



# Brush with the Law: The True Life Story of Law School Today at Harvard and Stanford

*Robert Byrnes, Jaime Marquart*

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Just how tough are the country's most prestigious law schools? Most alumni would answer with stories of humiliating "Socratic dialogue failures" in the classroom and all-night, caffeine-fueled cram sessions.

Until now, the traditional concept of the law-school experience was the one presented in Scott Turow's *One-L*, published in 1977, a dark description of his first year at Harvard Law School. Twenty-four years later things have definitely changed. Turow's book became the accepted primer--and warning--for aspiring law students, giving them a glimpse of what awaited: grueling nonstop study, brutally competitive classes, endless research, and unfathomable terminology. It described a draconian prison and endless work in the company of equally obsessive, desperate fellow students.

Yet, sidestepping terror and intimidation, law students (and new authors) Robert Byrnes and Jaime Marquart entered highly prestigious law schools, did things their own way, earned law degrees, and were hired by a Los Angeles law firm, turning Turow's vision upside down. In their parallel narratives--two twisted, hilarious, blighted, and glorious coming-of-age stories--Byrnes and Marquart explain how they managed to graduate while spending most of their time in the pursuit of pleasure.

Byrnes went to Stanford to reinvent himself--after a false start in politics he wanted to explore the life of the mind. It took him virtually no time to discover that the law was neither particularly intriguing nor particularly challenging. He could play around the clock. When Byrnes wasn't biking he was getting drunk and smoking crack. Finding himself when he discovered the right woman, Byrnes finally moved to Los Angeles during his third year and flew upstate only to take final exams.

Born and raised in a small town in Texas, Marquart had never lived outside the state before arriving at Harvard. Amazed at his own good luck, he approached school with all due diligence. Disenchantment followed shortly thereafter, and Marquart learned he needn't be intimidated by his classmates and teachers. With a mysterious and bizarre companion--another student called the Kankos--Jaime took up traveling but devoted most of his energy (and considerable money) to gambling, counting cards in casinos around the country.

Irreverent, funny, and downright shocking, *Brush with the Law* will inspire undergraduates to bone up for the entrance exam, while outraging lawyers and the admissions officers of their beloved alma maters.

Upon realizing how easy it was to get good grades, Jaime relates:

*"I approached my second year with [one] goal . . . take classes that required the least amount of work and the least amount of attendance . . . To accomplish my . . . goal, I devised The System, a short instruction manual on the principles behind selecting and ditching law school classes. The System's goal was to screw off as much as possible, with few if any consequences." --from Brush with the Law*

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