



One on One with Edward J. Walters, Jr., 85th LSBA President:

On Law, Leadership and Legacy

Interviewed by Michael A. Patterson

Edward J. Walters, Jr. is a partner in the Baton Rouge law firm of Walters, Thomas, Cullens, LLC. He received a BS degree in accounting in 1969 from Louisiana State University and his JD degree in 1975 from the LSU Law Center.

Walters served as the Louisiana State Bar Association's secretary and editor-in-chief of the Louisiana Bar Journal in 2012-13. He continues to serve on the Louisiana Bar Journal Editorial Board.

He and Michael A. Patterson have taught a course entitled "Advanced Trial and Evidence" at the LSU Law School for more than 30 years and has been a member of the faculty of the Law School's yearly Trial Advocacy program since its inception 25 years ago.

He was appointed by the Louisiana Supreme Court to serve as a member of the Judiciary Commission of Louisiana from 2017-2021. He was the Chair of the Commission for 2021.

He received the LSU Law Center's Distinguished Alumnus Award in 2015, the LSBA's President's Award in 2011, the Louisiana Bar Foundation's Distinguished Attorney Award in 2008 and the Baton Rouge Bar Association's President's Award in 1995, 1998 and 2014.

He is a member of the American College of Trial Lawyers, the International Academy of Trial Lawyers and the LSU Law Center Board of Trustees. He is Board Certified in the field of Civil Trial Advocacy by the National Board of Trial Advocacy.

He is the recipient of the 2024 Louisiana Bar Foundation's Curtis R. Boisfontaine Trial Advocacy Award in recognition of his long-standing devotion to and excellence in trial practice and for upholding the standards of ethics and consideration for the court, litigants and all counsel.

He is the author of the book Ipse Dixit: Ruminations on a Career at Law, which is a compilation of his writings.

Walters and his wife, Norma, have been married for over 55 years and are the parents of two children. They have four grandchildren.

He is being interviewed by LSBA Past President Michael Patterson. Walters interviewed Patterson for the Journal when Patterson was the incoming president.



Michael A. Patterson and Edward J. Walters, Jr.

(Left) Edward J. Walters, Jr. with his wife, Norma. Photos by Eye Wander Photo / Aaron Hogan.

Patterson: Tell us about growing up in New Orleans.

Walters: As you know, being from New Orleans, whenever someone asks you where you went to school, you always tell them where you went to high school. I went to St. Aloysius High School which is now Brother Martin High School. I graduated in 1964 and then went to LSU, where I met you. We were 17. I graduated from LSU in accounting and was immediately drafted.

Patterson: Tell us about your work history.

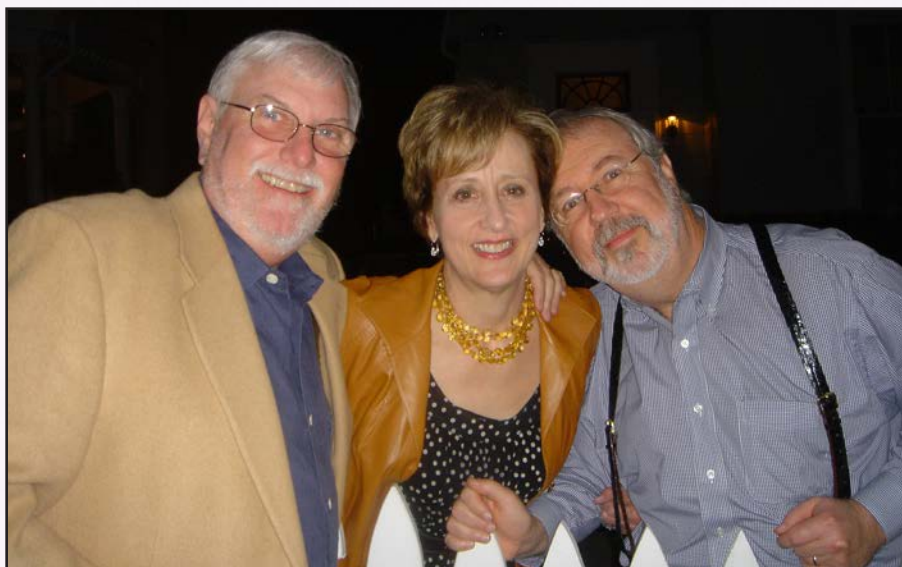
Walters: When I got drafted, I immediately joined the Air Force. When I was in the Air Force I ran a huge IBM computer the size of this office but which today would probably fit inside your watch. During my four years I spent 18 months in Fairbanks, Alaska, which is a story in itself. A very cold one.

Patterson: Tell us about your practice.

Walters: I worked in the LSU Law School library until my friend Dean Sutherland landed me a clerking job with Charles "Chick" Moore. I was with Chick for 35 years. We started with a general practice doing anything we could to make enough money to survive, but over time we ended up with an almost 100% plaintiff personal injury practice.



Edward J. Walters, Jr. in the Air Force. Photo provided by Walters family.



Edward J. Walters, Jr. with Hon. Elizabeth Erny Foote and Hon. W. Ross Foote (ret.). Photo provided by Walters family.

Through the years I ended up handling numerous cases of professionals – doctors, lawyers, psychologists – having sex with their patients. Also, priests and other professionals.

Patterson: Do you have a favorite case?

Walters: I guess my favorite case has to be *Kent v. Gulf States Utilities*. Around 1979 a young man was very badly hurt when a long tool he was using hit a powerline. Mostly due to Chick's skill as a trial lawyer we received a jury verdict which at that time was the largest jury verdict in Louisiana. That really put us on the map. I have many stories about that case and the lawyers we tried the case against who are still my good friends, like Frank Fertitta. I was a lawyer for just a few years, and I was allowed to handle the examination of the plaintiff before the jury. Risky move, but it worked out for the client.

Patterson: Who are the bar leaders who influenced you?

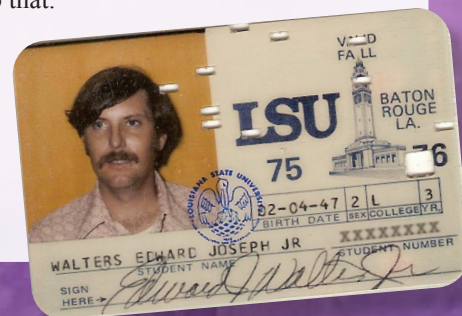
Walters: One thing that really influenced me was my service on the editorial board of the *Louisiana Bar Journal*. The first editorial board I served on was comprised of Beth Foote (now Judge Beth Foote), President 2008-2009, Ross Foote (now retired Judge Ross

Foote), Larry Feldman, President 2002-2003, Susie Morgan (now Judge Susie Morgan), Phelps Gay, President 2000-2001, and me. What a group. We are all still great friends.

And now, people like Barry Grodsky, Larry Shea, Minor Pipes, Darrel Papillion, Bob Kutcher and, of course, our Executive Director, Loretta Larsen, continue to influence me, some for the good.

Patterson: What do you see as the role of the LSBA president?

Walters: In today's world lawyers are not that well respected. I see my role as trying to show the public that we are in a noble profession – a calling – and we do many, many wonderful things for our clients and for the public in general. I plan to get that word out and hopefully improve our image with the public. Our catchphrase is "Serving the Public, Serving the Profession." We will live up to that.



Patterson: *Do you feel that as President you speak for the entire bar?*

Walters: We are a diverse bar, and we have many, many points of view and attitudes among our members. But, as lawyers, we all have a common core of values which we all aspire to, and we all believe in.

Patterson: *What are your objectives for the coming year?*

Walters: I would like to be a voice for our judges and thus for our system of justice. Judges are constantly attacked, and they are not able to defend themselves in the media. We can do that for them.

I will work on trying to bring lawyers together so that even though we live in a factionalized world, we can work together for the benefit of the profession and the public.

We plan to reach out to areas where the public is underserved by lawyers, and maybe where our lawyers are underserved by our Association.

We are currently in the midst of analyzing the structure of the LSBA. We now have 237 seats on our HOD – one for each district judge – and 46 are unfilled. Even for the ones that are filled, we have trouble getting a quorum even though



Edward J. Walters, Jr. and Thomas C. Galligan, Jr. at LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center presenting during a CLE. Photo provided by Walters family.

we now allow remote participation. We are studying the structure of bar associations in similarly-sized states. We want a structure that includes everyone and includes everyone's interests. Stay tuned.

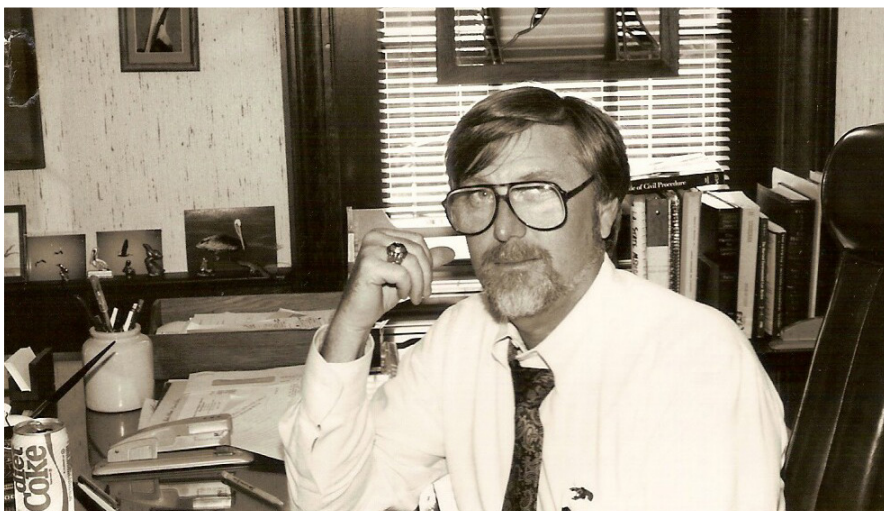
Patterson: *Why did you run for President of the LSBA?*

Walters: I really thought I could make a difference during these difficult times. I hope I can. A lot of past bar presidents discussed it with me, and I decided it was a good idea.

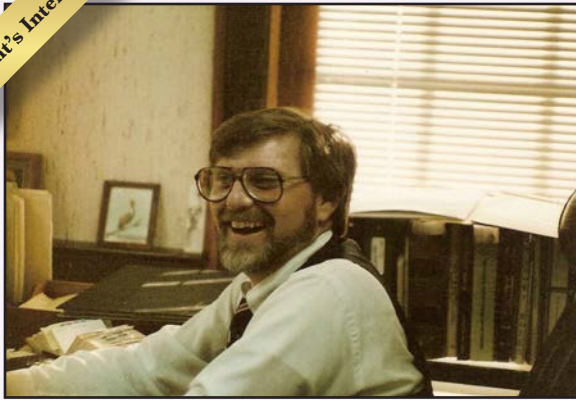
Patterson: *What do you see as the challenges for our profession ahead?*

Walters: Recently I have been concerned about outside forces trying to influence how lawyers practice law and who they can represent. I believe we should be able to decide who we represent without repercussion.

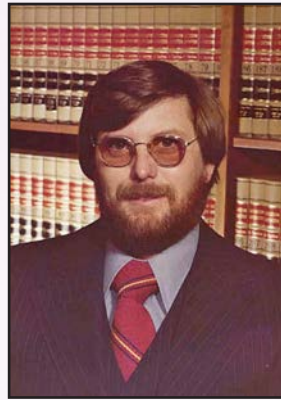
One big challenge we are addressing through the Judges and Lawyer Assistance Program (JLAP) is lawyer well-being. Dr. Angela White-Bazile, the executive director of JLAP, is vigorously having JLAP address how we deal with our wellness. Many lawyers and judges have viewed JLAP as a service to lawyers and judges with alcohol and substance abuse problems. While it does that, JLAP has broadened its scope to deal with many of the problems we face in our careers as lawyers: stress, burnout and, most seriously, self-destructive behavior and suicide. That continues to be a great challenge to our profession, and I commend Dr. Angela for her efforts to help.



Edward J. Walters, Jr. . Photo provided by Walters family.



Edward J. Walters, Jr. at work . Photos provided by Walters family.



Patterson: *You've been a lawyer for an extremely long time. You must enjoy the practice of law.*

Walters: It has been great. Although it is always a challenge, when you are able to positively affect a family's life, it is very, very rewarding.

Plus, I am practicing with the people I have practiced with for a long time who I love and trust. It doesn't get any better than that.

Patterson: *How did your avocation in the area of teaching Trial and Evidence happen and endure?*



Edward J. Walters, Jr. at the Edward J. Walters, Jr. Courtroom at the Paul M. Hebert Law Center in Baton Rouge. Photos provided by Walters family.

Walters: Back in the eighties another lawyer in Baton Rouge was teaching Moot Court at the LSU Law School and he asked if I would like to do it. I did and I very much enjoyed it. You and I developed a course entitled Advanced Trial and Evidence some 30 years ago and we have been teaching that course ever since. The course takes a case from the initial client interview to a trial of the case at the end of the semester before a real judge. We teach the skills a young lawyer needs to know when handling a case. I really enjoy teaching at the law school. As I've said many, many times we learn more from them than they learn from us. We try to stay in touch with our students after they graduate and become lawyers. Several of my partners were students of ours: Abboud Thomas and Darrel Papillion, now Judge Darrel Papillion. I am in a weekly lunch group which now includes at least ten of our students.

Patterson: *You have written a lot. How long have you been doing this?*

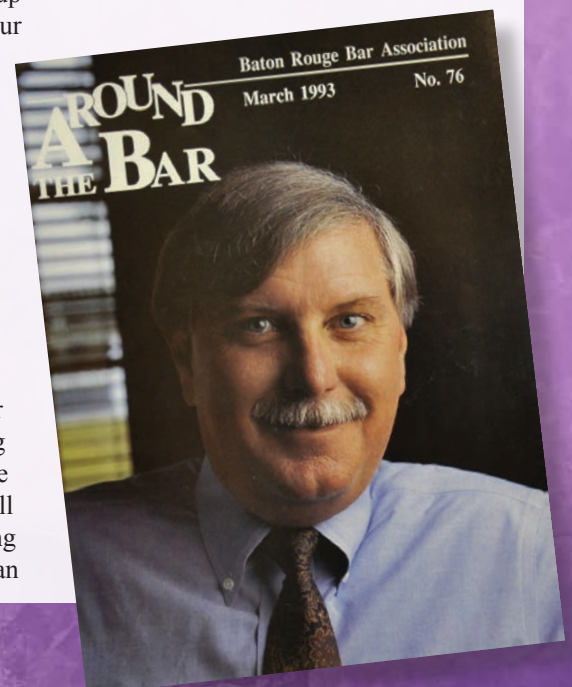
Walters: In 1987 I had a lawyer file a frivolous discovery motion and I had to go to court to defend against it. I was very upset that someone would do this, so, as I sat in court, seething, I wrote an article about it and how a Baton Rouge lawyer would never have done such a thing because in Baton Rouge we practice the right way. The article was very well received. After that any time something interesting came up, I would write an

article about it. I was the editor of the Baton Rouge Bar magazine, so I had no trouble getting it published. I have also written a lot for the *Louisiana Bar Journal*.

I was the editor of the magazine of the Baton Rouge Bar Association, *Around the Bar*, for 34 years. During that time, I wrote many editorials under the "kicker" *Ipse Dixit*. I also wrote many articles for this *Journal* under the same *Ipse Dixit* kicker. Here's how that came about. When I was in law school, Professor George Pugh, using the Socratic method, would ask a question of you, and with your answer he would request "... and what is your basis for that?" If you had no basis, he would exclaim, "So what is it, *Ipse Dixit*?" which means you have no basis. I had to look it up. It means basically "It is so because I say it is so." A perfect kicker for my articles.

I have been on the Editorial Board of this *Journal* from 1995 to 2025, excluding one year when I was fired by the President, Marta Schnabel. You see, I arranged to have the *Journal* Editorial Board meet at my office in Baton Rouge as a convenience to me. Well, I didn't show up for that meeting and Marta fired me. I don't blame her.

I compiled all of my articles into a book entitled *Ipse Dixit: Ruminations on a Career at Law*.



Patterson: Give us some insight into your family.

Walters: My dad died in an accident when I was 11 so I was raised by my mother and grandmother.

Norma and I met at LSU and we got married in 1968. She worked to put me through my remaining years of college, and she worked to help put me through law school.

When we were in college, one Christmas she sold blood to buy me a motorcycle. My family was not happy about that. I was.

We have two sons, Ed and John, and four grandchildren, Caroline, 25, Luke, 20, Miles, 17 and Drew, 16.

Patterson: What are your hobbies?

Walters: Well, since around 1983 our family has had a camp in Grand Isle. We enjoy going there fishing and relaxing, mostly relaxing. Norma is a much more successful fisherman (fisherperson?) than I am. We have just recently finished extensive repairs from Hurricane Ida, so we plan to spend more time there when we get a chance.

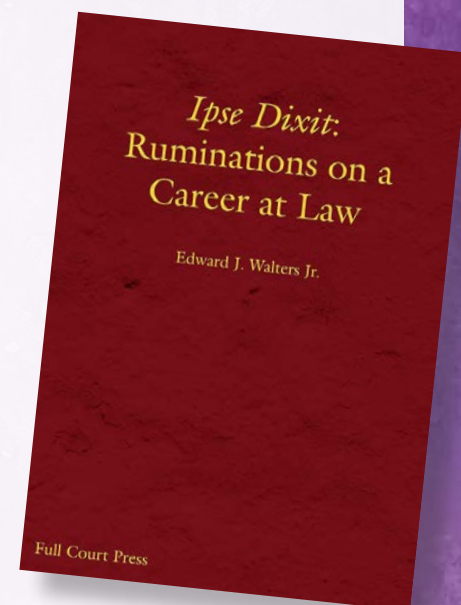
Patterson: Tell us who you admired as a lawyer, mentors, role models, and why.



Edward J. Walters, Jr. and Norma Walters.
Photos provided by Walters family.

Walters: A lot of my heroes have left us, like Frank Maraist and David Robinson. Many of our readers will not know their names if I mention them.

I still admire Judge Guy Holdridge, even though he always ruled against me. (Just kidding.)



Edward J. Walters, Jr. with his sons, John and Ed, and grandsons, Luke, Miles and Drew. Photos provided by Walters family.



Edward J. Walters, Jr. with granddaughter Caroline and wife Norma. Photos provided by Walters family.



Frank L. Maraist and Edward J. Walters, Jr.
Photos provided by Walters family.

I admire my ex-student, ex-partner and forever friend, Darrel Papillion (now Judge Darrel Papillion), LSBA President 2016-2017. He is the consummate professional in all that he does.

I always admired Charles McCowan. He is a tough litigator. We had many cases against each other, and I had a decision to make early in my career: be miserable dealing with McCowan or make him my friend. I made the right choice and he and I are still very good friends. He was still tough to deal with.

My non-exhaustive list of lawyers and judges I admire having tried cases before, against or with, are Judge Johnny deGravelles, Judge Guy Holdridge, Judge Mike Caldwell, Judge Mike McDonald, Judge John Molaison, Vince Fornias, Frank Holthaus, Barry Grodsky, Bob Kutcher, Jerry Glas, Vance Gibbs, Jim Boren, Mary Olive Pierson, Lewis Unglesby, D. R. Atkinson and countless others. If I left you out, it was not an error of the heart.



J. Cullens, David Abboud Thomas, Hon. Darrel J. Papillion and Edward J. Walters, Jr. at their firm.
Photo by Eye Wander Photo.

Patterson: What has been the most rewarding part of your career?

Walters: Judge Mike McDonald recommended me to serve on the Judiciary Commission of Louisiana. It is the body (three judges, three lawyers, and three real people) who review complaints against judges. I have never served on a more well-meaning, “do the right thing for the right reason” group of people in my career. I am so proud of the Commission and my service on the Commission. I served from 2017 to 2021. I was the Chair in 2021.

Patterson: What was the last book you read?

Walters: The last book I listened to was *Tell It Like It Is*, written by Aaron Neville. I am a big Neville Brothers fan, and it is a very interesting life history of a kid growing up in New Orleans. Right now, I am reading *Lorne, the Man Who Invented Saturday Night Live* about Lorne Michaels.

Patterson: How about some advice to young lawyers.

Walters: Everybody gives the same advice in these sorts of articles: preparation, preparation, preparation. We all know that adds to your success as a lawyer, but you also have to have success as a person. It’s important to remember to have fun time with your family and have some fun time with your friends and have some fun time for yourself.

As Robert Fulghum stated in his book *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, “Live a balanced life – learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.”

Patterson: How long are you going to do this?

Walters: I’ll give you the same answer you gave me when I asked you this same question 15 years ago when I interviewed you for this piece in the *Journal*, “When you quit, I’ll quit.”



Michael A. Patterson; Larry J. Centola, Jr.; Michael W. McKay; Hon. Robert D. Downing and Edward J. Walters, Jr. at Michael McKay’s birthday celebration. Photos provided by Walters family.



LSU Law School Distinguished Graduate Ceremony. Photos provided by Walters family.