

**OPEN NINTH:  
CONVERSATIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM  
JUDICIAL SPOTLIGHT  
EPISODE 145  
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HOSTED BY: LISA T. MUNYON**

(Music)

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

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

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Hello, and welcome to Open Ninth. I’m here today with Judge Brian Sandor, one of our newest County Judges here in the Ninth Circuit.

Before joining the bench, Judge Sandor worked as an assistant state attorney for the Fifth Judicial Circuit, as an associate attorney with The Ticket Clinic, and as a trial attorney with Morgan & Morgan. But, in September of 2021, Governor Ron DeSantis appointed him to the Orange County bench here in the Ninth Circuit.

I’m thrilled to have you in the studio today, Judge Sandor. Thank you for joining me.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** Thank you so much for the invitation.

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

**JUDGE SANDOR:** So I grew up right here downtown. I grew up right off of Livingston and Orange, just a few blocks away from the courthouse. We moved here -- my family moved here from Puerto Rico shortly after I was born. So I was born in Puerto Rico but I’ve lived in Orlando pretty much my whole life.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** So I did not realize that your family was from Puerto Rico. Do you still have family there?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I do. But most of my close family members are either here in the Central Florida area or spread out within the United States. Most of my extended family that I

don't really keep up with is now in Puerto Rico. Little by little, everyone started to move over in the '80s.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Oh, okay. So you grew up in Orlando. I suspect that you have seen a lot of changes in Orlando since you grew up here.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I would say so, yes. I got to watch the courthouse be built literally from my home. Watching I-4 change and the 408 change, and all of the development with new schools and roads, the traffic, the population, the west side of town blowing up the way that is has residentially. I remember when going out to Ocoee was a big trip for the family. Why are we going all the way out there? And then I moved another fifteen minutes past Ocoee at one point in life. So, yes, Orlando has changed so much over the years.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** And there used to be orange groves out there when you drove that far out to Ocoee.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** Exactly right. Exactly right. You could see them just on both sides of the road. You could pull over and just walk onto someone's farm and take an orange without much of anybody looking at you funny. Now, that would be a big deal.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Right. And you could smell them.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** You could smell them.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** And people that have not been to Orlando -- or have not lived in Orlando since the '80s, don't realize what orange blossoms smell like when they are just everywhere.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** Everywhere. That's right. In parts of Polk County, you can still smell them down when you go through that way by the factories. And same within Leesburg and

parts of Lake County where they still have the big groves and the canning and the juicing. The smell is amazing.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** So you grew up in Orlando. What did you like doing when you were growing up here?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** Man, I loved a lot of different things. I loved before when you could drive out to Tradeport by the airport and just watch the planes land. My family would do that, we would picnic out that way, growing up a little bit in Conway before we moved downtown.

I loved more of the local attractions like Gatorland that were a little less touristy, a little bit more for the local residents. The Orlando Science Center back when they used to allow sleepovers in the planetarium.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Oh, I remember those, yeah.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** Those were kind of the more fun days that I remember growing up here. Swimming in lakes before things got a little hairy. Just being able to go into Lake Conway and have good times boating and things like that as a kid. Those were the good times.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** So I get the sense that you're very close to family and that you have a large family.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I do. I do. I have three older brothers, and then I have my own children. So amongst all of us, there's sixteen grandkids that my parents have -- fourteen grandkids that my parents have, excuse me. But I also have cousins that are the age of my nieces and nephews, so I kind of look at them as nieces and nephews type age. So when we get together every other year for a large family reunion, it's about forty to fifty people, depending on who can make it.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Wow. Well, you -- I have noticed you have an incredible work ethic, and I suspect that came from your parents.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** It did. It did. And I appreciate you saying that because I try really hard. And I think that's one of the things that keeps me motivated. My parents both worked growing up, and I know the sacrifices they made because my -- in order to take care of all of us, with the different extracurricular activities we did, my dad switched from working days to working nights. So he would go into work at 4 o'clock and work until 8 o'clock in the morning in the IT industry, and my mom would work a more traditional 8:00 to 5:00 so that there was never a time where one parent wasn't available to take care of the rest of us. If someone had to call in sick -- or call out for school or a soccer tournament somewhere, we always had someone there.

And so seeing them constantly working and sacrificing their own relationship so that they could always provide for us and always be working, that was something that always stuck with me.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** So where did you go to high school?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I went to Winter Park High School. So I wasn't zoned for Winter Park but I was in the IB Magnet Program, so I was able to live downtown but go to Winter Park instead of either Boone or Edgewater. I kind of had my choice based on the address.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** So I suspect you were a good student.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I had potential that may not have fully been taken advantage of at the time. I was kind of that kid that just got it a little bit quicker than most but didn't really apply myself too much at that point in time. It really took some maturing later on in life for me to really understand what I could potentially do.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** So what made you want to go to law school?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** So my grandfather was a lawyer.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Oh, okay.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** He was a lawyer in Puerto Rico. He went to law school at night.

This is a little bit of my investiture speech that you're going to get a preview of. My grandfather graduated from law school from the University of Puerto Rico in 1972. My mom was born in 1953. So you can tell the gap in time that he had.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Yeah.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** And I don't think that many people went back to school in the '70s, I don't think.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Right.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I think it was much more taboo back then. And then so he because a licensed attorney in Puerto Rico, then we moved over here and he started a coin laundry business to kind of make ends meet while he studied for the Florida Bar. And eventually he did become a licensed bar attorney in the State of Florida. And then my uncle went to law school at night in New York and then ended up practicing in the tax area as opposed to practicing law.

So it was always something that was in my family, but it wasn't necessarily the family business. And those are two people in my family that I always looked up to. And so towards the end of my undergraduate studies, I was really struggling with what to do. And my uncle and I had a heart to heart. Much like what he did, he said, go to law school, you learn skills, you learn a way of thinking that is so much different than what other people have, that even if you want to be like me where you have a law degree but you don't practice it, it's so valuable.

And so I decided at that point in time to go to law school because I did love the law and the idea of the law, but I wasn't necessarily sure I wanted to actually be a practicing lawyer.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** So where did you go to law school?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I went to Michigan State. I got out of here.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Why moving from Florida to the cold state of Michigan?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I think part of it was because I had never left Florida, and I had really never left Central Florida. I went to UCF for undergrad, partially for soccer. I didn't -- that didn't pan out very well because I injured myself and so my scholarship and all of that kind of went away fairly quickly.

But I knew that if I went -- we spoke a little bit earlier about family. I had a brother in Jacksonville, and we know there's a law school in Jacksonville. I had a brother at the time in Tampa, and we know there's a law school in Tampa. And so I almost said no to both of those because I had family in the area and I didn't want to get stuck there. And then knowing myself, I didn't want to go to South Florida because I didn't think I would go to school. I thought I would just enjoy that South Florida life.

So I decided to join my other brother who had moved to Michigan. After he went to Ohio State, he moved back to Michigan with his wife. And it was having somebody an hour away, so it was still family close but it wasn't too close. And I just wanted to get out and experience something different on my own for the first time. I had had my parents close by for too long and it was too much of a crutch, so I decided to kind of get out there.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** So you talked briefly about your scholarship to UCF playing soccer. So you must have played soccer in high school.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I did. I did. I grew up playing a variety of sports, but soccer was the one that I stuck with the longest. I grew up here playing in a local club type thing, and at one point in high school I was playing for three different club teams plus my high school team.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Wow.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** And I had traveled the entire US, won two State Championships, went to four other Final Fours, got to play in England one summer representing the US, not for the national team but for a club area level. And I decided that I wanted to keep playing -- and unfortunately the University of Florida and Florida State, neither of which have men's soccer programs -- and so it was almost by default that I stayed local because my top two choices of UF and FSU didn't have men's soccer.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** So what position did you play?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I was an outside left midfielder or a forward, just depending on which team I was on. I think being left-footed and left-handed was actually the only thing that made me much better than anybody else. It was such a unique thing. I think if I had been right-footed, I would have just been maybe above average as opposed to being left-footed kind of made me a little more specialized and a little more rare to have.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** So how long did you play soccer at UCF?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** So that's the rub. So I separated my shoulder and broke my collar bone my junior year of high school, and that's when a lot of my college scholarships were taken away -- or revoked, I guess you could say. And so I had planned on going out of state to a more prestigious soccer program than UCF was back at the time. And so after I was injured and I had to sit out for a while, I had lost a lot of scholarship offers and UCF was the only one that took me to actually continue playing and I was what was called a grayshirt. So instead of a redshirt

where you sit out a full year, a grayshirt is you sit out until January. So you start in August and then you sit out till January.

While that proceeded and that was going well, I ended up failing my physical due to the weakness of my shoulder. And so I had to have surgery December of my freshman year. And between my surgery and January, UCF changed conferences from the Atlantic Sun Conference to Conference USA and they fired our coach. And so my deal with our coach was no longer on the table. And out of the twenty-six guys that were on the team, I believe nineteen were let go.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Wow.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** And so they only kept about seven guys. Most people transferred to other schools because other schools were interested in them. Nobody was interested in me. I hadn't played at a competitive level for quite some time and I was coming off of surgery, so I just decided to stick with academics.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Well, it turned out well for you.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** It did. It did. I'm really happy to be where I am.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** So when -- you went to law school in Michigan, and obviously you decided to come back to Florida.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I did. There was never a moment in time where I thought I wasn't going to -- that I was going to stay in Michigan, let me put it that way. There were times where I wanted to stay in DC. Michigan State has a great externship program in DC where you can, your spring semester as a 2L or 3L, work for a federal agency Tuesday through Friday and go to school on Mondays. Because there's enough students that go that they could hold class on Mondays.

And so my 3L year I did it and I really wanted to stay in DC, but the government shut down for funding and so there were no jobs being offered. So I knew it was either DC or Florida. But I never had any intention on going anywhere else. I always thought I wanted to come home until the DC thing happened, and I thought DC was a great city. I still think DC is a great city. But I always wanted to come back to Orlando, pretty much.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** So when you got back to Orlando, your first job was where?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** In Lake County, in Tavares, at the Office of the State Attorney of the Fifth Circuit. Unfortunately, the Ninth wasn't hiring at that point in time, and it was in 2011, so shortly after the big market crash. I think there was an oversaturation of attorneys and so the Ninth was full and I wanted to stay relatively close, so I applied to both Volusia and Lake and took the first job offer that I got. And I'm glad it was Lake, because I ended up falling in love with sleepy, little Lake County and Tavares and Mt. Dora. I never thought I would have ended up there, but I really loved being there.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** And I think Brad King was the State Attorney then, and his office is great to work for.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** He was. And he sat in on my interview with all of the heads of the other counties, and it was pretty daunting sitting there with so many people who you have at this point so much respect for but it was so intimidating at the time not knowing who was who. Because I couldn't figure out who was what for which office, and I just knew that I wanted a job. And I preferred Lake County because it was the county closest to Orange, that I could come home every weekend.

But it is -- it was a great office. Such a family environment. When I was in Lake County, I met now Judge Gibson. She was there at the same time I was there. And I think at that point in time there were only about twenty-five or twenty-six attorneys in the whole office for Lake County.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Wow.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** There was only two County Court Judges, four Circuit Court Judges in Criminal. And everybody got to know each other. You just became family. And I think at that point in my time -- that point in time in my life, being away from family, I needed that family atmosphere.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** So what kind of cases did you try when you were in Lake County?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** So I started off -- Lake County had a misdemeanor fast-track docket. So I did all first appearances and all arraignments for County Court, which sounds daunting but in Lake County a 30-person first-appearance docket is a large docket. So unlike Orange, where that would be a great day, in Lake, that was a busy day. So I would do that and then I would do all of the arraignments.

So my first case wasn't until about a year and a half after I started, and that was a misdemeanor trespass. So I did about ten or so trials in County Court. Normally your DUI's, that's the big sticking point in County Court trial base. But I did get to do some drug trafficking cases, some punishable by life burglary with battery cases.

The dockets over there are handled differently with the way the State Attorney structure is. When -- once I was in Circuit Court, I did everything but sex crimes and 10-20-Life cases.

We didn't have specialized drug prosecution at that point in time. We only had those two other specialties.

So it was quite a wide range of cases, which was great because I think in some areas you get so specialized that some of the attorneys don't get the opportunities to put their hands in different jars, and that really helped me. So I think I had about twenty-five to thirty trials during my time at the State Attorney's Office there, and it was a broad range of things, thankfully.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** So what made you decide to leave and go to The Ticket Clinic?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** So it was multiple offers from the attorney at The Ticket Clinic that I kept saying no to, because I really liked what I was doing and I wanted more trial experience and I wasn't sure I was going to get that at The Ticket Clinic doing so much traffic work. But it ultimately was coming home. It really was. My parents are -- were getting older in age. Unfortunately, about a month after I left, my grandmother, who lived with my parents, passed, so I was able to be in Orlando for about three or four weeks with her before she passed away.

But it was all about the family, again. It was coming home. I knew that this is where I wanted to start a family. I didn't have a family at that point in time. I had a girlfriend of a week, who is now my wife. But I decided that if that's what I wanted to do, I wanted to do it where my family was. And even though my brothers had kind of scattered a little bit, we always have a tendency to come home, I think as most people do. And so it was my family that made me end up actually taking the offer. As nice as Mr. Azcano is, my former boss, it was more about my family than it was about the job offer itself.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** And how long did you stay there?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I was there for five years. And so that, to this point in my life, has been the longest job that I've ever had. And I think it's because of having family around and being able to be in Orlando and have such a good work environment. I was there from February of 2015 until January of 2020.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** And during that time, I would assume that you continued to see your now present wife and --

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I did. I did. She got very tired of the commute, because she was an assistant state attorney in Lake County as well. We met at work, as taboo as that is. We met at work, and I moved back to Orlando, and we were doing the traveling an hour each way fairly often, and then she was assigned to -- as you spoke about it, she was assigned to Brad King's homicide cases that were being prosecuted here in Orange. So she was able to finally move to Orlando with me, and we were able to get married -- 15 months after we started dating, we got married, and we had a kid about a year after that and we've been able to start a family and do everything here in Orlando, which was kind of my goal all along.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** And does she still work for Brad King's office?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** She does not. She's in private practice at this point. She works for a private civil defense firm doing construction litigation defense, primarily.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** So you left The Ticket Clinic, and then you went to?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I went to a small, family, boutique firm called Morgan & Morgan.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Yeah, I'm not sure I would call it small, family, boutique firm.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I think when I started they said I was lawyer 557, or something like that. They did keep track. I was number 557 hired, and I think when I left they were in the 850s.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Wow.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** So I came -- I went to Morgan & Morgan to diversify my practice area. I loved my time at The Ticket Clinic. I loved my job. I really enjoyed helping more of your everyday person with their license issues or traffic issues, because that happens to everybody. But I really wanted to branch out into civil litigation. I had only done criminal for eight years. I had -- it was day in, day out criminal work. And while I loved it, I knew that where I am now was where I ultimately wanted to be.

And so to do that I thought that broadening my base with adding civil litigation would be helpful, and a place where I could still do trial work because I love trial work. And that's one thing you always get in criminal, if you want it, are trials. And so I thought that a place like Morgan & Morgan that's so heavy in their trial work would be a good fit for me.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** All right. And you worked there for how long?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I worked there for two years. And unfortunately I never got my trial because of COVID. I started at Morgan & Morgan in January of 2020, and as we know --

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Oops, yeah.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** -- three months later -- not enough time to get on a trial docket, and I was there until I was appointed. But it was great. I was on a lot of trial dockets but we kept getting bumped.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Yes. And with COVID, I don't think we started doing civil trials again until June or July of 2021.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** Right.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Just before you were appointed.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** Right. And so I was on one of Judge Myers' last trial dockets, and I really thought I was going to go, and I ended up getting appointed ten days before my date to pick a jury. So I had to file an emergency motion with him to get bumped so that the new attorney that was going to be replacing me could have time to get familiar with the file.

But I was really eager trying to go on a civil case, because my longest criminal case was three days and that's lightening quick for a civil case.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Yes.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** And so I really wanted to see where I stood as far as the civil bar goes because it's just completely different. And I am sad that I never got to try a civil jury trial. I sat third on a trial in January of 2020, I think it was my second week at Morgan & Morgan, but all I did was take notes. I didn't get to say anything. I didn't get to ask anybody anything. I probably would have passed out if they asked me to at that point in time. But, yeah, that's one thing I do miss.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** So why did you decide that you wanted to pursue the bench?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** So I'm glad you asked that, because it's a few different things. There's a few different reasons. And one was because of working at The Ticket Clinic, I went to eight different counties as part of my practice area. And over time, it became harder and harder to explain to clients why things were so different in so many different places. And I understand that as a practitioner, I understand that as a resident or a citizen of a specific county. But sentencing is one thing, as far as that goes. But why the rules and the procedures are different in so many different places is really hard to explain to a lay person.

And so having so many different experiences, and unfortunately having some very bad experiences with judges who just seemed unprepared or somewhat cavalier as to their position, it was something that I thought, hey, if you want to see a change, voicing your opinion only goes so far. Being part of the change can take you there.

And then you mix that with my grandfather that we spoke about earlier. My grandfather's dream was to be a judge, and that was a dream he had in Puerto Rico. And it's something he very well could have had in Puerto Rico because we were from such a small town --

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Right.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** -- that that was kind of a more feasible, more doable thing. But then coming over here and starting from scratch, taking a bar exam in a different language, having to develop a reputation, it just was something that he had always had but never really got the chance to pursue.

So you mix those two things together, and you sit on it for a little while, as I did, and then you practice in front of judges you respect and admire, and you develop relationships and then you get involved in various judicial campaigns over the years, which is what I did. And over time it just kind of festered within me that this was something I was going to want to do.

And so I ended up starting applying -- not thinking I had much of a shot -- in a bid to potentially run in the future. And things went my way. Things went pretty well. I didn't get it my first try. It took me three applications. But I think that's pretty quick overall. I was very shocked and surprised that I got it when I did. But I'm very happy at the same time because it wasn't exactly something that I thought was going to happen so quickly.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** So I know that there are -- lawyers think that being a judge is one thing, but the reality sometimes is something very different, even if you're in court every day as a lawyer. So what surprised you most when you took the bench?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** How many different things a judge has to be aware of at the same time. Especially going from such a heavy criminal background and then a circuit civil background, into county civil. The amount of areas that a County Civil judge is presiding over is insane. It's probably somewhere in the fifty to sixty different areas of law, none of which I practiced or knew ahead of time.

So it's one thing to say, hey, I'm in front of this judge, how do they not know that one specific rule, it's so common. And it's because they've got an inventory of hundreds of rules that they know, and in that moment they may have spaced on the one rule because they've got space for these other ninety-nine that are filling their head. And getting ready for all of these little hearings, trying to get up to speed, read the court file so that you can tell the parties, look, please don't read me your motion, I know what you're here for, this is what it is. And the amount of time it takes to get you to that point is exhausting.

And I'm really appreciative of my wife for allowing me to read in bed at night and potentially cut out of dinner a few minutes early so I could read some more. But it's the amount of reading. As a practicing trial attorney it was more on the litigating, the oral aspects, the in person, in court stuff is what I loved. I loved being -- I called myself a trial rat or a courtroom rat, because I just wanted to be in the courtroom.

On the judicial side, you're back to being a bookworm. Whether it's reading the motions, reading the case law, trying to find things on your own because you feel like the parties aren't really flushing it out as much, that's the side that I didn't really see.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** I think lawyers would be really surprised at how many cases our County Civil judges each carry. So do you have an approximation of the number of cases that are assigned to you?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I do. I know it almost exactly. And it's because, as you know, my seat was created by legislative funding, so I was able to add an extra seat and kind of take the weight off of some of the other judges. And then with Judge Caraballo's recent changes as agreed to, we went from four County Civil and I believe we're up to eight now. And so even with eight judges, my docket is just over 14,000 cases.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** That's a lot of cases.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** That's a lot of cases. And I can only imagine what it would have been -- it had to have been or it would have been over 20,000 if there were only four. And I think that that's still such a large number, especially when we're trying to deal with the backlog of evictions and those moratoriums expiring and things like that. All of these cases are kind of coming to a head and they need to be heard. They need to have their day in court. They need to have their time, both the person on the eviction side obviously, you're a defendant, but the landlord who may not have been paid for the last two years but had to pay their mortgage.

You've got to be able to hear both sides because, as you know, so many people have been affected negatively by COVID and they -- it's not that they're a bad person, they want their day. They want to pay their rent. They want those subsidies and those assistance that they've applied for and been approved of to help them, and ultimately that's what we provide them is that opportunity to be heard.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Well, I know that as a prosecutor -- a busy prosecutor probably didn't have more than 100 or 150 cases at the most. Maybe a little more in County Court.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I think you're right. I think when I was in Circuit Court 100 to 125 was about right with the way our dockets flowed. Four weeks of non-trial followed by two weeks of trial. We rotated like a six-week trial docket.

In County Court in Lake County, I was about two-and-a-quarter. But that was an even longer trial docket. So I come here to Orange as a private practitioner, and I think they are just so much higher in their volume than I was in Lake County. And there were times when I was in Lake County that I thought I was drowning, and then I come over here and realize I'm in the shallow end of the kiddie pool with how many cases I had. So, yes, that's a big difference.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** And I would imagine being a civil litigator at Morgan & Morgan, even though they have a lot of cases, each individual attorney doesn't have thousands of cases.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** Correct, I never had more than a hundred. And I think when I was getting above the eighties, it got stretched a little thin and cases were being transferred out to make sure that you weren't overwhelmed, that clients and cases weren't getting neglected, because you really do want to be on the front foot for plaintiff's work. It really helps to be on the pushing side than the receiving side.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** And I would imagine being an attorney with a ticket firm, that's a volume business.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** It is. That was very different. That was heavy volume. In a given week I could do 150 to 250 traffic citations in one week on top of our criminal case load, and

that would be a week that didn't include red light cameras or toll tickets. Because we could do 100 red light camera tickets in a single day. So that was a lot different.

But thankfully, for those, your clients are all very similarly situated so your argument is kind of copy and paste and you would either win them all or lose them all. There wasn't too much nuance day to day, it was more mass at that point in time.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Yeah, but even with all of those cases, it would be hard to prepare for a caseload of 14,000.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** Yes. There's -- those things, although overwhelming at the time, still pale in comparison to looking at a docket at this point in time and the amount of cases, and not just that but the breadth of cases. Going from a 9 o'clock case that an eviction to a 9:15 case that's a credit card debt to a 9:30 case that's an unlawful detainer to a 9:45 that's a replevin, your brain just doesn't have the ability to just get into a groove and just start and say, okay, today is my eviction day. I know my landlord/tenant law and we're going to go with. You don't get that because someone's going to interrupt you with a credit card debt case or, like I said, a replevin case. I have a lot of unfortunate cases where people are fighting over dogs after they break up. And so that gets a little bit more emotional and a little less factual or a little less legal and you never really get into a groove. So that stop and go can affect your ability to work through that large of a caseload on top of it.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** And I can only imagine. But I know when I talk to judges I tell them, you know, you might have had a criminal practice or a civil practice. When you're on the bench, Criminal's a fairly large -- it's maybe a fifth of the statute book and you don't really have any common law causes -- very few common law crimes. And then Family is an

even smaller part of the statute book. And Juvenile is a small part of the statute book. And then Civil is the rest -- the eighty other percent of the statute book plus all the common law.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** Right.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** It's huge.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** Right.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** And it's really hard to become a master.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I agree. And even with the criminal aspect that takes up the second largest chunk, you're still within the same wheelhouse of Fourth Amendment Rights, Fifth -- you're still -- even though the statutes might change, and the cause of action or the charges might change, and those elements might change, most of your motion to suppress or other issues, Crawford issues or whatnot, are all kind of the same. You just apply them differently.

Like you said, in Civil, it's so different. You know, we have Small Claims Rules versus Florida Civil Rules and other types of things like that. And we have so many pro se parties where they're just trying to have their day in court and they don't understand the way that it works on both sides, which can be very difficult to try to navigate.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** I know you're just getting your feet wet as a judge, but what are your goals as a judge?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** Wow. So short term, it would just be to try to practice in every -- or work in every area that we have. You know, spend my time here in Civil -- which I'm glad that I started in. Having such a heavy criminal background, I think starting now fresh and learning the civil will really do me well in the long run. And then rotate into Criminal and spend my time there, and then maybe Domestic Violence.

Long-term goals, I think it's always to try to reduce my caseload so that when somebody eventually inherits it, they've got something more manageable. I think that's something that retired Judge Miller in County Court here used to do. He always kept his cases moving so that if by any chance somebody else rotated into his division, they would have something that they could manage.

I'd love to continue to be more active in the local Bar Association with mentoring students. One of the things that I've done as a practitioner that I've tried to continue to do is volunteer at the various mock trial events. We've got another one for Barry Law School here coming up. I just did the Florida Bar one a few weeks ago. Because I did appellate moot court in law -- which was in law school which, as you know, is different. But you -- those programs don't work without volunteers.

I didn't have a local mentor in Michigan because I knew I wanted to come back here. But Judge Starr was actually my boss when I was an intern at the Attorney General's Office after my 1L year, and she stayed in my life all the way through and she's actually my mentoring judge now. So trying to be that for somebody else is, I think, what my real goal is. Whether they become a famous local lawyer practitioner, whether they become a judge, or whether they just have a good, solid practice. I don't care what they end up doing as long as they feel as though they had the tools that were given to them and at least somebody to look up to to try to help them get there.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Well, with all of that work in court and in the law outside of court, you have to do -- have to have something that kind of relieves the stress a little bit. So what are your hobbies?

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I try. I try not to just live in the judiciary mindset all day every day, but it is difficult due to the amount of work that we have. So some of the things I try to do -- I love Orlando City Soccer. I'm an avid fan on message boards as well as in the stadium for all of our home games. And I like cycling. I like cycling a lot. I got into it in college through my fraternity. And so I try to cycle on the weekends before my kids get active and going. I try to get out there and get home just in time to help. So an hour or two ride on a Saturday morning or a Sunday morning really helps me get out and think about other things. Just put some music on and not be a lawyer for a day.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** And it's peaceful.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** It is peaceful. It is peaceful. Especially because we have so many beautiful places where you can cycle, whether it's the Cady Way Trail, the West Orange Trail, there's great places out by Lake Nona now that have developed into good cycling areas. You just get out there, it's you and some air -- some fresh air, away from people, just you and yourself, you and your bike, very independent type of activity that I think does me pretty good.

**CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON:** Well, it was great getting to know you today. Thank you for joining me here in the studio.

**JUDGE SANDOR:** I appreciate it. I appreciate your time.

**NARRATOR:** Thank you for listening to "Open Ninth: Conversations Beyond the Courtroom" brought to you by Chief Judge Lisa Munyon and the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram @ninthcircuitfl for updates on new episodes, and subscribe to Open Ninth on your favorite podcast service.

(Music)