

9TH UNPLUGGED

HONORABLE JOHN BEAMER

CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE

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HOSTED BY: HONORABLE ALICIA L. LATIMORE

JUDGE LATIMORE: Hi, I'm Judge Latimore.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: And I'm Judge John Beamer.

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

(Music)

JUDGE LATIMORE: So before we get unplugged, I always start this podcast with asking if you'll please introduce yourself, tell us what division you're assigned to – well, I'm kind of giving it away what you do, so – and anything that you'd like us to briefly know about your profession.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: I'm Judge John Beamer, the second favorite Beamer in the courthouse.

JUDGE LATIMORE: I have to agree with that, I'm sorry.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: And I'm currently assigned to division 47, domestic relations. It's an area that I didn't practice in in practice, but I really actually enjoy it. And the people I get to meet and the work that we do in the domestic division in the courthouse as a whole.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Nice. And what did you practice before coming to the bench?

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: I was a trial attorney in-house at Farmers Insurance.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: And so I covered from Indian River County up to Duval, over to Alachua and down to Polk so all of central Florida.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Lots of travelling?

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: Lots of travelling. Lots of trials in different jurisdictions. But that was what I wanted to do when I was practicing, just be a trial attorney.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Do you miss travelling?

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: I don't miss travelling.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: No. It is nice to have only once place that I have to be. The pandemic kind of changed everything because then I was stuck, you know, in chambers.

JUDGE LATIMORE: In one place.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: Literally, in one place all the time.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yes, yes, that did make a difference. So let's go ahead and get unplugged. Where were you born and raised?

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: I was born and raised in Johnson City, Tennessee.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Now, Johnson City, what's the population of Johnson City?

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: It's grown significantly. I think it's, I want to say in the general area, it's maybe 125, 150 now.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Where is Johnson City near? What major city?

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: So it's about 90 miles north of Knoxville. It's in East Tennessee. It's right near the border of Tennessee, North Carolina and Virginia and it's part of what they call the tri-cities. Johnson City, Kingsport and Bristol. I don't know if you watch NASCAR, but Bristol Motor Speedway was like ten minutes from my house.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yes, I happen to like NASCAR.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: Okay.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yeah, I actually do. And so is that near the Smoky Mountains in Tennessee?

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: It is. So the Smoky Mountains are just a little bit south right as you get into the Knoxville area and then as you come up, if you're driving up 95, north through South Carolina, then North Carolina, and you hit the Blue Ridge Parkway. So you hit the Blue Ridge Mountains and that is what travels over into Johnson City. And you go through Asheville, North Carolina in order to get to my hometown.

JUDGE LATIMORE: What do you miss most about Tennessee?

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: The mountains.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yeah, I bet.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: The mountains.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Because Florida is flat.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: Florida is flat and seasons. I miss seasons.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yes, yes, because Florida does not have those either. Okay, so what do you do for a hobby? What are your hobbies?

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: Well, right now we've got three children all under the age of six, 6, be 4 in May and 20 months now so most of our time, fun time is spent with them.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Right. Those – that's your hobby right there.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: Yeah, that's my hobby. But I play guitar, which is hard to do with the kids because they want to grab the strings. They snapped them a couple of times.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Now, what kind of guitar because there's electric –

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: Acoustic.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay. All right, and how long have you been doing that?

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: Since college. One of my fraternity brothers taught me how to play and I'm not very good, but it's just one of the things that I enjoyed doing before I had all the other –

JUDGE LATIMORE: The little ones.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: - other things that take up and provide more joy.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right. And so what type of music do you play?

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: Really, it varies. Mostly kind of stick to country or acoustic, some punk songs on the acoustic guitar, is kind of funny.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right. So I see here that country music is one of your favorite topics to talk about.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: Oh, it's – I was trying to think of things to put down there that I like and can talk about, because I listen to a lot of country music. My wife didn't.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: So one of the things – she plays violin and she’s able to, some of the blue grass music that I know and I’ve played, she’s able to listen to the song and almost kind of play along, playing by ear.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Nice.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: Because she played violin for so many years growing up. So we used to do that every once in a while again before the kids came. My grandparents listened to country music all the time when I was a kid, like Merle Haggard, Hank Williams.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: Andy Griffith. A lot of people don’t know Andy Griffith has country albums.

JUDGE LATIMORE: I know. I do know. Aging myself.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: And Gospel albums I listened to a lot.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay. All right. So speaking of grandparents, you have a very interesting family tree.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: I do. So my great-great-grandmother was full blooded Cherokee, and I actually looked into what you’d have to do to be part of the Cherokee Nation, and it’s – I don’t think number one, that I’d have enough genetically –

JUDGE LATIMORE: To become part of the tribe.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: To be part of it, but there’s an approval process that goes – it’s actually very interesting. I tried to find more information about her. But because of where we lived, it was very rural, the recordkeeping is not very good. So I’ve seen a couple of pictures

about her and then my great uncle on my mother's side, he was the trainer for Big John Tate who was world heavy weight champion in 1979. Fought in South Africa and won the title there and held on to it for about a year, year-and-a-half.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Wow.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: Before he lost it. And he only recently passed away I guess in the last decade. But my Uncle Don was his trainer and that was one of the cool things. I never got to meet my Uncle Don because he passed before I was born, but that was one of the things that everybody was talking about. I had a t-shirt that said, Big John Tate fighting machine on it. I still have it; it's way too small. But that was one of the cool things that –

JUDGE LATIMORE: Have you ever boxed?

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: I tried to in high school with one of my cross running teammates. We decided to take boxing lessons and –

JUDGE LATIMORE: How did that go?

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: I'm too skinny.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Oh, okay. All right. To take those hits. To take those hits.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: I was – yeah, I was. I was too skinny to throw – to throw a decent punch and to take those hits back then.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Well, that sounds good. So listen, you are a man after my own heart. Your favorite food is bacon, which I have to totally agree. Like that's one of my top five, absolutely. Okay.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: It definitely is. And there was one time, before kids, my wife woke up and I was sleeping. And I heard this noise and I was like, what is that noise, what is that noise. And I'm yelling from the bedroom, like, honey it's raining outside, shut the front door. I can hear it, and I get up because the noise just keeps going and she's cooking bacon. And that is what I heard. I thought it was rain. And I was like, what are you doing? She's like, I was making you breakfast. And I was like, oh, what is it? Bacon.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Bacon. Exactly. That's the way to wake up. It's the only way to wake up. Tell me, other than your kids and your wife, what's your most prized possession?

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: Oh, that's a tough one. I think I'd probably have to say my faith.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: That's one of the things that we – when we – my wife and I both grew up in church. We had found a church family before she had moved to Miami to work in the prosecutor's office. And when she came back, and we were planning our family and started having kids, we looked for our church family and found a lot of different – different churches and then ended up, we came back to where we originally were and have been there ever since. You know, have made close relationships with other parents and kids, and our pastor. But I would say it's probably, next to them, that's probably the thing I value the most.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yeah. What do you love most about being here in Florida now?
How long have you been in Florida?

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: I've been in Florida since August of 2005 so coming up on 17 years. Honestly, I like the people --

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yeah.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: -- in Florida. I mean I have made friendships here that are as close to me as my own family. We've been in each other's weddings. Judge Kraynick and I were in each other's weddings. We got married around the same time. Our kids are -- our oldest are like three weeks apart. Just the people and the friendships I've made in Florida is probably the thing that I like the most.

JUDGE LATIMORE: So if you had a choice in a different profession other than being in law, what would it be? I mean, would you be the country music singer, playing a guitar or what?

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: I can't carry a tune so probably not that. I've said this before, I was the first man in my family not to have served in the military. I probably would have gone into the Navy if I hadn't -- if I hadn't gone to law school. That was one of the things that I considered as I was -- as I was applying because my grandfather was in World War II, at the end of it, then my father and my uncle, they were all in the Navy. And I was the first one not to have taken that path.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Well, that's awesome, even though you didn't get a chance to serve in that capacity, we appreciate the service you give to us in the Ninth Circuit.

JUDGE JOHN BEAMER: Thank you. I love it.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Thank you for being here.

(Music)

