

9TH UNPLUGGED

HONORABLE KEITH CARSTEN

CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE

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HOSTED BY: HONORABLE ALICIA L. LATIMORE

JUDGE LATIMORE: Well, hello there, I'm Judge Alicia Latimore.

JUDGE CARSTEN: And I'm Judge Keith Carsten.

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

(Music)

JUDGE LATIMORE: Welcome, welcome, welcome, Judge Carsten. It's a pleasure to have you here. If you would please as we start out this nine minutes, would you please tell the audience what assignment you have as well as your judicial career?

JUDGE CARSTEN: So I'm currently assigned to the circuit criminal bench out in Osceola County. I handle allegations of a felony nature and I am a former prosecutor, a former criminal defense attorney. I feel very much at home in this particular assignment and I'm super excited to have this role in the same community that I was born and raised, being one of the circuit judges here.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Now, when you say you were born and raised in this community, do you mean Kissimmee?

JUDGE CARSTEN: No, now our circuit is Orange and Osceola County. I was born in Florida Hospital in Orlando, grew up on the west side of Orlando.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay.

JUDGE CARSTEN: Went through public schools all throughout. I went to the University of Florida, went to Stetson and was a prosecutor here in the Ninth Judicial Circuit and then I was a criminal defense attorney.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Well, from one native Floridian to another, welcome.

JUDGE CARSTEN: There's fewer and fewer of us –

JUDGE LATIMORE: Exactly. Exactly. So nice – nice to have you here. Let's go ahead and get unplugged. All right, so first and foremost, what is it that you rush to do when you finally say I'm out from the work and I'm going to let that go and just unplug myself. What do you do?

JUDGE CARSTEN: So that's a great question. Sometimes leaving work at work is more difficult than others, especially with some of the particular assignments that we have. I've got a pretty lengthy commute home so I get a little bit of a chance to unwind, think about the day. I live in a really small community on the west side of Orlando. It's got dirt roads. It looks like Mayberry and just pulling in – into home knowing that I'm five miles from where I was born and raised and coming home. So I really like getting home. We go for walks. We've got – we're surrounded by lakes. I'm active in water sports and we've got a nice community. So that's a nice break when I leave the office.

JUDGE LATIMORE: What type of water sports do you do?

JUDGE CARSTEN: Well, I grew up on Lake Down, which is a part of the Butler Chain, and I grew up skiing, wakeboarding, wake surfing now is very popular so I've got plenty of friends with boats. My folks still live on the lake where I was born and raised so we've got access to the lake and in the evenings, we'll sometimes sit at the lake and see if we can't get in a session.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right, so you do a lot of things water-related, right, in the lakes. My understanding is you do some activities on ground, right.

JUDGE CARSTEN: Yeah, I like to scare myself occasionally. I like to get out of MY comfort level. I enjoy some of the more adventurous sports. I ride off road motorcycles. I ride motocross. I was part of the fallen gators when I was at the University of Florida, so –

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay, what's that?

JUDGE CARSTEN: I was on their skydiving team.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Whoa.

JUDGE CARSTEN: So –

JUDGE LATIMORE: So you like things in the sky too.

JUDGE CARSTEN: Yeah, I do. I am a private pilot. That was really what I had hoped my trajectory would be in high school. I was a junior Air Force ROTC member in high school. I would kind of set my trajectory there. In my senior year, my eyes started to get to the point where it was unlikely that I was going to get a pilot's slot so it was a change in direction for me after high school.

JUDGE LATIMORE: So when's the last time you flew a plane?

JUDGE CARSTEN: I have been up in a plane within the last month.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Wow.

JUDGE CARSTEN: I have jumped out of a plane within the last month.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Whoa.

JUDGE CARSTEN: So –

JUDGE LATIMORE: So tell US about that experience. You like adrenalin apparently. You really like adrenalin.

JUDGE CARSTEN: I like organized adrenalin. I'm certainly not going to do anything reckless because I've got a wife that I care very much about at home.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And I'm sure she loves you and she wants you to stick around.

JUDGE CARSTEN: And two kids. She does. But getting out of my comfort zone is important to me every once in a while so I took my first jump in about twenty years about two weeks ago and it was really familiar territory I thought. I was nervous but I – as soon as I got out of the airplane I remember you know the sensation of skydiving and I had a couple of people with me. It wasn't a tandem jump but I did have some safety divers with me and they made sure everything went smoothly but it was no problem.

JUDGE LATIMORE: What's the scariest about jumping out of a plane, other than jumping out of a plane?

JUDGE CARSTEN: For me it's the first minute when you have to kind of pause at the door and there's a handle inside the airplane and a handle outside of the airplane. And the airplane has got to maintain about 130 miles an hour to be flying so it's like sticking your head out the window as fast as you would be willing to drive your car. That would – it would be a little fast but you know holding your hand out of the window at highway speed kind of gives you a little bit of sensation as to what it feels like except that's on most of your body and it's loud, it's noisy. You're close to the engine so I'm always thankful to get away from the airplane and then it gets pretty quiet.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Now, I don't know how old your children are, but have they jumped out of a plane yet?

JUDGE CARSTEN: They have not, but I think they may have inherited some of –

JUDGE LATIMORE: Some of those adventurous --

JUDGE CARSTEN: -- some of my adventurous spirit. My son soloed a glider at 15 so his very anxious mother and I sent him up about 3,000 feet and he managed to get the glider back on the ground safely so that's – his trajectory, I think he has inherited that adventurous spirit.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Now, this may be a silly question considering that you jump out of planes, but what is your biggest fear?

JUDGE CARSTEN: Public speaking. It's not something that I relish. It's part of this job and it's part of our interaction with the public to publically speak on occasion but I certainly don't relish getting up in front of people and talking to people in public but I press through.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay. Well, I think you do a great job. I've witnessed it so you are doing a wonderful job. What would be your most prized possession and why?

JUDGE CARSTEN: Gosh, I know I'm supposed to say something like you know –

JUDGE LATIMORE: Like your kids, right.

JUDGE CARSTEN: My children's baby shoes. My dad and I started working on a 1960 corvette about ten years ago. It started into a father/son project. We were just going to replace a couple of things and then as we replaced those things, the things around them didn't look quite right and it turned into an absolute tear it down to the nuts and bolts restoration. We're about a decade into that. We have probably 1,000 man-hours in this 1960 corvette. It's just about done.

We're excited. It's in the last stages of paint, which was a project that we were not willing to tackle. We got the pros to come in and do that. But that's – that's something that's going to go to me. That's going to get passed on to my son so if I had to pick that object, that would probably be it. And it's not – I mean it's a cool looking car but it's really the story behind how it got to the shape it's in and the time that I got to spend with my dad is special, yeah.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yes. Yes. You have a very exciting life. I just want to state that for the record, okay. With that, I wanted to ask you, what is the nickname that your close friends call you?

JUDGE CARSTEN: Oh –

JUDGE LATIMORE: There it is.

JUDGE CARSTEN: This one I hold close to the vest. All right, so I was – I would say I get called KC a lot by my friends. It's simply my initials but I'll let the listeners in on a little secret that's going to come back to haunt me. I know that this is going to be an issue –

JUDGE LATIMORE: Oh, no, it was here on 9th Unplugged.

JUDGE CARSTEN: So my nickname in my fraternity was Yoda so I like to think that you know I'm a little on the – on the smaller stature but I like to think that they recognized that I was wise at the time, but so I'll divulge my little secret and I know this will come back to haunt me.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yeah, I'm guessing – I know a couple of colleagues that are really going to use that from this point forward. I mentioned that you had a wonderful story in regards to your life, but is there anything that you regret not doing up until now?

JUDGE CARSTEN: Regret not doing. I would like to climb – I'd like to climb a high mountain. I've been up about 14,000 feet in Colorado. I got about three quarters of the way Mount Rainier during a blizzard. That was extremely exhilarating, but I think I'd like to you know, a 20,000 foot mountain, I think is in my future at some point.

JUDGE LATIMORE: That would suit you –

JUDGE CARSTEN: I'm getting a little long in the tooth and that requires quite a bit of preparation and time and getting in shape is going to be difficult, but I think if I got my wish, I'd put that on the list of things –

JUDGE LATIMORE: My money is on you. I think that you will be able to do it, no matter what it is that is in front of you. And I thank you so much for being unplugged with me today.

JUDGE CARSTEN: I appreciate it and I appreciate the opportunity to sit down with you. I'm so thrilled that you are our host on this ongoing series and I think you're the perfect host. It is really an honor to sit down with you.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Thank you so much.

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