



# JUDICIAL CLERKSHIP INTERVIEW SUMMARIES



**CAREER DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**

**Judge:** Justice Steven Agee  
**Court:** Virginia Supreme Court; Salem, VA

I spent about 10 minutes with the clerks (2 of them, both have 2 year appointments) and then chatted with Justice Agee for 20 minutes or so. He talked about what his clerks did, his expectations, the court in general. He went through my resume, commenting on Law Review, my research with Prof. Bacigal, and his work with him on the Court of appeals. We also talked about Salem and if I thought I would like it there and my post-clerkship plans including where I saw myself down the road. He stressed the importance of writing skills and informed me he was interviewing about 10 candidates and would narrow it down to two or three, who would do a limited-source writing sample. (He would give 2 or 3 cases, and 3 hours to write a sample opinion.)

Afterward I went with his clerks for coffee for about 30 minutes which was very chill/nice.

I got a call to do the writing sample on the 11<sup>th</sup> of October, right after I had accepted with another judge. I informed his clerk I had just accepted an offer and then wrote Justice Agee a formal letter.

**Judge(s):** G. Steven Agee  
**Court:** US Court of Appeals for the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit  
**Interview Date:** August 2009

In the space below, please share your interview experience. Please include your general impressions and describe the interview format. Please share the types of questions asked and any specific questions you recall.

I met with his clerks for about 20 minutes, chatting generally about what the clerkship entails and what they do on a regular basis. We took a "tour" of the chambers and then I met with the judge for about 30 minutes. He described his procedure: he is conducting interviews for the next month or so, and would call back 3-4 of the best candidates for a "writing test" where he would give a problem as well as 2-3 cases and ask the candidates to write a bench memo in 3 hours. He asked about Law Review, my current employment, my past clerkship experience, and what my plans were for the future. He seems to be very perceptive and a very "cut-to-the-chase" kind of person.

**Judge:** Allen:  
**Court:** Chesterfield County Circuit Court

The original OCI Interview was done by the court administrator. She asked a few oddball questions, including what would I do if a judge asked me to write an opinion in a case and I disagreed with the conclusion he had reached. She also asked what my proudest accomplishment (either professional or personal) was.

The interview lasted about 45 minutes. He is very nice, and the interview was fairly relaxed. We sat at a little sitting area he has in his chambers. The first question was about why I was pursuing a clerkship. He then went into detail about his expectations for his clerk and what is required of his clerk. Next we talked about my resume and my interests. The only other question he asked me was if I was a strong writer. Other than those two questions about why a clerkship and the strong writer, everything else was pretty conversational.

**Judge(s):** Randolph Beales  
**Court:** Court of Appeals of Virginia  
**Interview Date:** September 2010

Judge Beales usually only interviews people who have worked a little after law school, but may interview someone just out of law school if he or she is highly recommended to him. He is very friendly and proper. He asked typical interview questions about why you want to be a clerk, etc. It was not an intimidating interview. If he is impressed with your work experience, professionalism, and personality, he will be interested in hiring you. He likes it if you have taken criminal law and family law courses as a lot of the Court of Appeals' docket is comprised of those two areas of law.

**Judge:** Hon. C. Arlen Beam  
**Court:** US Court of Appeals for the 8<sup>th</sup> Circuit

Judge Beam was a great person to interview with. He is from the Midwest and has that relaxed, friendly Midwest attitude about him. You're greeted by his secretary and then meet with Judge Beam. He starts off going over your resume and is mostly interested in seeing/assessing how well you write. He asks you to rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 on how well you write and then asks you to describe how the writing program works at your school. So the more thorough you can describe your writing development and instances where you've had to write the better. During the course of the conversation he will randomly talk about what the job entails and how his chambers work. He'll then ask if you have any questions. He loves to talk about football, he's a Cornhusker fan. As a general tip, somewhere on the internet is a 45 minute video

interview with Judge Beam talking about his life growing up, the law, and just generally who he is as a person. This was very helpful in getting to know him, see what he looks like, assess his mannerisms, and the like before meeting with him. If you do have an interview with him talk to career services and they will put you in contact with me.

**Judge(s):** Judge Robert C. Chambers  
**Court:** S.D. W.Va.  
**Interview Date:** September 2011

Although I didn't get this position (he informed me that he had selected two others on Friday), the interview went really well. I spent about 45 minutes to an hour talking with Judge Chambers about my ultimate legal goals, why I had chosen to apply to his chambers, the work I had done for the US Attorney's Offices, and what draws me to criminal law. We also discussed general information about Huntington. I then met for an informal conversation with his two current term clerks and his courtroom deputy (his permanent clerk was absent during my interview). Judge Chambers and his staff were very courteous and friendly. He does look for candidates with West Virginia connections.

**Judge:** Magistrate Judges C. Clifford Shirley & H. Bruce Guyton  
**Court:** U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Tennessee; Knoxville, TN

We talked about how magistrate judges serve on the “front lines” and how important flexibility was in the clerkship. They were also very concerned with the role and reputation of their clerk in the community. The focus was on them; they talked about themselves and their court. Quite frankly, I’m not sure if it would have been that great of an experience—the clerks work on a different floor and there didn’t seem to be a lot of interaction. They seemed to like their clerks but there wasn’t that daily randomness of chit-chat that would be important to me in a clerkship.

**Judge:** Judge Dohnal, U.S. Magistrate Judge  
**Court:** Eastern District of Virginia, Richmond Division

The interview was very quick-- about 20 minutes-- and, I thought, somewhat superficial. The first few minutes were spent asking me about where I was from, etc. Then he launched into a colloquy about types of cases he hears and the functions he fulfills as magistrate judge, and which ones the clerk works on. The current clerk was present for the entire interview but did not really say anything. The judge then asked me if I was familiar with any of his opinions, and I discussed two of his rulings, one of which I remembered because it involved a former UR law professor and the other because I had worked on the same case while interning for one of the district judges. I asked a few other questions about how the members of chambers work together,

etc. and then he and his clerk asked me about my classes and professors. He had obviously read through all of my application materials carefully, including my letters of recommendation and my writing sample, which I appreciated. At the end he asked me about whether I planned to stay in Richmond or in VA or what, and seemed pleased when I said I planned to take the VA bar. Overall he was very friendly and the tone of the interview was very laid-back, but it seemed like he was in a bit of a rush and he definitely kept things moving along. I could have asked way more questions but he and his clerk seemed intent on getting me out of there.

**Judge:** Robert Doumar  
**Court:** U.S. District Court, Eastern District of VA;  
Norfolk, VA

Judge Doumar's interview went horribly, as he seemed like he was in a very bad mood the entire time. He told me I caught him on a very busy day. I interviewed with him in the afternoon and I have a feeling he already had selected his law clerks. He asked me about what I had written during law school, my role on Law Review, and whether there was a grade inflation and University of Richmond. I suggest interviewing with Judge Doumar in the morning. Nevertheless, one of my friends who interviewed with Judge Doumar last year said she had a very pleasant experience and they never discussed anything substantive. I guess it just varies on his mood, or maybe on the candidate being interviewed.

**Judge:** Jerome B. Friedman  
**Court:** Eastern District of VA; Norfolk, VA

Not asked very many questions. Very laid-back and conversational. He did not ask about Law Review or my writing sample, but he did discuss it. He talked about what he was looking for in a clerk, the job, the types of cases he hears and how his office runs.

I met with the judge first, and then with his clerks and secretary. Total interview time was 1 and ½ hours. About 45 minutes to 1 hour with the judge, and 30-45 minutes with clerks.

This was much easier than interview with firms and more conversational and relaxed.

His is a 2-year clerkship and he prefers students from VA schools and hires 1 clerk every year so there is always 1 clerk with experience to train the new clerk.

**Judge:** James K. Gardiner  
**Court:** U.S. District Court, Eastern District of  
Pennsylvania; Allentown, PA

I had a fantastic interview with Judge Gardner. We chatted for three hours; I did not interview with anyone else there, although that may have been because I had plans and had to leave. I wish I would have gotten this clerkship. We met in his office. He offered me a diet coke. He told me I got the interview because I put on my resume that I was a Philadelphia Eagles fan—we talked about the Eagles for a while! He went through my entire application with me. He asked me about my recommenders. He talked with me about my writing sample. He even went through my undergrad transcript and asked me about some of the classes. Overall, Judge Gardner was just a great, easy guy to chat with. He even walked me out to my car and made sure I had good directions to get home!

**Judge(s):** Judge John Gibney  
**Court:** United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Richmond Division  
**Interview Date:** 2011

Gibney seemed very straightforward, and so I would recommend you be straightforward as well. You can joke with him, but he's got a fairly dry sense of humor which may make you think that something you said fell flat, but that's probably not the case. If you're from the Northeast, you're familiar with the kind of personality I'm talking about.

Ok, substantively: He probably won't quiz you on cases or your politics, ask you any ridiculous questions (If you were an animal, what would it be?), or what is your biggest strength and weakness. He'll just want to talk to you and see if the conversation's comfortable.

If my interview was any indication, it'll last 30min, although at the time he hadn't done many yet so that might have changed as he got used to it.

**Court:** Henrico Circuit Court  
**Interview Date:** October 1, 2010

In the space below, please share your interview experience. Please include your general impressions and describe the interview format. Please share the types of questions asked and any specific questions you recall.

This interview was fairly relaxed and informal. They schedule small groups of candidates to come in for interviews at certain times of the day. For example, my group was scheduled for the 9 am slot. We first met with the three current clerks and had the opportunity to ask them questions about their responsibilities. This part was really informal, especially because two of the three clerks were Richmond alums from the Class of 2010.

Each of us then interviewed separately with all of the judges sitting at the Henrico Circuit Court. They all asked general questions, such as why we wanted to clerk at Henrico, where we saw ourselves in 5 years, and what activities and classes we enjoyed at law school. This part didn't last long—I'd say each interview was about 10 minutes long.

**Judge:** Hon. David R. Herndon

**Court:** US District Court, Southern District of Illinois

The interview with Chief Judge Herndon started out fine, but I did notice his chambers were very somber. All his clerks stayed in their offices and there was generally no conversation amongst them or with the other people coming and going. I never had the chance to speak with them either. Herndon started by going over my resume and asking several questions. He asked very typical interview-esq questions. What is your greatest legal strength? Are you good at issue spotting? Where are your weaknesses? Are you a self-starter, if so, can you give me an example? I was a little surprised by the generic questioning, but you just roll with it—by this time in our legal careers answers to these questions should be routine. After that we talked about the area (St. Louis) and how it compares to Richmond. All of this took just under 30 minutes. During the last 20 minutes somehow we got on the topic of drug & gun cases in federal court and that seemed to set him off. He went on for awhile about how he doesn't think the U.S. Attorney's Office should be handling these cases and how he doesn't think it's fair that the state will choose to prosecute a lesser charge or a different one in state court and then the feds will come in and prosecute the harsher charges in federal court. Whether you feel strongly one way or the other, or not at all, about this is irrelevant so long as you know it's a subject he's passionate about and a little research into the topic would be helpful. Again though, no substantive legal issues were discussed and none of his opinions were brought up.

**Judge(s):** Henry Hudson

**Court:** US District Court, EDVA

**Interview Date:** August 2010

Judge Hudson's interviews are intimidating, but he recognizes personality and talent when he sees it. I didn't get the impression he was looking for someone who was just about grades and law review. He seemed mostly concerned with intelligence, passion, life and work experience, and well-defended opinions (you can certainly have these traits with or without grades and law review). He asked a lot of questions about controversial constitutional issues (gay marriage, immigration, substantive due process). He wanted to know my opinion on how SCOTUS should handle certain issues. Give a well-thought out answer and stick to it. I would study all the hot topics re con law before going in for the interview. He also asked for my favorite/least favorite opinions and a case I would have liked to write a dissent in. He had all his clerks and his

assistant in the room with him during the interview. The clerks and his assistant asked me questions after Hudson finished grilling me. Don't be afraid to apply to him even if your grades aren't stellar. My best advice is to "exude confidence" as he later told me to do when practicing in a court room.

**Judge:** Hon. Henry Hudson  
**Court:** Eastern District of Virginia

Judge Hudson's interview was seriously one hour of total mental anguish, and you should definitely pass this along to students. From other experiences with Judge Hudson, I know that the Judge is an amazing, intelligent, really nice guy. He obviously wants to know that his clerks are just as intelligent as he is, and clearly, good grades aren't enough. I actually have copied and pasted some of the questions below (I only still remember them because I got back from the interview, and wrote someone an email with detailing some of the questions, so these are practically verbatim from Judge Hudson's mouth):

Tell me about the reasoning in your favorite Supreme Court case handed down within the last year? (Note to Katherine – of course I cited a case that was handed down in 2004, and not to 2006. The Judge however, knew exactly what year the case was handed down, corrected me, and asked me to try again. This really set the tone for the entire one hour interview from hell).

And, using that reasoning, if the facts in that case were instead X,Y,and Z, how do you think the Court would have ruled?

The Judge then followed up with a question as to whether Substantive Due Process exists (Katherine, let me just say that I couldn't remember for the life of me what Substantive Due Process was, and then, after realizing how politically charged that Substantive Due Process is, it took me even longer to answer that question tactfully).

A few questions about the "living Constitution" and judicial activism later, the interview finally concluded with a real softball about Federalism and just how much power I think federal judges should have.

I'm only writing this much so that you can inform people about just how hard Judge Hudson's interview is! I think that I handled the questions fairly well considering how surprised I was by them – previous to that, all the other interviews were basically in a "let me get to know you format" – but, had someone told me how mentally rigorous the Judge would be in his interview, I would have done so much better for lack of surprise!

Hope all of this helps!



**Judge:** Henry E. Hudson  
**Court:** U.S. District Court, Eastern District of VA;  
Richmond, VA

Hudson interviewed me in his office *along with* his two current clerks. I think the total interview was around 20 minutes. It was a more intense experience than the interviews I had before—it felt more like a test than just a conversation. In fact it was quite clearly *not* a conversation; questions did not build on each other, there was no back-and-forth dialog, but rather the judge was asking all the questions and I was trying to keep my answers focused and concise.

Interesting questions:

- What is the single most important thing you have learned in law school?
- What sort of issue would be deserving of constitutional amendment?
- How far should a clerk go in offering assistance or answers to a pro se litigant who calls chambers with a question?
- When a federal judge overturns a state statute as unconstitutional, how far should that judge's opinion go in offering suggestions for how to re-draft the statute to conform to the Constitution?
- What makes a judge a judicial activist?
- What sort of facts would warrant a downward departure in sentencing? (I don't think he'd ask this question of someone who hadn't worked in a federal defender's office though.)
- What recent Supreme Court cases have interested you, and why?
- How do you stay up-to-date on developments in the law?

**Judge:** Hon. Henry Hudson  
**Court:** Eastern District of Virginia

Here is a general list of the questions Judge Hudson asked me:

- Talk about an interesting recent Supreme Court case from the past two years.
- What are you looking to learn from a federal court clerkship?
- Where should a federal district court look to settle a dispute over an insurance claim?
- Which of the Supreme Court Justice's opinions interest you the most? Whose writing do you dislike the most? Why?
- What is the most important thing you've learned in law school?
- Do you stay up to date on current issues in the legal world? If so, how?

**Judge:** Roger Hunt  
**Court:** U.S. District Court, District of Nevada; Las Vegas,

NV

The phone interview with Judge Hunt was pretty basic. After he described his job, the rest of the conversation was spent asking him questions, and listening to his very thorough responses. Judge Hunt, however, asked a few more probing (but by no means inappropriate) personal and background questions (specifically, asking about my family, siblings, parents occupations etc.). I did not speak with his clerks, and the interview lasted about an hour.

**Judge(s):** Chief Judge Robert G. James  
**Court:** U.S. District Court for the Western District of Louisiana  
**Interview Date:** Fall 2010

I flew to Louisiana on a Wednesday to interview with Judge James. However, when I got there, I found out that he was upstairs in his office and would not be coming down to meet me. Instead, I interviewed with his administrative assistant and permanent clerk. The administrative assistant seems to be the one calling the shots. She loves small town life, and is adamant that they are looking for someone that “will be a good fit in Monroe.” I also met with his term clerk, but it was mostly to ask them informal questions.

Personally, I was upset by the fact that I traveled so far and didn’t even meet the judge. This was amplified by the fact that I received an e-mail three hours after the interview, letting me know that I was the runner-up. Not a pleasant flight home.

**Judge(s):** Magistrate Judge David J. Joel  
**Court:** United States District Court for the Northern District of West Virginia, Martinsburg Division  
**Interview Date:** October 29, 2010

The interview with Judge Joel was very informal. I first met with Debbie, Judge Joel’s career clerk, and his current term clerk. They discussed what their responsibilities were, showed me a Social Security appeal that they were currently working on, and answered any general questions about the day-to-day operations of Judge Joel’s chambers.

Judge Joel then came in and talked to me for a little bit. He asked me about my hometown, my activities in school, and why I was interested in clerking in West Virginia. We also discussed what work I had done during my judicial internship with Judge Lauck here in Richmond.

After the interview, Debbie took me on a tour of the courtroom and also showed me the larger courtroom for the district judge (unfortunately, that seat has been open since 2006).

The interview was very relaxed—and it went well, because that’s where I’ll be clerking from 2011-2012!

**Judge(s):** James Jones  
**Court:** US District Court – Western District of VA  
**Interview Date:** August 2009

In the space below, please share your interview experience. Please include your general impressions and describe the interview format. Please share the types of questions asked and any specific questions you recall.

I first had a phone interview with Judge Jones where we chatted for about 20 minutes; he asked me why I wanted to clerk and what I liked best and worst about my current position, among other things. He called back about 2 weeks later to schedule an in-person interview. During that interview, I spent about 30 minutes with the judge and his secretary where he asked general questions about my resume, including what I did at my current employment and why I chose to

**Judge(s):** Chief Judge Yvette Kane  
**Court:** United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg Division  
**Interview Date:** September 21, 2010

My interview with Chief Judge Kane was a two-part interview. First, I met with Judge Kane for about an hour in her chambers. She and I discussed how she runs her chambers, how she handles her extra administrative duties as chief judge, how she delegates work to her clerks, and what she looks for in a law clerk. She also asked me about my work with Judge Lauck and Law Review. This interview was the only one where the judge specifically asked me about my upper-level writing requirement paper (Professor Pagan had written me a recommendation). We discussed my thesis and what thoughts I had about why there is still a sizable opposition to equal rights for sexual minorities.

After meeting with Judge Kane, I met with her three current clerks. Judge Kane staggers her clerks, so she hires two one year and then one the year after. Her clerks serve for two years each (that seems to be standard in the Middle District of Pennsylvania). The clerks took me on a tour of chambers and Judge Kane’s courtroom. We then sat down and they asked me questions to get to know me—such as my favorite book, favorite TV show, favorite movie, and what fast food place I would pick if I could only eat at one for the rest of my life (I picked Chick-Fil-A—which was agreed with by all the clerks). The clerks also asked me about my experiences with Judge Lauck, Law Review, and other activities in law school.

Overall, this was my longest interview for a clerkship. The first hour with Judge Kane was formal but was still a conversation; the second hour with the clerks was very informal.

**Judge:** Hon. Walter D. Kelley

**Court:** U.S. District Court, Eastern District of VA; Norfolk, VA

Extremely nice; got impression that I got interview because I am a Washington & Lee graduate and had previously attended a hearing in his court. It was a long interview.

**Judge:** Walt Kelley

**Court:** U.S. District Court, Eastern District of VA;  
Norfolk, VA

Judge Kelley's interview had a more informal feel than the other judges, and his current clerks sat in on the interview and asked me questions as well. We didn't get into anything very substantive.

**Judge:** Justice Cynthia Kinser

**Court:** Virginia Supreme Court; Pennington Gap, VA

I met with Justice Kinser for about 30 minutes & it was wonderful!! She's very kind, unintimidating, organized—overall great. We talked about my involvements, her kids, my interest in education law and divinity school, ways to get involved in SW Virginia, my job at (law firm name), what she expects from her clerks (lots of interaction; not an automator who will not question her if they disagree, but still the ability to write the opinion if we do not agree with her, willingness to read through all of the cases coming up and chat through them with her); She spent a while talking about what “court week” in Richmond looked like too. She brought me over to meet her clerks briefly (2 or 3 minutes) and that was about it. I left feeling welcome and trusted and wanted there. It was pretty awesome.

**Judge:** Hon. Edwin Kosik  
**Court:** U.S. District Court, Middle District of Pennsylvania

I was told the interview wouldn't last longer than an hour, but it ended up being almost two hours. The Judge is really casual – he just had a blazer and slacks on. We met for about 20-30 minutes in his conference room. He asked me about my family and some personal questions (nothing weird or out of line though). He stressed that he has a really informal chambers, and that I should ask him some questions. I asked him what he likes to do in his free time. He works out a lot. He used to run every day, but then he had his knees replaced, so he can't run anymore. Judge Kosik is pretty old (80+). Reagan appointee. Drives a SAAB. The M.D. Pa. has a ton of prisoner litigation. I also met with his career and term clerk, secretary, and case management assistant.

**Judge:** Hon. Ross W. Krumm  
**Court:** U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Western District of Virginia

Interview was pretty average. The judge seemed a bit boring. We met in his chambers, in the sitting area of his office. He had African violets all over—TONS of them. He is the only judge in the courthouse. The judge took me on a tour of the courthouse. It is pretty small. I also met with his clerk, and spoke with his secretary. The entire process took about an hour. No weird or unusual questions stick out in my mind.

**Judge:** Magistrate M. Hannah Lauck  
**Court:** U.S. District Court, Eastern District of VA; Richmond, VA

The interview was a quick 30 minutes with the clerk and 30 minutes with the judge. It was a calm and comfortable interview. The judge mostly talked about what the clerkship entailed and only asked me why I wanted to do a clerkship.

**Judge:** Magistrate M. Hannah Lauck  
**Court:** U.S. District Court, Eastern District of VA; Richmond, VA

I was nearly late to this interview! Luckily it did not cause a problem. I was greeted by the secretary and the current clerk, who called the Staff Attorney and Pro Se clerk down to join us. It was a surprise to me that I was being vetted by a full panel of four individuals, but I went along with it. I met with them for about 20-30 minutes in a conference room, where the main topic of

discussion was the paper I had recently written on federal courts. (I think the secretary was impressed that I was familiar with the travesty that the judiciary pays back 22% of its budget appropriations to the executive branch as "rent" for courthouse facilities.) I was also given the opportunity to ask questions, so I inquired about the division of labor and the interaction among the individuals gathered before me. This helped me get a handle on why all of them were interviewing me together, and also took a long time for each of them to offer their two cents. They asked me why I was applying to this judge in particular, why I wanted to clerk generally, etc. but nothing too difficult. They also asked me about my experience interning with Judge Hudson, and tried to clarify how clerking with Judge Lauck would be different from that experience. Then it was time to meet with the judge herself. I spoke with her for half an hour, and she asked me the typical questions: why did I want to clerk and what I wanted to get out of it, did I intend to practice in Virginia. She also took time to clarify her vision for the clerk's role, and distinguished between the activities she is responsible for that involve the clerk, and those that don't. But she seemed open to flexibility to accommodate the clerk's interests, for example in watching trials or other proceedings occurring in front of other judge. She also noted that she tries to encourage her clerk to socialize with the other clerks in the building, since she has a single clerk as opposed to two co-clerks. Overall she was extremely friendly, did most of the talking, and I wasn't sure that I made the best impression because I said so little. She was in a rush to get out of town for the afternoon, though, so I guess she was glad I didn't drag things out unnecessarily.

This interview contained one of the most memorable events of my interview experience. The pro se clerk, near the end of that stage of the interview, said to me, "We often work very late, and on weekends. Are you prepared to do that?" I seriously thought she was joking. During my placement with Judge Hudson, I saw firsthand that his clerks arrived at 8:30 and left at 5:00 every day, were not necessarily paragons of efficiency during the day, and I never once heard about them working on weekends. So I let a few seconds pass, trying to figure out how to respond to it (laugh? agree immediately?), eventually choosing to just say, "of course I'm willing to do that!" I suppose that the magistrate judges have the potential to be busier than the district judges because they handle so many smaller matters, in addition to being "on duty" every other week to issue search warrants and arrest warrants. But I was shocked at both her assertion, and the fact that she (apparently) was totally serious.

**Judge:** Justice Donald Lemons  
**Court:** VA Supreme Court

The tone of the interview was casual, and the interview was fairly short. There were a few serious questions at the beginning, but the rest was more casual, getting to know each other. I was offered the position at the end of the interviews, and accepted even though he said I didn't have to.

**Judge(s):** Judge Robert G. Mayer  
**Court:** U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division  
**Interview Date:** Fall 2010

Judge Mayer wanted to talk about my time in Charlottesville as an Undergrad. His questions came off as a little awkward, and when I had obviously finished my answer, he continued to stare with an awkward silence. I don't know what exactly he was looking for. He did say that he does all his writing and just gets the clerks to proof and research, so if you are looking for writing experience, he is not the judge for you.

**Judge:** Hon. Stephen S. Mitchell & Robert G. Mayer  
**Court:** U.S. Bankruptcy Court; Alexandria, VA

Interview was with both judges. Mitchell was more talkative than Mayer; they seem to like scheduling interviews together.

**Judge:** Honorable Norman K. Moon  
**Court:** US District Court, Western District of VA

The interview with Judge Moon was nothing out of the ordinary. It started out with a short meeting with his current clerks, while he finished with another interview, and that consisted of general chit chat and answering of any questions I had. Once the interview with Judge Moon started it was pretty relaxed. He started out by describing the job, how he runs his chambers, and a couple of questions from my resume, which took about 15 minutes. He then asked if I had any questions. There was no substantive legal material covered and no discussion of his prior cases. I asked several questions and he was candid and open in all his answers. The interview concluded with a tour of the courthouse. He played a very active role in the construction of the courthouse and is very proud of it, thus, the more you can seem in awe of the place and ask questions about it the better. One thing to consider is he moves VERY quickly. I got the call for the interview a week before they were supposed to start calling and he wanted me to come up that day for an interview, two weeks before the guidelines. Overall though he was a very nice person and the interview went smoothly.

**Judge:** Henry Morgan  
**Court:** U.S. District Court, Eastern District of VA;  
Norfolk, VA

Judge Morgan's interview was very relaxed, as he only spent about five minutes telling me about himself and his court. He then asked me if I had any questions. I'm not sure if this is his usual interview style, but make sure that you have a lot of questions ready for him.

**Judge:** Hon. Henry C. Morgan, Jr.  
**Court:** US District Court, Eastern District of Virginia

Judge Morgan was a very nice person and the interview was very relaxed. I started out by meeting his clerks and they asked several questions. They then answered any questions I had. This took about 10 minutes. Judge Morgan then came in and said he was ready and we chatted for about 30 minutes. He started out by talking about the job and how it works because he has one clerk start in August and one in February that way he always has a clerk who knows what they are doing. Then he talked about the job details on account of the fact that he is a senior judge and spends three summer months in Maine every year. After that he gave a brief glance at my resume, asked one or two questions about it, and then asked if I had any questions. This whole process took less than 10 minutes, **so come prepared with lots of questions.** It seemed like he wants to assess whether you'd be a good clerk based on how inquisitive you are and how good your questions are, as well as the personality fit. In regards to the personality, he is very much a family man. He has pictures all over his office and 2 large bookshelves are devoted to his family pictures and nick-knacks. So from the personal side of things if you seem to be a family person yourself I'm sure this would help. There were no substantive legal topics discussed and no discussion about his opinions.

**Judge(s):** Liam O'Grady  
**Court:** US District Court, EDVA  
**Interview Date:** August 2010

I sensed that Judge O'Grady was interested in hiring the more traditional type of clerkship applicant (someone with top grades, law review, top school). He asked some tough constitutional law questions (one had to do with whether journalists should have any greater free speech rights than others). Otherwise, he asked typical interview questions (why do you want to be a clerk, what are your long term goals, etc). He had me talk with his current clerks afterward. The clerks he had hired were not very personable and the conversation was a little awkward. I think he goes more for rankings than personality.



**Judge:** Hon. Sylvia Rambo

**Court:** Middle District of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg, PA)

I was greeted by the judge's two clerks, who promptly deposited me with the judge in her office. I was surprised at how old Judge Rambo was. I was pleased that she mentioned at the beginning that she thought my CV was extremely impressive, and then she noted that she'd had a clerk from UR several years ago and had just seen him within the past few days because he was thinking about relocating from Richmond back to Harrisburg. (So I figured this boded well for me-- she'd recently had positive associations with UR on her mind, how could that hurt?) She asked me a few basic questions culled from my resume, but unfortunately she kept things moving along so quickly that I couldn't really get her to engage me on any one topic. (E.g. Judge: "So I see you like the Eagles." Me: "Yes, I love the Eagles." Judge: "And you also like cooking." Me: "Yes.") She told me that her clerks would be giving me more detailed information about how she runs her chambers, but she did mention that she takes full responsibility for her criminal docket, and so the clerks work on civil matters only. At this point (5 or 10 minutes into the interview), she gave me the inevitable "So do you have any questions?" Since she had expressed interest in a paper I had recently written, I asked her what she thought about threats to judicial independence. This was great because it opened the door for her to mention how she had met Justice Sandra Day O'Connor the day before, who had been in Harrisburg to speak on that very topic. She told me some very interesting stuff about her personal visit with Justice O'Connor, volunteering the information that the Justice severely regrets both her resignation from the Court (apparently she's mad that Bush did not nominate a woman to replace her) as well as her vote in Bush v. Gore (because she is completely disillusioned with Bush in general). Since the judge had asked me some personal questions, I asked her about her personal hobbies and interests since she had declined to answer my questions about things specific to her chambers. This turned out to be kind of sad, as she recalled hobbies she used to enjoy (riding horses and farming) but could no longer do because of her advanced age. Then she got into how her husband had died over 12 years ago, and she loved to travel, but she had a problem doing it by herself because single supplements are so expensive. Then I made the mistake of asking her about her law school experience, which led to a discussion of how she originally went to GW but then her mother died during her first semester and she had to return home to Carlisle to raise her 11 year old sister, which she did while attending Dickinson Law School as the only woman in her class in the early 1950s. So I got way more personal information than I had ever imagined, and while it was only marginally discomfoting, I found it hard to respond other than with sympathetic mutterings. Luckily by the end of things we had veered back to more professional topics about some of the most interesting cases she had worked on (notably, the Three Mile Island litigation and the corporate governance suit against former Rite-Aid CEO). Overall the interview got me really excited about this judge (a true pioneer-- the first woman federal judge in PA, a Carter appointee) but it did get a little weird in parts. We probably talked for half an hour.

Then I went to talk to the two law clerks. First they took me on a tour of chambers, which was really big, but it became evident that the chambers are not technologically advanced. (E.g. no computer for the clerk in the courtroom; they take notes by hand, and when the judge needs to communicate with them during a hearing, apparently she writes them a note and hisses at them to pick it up and read it). Then they sat me down and asked me a bunch of questions about my background, my plans, why I wanted to clerk, was I really okay with a two-year clerkship. This was very relaxed and I really liked both women. In fact, one of my favorite things about this judge was the woman-power vibe of chambers-- two female clerks, a female judge, and a female secretary who's been with the judge for forever to whom the clerks were nearly as reverential to as the judge herself. The clerks asked me about my typical research process and my academic interests, and in turn they shared details about some of the interesting things they had worked on as clerks. I talked with the clerks for an hour, and it seemed like it flew by so quickly. Overall I was at chambers for nearly two hours, by far my longest interview. This clerkship was my top choice, and I told them that after they told me to let them know if I developed a need for a quick decision on their part.

**Court:** Richmond Circuit Court

**Interview Date:** October 5, 2010

This interview was fairly relaxed and informal. I first met with the three current clerks. This was a time for us to relax before the interview and ask them any questions about their responsibilities and what they do on a daily basis. I then met with four of the current judges sitting on the Richmond Circuit Court. This interview was fairly short—I'd say about 15-20 minutes. They asked me about my interests, what classes and activities I've enjoyed in law school, and why I wanted to clerk at Richmond. They also asked about what I hope to do after clerking.

2011: Depending on the judges interviews will look a little different. Some will interview together, but other pairs will just have one of the judges interview. Since there are only seven sitting judges, Judge Jenkins (the judge I worked for) is on his own and interviews by himself. When I went through I interviewed with Judge Jenkins. I also interviewed with Judge Spencer for the Spencer/Taylor position - Judge Taylor was out of town. In order to find out specifically, the student may want to give the law clerk for the judges a call. The student could just call the clerk's office and ask for the law clerk for whichever judge she/he has the interview with.

2012: Judges in Richmond usually share a clerk with another judge, and they usually interview similarly. However, it can be complicated, because the pairs occasionally shift from year to year. I only interviewed with Judge Snukals, and I accepted shortly thereafter, so I did not go through any other interviews. Judges Taylor and Spencer always interview together and always share a clerk. Judge Jenkins does not share a clerk. Judges Rupe and Hughes will probably share a clerk, and they will likely interview together. Judge Snukals may assist with these interviews as well.

**Judge(s):** Judge Frank J. Santoro  
**Court:** U.S. Bankruptcy Court, E.D. Va., Norfolk  
**Interview Date:** November 2010

In the space below, please share your interview experience. Please include your general impressions and describe the interview format. Please share the types of questions asked and any specific questions you recall.

I met with Judge Santoro only, not his law clerk. It was a brief interview—20-25 minutes—where he explained his expectations of his law clerk and his approach to his work and how the law clerk would aid him. I was his only interviewee, and I was offered the job on the spot and was asked to decide on the spot. I accepted and it has been a fantastic experience. He did ask what my undergraduate grades were and whether I was on the law review.

**Judge:** Hon. Judge Sharer  
**Court:** Maryland Court of Special Appeals

Pretty standard stuff, no big surprises or curveballs. Asked me why I wanted to clerk, how I heard about the clerkship, if I knew about the court, etc. I ended up asking quite a few questions, then I followed up the interview with a phone call question and a month later sent along another cover letter and updated resume expressing my continued interest in the job.

**Judge(s):** Magistrate Judge Candace Smith and District Judge David Bunning  
**Court:** United States District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky, Covington Division  
**Interview Date:** September 22, 2010

Fortunately, I was able to interview with Judges Smith and Bunning on the same day in Covington, KY (right across the river from Cincinnati). My first interview was with Judge Smith, and during this interview I only met with Judge Smith. The interview lasted for about an hour. She asked me why I was interested in Kentucky and asked me about my work with Judge Lauck (she mentioned that she prefers clerks who have had internships with judges). We also discussed the day-to-day operations of chambers and what experiences I had with research and writing.

My second interview was with Judge Bunning. Again, I only met with Judge Bunning for about an hour. The interview was very similar to the one with Judge Smith—he asked me about my experience with Judge Lauck, my work on Law Review, and why I was interested in Kentucky. We also discussed one of his opinions regarding the rights of a high school gay/straight alliance to have equal access to school facilities when other groups are given that access (he ruled in favor of the alliance).

Overall, both interviews were formal, but relaxed. Both turned into a conversation between myself and the judge.

**Judge:** Slights  
**Court:** Superior Court of Delaware; Wilmington, DE

The interview went very well, but it was rushed because he was in a massive toxic torts trial. He was very friendly and it was a great interview.

**Judge(s):** Magistrate Judge Candace Smith and District Judge David Bunning  
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Overall, both interviews were formal, but relaxed. Both turned into a conversation between myself and the judge.

**Judge:** Rebecca Smith

**Court:** U.S. District Court, Eastern District of VA; Norfolk

Judge Smith's interview was definitely a more formal setting, but we didn't get into any substantive discussion. (I think this was only because I went to the same high school as her sons, so we mostly talked about high school/college/law school, etc.)

**Judge:** Hon. Rebecca Beach Smith

**Court:** US District Court, Eastern District of VA

Judge Smith is an interesting person. I know there are a lot of things posted about her being tough as a judge and maybe not the most thorough in her decision-making, but she seemed to be nice enough during the interview and her clerks seemed to generally like her and the job. With that said, she is a very confident person and likes to talk about herself. She's been first at everything she's done, so have her sons, and she is generally successful at anything she tries. So the more you can stroke her ego the better the interview will go. She also likes to talk about former clerks and says she sees them as her children and takes a vested interest in their futures, so that is certainly could be a good thing. Otherwise, the interview consisted mostly of questions from my resume and then an inquiry into whether I had any questions. Hers was short interview on the front end followed by a lot of time for questions, so come with a lot, the more about her the better. There were no substantive legal issues discussed and no discussion about any of her opinions.

**Judge(s):** Chief Judge James Spencer  
**Court:** United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Richmond Division  
**Interview Date:** September 28, 2010

My interview with Chief Judge Spencer was a two-part interview. First, I met with Judge Kane for about twenty minutes to a half an hour in his chambers. We mainly talked about my internship work with Judge Lauck since she works in the same courthouse and is often referred work by Judge Spencer and the other district judges. He also asked me about my hometown and family (what my parents did, if I had any siblings, etc.). Overall, this time was for Judge Spencer to get to know me and to tell me about his expectations for his clerks.

After meeting with Judge Spencer, I met with his clerks, his courtroom clerk, and his judicial assistant. This was a time for me to ask them questions about what it was like to work for Judge Spencer. I asked the usual questions about the drafting process, how work was assigned, what chambers life was like, etc. This was the only interview I had where the clerks didn't really ask any questions of me.

Overall, both parts of the interview were somewhat informal and more like conversations.

**Judge:** Hon. James R. Spencer  
**Court:** US District Court, Eastern District of VA

Chief Judge Spencer is an amazing person and one of the best interviews I had. One thing to remember though, with Judge Spencer, the interview starts from the time you step foot into the courthouse. He will talk to people and see how you interact with everyone from the security guards, to his secretary, to his current clerks, everyone. He wants to make sure you are a personality match with everyone in the courthouse, not just him. So be aware, courteous, and thoughtful to everyone. You start out interviewing with him for about 30 minutes. He starts out describing the job, asks questions from your resume, and then has general chit-chat. He loves to talk about his family and hobbies (golf). He also wants you to ask questions. He wants to see a general interest in the job. He will not ask you about substantive legal topics or about specific opinions he's written, but you should be aware that he handles a decent amount of patent cases and handled the Blackberry matter. After that you meet with his secretary, current clerks, and clerk of the court. You basically sit around his conference table, he is not there, and talk. They won't really ask you a whole lot of questions, but they will expect you to ask a lot of questions. This took about 30 minutes.

**Judge:** Hon. James R. Spencer  
**Court:** US District Court, Eastern District of VA

Judge Spencer's interviews are very relaxed and he wants to know more about how you will fit in with the group and less about your legal knowledge. He actually referred to Hudson's intensive interviews and how he doesn't do the same thing. We talked about his son (Professor Spencer), things I've done in law school, where I'm from etc. He actually asked what my family does, where they come from etc. (which is against the NALP rules, but I actually appreciate being able to tell my history). He is a very genuine, warm person and I felt relaxed the entire time. I think the entire thing lasted about 25 minutes with the Judge and then about the same time with his clerks, secretary and deputy clerk. I believe he is the one who makes the decisions, but he does take the advice of his secretary, clerks and deputy clerk, so make sure you are just as on with them as you are with Judge Spencer.

I would also be happy to talk to any one next year (or in the future) if they land an interview with Judge Spencer. (Evan Miller, Class of 2008)

**Judge:** Hon. Stephen St. John  
**Court:** U.S. Bankruptcy Court; Norfolk, VA

Short, easy to talk to, discussed the position for most of the time.

**Judge:** Stephen St. John  
**Court:** U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Eastern District of Virginia; Norfolk, VA

My in-person interview with Judge St. John began with an interview with his clerks. This was pretty laid back as one of the clerks was my friend. Then I spoke with Judge St. John for about 2 hours. This interview was the closest to a conversation, and, while mostly focused on court and clerkship-type topics, also included discussions of my background.

**Judge:** Stephen St. John  
**Court:** U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Eastern District of Virginia; Norfolk, VA

I had a morning interview with Judge St. John and got a speeding ticket for reckless driving on the way there for fear of tunnel traffic. However, I remained calm and ended up having a really good interview. First I met with the two clerks. Judge St. John has one permanent clerk who also handles administrative matters, and one term clerk. In this case both clerks were UR grads, and they chatted about school and Law Review (the permanent clerk was Annual Survey Editor

while at UR and she wanted to know if it was getting out on time!). The term clerk was an acquaintance of mine, so I felt comfortable. We talked for probably 25-30 minutes, with the permanent clerk telling me about how the court operates and me asking question in between. The term clerk was able to give the more recent perspective of how long it takes to figure out what you need to know about bankruptcy, etc. This interview was very pleasant and relaxed. They both also told me how much they enjoyed working with Judge St. John.

I then spoke with Judge St. John in his office for around 45-50 minutes. This was a lot of fun, as he is a very jovial individual. We chatted about some things on my resume, about Norfolk and the Tidewater region, and about my future plans. We also made fun of the term clerk, which I quickly understood to be a good-natured but indispensable element of chambers decorum. At the end of the interview, he asked me to please let him know if any other judge was putting any pressure on me to make a decision so that they could expedite their decision-making process for me, which I took to be a very positive sign. Overall this was my first really good interview (my third in the process, so part of it was me getting more comfortable, but the low intensity and overt friendliness definitely helped as well). I would have been very happy to work for this judge, but I got a different offer before I heard back from him. His permanent clerk, Heather Berry, was so nice and friendly too.

**Judge(s):** Judge Stephen C. St. John  
**Court:** U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Norfolk Division  
**Interview Date:** Fall 2010

I immediately went back into Judge St. John's chambers upon my arrival. The interview was informal. Most the questions that he asked were broad; such as "Why bankruptcy?" He seemed to enjoy talking about how fun the area can be, and how much he likes living at the beach.

After my interview with him, I met with his permanent clerk and his term clerk. His permanent clerk is a UR alumnus, so that was something that broke the ice. All in all, the process was relaxed and painless. I was very nervous as it was my first interview. I would recommend concentrating on being relaxed and personable; he is looking for someone that will contribute to a collaborative working environment.

**Judge:** Frederick Stamp  
**Court:** U.S. District Court, Northern District of West VA; Wheeling, WV

I had expected, after meeting with Prof. Spencer that my clerkship interviews would be very intense, and prepared accordingly. Instead, I think these were the three least intense interviews



that I have ever had. For the most part, I just listened to the judge speak, and tried to interject a relevant comment from time to time. I mean this in the best way possible.

I think Judge Stamp literally asked me three questions; after he described his job, the rest of the conversation was spent asking him questions, and listening to his very thorough responses. I then spoke with his clerks. I think the interview lasted close to two hours.

**Judge:** Hon. William F. Stone  
**Court:** U.S. Bankruptcy Court; Roanoke, VA

Short interview. Essentially only discussed the position. He and Krumm seem to collaborate, so it is good to express interest in both judges.

**Judge:** Hon. William F. Stone  
**Court:** U.S. Bankruptcy Court; Roanoke, VA

It was a pretty basic interview. The judge offered me his parking space to use during my interview, which I made sure to bring up. Much of the interview was a simple description of what the clerk's role and responsibilities are. In fact, that was my experience with every one of the interviews I had. All the interviews I had were pretty laid back and easy going.

**Judge:** James C. Turk  
**Court:** U.S. District Court, Western District of VA;  
Roanoke, VA

Didn't talk a lick about my law school experiences. We spoke about one of my novels that I had written about WWI. We also spoke about:

- Practicing law in SW VA
- Fishing at Smith Mountain Lake
- The need for more diversity in law schools.

Judge Turk is an older guy (83 years) and has been on the bench for decades. Regarding clerkship interviews, I think he's heard every sort of brown-nosing, law review name-dropping comment in the book. I went into the interview just hoping to make friends with the guy. I reasoned that at this point in his career, he'd rather pick someone who he got along with and trusted rather than someone who can't stop talking about how much of an academic superstar they are. It worked.