

OPEN NINTH:  
CONVERSATIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM  
A REPORTER'S PERSPECTIVE  
EPISODE 14  
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HOSTED BY: FREDERICK J. LAUTEN

(Music.)

>> Welcome to Episode 14 of "Open Ninth: Conversations Beyond the Courtroom" in the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida.

And now here's your host, Chief Judge Frederick J. Lauten.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Well, we're very fortunate to have Kerry Sanders as our guest today. Kerry is a national correspondent for NBC News. He's based out of Miami. He works predominantly out of the Miami bureau. But is -- he contributes regularly to *NBC Nightly News*, to the *Today Show*, to MSNBC, *Dateline*. Kerry's worked as a general news reporter for a number of stations in Florida. He's a graduate of University of South Florida.

Kerry, we're delighted to have you here, especially today. Thank you so much for being here.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** And a surprise, I graduated Oak Ridge High School, right here in Orlando.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** You're kidding me. Oh, no. I didn't know that. I'm a Bishop Moore High School grad. Oak Ridge High School grad, that's fabulous.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Only lived here nine months, but this is where I graduated high school.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** That's amazing. Well, why

journalism? Why did you become a journalist? Let's start there.

**>> KERRY SANDERS:** I think it just boiled down to I was the person who always kind of got on my hands and knees when there was a crowd and crawled through to see what was going on and always kind of had my nose where it didn't belong. And it was just kind of like some people had curiosity all the time. Some people have curiosity, and the older they get, it just kind of wanes. I still have that curiosity.

And so when I was at college, it was really kind of liberal arts degree. But I just kept thinking, it would be interesting. I could go to places and see things and ask questions.

I mean, you're a Chief Judge. The average person will not come up to you and say, I got a question for you. But as a reporter, that's my job --

**>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** That's right.

**>> KERRY SANDERS:** -- you know? It's kind of fun. I can ask you a question -- I could even ask you a question that's uncomfortable because it comes with my territory, where other people would be fearful.

And so whether it is talking to somebody on the street or talking to the President of the United States, I really love that opportunity.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Fabulous.

How about -- did you have any specific training? You clearly have a journalist voice and a correspondent's voice. Were you in theater?

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Yes, I was. As a young child, I was originally from the Boston area, and I would -- my mother was a gymnastics coach for the Olympic team, as well as a ballet instructor. And so she was a gymnastics coach for the U.S. Olympic team that was going to the Moscow Olympics, which you may remember --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Never happened.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** -- never happened. So my mother had her Olympics stolen from her.

But we -- my older brother and younger sister, we were thrust into my mother's world. So I was in ballet classes because she was the ballet instructor. I danced in the Boston Ballet Company.

We were interested in, you know, kind of like community theater. I played in the "Music Man." I played -- I can't remember his name. He had a lisp. I got a chance to do all of those kind of acting things.

But, you know, the thing about television journalism versus how I started in radio and

newspapers is -- I don't want to say we're actors, but there is a component where you're on camera. So having the opportunity to have spent some time in front of people and understanding that if you're going to look at somebody in a special way, like I did to you just now, even though we're on radio --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** -- so you've had that experience in -- in acting classes. And again, we're not faking it, but you're aware of it when you're a journalist.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Well, I went to Rollins. Rollins has a pretty significant theater.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Yes.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** I majored in history. I was in about six plays. I think maybe the training I learned on stage helped me more as a trial lawyer than anything else. So I understand presentation and vocal variation and how important it is to communicate to others. And you certainly do too.

How about any particularly -- any particular journalists that influenced you early in your career?

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Yes. Some that you know and some that you don't.

Ted Koppel because he taught me -- just as a

viewer, he taught me that -- and this was -- I was in college when we had the Iran --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Watergate?

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** No. The taking --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** The Iran hostage crisis --

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Yeah. And so that started out as a 15-minute newscast at 10:00 or 11:00 at night. Something like that. Whatever time it was, it was late.

And so here was this guy that didn't look like a TV reporter. He had funny red hair and kind of Alfred Newman-y looks, but what I learned by just watching him is that he did something that a lot of journalists to this day still don't do, he listened. He would ask questions, but then he would listen to the answers that would lead him to the next place. So, clearly, an influence on me just watching him.

Bob Costas, who, while not a traditional news journalist, is probably one of the best back-and-forth explaining things. And I'm not a sports guy. I listen to him. I understand what's going on. He takes complicated stuff and makes it easy, and he's just very easy.

And then probably the best interviewer in television, probably in my lifetime, will be Matt

Lauer.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Really?

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** And I listen to Matt Lauer because Matt Lauer takes very complicated subjects, and sometimes they're not only complicated and offensive, but he has to bring them into an audience at a certain time in the morning and he has to ask the hard question, but he can't be a jerk about it. And he does an amazing job with everybody that he brings.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Is he kind of like an elite athlete, where it's a very difficult skill set, but he makes it look so easy --

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Yes.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** -- that it looks easy?

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Exactly. That's a great analogy.

And then there's one person who had a tremendous influence on me, and somebody that most people would not know, but Jim Bennett was my news director at the very first full-time TV reporting job I had. I had worked in Jacksonville. But my first full-time reporting TV job was in Fort Myers, Florida. And Jim Bennett was the news director of the CBS news station there, which is WINK, W-I-N-K. Kind of a cute name because it's CBS and the eye is CBS. WINK-TV.

But Jim Bennett had been a war correspondent in Vietnam for both NBC and ABC. And somebody at the -- I think it was at the University of California did a study on which reporter actually filed more reports from Vietnam than any other TV reporter, and it turned out it was Jim Bennett.

So he had seen it all and done it all and -- as a young, 22-year-old reporter working in his newsroom, um, he would teach me things that just were natural to him because he was a reporter. He wasn't a professor. He was a reporter. And would teach us one -- one of the best things he ever taught us -- and I still think this works for young journalists -- it is really easy if I'm a reporter and doing a story about the court system. The very first thing I'm going to do is (knocking sound). I'm going to go, can I come to an interview with you? You're the Chief Judge. You're in charge. I should talk to you.

What he had us do for a month -- and this was quite a challenge. You can talk to all the officials you want, but not on camera. I want your stories to be told without talking to any officials on camera. And it's really interesting because it opens your eyes to all the people around.

Maybe I should talk to you about how the court

system works, but maybe the best interview is the bailiff who's worked in your courtroom for 10, 15 years.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** They have some stories.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** And that's the stories. It was -- Jim Bennett was an amazing teacher. Unfortunately, he passed away, but really one of the strongest influences in what I do today.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** When you start off in your career, is the ultimate goal to be a national reporter? Is it a natural progression? Is it like making it to the major leagues in sports? What's that pathway like?

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Yes, I can tell you -- getting there, it's hard work. You have to have all the tools in your tool chest. But at the end of the day, you're lucky because you don't apply for the job, you're called upon.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** And when you look at, for instance, NBC and the number of reporters that we have -- not the anchors who report in the field, but just the purely based on reporters in the field running around, there are certainly more players in the NBA than there are at ABC, NBC, and CBS doing

reporting. We're a very small group of people. Then you throw in the anchors. Again, I'm not mentioning cable TV and CNN and MSNBC. But the number of us doing this is -- is tiny.

And how it sort of happens, yes, it was my goal. I wanted to do this.

In fact, what I really wanted to do -- because Jim Bennett had been a war correspondent, I wanted to be a war correspondent. And so that was what was my goal was.

I got a chance to go to several conflicts around the world. And now at 56 years old, I can tell you I've seen enough, and I'm not interested in covering war, in part because after you've been to many locations, you begin to understand that the people who are harmed the most by war, even when they're perfectly important goals, are the most innocent people. And sometimes it's kids. Sometimes it's families. Sometimes it's just really hard to stomach.

**>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** Are those the most difficult stories you've had to cover is victims in war zones?

**>> KERRY SANDERS:** Yeah. And not even just war zones. I mean, you know, I hate to say it, but in certain parts of our country, it can be very similar to a war zone. You hear reporters say, oh my God,

it's so bad, it looks like a war zone. And I kind of chuckle to myself. You've never even been to a war zone. But I have been to a war zone, and I can tell you at certain places that I've been to in the United States where we have had violence, and it's at 360 degrees around you and there are people who are injured or shot or seriously wounded -- or worse, dead, it is like a war zone. It's just not as, um, sustained.

War zones are sustained. You lose weight. You're nervous. You never sleep. Food is a rare commodity. It's hard in a war zone to live.

**>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** Well, if you would, tell our listeners some of the combat areas you've been to. You mentioned you've been to several.

**>> KERRY SANDERS:** Okay. Well, first probably -- first, I can do it kind of in a linear way. I started out and was sent to, um -- what did we call it? It was in Panama when we were taking Noriega out. I can't remember the name of that operation. But I got a chance to go down there, and I was really young and just sort of learning about this.

In some of the more aggressive conflict spots that I've been to is in Haiti for quite a bit of time. First of all, when there was a civil war there. And

then when the United States sent in troops to try to see whether we could help that country out. Sadly, that country's economic mess is -- and natural disasters and everything else has just made it horrible.

Spent time in Kosovo, in Belgrade, in Iraq, in Afghanistan. Spent time in -- in Qatar, in parts of the Middle East, sometimes tangential. So I'm in first Gulf War in Saudi Arabia up in Kuwait. So, yeah, I've bounced around to a variety of locations.

**>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** For journalists who are embedded, which I think is, you know, a term that's somewhat recent to --

**>> KERRY SANDERS:** Yeah. Sure.

**>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** Any -- do you think that they're afforded any special protection from either of the combatants or are they just out there?

**>> KERRY SANDERS:** Nope. I can tell you because I was there. When we decided in this most recent Gulf War, not the Schwarzkopf war, but the one in many ways we're still involved in because we're directing with our advisors. I was in -- in the desert, basically, with the marines, and we hadn't actually launched into Iraq.

And they were from the Pentagon picking

reporters, and you'll be embedded. And you'll be embedded here. I wasn't embedded here.

It was, quite frankly, a very political process that took place back in the United States. I'm not a New York-based correspondent. I'm not a Washington-based correspondent. And I just wasn't in the little circle. But I was out there with the marines and we're -- it's three weeks with them, waiting to see if there's a green light, and I'm called back.

And I went back out and I went to the lieutenant colonel, and I said, you know, this is my experience from other wars. It's complete chaos. Nobody knows what's going on. Why don't I just do a fake embed with you? Who's gonna know the difference? I'll be traveling with you. Nobody's ever gonna get on a sheet of paper and go, Kerry Sanders, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines, I don't remember doing this.

And he said, so you're trying to cut a drug deal with me? And I'm like, huh? He's like, that's a military term and we're cutting a drug deal. I'm like, I'll take it.

So the only requirement that I had was for -- this thing was all worked out. He was great with it. Lt. Col. Royal Mortenson, great guy. He said, just

for your own safety, you have to have the anthrax shot. Because we didn't know whether there was gonna be anthrax, and he didn't want that responsibility.

Well, that meant at one point all the reporters, cameramen, technicians, had to go in this long line and everybody went in and you got the anthrax shot.

Well, I wasn't on the list. How am I gonna get the anthrax shot? So I stood there. And when it came time for me, they go, you know, name and where you from? And I go, Kerry Sanders, NBC News. They go, who are you embedded with? It's the oldest joke in the world, if I told you I'd have to kill you.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** (Laughing.)

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** So I said, if I told you I'd have to kill you, and it was a woman there --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Stick your arm out.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** And she's like, oh. Special Forces. We can't put that on here. She thought I was going into the Special Forces. And who am I to correct her? So I got my anthrax shot, and I was embedded.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Oh, my gosh. That's crazy.

Let's talk a little bit about coverage of crime. What's your experience covering crime stories and do you think it's changed in -- in your -- over your

lifetime in broadcasting?

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Yeah, it has. We -- when I started working in local TV, which is 1983, um, and I would arrive at a crime scene, I could walk right up to the crime scene. I could walk around the crime scene. There was no yellow tape. I know that detective. He knows me. We've seen each other. Let's go here.

For the court system, um -- and it holds still true today, but back then, the judges would say, oh, there's six TV stations that want to be here. Okay. All six cameras over there. You could, as the judge, say, okay, I'll let six TV cameras in there. Now it's just one camera and we all pool it.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** There was a little bit of chaos. We were sometimes in the way. We were friends with detectives in ways that, you know -- I don't want to say blurred the line, but there was a much more, hey, you're part of this, come along.

I can give you a -- something that would probably shock people. At the Florida State Prison, there was a time where we were allowed to walk in and we walked down death row, and you could stop and look right through the bars, talk to anybody you want, and then

you go into the death chamber. And if you wanted to, you could sit in Old Sparky. You could walk around. Television cameras everywhere. It was a very different world.

I don't think -- the last time I went to Starke, where the prison is, just getting a camera into the building was an act of congress. I mean, it's that -- so have things changed? Yes.

Reporters, at one time, would stand -- and I hopefully was not one of these, because it's kind of a little absurd, especially in 2016. But reporters would stand and reach down and touch the crime scene and say, it's right here, see that? And point at the bloodstain and stuff like that.

Today, there's forensics. Today there's a respect for what's being done. We're not going to show -- even if we haven't -- let's say I am there before the detectives, and the dead body's in the street and we get the camera out, we are shooting it. We are not going to air that. We're not going to offend people at home with pictures like that.

When the detectives come and they put the white blanket over or the sheet or whatever, thank you. We want that because it's a symbol that tells people there's something horrific that happened here.

Somebody's dead. But we don't want to violate somebody's -- somebody's last moments and their family.

So, yeah, I think things have changed. I think things have changed, and I would say for the better.

**>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** It sounds like just -- almost an evolving standard of decency or sensitivity. Is that --

**>> KERRY SANDERS:** I think it's a recognition -- first of all, it's overwhelming now. The media is everywhere. We got social media. We have -- let me think of how many TV stations are in Orlando, between ABC, NBC, the CBS, the FOX, the independent stations, the -- Telemundo. I think there's a Univision here. And then you've got cable, which is a 24-hour cable station. When you start adding all of that up, it can be sort of overwhelming. And to some extent, it sort of blurs the line of, you know, all of it. But I think people want to be respectful.

**>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** And then you have social media where just regular citizens, not trained journalists, carry around a device where they can take pictures and videos of events before anybody arrives, maybe, and then post them.

**>> KERRY SANDERS:** That's not a bad thing. I do

mind how we decide to use it. So it's out there and somebody got it. Great. And they put it on their Facebook page. They put it on Twitter or Snapchat, whatever they decide to do.

The real challenge we have is finding out -- first of all, is it what it purports to be --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Interesting.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** -- you know? There are people who will put up videos of something that happened somewhere else and say it happened here. And then, you know, if you're too quick and you're too fast and, you know -- it changes the complexion of the story.

We've seen this happen in places around the country where a video of -- for instance, a law enforcement officer engaged with a civilian where something seemingly didn't work out and somebody was injured, somebody was shot. And if we play the video without the understanding and the context of what we're doing, we could actually be causing a problem rather than reporting the situation, which are two different things.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right. That's interesting.

So what kind of pressures must you be under to meet deadline? And is it more important to get it right or get it first?

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Well, we do say it's more important to get it right than to get it first.

There is a very real deadline, and that is, for me, 7:00 in the morning on the *Today Show* and 6:30 P.M. on *Nightly News*. And MSNBC, our 24-hour channel, the deadline is whenever. It's now. And two seconds later, it's now.

So the world of the deadline is something that we learn to live with. I think people might be really, quite frankly, surprised that our *Nightly News* broadcast that airs at 6:30 Eastern Time is formulated as early as 9:30 in the morning.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Really?

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Now, that doesn't mean that we know that what we've talked about at 9:30 is going to be the 6:30 broadcast. But we are already working on a plan. We're saying, you know, we would like to do a story about -- I'll make this up.

We'd like to do a story about the Orange County Court System, and we need to get some statistics on whether it's true that there is an increase on the number of plea bargains here because the State Attorney's Office is trying to pump a record that shows that he's had more convictions -- or she -- has had more convictions than anybody else in the state of

Florida.

But there's all these plea bargains. And when we're looking at these statistics, do the plea bargains really suggest they're giving people a walk? And so all of those sort of things -- we're talking that at 9:30.

Now, at 5:30 we may have found out, this wasn't true, this isn't true, that story's not going to air. What are we going to put in there? Well, we launched that morning nine stories, and we're only going to have eight stories on the air.

**>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** Is there one story that sticks with you more than any other story in your career, one that affected you more than any other story? Do you have that one that --

**>> KERRY SANDERS:** Well, I have those sad stories, but I like to say two things that have made me more smile than anything else.

**>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** Okay.

**>> KERRY SANDERS:** Those are the things I want to remember.

**>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

**>> KERRY SANDERS:** And it's really just sort of personal experiences. One is that NBC News, as we were looking at global warming we called it -- now

it's called global climate change. At the time Al Gore came out with this movie global warming, the whole world was sort of wondering what the reality of this was.

So my bosses decided I would fly to a place called Murmansk, Russia, and I would get to Murmansk, where the sun never sets in the summertime, and I would get on a nuclear-powered icebreaker, and for 15 days, we would plow north to the actual North Pole.

**>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** Oh, my God.

**>> KERRY SANDERS:** And so I was on this ship, plowing through, getting to the North Pole where they're measuring ice and the scientists are doing all their work.

And the team on board, they're all Russian. They speak English. They go, okay, we have a tradition now. And I'm like, okay. You need to jump in the water. The ice is broken and is 29 degrees. Because it's salt water, it doesn't freeze at 32 degrees. It's like 29 degrees there. And I'm like, this is a joke, right? And they're like, no, you have to do this.

And so I -- we're out on the ice. I go back into the ship, I put on my shorts and I wear my little Crocs and I come walking down. And they take a rope,

and they tie it around my chest. And I'm going, what's that for? They're like, in case you have a heart attack, we'll pull you back in and restart you.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** (Laughing.)

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** So I'm like, okay. So they said, jump. So the cameraman was rolling and I jumped in the water. I think I was in there for less than 30 seconds, for sure, maybe about 26 seconds.

The rush of cold water gives you that -- all your blood runs set or mass. I felt like a "roar." I felt like I could just roar like a bear.

I got out of the water, and, um, they say, now you must drink vodka. Here you go.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** (Laughing.)

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Knocked back some vodka. It warmed me up. My feet hurt like nobody's business. There was no blood in my feet. So you know that feeling where you get pins and needles you get sometimes when your foot gets asleep?

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right. Right.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** It was times a million. Oh, my God.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Well, you could've had hypothermia.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** And the only other thing that

I love to talk about of my personal experiences that I got a chance to do -- not too far from here, what the astronauts do, and that's a zero-G flight. So I know what it's like to be in a gravity-free environment. It's simulated, but it's phenomenal.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Amazing, amazing. How long were you floating?

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** You get 26, 27 seconds of it. But you, in your mind, think -- and then you'll be swimming and take yourself here and you see the NASA videos that they're doing the moves across, like they're doing a breaststroke or something.

But the truth is, when there's complete lack of gravity, you can't do anything. You have to grab something and move yourself. I mean, I tried doing a tumble where I was going to do a somersault in the air. It was really quite ridiculous.

I said to a woman who was on there, I said, okay, what I'd like to do is we have 27 seconds here, I'll ask you a question and you answer it while you're weightless. And she was a schoolteacher who was going up there. And so she had hair all out -- all over the place.

And so as I started to talk to her as we got weightless and came up, she started to float back up

against the wall, and I, completely uncontrolled asking my questions -- started to go head down, legs up. And my legs split her head as she was answering the question, and of course the --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** That's quite visual.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** You've got it in your mind? NBC loved it. They played it like two or three times. They thought it was hilarious.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** That is funny.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** So I guess the moments we don't calculate are the best ones.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Are you put off -- certainly when you were in combat zones.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Right.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** But today in noncombat areas, are you put in dangerous situations as a reporter?

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Well, yes. And it's kind of like, comes with experience where you start to understand what you should or should not do. Not too long ago, remember we had violence in a lot of places in America.

I was in Milwaukee not too long ago where we were having riots. And, you know, I've got my riot gear. I keep it in my garage ready to go. I've got two flak jackets. I've got gas masks. I've got helmets. I've

got it all. But were you to show up at a scene wearing that, you're going to perhaps escalate it.

NBC also provides personal security for us because the world is different. People have guns, and we are targets. It used to be that reporters are like, get over here, we want to show you something. Now get over here, we want to shoot you, we want to beat you. Because you're the person who will -- we hate you as much as anybody else. We don't have that Superman suit that the reporters once had.

So when I was in Milwaukee, we did have some tense situations. In that particular case, I'm the only white guy in a black neighborhood where people are very angry at white police officers, and here I am standing there.

And so my job is to ask questions and to listen to what the gripes are. But at the same time, NBC wants to have security there to protect me in case there's a problem.

In this situation, after I met the security people, I said, you're gonna be so far away that you're not associated with me.

**>> JUDGE LAUTEN:** Hmm.

**>> KERRY SANDERS:** They were all ex-military.

They all had tattoos. They were all white. And they

were all buff, and, quite frankly, intimidating.  
That's their job.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** But in this neighborhood, that intimidation is a threat to the neighborhood, and it's going to result in something.

And so while people were screaming and yelling at me, and later that night when we were in the car, throwing rocks and bottles -- which we've had happen before -- it -- it's more a matter of trying to balance what you're doing, what your job is. Nobody wants to get killed or seriously injured or even injured, you know, trying to get a story told.

But by the same token, the people in that neighborhood feel that they are ignored and their voice is not heard. And my job is to say, you know what, I'm going to make sure your voice is heard. So don't look at me. There's a camera and a microphone here. Let me ask a question, and let's see where it will lead. And hopefully -- hopefully I did my job, you know?

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** There's a conundrum I want to ask you about. And you can pass on it if you don't want to. But -- I've never gotten to interview a national reporter, and I know you covered this story,

so we just had Hurricane Matthew in our state.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Yes.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** The Governor gets on TV and says people are going to die. And the news says -- kind of advised the East Coast you should evacuate. I don't understand why networks place reporters --

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** You know, this is my --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** -- in the East Coast, where they've just told people to evacuate, to film the storm as it's there when the message is people should get out. And according to our Governor, if you don't get out -- and it seems to me your employer is placing you in harm's way.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** So I covered my first hurricane in 1983. And I have covered hurricanes from Central America down in Nicaragua all the way up to Montauk, which is the tip of Long Island. And I've covered them all -- the big ones that you know like Hugo and Andrew, and the little ones that you'll never remember. I've covered them all.

And my job has been to stand out in a Category 4 like Ivan where I'm wearing goggles because the sand is blowing so hard and to stand in the wind to get blown around. And people at home are like, they're telling us not to do that and --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** You're doing it.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** -- then you're doing it. And I'm completely aware that a coconut in, you know, 160-mile-an-hour wind is going to hit me in the head and kill me, if that happens.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** So why do we do it is, as you point out, the conundrum because we shouldn't be doing it. The audience, kind of, I think wants to see it.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Mm-hmm.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** And, you know, you asked me about theater. This is not theater.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** This is real life. We're standing out there. But there is an aspect to this that I think people want to say -- I have actually talked about with my camera crews and my producers in the field that what I would really like to do is take a scarecrow or a mannequin, stick it out there, stand inside, and hold the microphone, and just voice, hey, look at that scarecrow out there. It's falling apart. I'm glad it's not me.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** But we do it. We'll probably always do it. Because of the experiences I've had

and -- you know, there's no lesson in this other than getting out and doing it. I have actually been through up to Category 3 hurricanes where I was outside the whole hurricane. I would never suggest that anybody do this --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** -- but once you've spent some time in hurricane after hurricane after hurricane -- trying to predict Mother Nature's next to impossible. I can predict human behavior much better than I can Mother Nature. But you do learn some things that will protect you.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Okay.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** And, ideally, we won't have any more hurricanes. We just had a great ten-year period with no hurricanes in the state.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Sure did. And then our fear was -- Matthew, thankfully, it wasn't as strong as everybody thought it could be.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Could have been. Fifteen miles closer to shore, we would've had a different story.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** But will people say, you know, these things are always false alarms.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** That's the problem. Nobody

wants to believe the media. We're a hype machine. We're the ones -- and the Governor, you're gonna die! We had it on the Weather Channel.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** And Bryan Norcross, I don't normally do this, you know? And so we become the boy who cries wolf.

And I made a point, because I've covered so many hurricanes, that when I'm covering Matthew, for instance, and I was -- let's see, I was doing some live reports, I think from, like, maybe Satellite Beach or something like that, I was trying to point out, if you're new to our state and you are inside your home and you're watching this, this is not a hurricane.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** I am in a tropical storm. Don't think you are experiencing a hurricane and don't start telling all your friends from wherever you moved from, Boston or Iowa, hey, I went through a hurricane. You didn't go through a hurricane.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** That's right.

Let me end with this question. Is there anyone you really wish you could interview in your career if they agreed to sit down with you who you haven't had a

chance to talk to yet?

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Well, that's a pretty easy answer right now. Donald Trump.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Sure. You think you'll get the chance to? Who knows.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** The first seven weeks of his -- after he announced, I followed Donald Trump around the country, in Iowa. And this was when he was just attempting to get the nomination. And I didn't get a one-on-one interview but did get a chance to ask him questions with a group of reporters.

When you think about what's just happened in our country, and it's the biggest job in the world, I would love to have a long interview where I could ask questions and, as Ted Koppel would do, listen to answers.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Thank you so much for joining us. We're so grateful.

>> **KERRY SANDERS:** Thank you.

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(Music.)