

Profile: William McMurry

Tenacious lawyer taking on archdiocese likes big challenges

By **ANDREW WOLFSON**
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Infected with HIV and unable to pay her lawyers, the plaintiff seemed doomed to represent herself in a lawsuit claiming that Jewish Hospital had improperly disclosed her condition.

But on Jan. 30, 1997 — the day the trial was to start — attorney William McMurry read in the newspaper about Traci

Walls' plight and showed the story to his 10-year-old son. "Isn't this what you do?" McMurry said the boy asked. "Why don't you go do it?"

So with no preparation and a client he'd never met, McMurry tried the case for free and won a \$125,000 verdict. "God sent him," Walls exulted after the trial.

The verdict ultimately was reversed, and Walls died shortly after her case did. But the impromptu trial performance was

pure McMurry, say lawyers and judges, relatives and former clients.

Fighting for the underdog against a powerful institution. Self-assured, even cocky. Steaming with righteous indignation. Living on the edge, whether it's sky diving — he's made more than 3,000 jumps — or jousting with witnesses in the courtroom.

"He is absolutely bulldog tenacious," said his brother, John McMurry, an obstetrician/gyne-

cologist who would not want Bill McMurry suing him. "He can be a scary guy."

Now Bill McMurry, 46, is taking on another powerful institution — the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Louisville — in what could be his biggest case.

He is the attorney in all but two of the 75 recently filed suits in which former Catholic-school students and parishioners say the archdiocese negligently hired and retained priests who, the plaintiffs claim, molested

them over four decades.

"We will prove that Archbishop (Thomas C.) Kelly knew ... and acquiesced in allowing predator priests to remain around children," McMurry charged one day last week as he juggled a prospective client in his conference room with others on the phone and a TV crew waiting in his office.

"To say the church has not

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BY PAM SPAULDING, THE CJ
William McMurry said, "Most of the defendants I go up against are ... evil."

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