

9TH UNPLUGGED

HONORABLE BARBARA J. LEACH

CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE

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HOSTED BY: HONORABLE ALICIA L. LATIMORE

JUDGE LATIMORE: Hi, I'm Judge Latimore.

JUDGE LEACH: And I'm Judge Leach.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And you're listening to 9th Unplugged.

(Music)

JUDGE LATIMORE: How are you doing?

JUDGE LEACH: I'm doing great. I'm so excited to be here today.

JUDGE LATIMORE: I'm glad to have you here as well. Would you share with our audience what you do? We know you're a judge but what division you're assigned to and how long you've been on the bench.

JUDGE LEACH: Sure, I have been on the bench since January of 2021. I'm currently in my third year of serving in the domestic violence and related domestic relations court here in Orange County.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And what do you find most exciting about being a judge?

JUDGE LEACH: Oh, I love getting to have really talented lawyers in front of me, being smart and articulate, and arguing vehemently for their clients.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right, let's stop talking about work and let's get unplugged. So what do you do most time – what's the most fun thing that you find yourself doing when you're not at the courthouse?

JUDGE LEACH: I find I spend a lot of time either reading or handmaking cards or baking cookies.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Now, I had the privilege of seeing some of that, some of your cards, as well as your cookies. I mean, you're very creative.

JUDGE LEACH: Oh, I copy. I am not creative.

JUDGE LATIMORE: You copy. You're very creative. I got a chance to see that. How did you get into doing all of that?

JUDGE LEACH: Well, I started card making probably in 1999 because I got sucked into going to a home party and the Jedi mind trick works on me and so this lady was like, you should start stamping. And I said, I should start stamping. You should sell rubber stamps. I should sell rubber stamps. So I sold rubber stamps for five years. Had a blast. I gave it up when I went to law school because who has time to have fun.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Right, exactly.

JUDGE LEACH: Be creative, and then I rediscovered it about a year ago.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Wonderful.

JUDGE LEACH: And the cookies, I fell into that about eight years ago.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And you found that recipe on Pinterest, am I right about that?

JUDGE LEACH: Yes. Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right. What else have you found on Pinterest that you can cook or bake?

JUDGE LEACH: Oh, nothing.

JUDGE LATIMORE: There you go.

JUDGE LEACH: People think, oh, you're such an accomplished baker. Like, I am a one trick pony.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Well, I think you have many more talents than that. I understand that you scrapbook and you also play pickleball. Tell the audience about pickleball because there's some who really don't know about pickleball yet.

JUDGE LEACH: Pickleball is the marriage, if you could have a three-way marriage between badminton, tennis, and ping pong.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay.

JUDGE LEACH: None of which I am good at or have a history in but it doesn't stop me from getting on that court with my paddle and making a complete fool, fun-loving fool of myself.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Do you play it regularly?

JUDGE LEACH: I play it twice a week.

JUDGE LATIMORE: That's good.

JUDGE LEACH: I even have a coach.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Get the cardio built-up with pickleball or is it one of those more relaxing type activities?

JUDGE LEACH: I think if you're fit, it's definitely a way to exercise. But if a ball goes far away from me, I'm like oh that was a really good shot.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Right.

JUDGE LEACH: No way I'm going to get that –

JUDGE LATIMORE: I'm with you.

JUDGE LEACH: Somebody should get that ball. It's not going to be me.

JUDGE LATIMORE: So one interesting thing I found out about you just reviewing your facts is that you found out you were adopted when you were 21.

JUDGE LEACH: Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Tell us about that. How did that feel? Tell me the emotions and the feelings that you had at that point?

JUDGE LEACH: Well, I was surprised but I probably shouldn't have been. I think I'm a fairly oblivious person on some level because it never occurred to me that I'd never seen a picture of my mom pregnant.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay.

JUDGE LEACH: Like oh maybe that should have been a clue. But when she told me that I also thought, gosh, and here I had been so worried about growing into my mom's earlobes because I know like droopy earlobes is genetic. And so like I didn't have to worry about this at all. You should have told me this sooner.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Look at that. There's a silver lining in every cloud, right.

JUDGE LEACH: Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: So you learned that you had siblings also that you had not met.

JUDGE LEACH: Yes. Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Tell us about that.

JUDGE LEACH: I am apparently, on our father's side, I'm the youngest of five.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay.

JUDGE LEACH: So it's really weird to be the baby sister and to have older sisters, so I have two older sisters. And the youngest one of those two has been obviously used to being the baby sister but now I'm the baby sister. And they're all lovely people who I discovered about three years ago and met in person two years ago and it's just so exciting to have a family.

JUDGE LATIMORE: I bet. That is wonderful. I'm so happy. Someone who loves doing adoptions, I am very happy to learn that about you and that's wonderful that you got to meet your sisters and siblings. Tell me, who are three people who have been the most influential in your life?

JUDGE LEACH: In my life. One of whom is Judge Diana Tennis, one of our colleagues.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And how has she influenced your life?

JUDGE LEACH: Well, she's been on the bench for I think six years longer than I have and you know she was a model practitioner and you know a very engaged judge who gives back to the community both individuals and the lawyers. And when I first started to think about running for judge, she was really, really helpful.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And she's a really fun person, right.

JUDGE LEACH: Right.

JUDGE LATIMORE: So that's always good to have somebody who's fun to influence your life as well.

JUDGE LEACH: Yeah, yeah.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Who else?

JUDGE LEACH: I would say – I'm going to group them just – so I went to Valencia Community College and then I went to Rollins's night school, and then I went to FSU law school at different parts of my life. And I would say collectively there have been two or three professors at each stage of my academics with whom I'm still in touch who have helped shape me into the person I am. They gave me the confidence to be where I am. And then this is going to sound weird but listen – hear me out.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay, I'll hear you out.

JUDGE LEACH: The third person is my ex-husband.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay.

JUDGE LEACH: Eric Christman who I've known since high school. And I went to law school because he said, Barb, you should do that.

JUDGE LATIMORE: That's wonderful.

JUDGE LEACH: You know, so even though we are divorced, I still respect and admire him tremendously. And I'm thankful every day that he supported me the way he did.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Well, the audience – for the audience out there, ex-husbands can be okay.

JUDGE LEACH: Right.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yes, so nothing against ex-husbands. They are all right. What is the best thing about you that you would want people to know?

JUDGE LEACH: I'm really good at grammar, and I like editing things.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right. And when you're not editing things, what else are you doing for fun? I just really want to know, other than staying in the kitchen and cooking cookies. Do you like to travel?

JUDGE LEACH: I do. But you know I don't like going places for very long. I love being home. I love being in my craft room. I love hanging out with my family and friends, and so I like going for short bursts.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yes.

JUDGE LEACH: Like a four- or five-day trip.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And where is the spot that you really like to go?

JUDGE LEACH: Oh, my favorite spot in the universe other than here in the Ninth Circuit

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JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay.

JUDGE LEACH: -- is New Orleans.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yes, that is a very – now, is it the food? Is it the jazz? Is it the culture? What is it that really attracts you –

JUDGE LEACH: Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All of it.

JUDGE LEACH: Yes, and it's just the joie de vivre, that the people who live there have – like I could never work there because I feel like these people are always having festivals or parades or parties. I don't know how anyone gets work done in New Orleans, but whenever I go there, it just – it's just – there's just such an ebullience, like the zeitgeist of the entire town is just one of joy, unless again you're living there and having to work all the time.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yes. And I'm sure the baguettes have nothing to do with it at all, right. Well, I really thank you so much for being here with me on 9th Unplugged. You've been a pleasure to speak with and I wish we had more time, right. But please, don't hesitate to bring cookies.

JUDGE LEACH: Oh, you're already on my list.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right, sounds good. Thanks.

(Music)