



MEMBER PROFILE QUESTIONS

INTRO :

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Year of Call : 2007 (Qc) (2011 in Ontario)

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QUESTIONS :

1- How did you get into criminal law?

It started with an undergrad in criminology, which I chose by process of elimination – I really had no idea what I wanted to do when I entered university. Criminology sounded interesting to me. It was! Then one thing led to another...

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

Cases that are legally and factually complicated. With all sorts of pre-trial motions, legal argument, and tricky issues to navigate. Complex stories that I need to distill and convey in a compelling way. I find it particularly enjoyable to craft new legal arguments and figure out how to frame the evidence in support of them. A lot of our work is fulfilling, but this creative type of work is what I enjoy the most. Luckily, every case is different, so there's a bit of that in all cases.

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

I suppose it has allowed me to have a deeper understanding of the variety of perspectives out there. The practice of criminal law forces you to contend with all sorts of perspectives on a single situation. I think being a defence lawyer brings you to put yourself in another person's shoes to try and understand where they are coming from. And I don't just mean our own clients. I think you are a better lawyer if you attempt to place yourself in the complainant's or witness' shoes before examining them, and if you take the time to consider the judge's perspective before making submissions to them. Or again, the police officer's shoes as you prepare to plead for your client's release from the station. And the Crown's when you are trying to achieve a particular resolution. It's a tough skill to master and certainly not one I've already mastered, but being conscious of it helps to be more persuasive.

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

Less pre-trial detention. It's a most fundamental part of the process since a person is more likely to be convicted if detained pending trial. It informs almost everything that comes thereafter. So we need to reduce the rates of detention pending trial. This is one area where the Supreme Court has stated very clearly that we should be doing better, and yet we are still struggling to see real change in our bail courts. This can and has to improve.

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

Make sure anything you tell your client or a witness is something you'd be ok with them repeating. Because one day they will.

6- How do you deal with bad work days?

Good question. I wish I could say I go for a run and make myself some sort of healthy smoothie to boost my energy. I don't. I wallow for the day then I move on. Typically, by putting my head in some other file. If that doesn't work, I go to bed.

7- What do you think of Zoom court?

I think it's good for many things, not for others. One thing I think it can be great for is bail court. During the pandemic, I had a client with mental health needs get arrested I can't tell you how many times. I could never have attended court (outside the GTA in this case, so farther away) as many times as his repeated arrests required if I had had to attend in person. Bail is difficult to contend with because you don't plan for it – you get the call one night and it may be difficult to change your schedule to make it happen the next day or the day after. To obtain our clients' release at the earliest opportunity, we need flexibility. Zoom can allow for much greater access to justice in those circumstances. But it has its place, and we always need to ensure that accused persons can choose to appear in person if they so wish – with counsel in attendance.

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

The worst part of this story is that it happened in a high-profile case, with a room packed full of media. And so, there is no hiding from it. I was in the middle of arguing a pre-trial motion and we had to schedule a return date for its completion. The judge suggested February 14th to which my tired brain instinctively responded: "But that's Valentine's Day". To which Her Honour replied: "Do we not work on Valentine's Day, counsel?". (And I don't even celebrate Valentine's Day, to be clear!) Not sure what came over me. I was then chastised (by my law partner, not the judge) that I was next going to ask for my birthday off. The reporters had a field day, and all were interested in my oh-so-important V-Day plans.

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

Easy. I've been working with Marie Henein for over a decade. So.

10- What's your favourite song?

My daughter just asked me the same question and I got into a lengthy explanation about how it depends on the time of my life. Will spare you the details (other than to say I have gone from Céline Dion's *S'il suffisait d'aimer* (Quebec origins) to Elton John's *Daniel* (parental influence), to Bush X's *Glycerine* (90s), to REM's *Strange Currencies* (first real relationship), to Leonard Cohen's *So Long Marianne* (current relationship)). Right now, I'm spending a fair bit of time listening to Alicia Keys' *Girl on Fire* with my two daughters to boost their confidence.

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

I have been lucky enough to find a cottage not far outside Toronto (it exists!). So I exit the city most weekends. Even when I have work to do, it is incredibly more relaxing to do it from there. I realize it's not something everyone can just make happen, but I have recommended to many to forego buying in the City and instead get a place out of town. It helps to have a change of scenery.

12- What is your biggest legal inspiration?

I would say *one* of them, given my many moments with Marie. I witnessed Alan Young mount the Bedford case and it was truly something. The effort that was put into changing the law on that case was inspirational indeed.

13- What do you do outside of the law?

Some gardening. Nothing too serious. (Beyond my zucchini).

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

I was fired from my very first job (Staples) for (miserably) failing a mystery shopper evaluation, then went on to spend 7 years at Hallmark where I was repeatedly recognized as employee of the month. I learned my lesson well.