in the Howard County Bar Association, the Maryland Criminal Defense Attorney's Association, and the National Criminal Defense Attorney's Association and sits on the board of Howard County non-profit organization HC Drug Free. In 2008, he was formally recognized by the National College for DUI Defense for his efforts in the defense of citizens accused of driving under the influence. In 2013 he was named a "Superior DUI Attorney" by the National Advocacy Center for DUI Defense.

David has found a way to let his eccentricities work for him in a positive way as he fights zealously in court and out of court to protect Shapiro, Zwanetz & Associates clients and most importantly, the Constitutional rights afforded to all US citizens. He runs a thriving YouTube channel with a mission to inform the public about little-known Constitutional

Protections. David prides himself on his work ethic and dedication to his clients in a personal capacity. He truly believes that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

He and his wife Cathy were married in September 2007. In October of 2013 their son Xander was born, and approximately two years later, in November 2015, their daughter Zoë came into the world. On May 6, 2014, on David’s 35th birthday, he became Partner. Two years later Shapiro, Zwanetz & Associates was formed - Jason A. Shapiro and David Zwanetz remain the two establishing partners, and more importantly the closest of friends.

David has this to say about how the events of his life have influenced his career: *“For me, the greatest thing that could ever happened to me is some crooked cop violated my rights as a 14-year-old because it propelled my entire career. He underestimated me and I am thankful for that. Without that who knows what would've happened or where I would be today. That single event planted a seed of determination in me that drove me to work hard to defend my clients. I think that is very funny.”*

“If I were to justify where I am right now in my career, a lot of it has to do with my martial arts training at Crazy 88 Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. I view being a BJJ practitioner and a zealous lawyer as one in the same. I attribute much of my success to Master Julius Park, who I consider a best friend. We believe that our purpose is to improve our surroundings with the improvement of ourselves.”