



ABC photo, Ron Tom

Mark Valley Masters Law A January 2006 Interview

Fox's loss is ABC's gain. Valley starred in two Fox series that were treated poorly by the network. ABC is sticking with his 'Boston Legal.' He's one of the reasons why.

Folks who watch 'Boston Legal' are familiar with the actor Mark Valley, who plays Brad Chase. It's hard to forget someone who chops off a priest's fingers with an ax. Mark is a rising star who would be terrific with co-star Julie Bowen, who plays Denise Bauer, in a "Legal" spin-off series that would feature them trying to start their own law practice. The sexual tension between the leads would be enough to keep viewers happy for years.

Even David E. Kelley's writers love the Chase character. Mark's real-life experiences in the Gulf War are mentioned as the reason he is the only lawyer at the firm who can handle himself in a fight. Who will ever forget the time Alan Shore (James Spader) hired someone to take up for him in a bar? It's obvious to series fans that Denny Crane (William Shatner) would lock and load to protect the firm if a group of thugs came calling, but only Mark's Chase would be able to fend off the brutes with his bare hands ... although, I must admit that Shirley Schmidt (Candice Bergen) might be good in a brawl too.

The last two series that Mark starred in for Fox were treated like road kill by network executives. 'Pasadena' and 'Keen Eddie' were given the kiss-off even though both shows had a following. I was especially fond of 'Keen Eddie' because Mark and his lovely co-star, Sienna Miller, were a great pair. He played the cop from America who went to work for the British police. She played his reluctant roommate. And then there was Eddie's dog, one of the funniest stars to grace the tube in 2003 and 2004.

I give ABC a ten for staying with 'Boston Legal' so far. It is one of my favorite series, not because Spader and Shatner dance so good together, but because all the actors on the show seem to have a ball delivering the lines that the amazing writers give them each week. I give ABC an eleven for allowing me to chat with Mark this month.

The Mark Valley Interview with Tony Bray

When I interviewed Dana Delany a couple of years ago, here's what she said about 'Pasadena:' "The great thing for me was I got to work with Mike White and all the people in the show who played my family."

Dana. We e-mail each other, talk on the phone. We still keep in touch. Because we were shooting in Vancouver, we all sort of came together like a dysfunctional family. (Laughter) And now we're stuck with each other.

'Pasadena' was my favorite show that year. I like dark families.

God, I loved that show.

I still think 'Keen Eddie' is one of the top ten shows in the past twenty years.

That was quite a show too.

Sienna Miller was a beautiful co-star, but the dog Pete and her cat were the stars.

Oh, yes. I love working with animals.

Then you won't mind me being at home with my dog. She got mauled and I didn't want to leave her alone.

No. My cat is limping around too. I think she got in a fight with some local cat.

What ever happened to Pete?

The trainer's adopted him. They found him up in Manchester, in a cardboard box or something. I guess somebody was selling him. Some street person was trying to get money for his dog. Pete is really a pretty good natured dog. When he's happy, he kind of runs around in a circle, like it's in that little box. They adopted him. They have a big spot of land and I think he's pretty happy up there running around.

You have a lot of ethical issues with Alan Shore on 'Boston Legal.' Are the writers going to get you two any closer, at less odds?

I don't really know what they're going to do. James and I would like to work together more. We've told the writers. I think right now they're taking advantage of the chemistry between Shore and Denny Crane.

I just love doing quality shows. I was on a soap for a long time. So, I sort of had enough of that. (laughter)

I can dig that.

I decided if I wanted to do something, I wanted it to be good. I'd rather have somebody come up to me and say: "Man, I really like your show," than come up and say: "Oh, wow, you're Mark Valley."

You know what I mean? It's the feeling of belonging to something that has a worthy purpose.

You were in the Army. You know the value of teamwork. A successful ensemble requires that.

Yes, you're really relying on each other, especially on our show. There are so many talented actors. It's so crucial that you have this wealth of information available. There's James, who I think is a very intense dramatic actor, but also has this kind of comedic flair. It's fun to kind of bounce things off of each other.

'Keen Eddie' was like that as well. Julian Rhind-Tutt is a brilliant actor with that kind of English sense of irony. We used to run things off of each other while we were working scenes out together. We do that on 'Boston Legal' as well. It's really a group effort.

I think it's the best show on television. Congratulations for the Screen Actors Guild Ensemble nomination.

That was great news.

You're on the set with some amazing people.

I know, I know. It's amazing the parade of guest actors that we get on the show. It's like doing 'Keen Eddie' in London. There was this amazing pool of actors that would come through. These people that were at the Royal Shakespeare Company one week and then doing an episode of our show the next. 'Boston Legal' has Betty White and some of the people that come in to play judges are really experienced actors. It's fun to sit around in

between shots and chat with these people. I talked to Betty White about what it was like doing live television.

I don't understand why more people don't watch 'Boston Legal' each week.

I love to postulate on things like that. I guess what I would say is that different people require different types of stimulation from entertainment. There's such a broad array of choices out there nowadays that I think it dilutes things out a little bit.

It's funny. America has this idea -- who's the best, who's the winner, what movie won, what movie got the most money for the weekend. There's a lot of room out there for all of us to kind of play around and do our thing. So, I'm pretty content with what's going on with our show right now.

The show's writers are great. Spader gets the long speeches. Does he shoot those in one take?

James is really a brilliant man. He'll do all his work at home and come in and work things out with blocking. He'll stop and start on his own until he gets to the point where he feels like it's ready. By the time they're ready to roll cameras, he's ready.

William Shatner's Denny Crane has the least to say, but his name speaks for him.

Yes. He can be in a scene with four people, be listening to the whole thing and have one line near the end, and steal the whole scene ... just by adding that one thing that make's everybody laugh.

'Boston Public' actor Anthony Heald plays a judge who looks like a raving lunatic. Sometimes he looks like he might have a shotgun behind the bench.

I know that scene. His eyes looked they were going to pop out of his head.

Exactly. That's why I love the show. There's just so much going on with so many good people.

Yes, it's really cool. We're starting to come together as a team and as a family. I never thought someday I'd be working with James Spader or that anybody would be working on the same thing with Candice Bergen and Shatner and Spader (laughter)

Are you getting any good movie offers because of 'Boston Legal'?

Not yet. One of the things about being on TV is that you're not really available except for two or three months over the summer time. It's kind of hard to kind of slot yourself in like that. At least that's my excuse and I'm sticking to it. (laughter)

Having a film career is pretty hard. There's not a lot of people out there that have one. It's a harder life unless you're a star. TV ... this is the gravy and butter. It has the ability to be topical, funny, dramatic and significant. But rarely do you see a movie that can tackle the issues that a television show like 'Boston Legal' goes after without smaltzing it up. What would the TV landscape would be like without our series? (Laughter)

Pretty boring most of the time.

I like to watch 'The Daily Show.' John Stewart is funny. I like to watch 'Pasadena' on the soap channel. I hadn't seen the last seven episodes, so I got an opportunity to see those.

I'm glad you admitted to that, because, if I were an actor, I know darn well I'd watch what I do.

It's amazing, I can watch an episode that was shot seven years ago and remember almost what I was wearing, what it felt like, what I was doing there. But I can watch the story being told and discover things that I didn't even know I was doing. I can see the payoffs now.

Switching to a different gear ... you were over there for Operation Dessert Storm. I can't imagine it was fun. Thanks for serving.

I'm proud that I served.

Well, you should be.

I did some time, but war is a young man's game now.

How did you get to acting from Operation Dessert Storm?

The bug was sort of planted early on when I was in college. I had to give some speech, so I dressed up like George Patton and gave it as him instead. I sort of realized the power of theater to inspire people. After the Gulf War, it was sort of a spiritual kind of a decision that I made. I realized that everything could just go at any minute. I decided to do something that I would enjoy -- sort of like a dream job. I decided to give acting a shot.

Have you got anything on the burner that interests you?

I'm doing some research on Rudy Vallee because I have this hair-brained idea of putting on a one man show, trying to play him or something.

That's not hair-brained at all.

He's a fascinating guy. Back in the time of the crooner, when the melody was the most important thing, before back beat came along. It was even before jazz and swing really picked up.

I've taken up too much of your time. You've got a weekend coming up and an Awards Show on the horizon.

I've got to get something to wear. They keep taking pictures of me wearing the same thing. It's getting embarrassing.

Just tell them that Denny Crane handles your wardrobe. I appreciate the interview. You are a fine actor and have a big future ahead. Good luck with 'Boston Legal.'

Thanks, Tony. It's been fun.

End of the Mark Valley Interview

Visit the ABC 'Boston Legal' [Web Site](#) for more information about the show and to find a perfect lawyer to handle your family and business affairs. Be sure to watch some of the Case Video Clips. The series airs on Tuesday nights at 10:01pm.

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