



MEMBER PROFILE QUESTIONS

INTRO :

Member Name : Alan Richter

Year of Call : 1999

Twitter Handle: @albobrichter is my twitter handle but I hardly use twitter – mostly I don't really understand it and can't be bothered to learn

LinkedIn Page: I don't use linkedIn but I have an account that I can't even remember how to access

QUESTIONS :

1- How did you get into criminal law?

How I got into criminal law is a long story, from a working class up bringing in rural Ontario when I was 11 I followed a biker murder case in my home town in the local paper with my grandmother and thought that criminal law was extremely interesting. High school came along and I dropped out – misspent youth! Went to college as a mature student – had them fooled - and got a diploma as a legal assistant, worked at a firm in Lindsay Ontario which was largely unsatisfying, did well enough at college that I thought I could do university and then graduated Trent Business, met a distant family member who was a criminal lawyer in Kitchener for years and a Liberal MPP - the last and only politician I liked and trusted. Worked two summers with him during university after he got booted out of politics by the NDP, thought that since I had gotten that far in university I was able to do law school – got into Osgoode, hated the campus loved the courses, got married after first year and transferred to Ottawa U where I completed my last two years taking every criminal law course I could (and Paciocco's trust class because he is the best). Articled with a criminal lawyer in Ottawa for \$1000 a month as only one of four criminal articling students that year in Ottawa, left that firm before it imploded and took a per diem with the Perth Crown on a double homicide – all three were rightly acquitted (at least I thought they should have been). Left Ottawa with my wife, my awesome 2+ year old daughter, my new born son and my dog Zack the Wonderdog to move back home north of Port Hope and start with a criminal firm from Oshawa and the rest is history.

2- What type of cases do you enjoy defending the most and why?

I prefer warrant cases such as drug projects and homicides because the Court attendances are less and you can focus on the case and not the client maintenance, as well I hate having to nickel and dime with Crowns on the day to day cases, oh and anything on a private retainer – I love those.

3- How did the practice of criminal law change you?

Criminal law changed me by making me incredibly jaded and cynical, although I have met some fantastic people along the way and had some very satisfying victories – the system remains horribly broken and corrupt though.

4- If there is one thing only you would like to see change in criminal law, what would it be?

The one change I would like to see is a legal aid system that is efficient in authorizing certificates and then pays lawyers an hourly amount commensurate with their Crown Attorney counterparts.

5- What advice would you give to your younger self when you first started practising criminal law?

Advice to young Alan B. Richter would be more work life balance – cant get time back and hard work isn't always appreciated by others, including the clients, bosses, some judges and most Crowns.

6- How do you deal with bad work days?

I deal with bad work days poorly as it turns out....

7- What do you think of Zoom court?

Zoom court has its place, sometimes, although the camera adds 20lbs and I don't need that. The zoom system should be continued after the pandemic ends (if it ever does) as there is certainly a place for it, particularly as a hybrid system.

8- Any embarrassing court story you're willing to share?

Embarassing Court story would probably be when I was still a young lawyer and decided to object to my own client's testimony in a domestic trial. I should have known things weren't going to go well when three questions into cross he told the female Crown "you can't fucking ask me that bitch" and as the afternoon raged on with expletives, yelling and long winded asinine answers I thrice objected to

my client's answers and asked the judge to direct my client to just answer the questions, she reminded me that I couldn't do that, which I knew of course but just couldn't take the frustration anymore. Ultimately the judge sentenced him to considerably more time than the Crown asked for and he contacted an associate in my office to see about suing me, while I was still in that firm. The Law Society determined I had done nothing "wrong" in the circumstances when they read the trial transcript, but did remind me that I can't object to my client's answers. That was sound LSO advice.

9- Who is your role model/inspiration in criminal law?

My role model/mentor would be a combination of Mr. David Cooke who is the family member and criminal lawyer from Kitchener I mentioned above and Mr. Tom Balka from Oshawa. Both outstanding people and great lawyers from different eras. Both dedicated to the principles of criminal defence and fearless in their pursuit of justice.

10-What's your favourite song?

My favorite song may well be Triumph's "Just a Game" a misspent youth with head banging rock and roll but the lyrics have plenty of truth to them, also anything from the Hip.

11-How do you maintain work life balance and how do you deal with the stress of the job?

Can't reveal all my secrets of dealing with work life balance but as Roger Dodds put it at the CLA conference "I didn't know I had an addiction I thought I was just funny (paraphrased)". Try and focus on family and friends, exercise as much as my old body will let me and get to my cottage as much as possible.

12-What is your biggest legal inspiration?

My biggest legal inspiration is AIDWYC and now Innocence Canada. Fantastic people doing fantastic work and with every case they highlight the massive defects in our system so that maybe we can get some real positive changes – I'm not too cynical and jaded that I can't still be idealistic.

13-What do you do outside of the law?

Outside of criminal law I have a few interests but recently my son and I have been restoring old Porsche 944's which is fun.

14-What would your defence bar colleagues be surprised to learn about you?

My colleagues might be surprised to know that I dropped out of high school because anyone I have ever told seems shocked by that little fact, you wouldn't be so shocked if you knew me in high school