

9<sup>TH</sup> UNPLUGGED

HONORABLE HAL C. EPPERSON, JR.

OSCEOLA COUNTY COURT JUDGE

JANUARY 4, 2023

HOSTED BY: HONORABLE ALICIA L. LATIMORE

JUDGE LATIMORE: Hi, I'm Judge Latimore.

JUDGE EPPERSON: Hi, I'm Judge Epperson.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And you're listening to 9<sup>th</sup> Unplugged.

(Music)

JUDGE LATIMORE: Well, before we get unplugged, if you'll do me a favor and let our audience know where you're assigned as well as a little bit about your judicial career.

JUDGE EPPERSON: Well, I presently serve on the county criminal bench in Osceola County. I've been on the bench for almost 17 years and 15 of those years have been on the criminal bench. Two of them were on the civil bench. That's probably because my background as an attorney, I was in criminal law and so it's a nice fit.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right. And so we are happy to have you here today to be unplugged. And let's go right into it. What is it that you prefer to do when you're becoming unplugged? Once you leave work and you're ready to settle down or have fun.

JUDGE EPPERSON: Well, on the weekends, my wife and I like to spend time with our grandchildren. We have two grandchildren.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Awesome.

JUDGE EPPERSON: Jacob is four and Riley is two. And just about every Saturday we have dinner with my son, his wife and our grandkids and then spend a couple of hours with them.

JUDGE LATIMORE: That's nice. Do you cook?

JUDGE EPPERSON: I do not cook. I do not cook at all. And so I rely upon my wife and sometimes delivery services for our meals.

JUDGE LATIMORE: That always works. That always works. So I understand that you – you are what I call, because I’m in this category, a carnivore.

JUDGE EPPERSON: I am.

JUDGE LATIMORE: So you prefer all non-vegetables from what I understand.

JUDGE EPPERSON: That’s correct. Steak and potatoes. Any meat. I probably eat about two vegetables, green beans and corn and then after that maybe some salad.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And that’s it?

JUDGE EPPERSON: That’s about it.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Is it the texture or you just don’t prefer the taste?

JUDGE EPPERSON: I think – I was the third child in my family. I was the youngest and I think by that time my mom and dad didn’t make me eat all of my veggies and I just never matured.

JUDGE LATIMORE: That’s fair. That’s fair. All right, tell us about some of your favorite hobbies.

JUDGE EPPERSON: Well, I would say in 2015 my wife and I started going to see the national parks and we began to hike through those parks. And since then we’ve done about 20 of them and so we thoroughly enjoy just being out in nature and hiking. I enjoy golfing.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Are you good at golfing?

JUDGE EPPERSON: I would say I'm good at golfing. I keep it under 100 but beyond that, not so good. I don't play enough.

JUDGE LATIMORE: It takes time. You have to practice in order to become pretty good at that.

JUDGE EPPERSON: You do.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Which one – which national park is your favorite, if you could pick one?

JUDGE EPPERSON: Yeah, it's very difficult. We've enjoyed every single park we've attended. Obviously, Yellowstone.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yes.

JUDGE EPPERSON: Grand Teton, Yosemite, the Utah 5, nice. The ones out west we've really enjoyed. And then more recently Arcadia up in the northeast was also beautiful but they're great.

JUDGE LATIMORE: You grew up in Kissimmee.

JUDGE EPPERSON: We moved to Kissimmee when I was about eight years old.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay.

JUDGE EPPERSON: My father was called to be the pastor at First Baptist Kissimmee and so lived here all my life really, since eight years old.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Oh, wow. Okay, that's very rare to find native Floridians much less almost native Kissimmians, I guess you would call that. All right, so with that, I just have to

ask you the question, there's a question in regards to topics that you would prefer to avoid. And you indicated home improvement. Why is it that you do not want to speak about home improvement?

JUDGE EPPERSON: Because of my total incompetence in that area.

JUDGE LATIMORE: I can't imagine –

JUDGE EPPERSON: I've never – I'll pass the buck and blame my familial situation. Because my dad was a pastor, we grew up in a parsonage and so we never owned our homes. And so because of that, if any work needed to be on the home, work needed to be done, it was some third party. And so I never stood over my father's shoulder and watched him work on a project, an automobile, or a home. And so I really never developed those skills.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Other than hiking in national parks, what other hobby would you get into if time and money weren't an issue?

JUDGE EPPERSON: Probably increase travel. We've traveled all over the nation, but I've only been overseas one time. We went to the Holy Land and traveled all through Israel. But if I had more time and money wasn't an issue, I might do a little more international travel to see the world.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And where else would you like to visit?

JUDGE EPPERSON: I'd like to go to Switzerland and Europe.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yes.

JUDGE EPPERSON: And see some of the great cities of the world but we've not done that yet.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And what is something that your friends would consider so you? If they had to describe you or something about you, what would they mention?

JUDGE EPPERSON: My close friends would know that I'm very introverted.

JUDGE LATIMORE: You are.

JUDGE EPPERSON: I am extremely introverted. I'm very comfortable speaking in front of a large group of people, but in small settings, parties and things like that, I'm extremely uncomfortable.

JUDGE LATIMORE: I relate to that. I really do. So we are what I call forced extroverts to some extent that we are required to be extroverted. But if you leave us alone, we are content.

JUDGE EPPERSON: Absolutely.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And find it hard to strike up a conversation at a party at times, correct.

JUDGE EPPERSON: That's correct.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right, that is wonderful. So let me ask you, you know, what are some of the unusual types of activities you might have done as a young Hal Epperson that you might not do now that you're much more wiser?

JUDGE EPPERSON: That I can broadcast?

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yes. Right. As long as the Church isn't listening, right?

JUDGE EPPERSON: Well, when I was young, I was actually athletic. I played a lot of sports.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Did you.

JUDGE EPPERSON: Yes, I played high school baseball and I actually was invited to try to walk on at Stetson University but when I – my first year, I was on the baseball floor with the team and when I went to watch some of their practices, I realized they were at a caliber that was beyond me. First, they are Division I and I knew that if I even made the team, I wouldn't be playing. I'd be sitting on the bench and so I gave up that dream. But I used to enjoy playing sports, softball, tennis. Had a back surgery though about 12 years ago and that's curtailed some of those physical activities. But I enjoyed a lot of athletics when I was younger.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And I understand that your first job was at a funeral home.

JUDGE EPPERSON: Yes, actually Grissom Funeral Home right across the street from the courthouse.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay.

JUDGE EPPERSON: After graduating high school, the first summer, I went to work there and I ended up working there every summer through college and law school at Grissom. It was a wonderful place. The people there, Mr. Grissom was a wonderful man, wonderful family. And I can remember standing out in the morning, my job was to kind of wash off the sidewalk and the front there, and I can remember watching the lawyers walk to the courthouse.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yes.

JUDGE EPPERSON: And thinking maybe I might want to go to law school one day.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And look at where you are now. Ah, look at that. Okay. And so I wanted to ask you, if you were able to pick – to have a movie made about your life, and you had to choose which actor would play the role of Hal Epperson. Who would that be?

JUDGE EPPERSON: Oh, I'm so culturally illiterate about actors and actresses. Goodness.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Well, back in our day, let's do it that way.

JUDGE EPPERSON: Boy, I'm struggling here. I need a multiple choice.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Do you have a title?

JUDGE EPPERSON: A title, well, you know they did have a title name Shallow Hal but I'm not going to go with that one.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Oh, don't do that.

JUDGE EPPERSON: I'll go with Complex Hal.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right. Let's do some really quick rapid questions for you. You've already answered this one. Are you an extrovert or introvert and we already know that you've indicated introvert. Do you prefer a zoo or aquarium?

JUDGE EPPERSON: Zoo.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Zoo. Why?

JUDGE EPPERSON: I've always enjoyed watching animals and most recently we took our grandkids to kind of a farmhouse and had them feed the animals and I enjoyed that so I'd go with the zoo.



JUDGE LATIMORE: Jeep or Jet Ski?

JUDGE EPPERSON: Boy I like both of those. Because I'm getting a little older, I'd say the Jeep.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And are you an early morning person or late night?

JUDGE EPPERSON: I'm now an early morning person. Used to be late night, now early morning.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yeah, I heard that kind of comes as we get more seasoned. Yes, I'm having that experience too. Thank you so much for being unplugged with me today.

JUDGE EPPERSON: Enjoyed it very much. Thank you, Judge Latimore.

(Music)