



Michael Collins, JD W'09 *Salt Lake City, Utah*

“My cousin, who believes in Indian astrology, read my charts once and told me I should be an attorney.” That disclosure coincided with Mick’s being called as a witness in a criminal case and intrigued him enough that he began to read about law and got hooked. How, though, was he to leave his demanding and high-salaried employment? Finding Concord, he was able to study while working as a computer consultant. In fact, while at Concord he fulfilled his contract with the state of Utah to create a system that fully automated the dissemination of unemployment insurance legal notices. A software expert, he had been hired to design software that sorted databases, selected recipients, created and printed the notices, collated them, folded them, stuffed them in envelopes and mailed them all in a fully automated process.

Also while studying with Concord (and working full-time) Mick Collins flew to Paris to participate in Cornell Law School’s summer institute abroad where he studied human rights law and comparative law. During his tenure at Concord, he joined the American Constitutional Society (ACS) and became very active in the organization, participating in two ACS Moot Court competitions. He earned a scholarship from ACS which allowed him to meet and dine with an ACS Criminal Justice Issue Group Co-Chair or board member of his choice, and he chose Carol Steiker, professor of criminal law at Harvard. His dinner discussion with her fueled an interest in criminal law which has motivated him ever since. Mick was also named an ACS Next Generation Leader for 2009-2010.

“I consider criminal law a neglected stepchild of our legal system,” says Mick. “There are so many ideas that haven’t been thoroughly researched--especially given modern technologies and methodologies now available.” He goes on to explain that the field of bio-criminality, while relatively new, has begun to allow us to explore genealogy and biology, using databases and even neuro-imaging, to determine factors in criminal behavior.

He is particularly interested in the ability to construct a modern database to catalog, quantify and qualify the attributes of criminal processes. “By being able to see certain patterns we might be able to illuminate methods that are more successful in stopping crime than the punishment-based system we currently have. The outcome of a criminal trial is a verdict and a sentence. Our legal system puts the emphasis on the sentence whereas I think our focus should be on the verdict and how to better mitigate criminal behavior,” he explains.

Mick credits Concord with strengthening his ability to study more efficiently and research things more thoroughly. “I felt the way my brain worked actually changed as a result of Concord. Now I can pick up musical scores and more quickly see patterns and relationships. I also see more potential in myself. I feel as if I’m competing with myself and it makes me more productive. Finally, my Concord experience has instilled more personal circumspection. I used to jump to conclusions. Now I stop to examine my motives and can more clearly see both sides of an argument.”

Mick continues to work in the world of computer programming, while also working part-time for a law firm in Utah. He hopes to transition into more full-time legal work in the next year. Having passed the California bar, he is interested in working as a public defender in California, or as a federal attorney in his home state of Utah. He is also applying to attend an LLM degree program in September 2010. With luck, a year from now, Mick will be pursuing his passion in one state or another.