

OPEN NINTH:
CONVERSATIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM
LABOR DAY SPECIAL: BEFORE THEY WERE JUDGES
EPISODE 56
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HOSTED BY: FREDERICK J. LAUTEN

(Music.)

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

Now here’s your host, Chief Judge Frederick J. Lauten.

>> **CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Hello, and welcome to Open Ninth. I’m here today with a room full of Judges, 10 to be exact, and we’ve come together to celebrate Labor Day by swapping stories of the jobs we did before we were lawyers and judges. The idea for this episode came from a casual conversation I had with a colleague about my days as a waiter.

Before I was a lawyer and before I had any designs on becoming a judge, I waited tables in Washington, DC, as did he. In reality, I think so many of us worked in the restaurant industry during law school that waiting tables might as well been a prerequisite for the Bar; and I don’t mean tending bar. I mean the Bar.

So this got me to thinking, there are 65 Judges in the Ninth Circuit and what jobs were they doing on their way to the law and on their way to the bench.

So here with me today, representing the Judges of the Ninth, are Judges Faye Allen, Alice Blackwell, Mark Blechman, Patricia Doherty, Eric DuBois, Bob Egan, John Kest, Bob LeBlanc, Heather Rodriguez and Diana Tennis. And I want to welcome each one of you and thank you all for joining us today. And let’s just dive right into it.

Heather, I’d like to start with you because I’ve just got to know the story behind that dress.

For our listeners, Judge Rodriguez is here with what looks like a prom dress.

So, Heather, why don’t you introduce yourself to our listeners and tell us your story.

>> **JUDGE RODRIGUEZ:** My name is Heather Pinder Rodriguez, and I'm currently assigned to the Unified Family Division in Osceola County.

Well, I think most people would find it surprising, once they know me, that one of my first jobs in high school was cleaning construction job sites. My father was a local contractor, and I discovered early on that could earn money a lot faster cleaning job sites and not have to give up my Friday nights babysitting.

So on days off from school or during the summer, I would clean those icky areas of a job site that no one wants to clean. And I was motivated to do that so that I could purchase what I have brought to show you today, or at least describe on the podcast, which is my prom dress. So I used all that money that I earned to buy this beautiful royal blue, taffeta, off-the-shoulder, mermaid, double-tiered, high-low prom dress, which now looks completely ridiculous. But at the time it was purchased in the area of big hair and big dresses, it was gorgeous.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** You're right. I would not have imagined you on a construction site, for starters. Though, beyond earning money for that dress, what was your take-away from your time working there?

>> **JUDGE RODRIGUEZ:** What I'm really thankful for is, my father used that opportunity to teach me that I wasn't afraid of hard work. I could spend a full day working out in the heat doing jobs that maybe people wouldn't pick to do. And so as I went through college and law school and my first years as an attorney, and even now, I know that I'm not afraid of working hard because I know there's a reward in it.

And I actually -- and I learned that I wanted a job in the air conditioning, too, so that kept me pretty motivated to study at night when I was younger. And then when I got out of law school, my first job was as a construction attorney at Holland & Knight, because they knew that I

understood the industry, I could relate well to clients. And I ended up becoming a board-certified construction attorney, which is an area of law that you really have to be detail oriented, and you have to be willing to work hard. And so I take those skills that I learned about my willingness and ability to work hard and my ability to pay attention to detail to my work that I do on the bench every day now.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** I'm sure it did. I think there are a handful of us who have had jobs working in the elements,

Faye, during your youth, you worked on the farm. Why don't you introduce yourself to our listeners and tell us a little bit about that.

>> **JUDGE ALLEN:** Faye Allen, and I'm currently assigned in the County Civil Division.

And my first job was age 6 working in the tobacco fields. And after that, I worked in the tomato fields, I worked in pecans, I picked beans. And my final job, before graduating from high school was I worked in the flower nursery.

And so having done all of that, I got to tell you, I truly was an outdoorsy type of kid, and I absolutely loved it. Everybody was, you know, working for a common goal. We all understood that what we were doing was going to provide food and nourishment to households all over the -- at least the state, if not portions of the nation.

And it was something bigger than us. You know, we could all pick one or two tomatoes and take them home and eat them. So -- but we had miles of fields to work in, and we knew this was bigger than us. And sometimes I'd go to the local grocery stores and I'd see the tomatoes and they'll be stamped with that Beefsteak, because I worked for Beefsteak tomatoes, and I'd go, I might have picked that tomato. It would just make me feel so proud.

I believe that one of the things that was instilled in me at a very young age was to work efficiently. When you get up in the morning, before going to that tomato field or going to that flower nursery, one thing is this; is that it's going to start whether you are there or not. And they would fire you if you didn't show up to work for multiple days or were late for multiple days. It's going to start whether you are there or not, so you have to be on time. You don't want to be that person that's lagging or coming up short or coming up behind. So it was instilled in me at a very young age to, you know, just have a strong work ethic and be able to multitask and be able to, you know, get up and share a house with five, six other people with one bathroom and we all need to still get to work on time.

So it teaches you -- it taught me, I think, very good organizational skills, for one. Other things I think is just the belief that everyone really has a story, you know. Now that I'm a judge, people may find it hard to believe that I once worked in fields. If I could title the talk that you and I are going to have today, it would be, how I almost did not go to college. Because I just enjoy being outdoors and working in the fields and being around people who I thought were making an honest living. They may have been poor, but they were happy.

And I learned so much from these people. But I -- it almost was too good for me because I didn't see the downside until I was literally at the door, knocking on the door of going to college, graduating from high school, before it hit me like a two-ton truck; hey, you can't do this for the rest of your life; you need to take your decent grades and you need to go to college and become an attorney and get a career.

>>**JUDGE LAUTEN:** Well, that's a great story, and everybody has a story. And so it's interesting to learn about each other's histories. For instance, you know, many of us started working at a young age.

Mark, I think you mentioned you started working around 12. That's pretty young. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

>> **JUDGE BLECHMAN:** Yes. My name is Mark Blechman, and I'm currently assigned to the Domestic Relations Family Court.

My first official job was as a paperboy. I was 12 years old and I was in Miami -- North Miami, Florida. And I wanted money and my parents weren't wealthy, and I realized a way to get money was to work. And as a 12-year-old, there aren't very many jobs that you can get.

But I found a job as a paperboy. I started with a small route of 35 papers and worked up to about 150 different paper -- different houses to deliver papers to.

What was interesting, and I didn't realize it until I was preparing for this session this afternoon, is as a 12-year-old kid, I'm learning to run a business. Because the houses were houses that I was responsible for to deliver, I would go and collect the money every other week and keep track of that, it was my responsibility to build the route by going out once a week and trying to recruit new households for the Miami News. So it was actually a wonderful experience for a 12-year-old to run a business.

It was also wonderful because I dealt with very different people of different variant ages. I wasn't hanging around 12-year-olds; I was working with mature adults who were working in the newspaper business. So it was a great opportunity for a youngster to learn the real world, if you will.

We had papers delivered by this huge truck every afternoon; it was an afternoon paper. And they would deliver about 500 papers to my house, much to parents chagrin, and all the paperboys would come and we would all fold our papers and rubber-band them, unless it was going to rain, and then we would bag them.

And the guy that delivered was this -- we thought he was an older guy; he could have been 30 for all I know. But this guy came every day, and he was the happiest, funnest guy, and we all loved him, and he treated us like coworkers, even though we were just goofy kids.

And I remember Christmastime was coming around and we wanted to buy him a gift, and we didn't really know what to get him. And so we all got together and we chipped in money and I went to the store and I bought a couple of six-packs of Schlitz Malt Liquor beer. They sold it to a 12-year-old back then. And he drove up and we gave him the beer and he was crying; he was so happy and touched by it. And thinking back, I wonder if he was drinking it while he was driving for the rest of the route. I have a liability, I have.

But it was a wonderful experience. And I remember -- if the gentleman is still alive, and he may not be, but I'm sure he always told that story. And it was a wonderful experience for me.

Once I felt I was too old to be a paperboy, I delved into the restaurant business and I started as a busboy in different restaurants. And then I started at this sub restaurant where they made hot and cold subs called Lemon Tree in North Miami Beach, and I started as a dishwasher. And then when I was 16, they let me become a delivery driver. And back then, they gave you a car. Foolish people.

So I was a delivery driver until I became a cook, and then a manager. And in the three years I worked there, from age 15 to 18, I did every job in the restaurant.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** So, Eric, I know you have experience in the food service industry as a manager, as I understand it. So let me know if I'm correct about that. Please introduce yourself to our listeners and tell us about your time at Haagen-Dazs.

>> **JUDGE DUBOIS:** Sure. I'm Eric DuBois. I'm a County Judge here in Orange County, serving in the Civil Division. I've been there since January of 2017.

When I was a senior in high school, and throughout junior college, I was the assistant manager and manager of two Haagen-Dazs restaurants -- or ice cream stores in the Sawgrass Mills mall down in Fort Lauderdale.

By square foot, they were the number one and number two stores worldwide for volume, for Haagen-Dazs. So you can imagine during Thanksgiving and Christmas how chaotic that mall was. We would have people three or four deep waiting for a \$3.00 ice cream cone.

And managing those stores and running those stores was fun. But, you know, you would get 200, 300 tubs of ice cream delivered two or three times a week at, like, 3:00 in the morning. And then the fun -- the most fun part was, since we were two venues in the same mall, if we had one store that was short on one flavor, we would get a police escort around the mall to move ice cream from one food court to the other food court.

The best perk was, if the quality control wasn't good enough, Haagen-Dazs wouldn't allow us to serve the ice cream, and then we would get to take it home or throw it away, was what we were supposed to do, but we always thought charity started at the home so take it home and dispose of it. You know, if vanilla chip didn't have enough chips, it was just a tub of vanilla ice cream and the employees, who were all college kids or high school kids, were pretty happy to take home a tub of vanilla ice cream.

It was very stressful, because of the amount of volume. I mean, we would do a ton of ice cream. And, you know, sometimes at night you'd have to defrost the coolers and all that, and we'd get into creamer wars or hose each other down with a hose instead of hosing down the ice cream dipping cabinet or something like that, or lock people in the freezer, you know, for a couple minutes just to -- you know, when they were going to get ice cream, just put something in

front of it and hear them banging on the wall. But nothing too harsh, but just to have fun and, you know, kind of lighten the mood with all the stress and give people a break.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** You know, it's interesting to me that there are these industries, food service in particular, that, for the customer, are mostly associated with fun or relaxation. But for the worker, there is the same stress that is found in almost all jobs. I'm sure no one goes into any ice cream shop and thinks about its potential as a high-stress job.

The Army Infantry, however, that's a different matter. That's clearly high stakes, high stress, as I'm sure Judge Egan can attest.

So, Bob, why don't you introduce yourself to our listeners and tell us about your time qualifying for the Army Infantry.

>> **JUDGE EGAN:** My name is Bob Egan, and I'm currently at Juvenile Delinquency.

It's a bit of a culture shock when you arrive and are greeted by drill sergeants, but the thing I had the most trouble with was shooting -- qualifying with an M16 rifle, which is -- when you break it all down, it is the single most important thing a soldier can do. And if you cannot shoot, you're going to get more grief from these drill sergeants.

You have practice qualifications, and at the time -- I don't know if it's changed, but at the time, when you qualified, you had live ammunition and you went to a firing range and they would -- you'd shoot at targets downrange with live ammunition, and the targets would range from -- anywhere from 50 meters away to 300 meters away. And sometimes one at a time would pop up, pop down; sometimes two at a time. And you would get 40 of these targets and you would need to be -- you would have to hit 23 of them.

So during basic training, after you met your weapon and you zeroed it to your sight, learned how to shoot it, we would practice on live -- with live rounds on firing ranges, dozens

and dozens and dozens of practice -- 40 targets practice. I never, ever came close to qualifying in the practice rounds. And you would need to hit a minimum of 23 out of 40 targets. I couldn't do it.

I mean, everybody knew I couldn't shoot this thing, and the night before we were going to qualify for real, I couldn't sleep, I just -- I don't know what I'm going to do because there's no way I'm going to be -- to do this. And we -- they drove us the next morning to where the range was -- and I've never seen this before, because at a military base, certainly at that time during basic training, you know, no tobacco products allowed whatsoever. And these drill sergeants, these guys who -- if I used their language, this would certainly need to be R-rated at best, but they gathered my platoon together, and this guy who had it out for me, he says, men, I'm only going to tell you this one time; he says, but I'm going to turn around and walk away and you can smoke 'em if you got 'em. And he walked away.

And I was amazed, because, like, half these guys -- I got a platoon about 50 guys in it -- pull out cigarettes and started smoking them. Where did you guys get these things? But that's what -- he wanted to do anything to calm everybody down so they would, you know, shoot well and he could win whatever bet he had with the other drill sergeants.

So I get on line there, and you have two magazines with 20 rounds each. And the person in charge of the range, over the intercom, tells everybody to lock and load, and you do that, and then you take aim and the targets start flying up at you. And bam, bam, bam, you're just shooting. And then after you shoot 20 rounds, you pop out the empty magazine, you stick in another one, targets keep popping up, and then they yell cease-fire.

And I'm not keeping track. There's a spotter behind each soldier who's counting what targets you hit. And so I finished, and it's dead silent at that point, and I turned around and the

guy told me -- and this drill sergeant, my archenemy, is walking down the line asking each of my fellow recruits, how'd you do, how'd you do, how'd you do. I passed, Drill Sergeant, passed -- hit 39 of 40, 40 out of -- whatever it was. He gets up to me, he doesn't even ask. He just looks at me and says, well. And I said, 23 out of 40. I passed, barely. So the only time I ever fired this thing straight -- this gun, was on the day that it matters.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** So at the 11th hour you shoot this thing, and all the training that you feared wasn't taking hold, turns out that some of it actually did take hold, and that those skills mattered.

Well, I'd like to explore that idea a little bit further and think about those first few jobs and the role they play in your work on the bench.

So let me start with Patricia Doherty. I can see you nodding over there. So, Patricia, why don't you tell us your story.

>> **JUDGE DOHERTY:** My name is Patricia Doherty, and currently I'm assigned to the Circuit Court; I'm a Circuit Court Judge and I'm assigned to the Domestic Division.

So the first one that comes to mind is -- my undergraduate degree was in physical therapy, so that was my first career. And I worked as a physical therapist then to support myself for a little while before I decided to go to law school. Having the ability to read medical records, to understand medical terms, that has helped me in both -- previously, I was assigned to the Civil Division. I presided over a lot of medical trials. And now in the Domestic Division, a lot of times there are medical records, medical issues, medical witnesses, so it's given me a really good insight and education.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** So that's fascinating. So you were in the medical field before the law. Tell us a little bit about the work that you did and the jobs that you had.

>> **JUDGE DOHERTY:** When I was working in a hospital setting -- and you have to keep in mind, this is in the 70s, so I was about -- I was young. I was a young girl/woman of about 21. And in this hospital setting they had a beautiful therapy department. And our director was a very muscular, well-built man. And one of my responsibilities was, at lunchtime each day, to measure his biceps.

So I would stand up on this little stool to reach his bicep, I would have to run the tape around, call it out for his record, and he would make a note on it to see if his workout during the lunch hour -- so after doing this for about six months to a year, I was talking to my best friend, and she had a similar experience where she was working. And we both decided maybe there was another career where we could use our education and still make a difference.

She applied to med school and is now a physician. I applied to law school and went into the practice of law and specialized in medical law.

So the other thing that happened that was kind of interesting was, while I was in therapy -- I did home health therapy, and this is helpful because it really reminds you that our society has people that have a lot of resources and a lot of people that don't have a lot of resources. And I was assigned to the Immokalee district, and I would drive my little Corolla, which was on its last legs, out to the migrant farm camps. The people were just wonderful.

But one time I was driving out there and I get surrounded by about four police cars, and they pull me over. Here I am in my little white suit with my physical therapy patch, again, about 22 years old, and they pull me out of the car -- not physically. But I get out of the car, I have all my walkers and crutches in the back, and they surround me until they figured out my car wasn't the reported stolen car.

So that coupled with my experience with the people there, I said, well, going to law school, it's a way I can help people of all different levels of society with different resources, bring that experience and maybe find something that was a little more challenging.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** John, I know you have a medical background as well. Why don't you tell us about your jobs and also if you found your time in the medical industry useful as a lawyer or a judge.

>> **JUDGE KEST:** My name is John Marshall Kest. Presently assigned to the Circuit Court Criminal Division, Felony Division.

Before I became a judge, obviously -- I was an attorney for 30 years, but before that, while I was in high school and in college, I worked as both an operating room scrub nurse and assistant to a pathologist doing autopsies. And to say the least, they all had very interesting and rather unusual situations involved with them.

As an operating room scrub technician, we would assist the doctors doing the surgery and actually be at the table handing them instruments and sometimes holding items. There was one occasion -- we were on call 24 hours a day, so we would be called at 2:00, 3:00, 4:00, 5 o'clock in the morning.

There was one time, 3 o'clock in the morning, we came in; an individual had been brought in with a ruptured aorta. We had an emergency situation to try and deal with, and as we were getting the patient settled on the table, this gentleman opened his eyes and looked at him [sic] and said, hello, John. He was a doctor friend of my father's. And he was literally on life support at that time. So a very unusual situation in that.

On the pathology standpoint, we would do autopsies. The place I lived is a place called Poughkeepsie, New York; it's right on the Hudson River. And while autopsies, in and of

themselves, are rather difficult, we had an occasion to do several autopsies of people who had been floating in the Hudson River for several weeks at a time. To say it was unpleasant is probably an understatement.

From the autopsies we did, I've learned that you have to be conscious of details. You have to be very careful about all of the aspects, all of the findings that we would make on autopsies to determine cause of death, and sometimes the cause of the cause of death.

We hear about that in criminal cases a lot now in autopsies, but when I was learning it, it taught me to pay attention to even the minor details of any type of law in which you're practicing, whether it's family, civil, criminal or any other aspect.

Ironically, from the surgical aspect of it, I learned a lot of medicine and a lot of surgical things and developed some expertise. But ironically, the thing that I brought with me to the bench that was most helpful is when you're doing those surgeries, they're always high pressure. It is literally life or death. And the tension in the room is really very difficult. So what we had to do in the operating room, we would joke around a little bit to bring the tension down.

And I have been able to bring that to the courtroom. Because sometimes, in death penalty cases, in civil cases that are highly emotional, sometimes in family law cases which I don't do, getting the tension down in the courtroom is extremely important. It's for the safety of everybody in the courtroom, it makes it easier for the deputies, and it makes things to flow a lot smoother.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Diana, I can tell that you're dying to jump in here. So why don't you introduce yourself to our listeners and then tell us your story.

>> **JUDGE TENNIS:** My name is Diana Tennis. I'm a Circuit Court Judge. I was elected just four years ago, and I am currently in a Family Division.

So it's a great question to ask everybody what their first jobs gave them life-lesson-wise, because I think all of jobs gave us life lessons. And waiting tables for me -- well, number one, I'm the best tipper ever. And I totally understand how that whole room works and what's whose fault and what is not whose fault.

And so I think that what I carry with me into the courtroom is to not jump to assumptions about who maybe is at fault for things. And also just to be more generous with people and forgiving, and not getting so uptight about the small things. If you give people a little bit of a break -- because not everybody is going to be perfect in every minute, just like I wasn't perfect in every minute -- then I think that you just get a lot more cooperation out of people. And ultimately I'm a problem-solver in the courtroom, and the more cooperation I have from everybody who's there, the better solution I come up with. So I try to give people a break.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Okay. So you were a waitress. How did that work out for you?

>> **JUDGE TENNIS:** I don't know how I kept any of those jobs, to be honest with you, because I was so horrible. I was the worst waitress ever. If there was an order to get wrong, I got it wrong. If there was a pizza to spill on people -- I spilled at least four or five pizzas on people.

I worked at one place in Gainesville where they had these huge goblets with these gorgeous punchy, boozy drinks, and I spilled so many of those that the barback literally told me, Diana, I will carry the drinks to your table for you.

So I worked in food service -- I have some very, very fond memories and great friends that I made there, but I was really the worst. I was just the worst.

So something that stands out to me was -- it's a little embarrassing, honestly. I'll tell you, when I finished law school, I didn't yet have a job, and I was interviewing with different places

and I was really hopeful, since I graduated with honors from Florida, that I'd get a job really soon. But I didn't have a choice; I really needed to make some money, so I went back to waiting tables when I thought I would never, ever again have to do it. And I went back to this great restaurant who took me back in Gainesville, and I plugged along for all of maybe three weeks before I got the call that I had a job in Orlando, in law, being a lawyer, and I was so excited.

But having gone back to waiting tables, just for that little period, I swear, it's demented me, because that is the recurrent dream I have. The recurrent dream I have, when I forgot to take the math class in high school and they figure it out and they take away my law degree. The only reason any of that is a nightmare is because I had to go back to waiting tables. So that will stick with me forever. I still have that dream, like, once a month.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** So, Bob, you waited tables quite a while. What was your experience?

>> **JUDGE LEBLANC:** My name is Bob LeBlanc. I've been on the Circuit bench for 12 years, and I'm currently assigned to Circuit Civil.

For eight years before law school, I waited tables and bartended. And I think, just on a huge level, it tremendously helped my people skills, it helped me understand people from all sorts of walks of life.

And when I first moved to Boston, I was a room service attendant at the Ritz-Carlton hotel. And I got to meet George and Barbara Bush, I got to meet Henny Youngman. I don't know if you know who John Kenneth Galbraith is, but he was a famous economist who taught at Harvard. He came to the Ritz bar three days a week and had lunch, and so I got to serve him the same thing all the time; chicken salad and a Bullshot. If you don't know what a Bullshot is, it

was created by the Ritz and it's basically a Bloody Mary made with beef consommé instead of tomato juice.

And then one lesson I learned while working there is, I was called to serve -- this was 1980 or 81, and Bette Davis was staying in Boston for something; I'm sure what. But she would call room service and order a scotch and soda. And I might deliver three or four over the course of the evening, but she never ordered a bottle. She wanted one at a time delivered, and she would hold onto you and talk to you until finally you had to say, Ms. Davis, I'm sorry, I have to serve someone else. And to me it was a lesson in seeing someone with money and fame living quite a lonely life. I never forgot it. It was interesting.

I think that if you are handling people -- I hate to use that word, but that's what comes to mind. If you're handling people on a day-to-day basis, all of those jobs helped me communicate better with them, making myself clearer, getting my point across, and letting them know that I am listening to them and that I'm not forcing them to listen to me; that I'm including them as part of my dialogue with myself when I'm making decisions.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** So, Alice Blackwell, I don't think we've heard from you yet. Do you want to introduce yourself and share your thoughts with our listeners?

>> **JUDGE BLACKWELL:** I'm Alice Blackwell, and I'm currently assigned to the Domestic Violence Division of Family Court.

Well, I think when you're starting out in your first couple of jobs, that one of the best things to know is that no job is beneath you and that there's dignity in all work. And so doing -- you know, if you're flipping burgers, do the very best you can. Because learning how to put your whole heart into what you do, learning how to see the dignity in all work will set you up for doing great things down the road.

Part of what I learned working in a small town country church was just the beauty and value of regular, normal, everyday people. They were such wonderful, loving people and were so grateful for what I did for them at the church. And we had the church suppers where everybody brought potluck meals, and they were just wonderful people.

And I think for me, as a Judge, when we deal with so many people's lives, it's just important to remember how good so many people are.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** And what was your job at that church?

>> **JUDGE BLACKWELL:** Well, my first job -- my first paid job was to work as a church organist at a little, tiny church up in the mountains of South Carolina where I was raised. And when I was 15 and got my driver's license and a car, it was a pickup truck that my family let me use, I would drive up to the church on Sundays and Wednesdays and be their church organist.

One of the most memorable things that happened was -- happened on a Sunday morning at a Sunday service. Now, you have to understand the church. It was an old country church, no air conditioning. It was the summer, it was hot, so all the windows are open and the church is open-air, and all the ladies are sitting there with the funeral home fans, fanning themselves. And we had a very sweet man from the choir who wanted to sing a solo for the offertory. And so he was singing his solo and I was accompanying him. It was very -- he sang very heartfelt and very passionately was singing this song, and as I was playing for him, I could hear some buzzing. And I looked up and there was a wasp buzzing around me.

And so I kept playing because I couldn't stop because he was singing and he had his whole heart in it. And all of a sudden the wasp landed on me and stung me. So I started crying. I just had tears running down my cheeks but I kept playing, and we finished the song. And the service went on, and we ended the service. And at the end of the service the -- several of the old

ladies came up to me and they said, oh, Honey, you were so into that song and you were -- we felt it so much from your heart, we just appreciated you so much. So I never had the heart to tell them, no, I really just got stung by the wasp.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Okay, Alice, that's true dedication.

But before we wrap this up, to the group, do any of you have any advice you wish to share with our listeners and young workers?

John, let me start with you; the mic's yours.

>> **JUDGE KEST:** No job is ever wasted. You will always take something from -- you are a combination of all of your experiences. And the most menial job you do, whether it's out ditch digging, whether it's fixing a plumbing pipe that is broken on some type of a job, that expertise will at some point in later life come and assist you in your practice of law, if you're going to be a lawyer or if you're going to be a judge. All of that accumulated together gives you a better overall insight into the way the world works and the way life is.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Great. That's great.

Bob, anything you want to add?

>> **JUDGE LEBLANC:** My very first job after college was washing dishes. I needed a job and I knew if I washed dishes for a short time, eventually I would elevate to busboy or waiter. And so don't be ashamed to do anything. When you have to pay your rent, do what you have to do.

I had a college degree and I washed dishes for five months until a waiter position opened up, and I wasn't ashamed of it at all. I was very happy and proud to be able to pay my rent. So don't be ashamed of doing anything. It won't last forever.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** All right. Anybody else want to add to their thoughts?

Eric, why don't you go ahead.

>> **JUDGE DUBOIS:** Just to remember where your roots -- remember where you came from. Stay humble. You're not too good for any type of job. Any job is a job, and sometimes you've got to start at the bottom and work your way up. And, you know, it doesn't matter if you're scooping ice cream, if you're, you know, cleaning windows or, you know, cleaning an office building, it's a job and on your resume it looks great and it provides you the ability to then move up and advance in the company or move to something better.

If you would have told me back in 1989 that I would be sitting here as a County Judge in 2018, I would have thought you were crazy. But, you know, it was those skills that I learned then and taught me the work ethic that I needed to get through college, to get through junior college, to get through law school, and to serve the community.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** I think we have time for one last comment.

Heather, you kind of kicked us off. How about you close us out. What parting thoughts do you want to share with young workers today?

>> **JUDGE RODRIGUEZ:** I would give them two pieces of advice. First of all, you can do anything in this life if you're willing to work hard, and never be afraid of working hard. And number two, no matter what you're doing, whether you're a judge serving the community or whether you're doing what I did, which is cleaning toilets and icky areas, if your name's associated with it, always do your best, because it matters.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Heather, that's a great point to end on.

It does matter. And not just for one's own personal growth and career path, it also matters really on a much larger scale. Whatever your job, construction worker or architect,

janitor, teacher, waiter, judge, the success of our communities and our country is built off of your hard work and effort. What we do and how we do it does indeed matter.

Let me thank all of you for joining me today and sharing your stories and your experiences, and helping us celebrate Labor Day as it was originally intended to be celebrated, honoring the achievements of the American worker.

So Happy Labor Day, everyone, and thanks to all of my colleagues for joining us today.

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(Music.)