



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

### MEMBER PROFILE QUESTIONS

#### INTRO :

**Member Name :** Mark Knox

#### QUESTIONS :

##### **1- How did you get into criminal law?**

I was raised in Southern California. I became interested in criminal law because, growing up, I learned that the state's power needs to be monitored and checked. In the 1960s/1970s, there was so much happening in the US- I was startled watching the nearby Watts riots on TV with my dad, saw the public's attitude toward the Vietnam War and civil disobedience change during the conflict (by the way, poor teenagers were being drafted from my high school in Quartz Hill, California), experienced the lies and corruption from Watergate, learned about the brutality of racism and segregation, and saw how American states harshly sentenced and poorly treated persons behind bars. In short, it became clear that someone needs to keep an eye on things, including protecting defendants.

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

Cases where witnesses have not been/are not honest, forthcoming and transparent. Those participants are supposed to show those qualities; and 2. tort cases against police



and correctional facilities because incarcerated victims are at such a disadvantage in litigation.

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

Three ways: 1. I've learned that anyone is vulnerable to breaking the law; 2. I have found many sides to a contested story, and it's easy to jump to conclusions; and 3. I know that the attitude/approach of the judge/crown/corrections staff toward an accused can make a world of difference in helping people change. Bill Sands was the son of a judge. When he was 19, he began serving a life sentence in San Quentin Prison. What made him change? He ultimately became a pilot/boxer/comedian/explorer/successful businessman/speaker and wrote a million-seller book, **My Shadow Ran Fast**. He said the following about the prison's warden, Clinton Duffy: "He cared."

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

Avoid being resentful toward those that are difficult to deal with-it's non-productive. In self-help groups, including AA and NA, one learns that resentment is like taking a poison pill and expecting your enemy will suffer. Resentment sucks the positive nature and energy out of us; it defeats us and causes us to take our eye off the ball. Whether engaging with the crown and police, our standard paradigm-- "us v. them" -- isn't (always) the best model to use when trying to help our clients.



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### **5- Who is your role model/inspiration in criminal law?**

Inspiration from working in Nova Scotia? We have a staff legal aid system in NS that employs about 80 staff lawyers. These people inspire me endlessly, tirelessly advocating for their clients.

My models and inspiration from across Canada? I admire those that have toiled, FEARLESSLY for the unpowerful during their entire careers, e.g., Senator Kim Pate and (previously defence counsel) Justice Anne Derrick (NSCA)

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

Do my best, but also know that it's good my partner is in the same game. And? I marvel at those that demonstrate peacefulness.

### **7- What do you do outside of the law?**

I have four older cars. Old things constantly break, but (I tell myself and our adult kids) this is a character builder! And I volunteer with the 7<sup>th</sup> Step society-we help persons, men and women, young and old, to not go back to jail and prison. The 7<sup>th</sup> Step Society is made up of i. volunteers like myself and ii. offenders/ex-offenders. We learn to help and support one another. Volunteers learn how lucky we are to have not suffered from poverty/mental health problems/less than perfect parenting/addiction/education deficits, and to be amazed at how those who did live that life try to and are able to change;



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volunteers (anyone including students, lawyers, teachers, retirees from all walks of life, even corrections persons that are accepted into the group) can help persons with records to normalize, solve problems and live a regular, pro-social life.