

**OPEN NINTH:
CONVERSATIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM
TURNING THE TABLES
EPISODE 72
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HOSTED BY: FREDERICK J. LAUTEN**

(Music)

NARRATOR: 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, listeners, and welcome to Open Ninth. I’m here today with three pretty incredibly impressive students, Aecha Kimball, Cristian Cifers and Albi Manfredi, and they’re all seniors at Lake Mary Prep, and they are spectacular students and high achievers and on their way shortly to college where I’m sure they will perform as impressively as they have in high school.

And we’re going to depart a little bit from our normal format here at Open Ninth, so instead of my interviewing our guests -- I don’t know how I agreed to this, but these students are here to interview me and ask me questions, and I’m going to try to answer the questions for them. So to our listeners, we’ve sort of turned the format that we typically have upside down.

And I want to thank all three of you for joining me. And why don’t you -- instead of me telling the listeners a little bit about yourselves, why don’t you tell the listeners a little bit about yourselves in terms of are you originally from Florida, tell them a little bit about Lake Mary Prep and what your plans for the future are.

And, Aecha, I’ll start with you, and then we’ll go to the gentlemen.

AECHA KIMBALL: Well, I’ve lived in Florida all my life. I really enjoy Lake Mary Prep. I came my sophomore year. I sat my parents down and told them that I really wanted to go there; it’s a great school, great environment.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: How did that go over with your parents when you said, here’s where I want to go to school?

AECHA KIMBALL: It was the summer of freshman year, and I realized that I really wanted a different environment that kind of pushed me more. And I was --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: In terms of academics, especially.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yes. Yes, definitely.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Okay. Gotcha.

AECHA KIMBALL: And they were super supportive. I love my parents with all my heart. And, like, I shadowed where you -- like, you follow a student around, and I decided that that was the place for me, so --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Great. Great. Where were you headed before that, did you think? Public -- a public school system?

AECHA KIMBALL: Yes. Yes.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: What would that have been, Lake Brantley or where?

AECHA KIMBALL: No. I was in Lake Nona.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Lake Nona.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yes.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Okay. That was -- so that's a little bit of a drive if you're still out that way.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yeah. So we researched all the private schools all around there --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah. Great.

AECHA KIMBALL: -- but I finally decided on Lake Mary Prep.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Wonderful. Wonderful. What's your favorite subject?

AECHA KIMBALL: I would say math. I love math.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: And do you know what you'd major in? I had no idea my freshman year, so --

AECHA KIMBALL: I like molecular biology and cell science.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Do you want to be a doctor or a researcher?

AECHA KIMBALL: Doctor.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Great. Great. Wonderful.

Let me go to Cristian. Why don't you introduce yourself to our listeners, and some questions.

CRISTIAN CIFERS: Cristian; you can call me Cris also, sir.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Cris, okay. Great, thanks.

CRISTIAN CIFERS: Yeah. But I've been in Florida all my life. I'm like a sixth generation Floridian, actually. My family's been here. We have our roots.

Next year I plan on going to Florida; go Gators.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: There we go.

CRISTIAN CIFERS: And for -- I plan on studying business and majoring there.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Great.

CRISTIAN CIFERS: I've been going to Lake Mary Prep since fifth grade, so it's been quite a long time there.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Oh, wow. You play varsity football, I know that.

CRISTIAN CIFERS: Yeah.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: What other sports?

CRISTIAN CIFERS: I did weightlifting, I did basketball for a little bit, but I then focused more so on football.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Great. How big is Lake Mary Prep? How many students?

CRISTIAN CIFERS: I'd say total our school's around 600.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Okay.

CRISTIAN CIFERS: That's including K through 12, roughly.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: So your ratio of students to teachers in high school, that must be ideal. That must be --

CRISTIAN CIFERS: Yeah. It's -- I'd say it's about, like, 15 per class.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Great. That's wonderful.

CRISTIAN CIFERS: Some shorter [sic], some a little bit bigger.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah. Great. Great. Great.

All right. And Albi.

ALBI MANFREDI: Hi. So I was also born and raised in Florida, in --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Tell everybody your full name. Tell our listeners who you are.

ALBI MANFREDI: I'm Albi Manfredi.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Okay. Just so they know. I mean, I want to introduce everybody but want them to get the voices with the names. Go ahead. I'm sorry.

ALBI MANFREDI: Yeah. So, yeah, I was born and raised in Florida, and I've been at Lake Mary Prep since fifth grade, so I've been there for a while. And next year I'm not sure 100 percent where I'm going, but I would like to end up at Duke. And decisions --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Go Blue Devils. I was hoping we'd get one of those.

ALBI MANFREDI: Well, decisions come out soon, so --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah, good luck.

ALBI MANFREDI: -- it's kind of a stressful time, but hopes are high. So I hope to study some form of science originally for undergrad, but I hope to end up in law school, so --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Great. Okay. There we go.

ALBI MANFREDI: Yeah, very excited to be at the courthouse.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Fabulous. Fabulous.

Okay. I mean, I'd like to keep asking you questions, but I'm going to turn it over to you-- all so you get to ask me the questions. And who's going to fire away first?

AECHA KIMBALL: So we kind of wrote out some questions, and I just have our first one here.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Okay.

AECHA KIMBALL: Which case that you've ruled on has had the most impact from a constitutional and a policy standpoint?

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: That's an interesting question. And I'm going to start it by saying that a lot of times the cases that trial judges have don't make a lot of law, because our responsibility is to apply the law as it's written by the legislature or determined to exist by the Appellate or Supreme Court and apply it to a given set of facts. And so the run-of-the-mill cases, the law is fairly clear and you can't really deviate from that law easily.

I had a couple of cases where the law wasn't quite so clear. So one of the cases that I had was brought by Expedia and Orbitz versus Orange County that has a Tourist Development Tax. So if you're a guest and you stay in a hotel in Orange County you pay six percent of the cost of your room to this Tourist Development Tax that raises 40 to 50 million dollars a year for Orange County, and then that money goes into a trust fund, for want of a better -- that funds tourist development, so the convention center, advertising for tourists attraction. And some of the

controversy about that fund right now is should it be used to pay for more police officers or improve the roads and -- but the monies are pretty dedicated.

But here's what the law suit was about. Orbitz and Expedia said that the six percent should only apply to the price of the room that we get on behalf of our customers. And Orange County said, no, you pay Expedia a higher fee for their services, so you go to a hotel and maybe the room costs \$100 but you've really paid Expedia \$140 and we want that difference. And you think, what's six percent of forty bucks. Who's the math whiz; 2.40, right?

AECHA KIMBALL: We had to think for a minute there.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: So it doesn't sound like a lot of money until you realize that we have 60 million visitors a year. So all of a sudden two or three dollars, or even ten dollars, is a significant amount of money.

And so the challenge was Orange County said, no, it's on the whole amount that's paid. And the company said, no, it's on what we get as the cost of the room for our customers. And so lawyers were in my courtroom from Dallas and Washington, D.C. and New York City and L.A., and the County lawyers here were very skilled too. But there was a big battle about it, and there was no clear law.

Ultimately I found a case that said when a taxing statute is ambiguous so that it can be reasonably interpreted in one of two ways, that the law says you interpret it in the way that it is most favorable to the taxpayer; not the taxing authority, the taxpayer.

In the same way, the criminal statutes have to be clear for citizens so that they know -- they're on notice of, this action violates the criminal law. Once I found that case that said, the statute too ambiguous to be interpreted the way the County wants, it's got to be interpreted in terms of the taxpayers, and I wrote a pretty lengthy order.

And the same challenge was being brought in Leon County. And a good friend of mine, Terry Lewis, who handled a good part of Bush v. Gore in the election challenge, he had that same case and he cited to my order and didn't even write an order. He said, I'm adopting Judge Lauten's order, and then I was affirmed by the Florida Supreme Court.

So that case -- it's an obscure, little area of the law -- kind of made some law there.

I also had the Sick Leave Initiative. I don't know if you-all followed that in Orange County. But there was a citizens' petition that said that citizens should get paid sick leave time. And got it -- and they were trying to get it on the ballot, and there was a big battle about whether this was going to appear on the ballot. And that battle ended up in my courtroom -- actually, I was on an Appellate panel with both -- myself, Judge Julie O'Kane and Judge Jeff Arnold, about four days before the election. And it was almost impossible to handle that case timely. And ultimately we found that the initiative needed to go to the voters, that it was -- should have been on the ballot but it was too late to get it on the ballot. This was about three days before they were printed. So they're printed well in advance of the election. So I kind of had that case.

I've handled -- they don't make law, but numerous first-degree murder cases and death penalty cases. Then I was in Business court for five years, and those cases are highly complex. We don't have the most finely developed body of law in the commercial arena in Florida. New York does and Delaware does. And -- but we're kind of growing in that arena. I sat there for five years. And the reason I had that taxing case was because I was in Business court. So I guess that's it.

ALBI MANFREDI: So about, like, the ambiguity of the law, one of the things we discuss in government class is judicial activism versus judicial constraint. And we know it's not per se, like, the trial courts to change the laws, per se --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Correct. Right.

ALBI MANFREDI: -- but what are your thoughts on, like, judicial activism and judicial constraint?

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Well, my thoughts are -- I take an oath to apply the law as it's written by the -- in our, you know, three branch of government system, by the legislature. And so it's not my prerogative to decide, do I like this law or dislike this law. If I want to be in that arena, I should run for the legislature and then advocate for what the law ought to be.

And so as a judge, I'm duty-bound to apply the law as it's written, whether I personally would have voted for that law or not. So that's easy to say. And that's what most judges say.

The hard part is when the law is not clear. When the language that the legislature used -- like in the taxing case, they might think what clearly encompasses this activity, but the language when you look at it is not so clear-cut and it's capable of different interpretations. And then the court has a hard job of determining what is the legislative intent behind legislation and to give force to legislative intent, to what the legislators adopted, and if it's a constitutional provision, what the voters voted on when they adopted this constitutional language.

Now, I fully recognize that there's enormous philosophical debate about how do you interpret constitutional language that was written in the 1780's when you exist in 2019 in America. And so that you're taking language that the founding citizens of our nation looked at and then you're saying, how does that apply to cell towers and cell tower searches. And the adopters had no vision -- they didn't even have -- and it wasn't even like you could look forward and say H.G. Wells had predicted that we'll have spaceships. I mean, they didn't -- had no idea that cell towers -- you know, driverless cars, all that kind of stuff. And so that can be a challenge for the courts.

But really our job is to not make the law but to interpret it. And so Justice Scalia wrote at length about originalism, and then you have strict constructionism, and then you have other -- you know, Professor Tribe at Harvard who writes about, it's a living, breathing document and you have to give it breath and life in today's society. And that's -- those are fascinating questions, but the answers just aren't that easy, as you'll learn when you get to law school.

But those are two great questions.

CRISTIAN CIFERS: Of course.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yes, Cris.

CRISTIAN CIFERS: Well, I have to follow that up now. But while we're touching on the laws in general, and you mentioned, like, the -- you mentioned the Constitution. That brings me along the lines of where does, like, the delineation between state and federal laws and state right and federal right laws -- where do that -- does that come in?

Because, for example, Governor DeSantis just signed in the use of medical marijuana. So while that's clearly, like, a federal crime to be using illicit drugs like that, where does Florida law come in and say, we can do this, or is that --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Sure. That -- and that's another great question. So as you all know, you know, I kind of operate these parallel systems. I mean, I operate predominately in the state court arena in the sense that most of the time I'm pulling off of my bookshelf a volume of Florida Statutes and looking at what did the Florida Legislature say in this area. And then also I'm guided by the language of Florida's Constitution. And for the most part, that's the arena that I'm in.

But as you know -- and so in the federal system, which is a parallel system -- I have friends who are Federal District Court Judges, and they're not looking in Florida Statutes. They

do sometimes, because they're called upon to apply those. But they're looking at the United States Code and the Federal Statutes, until you get to basic rights that citizens enjoy.

And so the basic rights and the basic governing document is the United States Constitution. And then there's also a State Constitution in Florida. And so the Federal Constitution sort of sets a floor for rights. You can never go beneath that floor and say, freedom of speech, under the 1st Amendment, it might mean this in all other states but it means something less than that in Florida. You can never say that, because that's a floor for your rights.

And then the Florida Constitution might grant you more rights than the Federal Constitution. And so one of the big debates is, you know, the word privacy is not found anywhere in the United States Constitution, although *Roe v. Wade* is pretty much a privacy decision and so it's still a controversy today. Does that decision rest on sound constitutional interpretation? This court might recede from it, it could overrule it.

Then if you're a Florida citizen, your argument is going to be, we have an explicit guarantee of privacy in the Florida Constitution so I have the -- I have a Florida constitutional right to abortion because that's what was included when the term privacy was written into the Florida Constitution. I don't know how that will go, but that those are the arguments. So a state can grant more rights than the Federal Constitution. It can never grant fewer rights than are found in the Federal Constitution.

And then -- maybe you studied this in school or not, but for the longest time there was a debate about whether the federal constitutional rights even were to be applied in the states, and that was settled through these amendments that happened as a result of the Civil War, the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendment. And ultimately the U.S. Supreme Court said that most of the basic

rights that we enjoy are incorporated into the state through the 14th Amendment. That's in part what was being adopted when the 14th Amendment was adopted.

And so we have the incorporation of criminal right -- you know, right against search and seizure, and a right against self-incrimination, privacy rights to a degree, and 1st Amendment rights and freedom of assembly through the 14th Amendment.

ALBI MANFREDI: We actually, in government class, just did like a moot court debate on the *Timbs* case the Supreme Court had that selectively incorporated one of the --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah. In the *Timbs* case, was that -- tell me what those facts were.

ALBI MANFREDI: It's about civil asset forfeiture.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yes, whether you can take the --

ALBI MANFREDI: Yeah, excessive fines.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: They took that guy's Jeep --

CRISTIAN CIFERS: Land Rover.

AECHA KIMBALL: Land Rover. Yeah, his Land Rover.

CRISTIAN CIFERS: Yeah.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah, his Land Rover for -- what was his --

AECHA KIMBALL: He had marijuana -- I think possession. And he was selling it.

CRISTIAN CIFERS: No, it was -- yeah, it was something like that. He was selling drugs.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: They incorporated the 8th Amendment prohibition against excessive fines.

ALBI MANFREDI: Yes, excessive fines.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yes, excessive fines.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah, that was an interesting opinion.

ALBI MANFREDI: Since we're talking about, you know, like the differences between the state and federal government and, like, I know one of the things is that, you know, state judiciary, you have to be elected.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Correct.

ALBI MANFREDI: In federal, you have to be appointed.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Correct.

ALFI MANFREDI: So how do those state elections work? How do you, like, run on a platform to be elected without being partisan and --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: That's a great question. Well, first of all, just to remind our listeners, so if you're a trial judge in the federal system, or an appellate judge or a Supreme Court justice, you get nominated to that position by the President of the United States and then you go in front of the Senate. With their advice and consent, if you get that position, you hold it for life, unless you are impeached and removed from office.

Florida does not have that same scheme. So all of the judges in Florida are elected officials as opposed to appointed officials. The trial bench is an elected position. As Circuit court judge I serve for six years. County court judges serve for six years, although I became a County court judge in 1993 when we only served for four-year terms. And then the -- that was changed; our terms are six years at either level.

About half of the bench -- currently there's about 1,000 judges in Florida; 500 of them got to the bench by being appointed to their position and about 500 got there by running a race. So I was appointed to the County court bench by Lawton Chiles in 1993, and appointed to the

Circuit bench by Jeb Bush in 2000. And you say, well, how -- why were you appointed in an elected state. If there's a vacancy in an office midterm -- death, promotion, retirement -- then there is a slate that's sent to the governor and he appoints a judge who then has to run to keep that position down the road. And it used to be you had to run in the next general election. Now you have a year where you get to sit on the bench and then you run in the next general election.

Those elections are -- I don't know if there's a good way to pick a judge, to be honest with you, Albi, because it's kind of like running for class president. You put a sign in somebody's yard. Is it the coolest sign? You can't promise anybody anything. You can't run for class president of the senior class at Lake Mary Prep and say, I'll shorten the school day, you know, or we'll have every Wednesday morning off. You can't do that.

And when you run for judge there's very little you can say. You can't say, I'll lock up criminals, you know, I'll be tough on crime, or I'm liberal or I'm conservative. You cannot go to a partisan fundraiser or event unless all the candidates are invited. So you can't say, hey, I'm a republican, I'm going to go to the republican events. You can't do that. And the only thing you can basically say is, I will be fair or I will be impartial, I will be patient. But you can't even tell people how you would rule projecting out. I might see this kind of case and here's what I would do with it; you can't do that.

And, in fact, if you violate these codes that control our elections, then you can be disciplined by the Florida Supreme Court and potentially removed. And they've done that more and more lately, removed judges for election code violations. Because for a while, as a branch, we were concerned that some people were running saying, I'm going to violate the rules, I'll get elected, even if I get suspended for six months I'll still make more money than I was making in

private practice, or I'll be able to keep the job, I just won't be there for 90 days or 180 days. So the court started to remove people who violate those, otherwise it's chaos.

And so I have to run. I've never had an opponent, knock on wood. I don't need to knock because I'm retiring from the bench in 90 days and so I won't be running another election. But I could have.

And for the trial judges, we have 65 of them in this circuit, a lawyer can file to run against you. That lawyer must have practiced law for at least five years, which is probably too short. It probably should be more like ten, but it is what it is. And then you're in a contested race. And then, you know, fundraising is awkward. We cannot go solicit funds. Committees of responsible people, is what the statute says, can ask other people to provide money to us. That's often done by lawyers, so there's that awkwardness about -- you know, because I can't repay the favor by ever ruling for you just because you helped me get elected.

Then the appellate judges get there in a little different way. So that's -- there are five District Courts of Appeal in Florida, and then there's the one Florida Supreme Court. All those appellate judges are appointed by the governor. And then they are -- appear on a ballot at the general election at the end of their six-year cycle and it says, do you want to keep Justice Lawson or not; do you want to keep Judge Cohen. And these are two very good friends of mine, so I'm using their names. And the voters vote yes or no. And no judge is -- that's called a merit retention election. And no judge in Florida has ever lost a merit retention election.

A few years ago there was a controversial abortion ruling, to go back to that, a parental notification ruling by the -- and three justices kind of had a mounted campaign to be removed from the Florida Supreme Court, and they were not. And I -- you know, whether you agree with their ruling or not, I'm glad that they weren't because I don't like those states that the justices

have to think, you know, if I rule the way I think I should rule, will this cost me my job. And so I -- you know, we don't have that -- that has not happened in Florida. But it happened in Tennessee. It happened in some other states, where slates of justices were removed because of a ruling. And that's not a good thing.

ALBI MANFREDI: Gotcha. One of the other big cases we talk about in government class is the Citizens United Decision from 2010. Does that have any effect on the judicial elections as well?

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Not really. You now, these PACs and big donors, you just don't really see it. There's a limitation on how much you can give in Florida, as you probably know.

ALBI MANFREDI: Okay.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: And I don't know a lot of -- I don't know if any judge, now that I think of it, who's had a PAC necessarily come out and oppose them, other than these justices a few years ago. You know, that could potentially happen, where it would be issue driven, where it's like, take this justice off the court because we don't like how they ruled on this issue.

So, no, I haven't seen a major impact from Citizens United. It has a major impact on federal elections and somewhat on state elections too.

ALBI MANFREDI: Gotcha.

CRISTIAN CIFERS: As opposed though to -- I mean, you were an elected judge. So what would you say your workload would be in comparison to someone who was just appointed?

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Well, our workload is the same pretty much. So I'm the Chief Judge of the circuit. I've been the Chief Judge for four years. I was preceded by Judge Perry who had that position for 18 years. And then Judge Don Myers will take over July 1st.

So the Chief Judge assigns the judges in the circuit to divisions and ensures that the workload is sort of spread out evenly. And so the Chief Judge -- we kind of have adopted a policy of rotation so judges can usually predict, this is where I'll likely go. But ultimately, the Chief Judge can assign judges to wherever he or she wants them to be.

And so we have 10 judges in Circuit Criminal, and so, you know, I look at are their caseloads even in terms of the number of filings that they get every year. And, you know, some of those judges are a little quicker than others, maybe more efficient, better managers so they drive their numbers down maybe compared to another judge and, you know, we take a look at that. But for the most part, the workload is decided based on the filings, and then we move judges into those areas where the work demands it.

Our crisis right now is there's been no judge added to the workforce in Florida at the trial level since 2006. So we have the same workforce that we had 13 years ago. And I speak to lots of economic groups and just ask people facetiously, have you -- have any of you added any employees since 2006. You know, so here in Orange County where we have 60 million visitors, we've got, in the Ninth Circuit, a 1.7 million population base, and we have economic and population prosperity. We're growing, which is a great thing.

But I need new judges. And every year since 2006, I've -- the circuit has qualified for an expansion, and we can't get it from the legislature. And for the last five years, every year we've qualified for at least two and sometimes more Circuit judges, and I can't get them. So I shut down the Business court that we started. We were the first court in Florida that started Business

court to handle complex commercial cases, and I just shut it down to move those judges into Family because the Family litigants that had to wait for rulings in, you know, an unacceptable period of time. And so I had to shut those down. And if we don't get them this year, I don't know what my successor will do. He'll have to make some very difficult decisions about shifting the workload around and deciding which litigants are going to wait longer.

ALBI MANFREDI: What's stopping that, like --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: The legislature determines the number of judges in the state because they're the funding source.

ALBI MANFREDI: Gotcha.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: And so they have to, through legislation, approve the expansion of the branch.

ALBI MANFREDI: And is it not popular in the State Legislature?

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Well, as highly critical as I can get of the legislature about this one topic, let me say something in their defense. So in 2009, of course, we began the Great Recession in the United States. And so from 2009 to 2012, you could understand responsible legislators saying, we've got to figure out where we are economically; we don't want to drive our state into bankruptcy. They're constitutionally required to balance the budget in the State of Florida, unlike the federal government. And so, you know, in their defense, they were wrestling with that for some of this period of time.

And then also in their defense -- I've been up there to lobby for -- please give me the judges that we certified for. And that comes from the Florida Supreme Court. They certify what the need is in each circuit in the state. And so this year we qualified for more judges than any

other circuit. Last year we qualified for more judges than any other circuit. The year before that, we were the only circuit to qualify for circuit judges, and we just haven't gotten them.

But when I go up there to ask the legislators, will you please seriously consider the certification opinion, I get in line, the person in front of me is from the Department of Transportation saying, we need money for roads; the person in front of them says, I'm from the Education lobby, we need money for schools; the person in front of them is, I'm from the Mental Health Association, we're 50th in the nation in per capita mental health funding, would you please give us money; my wife works in the Homeless Advocacy community, she's in the front of the line saying, we need affordable housing and we need money for homeless individuals because it's costing the taxpayers a small fortune to deal with them repeatedly.

So everybody has their hand out and says, please give me resources, resources, resources. And I'm one of them. So in that sense, I understand the fatigue that a legislature feels, because everybody's asking for money.

Having said that, we can -- you can control the size of government as much as you want. As a legislator, it's a policy matter. That's your bailiwick, that's not mine. You get to make policy, not me. So if you want to have a low tax base and small government, you can do it.

What you can't do in a growing state is tell the citizens you represent, your services will remain exactly the same; so don't worry, you'll still get your case heard as fast in court as you got it heard before; that's -- can't happen. I mean, it's just got to -- it was a basic -- who's -- you want to go into business, I've got an MBA, I mean, this is a -- it's really a supply-and-demand curve. You -- we can't serve the same volume of litigants with the number of judges we had 13 years ago if we have 10,000 more filings in our circuit.

And where we just -- where I just couldn't sleep at night anymore was families were having to wait for decisions about temporary child support and temporary alimony. And so whether you could pay your mortgage or rent or would become homeless often depended on the court's ruling, and we just couldn't ask people to wait.

On the other hand, in Business court we had companies with means. They needed our services, but they have means. They could hire very expensive lawyers for very important cases. And I just said, between the two, it's sort of easy; I'm going ask the people with means to hang on while the people who desperately need a decision from us get our attention. And hopefully the legislature will, you know, help me out of this dilemma.

AECHA KIMBALL: That makes sense. Just talking about, like, workload --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Right.

AECHA KIMBALL: -- a quick question on, like, what's your opinion on the jurisdictional changes proposed by the legislature of 50K for County court instead of the 15K limit that's now?

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Right. Well, that's up to them.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yeah.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: And so we -- last year we saw this come in as a branch and it didn't pass, so between the last legislative session and this session we studied -- or we attempted to study what would be the impact if they changed from 15,000 to 25,000. And we looked at Virginia, because they recently had gone through that. And although we're a larger state, we kind of looked at what would that mean in terms of increased caseload of County court. We thought we could absorb it.

But now the legislature's talking about -- well, the latest bill was 30,000 till 2022, then 50,000.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yeah.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: And then that -- as of last week, the House was proposing a \$75,000 increase and the Senate was proposing a \$50,000 increase. It will mean more work for County judges.

I have a need for Circuit court judges. So taking a little work away from them and giving it to the County court judges would help me out because the pressure point for us is Circuit court. At some point in time, if you give too much work to the County judges, then there's going to be a pressure point for needing more County court judges. We're just not there yet. So it's up to the legislature. If they want to do this, they have the absolute right to do it. It might coincidentally help me out because it might move some of the work back into County where I think we're doing okay.

AECHA KIMBALL: That's what I was thinking.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah.

AECHA KIMBALL: How would you say of its, like, impact on the appeal system, if it were to happen?

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah, that's a great question too. So the big area we're wrestling with is, right now County court cases are appealed to the Circuit court.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yes.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: And then Circuit court cases are appealed to the District Court of Appeal. Some County cases go up to the District Court of Appeal; constitutional

questions, questions of great public importance. But most of them go to the Circuit court, so that would increase the Circuit court appellate caseload.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yes.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Because that would grow. And so that might even out. You'd say, oh, well, the Circuit judges, you know, they don't have as much work as they used to. Well, maybe we do because we're doing all those appeals now.

And there was a big debate about whether those County appeals should just -- in that range from 15,000 to -- up should bypass the Circuit court and go -- still go to the District Court of Appeals. I don't think that's going to happen. I think they're going to go to the Circuit court, but it will increase the workload on the appellate divisions of the Circuit court.

AECHA KIMBALL: That makes sense.

ALBI MANFREDI: I was wondering if I could change the subject a little and ask you about --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Sure, absolutely. Basketball?

ALBI MANFREDI: No, no, no, no.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: You want to stay with the court system. Okay.

ALBI MANFREDI: The Casey Anthony trial was something we had a lot of questions about just because of how big it was in terms of media attention.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Okay.

ALBI MANFREDI: And just a few days ago, you know, Casey Anthony is still in the media, showing up at like places in Palm Beach. So we were just wondering, like, what it was like to go through such a highly-publicized case and have to deal with that logistically.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah. And the person to really ask is Judge Perry, or maybe now Judge Ashton who was one of the three prosecutors on the case and he's now on our bench. It was unlike anything we'd ever seen before. We've never had anything like it. I don't know if we will have anything like it again. We might. We have a couple of high-profile cases right now.

But it was just a tsunami that grew. And I -- it's funny because I don't know if anybody really saw it coming. As horrible as this sounds, that's not the first case where we've dealt with the murder of a child. And so we thought, well, we've handled these cases before, maybe not with defendants that look like Casey Anthony. And then that case kind of, you know, had all these twists and turns in it so it just sort of took off and it -- and then had a life of its own.

So I was in the building when the media tents were set up across the street and, you know, we were overwhelmed with the media presence. We had to manage jurors who we -- Judge Perry picked from another location and brought here, then just kind of kept their location secret, and that took a lot of logistical challenges, mostly for Court Administration.

And, you know, the courthouse was an interesting place then, getting in, getting out. You know, you probably know we had the fight in line for people who wanted to get in and see part of the trial, when you just lined up and first-come, first-serve, and then there was people saving spaces and they got in fistfights, then we went to this lottery system. So just logistically it was really challenging.

I don't know -- I've been very proud of Judge Perry for many reasons. But I don't know that I was ever more proud of how he handled that case. I mean, he did a spectacular job handling all of the pressures of that case and being Chief Judge of this circuit at the same time. And now that I'm Chief Judge, I don't know how he did it, to handle that case. And I thought he

made us look really good, because that thing could have blown up at any moment. And I think his personality was such that he kept it under control and moved it along and it got tried. So he was the perfect judge, in my opinion, to handle that case, and I have tremendous respect for him for that, and things the public don't get to see, which is the job he did as Chief Judge day in and day out for 18 years.

So a big loss when we left [sic] him. Big shoes to fill. And if I'd done half the job he did, I'm, you know, satisfied that I succeeded him. But he did a great job on the case.

CRISTIAN CIFERS: All right. Florida has the Sunshine Laws where media can come into the courtrooms and videotape everything and everything is open to the public. So how does that media pressure then impact trials in the sense of fairness, even?

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah, that's another great question. Because it, you know, can have an impact in terms of if you have a really high-profile case. I'm presiding over one right now, can't talk too much about it. But it can have an impact.

Like for Casey Anthony, Judge Perry went out of this circuit to find jurors who didn't know anything about the case, and he basically had to do that. And every now and then we have cases that get so much pretrial publicity that you have to go out of the circuit to get jurors, so there's that impact.

And the first time as a judge where you walk into your courtroom and look up and there's a camera, you know, staring you in the face can be a little disconcerting. Honestly, you kind of get used to it after a while. You sort of forget it's there. You know, I don't think you ever completely forget that it's there, but it becomes sort of less impactful as the day goes on.

As judges we monitor, are these lawyers playing to a camera or are they doing their job the way they're supposed to do it. And so you're -- we're a little conscious of that. But we are a

state, and I'm happy that we are, with a deep tradition of public record access. And then of course in the court system historically, we've been open to the public. Anybody can come here and watch any trial that they want. And we were one of the leading states to say, you can have cameras in the courtroom because of the public access to this taxpayer-funded court system. I mean, the court system is funded by the taxpayers paying their taxes, and it should have transparency. I shouldn't be up there secretly deciding how cases should be determined, and so the public should be able to see me.

Sometimes it presents logistics challenges. Today we're a little concerned about non-traditional media and whether they affect the trial as it's going. So, you know, every now and then we have people in there and they're filming -- and we're pretty strict about filming because of security concerns. So someone might be in there filming the courtroom legitimately to just get some clip to run on a website. But someone could also pretend to be the media, film the security system in the courtroom because they're trying to aid someone in escaping and overtaking security, and so we monitor that a little bit.

But -- and there are certain procedures, Cris, that are closed off to the media. And so -- young children who testify and the victims of sexual offenses, you can clear the courtroom for that. So, you know, there are certain areas where we do close the courtroom off, but it's very rare. It's the rare exception, so --

AECHA KIMBALL: Yes. Like, one question we have is, like, how have new technologies changed how the courts look at the privacy of individuals? So --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Well, part of it is what I just mentioned.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yes.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: We're concerned about this balance between transparency and access and security.

AECHA KIMBALL: Definitely.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: So years ago in Atlanta, we know that the corrections people walked this defendant down the same hallway week after week after week, and he at one point overpowered the person who was escorting him, disarmed her, shot and killed her, went into the courtroom and started shooting people.

In 1983, we had a courtroom shooting and a deputy was murdered immediately on the fourth floor of the courthouse -- I was in the courthouse that day, heard the shots -- and then shot and injured seriously two other deputies who ultimately really died from the complications of that. So you have to be conscious not just of the judge's security but everybody in the courthouse. Anybody that day could have been killed. Turned out it was court deputies who put their lives on the line, but it could have been a spectator in the court, you know, sitting in the back of the courtroom. And so we have to be conscious of that.

It is a building where people come, they are anxious when they get here. We might be taking children away from a parent one day. We might be sentencing a son or daughter to life in prison. We're telling people, you're getting divorced and now you're going to have to work out a schedule to see your children. And all of those are traumatic events and develop significant anxiety, and so sometimes people act out and want to hurt other people. So we have to be conscious of that and balance that with we want access through new media and traditional media to see what we're doing.

AECHA KIMBALL: That makes sense. A common question a lot of people ask is -- I'm just going to go more into a different topic of --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Okay.

AECHA KIMBALL: -- how fair or effective are the due process rights defendants receive today? And, like, is it enough that defendants be provided a free attorney if they cannot afford one, or do they have a right to expect the same legal representation that persons who can afford the best attorney receive?

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Well, I'm going to break that in two.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yes.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: So as you stated today, and since *Gideon v. Wainwright* which happened in Florida, if you can't afford an attorney in a criminal case then the court will appoint one at no charge to you. There are some minimal charges initially, but you're entitled to a court-appointed attorney that the state pays for.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yes.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: And that led to the creation of the Public Defender system, and so there are -- there's a -- basically a large, in each circuit, sort of agency, the Public Defender's Office, with attorneys who represent people, not charging them a fee for their case, but they're salaried and they represent whoever the court tells them, you'll represent that person.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yes.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: So let me say this. Some of the Public Defenders I've seen are the most talented advocates that I've had who deserve much more appreciation and recognition than other lawyers, because they're not in there because they're trying to make as much money as they can but because they believe in the system of due process, and know enough about the judge, because they are there every day, and how he or she might rule or feel about a certain matter that they can advise their clients well what to do in this particular case.

And so -- but they don't get enough credit. They get crap from their clients a lot of time, I want a real lawyer; well, I am a real lawyer. And, you know, they take a lot of guff that they shouldn't have to take a lot of times from their own clients. The problem is they are overburdened with cases.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yes. We (indiscernible) that.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: So they have so many cases that naturally they cannot devote the same amount of time as a private attorney who's getting paid a nice fee can devote to a single case. And so that's sort of resource driven. But in terms of their skill set and their dedication, they're -- they can be really good. And they would be great if they only had three cases. But there's not a day in their career when they've only had three cases. You know, they're carrying 50, 60, 70, 130 cases at a time.

AECHA KIMBALL: Definitely. I met a couple and I discussed about the problem with them, because I have full respect for everything they do.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Right.

AECHA KIMBALL: But they talk a lot about how they are overburdened --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Right.

AECHA KIMBALL: -- and overworked and, like, how they don't have the resources --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Right.

AECHA KIMBALL: -- and how they're trying to get the resources, much like how you're trying to get more judges.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Right. See, there's another example. I should have put them in the line that I was talking about that earlier. I forgot the prosecutors and the Public Defenders. They have their hand out understandably too.

CRISTIAN CIFERS: But it's just -- not just in Florida. I remember reading somewhere that Louisiana that -- like, several Public Defenders who have upwards of, like, 200, 600 cases.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah, that's really tough.

AECHA KIMBALL: (Indiscernible) it's horrible.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah, really tough. But they do good work.

ALBI MANFREDI: Yeah. I was wondering if I could ask you about another hot-button legal issue. I'm not sure how in depth you can go about it, but it's the death penalty.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Fire away.

ALBI MANFREDI: I know we are one of the states that we can sentence it. And rather than asking you, like, your opinion on whether or not it's constitutional, just like what is it like to sentence someone to death?

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Well -- so I haven't sentenced anyone to death.

ALBI MANFREDI: Okay.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: As a prosecutor, I asked the court to sentence a defendant to death -- one, two three -- about four times, I think. I've had death penalty cases as a judge. All of them worked out to where they were resolved short of trial by the defendant pleading. And so I've never had a case where I've had to ask the jury, you know, for their recommendation and then make that ultimate decision.

I have two pending death penalty cases. I can't talk about them. I'm not going to share my personal opinion, it's just inappropriate.

As you-all probably know from studying it, so the case law about death is evolving in the State of Florida. So now, you know, as of a couple of years ago, and this wasn't true for most of

my judicial or legal career, jurors have to unanimously recommend death as opposed to a majority of the jurors recommending death. And the United States Supreme Court declared our Death Penalty Statute unconstitutional because it didn't have unanimous death recommendation. So that's caused a lot of activity in the courts, so we have a lot of resentencings to do in cases where the jury recommended death 10 to 2 or 9 to 3.

And, you know, we're a state where the policymakers have decided that it's going to be a death penalty state. The big debate is, is it -- you know, I think sometimes the public is surprised to hear this, but probably it's more expensive to execute someone than it is to keep them in prison for life. And that largely is because there is so much post-trial activity. Post-conviction motions that start at the trial level and flow through the Florida Supreme Court, the whole state court system and then over to the federal system, and then up to the U.S. Supreme Court, and maybe back to the Circuit Court of Appeals, then back to the Florida Supreme Court, back down -- they take these, you know, lengthy routes before the death penalty is actually effectuated.

AECHA KIMBALL: We've heard that takes, like, years and years and years. We've looked at a couple of those cases, where it just takes a long --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah. It's pretty rare for someone to quickly be put to death. And we have -- I don't know what it is today -- over 400 inmates on death row. Some have been there for 30 years.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yeah. On a lighter note --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Okay. Good.

AECHA KIMBALL: -- why did you want to become a judge and, like, what advice would you give to those who would want to?

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: As a trial lawyer -- so I started in private practice for three years and did kind of whatever walked through the door in a small firm. Then I went to Washington, D.C. and practiced in the District of Columbia before an administrative agency. But I wanted to come back to Florida. My family was here. And I applied to the Public Defender's Office and the State Attorney's Office and I got accepted at both, and I went to the State Attorney's Office because I wanted to learn the skill set of proving a case as opposed to attacking a case. I thought maybe someday in private practice I would have to prove cases in front of jurors.

And so I ended up at the State Attorney's Office, and I loved that work. I absolutely loved trying cases. But you go to court every day; every single day. And so I saw dozens of judges. And I saw their different styles and their different philosophies and their different approaches. And after a while I thought -- I, you know, began to think, maybe I can do that.

And I think if you're a trial lawyer, a lot of trial lawyers think, I wonder what it would be like to make the decisions up there. And so I kind of naturally moved over that way. I think my personality might be as suited for being a judge or maybe even a little more suited than as a prosecutor. And I don't think I was a bad prosecutor, but just I think my personality was such where I thought my skill set might be best demonstrated on the bench.

And so I applied a few times and then got appointed. And then applied a lot of times to get to the next trial level and eventually got appointed to that. My bias is I like trial judges who were trial lawyers, because the learning curve is a lot less. And what you do is try cases and manage dockets. And so if you were in a practice where you didn't go to court much, then I think your learning curve is pretty steep. That's not to say you can't end up being a good judge. You can. But I think it's very beneficial if you've been in a courtroom, because that's where

you're going to spend every single day of your career when you put on a robe, is in a hearing room or a courtroom.

And if you don't have that experience -- you know, I got to look at judges and go, that's a really strong judge in this area, maybe not so strong in that area. And another judge, go, that judge is strong in that other area. But -- and, you know, finally you think, I think this is the management approach to take to be a trial judge. I love being a trial judge. I mean, I love this job.

I was talking -- I did a podcast with a Russian -- former Russian judge and a former Russian lawyer, and we were talking a little bit about Marxism and the alienation of workers. And I said, you know, for 26 years I've loved coming to work. And I do. I love -- there are days that are tough, but I love what I do in the building, and I love -- the colleagues that I work with are really bright, fascinating people, all have all kinds of different life experiences but they're very smart and, you know, fun to work with and make you think. And then going into the courtroom and doing that work, I love it.

Now I'm kind of doing management work. And I never thought I'd use my MBA much, but I got an MBA and so all of a sudden I'm kind of relying on those skills as much as my legal training in law school, so --

AECHA KIMBALL: I see. So you had, like, vast experience from before and then you've --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: I had trial court experience.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yeah.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: And that helped me a lot, I think, to be a judge. And so, you know, if someone were to come to me and say, what does it take -- and the other thing is

you've got to either decide am I going to -- the path, like, am I going to run for this position or hope to get appointed.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yeah.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: And I thought I had the skill set to be a judge younger than I really did. I can tell you that having a family changed my perspective on a lot of things, and I think I may be a better judge to have children. Not that you have to have children to be a good judge, but it -- but, you know, it helped me think about is what I'm listening to and judging here, is it that serious and -- or is it not as serious as other people might believe; do I want to affect someone's life by a decision I make forever with this younger person, or take them down a path where they get a second chance. And I think having children made me stop and think more about that.

AECHA KIMBALL: That makes complete sense. Some events just help give you perspective on that.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: It gave me perspective.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yeah.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: And of course, if you want to be a lawyer or a judge, you've got to do well in -- where you-all are, in high school, so you get into a good college, then you have to do it all over again and do well there; you know, take that test to get into law school, the LSAT.

AECHA KIMBALL: Yeah.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: And then you want to perform well there, because we have a lot of lawyers now so the competition is tough and you want to have the best legal education you can get.

CRISTIAN CIFERS: Going on that, does backgrounds of where these lawyers and -- who eventually transition over and running for election and becoming judge, your socioeconomic background, I mean, how much of an impact do you think that plays?

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Well, let me think about that for a minute. On our bench, 51 percent of the judges in our circuit are women, so we have a pretty significant gender balance on the bench. We are underrepresented in minorities. And so 17 percent of the population in Orange County is African-American, 7 percent of the judges are African-American; 30-some percent of the population in Orange County is Hispanic -- it's probably a little higher in Osceola County -- like, 5 percent of the bench is Hispanic.

So, you know, we're underrepresented in terms of ethnic minorities. We have balance in terms of gender balance. I think we have judges who are fairly wealthy, mostly from a pretty successful private practice, some maybe from inheritance, but -- and then we have judges who are middle-of-the-road, and some judges who fought their way out of poverty and tough neighborhoods and, you know, exceeded, you know, maybe what people expected them to do and now serve as judges and bring an invaluable perspective to the administration of the criminal and civil laws.

I think the more diversity we have as a group, the better we are, so that we all don't think the same. That would be boring and probably unhelpful. And so, you know, when we sit around and talk about approaches to things, it's good to get someone else's perspective that might be different than yours to force you to think critically about am I right or wrong about this legal principle, and am I on target or off in this discretionary area that I have, and have I thought about the impact my decision has on people of means and people who don't have means, what about policing in our -- you feel policed one particular way in an affluent neighborhood and you feel

policed in an entirely different way in a less affluent neighborhood. And hearing all of that from our colleagues is, you know, beneficial and helps us be better judges.

You know, you can get appoint -- I mean, if you run in an election, you're going to have to pay for that election somehow. And so if you have your own money it's easier, then you don't have to raise it all, so that's true. But that's not the only path to the bench, so --

AECHA KIMBALL: That makes sense. One more quick question from me. Why is Maryland so much better than Duke?

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Well, of course, you just have to flip that upside down. Who is still in the tournament? I believe that's Duke. Maryland -- and Maryland, you know, ran from Duke. They ran out of the ACC and joined the Big Ten, where my son works. So Maryland was Duke's nemesis when he was at Duke and they were in the ACC. And just when he thought he'd got away from it and escaped, they switched over to the Big Ten. So, you know, those Terrapins -- I don't know.

AECHA KIMBALL: Sorry, Albi, I had to ask.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: You get in the gym and they're just -- oh, my Lord. Yes, that's -- I know what you were doing there.

AECHA KIMBALL: I might --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: God bless UCF. They played one phenomenal game. And it's too bad that Coach K, you know, was competing against I think the player he loved the most who went through his program at Duke, Johnny Dawkins, his first National Player of the Year, first championship when he was the head coach, like a son to him, assistant coach there for 14 years. He doesn't like playing his former players. And then to have that game and beat them the

way they did. And then, of course, Johnny Dawkins -- Coach Dawkins' son Aubrey just was spectacular.

And that was -- I mean, I know Coach K was glad he won, but I -- he doesn't like to play his former players. And my son was in the basketball program at Duke and knows Coach K well and knows Johnny Dawkins well, and he said it was painful for him just to watch because he cared very much and respected both of those guys who had a significant impact on his life, so -- and that was just my son who was a student manager for the team.

Coach K, you know, maybe owed his career at Duke to Johnny Dawkins coming to Duke, because he might not -- you know, he needed to turn that program around and Johnny Dawkins was the one who did it.

So -- see, we got basketball in here. I knew we --

ALBI MANFREDI: Yeah, we did. We managed to slip it in.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Last question. Who wants to fire away? We could end with the Maryland/Duke debate. But you -- I'm surprised you didn't ask me about UNC. I really thought that's -- I thought that's where you were going.

ALBI MANFREDI: That might have been too touchy of a subject.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah, that would have been -- yeah, we would have had to edit my comment out of this. Just teasing. I'm just teasing.

Anything else? You guys were great. Those questions were spectacular. I don't know how much time we spent, but it flew by. Yeah, we normally do about 30 to 45 minutes. I think we've been going for 60 minutes, but --

AECHA KIMBALL: Oh, wow.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Best of luck to each one of you. If you are the future, and I know that you are, I think we're in great hands. And you owe a debt of gratitude to your teachers, your parents and your Principal, who's here. So you should say thanks before you leave Lake Mary for the final time, because you will look back and go, I don't know that I ever told them enough or strongly enough what a great influence they had on my life.

And I know that now about my high school teachers and my college teachers who truly changed my direction. So -- you know, and what drives me crazy today is teachers get a lot of garbage from the community; you know, they don't work hard enough. And they're underpaid and -- they're way underpaid and they're way underappreciated, and it should be the reverse. We should overpay them and over-appreciate them. But anyway, that's my last lecture for the day.

Thank you all for coming. You were great.

ALBI MANFREDI: Thank you so much for having us.

CRISTIAN CIFERS: Thank you.

AECHA KIMBALL: Thank you so much.

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