

00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	<b>Speaker:</b> <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:14	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> “Huddle Formation” from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:22	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. My first guest this week is John Larroquette. John is—and you probably already know this—the Emmy award winning star of <i>Night Court</i> , a hit sitcom from NBC. He’s also the Tony award winning Broadway star of 2016’s <i>How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying</i> . He played Carl Sack on <i>Boston Legal</i> , co-created and starred on <i>The John Larroquette Show</i> . He did the opening narration for several—yes, <u>several</u> — <i>Texas Chainsaw Massacre</i> movies. And now, he’s back in <i>Night Court</i> .
			On the old <i>Night Court</i> , Larroquette’s character, Dan Fielding, was a horny prosecutor. On the new show, he’s a graying public defender. And the judge is Abby Stone, the daughter of Harry Stone from the original show. The new <i>Night Court</i> is silly and funny and weird, just like the original show was. It also has heart—real emotional stakes. In this clip, Larroquette’s character, Dan Fielding, shares why he decided to come back.
00:01:25	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:26	Clip	Clip	<b>Dan (<i>Night Court</i>):</b> Say a lifetime ago you worked with a guy. Right? Had your ups and downs, but on the whole? Liked each other. Respected, even. The job ends. You go your separate ways. Life happens, and you live, and you love. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> And you lose. Big time. And so, you close off your heart. Then, one day, the child of that almost forgotten guy comes to you and asks for your help. Would you take the chance? Would you open that heart up again?
00:02:02	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:03	Jesse	Host	John Larroquette, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> . It’s nice to have you on the show.
00:02:06	John Larroquette	Guest	Hi, Jesse. Thanks a lot for having me.
00:02:09	Jesse	Host	I guess we chose to play a clip with no punchline in it. There are a lot of—
00:02:12	John	Guest	There’s no jokes in that one. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:02:13	Jesse	Host	—big punchlines in this show. I wanna be clear.
00:02:15	John	Guest	All of the sudden, it’s—yeah. It sort of became a romance novel or something. Yeah, there were a lot of laughs. But that particular moment, I actually wrote that little monologue, because I wanted it to be understood how the decision that my character has to make about coming back out into life is prompted by the fact that the girl who asks for his help is the daughter of the previous Judge Harry Stone. It’s the only reason he comes out, is ‘cause he can’t leave her to the crushing despair of midnight night court in Manhattan.
00:02:50	Jesse	Host	I mean, you had to make a parallel decision. Like, you could be sitting with your feet up in a beach house right now, as a successful

actor of 40 years. An actor of 50 years, but a successful actor of 40 years.

[John laughs and confirms.]

00:03:12 John Guest

So, why did you agree to do a new *Night Court*?

At first, the objection that I had in my mind was that I really hate the idea of being compared to myself 35 years ago, as I've said many times during this process. You know, I can't jump over chairs like I used to or leap across the courtroom in one single bound or tie myself into knots and do a lot of the physical comedy that I find funny and interesting and was fairly agile at doing. And as I talked to Melissa Rauch about this show more and more—and also, it's not common fact yet: when I was first approached with this project by her and Dan Rubin, the showrunner and writer, she was not planning to act in it. She was merely gonna produce it through her company after—she had her production deal with after *Big Bang*, like many successful actors do after a successful series.

Anyway, and I thought I don't know if this is a good idea at all. And as it started churning in my mind, and then the thought came, "Well, how often does an actor get a chance to revisit a character that he played 35 years previously?" And to see where that character is in his life and is there still—especially considering the fact that it's a sitcom—is there still humor in that character? Is there still a way to be funny in that character, considering the changes that would've been made not only in society but in himself as well? And then, the cherry came when she said, "You know, I've really been thinking about this." After a year of talking she said, "I really wanna do this with you." And so, at that point I thought, oh, okay. I'm sort of stuck now. I have to say yes to this because of her. And also, my relationship with NBC and Warner Brothers was long-lived and—you know, down on the list was money.

But not—you know, I didn't need the money, but it certainly—it doesn't ever fail one to recognize the possibility of stashing a bit more away and work in front of an audience this big. You know? 'Cause this was covid. I had been—I hadn't done—I had not done a four-camera for any length of time for a long time. The last thing I did was I was doing a series up in Montreal and had a couple of weeks off, and Candice Bergen called me and said, "What are you doing?"

I said, "Well, I'm working on a show in Montreal, but I've got a couple weeks off."

So, she—and she said, "Come on down! Do an episode of the new *Murphy Brown* with me." So, I did that. I flew to New York and worked with her. And that's the last time, and that was years ago that I did it. And I hadn't done a series in a very long time that was four-camera. And I love that format. You know, I'd done two years on Broadway, so I—in front of an audience is where I think I belong. So, the idea of doing it in front of an audience again became appealing.

00:05:45 Jesse Host I wanna talk to you a little bit about your career before acting, 'cause you were in radio before you were an actor. Did you aspire to be an actor when you were an FM radio DJ?

00:05:55 John Guest I think so. I think I realized—I remember seeing a play when I was like ten years old. A school trip took us somewhere, and there was an old auditorium in New Orleans, called The Civic. And there would be touring companies that came through. I don't remember the origin of this at all, but there was a play called *Charlie's Aunt* in which there's a man in drag trying to hide. And so, he dresses up like a woman. And I remember sitting in the audience and the—you know, I'm sure if I read it today, it would be as corny as some of the stuff that I did as Dan Fielding. But I—uproariously laughing, and everybody else laughing, and I thought, "What a feeling to have that affect on people, to make them laugh like that."

So, I always had that feeling in me as to I liked to make people laugh. Whether it was the class clown or whatever. And then, when the '60s started happening and music became so important to me, the DJ thing—I was always acting with my voice. You know? I would do voices on the radio. We had a vision of the future where, on Saturday nights, we'd tell people, "The monster movie's on. Get stoned. Turn it on. Don't put the sound on, and tune us in." And me and my friend, Norbert, and another guy named Earl would sit in our booth at the station, watching the movie, and make up stupid dialogue for it as—

00:07:04 Jesse Host And you were getting paid to do this?!

*[John confirms.]*

00:07:07 John Guest You were a professional disc jockey at the time.  
\$100 a week.

00:07:08 Jesse Host This is the golden age of FM radio. *[Chuckles.]*

00:07:10 John Guest It was. We had maybe two commercials an hour.

00:07:12 Jesse Host Is paying John Larroquette, age 25 or whatever—

00:07:16 John Guest Oh god, 18.

00:07:18 Jesse Host Oh my god!

00:07:19 John Guest 18. Yeah, it was \$100 a week. And in those days, nobody advertised on FM radio except a couple of headshops in the French quarter or some record companies, 'cause there were a couple of distributors in New Orleans—Columbia and Decca. And at this point, we've got Dylan and Hendrix and FM—I mean, AM radio. Top 40 radio wasn't playing that stuff. We were the only station in town playing that stuff. So, we would get commercials for them, but sometimes you'd have a whole hour of no commercials. So, you could do whatever you wanted. Each DJ was his own music director.

It was, "Oh! What I found in Wreck It Ron!" It was a store in New Orleans, called Wreck It Ron, that was just huge and nothing but albums. And he would buy them by the boatload at Walmart sales and stuff—the promotional ones with the hole in the center. Not the center. Of course there's a hole in the center. But in the cover itself, which means it was gonna go back for credit, because the store didn't sell it. So, he had millions of records. But we would find all of this crazy stuff and just go play it. You know. Or here's ten minutes

of Korean wedding gongs. So, that would be playing on the air. You know?

00:08:15 Jesse Host  
00:08:16 John Guest

I'm sure that was very popular. I'm sure your—  
It was! Especially when then I would read *The Hollow Men* by T. S. Eliot over it at the same time.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:08:25 Jesse Host  
00:08:33 John Guest

Old stories but true stories.  
So, why did you think—when did you start like auditioning for things? Were you still traveling the country as an itinerant—?  
No, in 1970—summer of '70, I was offered a job in San Diego with a record company—a new record company. And I had worked for Decca parenthetically when I was a teenager, as a promotion assistant kind of guy. And because I was a DJ for all those years, I knew all of the—in those days, they were called one-stops, right? Where all the record companies would send all of their material. And that would get distributed out to stores around the cities. So, I knew all those guys that held up those one-stops. And a fellow in San Diego, who had hired a friend of mine to write some music for an artist he had found, needed somebody to help set up promotion and distribution.

And so, my friend called me in New Orleans. I was working in radio at the time. And he said, “You want—” You know, he offered this job in San Diego. And so, I took it. Moved to San Diego in the summer of 1970—'70, I think, or '71. The record company was not successful. The only thing it ever actually produced was a record that I produced, which is a children's record called *Hugo—Hubert, The Rain-Making Hippopotamus*. Based on a children's story by a fella named Thorn Bacon, and I did all the voices, hired a guy to do the music, and it was this cute, little thing. That's the only thing they ever produced. Anyway. Quite literally, one night I'm walking through old town in San Diego, where there are a lot of Mexican restaurants, etc., and there's a theater there called The Mission Playhouse.

And I stuck my head in, and there were a bunch of actors sitting at a table on the stage, reading a play. Just reading it. And so, I snuck in and sat in the back and felt comfortable, felt at home sort of in that environment. As I was leaving, a woman walked up to me and asked if I was an actor. And I said no. No, I just stepped in 'cause it's lovely to hear that. And she made mention that she was reading a play the following weekend and needed another male voice just so she could hear it. Would I like—would I come back and just read the play with them? And I said yes! And I did. And then, it happened to be a play by Tennessee Williams, [inaudible]—about where I lived, actually, in New Orleans. And at that reading, at that table, I thought, “Oh, I think I'm supposed to do this.”

And so, I quit the job and moved to LA and started collecting unemployment and reading for plays and got a play. And Ron Saucy, who's a big theatre man here in LA and had been for years—and did the play and the people in that play said, “We're gonna do another play. You wanna do that?” And I said sure. And then I was in a play by—based on Carl Reiner's life story. *Enter*

			<i>Laughing</i> , it was called. And I did that and played the lead in that—a goofy, young guy trying to get laid and trying to become an actor. And I got an agent from that play, and also met my wife during that play in 1974. And then, started going out and doing one day on <i>Kojak</i> or one day on <i>Ellery Queen</i> and stuff like that. And just momentum carried somewhat for a while, and all of the sudden I was a working actor.
00:11:20	Jesse	Host	We're gonna take a quick break. When we come back, more with the legend John Larroquette. Stay with us. It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and NPR.
00:11:30	Music	Transition	Thumpy rock music.
00:11:35	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, my guest is John Larroquette. Among many other roles, John played prosecutor Dan Fielding on the classic sitcom <i>Night Court</i> . He is now one of the stars of a reboot of the series, which is airing on NBC and streaming on Peacock. Let's get into the rest of our conversation.
			John Larroquette, fun fact that I'm sure everyone asks you about is you having done the opening narration for <i>The Texas Chainsaw Massacre</i> . I happen to have just listened to that, 'cause it was a fun fact I learned in preparing for this. I didn't know.
00:12:08	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:12:09	Clip	Clip	<b>Narrator (<i>The Texas Chainsaw Massacre</i>):</b> The film which you are about to see is an account of the tragedy which befell a group of five youths. In particular, Sally Hardesty and her invalid brother, Franklin. It is all the more tragic in that they were young. But had they lived very, very long lives, they could not have expected nor would they have wished to see as much of the mad and macabre as they were to see that day. For them, an idyllic summer afternoon drive became a nightmare.
00:12:39	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:12:40	Jesse	Host	The thing that I was struck by—this is like the early '70s—is you are definitely doing a voice. Like, you are trying to be a deep voiced guy in doing that narration. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:12:49	John	Guest	I am. I am. It's true. It's true. I've never—I've never seen the film, and I don't think I've really ever heard the recording except when I was doing it for Toby. But yes, I wanted to be as serious and as senatorial as possible, I think, in that particular reading. And I was—as I said, I was—what was I? 24, then? About? About 24, I guess, when I did that.
00:13:14	Jesse	Host	<i>[Mimicking John's narration pattern.]</i> No matter how the line ends, you end every line by going down.
00:13:19	John	Guest	Yes. Well, it's horror. You have to. Right? You don't go up. I mean, you have to go into the pits. And I was not a trained—listen, I've never taken lessons. I don't—and I'm not saying, "How good am I? Look at that. I've never taken lessons." I'm sure that the—you know, I just—whatever I did, I did from the seat of my pants.
00:13:35	Jesse	Host	John, that's a legendary film for a good reason. You're not very good at reading that opening.

*[They laugh.]*

			You're a wonderful actor with a long and well-earned career, but you are not very good at reading it.
00:13:48	John	Guest	Thank you. Thank you. Maybe that's why I don't do commercials.
00:13:52	Jesse	Host	So, you met your wife early on in your acting career, and I guess you probably had a family before you had the kind of acting career that you could count on.
00:14:04	John	Guest	Yes. Yes. Although, our son—my wife had a child when we met, and we got married when she was three. And Elizabeth and I had a child in 1977—our first son. And I was working. You know, my wife was working. Luckily, she had a real, human job, which allowed me the freedom to go out for auditions and do that sort of thing. And so, for about five or six years, we did that, and I took a little time out to become an alcoholic and sort of not be very responsible. But then, I did a movie in 1980, called <i>Stripes</i> . And about a year later, I got sober in the winter of 1982. And at the end of that year, I got the audition for <i>Night Court</i> . So, it wasn't that long before I could really afford to support us as an actor.
00:14:56	Jesse	Host	So, you said you took a detour into alcoholism. Do you—do you feel like casual drinking became alcoholism at some point in that time in your life?
00:15:10	John	Guest	No, I think I always drank to get loaded. Although, I never drank when I was—you know, New Orleans was a pretty open town, and there are laws of course, but you can get to-go cups in the bars in New Orleans. And so, drinking is—there's drive-through daiquiri shops. So, it's all part of the fabric of that society. Which is great, and my family had always had a bottle of wine. But I was not that interested in it. And also, by the time I was—what?—16 or 17, we discovered weed in the French quarter of New Orleans, and that to me was far more fun than drinking.
			Around '75 or '76, we started drinking heavily and used it as whatever an alcoholic uses it for—to escape, to feel good but not know when to stop. And so.
00:15:50	Jesse	Host	And you were married then, already?
00:15:51	John	Guest	Yes. Yeah, and my wife was—understood and just said, "Well, you know, if you're gonna die, you're gonna die. It's not up to me." And it just went on for a while. It went on for five years, I would say. Between '77 and '82. And there were lapses in that and there were spots in that when I'd be okay. I'd be working and just showing up and being responsible. But there were times when I wouldn't be. And then, finally one night I just—it just stopped. Literally stopped.
00:16:17	Jesse	Host	So, it is a cliché to describe a moment of clarity, but it sounds like you had a very literal moment of clarity.
			<i>[John confirms.]</i>
00:16:25	John	Guest	Where were you? Sitting with a friend, snorting coke and drinking Scotch. And you know, I'm not a spiritual person. I grew up Catholic and was devout until I was about 12 and realized, "Hold on a second." And I don't know. You know? And only years later—or shortly, you know, a couple of years later when I started reading other views of alcoholism—Carl Jung being a major one, about how he had seen the only—these major shifts in perception would happen in certain people when they were drug addicts or alcoholics. This major shift. And that's what happened to me. I mean, it was sort of—in one

00:17:16	Jesse	Host	moment, I couldn't conceive of living without a drink, and I couldn't conceive of living with a drink. In the same moment. And that particular night, not being able to conceive of living with a drink won, I got up and left the table and went home. And that was it.
00:17:19	John	Guest	Did your family believe in it?
00:17:25	Jesse	Host	Yes. I think my wife knew me well enough to see in my eyes that I was serious about this.
00:17:28	John	Guest	'Cause at some point, you had been separated from your wife, right?
00:17:59	Jesse	Host	Yes. Yes. She asked me to—she said, "If you wanna die, don't do it in front of the children." And so, for a few months I was living in a little apartment in Highland Park. And... but once she saw me, after that—once I came home that night, I think that she felt it as well that there had been a serious shift in my perception. And so, from then on, I was just very serious learning how to live without that.
00:18:05	John	Guest	How did you learn how to do things like make amends?
00:18:07	Jesse	Host	Um, I won't talk about that.
			Okay.

I was watching *The John Larroquette Show* earlier today. I was watching an episode from the first season, and there's a little cold open. Your character is a guy who wakes up from a bender as the—and becomes the manager of a bus station. And there's like a little cute cold open in this episode that I watched. But the real opening scene is a meeting. And it's you sitting at this long table with—you know, and everybody has those kind of paper cups with the little paper handles, which was a vivid memory for me of I used to go to meetings with my dad 'cause he was a single parent. He went to meetings a lot when I was a kid. So, it was like, "Oh my gosh. Those cups with the little paper—"

00:18:57	John	Guest	Yeah, the little handles you've gotta fold out. Yeah.
00:18:59	Jesse	Host	Yeah. <i>[Chuckling.]</i> And anyway, I'm gonna—I'm gonna share this scene from that episode of the show, which I think is the third or fourth episode of the show. And it's my guest, John Larroquette, on <i>The John Larroquette Show</i> at an AA meeting.
00:19:15	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:19:17	Clip	Clip	<b>John (The John Larroquette Show):</b> I saw this fat kid having an ice cream cone. And I thought, "You lucky bastard."

*[The audience laughs.]*

Go for it. Lick it, rrrrelish it. That's how I had my first Scotch of the day. You know, just a little cold on the lips and then I down it and it would fill me with... with life. All my problems, poof! Would disappear. And I'd feel something. And the rest would be so easy. And I looked at that kid, and he had ice cream aall over his face, and he was licking and licking and licking.

*[The audience laughs.]*

I hated that kid, because he had what I wanted. I wanted to take that ice cream and shove it in his face and say, "There! How do you like that, fat boy, eh? How do you like that sweet sticky ice cream now, fat booooy?" Because if I can't have that feeling, nobody can!

[The audience laughs.]

00:20:17	Sound Effect	Transition	As I said, I'm sober and grateful. Thank you. Music swells and fades.
00:20:18	John	Guest	[They laugh.]  Wow. That's funny. I don't—I don't—I don't remember much of that. I don't remember much stuff, these days. And I don't watch myself, so stuff like that is always a revelation to me when somebody plays something from anything I've done.
00:20:38	Jesse	Host	I mean, what's wild about it is—I mean, obviously you were at a point in your career where you could get a show made, because you had been one of the biggest stars on network television. You had won a bunch of Emmys. Like, Don Ohlmeyer was gonna take your call and say yes. But at the time, NBC was making aspirational social comedies about attractive young people, such as the cast of <i>Friends</i> and, coincidentally, <i>Seinfeld</i> , which I don't think they ever quite understood why anyone liked it. I mean, I don't—I love it, to be clear. But like no idea how that was a hit network television show.  But you know, they were making <i>Friends</i> and <i>The Single Guy</i> and stuff, some of which was really funny but was real different from that. So, like when you turned in your first 13 and—you know—showed up to ask for a back 9, what did they think of this sort of melancholic, very multicultural, multiethnic show? Like a really unusual program for what they were up to at the time.
00:21:49	John	Guest	I think the request was, "Could you make it less dark?" You know. And I put it down to ego and greed that I said, "Yeah, I think we can do that, although that's not the show we sold you, but yeah. I think so." And at that point, I think I should've—I should've probably walked away, that Don and I should've said, "You know what? Let's not—let's not neuter this. This is what we wanted to do, and if it's not working I totally understand."  Because also, that first season, I was against <i>Rosanne</i> , so I don't think our numbers were great, but Warren kept saying, "It doesn't matter the number; it doesn't matter as long as we think you're doing a good show, as long as you're comfortable with it and successful with it in your own world, then fine. We'll go more." And he kept his word. We did. I mean, we went another two and a half seasons, but it became something else. It became more centered. It became cleaner. You know? John Hemingway moved to a nicer apartment and got his hair cut and had a girlfriend and wasn't quite the—you know. I remember the first note—I should've maybe known something about it then, you know—the first scene of the first episode, when we walks into the office and he hangs—nails a sign on his office wall. And the sign, in kind of carnival script, says, "This is a dark ride."  And the—Mahalia, who was played by Liz Torres, phenomenal actress—looks at it and goes, "What's that?"  And Hemingway says to her, "I found it at a carnival, and I think it should be hanging at the end of the birth canal." And the first note I got was, "Do you have to have the sign on the wall?"



And I went, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, we do.” You know. And then, I just brushed it off, but. So—and Don had written that. You know. And so, we tried. And it was—I think, again, I still get calls or letters from people saying that we used the first 13 episodes in rehab, in detoxes to show people—to show people it, so that they see a guy struggling but finding ways to get through the day.

00:23:46 Jesse Host

One of the things I imagine about doing a new version of *Night Court*—it’s not that you are revisiting this character, but you’re like literally standing in sets from *Night Court*, or at least recreations of sets from *Night Court*. Most of the main cast of that show has died since you made that show.

*[John confirms.]*

Did you think about what that would be like before you went to work?

00:24:13 John Guest

Well, before I went to work, only Harry had died. When I read the script and realized this was gonna be the daughter of Harry Stone—you know. And the problem with that for me, it really was that—you know, Harry Anderson and Harry Stone were sort of—they were sort of back to front. You know? Because Harry’s—his outfits, his comedy, his magic was very Harry Stone and Harry Anderson. So, it was the—you know, the other side of a coin, as it were. Although, when Reine wrote the script, it was Harry, but it had no intention of—didn’t plan it for Harry Anderson. That just happened, and that became Harry’s show.

So, Markie and Charlie were still alive when we started the process. And so—and Charlie died the day we were doing the pilot. And Markie died the August of 2021. And so, after that point, I felt very, very conflicted walking onto the set, obviously. Because—you know, I sat in a chair where I would sit with Charlie or with Markie or with Harry and just talk about life. And it was—you know, in those days when we did that show, we were young and successful, and everybody was watching us. And so, we all had babies. I mean, Markie had her first child and Harry had another child, and Elizabeth and I had Benjamin and Reinhold had a baby girl—living this sort of dream life of a successful television show, making a good living, and—you know—hanging out together. ‘Cause we were—we hung out together a lot off camera.

And so, it was difficult. And also, there was no—there were two people on the crew who had been a part of the original: our script supervisor, Suzy, and our UPM, Pixie. Both were part of the original. They were the only people I could look at ever and go, *[whispering]* “Do you remember when that—” and there would be recognition. Otherwise, you know, it would be maudlin for me to walk up to one of the other actors and go, “Oh, this is where Harry used to—” That would be—you know. They don’t know him. They know the show, but they don’t have that emotional connection. But I certainly did with all those people.

00:26:17 Jesse Host

Was it weird to make a new thing out of that old thing?

00:26:22 John Guest

You know, a bit. A bit. Certainly, that—I mean, for personally, for Fielding—I mean, I thought about it a lot and I wrote a lot about it. And we actually used a scene from the show as sort of a pitch point

when we were talking to Warner Brothers about this, and NBC. And there's a scene between Dan Fielding and Harry Stone. And Fielding is in a hospital bed. I don't remember the circumstances of why, but he was close to death for a minute, or something happened. I don't know the setup. And he's miserable and "I don't wanna live", blah, blah, blah.

And Harry says, "Look, you got a great life."

And Fielding says, "I don't have a life. I have a lifestyle." And he goes into his—you know, his pitch about, "You know how many women I've slept with? You know the sign on the McDonald's? A billion served? Let me just say, I'm competitive. But in all of that time and all of that, no one ever looked at me and said, 'I love you', so what point is there to any of this?" And so, when thinking about Fielding 35 years later, I thought, well first of all, he's certainly not gonna be the lothario he was in the '80s. That's just disgusting. Not disgusting, but it's like asking a basset hound to pole vault, I thought. That "what happened?"

And what happened, I decided—and pitched this to Dan and Melissa and Winston, her husband who's our producing partner and the executive producer on the show—that he did find that. He found that person after the show was over. You know, like where did Harry go? Where did Dan go? Where did Christine go? And Fielding found that, and he had his moment of clarity with this person and married her and had a loving relationship with a human being, unselfishly. Unselfishly? Yeah, not selfishly. And it was the answer to his prayers. And then, that person died. And so, that's what pushed him back into his cave, which he is then pulled out of by Harry Stone's daughter.

00:28:20 Jesse Host

There's a part of that that I imagine you have some personal relationship to, as somebody who was in love, like messed it up, and figured it out. I mean, I'm not gonna presume that you figured it out perfectly. *[Chuckles.]* But I think you and your wife love each other today.

*[John confirms.]*

00:29:00 John Guest

So, like that feeling of figuring out how to be with somebody and love them and have them love you is one that you experienced to some extent when you got sober.

Yes, I agree with that. And I think that if I were gonna write—it would be probably a little maudlin. You can't really flashback on sitcoms like this, but the idea has occurred to me to see some of that relationship between Fielding and Sarah, the character who we've created as his wife, to where he learns how to like walk in a way, in love, and walk in sort of a different life than he had. Because it was very important to him, obviously. And it also then relieves Fielding of the—he doesn't have that impetus anymore. He doesn't have that drive to be amorous or—'cause I had it. I had that. It was great. And then it's not. So—and I'm old. You know, he's my age. He's 75 years old. He's not a young man anymore at all.

And so, what's now? Because he doesn't have the ambitions he had. He doesn't have the greed that he had. He doesn't have the

drive that he had. What's left? What's left to be funny? And he's still a bit misanthropic and still thinks he's the smartest guy in the room. And so, a lot of the humor comes from that. And he stays outside that circle of this new gang, as it were. But he steps in occasionally to lend a hand or to mock or to scold or to be funny. I'm sort of drifting here. But I mean, it's just--you know, it's a new character, in essence. Same guy, different character.

00:30:19 Jesse Host

We'll be back in just a second! It's *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

00:30:25 Promo Clip

**Music:** Dramatic, low music.

**John Hodgman:** They can be anywhere—at your office, in your car. And they. Are. Wrong.

**Speaker 1:** My mom says that the Gray House didn't exist. But she's wrong!

**Speaker 2:** He just does it wrong.

**Jesse Thorn:** Someone in your life is wrong about something—something small, something weird, something vitally important. Only one person has the courage to tell them just how wrong they are.

**John:** You know what you did was wrong, but your daughter is a liar who eats garbage.

*[They laugh.]*

**Music:** Upbeat synth fades in.

**John:** They call me Judge John Hodgman. Listen to me on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

**Jesse:** If someone in your life is doing you wrong, don't just take it. Take it to court. Submit your case at [MaximumFun.org/jiho](http://MaximumFun.org/jiho).

*[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:31:08 Jesse Host

I'm Jesse Thorn. You're listening to *Bullseye*. I'm talking with actor John Larroquette. Let's get back into our conversation.

00:31:24 John Guest

When you got sober, was the... surrender part of it difficult for you? No. No, I think that's what happened—that's what happened simultaneously, at the same time. I gave up. I mean, it's just like, "No." It's not—you know, people sometimes say that, you know, being sober's just a matter of willpower, that alcoholics don't have willpower. But believe me, alcoholics have willpower. It'll be ten minutes 'til two and they don't have a bottle, and they've gotta get to the liquor store, which is 20 minutes away, they'll get there in ten minutes. So, it's not—it's not a matter of that. It's a matter of realizing I can't win unless I give up. And that's—and again, it was no thought process going on there. It just happened. And the cosmic part of this—I don't talk about this either, but I found out later on, because I didn't know this, that I got sober on my father's birthday. I didn't know my father, but I happened to get sober on his birthday.

00:32:19 Jesse Host So, there was some significance in that—to me, anyway. That kind of surrender is a necessary part of being a good actor too, I think. There is like a—you know, you can prepare and push and develop skills and all of those things, analyze scripts, figure out beats, put slashes in—you know, in between words and accent marks over iambic pentameters and all of those things. But like ultimately, even though acting is a—you know—selfish and performative act, you also have to like—you just have to be able to fall backwards a little bit. Like, you just have to open your heart and listen and be present.

00:33:03 John Guest Yes. I—you know, that sounds like a great explanation of a real actor. I'm not sure I am that, because everything you were just saying, I kept thinking, "But where's the rubber chicken?"

*[Jesse laughs.]*

You know? I don't—and I say this about myself, I'm not talking for anybody else nor their work, etc., but I don't consider it really art as much as it is a craft, a real good craft. If you're good at it, you're really good at it. When I have—I have—I have timing. You know, like Ginger Baker we talked about, the time is all that counts in musicianships. If you've got time, even if I hate you, I'll play with you. You know, him and Jack Bruce, prime example. He wanted to stab the guy, but Bruce had time.

And I think with comedy, obviously you have to have time. And if you don't, I don't know if it can be taught. And I think that I have time. I don't think deeply about stuff. I don't wear characters. The only time that's ever happened—and I'm not sure if it's—if I may digress and just tell a short story. I had never worked in my hometown. I'd never been offered money to go to New Orleans and do anything. And all the sudden, I was. I was offered a little independent film that actually my son, Benjamin, was instrumental in happening. Because a friend of his was gonna produce it—a friend of his from Idaho. And offered me the lead roll in it. And I thought, "This is great! This is absolutely great." I've never gone home to work, and here is somebody that's gonna pay me a good deal of money to go home, live in New Orleans, and do a movie.

And I thought, great! I'll be able to go hang out at Felix's Oysters, go get some po'boys, go get a muffuletta, just hang around in my old hood. And for the month that I was there, I was never more depressed and miserable I think in my life. And when I got done with it, I explained it to Elizabeth that I don't know why it—maybe, again, looking at New Orleans and mostly dead relatives and my best friend had died a few years previous, and I thought, "Well, maybe that's it."

And she thought, "Well, maybe it's the character you played." And the character I played was a depressive, losing kind of life guy. And I thought, is it possible for the first time that I actually took him home with me at the end of the filming day and just couldn't rise to being at home in New Orleans and having fun. So, I don't know. But I don't—you know, things don't stick to me like that usually, 'cause the characters I play are relatively shallow. As long as the timing is there, and the jokes are there. I don't mean to belittle my own talent

here, because—you know—I’ve done—won a Tony on Broadway. I worked every—but that was also a comedy! You know? I’d get up there and sing and dance and be funny. But I’ve done dramatic work. I mean, when—you know, when I just did—and I didn’t read it until someone gave it to me.

00:35:49 John Guest There’s an article in the *New York Times* about my ventures in my career. And one of the people I asked about me was David E. Kelley, who I’d worked for quite a bit. And David’s quote—I’m gonna chop it up here, but it was something to the degree of, “You need somebody to be serious, but still be able to find the joke in there, then you hire Larroquette.” And that’s where I’m always looking for the rubber chicken. In whatever I do, I’m looking for the rubber chicken.

00:36:16 Jesse Host Well, I really enjoyed the new show.

00:36:18 John Guest Good!

00:36:19 Jesse Host God—you and Melissa are a tremendous team.

00:36:24 John Guest That’s a good—that’s a good reason I did it, too, ‘cause I realized it was a—talk about time! She’s got time.

00:36:29 Jesse Host The two of you are—you’re just like, ah, there’s a couple of television sitcom stars right there. *[Chuckles.]* These people are good at this!

00:36:38 John Guest *[They laugh.]*  
She’s great at it.

00:36:40 Jesse Host And I’m so grateful to you for taking this time to talk to me.

00:36:43 John Guest You’re welcome, Jesse. It was—

00:36:44 Jesse Host I’ve admired your work for so long.

00:36:45 John Guest I was—I was—I was not impressed when I heard that it was an hour.

00:37:03 Jesse Host *[Jesse laughs.]*  
But I’m glad that I’ve—I’m glad I’ve sat across from you. It was good fun. It’s been—you know, I am a closed individual sometimes. So, if I’ve given you enough to have a decent radio show, good.  
John Larroquette. New episodes of *Night Court* are airing now. You can watch them over the air, on NBC, or you can stream them anytime on Peacock.

00:37:18 Music Transition Somewhere out there, in our hearts, Kenneth from *30 Rock* is smiling.

00:37:20 Jesse Host Upbeat, jazzy music.  
That’s the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. Outside my house, the big, giant, old tree has a few branches that are only being held up by other branches. They’ve been there for like a week. I don’t know what to tell you about this tree. I’ll tell you; I am not gonna park my car underneath it.

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producers are Jesus Ambrosio and Richard Robey. Our production fellows at Maximum Fun are Tabatha Myers and Bryanna Paz. We got help booking from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is composed and provided to us by DJW, the great Dan Wally. Our theme song is by The Go! Team.

It's called "Huddle Formation". Our thanks to The Go! Team. Our thanks to their label, Memphis Industries.

*Bullseye* is on YouTube and Twitter and Facebook. Find us in any of those places. Follow us. We will share with you our interviews. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

00:38:25    Promo            Promo

**Speaker:** *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and is distributed by NPR.

*[Music fades out.]*