

OPEN NINTH:

CONVERSATIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM

JUDICIAL SPOTLIGHT

MEET HONORABLE DOUG WALKER

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HOSTED BY: LISA T. MUNYON

(Music)

NARRATOR: Welcome to another episode of “Open Ninth: Conversations Beyond the Courtroom” in the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida.

And now here’s your host, Chief Judge Lisa Munyon.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Hello, and welcome to Open Ninth. I’m here today with Judge Doug Walker, our newest county court judge in the Ninth Circuit. Governor Ron DeSantis appointed him to the Orange County bench in April of 2022. But before joining the bench, Judge Walker worked as an assistant public defender in the Ninth Judicial Circuit, and as an associate attorney at Bradford Cederberg, PA. I’m thrilled to have you in the studio today, Judge Walker. Thanks for joining me.

JUDGE WALKER: Yeah, thanks for having me.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So tell me a little bit about yourself. Where did you grow up?

JUDGE WALKER: Yeah, sure, so I grew up in Amelia Island, Fernandina Beach. I don’t know if – you know, it’s north of Jacksonville so I tell every – it’s kind of Baha Georgia so I was raised by diehard Georgia Bulldog fans. They all went to the University of Georgia.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Oh, I’m so sorry.

JUDGE WALKER: It’s okay. But they grew up in Florida. They grew up in Nassau County where I was born and raised, and then – yeah, I went to high school there, went to college at the University of Florida and always thought I’d go back there but you know life has a funny way of steering you where it wants to. So here I am.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So I would assume growing in Fernandina Beach you had some you know hobbies that you enjoyed. Did you spend a lot of time at the beach or outside? What do you enjoy doing?

JUDGE WALKER: Yeah, we were outside. I was talking about this recently with someone, you know, I think – and it was in the context of sunscreen because I don't know if I really wore sunscreen until you know, the first 17 years of my life and I was outside constantly. The house I grew up in was probably about an eight or ten minute you know walk to the beach. Wasn't on the beach but it was close enough to where you could go whenever you wanted. So between that, fishing, freshwater, salt water, playing golf. You know, growing up, especially once you got into high school, you either worked on a fishing boat or at a golf course, you know, all my friends, so I never really paid to go fishing and I never paid to play golf, which was a rude awakening when I became like a real functioning adult. You want me to pay to play golf, what the heck. So yeah, it was everything outside. Even if it was just you know sitting outside you know watching birds or whatever, you know, I was outside all the time and still enjoy being outside.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Yeah, that is the bad part of this job is you're inside all the time.

JUDGE WALKER: That's true.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So did you work on a fishing boat?

JUDGE WALKER: No, I didn't, but I have friends that were in my wedding, you know, it's a small town so I knew you know the friends that I have to this day that still live up there, you know, we met each other in pre-school. And two or three of them worked and some still do

work on commercial fishing boats or private charter fishing boats, or somewhere fishing adjacent so I did not. I did work at the city golf course though and in between playing sports, that became like a weekend job for me but it allowed me to play free golf.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Yes, and between being on a commercial fishing boat and being on a golf course, I think commercial fishing is really tough.

JUDGE WALKER: Yeah, depending, you know, it's very -- dependent on the weather obviously, but they are long days for sure, yeah.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Yeah, I've watched some of those commercial fishing shows. It looks pretty -- although you know, it's not cold in Florida so you don't have to worry about that.

JUDGE WALKER: Right.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: But still -- yeah, absolutely. So what took you to the University of Florida if your parents were diehard Bulldogs?

JUDGE WALKER: That's a great question and one I get asked often, so --

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: See, my parents were diehard Gators so it went without saying, I was going to UF.

JUDGE WALKER: I grew up hating the Gators. You know, I hated Steve Spurrier, you know, I grew up like I said, a diehard Georgia fan. We would go to Athens a couple times a year. We'd catch Braves games and Bulldog games, and there's pictures of me, you know, ten, eleven years old with half of my face painted red and half of my face painted black for the Florida/Georgia game, which I do now call it the Florida/Georgia game, you know, not the

reverse order. But you know, long story, I wanted to go to the University of Georgia. Things happened where you know, I don't remember if I got in or not or even if I even applied, but it just became apparent that it wasn't something I wanted to do at that time. I played baseball at Santa Fe Community College –

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Oh, did you.

JUDGE WALKER: And that was kind of like, you know, I didn't know what I wanted to be when I grew up. You know, I was still kind of chasing the dream of – not even really a dream. I knew I wasn't going to play professional baseball, but I was going to play as long as I could. And the opportunity came up to play at Santa Fe Community College, which brought me to Gainesville. And I spent the first two years there still wearing red and black to the Florida/Georgia game and then that was, when I transferred to the University of Florida just because it was so convenient and easy, that was right around the time the basketball team was winning National championships. And the football team had Tim Tebow and Percy Harvin and they were winning National championships, so I was a very willing victim of the brainwashing and still wear it to this day.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Yeah, I can understand. Gainesville has that effect on people.

JUDGE WALKER: It does, yeah. So now we – I was just there this weekend. My brother was graduating from the University of Florida with his master's in sports management, something to do with facilities. I don't know the exact title but I was there yesterday. And he's got the key to the stadium and unlocks all of it so it was a very cool tour he was able to give me yesterday and it brought back a lot of fond memories of going to those games.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So if you played for Santa Fe Community College, then you must have played in high school.

JUDGE WALKER: I did.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: What position did you play?

JUDGE WALKER: So I was a pitcher and I played first base. I was not a good hitter at all so I make the joke, and it may be true. I don't know if it's a joke, but I was probably the only first baseman in the entire country that was DH4. I had a designated hitter that actually hit. So you know it was just one of those things. I was a thrower. I played quarterback on the football team and like I was – I was a thrower so I pitched and that's what I did at Santa Fe.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: You pitched at Santa Fe.

JUDGE WALKER: I pitched at Santa Fe.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: They've got a good baseball team and traditionally have.

JUDGE WALKER: I was shocked at the talent, because it's different rules too. You know, if you go to a four-year college, you have to play three years before you can turn pro and a lot of these guys that play in junior college got drafted in the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> round but they think if they can play one year, maybe they can get drafted in the top ten. Make a little bit more money so there's a very wide – and then there's guys like me that was just kind of, I'm here and – but there's a very wide range of talent in junior college baseball and some of it is top tier.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So you decided to go to UF after playing baseball at Santa Fe. What did you study?

JUDGE WALKER: So it's one of those things, so we'll talk about it a little later too, I guess. My wife teaches a freshman seminar at Valencia College so it's like a – it's an intensive – it's SLS is the name of the course. But it's what do you want – now that you're in college, what do you want to do?

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Yeah, what do you want to do when you grow up?

JUDGE WALKER: Right, exactly. And they really – you know, they do all the – I don't know if it's – you know, the personality test we all know of, but they do very intensive find out about you and what you're good at and your strengths.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: That's a good thing to do now. They didn't do that when I was in college.

JUDGE WALKER: Amen. And I wish they did that for me to. So I majored in telecommunications, so I thought I was going to do like TV news. I don't know why. I really don't know why that's what drew me to it. There was a lot of pretty girls in that major so maybe that was it. So – but anyway, I just ended up taking classes. And I did radio for WRUF and took all the TV classes. And I took political science classes for fun because that you know, as weird as that sounds, if I'm going to take an elective, that stuff interested me.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: And it could be useful if you're going to be a news anchor, I would think.

JUDGE WALKER: Yeah. And it really – you know, those classes didn't necessarily feel like work to me. It was one of those things where it's like, oh, that's interesting. I didn't know that. I think I took comparative politics in Nicaragua or something like that and it was like – I only took it because it fit my schedule but half way through, I'm like, wow, this is really

interesting, I didn't know this. But anyway, so I ended up, when it came close to graduation, I only needed like one or two more poly psy classes to actually major in that as well so I doubled majored in telecommunications with a focus on TV news. And then poly psy. So – but right around when it came time to graduate, realized that I didn't really want to do TV news because you got to move to like, you know, po-dunk Idaho.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Yeah.

JUDGE WALKER: And start out doing the weekends and you know, for no money at all and it's hard to start a family and set up roots. And I'm a very rooted type of person.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Yeah. Yeah. If you grew up in the place where your parents grew up –

JUDGE WALKER: Right.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: You have to be rooted.

JUDGE WALKER: Right. So that lifestyle, that grind I guess really – yeah, I just at that point kind of made the decision that's not what I'm going to do. I'm going to figure out – and I didn't know what I was going to do. I just was going to figure it out.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So what did you end up doing?

JUDGE WALKER: Yeah, so I moved back to Jacksonville, Fernandina, but I moved to Jacksonville and I got a job at Merrill Lynch, basically, a glorified data entry person on the back end. So we worked with like offshore mutual funds. And I did that for two years but it was – after about a year there, it was like, okay, I need to like – I need to go back to school. And I didn't know what I – you know, do I need an MBA or I need – what am I going to do? And I



think I was in a dentist's office reading like the versatility of a law degree or something and I was like ah, so I did a little more research on that. Yeah, about a year or so into working at Merrill Lynch, kind of made the decision, all right I'm going to study for the LSAT and do that.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So did you know any lawyers growing up?

JUDGE WALKER: No. I mean, I knew -- Fernandina is a small town so you know like the three or four names of the attorneys but they weren't family friends, you know, I knew of them. They've since become friends and I've reached out to those attorneys who I knew growing up but didn't know personally and now within the past two or three years have gotten to know them a little better personally. And then kids I went to high school with have become attorneys, but growing up, I don't think I knew one. I think I had an uncle that -- you know, but he was a distant uncle, you know.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Yeah, when I went to law school, I had never actually talked to a lawyer.

JUDGE WALKER: Right.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Yeah. It's like okay, that -- that was an interesting way to make a decision.

JUDGE WALKER: Yeah, you know, in a way it helped because I had no expectations of law school or the job, or anything like that. So my mom -- my mom worked for the paper mill. If you've ever been to Fernandina, you can usually smell it before --

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Yeah.

JUDGE WALKER: Yeah, so, there's two paper mills there. She worked for one of them growing up. My parents separated when I was six but they both lived in Fernandina. My dad worked for the wastewater treatment plant for most of my childhood and then worked for solid waste. Even when it was privatized, he kept that job for a while. Then he ended up driving cabs and you know, long story short, but we weren't, for better or worse, connected to like the legal community really in any way.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So you decided – you read an article, decided you're going to take the LSAT. So I guess you must have done – you must have followed through and done pretty well because you got into law school.

JUDGE WALKER: Yeah, so I started taking class – you know, I wasn't making a lot of money so I bought two things. I bought Jaguar season tickets because I've always wanted those and then I bought an LSAT class that was – met in person on like Wednesday nights or something like that and you know, when you start spending your own money, you start taking it a lot more seriously. So you know, when I was you know shelling out the dollars for I forget which – it doesn't matter, the LSAT class I was taking, I really like, all right, I'm going to do – I'm going to really focus on this and really do it because it's important, you know. I don't want to work here the rest – I need to do it, so – and I did okay. I did – yeah, I was happy – you know, I think like everyone, I was practicing better than I actually scored, but it was close enough to where I was fine. I wasn't taking it again. I only took it once.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So you ended up going to law school at where?

JUDGE WALKER: FIU.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: FIU.

JUDGE WALKER: Florida International and that was another –

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: In Miami.

JUDGE WALKER: In Miami. Yeah, a decision, you know, I was paying for it so it was – it was cheaper than the other public schools. It was in a big city, you know – that’s how I approach things. I just start researching you know, how to pick a law school –

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Right.

JUDGE WALKER: -- and stuff like that. It was in a big city with a lot of opportunities for internships and things like that. And when I visited there and the people I spoke to, they seemed genuinely invested on – and they have their own ulterior motives to get their name and their school because it was a fairly new school at the time. I think my first year was their ten-year anniversary but they were very invested on seeing their students do well because it made them look better and I could feel that. And in hindsight, it was maybe one of the best decisions I – because it proved true, you know, I felt like there were a lot of people, especially for someone who didn’t know what they were doing in law school, didn’t know a lawyer like we were just talking about, really pushed me in the direction which I needed to be pushed.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So you went to Miami, which is a long way both culturally and distance from Fernandina Beach.

JUDGE WALKER: Correct.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So how did you acclimate to life in Miami?

JUDGE WALKER: I loved it. I lived right in the middle of – you know, I lived in Brickell so – in an old, old building. It was you know, we had three roommates and – but we

were right in the middle of everything. I think at that time too is when LeBron and Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh were playing for the Heat. So I never had an MBA – you know, never had an MBA rooting interest, sorry Orlando. It just never crossed my mind. So kind of – I’m not a huge Heat fan to this day, but it was something to do in that big city environment. And it was fast and it was good. I was in my mid-twenties, young, had the energy to kind of survive in that environment and I loved every single minute of it. I, you know, you hear people talk about Miami that are from Fernandina and from Jacksonville, oh, I could never do – and I kind of – I admittedly had the – because what was told to me, I had those kind of expectations of this is going to be a lot, and it was such a fun three years. And productive three years, and I experienced things that I would never have been able to experience really anywhere else probably in the world. I mean, even New York, LA, you know. Miami is a very unique place.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: It is. Absolutely. So did you, while you were in law school, did you get an interest in any particular area of the law, or did that come later?

JUDGE WALKER: Yeah, so I remember at orientation, I mean this was my introduction to law school. I mean, it was – it was you’re a 1L, just make good grades. That’s all you need to focus on, just make good grades in all your classes. And I didn’t – I did not really have an interest in any particular area. So I took that to heart and I just studied a lot, and tried to make good grades. And ended up doing well after my 1L year, I think I was 8<sup>th</sup> out of like 152 or something. So the grades just kind of came, and I can’t – and I think working before going to law school was a huge, huge asset because –

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Gave you some maturity I would imagine.

JUDGE WALKER: And you just put in an 8-hour day.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Yeah.

JUDGE WALKER: And you could stay on top of things. Where a lot of the kids who had transitioned straight from undergraduate to law school were still kind of – and then at the last minute, they're trying to cram everything in and so I was just – you know, I never felt like I was killing myself in law school studying. I mean, there were – some days were easier than others but it was essentially built around an 8-hour day with a lunch break and you know dinner at night and all that stuff. So I made good grades and then after that, like I said, there was an impetus on like well, you need – you need to try to get on law review. I had no idea what law review was. But it was imparted on me the importance of that, so I tried to get on law review. I did and then that took up a lot of time and then the editorial board interviews, those happen and they ask you to rank what you're interested in. And I ranked them. And I just remember, I put editor in chief third and then when they were interviewing me, they said why did you put that third, like that should be number one. And I was like, I don't know what they do. It sounds like a lot of work. I'm already – you know, I already have an 8-hour day. I'm not trying to like put in over – you know, whatever.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Yeah.

JUDGE WALKER: And they kind of convin – they were like, well, if we offered you that, would you take it? And I said, well, you know – they told me – we had a long conversation about it. And I said, yeah, sure, so they selected me for that. So I ended up being the editor in chief of the law review my 2L – 3L year. So that took up time doing all that stuff.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So what does an editor in chief of a law review do?

JUDGE WALKER: That's a great question. Because I feel like everyone is so different, personality wise. It's like any other kind of business, I guess. You have different management styles. Some editors in chiefs are hands-on with the articles and I was more of a, you know, we have articles editors. We have designated positions. If you have issues – like I was more of like the liaison to who's ever submitting articles, the faculty and mainly, you know, the CEO of whatever publication and symposium we were working on at the time. So it ended up being not as much work as I thought it was going to be and was scared about, but it was still an investment in not only time but people too, and managing different personalities and different schedules because they were all law students as well. And stressing about this, and we have our own deadlines.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: I would imagine that helped you hone your writing skills and editing skills, which were just as important as writing skills.

JUDGE WALKER: Right, and that was one of the strengths – I guess maybe that's attributable to like the telecom undergrad. You know, it was a lot of writing, but going into law school, I did well. I don't know, if surprisingly, but in all the legal writing classes, so that was I guess a strength that I noticed kind of early on. But I did – in that 3L year I did take a trial advocacy course and that's where I did – I was like man, you know, I read that article about the versatility of a law degree but I think I just want to be a lawyer. I think I want to be a trial lawyer.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Be a litigator, yeah.

JUDGE WALKER: Right, yeah. So – and that’s – and luckily that was kind of towards the end so that’s when I really started focusing on like all right, well, how can I be the best you know litigator I can be.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So what – after you left law school –

JUDGE WALKER: Correct.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: -- what was your first job?

JUDGE WALKER: All right, so again not knowing, I’m like leaning, what do I need to do and everyone says, well, you need to clerk. You need find someone, and as you probably know, it’s easier said than done.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Yeah.

JUDGE WALKER: And I don’t know anyone so I don’t have any connections. So what I did was I sent a hard copy resume to every judge in the 3<sup>rd</sup> DCA and the 4<sup>th</sup> DCA, you know back on – you know the thick card stock, back when you used to do that. And Judge Mark Polen at the 4<sup>th</sup> DCA actually called me and I interviewed and I started working for him in June while I was studying for the bar exam. Then I passed the bar and he kept me on. He was aging out and this is Judge Polen at the 4<sup>th</sup> DCA.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Right.

JUDGE WALKER: And he was aging out so I only worked for him for one year but Judge Alan Forst was coming in to fill a different vacancy and I interviewed with him. So I worked – I clerked for him for one year after that. So two years at the 4<sup>th</sup> for two different judges.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: And the 4<sup>th</sup> is in Fort Lauderdale, right?

JUDGE WALKER: It's in West Palm.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: West Palm, yes.

JUDGE WALKER: But we'd take cases from Broward, yeah.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Yeah.

JUDGE WALKER: Or took. Yeah, so it was – yeah, that – so that was a nice transition too out of Miami, West Palm is like the half way – you know, it's still south Florida but it's a little – little slower, so...

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So where did you go after clerking at the 4<sup>th</sup> DCA?

JUDGE WALKER: I had a friend – so it's – you know, the clock's ticking, you know, most clerkships are like two years. So all of a sudden the two years flies by –

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Yeah.

JUDGE WALKER: And it's like, oh, I do need a job. And like I said, I wanted to be a trial lawyer so it was all right, where can I get trial experience. So around that time a lot of places were experiencing hiring freezes. A lot of state attorney's offices, especially south Florida and public defender's offices. But I had a friend, Kathleen Shea, I don't know if you know Kathleen.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Yes.

JUDGE WALKER: She was on law review with me at FIU and we were friends outside of school too, still remain very good friends. And I texted her, and was like, hey, I know you're



at the public defender's office up there, are you hiring? And she – in typical Kathleen fashion, OMG, yes, like send me your resume. And did that and I think Eileen Forrester called me the next day and I interviewed a day after that. And then they had offered me the job like that Monday. So it happened pretty quickly.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Had you ever before then thought about living in Orlando?

JUDGE WALKER: No, and it's one of those beautiful things about, you know, plans, even unknown plans kind of coming together. My girlfriend at the time, now my wife, her parents had just retired to Clermont so we weren't engaged or anything at the time but we were serious. She still lived in Miami, I lived in West Palm but we saw each other every weekend and we were doing that kind of thing. And I got the job and it was kind of like, I'm going to Orlando, like, I would love for you to come with me but like I understand like you've – and she's like, no, my parents just retired, it sounds like a great opportunity. So she ended up getting a job at Rollins up here to start off. So we came up here and yeah, I don't think we're leaving.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So how long were you at the public defender's office?

JUDGE WALKER: Just about three years and that was the –

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: It's a great place to get trial experience.

JUDGE WALKER: I loved the job. And I still love that job and the relationships that you form with other public defenders, it's an anal – I don't know if it's a perfect analogy, but it's an analogy I use. You're kind of like the stray dogs of the courthouse. You're kind of like you know, you're a little rough and no one can truly understand like the struggles of that job except other public defenders. And you develop you know, you get asked the question all the time, how do you defend the guilty people? You know all that stuff. And I don't know if there's ever a

satisfactory answer to the lay person, but the public defenders who live and breathe that every single day, a lot of my best friends to this day are still, you know, because those relationships are forged in that environment to where like, no one else can understand what's going on here. So I can confide in you. You can confide in me. We can bounce things off each other, and it was just such a collegial, one of the most collegial places I've ever worked and yeah, I'm very thankful for that experience.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Yeah, thinking back on it, we have a long tradition, going back to the founding of this country to attorneys representing people charged with crimes that are, you know, might be deemed as unpopular.

JUDGE WALKER: Right.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: I think John Adams even volunteered to represent the British soldiers at the Boston Massacre.

JUDGE WALKER: Right. Yeah, no, and that's – that's –

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: I mean he was the President and he was a Patriot.

JUDGE WALKER: Right. Right. And that's the thing – that's one of the things that makes the American judicial system, you know, exceptional is that the innocent until proven guilty and the due process, and all the hurdles, and the burdens, and the – and you know, beyond and to the exclusion of every reasonable doubt is a high burden. And you know, I would have conversations with defendants who, you know, because a lot of times they don't even like you as a public defender because you have bad news a lot of times. And I've had really heart to heart conversations that you know, look I'm the only person in the world that's like on your team right now. So you don't have to like me but I'm trying my best. But that's the way our system is set

up to where they do have an advocate, whether they like it or not. And the public defender's office here and elsewhere, there's some really good attorneys that come in and out of there.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So after being at the PD's office for three years, is that when you went to Bradford Cederberg?

JUDGE WALKER: It is and I wasn't looking to leave the public defender's office. I was – like I said, it was a great job. You know, like any service job, which, you know, I love service jobs. The Bradford Cederberg job is really the only service job I've had – non – you know, only nonservice job I've had since law school. But when you have student loans, you're thinking about starting a family, you know there are some temptations out there that kind of smack you in the face and that's kind of what happened. I was just approached with that opportunity, sat down with Mark and Rutledge over there and they're terrific people. They have a great environment there. It was – the fears of jumping to private practice were not realized. It was a lot like the public defender's office in the sense that it was very collegial.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: And you got to learn the rules of civil procedure.

JUDGE WALKER: And you got to learn the rules of civil procedure and you got to litigate civil cases which in, you know, when taking that job too, that was something I was considering was trying to be a little bit more well rounded. I didn't know if I wanted to be a criminal defense attorney the rest of my life, but I didn't know if I didn't either. The only way to kind of realize that is to jump in and do it. So and yeah, it was – it was a great experience and it was a great opportunity for what's next.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So how long were you at Bradford Cederberg before getting appointed to the bench?

JUDGE WALKER: Yeah, it was – I started in March 2017, so five years, a little over five years which is the longest job I've ever – you know, it's the longest place I've ever been but you know, that was during the COVID years too so it didn't feel like five years. You know, we've got those two like lost years --

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Right.

JUDGE WALKER: -- where it feels like nothing happened. But it was five years. I remember at the end of my time at Bradford Cederberg, I was having a conversation with a colleague there and he was like, yeah, remember back in 2019 we got that order. And I was like, you know, 2019 was three years – it felt like yesterday, you know, so it didn't feel like five years. It flew by, but yeah, it was a little over five years.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Well, that gave you a unique perspective I imagine to be on the county bench because you have both criminal experience and civil experience, and civil experience in the county courts.

JUDGE WALKER: Right. And more – yes, and that's – you know, obviously I tried to highlight that on any application and any interview that you know, it doesn't matter where they put me, I feel like I have experience to kind of hit the ground running. But also managing the different – different personalities of litigators in criminal court versus civil court, you know. In county civil, yeah, small claims and it may not be a lot of money but you know, a lot of these insurance cases, you're dealing with huge law firms with very experienced and well funded, and well buttoned up attorneys. And then you're dealing with the self-represented. And criminal, the same – same thing, you've got you know criminal defense attorneys and you've got self-represented attorneys with completely diff – or parties with completely different stakes too. So

managing not only the dockets but the personalities of the different individuals that appear. I feel like that's the biggest takeaway from doing both.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: When did you decide that you wanted to become a judge?

JUDGE WALKER: Yeah, that's a good question. It's like one of those things that I'm just so like, whatever's right in front of me focused. So back to law school, make good grades, that's all I focused on. Then so on and so forth, get a clerkship. That's all I focused on. So then it became my focus was just like, all right, well, I'm just going to try to be the best litigator I can be. Criminal experience, civil experience and then it kind of, like I said, I've always been kind of drawn to service jobs. So I knew eventually I would end up doing public service. I didn't know what it would be and I kind of took a step – took a step back and looked around and like looked at my experience, my resume and things like that. And thought well, I mean, that could happen down the road obviously is what I was kind of thinking at the time. And had a conversation with a friend, a friend who is an attorney I think on the golf course, and he was like, no, you should totally do it. And I said, you're a friend, you're going to say that. And then, talked to some people who were more colleagues and mentors that aren't as much friends, I can expect the truth from, and the response was so surprising and humbling. The response was essentially, you know, I've been waiting for you to ask me this question. Here's what you need to do and it's like, holy cow, I wish somebody would have told me sooner that there were these conversations going on. But I'm also glad that they didn't because it all led to where we are so I'm very fortunate to have the relationships with you know people that were born and just showing up and doing your job and being kind to other people and just people notice I guess.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Well, you've been on the bench a little bit now. So tell me, what are your first impressions? What surprised you about it?

JUDGE WALKER: You know, so I started, I was doing county civil as a practitioner for the last five or so years so started me in county criminal. And I knew it would be like riding a bike. I just didn't know what kind of condition my bike was going to be in so – and I found it to be in relatively decent shape. And somebody used the metaphor, last week I was talking to someone from a different juris – different county and they said, they had a similar experience and said, isn't criminal kind of like coming home? And I said, yeah, you know, it does kind of feel like that. So I'm happy to be – I guess to answer your question, I'm surprised just how comfortable it is and I think a lot of that has to do with being in a criminal docket. It does kind of feel like coming home a little bit. But yeah, and it's – I mean, it's been two weeks so it hasn't been a long time, but it feels really comfortable, and I'm surprised at how comfortable it feels.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: And you've got some great colleagues down there.

JUDGE WALKER: Yeah, oh, Tina Caraballo has been amazing. She was friends with Rutledge, my old – they were buddies outside of – outside of litigating too before. So Rutledge encouraged me early on to lean on Tina and I was lucky enough to have her paired as my mentor judge. So now, even if she doesn't want me to lean on her, it's her job so...

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: She doesn't have a choice.

JUDGE WALKER: Yeah, exactly. So I'm very fortunate that that worked out that way but – and Judge Bigney and Judge McGinnis, they've all been very helpful in the short time and everyone has reached out to a certain degree. But it's nice to have – yeah, in any job, just colleagues that you can talk to and lean on and bounce stuff of so it's nice.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So what does your future hold? Are you just concentrating on being the best county judge you can be at this point?

JUDGE WALKER: Yeah, I mean, that's pretty much it. The – you know I'm just so – I feel so fortunate and so blessed just to like I said all this kind of took me by surprise as to how much momentum there was. Just by like I said, early on my mom taught me as a kid, she was a Sunday school teacher, so you know, to serve God, and the easiest way to do that is just to serve other people. So with neighbors, start with your family, your neighbors and kind of just work your way out and just try – you know, we have a choice to be kind to other people. That's one of the few things in this world we can control and to work hard. That was what my dad taught me, 90 percent of life is showing up and the other ten percent is like showing up on time so...

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Right. Exactly.

JUDGE WALKER: So show up prepared and be kind to other people and just kind of let the chips fall where they may. And I'm so taken back by just how true that advice was in my circumstance, just to have the people that were advocates for my application and for me to have this job was so surprising and I just feel so fortunate to have this opportunity. Yeah, I mean, so yeah, I'm just so focused on enjoying what kind of just happened. But yeah, and county court, I mean, it's the peoples' court and I enjoy – I'm passionate about people and I'm passionate about serving people so it feels – it feels good to be interacting with people again.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: It just feels right.

JUDGE WALKER: It feels really good.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Well, thank you so much for joining me today and letting us get to know a little bit more about you.

JUDGE WALKER: Yeah, thanks for having me. This was great, so thank you.

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