

OPEN NINTH:

CONVERSATIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM

PART 1: THE SHOOTER, THE VICTIMS, THE AFTERMATH

EPISODE 40

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>>Welcome to “Open Ninth: Conversations Beyond the Courtroom”. During this three-part podcast series, we’ll be taking a look at the state of our Courts before and after one dreadful day in January of 1984. It was on January 10th, 1984 when an unemployed electrician entered the Orange County Courthouse with an arsenal of weapons opening fire and killing one deputy sheriff, while wounding two others. The event sent shock waves through our quiet community, changing the lives of many and the landscape of court operations here and across the nation.

You’re about to hear the first-hand account of those who were there as we honor the memory and selfless sacrifice of our fallen heroes.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** I’m here today with kind of a hero of mine, Judge Emerson Thompson who I practiced law in front of and tried cases in front of when I was a prosecutor a long time ago, and then was honored to join him on the bench and served – and he was a mentor to me and to many others, and so it’s a thrill to have him on Open Ninth. Let me tell our listeners that Judge Thompson, and correct me if I say anything incorrectly, was the first African American state attorney in the State Attorney’s Office in the Ninth Circuit, first African American to serve on the bench in Orange County, first as a County Court Judge, then as a Circuit Court Judge, as Chief Judge. Then served on the Fifth District Court of Appeal and was the Chief Judge of the 5th District Court of Appeal until your retirement in 2008, I believe.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** That’s correct.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** A trail blazer, a mentor, and a scholar so it’s a thrill to have you here. Thanks for being here with us today.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** And thank you for inviting me.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** So tell our listeners where you went to school and a little bit about your history growing up, and then we’re going to move into a particular episode in both of our lives.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** Well, I was born and raised in Jacksonville, Florida. My grandmother was born in a place called New Berlin, Florida, which is on the way to Amelia Island.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** All right.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** We always say if you stop by the Suwannee Gas Station, you're in New Berlin, Florida. And so her family was from there so we're the fifth or sixth generation Floridians. My grandfather was from – both of my grandfathers were from Georgia. I went to high school in – elementary, middle school, then called junior high school, and high school in Jacksonville at a school called Stanton High School which is a historic black high school. And a piece of trivia, Representative Corrine Brown was two years ahead of me. Reverend Randolph Bracy was about five years ahead of me. And Henry Latimer, attorney Henry Latimer for whom the Florida Bar's Civility and Ethics Division was several years ahead of me, so we pretty much knew each other, not well at that time. But the school graduated doctors, lawyers, Colonels, Generals.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Great.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** So that's where I went to high school.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** High school, then college at –

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** I spent a year Bethune-Cookman College, three years at the University of Florida, then I graduated from the University of Florida and then went to FSU for law school.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Great. So are you a Gator fan, or Seminole fan, or you just split your loyalties?

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** Actually when I was in high school, I was accepted to the University of Florida but didn't go, so I've always been a Florida football fan. When I was in law school, I worked on the weekends so I did not attend any games while I was at Florida State.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** All right. So Jacksonville, Gainesville, Tallahassee. Tell us how you got to Orlando.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** I'm from Jacksonville. I married between my senior year – well, after my senior year, but before my first year of law school. My wife was from Miami. She wanted me to go to the University of Miami Law School. I did not like Miami and I did not want to go back to Jacksonville. So I interned in the State Attorney's Office because I knew I

wanted to be a trial lawyer. So I interned here for the County Solicitor, who was Rom Powell. And between interning and graduation, the State Attorney took over the office of County Solicitor. So I got a call from Bob Eagan's administrative assistant, HR guy, his name was Andy Hudak. And he called me and asked me if I wanted a job. And I said, yes, I do. And he said, okay, then you'll be hired. This was a Wednesday. And I was studying for the Bar, and he said – I said, well, when do you want me to start? He said, Monday. I said, Monday, like in – he said, Monday, like in next week. I said, that's very quick. He said, do you want a job? I said, I'll be there. And so I came down on a Sunday or Saturday, and then started work on Monday.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Wow, fascinating. How long were you at the State Attorney's Office?

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** Four years.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** And then appointed to the county bench?

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** Appointed to the county bench. At that time you did not have to be a lawyer 10 years to be appointed.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** And what Governor was serving?

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** Reubin Askew. Reubin O. D. Askew.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Fascinating. How long on the county bench?

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** From 1976 to 1980.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** And then who appointed you to – you were appointed, I believe, right, to the circuit bench?

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** That's correct.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Who appointed you to that bench?

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** The governor who appointed me was Senator Bob Graham.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Fascinating. Well, then we share what not a lot of people do, we share this experience as being a Chief Judge, and remind me when you served as Chief Judge because it will important to what we're about to talk about?

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** It was from 1989 to 1991.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** All right, so after the event that we're going focus on today.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** Absolutely.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** There's so much I could talk to you about in terms of your background and your experiences, but if you'll permit me to, what I'd like to focus on is your perspective of being in the Orange County Courthouse, which is now the historical center, on January 9th, 1984. So can you kind of tell us what it was like the day before the event occurred with Thomas Provenzano? What was your impression of the building?

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** Well, even though I was not chief judge, you attended judges' meetings and you had a sense of the administrative part of the court system. Judges were requesting a number of things from the County. Now, we did not own the building; we were here with the County. They owned the building, the facilities, the employees. Judges have one employee and that is their judicial assistant. And so many of the things we used belonged to the County or the County funded them.

Orange County was a southern city, and until the 70s and growing from there, a small southern town. The Courts closed in July, August and September because of the heat and so everybody took holiday or vacation unless there was an emergency, and one judge always had to be in town because of an emergency. But the Courts were effectively closed. There was no air conditioning. People had fans in their opened windows. The historic courtroom in the county historical building, the windows were open, and people would bring fans, and there would be big ceiling fans and that was the air conditioning.

>>**MR. TUMARKIN:** My name is Danny Tumarkin and I was an assistant public defender back on January 10th of 1984. I currently work as a criminal defense attorney in private practice. It was much different than it is today. It was a smaller legal community. Everybody knew each other and it really was almost like a little family within the courthouse between the court reporters and the state attorneys, the public defenders and everybody, court deputies as

well. We used to play football together on Saturdays, go out drinking on Fridays, so it was a much more collegial atmosphere than it is today.

>> (Music)

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** So one of the big issues for the judges was additional monies for court security because now recall the Bundy case had been tried here. Moved from Lake County, Florida, or Lake City, Florida to Orange County because of the notoriety they couldn't pick a jury. Well, you would have security for those special cases. We had a case come up from Miami, the McDuffy case, so security was an issue but only on big cases. Well, we had trouble with certain defendants, family members, and judges would enter orders that they could not enter the Orange County Courthouse unless they checked in at the Sheriff's Office, which was in the sally port of this building – I'm sorry, of the old courthouse. By the sally port, I mean there was a space, a driveway between the historic courthouse and the administration building, which contained the jail. And so they would have to check in. Every judicial assistant, every judge, every court deputy and clerk would have pictures and descriptions of certain people, if you see them in the building, notify the security personnel immediately. But it was a voluntary program in the sense that if a guy decided not to check in, he could just walk into the building which is why it was circulated, so there was little or no security entering this building. None of the doors were guarded. None of them were monitored. None of them were patrolled. The only security was the observation of the court deputies and the observation of judges, and they would direct the court deputy or police or sheriff's deputies who were in the building to focus on a particular person or a group of people.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** And I remember practicing as an assistant state attorney, you could get in and out of that building in many different ways. There were multiple entrances and exits.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** Remember, this was a joint – the courthouse was a joint use building.

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

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** So you had clerks coming in, deputy clerks. You had people in the county administration – the building was shared with county administration. You had

zoning personnel, you had builders coming to pull permits. People coming to file small claims cases. You had jurors; you had visitors; you had people who were court monitors; you had students who wanted to court watch. So it was an open accessible building. Judges' offices were open. It was not unusual for lawyers to stop by to visit with the JA or to say hello to the judge. Foreigners would come to ask to talk to the judge because they wanted to see how the court systems were running in the United States, and particularly in Florida. So it was not unusual for people just to walk in, say hello, or is the judge available, I have a question for him. There were no hers. And the judges, if they had time, would accommodate them.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** And as I recall, judges had assigned parking but it wasn't anonymous or secure; it was right outside the building.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** The parking was on Washington Street at the location right adjacent to what is now the historic building. Initially judges had their names on name tags and some of the judges took exception to that, and so they all had numbered spots. The problem was everybody knew the judge's car and lawyers would wait for the car to pull in. There was a little restaurant near Orange and they would see the judge come in so they would dash out, run down the incline, catch the elevator to get to an 8:30 or 9:00 docket sounding or pre-trial. And so there was – you know, everybody knew the kind of car we drove except one judge who had many cars. He would trade – he had a t-shirt that said, I don't do drugs, I do cars. And so he would have different cars on a regular basis.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** For some reason I particularly remember there was an entrance and right as you walked in, there was a snack bar to the left and that entrance I think was through a breezeway of some sort.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** That's the sally port. There was a building there and there was an office. And that was run by the Florida Association for the Blind, and they had a snack bar, coffee machine, et cetera. And so lawyers would gather up, get coffee – and you could take coffee upstairs to a courtroom. Get coffee, crackers, whatever and go upstairs.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** The other recollection I have, and you've touched on it, is you could just easily enter into the JA's workstation which was really right outside of the

judge's chambers and talk about scheduling or talk about families. It was in many ways more intimate, but far less secure.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** This was a southern city. A lot of the lawyers went to school with the JAs or their families, or they had represented them, or they knew each other from different activities, Church, football and so on. So it was a small community. And you're right, JAs also got to deal with the obnoxious person who came in. If the court deputy was in court with the judge, the JA literally was there by herself. And so they learned to defuse the situation or usher the person out, close the door and lock it. So yeah, JA's – we used to say that they had the toughest job in the building.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** And the other recollection I have is that a lot of activity occurred in the courtroom, but in that building in particular, sometimes a pre-trial conference or conferences would occur in hearing rooms or even in the judge's chambers themselves, so there was this sort of free-flow around the building.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** When I first came here, circuit judges had hearing tables in their office. My most vivid recollection of that was Judge Bernie Muszynski's office faced onto Washington Street, and he had the corner office so he had two windows. And lawyers would be literally lined around the table. They'd get a seat, then lined around the office and as one guy moved, another guy would sit down. Obviously, all that changed and judges were advised never to hold any kind of hearings in their hearing room. Part of it was because of the Provenzano case, but there was a judge who was shot and killed in the Panhandle while hearing a domestic violence – a dissolution of marriage case which involved domestic violence. And the judge had the hearing in his office. The husband pulled out a gun. He shot the lawyer for the wife. He shot his lawyer. He shot his wife. The judge ran into his restroom. The guy shot through the door, killed the judge. And the sheriff of the county happened to be coming across a walkway, heard the shots, ran up, challenged the guy and shot and killed him. So we were advised under no circumstance are you to hold hearings in your office.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Well, back to January of 1984, before January 10th, were there signs that said, weapons are prohibited? What was the situation as far as you can remember about weapons? Were weapons discovered in the courthouse?

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** Well, you know, that's interesting. I'll say this over and over again. Orange County was a southern town. People carried guns and knives as part of their daily routine. And I don't mean bad people. I don't mean malicious people. It was just a southern thing. Pocketknives, every judge I knew except two carried a pocketknife. I've lost three knives, two at the airport. I forgot I had it on me, pocketknives and one at the magic game when I found out they now had security. So – and I hid it, I thought, but it was gone when I came back. So people carried knives. People carried guns. Businessmen, builders, construction guys because they just did, because of the kind of people they dealt with, the neighborhoods they were in, they just carried guns. There was a sign, and I recall it had knives and guns. Later it was added to with the term dirks and sword canes. And we used to laugh at it because first of all, most people didn't know what a dirk was and sword canes, we hadn't seen – one guy said since dueling went out. But it was not unusual, the sheriff or the court security at the time periodically would have a show and tell of all the things they collected during the day. And this is after you had the magnetometer or the metal detector. And you'd have belt knives which were popular among certain aspects of the community, mostly motorcycle clubs. Boot knives, which were daggers, double-bladed short knives, .22s, .25 automatics, Raven .25 automatics was the most popular gun seized. You had .38s. My favorite story is that when we moved to the Angebilt or the Civil Courts Building, there was a matronly, nice old lady, she came in to file an eviction notice. And when she got there, the metal detector went off and she had a Smith & Wesson .357 magnum in her bag. And the court security officer was taken aback and he asked her why. Her husband had died and left her rental property and when she went to collect rent, she took his gun to go collect rent because he always took his gun. And she was asked, have you ever fired that gun, and she said, no. He said, well, why don't you go back to your car and just leave your bag and come back, and she did. But that was not unusual. People would come into the building, they would see the magnetometer, they'd see a sign, they'd turn around, go back to their car, and then come back into the building.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** But before those magnetometers, so back in the early 1980s, were guns prohibited in the courthouse, do you remember?

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** I do not recall, but I know that people carried them.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Carried them in there. And then –

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** Because the court deputies or the judge would notice a bulge or a jacket that leaned to one side, or something, and would say, go ask the guy to step outside and check, and most times it was innocent. They just forgot they had it.

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>>**MR. JACOBS:** My name is Alex Jacobs. I was a Corporal with the Sheriff's Department at this time – at that time. At that time the courthouse had no security. Only a handful of the bailiffs were issued guns. We escorted inmates from the jail which was located on the 5th and 6th floor in the courthouse, through the hallways to the various courts to which they were assigned.

>>**MR. SPRINKEL:** My name is George Sprinkel. I was a county judge on January 10th, 1984, and then I was appointed by the Governor as circuit judge and retired ten years ago. It was a hell of a lot different than it is now, that's for sure, as far as coming in – being now an outsider coming in the courthouse is a lot different than it was back then. And even when I told them I was a retired judge, it didn't make any difference to them. They still required I go through security.

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>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** So did you – was there a noticeable sense of, we don't have much security in the early 1980s?

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** Yes.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** People would sometimes say, this place is a sif in terms of people coming and going.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** Well, remember, it was not just in Orange County. There were more and more violent things happening in the country and we would get reports about judges, especially in metropolitan areas being threatened or shot. And as a result of that, the judges had frequently requested that Orange County improve the security, et cetera, and we would go to national judicial college and there was a – the college in Virginia, and they'd talk about court security, personal security before the incident, and we'd bring those ideas back.

Because once you start having things happen and judges often were threatened, people became a little more conscious that this was not the Orange -- Orlando that they grew up in.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Do you remember were there cameras in the building at the time?

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** No, there were none.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** No cameras, no magnetometers, computers --

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** No computers.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** No computers.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** No computers or desktop computers for the judges. The computers in this building were run by the Clerk and the County, and they were the huge mainframe, but there were no desktop computers, no lap tops and people look at you like you're crazy. The first computer this court system got weighed 40 pounds and it was to be shared by all the judges and only two judges used it that I'm aware of. One was writing a book that he still publishes and updates and the other was me trying to find out how it was used and what we could do to get judges more technology.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** So the picture you've painted in part is January 9th, 1984, Orlando, particularly the courthouse, sleepy southern town with certain characteristics which included that people would carry knives and maybe guns, not malicious people, just that was the culture, sort of, I want to say cowboy culture, but a little bit of that.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** That's true.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Southern kind of cowboy culture. It was a rural area. I lived here then. I lived here before Disney so I saw those changes where it was so much citrus and agriculture, and then Disney announced and slowly we kind of changed our character a little bit. But that was the character in the courthouse, very intimate, but not very secure.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** Correct.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** And then we had an event on January 10th, 1984 and that sort of changed everything. And were you in the courthouse that day?

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** I was. Just to give you a short background, UCF had a legal assistance program. I was friends with the professor and periodically he would ask for his students to come to my office to job shadow me. Some would last a day, some would be a week, depending on their schedule and what they were doing. The day that happened I had come back from juvenile. My first assignment was at juvenile court. Had come back to the Orange County Courthouse. Juvenile at that time was on Michigan. Harry Dalton was my court deputy and a friend of mine. We both were runners. He ran more than I did, but he'd give me tips on running. So I would show the students around. I'd show them where the clerk's office was; I'd show them the courtrooms. We'd sit in the back and watch part of a civil case or a jury case. I always tried to take them to where a jury was being selected. I'd introduce them to the jury room personnel because I told them that's where things started and you need to know how jurors are checked in, et cetera. So Judge Lee Conser was on the bench. Harry Dalton was out in the hallway. He spoke. I was telling him about a problem I was having running and that's why I wasn't running as much because I had heel spurs and he told me to cut some carpet and put it in my shoe, but there was no excuse. And Provenzano walked by. Now, I knew who he was because Judge Larry Kirkwood and I shared an office. We were suitemates. His JA would have to deal with Provenzano. He was not loud; he was not mean, but he was persistent and annoying, and Gail would lose her cool and talk with him. So we – and sometimes I'd have to go over and tell him, you know, well, why don't you come back a little bit later, but he was never threatening. He did not have a, do not enter the courthouse order against him. He was just unusual.

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

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** And so I saw him walk down the hall and Harry mentioned him because we all knew who he was. And I went back to my office with the clerk – the intern and went back upstairs. There was no computer system that alerted everybody at one time when there was a problem, so a court deputy came up – my court deputy, and said, lock down the doors. Do not go into the hallway. Stay away from the windows; there's been a shooting. And my first – I knew – when he said that, I knew who it was. And I said, is anybody hurt? He said, well, two deputies are down and that's all he said at the time.

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>>**MR. HARTSFIELD:** My name is David Hartsfield and I was a Sergeant with the Orange County Sheriff's Office in the court services section on January 10th, 1984. I was a Sergeant in the civil process section. Myself and Tommy Ward who was my Corporal at the time, we had a hearing with Judge Ted Coleman on the 4th floor of the courthouse. Our offices were located at 1 North Orange, at the old bank building there. We walked over – I forget what time our hearing was. We walked over down the sidewalk on Central, and entered the new part of the old courthouse and went up to the 4th floor on the elevator. Judge Coleman did not like deputies or police officers that were not in uniform to carry guns so we didn't have our guns on us. We were both sworn, but neither one of us had our firearms. We got off the elevator on the 4th floor and started walking north in the hallway, and half way down the hallway encountered Thomas Provenzano walking the other direction. He had a – Tommy Ward and I were walking together, of course, and Provenzano had what I recall a green army trench coat on and made eye contact with me and just, you know, I had chills go up my spine just the way he looked at me. And we passed, we got where I could whisper to Tommy, I said, boy, that guy looked strange and he said, he sure did, not realizing that – thinking back now that if I had had my weapon, I might have stopped him and asked him, and it might have made a whole different outcome, and I might not be here or Tommy, because he had the guns sewn basically or tied inside his trench coat.

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>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** I was in the State Attorney's Office Wednesday before Thanksgiving and Mr. Eagan had given the staff and attorneys that afternoon off but he wanted one investigator and one lawyer on every floor. And I was preparing for a second degree murder trial that was supposed to start the Monday after Thanksgiving. So I said, look, I'll stay because I got to work. And the receptionist at the State Attorney's Office on the 4th floor just sat behind a big desk. There was no plexiglass; there was no alarm system. She just sat there and welcomed people, you probably remember this.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** I do quite well.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** She called and said there's someone out here and wants to use our library. Will you come out and talk to him? So I said, sure, I was on the same floor. So I came out to that reception area and Thomas Provenzano was there and I said, can I help

you? He said, I want to use your law library. And I said, well, it's not a public law library. Well, can I go in there and use it? And I said, no. I said, what do you want to use the law library for? And he said, I want to petition the Governor on behalf of Susan Assad or one of the Assad's. Their daughter had been killed in Seminole County.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** I remember.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** That was a strange request. And I said, well, our law library just isn't available to you but you can go to the Orange County Law Library and there's a legal section in there. He said, well, just let me in there; I won't be in there very long. And I kind of gently touched his arm and said, well, you have to go. It's right before Thanksgiving; we were closing. Anyway, and I walked him to the front door and he left. And then he came and watched my next two trials, just sat there and watched them. And then we never saw him again. That was November and early December. Then the shooting happened and Vicky Smith, Judge John Sloop's wife, we heard the shots. We were on the 3rd floor and then we got the news that there had been a shooting and this was kind of spooky. She turned to me and said, I wonder if it was that guy watching us.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** You know, it is really strange, there were people who were more – we thought more dangerous.

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

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** I hate to say this, there were some people who were nuisances. He was never considered a nuisance to the point that you were either frightened or scared of him. He was just strange.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Strange. He was strange. A little odd looking and kind of odd manerisms.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** But see, we got a lot of unusual people, so it wasn't like he was strange to the point – there were other people – well, there were other people stranger than he was.

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

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** There were other people we perceived to be more dangerous than he was, and he just looked just weird but not dangerous and not fearful of – we weren't fearful of him. And the only thing I remember that I never will forget is, I mentioned to Harry, and we were just talking, he had a duffle bag and the bag didn't sway, you know how when you walk, and it just hung just straight down. And I mentioned it to him and thought nothing of it and I thought maybe he had law books; it just never occurred to me that he had guns. And the thing that is interesting is that most of the judges, we were not ultra-concerned about our safety. We would go together to lunch as a group. We'd meet in the circle and we'd pick a place to go, and we'd walk as a group to lunch. At that time they would bring prisoners in by security vans from the jail. The jail had moved. And we'd walk by the prisoners as they were coming out of the sally port, out of the van into the sally port to go up to the holding cells. And we were concerned but not ultra-concerned about our security. And you'd sometime run into a guy you had on trial and they were respectful and they'd – you'd leave or they'd leave. And so most of us were not worried about our personal security in downtown Orlando.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** And for our listeners, one of the ironies of this incident was this did not occur in a felony courtroom.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** Right.

>>**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** He was not going to court on a charge of armed robbery or first degree murder. He was going to court on a crime that involved some violence but it was resisting an officer without violence and other misdemeanor charges. So he was in a misdemeanor courtroom, and not in a felony courtroom where so many members of the public say, isn't it highly dangerous in a felony courtroom and at that point in time, you know, the act of violence occurred not in a circuit court, felony courtroom, but in a misdemeanor courtroom, a county courtroom.

>>**JUDGE THOMPSON:** Right. And it was an outlier for a lot of us but the thing that my colleagues and I talked about is that they were just so surprised, not that he had not – that he got into trouble, but that there was violence. As I said, he was a nuisance, but nobody perceived him as a danger at that time.

>>Thank you for listening to this episode of Open Ninth where we learned how different our court and community were in the 1980's. In our next episode, we'll delve into the tragic events that occurred on January 10th, 1084, a day that changed everything. We hope you'll continue to join us.

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