



Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast! Today, we're talking with Kelsey Russell, a writer for the Law School Toolbox and a recent judicial clerk, about judicial clerkships.

Today, your Law School Toolbox host is Alison Monahan and typically, I'm with Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be.

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With that, let's get started.

Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox Podcast. Today, we're excited to be talking with Kelsey Russell, a writer for The Law School Toolbox, and a recent clerk, about her experience with judicial clerkships. So, welcome, Kelsey.

Kelsey Russell: Hi Alison.

Alison Monahan: Thanks so much for being here. Before we jump in, can you give our listeners some basic background about your law school experience and your path to clerking?

Kelsey Russell: Sure. I have an untraditional path to my ultimate clerkship home, but it started pretty classically. I started applying probably later in the game than most people who are thinking about clerkships. I started applying the fall of my third year of law school. I ended up getting a clerkship with the Honorable Thomas P. Griesa and I started clerking for him for the 2017 to '18 term.

About three months into my clerkship, Judge Griesa very sadly passed away, and I didn't exactly know what that meant for me. But luckily enough, it worked out that I ended up clerking for a different judge in the courthouse, the Chief Judge of the courthouse, who I had some done work with while I was working for Judge Griesa.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, that definitely sounds like a slightly unusual situation. I'm glad that it worked out for you, but definitely not what you were expecting I would imagine.



- Kelsey Russell: No, not at all. I looked around and was like, on the one hand, it's obviously a very sad thing, you've come to know the judge you've worked for. On the other hand, you're like, "Do I have a job?"
- Alison Monahan: Yes. Yeah, no. That would be really very difficult, I think, all around for, like you point out, numerous reasons.
- Kelsey Russell: Yes.
- Alison Monahan: What type of clerkship was it?
- Kelsey Russell: It was a term clerkship, so I was on for the 2017 to '18 term. Being that I switched over to Judge McMahon's chambers, she basically ... Her term clerks are all civil clerks and she has, for her criminal docket what's called a career clerk, so someone who's worked with her for a much longer period of time and has that institutional knowledge. That's how she divides her docket, criminally to the career clerk, and civil go to the term clerks.
- Alison Monahan: Okay. These were federal district court judges?
- Kelsey Russell: Oh, yes, yes. This is the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York.
- Alison Monahan: Okay, interesting. Yeah, I always find it interesting. I've clerked for a district court judge too and I always found it interesting to hear about different chambers and the way that things were organized because it seemed like everybody ... Often times, they had their own thing. Some people had secretaries and a couple of clerks. That was what my judge had. I think you could have three clerks but no secretary. Sometimes people have career clerks. It's very interesting.
- Kelsey Russell: Yeah, it's crazy too because when you're in the interview process, I feel like that can sound like white noise.
- Alison Monahan: Right.
- Kelsey Russell: Like, "Oh, we have a deputy, we have this, we have that." And you're like, "Okay, I'm just looking for a clerkship, I don't know ..." But it really does tailor and shape the entire experience you have because those different people have very different roles. If there is a missing person in that mix, you'll be doing that role.
- Alison Monahan: Right.
- Kelsey Russell: So really it does affect everything.



Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. I feel the same. I was like, "Oh, two clerks, three clerks, whatever, secretary," but then I realized how much work our secretary actually did and how much institutional knowledge she had. She was always answering questions because it was just me and my co-clerk. I thought, "Oh my gosh, if we were having to answer the phone and also try to figure out all these questions, we would have absolutely no idea what we were doing."

Kelsey Russell: It's true.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I also clerked, just so our listeners are aware of the basics, Federal District Court in Boston. Really, I thought it was a fantastic experience and each of the chambers, they're all different. We're going to talk about what really goes on in a clerkship and how stuff works day-to-day because I think I definitely did not have a real understanding of that or what I was getting into, but it's a super fascinating job. I don't know what your experience was like, but mine, I loved it. I thought it was really interesting.

Kelsey Russell: Yeah, yeah, same. I think it's one of the best experiences I'll have as a lawyer, even though it's pretty early on in my career to say that. I can already tell that what I've gotten out of it interpersonally and professionally is really going to be unparalleled.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that's right. Your co-clerks and the judge, at least in an ideal world, they become close friends, almost family, sending Christmas cards for the rest of your life, that kind of thing.

Kelsey Russell: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Let's talk about what actually goes on in a clerkship and how it works. Obviously, this is going to vary a lot between different judges, but I think there are certain commonalities. Obviously, here we're talking about a district court experience; we don't really have other experiences. If we were doing this with two appellate clerks, they would probably have a totally different story to tell. But just some basics.

How many co-clerks did you have?

Kelsey Russell: I had two co-clerks. Again, the one little weird wrinkle in my experience was when I got hired on my Judge McMahon, the clerk that I was replacing was leaving on maternity leave, so for a while, we overlapped. There was a period where there was four of us, but that didn't last long, and technically, I was not a clerk hired by the judge until her maternity leave kicked in. Then it was the three of us.



We all had pretty different backgrounds, which made for a nice blend. One of my co-clerks had been a clerk with another district judge, so there was that experience, and then my other co-clerk had been working at a law firm before she started clerking, and then there was me, who was fresh out of law school. We had a nice blend of experiences in chambers.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think that's happening more often too. In my case, both me and my co-clerk were just right out of law school, but I think more and more judges, particularly when there really wasn't a hiring plan, seem to be hiring a lot more people who did have some experience. Yeah, you don't really know. It's one of those situations where you don't really know what you're going to get when you sign up for this because you might not even know who your co-clerks are, for example.

Kelsey Russell: Right, right.

Alison Monahan: I guess you maybe had more information because you were coming in in a little bit of a strange situation, but for me, I took the job and then a month later got, "Oh, here's your co-clerk. Welcome." What type of work did you do?

Kelsey Russell: Like I said, we basically and primarily focused on civil matters. On that end and on the written work product that we did was mostly ... It was a blend of things. I would say the two big ticket items that I really worked on, the longest case that I had was an antitrust proposed class action that dealt with different pharmaceutical companies. It was two layers of technical: it was the antitrust technicalities and the pharmaceutical technicalities. It was like an alphabet soup of things I had to learn on the spot, but that was my longest running assignment. That was a pretty large and multi-party situation. That took up a lot of my time.

And then other motions that came in, motions to dismiss. There was one really interesting one that was against a major news network that ended up turning ... It was a sexual discrimination claim and it ended up turning on a really novel and potentially undecided question of personal jurisdiction, so it was back to civ pro for me for a little while.

Alison Monahan: Wow. I was a civ pro TA, so I totally would have geeked out on that.

Kelsey Russell: Yeah. It didn't sound as fun when I explained it to people who didn't really have the same affection for civ pro, but it was fun.

Alison Monahan: I think one of my proudest moments as a clerk is when I realized that there actually was no subject matter jurisdiction in a case that we were having a hearing on. I went to the judge the night before and I'm like, "Did anyone think about this?" And he says, "No. Huh, yeah, I think you're right."



So, he brings it up in court and these attorneys were not used to being in federal court, obviously they hadn't really thought about this, and so he says, basically, "What's your basis for subject matter jurisdiction? I don't really think there is one," and they say, "Oh." They kind of look at each other and one of them says to the other, "Oh, Your Honor, I think we'd be willing to waive that." He's like, "Yeah, you can't do that."

Kelsey Russell: Not how that works.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. He's like, "That's not really an option here, actually. You're going back to state court." But it is one of those cases that make you realize you do need to pay attention in civ pro.

Kelsey Russell: Yeah! It's crazy. It's not crazy, but it feels crazy when you're like, "Oh, that's real? What was in my textbook, is that really playing out right now?"

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. Okay. In your chambers, how did the work assignments get handed out? Did you have longer ones? It sounds like you had some sort of long things. How did that process work?

Kelsey Russell: Yeah. I think that a lot of chambers have a formal assignment system that, in itself, varies. I won't speak to that necessarily because we didn't have a formal assignment system. We filtered through, informally amongst ourselves and in meetings with the judge, who would be working on what. The considerations that, I think, were primary to us were time. Say I was working on the antitrust matter that I had and four smaller things had come in, it would probably be that I would get one of those and we'd divvy up the other three accordingly to other people's schedules.

The other thing that we tried to take into consideration was people's relevant work experience or if you were particularly experienced in something that you had studied in law school and a case that came in that was relevant to that. For example, my co-clerk who had worked at a firm before clerking had worked in the labor and employment department of her law firm. If we had something come in that was FLSA, like a Fair Labor Standards matter, or something come in that was workplace discrimination, I think we would always see if she wanted to be prioritized on that. But at the same time, since it is a clerkship and you'd like to have varied experiences, not pigeonhole her to only have those cases assigned to her.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, right.

Kelsey Russell: Yeah.



Alison Monahan: I think ours was completely different. It was much more structured. The judge I was working for had been on the bench for quite a long time at that point and had his way he liked to do things. As I recall, and it's been awhile, but I think every two weeks we got a new assignment, basically. Sometimes it might be a continuation-type of assignment, but often times, it was one specific thing that you were going to be working on for those next two weeks.

Obviously, this varies a lot. Do you think it's okay to ask, if you have an interview, about the workflow process in chambers?

Kelsey Russell: I think not only is it okay, I think it really shows two things. I think it shows one, that you've probably done your homework and talked to some former clerks to even know to ask that question, and I think it also shows that you're anticipating your future potential role as a clerk for this judge, which again, I think with the term situation where you have a lot of turnover, clerks coming in and out, it really is comforting to the judge to see someone who's thinking about already being in that position because it's such a high volume of people passing off knowledge, passing down knowledge. It's heartening to see someone looking at themselves as already part of the fabric of the chambers.

Alison Monahan: Right. I don't want to say that you're a cog in the machine, but you are kind of a cog in the machine. Every year, the judge has to slot new people into these and they want to find people that they think are going to be interested and able to get up to speed quickly and have a realistic understanding of what they're getting into.

Kelsey Russell: Exactly. That's exactly where I was going with that.

Alison Monahan: Okay. In addition to these substantive assignments, were there other things that you did during the day like observing court proceedings or stuff like that?

Kelsey Russell: Definitely. There are things that your judge will have on that would be nice to see because it's just nice to see your judge on the bench doing what judges do when they're not in trial. Then naturally, there'll be stuff going on in the courthouse around you that you hear about either through word of mouth or a lot of courthouses have a central office. Ours was we had a district ... I think most courthouses have a District Executive's office who will give you a list of proceedings that are of interest to the public going on in the courthouse that day.

Being in Manhattan, naturally there were a lot of high-profile things coming in and out that we wanted to attend. I think that that, as with most things, trailed off toward the end. You became desensitized to some of the more sexy things coming in the courthouse. You're like, "I really have to finish this personal



jurisdiction motion, so I really can't go to the Michael Cohen hearing" or whatever it is.

Alison Monahan: Exactly.

Kelsey Russell: But when your judge is on the bench, I think it's actually really meaningful to be there because you get a sense of her decision making process, which then you can bring back to unrelated matters that you're working on because you're going to see what she's doing on the fly and what's going through her mind when she has things right in front of her. Just immersing yourself in her decision-making process, I think, can really inform your work back at your desk.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that's right. We were typically, if the judge was in session in court, we were typically, one or both of us, me or my co-clerk, would typically be there, even if it was a hearing. A couple of cases, we had trials, so those were, even though we weren't really doing that much frankly, they were always interesting to see. Sometimes there would be evidentiary questions or something like that, that couldn't be resolved immediately, where we would take a break and basically, that's a high-pressure situation because you basically go back into the chambers and the judge turns to you and says, "What do you think I should do here?"

If you're going to clerk, evidence is another one of those classes you definitely want to pay attention in because you might get called out on it right there.

Kelsey Russell: For sure, yeah. That would happen more often than was comfortable for me.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. Sometimes, you'd get the glance and kind of give a nod.

Kelsey Russell: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: But presumably, if you're doing a district court clerkship, you find litigation interesting in some respect. I thought that was always super fascinating, even if it was just a hearing. You never had any idea what was going to go on in some of these things.

Kelsey Russell: Definitely, yeah.

Alison Monahan: Okay, so let's dive into the process of applying for clerkships a little bit more. And also, we can talk about when it does and doesn't make sense to apply for these because I know sometimes people think, "Oh, I don't want to do this type of law," or, "I do want to do this type of law," or all different kinds of things.

So actually, let's start there. What if I'm just not interested in litigation? Do you think it's worth it to clerk?



Kelsey Russell: I think the short answer to that is probably not. If you're not interested in litigation, that's really the skills that you're going to develop and learn in the clerkship. But I think that if you have the luxury of getting a clerkship when you are not interested in litigation or if you have the luxury of time, it is by no means a bad thing and I think can only do good for you at the end of the day. The skills that you're going to get, again, they tend to be helpful for people who are interested in litigation down the road, but you'll also hone your decision-making skills, which I think helps no matter what position you're in.

And then outside of the technical skills that you'll be gaining, you'll be making relationships with people that just truly will better you as a human and also cannot hurt you professionally at the end of the day. So I think there's a lot to consider, even if you're not interested in litigation, about the clerkship that would be beneficial at the end of the day.

Alison Monahan: I think that's right. Obviously, you can consider certain courts or certain areas if you're not strictly a litigation person. I don't know, does the Delaware Chancery Court let people clerk? That's a more up your alley for the corporate folks in the room, but I agree. This is the sort of thing that's not ever going to hurt your resume, particularly if you're going to go into a firm. They give clerkship bonuses, so financially, it doesn't have to be quite as big of a hit as it might appear to be to begin with.

And also, there's the option of working and then I think you get paid more, which is always a bonus, versus coming straight out of school. There are a lot of things to think about, but I think it does have value outside of just being able to view courtroom proceedings and being able to do stuff behind the scenes.

For me, part of the thing was just reading so many things, reading so many motions and briefs and things that were submitted and seeing which ones were good, which ones weren't good, what was convincing, what wasn't convincing, what kind of really ridiculous things did people do like editing quotes and taking out a "not." You know?

Kelsey Russell: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: I think it makes you a lot more suspicious as an attorney. Maybe we should say detail-oriented.

Kelsey Russell: Yeah!

Alison Monahan: I don't know if you saw any sort of very bizarre quality stuff, but sometimes you see things and you're like, "Wow, okay, this person's made it this far..." Our judge was very much like, "Well, people are doing the best they can with the resources they have available to them."



Kelsey Russell: Yeah, there was that. I think there's a lot to be said for reading that many briefs and seeing what convinces you because at the end of the day, that's what you're going to be doing no matter what, as long as you're in litigation, is ... Well, really in the corporate world too. You're convincing people when you're submitting your work. You're just trying to persuade them that what your take on the research is, is the correct take on it.

I think, again, to corporate-minded people, eventually, what you're doing is you're drafting things that maybe one day will be in court. You know?

Alison Monahan: Unfortunately, yes.

Kelsey Russell: They might all end up in court, so whether you see yourself in a courtroom one day or not, the things that you work on very much could end up in a courtroom one day. To have that view on that, that perspective, I think is helpful really no matter what you're doing.

Alison Monahan: Yeah and I think it's hard to predict. You might think, "Oh, I don't like litigation," but then you go into the corporate world and you decide you don't like that either. Then you're like, "Oh, maybe I'll give litigation a shot." I'd encourage people to be open about it, but if you find, "Gosh, this seems like the most boring thing in the world," then probably you can go do something else.

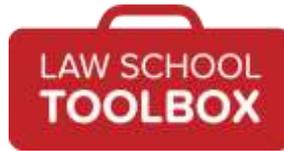
Kelsey Russell: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: On the hiring front, the process seems to be influx, again, as usually. When I actually applied, it was very structured and not everyone followed the hiring plan, but I would say 90 to 95% of judges basically followed it. It had a certain day where you could apply and then there was a week, I think, where they could review all the materials. And then they could call for interviews and the interviews were very structured on a certain day and certain time.

That does not sound like the experience you had because basically, this whole plan fell apart. And for at least the last multiple number of years, judges have been hiring kind of willy-nilly, but now they're talking about going back to a plan. Tell me about your experience.

Kelsey Russell: Yeah. When I was applying, that's right, the plan was tossed at the point that I was applying. It was the tail end of what I would call the wild, wild west of clerkship applications where it had gotten to the point, I think 1Ls, you were able to apply at the end of your first year of law school.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, which is crazy.



Kelsey Russell: It's crazy. I guess if you don't know the background to the hiring plan, maybe it doesn't sound that crazy, but you have one year of experience under your belt. I don't know how you even know if you want to clerk at that point.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly or where. You basically haven't even had a chance to choose a single class at that point in law school.

Kelsey Russell: Exactly. Your application's going to be a lot harder to get meaningful letters of recommendations from professors because you've had really your doctrinal first classes, but aside from that, so rather than talk about the merits of the earliness of the applications, it's a little more structured now, or at least on trend to be more structured.

A few of the, we'll call, the leading judges in different circuits have signed onto a plan that would put applications at the backend of 2L, your second year of law school, I believe. With those few judges who are very popular for clerkship applications to have said, "We're not going to look at clerkship applications until this time," I think paves the way for a plan to come back into action a little bit.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that's right. Honestly, I think judges too are just like, "This is completely crazy." You know? Most of them, I feel like, would probably just rather have some sort of structured process so they know, "Okay, I have to devote this couple of weeks period to getting my next clerks and then we can move on with our lives."

Kelsey Russell: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. The day that I remember interviewing, I did the Southern District interviews before I did a Boston one the next day. It was crazy because every single person who was interviewing for clerkships in the Southern District was in the courthouse that morning starting at 8:00 AM. It was just, you could imagine, totally frantic. I think they made you check your phones, so nobody had their phones. It was just completely crazy.

Kelsey Russell: Yeah, that does not sound like a pleasant morning.

Alison Monahan: No! It was completely nuts. You're sitting there, you're doing the interview or you're sitting waiting as somebody's coming out and somebody's coming in. It was a very high-stress day, but it did enable them, basically, to do their hiring in a few days, which is kind of nice.

Kelsey Russell: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, I think if people are interested, what you need to do really, and this probably applies almost at any time that you're listening to this episode,



even if it's years later, is check with your school. Most schools have some sort of coordinator of clerkships; they know what this process is and they can advise you on what you should be doing because it is one of those things that seems to go in and out of favor, to have a plan or not to have a plan, and frankly, not all judges follow the plan anyway. So, this is one of those where you really need that on the ground knowledge of what is going on.

On that point actually, how did you get information about where you wanted to apply, or once you had interviews, about the judges themselves?

Kelsey Russell: There are a few ways that you can learn about the different judges that you're applying for. Yeah, the first question is where you want to clerk. I knew I wanted to clerk in New York. I didn't necessarily care whether that was the Eastern District, the Southern District, or any of the other districts that are available. I had a connection through a professor that I had to Judge Griesa. She knew that he was looking for clerks relatively quickly. And like I said, I was applying pretty late in my third year, especially to be looking for a clerkship my first year out. I took advantage of that and got to know about him through my professor.

And then from there, I talked to a lot of his former clerks who, their information was made available just by word of mouth to me through my professor. Then once I talked to one former clerk, then they had the information on another former clerk. I got the whole picture of what working for Judge Griesa would entail.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think that's a really smart move. I also tried to reach out to former clerks and people that I had interviews with just to find out what is this judge like? It was really interesting because sometimes they would give me very helpful information about what the interview itself was likely to be like, maybe some types of questions I was likely to face. That enabled me to go in, I think, with a lot better knowledge about what the interview process was going to be like and to be more successful there.

I've had people call me, as a former clerk, and I'm always happy to help them. I think there's no harm in reaching out to people and just asking them.

Kelsey Russell: Definitely. I was so glad that I did that because I just think the information that you can get from public sources really is, it's very helpful, it's a good starting point, especially to understand the application materials that are required for a particular judge, but the real things that you want to know, I think you have to talk to people, you have to have conversations with them to get the full picture.

Alison Monahan: Yeah because this ends up being a very, very intense personal relationship. You're working very closely in usually a pretty high-pressure situation with people, and very small number of people, and typically a decent number of



hours. You want to make sure that this is a person that you don't mind spending that much time with and you think is going to be a good boss and that kind of thing and not be abusive. Let's face it, that happens in every job. So, you want to make sure what you're getting into.

Sometimes you can get this information through your school or maybe through different organizations at your school. I think if you are interested, definitely ask around and try to figure out where these maybe non-public sources of information might be because they probably are out there somewhere.

Kelsey Russell: Definitely.

Alison Monahan: It's good to know. You don't want to work for somebody that seems great in an interview and then turns out to be a total nightmare, which definitely you hear stories about.

Kelsey Russell: Definitely, yeah. I think that does happen.

Alison Monahan: All right. People may not be aware of this, but typically, when you interview, in addition to interview with the judge, you're also going to talk to the judge's current clerks. Did you do those types of interviews?

Kelsey Russell: Yes, we did.

Alison Monahan: All right. What were you looking for there?

Kelsey Russell: I think there are definitely a few things that, overall, I was looking for. I think the one that stood out to me the most and I looked for the most when I was interviewing a candidate was their judgment, which is not always the easiest thing to get out of a 15 to 20-minute sit down with a candidate. But you can get a sense, I think. When you're having a conversation with someone, even informally, you get a sense of whether they take responsibility for their own things.

I think the clerkship is, in a lot of ways, a very self-motivating, self-monitoring position, and to me, it was really important to try to gauge whether someone who I was speaking with, when they had their own ... I always look at it as my own docket, even though it's part of a floor docket, like my docket of cases. Nobody was really checking on what was filed that day in a case that I was on; I had to check that. Nobody was checking if the page requirements that a party has to abide by when they submit a filing were met; I had to. That was the kind of stuff that, when I was meeting with someone, I wanted to see would they check their own things or would they be waiting for somebody else to flag that something had gone wrong with a filing? That was number one.



Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that's a great point. I think it is a very high level of responsibility to be a clerk, and I think you are looking for people who are going to take that seriously because you don't want to be the one dropping the ball and then making the judge look bad or possibly get reprimanded or something like that. It's one of those things where you do, I think, have to be the one who makes sure that the buck stops with you. If you're not that type of person, I agree, sussing that out in an interview is probably a pretty good way to go.

Kelsey Russell: Yeah, yeah. I think, hand-in-hand with that, I tried to gauge whether a candidate was mature. When I say that, I don't mean age because, obviously, as someone who came right out of law school, I wouldn't have a leg to stand on to say that. But if you're a mature individual in your personal life, that usually translates to your professional life as well. That was always something that I really liked to see in a candidate.

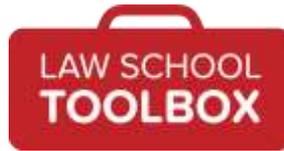
Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think overall, I was typically looking for does this person seem like somebody who would get things done, be responsible, not cause problems or drama or anything like that because there's enough of that in the courtroom itself, and be a person who's easy to work with and responsible that I would literally want to spend time sharing an office with. I don't know about you, but we had one office for the clerks, so we were literally there, sometimes with an intern, all day long. You want to make sure it's somebody you could actually do that with.

Kelsey Russell: Yeah, we had the same set up. It was the three of us in one office and with that, you want to make sure it's someone that even if ... You're never going to be comfortable with someone in the first week that you're working with them, but you want them to get the sense that, "Down the road, I will be very comfortable sitting here either with my headphones in or my headphones out, working on something, and during late hours." You have to get the vibe that will eventually come to pass.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, so if you have an interview, try to be seemingly somebody who's easy to work with. I think when you're talking about references and that kind of thing too, that's another important thing that you're looking at in those references is, is this person responsible? Do they get things done? Are they easy to work with? That kind of thing.

Sometimes, I think people feel like they have to show you how smart they are. Honestly, if you've gotten to the point of getting an interview, I feel like that is less critical than all these other factors.

Kelsey Russell: Definitely. I really preferred during the interviews when it would be more of a conversation about getting to know the person than them reading me their resume, which I also had in front of me.



Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. So, don't look at it, if you're in the interview, don't look at it like you're going to be judged or necessarily pushed on any sort of substantive stuff. That occasionally could happen, but really, it is more of a, "Does this person seem like someone we could work with?"

Well, overall, what did you think of clerking? Was it a good experience?

Kelsey Russell: It was an amazing experience, something that I think I will cherish forever in work and outside of work. I keep in touch with my co-clerks already. One of them moved to California and we still talk plenty. Sharing that office, really, I think did create serious bonds.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Weirdly enough, at one point, my co-clerk ended up being my downstairs tenant because I bought a duplex when I was working at the firm and I lived upstairs and I needed someone to live downstairs and she needed a place to live. So we told the judge and he was just like, "What? You guys are doing what? This seems like a really bizarre thing." We're like, "No, it's great. We already know each other!"

Kelsey Russell: "F-you judge!"

Alison Monahan: Yeah. He was a little bit ... He was like, "Well, that's kind of flattering, I guess, that you guys are friends," but yeah, he was just like, "This is not normal." Yeah, certainly, I think most judges keep up with their clerks and visit if they're in the city. Certainly, if I'm back in Boston, I always try to stop by and have lunch or something like that. Yeah, I think for most people, barring the occasionally catastrophe, I think it is typically a very, very good experience.

Kelsey Russell: Yeah. I think that it will make me a better lawyer, unquestionably.

Alison Monahan: Oh, for sure. At least you know what not to do now.

Kelsey Russell: Those are cemented in my mind, what not to do.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. Yeah, I'm sure we can all tell some stories when we're not on a recorded line about what not to do in the courtroom.

All right, well unfortunately, we're just about out of time. Anything else you would like to add on this?

Kelsey Russell: No. Aside from, I think, everybody should at least consider applying for a clerkship, I think that's really all I have to say.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think if you're listening to this and you're like, "Oh, there's no way I'll ever get one of these fancy clerkships," the reality is there's tons and tons of



options and I think it's worth investigating. There's state clerkships you could do, there are local ones, there are all sorts of different federal ones at different levels, magistrates. There probably is a clerkship out there for you if you really want to do it, so don't just ... Sometimes it's easy to say, "Oh, well, I just don't have the grades for a federal clerkship, so I'm not going to think about this," but I think there are a lot of other options that are definitely worth exploring.

Kelsey Russell: Definitely. You could also consider, as just before you even think about clerkships, is interning for a judge to get a sense of whether chambers is for you.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. For some people, if you're not willing to commit fully, I think the summer or even during the semester can be a great time because you're basically doing the same thing. Obviously, you don't have quite as much experience, but you're in chambers, you're seeing all of these things. I think that's a great point, doing an internship or externship, whatever they are, can give you a lot of that experience without you having to commit, necessarily, to a full year.

Kelsey Russell: Definitely.

Alison Monahan: All right. Well Kelsey, thank you so much for joining us and sharing your insight.

Kelsey Russell: Thank you so much for having me!

Alison Monahan: Oh, my pleasure. With that, unfortunately we are out of time. If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox Podcast, please take a second to leave a review and rating on your favorite listening app. We would really appreciate it! And make sure to subscribe, so you don't miss anything. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to Lee or Alison at Lee@lawschooltoolbox.com or alison@lawschooltoolbox.com, or you can always contact us via our website contact form at lawschooltoolbox.com Thanks for listening and we'll talk soon.

RESOURCES:

- [Podcast Episode 44: How to Get a Judicial Clerkship](#)
- [What is it Really Like to be a Judicial Clerk?](#)
- [Expand Your Options: an exploration of the different types of federal clerkship and state clerkship options](#)
- [CareerDicta: Career Help for Lawyers and Law Students](#)