MEMBER PROFILE QUESTIONS

INTRO :

Member Name : Andrew Domacina

Year of Call : 2020 – I was a middle of the pandemic call

Region/City : Home base is Toronto, but I take cases all over the GTA

LinkedIn Page: https://www.linkedin.com/in/andrew-domacina-0600795b/

QUESTIONS :

1- How did you get into criminal law?

My journey into criminal law began at an unexpectedly early age. When I was merely ten years old, I was called as a defence witness in an assault trial involving a family member who, unable to afford legal representation, appeared on their own behalf. Although I was only a child, I vividly remember withstanding a rigorous cross-examination by the Crown prosecutor and

remaining steadfast in my account of the events. They were totally justified in defending themselves of course. When the trial judge ultimately acquitted the accused, citing my testimony as a significant factor in the decision, the experience left a lasting impression on me. Witnessing firsthand the profound impact that effective advocacy—and the courage to tell the truth—could have on the administration of justice sparked a passion that has guided my career ever since. From that moment forward, I knew I was destined to become a criminal defence lawyer. I just took the long and winding road to get there.

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

Ironically, it hasn't changed me as much as it has reaffirmed who I already was. I've always been aware of the challenges faced by marginalized people who become entangled in the criminal justice system. Practising criminal law has only strengthened my belief that passionate advocates are needed to stand beside those whose voices are too often overlooked. Every day reinforces why this work matters: ensuring that every person, regardless of their circumstances, has someone willing to fight for their rights and dignity.

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

If I could change one thing, it would be our approach to bail. With all of the toxic ongoing political rhetoric, the pendulum of detention has definitely swung in the wrong direction. Too often, people struggling with mental illness, addiction, or the effects of trauma find

themselves in custody simply because the community lacks the resources to support them. Incarceration is rarely the solution to those underlying issues.

We need meaningful investment in organizations such as the John Howard Society and the Canadian Mental Health Association, along with other community-based supports that help people stabilize and succeed. The justice system should be focused on breaking cycles of offending, not perpetuating them.

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

Challenge yourself—but know your limits. I've always believed that the best lawyers are forged through difficult cases, and I encourage young lawyers to take on files that stretch their abilities. That's where real growth happens.

At the same time, I've learned that every case deserves your complete attention, and there is only so much of that to give. Be disciplined about the work you accept. Your clients deserve your best advocacy, and that becomes increasingly difficult when you've stretched yourself too thin. That's a lesson I learned the hard way.

5- How do you deal with bad work days?

Criminal defence comes with some incredibly difficult days. There are moments when it feels like the entire justice system is working against your client, and by extension, against you.

One of the most important lessons I've learned is not to carry those days alone. Lean on your colleagues and support one another. Having trusted friends in the profession who understand the emotional weight of the work, can help you think through difficult cases, and are willing to be a sounding board when you're frustrated, is invaluable. That kind of camaraderie isn't just comforting—it's essential to building a long and sustainable career in criminal defence. I'm incredibly grateful for the colleagues who have been there for me through the toughest days.

6- What do you think of Zoom court?

Zoom court modernized a justice system that, for many years, was resistant to change. Like everyone else, I've experienced the occasional technological mishap and more than a few times when I forgot I wasn't muted. But overall, virtual appearances have made justice significantly more accessible.

I think the hybrid model is the right one. Case management appearances can be handled efficiently online, while trials and contested hearings are best conducted in person. Bail proceedings, in particular, should remain virtual whenever possible. The ability for an out-of-town surety to participate remotely can make the difference between

someone's release and an unnecessary adjournment that prolongs their detention. When liberty is at stake, accessibility matters.

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

I've certainly had my share of memorable moments. One that still makes my colleagues laugh happened during my very first trial in the middle of COVID. The entire proceeding was conducted over Zoom, and I was enthusiastically arguing all of the innocent explanations for what appeared in a grainy CCTV image to be an object in my client's hand.

Unfortunately, I have a naturally loud voice, and I became a little too animated during my submissions. Let's just say my colleagues down the hall had no trouble following every word of my argument—and they were kind enough to remind me of my courtroom theatrics for months afterward.

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

Criminal defence can consume you if you let it. Early in my career, I thought being a good lawyer meant being available every minute of every day. I've since learned that taking care of yourself isn't a luxury—it's part of being an effective advocate.

Early in my career, I probably dealt with that stress by pouring a good glass of quality Scotch. These days, I have a much healthier perspective. Walking through the front door to my wife and young kids has a remarkable way of putting everything into context.

Hitting the hardwood, the greens or a punching bag; or simply spending time with my family reminds me that there is more to life than what happened in court that day. Those moments allow me to return to my clients focused, energized, and ready for whatever challenge comes next.

9- What is your biggest legal inspiration?

The one and only, Attorney for the Damned, Clarence Darrow. My first principal often shared stories about Darrow's courage in defending unpopular clients, challenging capital punishment, and standing up for those society had written off. Those stories stayed with me.

The practice of criminal defence requires a certain willingness to stand alone when necessary—to defend constitutional rights, even when doing so is unpopular. Every defence lawyer could benefit from carrying a little bit of Clarence Darrow into the courtroom.

10- What do you do outside of the law?

Outside the courtroom, my world revolves around my family. My wife and our young children keep me grounded and remind me every day what truly matters. When I'm not chasing them around, you'll usually find me on a basketball court, on a golf course, or watching just about any sporting event I can find.

If you're a soccer fan, there's a good chance you spotted me in the front row when Croatia played Portugal in Toronto. My emotional journey over those ninety minutes—from absolute elation to complete heartbreak—probably rivalled the drama on the pitch. Croatia was robbed, and it was a total travesty.

As much as I love the law, I believe being an effective advocate requires having a life beyond it. Time away from the office gives me perspective, helps me recharge, and ultimately allows me to be a better lawyer for my clients.