



THE **VOICE** OF
THE **CRIMINAL**
DEFENCE BAR

MEMBER PROFILE QUESTIONS

INTRO :

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QUESTIONS :

1- How did you get into criminal law?

I decided when I was very young that I wanted to be a criminal defence lawyer even before I really knew what it was or what it meant. I come from a working-class blue-collar family without any lawyers or other professionals. But growing up in the 70s and 80s, Eddie Greenspan was someone who was always in the paper or on the news doing high profile criminal cases in addition to fighting against the death penalty. He always seemed to be enjoying himself and people were interested in what he had to say. It seemed like a good way to make a living. Beyond that, it is mostly just good fortune and making the most out of opportunities including getting one articling job offer to work in criminal defence.

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

The most enjoyable cases are trials or appeals where I feel I brought real value or have thought about an issue or discovered a problem in the police investigation or the Crown case that was not necessarily obvious.



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

It's made me even more of a cynic than I probably was already. It also really highlighted for me the role that socioeconomic issues can have in shaping someone's future and how fortunate I was to have the opportunities that I had.

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

Proper funding for those people who truly cannot afford a lawyer so that the scales are evened out a little more than they are now. I know I'm only supposed to say one thing but the other thing that I'd like to see is for the work of criminal lawyers to be properly respected not just by judges and Crowns but by other lawyers and the broader public which ties back to the proper funding thing.

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

Your insecurities are getting in the way. Continue to work hard. It will be fine.



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6- How do you deal with bad work days?

I try to keep it in perspective. Our worst days are not as bad for us as they are for our clients or for people who have to go to a job every day that they hate. Complaining to colleagues and the occasional whiskey or scotch also helps.

7- What do you think of Zoom court?

Video technology is fantastic for a lot of different things – set dates, JPTs, and even some motions or trials. During COVID, it allowed us to continue to work and allowed for timely justice. But I think we need to resist the idea that video should replace in person litigation. I still believe in the solemnity of the occasion when it comes to a criminal trial or appeal.

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

Does anyone ever answer this? – I try to suppress all the times I have probably embarrassed myself.

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

I've had the honour of working with amazing lawyers over the years on many different cases in many different contexts including with the person who made me go into criminal law in the first place – Eddie Greenspan. But at the start of my career I articulated and then



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worked for Alan Gold and Justice Fuerst at their firm. I learned more in the 2 years I spent with them than I've learned since. Alan Gold is coming up on his 50th year at the bar and he is still at the top of his game. He remains a role model and inspiration to me.

10- What's your favourite song?

Signs – Five Man Electrical Band (1971).

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

I wouldn't look to me for guidance on how to maintain work life balance. I have a wonderfully supportive spouse and daughter who both patiently allowed me to work on my career and, at crucial times, prioritize it over other things. I also genuinely enjoy

practice and working so I'm not normally looking for ways to balance it out. But it can be very stressful at times. I try to live by this rule: I don't work after 5 on Fridays and Saturday is for family. I stick to it unless there is a true work emergency. To take my mind off work, I enjoy going sporting events, dinners out with family and friends, and weekend travel when I can fit it in.



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12- What is your biggest legal inspiration?

I'm inspired by new students and young associates who have a passion and commitment to the practice of criminal law. It's not an easy time to choose to practice criminal law and their desire to work hard and do good work is inspiring. Our profession is in good hands.

13- What do you do outside of the law?

I don't really have hobbies or a lot of outside interests. I golf but at such a poor level, it is not fair to even call myself a golfer.

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

I was painfully shy as a child and I hate public speaking. I'm also better with animals than people – that last bit will probably not surprise anyone.