

**Distinguished Professor
And Scholar;
Professor of Law;
Director, Criminal
Justice Concentration**
B.S., J.D., University of Utah

Courses Taught
Criminal Law, Evidence,
Juvenile Law,
Community Property

Recent Scholarship
Child Protection in America:
Past, Present, and Future
(Oxford 2006)
A History of Child Protection
in America (Xlibris 2005)

Member
American Law Institute

Photography: Bill Mahon

Professor John Myers

Racing to Keep Child Abuse Professionals Current

THE PACIFIC MCGEORGE PROFILE

By Cynthia Kincaid

For Professor John Myers, speed is a way of life. Whether it's making scores of presentations a year on child abuse to judges, mental health professionals and doctors, social workers, and other attorneys around the country, or racing his Mazda Miata as an amateur on the Sports Car Club of America Club Racing circuit, Myers seems to be in constant motion.

His passion and reputation lies in helping those who assist and defend the most vulnerable members of our population, especially abused and neglected children.

As an attorney in Salt Lake City, Utah, Myers worked as a legal services lawyer on juvenile court cases and also represented the developmentally disadvantaged. After leaving the law and moving into academia, he chose the area of child abuse because of his interest and experience with children, and because it seemed a neglected field.

"In the early 1980s, virtually nobody in the legal academy was writing about child abuse issues," Myers says.

Over the past two decades, Myers has followed, indeed been a part of the emergence of, child sexual abuse as a major social issue. He notes that people were interested in the subject in the 1970s and 80s, but few law professors wrote about it or devoted their full energies to children as witnesses or to evidence issues as they related to child sexual abuse. "It was a niche that needed to be filled," he says.

The growing interest in child abuse, Myers says, stems from the intersection of human nature, crime and sex—all very emotional issues. "So it makes us interested in it," Myers concludes.

Myers travels around the U.S. giving presentations and lectures that involve training on the legal issues such as interviewing children properly and investigating abuse cases effectively.

"People don't have access to the most recent information or the most recent psychological or medical literature, which could be relevant," says Myers. "If they do, they don't have time to read it. So it's not that people have a lot of misconceptions, it's that they're not, for the most part, fully up to date. My job is to be a resource for the people who do the work in the field."

Over the past few years, Myers says he has seen a vast improvement in the quality of child interviewing techniques. "We've made real strides," he says. "We are doing a better job of interviewing, and we are doing a better job of training people in how to talk to kids." He points out that much

of the initial interviewing of children for court cases is done by the least trained of professionals. "So we still have a tremendous amount of work to do in terms of society's interest in protecting kids," Myers says.

All the work around protecting children is paying off. Today, according to Myers, there are more than 400 specialized child advocacy centers scattered across the United States; in 1985, there were none.

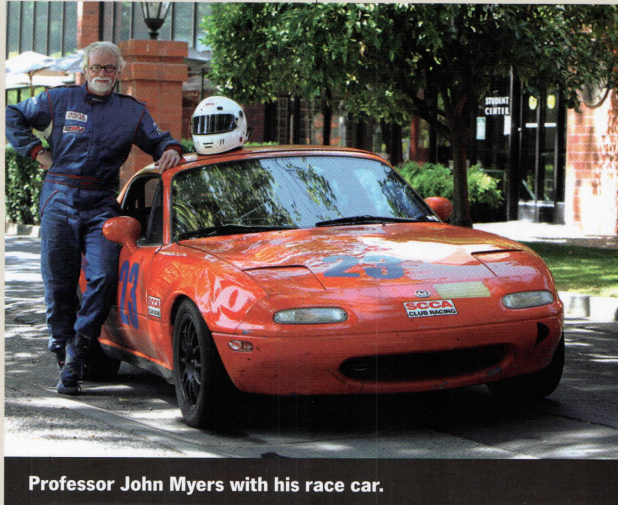
When Myers is not zipping around the country lecturing, you can find him speeding around race car tracks in his modified Mazda Miata. His amateur racing club cohorts race around the same tracks as the racing stars do, and Myers concedes that he enjoys what he calls the "slight" degree of risk and the adrenaline rush of racing.

"I love the competition because I am very competitive," he says. "I love the camaraderie, and I love the speed. I didn't start racing until I was 60." He finished in the top 10 in a recent race although he admits a crash that wiped out part of the field might have helped him a little bit.

For Myers, who also taught karate for 13 years, racing provides a way to clear his head and be among other racing friends. He has taken his students for rides, and has a bent fender from a previous racing collision up on his office wall to remind him of his mortality. He's had one car catch on fire, and he's totaled another. Still, none of this deters him from the love of the sport.

Not surprisingly, he brings this same passion into the classroom. "Teaching is the greatest job in the world," he says. Initially, Myers had no interest in being a lawyer. Instead, he went to Vietnam, where he served as a Navy medic, then worked his way through college by driving an ambulance. "I was interested in the human condition and the unbelievable conditions in which so many people somehow get along, in terms of poverty and alcoholism and mental illness," he says. "I was moved by that to try and do something about it."

So a decision had to be made—law school or a career in sociology? "The law school application was easier to fill out than the sociology application, so I became a lawyer," Myers says. "Turned out it was a good choice for me."



Professor John Myers with his race car.

This is the tenth in a series of Pacific Law articles on members of the Pacific McGeorge faculty who pursue excellence inside and outside the classroom.