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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, "Court Martial, Martial, Martial!". Robert brings the case against his friend, Karl. They both belong to a text group with friends. Recently, Robert entered the chat and said that *The Brady Bunch* is a classic sitcom. Karl said, "Wrong! *The Brady Bunch* is not good enough to be classic." The rest of the group is split, and neither Karl nor Robert will admit defeat. Until today! Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide. Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and presents an obscure cultural reference.

(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)

John Hodgman: Alright, you put a shiv in my partner. You know what that means, God-or-Whatever damn it? All winter long I gotta listen to him gripe about his bowling scores. Now I'm gonna bust you for those three bags, and I'm gonna nail you for picking your feet in Poughkeepsie.

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear them in.

Jesse Thorn: Robert and Karl, please rise and raise your right hands. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, God-or-Whatever?

(They swear.)

Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that he's hogging the phone?

(They swear.)

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

John Hodgman: Robert and Karl, you may be seated for an immediate summary judgment in one of your favors. Can either of you name the piece of culture that I referenced as I entered this courtroom? Karl? Robert? Who wants to go first?

Karl: I will, your honor. I will guess a *Honeymooners* reference. The bowling at Poughkeepsie.

John Hodgman: A honeymooner's reference. Okay, that guess is wrong, but I'm going to give you another shot. Because you both deserve a hint. This is an obscure cultural reference. I am quoting a film that is perfect for 11-year-olds. Okay? So, do you want to take another guess, Karl?

Karl: I'll pass.

John Hodgman: No, you have to guess.

(Jesse laughs.)

Karl: The *Honeymooners* movie.

John Hodgman: I think there was one. I'll put it in the guess book. I'm even going to take this pen and pretend to write on this piece of paper to show you. *(Pen scratching.)* That's what it sounds like. Me writing. Also, you getting an ASMR response. You're welcome listeners. Robert, what's your guess?

Robert: Well, it kills all my *Brady Bunch* guesses.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Did you think I was going to come in here with a *Brady Bunch* quote? Most quotable? "Mom always said, don't play ball in the house." "Oh my nose!" Whatever.

Robert: I was prepared with a reference to Greg's book, Barry Williams's book.

John Hodgman: Barry Williams's book, which was what? *A Very Brady Book* or something?

Robert: *Growing up Brady*, I think.

John Hodgman: *Growing up Brady*. I read it while sleeping on an air mattress in Annie Radford's apartment in Seattle in the 1990s.

Robert: I've read it as well. Probably the same. Not the air mattress.

John Hodgman: You ever meet Barry Williams?

Robert: I have not met Barry.

John Hodgman: You ever rent him a video in a video store in New Haven in 1992 or so?

Robert: No, but wish I had.

John Hodgman: Yeah, well, I don't wish I had! Because I did!

Robert: And what was it?

John Hodgman: *The Oxbow Incident*, but there's more to the story. I think you have to read about it in *Medallion Status*, because it's a liiittle bit of a grown-up story for this podcast. Robert, let's stop playing. Come on. What's your guess?

Robert: *The Biggest Loser?*

John Hodgman: *The Big*—? A film? A film. A feature film.

Robert: Yeah, Giamatti's movie. Yeah, maybe I got the title, *Biggest Liar*.

John Hodgman: *The Biggest Liar*, because *The Biggest Loser* is a reality show, I believe.

Robert: Right, *The Biggest Liar*, or *Big Liar*. *Big Fat Liar*.

John Hodgman: With Frankie Muniz?! And Amanda Bynes.

(Robert confirms.)

You both are attorneys, right?

Robert: Yes.

John Hodgman: Counselor, can you explain your line of thinking here?

(They laugh.)

Robert: There is no line of thinking, your honor. I was trying to think of a movie for an 11-year-old that would have the word shiv in it somewhere.

John Hodgman: I got you. The quote again—the quote again is, “Alright, you put a shiv in my partner, you know what that means, God-or-Whatever damn it? All winter long I gotta listen to him gripe about his bowling scores. Now I'm gonna bust you for those three bags, and I'm gonna nail you for picking your feet in Poughkeepsie.”

All guesses are wrong. Of course, this is the famous children's movie, *The French Connection*.

(Jesse cackles. He's the only one.)

Now, Jesse's laughing because what he knows And Karl and Robert, you don't know is that that we recorded an episode with the wonderful Kurt Braunohler, a juvenile court episode in which an 11-year-old was petitioning my court to be able to watch *The French Connection*, an R-rated film with a lot of inflammatory language in it. And a gritty and realistic portrayal of New York in 1970/1971. But I said that they could watch it, because—yeah. Because it's a good movie. But why did I mention it in this case? Now, Robert, Counselor. You seem to have an idea why. Why?

Robert: Because Gene Hackman was originally thought of to play Michael Brady.

John Hodgman: Boom! Hang on. (*Thump, thump, thump.*) That's the sound of a big gavel. Does it mean you won the case? No. That was a gavel of appreciation. You know that, Jesse Thorn?

[00:05:00]

Sherwood Schwartz, who created *The Brady Bunch*—number one choice to play Mike Brady, Gene Hackman. Would have been a different show!

Jesse Thorn: Very much so.

Robert: Would have been a different world.

John Hodgman: Would have been a different show. He would have been—it would have been a much beefier and football-y dad than Robert Reed. Who, by the way, incredible actor and obviously iconic in the role. It worked out the way it was supposed to. We're here to talk about *The Brady Bunch*. Before we get into it, Karl and Robert, you're old friends, right?

(*They confirm.*)

You're both attorneys, right?

(*They confirm.*)

You met each other as adversaries in court originally?

(*They confirm.*)

And the dispute in that courtroom was... if a Reuben has mustard on it, is it a Reuben? Correct?

Robert: Exactly.

(*Karl agrees.*)

Yes, it was.

John Hodgman: That's not what the dispute in your courtroom was, but that's another—that's a dispute you were having off mic with me before we started recording, right?

Robert: It is.

John Hodgman: Alright. Can I just say for the record, I don't know who believes what side of this, but if you put mustard on a Reuben, it's not a Reuben anymore. Certainly, if you

substitute mustard for Thousand Island. Karl, you were on the anti-Reuben side of that argument?

Karl: Yes, that's correct, your honor. Thousand Island or Russian is a main ingredient. Without it, it's not a Reuben.

John Hodgman: Russian dressing is the correct one. I'll allow Thousand Island, Counselor.

Karl: Same here, your honor. I will not allow mustard. It's a different sandwich.

John Hodgman: What would it be called? The Robert?

Robert: I like that!

Karl: The Bob.

John Hodgman: The Bob? The Wrong Bob?

Karl: Maybe a Bobwich.

John Hodgman: It'll be a Wrong Bob. That's what it's called from now on. Because you were wrong on that one, Bob. Robert, I mean.

Robert: I look forward to seeing that on menus.

John Hodgman: Alright, who comes here? Robert, is it you who comes seeking justice in my court?

Robert: It is, Judge.

John Hodgman: Alright. It says here that you believe *The Brady Bunch* is a classic sitcom. For our younger audience, who may be listening with their parents and may not know and didn't grow up with this show, what is *The Brady Bunch*? Go ahead, Robert.

Robert: *The Brady Bunch* is a family sitcom with what is now called a blended family. The father with three sons marries the mother with three daughters. Each episode is about half an hour long. They—

John Hodgman: Alright, now we're getting into the weeds when we're talking about running time.

Robert: Those are the weeds? Okay.

John Hodgman: Yeah. I mean, I don't think we need to know— Yeah, it's a sitcom, 30 minutes long. Right. Single camera sitcom. Very, very big cultural phenomenon. 1970, five

seasons, I believe. I could be wrong, but early '70s. Very groovy outfits. These kids grew up in front of our eyes. Greg was a measly twerp, the eldest son—played by Barry Williams—ended up maturing into a true Johnny Bravo, right?

(Robert agrees.)

Very, very famous, lots of catchphrases, lots of influence. Then there was a couple of reunion movies, a couple of parody movies. Big, big, big cultural touchstone for a lot of people my age and a little bit younger and a little bit older. Because I grew up with it, watching it on Channel 56 every afternoon when I got home from school.

Robert, your claim is that this is a classic television show.

(Robert confirms.)

And Karl, you say no. What's your problem with *The Brady Bunch*?

Karl: I don't have a problem with *The Brady Bunch*. And Bob is—Robert is free to like what he likes. *(Clears his throat.)* But to be classic, something has to be of high quality and have enduring excellence. And *The Brady Bunch* falls far short in that respect. And that's why it's merely iconic, in my opinion, as opposed to classic. Because it's not—

John Hodgman: Merely iconic.

Karl: Yes. And the points you made before about growing up watching the show, I noted you watched it in syndication. It only became iconic because of its popularity in syndication. It wasn't even that popular on first run. It was never highly rated, never a top 30 rated show. Never received any Emmy nominations, much less awards. It was critically—it was panned across the board by all the critics. And it just wasn't a high-quality show. Though you know, perhaps you view it that way, or Robert views it that way, through the prism of his older Gen X nostalgia guy. But that doesn't make it a classic.

John Hodgman: Let's read the roll call of honor. All the Bradys.

Robert: Let's.

John Hodgman: Robert Reed is Mike Brady, rest in peace. Florence Henderson as Carol Brady, rest in peace. Ann B Davis as Alice Nelson, rest in peace. Maureen McCormick as Marcia. Eve Plumb as Jan. Susan Olsen is Cindy. Barry Williams, my customer at Filmfest Video in New Haven on one notable afternoon, Greg Brady. Christopher Knight, Peter Brady. Mike Lookinland as Bobby Brady. And let's not forget, Robbie Rist as Cousin Oliver. These are all the people that you would like to erase from television history, Karl. All of the working actors that you say are pure garbage, correct, Karl?

Karl: No! There was some fine acting in that show.

[00:10:00]

Particularly Mr. Brady and Mrs. Brady.

John Hodgman: (*Steamrolling him.*) Uuuh, according to you, the show wasn't good and therefore is not a classic, so therefore they're all bad actors. Correct, Karl?

Karl: That is not correct, your honor. That is not a fair characterization of my testimony, your honor.

John Hodgman: Bailiff, Jesse Thorn, do I have permission to treat Karl even more hostilely?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I mean, I'll give you permission, sure. Judge Hodgman, go to town!

John Hodgman: Thank you very much. Karl, is that the way it works in courtrooms? You're an actual attorney, right?

(*Karl confirms.*)

What kind of law do you two practice?

Karl: I practice general litigation.

Robert: Real estate, mostly litigation.

John Hodgman: General lit and real estate. Okay. But you're saying that—if I understand you, Karl—that this is not a classic, because even though it became well-known, certainly—iconic, indisputably—arguably beloved, but also made fun of by multiple generations after its original airing due to its popularity on syndication. It was not a classic, because no one liked it when it was on TV.

Karl: No, I'm saying it's not a classic, because it didn't have the quality and the storytelling and the depth of characters. I mean, look at the characters. You have Mike. Who's Mike? He's your stereotypical father. He's the big—the good provider. Goes to work, comes home, renders his sage paternal advice to the children that Carol couldn't give while she was home all day as the happy homemaker, with a smile the whole time.

John Hodgman: With a full-time in-home helper, maid, and caretaker, by the way.

Karl: Which I never understood. And they made the poor woman wear a uniform, and they wouldn't let her eat at the table that they ate at! For dinner that she made.

John Hodgman: No, no, no. She was pretty busy in her guest apartment next to the washer dryer, hanging out with Sam the Butcher.

Karl: I don't know. I think the show was more classist than classic in that respect, when you look at the role of Alice.

Jesse Thorn: Wow! You're one of these rhyming attorneys!

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: My name is Karl and I'm here to say, I'm in general litigation every day.

Karl: Not today.

Robert: You must've seen his ad.

John Hodgman: And then you have—wait, Karl, do you have a TV ad?

Karl: *(Laughing.)* No, I don't.

John Hodgman: I don't think—we've rarely had real lawyers on this program, never mind TV or radio ones.

Robert: We need fake law books behind us, and we'll be all set.

John Hodgman: Yeah, that's right.

Karl: Then you look at the older siblings. Again, stereotypical older siblings. You had Greg, who's the cool, popular, kind of jock-y Johnny Bravo, right? And then you have Marcia, super pretty and perfect and popular. Then you have the middle siblings, who are desperate for attention, overlooked, resentful of the older siblings. I mean, poor Jan has to make up a boyfriend. You know, the famous line, "Marcia, Marcia, Marcia." And these are all stereotypes and tropes, these characters. And then you have the youngest siblings. Same thing. You have Cindy. She's just there to be cute with the pigtails, the dyed blonde hair. They dyed her hair so often it was falling out in season two!

John Hodgman: Let me ask you a question. Is *The Wizard of Oz* a classic film?

Karl: I would say yes.

John Hodgman: Even though Judy Garland was horribly abused on set and forced to, you know, take diet pills and stuff at the age of 14 or whatever?

Karl: I mean I'm not talking about set. I'm talking about the lack of development of these characters.

John Hodgman: So, what is—?

Karl: These characters were so poorly developed.

John Hodgman: What does the plight and exploitation of child actors have anything to do with making classic culture?

Karl: Because her look and fit in this role was more important than the character itself. None of these characters were fully developed characters. None of them were worthy of any spinoffs, unlike—true classic shows have spinoffs, because they have well-developed characters.

John Hodgman: Hang on, I'm writing—I'm actually writing this down. This is an interesting theory. I like this theory. True classic shows—

Karl: I'm sure you'll—

John Hodgman: Excuse me, I'm writing it down, Karl. I don't know why I'm so feisty today, Bailiff Jesse.

Jesse Thorn: Well, these guys are bringing the heat!

John Hodgman: They're bringing some heat, right? Maybe I'm intimidated, because they're attorneys, and I'm a fake judge.

Jesse Thorn: And they have incredible theories. I mean, like most snobs my age, my favorite television show is *The Wire*. But my second favorite television show is *The Wire's* spinoff show, *Bunk!* with an exclamation mark.

(John laughs.)

Karl: I would watch that.

John Hodgman: I would watch it too. So, what's a classic show? Like, tell me your spinoff theory a little bit more there, Karl.

Karl: Classic show from the same era? I would say *All in the Family*. Yeah, so you had *Maud*. You had the *Jeffersons*. Both high quality shows.

Robert: *Good Times*.

Karl: *Good Times*. *Good Times* spun off from *Maud*.

John Hodgman: *Maud*. Yeah, that was a spinoff of a spinoff.

Karl: Yes, because of flowww.

John Hodgman: Rest in peace John Amos. Rest in peace Norman Lear too. Okay, *All in the Family* is classic, because—I think it was probably classic for more reasons than just spinoffs. It was also incredibly trenchant and observant and groundbreaking and taboo-breaking and everything else. Whereas *The Brady Bunch* was straight down the middle, pretty palatable, entertainment suitable for adults and children. Never really broached major social commentary, despite the fact that it was in the early '70s. Although it was one of the first films to portray a blended family, which was a very big innovation at the time. Yet you would strip it of its classic status.

[00:15:00]

Because it's just not good enough. Robert, how did this come up, even?

Robert: Okay, so this came up because I use an app called Strava. It's a fitness app, you track your runs. It keeps track of pace and distance and shows a little map of the area where you ran.

John Hodgman: What does this have to do with *The Brady Bunch*, Robert?

Robert: So, after I finish running, every morning I try to find some pop culture reference to honor that day, and it's usually somebody's birthday.

John Hodgman: So, you name the run?

Robert: I name the run, and that morning was Mike Lookinland's birthday, who your honor mentioned. Mike Lookinland, who played Bobby Brady. For the life of me—I know I sent it in as evidence, like when we started this case. Actually, Adam sent it in. But I named the run something like “Mom always said don't run in the house.”

John Hodgman: Uh-huh. Right. Which is a spinoff of the—or you know—a spinoff, if you will, of the classic line from *The Brady Bunch*: “Mom always said don't play ball in the house”. Because they threw the ball—the football in the house, and it hit the vase, and it broke.

(Robert confirms.)

Karl: Mom's favorite vase.

Robert: Right. So, then I sent it to these guys. And every morning we have a little discussion about the person who I've honored and whether or not I've honored somebody appropriately. And Karl said, “Why are you doing this?”

And I said, “It's a classic show. Of course, I'm going to do this.” And by the way, I've previously honored Barry Williams, Florence Henderson when she passed away. Like, this is not the first time I've honored anybody in *The Brady Bunch*.

Jesse Thorn: I'm so excited about the idea that this is the greatest show business honor anyone could earn—to have your passing marked by one of these runs being named after a reference to you.

Karl: I think it's right up there with a mention at the Oscars.

Jesse Thorn: This is like the monuments at Yankee Stadium or the Hollywood Walk of fame. (*Chuckling.*)

John Hodgman: Hey, Jesse, you haven't seen this evidence, and you can take a look at it at the *Judge John Hodgman* show page or at our Instagram account, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](#). But we have a couple—Robert dedicated a couple of runs to our podcast, Jesse. So, before you start turning your nose up. We got one here—a one-mile run called “Here Run the Judge”. And then a 3.61-mile run called “Only Run Can Decide”.

(*They chuckle.*)

Jesse Thorn: Both of those are pretty solid.

John Hodgman: That one's pretty good.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, I think if we've learned anything from today's case and from *Judge John Hodgman*, it's that *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* is a classic podcast, since this program is a spinoff of *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*.

John Hodgman: Ah! Good point!

Robert: That's an excellent point.

John Hodgman: Really good point.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

John Hodgman: Let me ask you, Karl.

Karl: Yes?

John Hodgman: Is this podcast a classic podcast?

Karl: I don't have the expertise to opine, your honor. I apologize.

John Hodgman: Hm. So, you really don't know what makes anything a classic, and therefore I should throw you out of this courtroom right now.

Karl: Well, I've watched plenty of television, your honor. I have not listened to many podcasts. Yours, in fact, is the only podcast I've ever listened to, your honor.

John Hodgman: All guesses are wrong. This is absolutely a classic podcast. Contemporary classic.

Jesse Thorn: Webby award winner.

John Hodgman: Webby award-winning. A Webby award. You think the Webby is handing out awards to non-classics?

Jesse Thorn: Best of iTunes.

John Hodgman: Best of iTunes, Karl.

Karl: I will have to defer, your honor. I've never listened to any other podcast.

Jesse Thorn: They're terrible. I can't recommend them.

John Hodgman: Karl, how did Robert's runs end up becoming a conversation in your text group among your friends?

Karl: It's a morning ritual. As much as—it's as important to my waking up as coffee. Rob runs at the crack of dawn every day, seven days a week.

John Hodgman: Rain or shine?

(Karl confirms and Rob thanks him.)

Karl: Every day. Six o'clock in the morning, he's out there. 20 degrees, snow, rain, it doesn't matter. And then he comes back, and he posts it on Strava—manually from his watch. This all migrates over from his running watch. And then he looks at birthdays of famous people and chooses a person to honor that day. It's generally a musician. And our rule is we do try to do musicians first. And so, then Rob texts us his Strava link with his little pun in the picture with the expectation that the others in the group, mostly me, will chime in and come up with other puns. Usually, which mock Rob, as most of his puns mock him as well. And you know, if Rob expects to be mocked, I will surely not disappoint him. So, we end up sharing song lyrics and song titles for the honoree, just making fun of each other, but mostly Rob.

John Hodgman: So, Robert, what's your definition of a classic TV show?

Robert: Okay, so, I don't know have my illustration. I'll tell you why I think *The Brady Bunch* is a classic TV show is a show that stands the test of time, that people still watch decades later.

[00:20:00]

(John “mm”s thoughtfully.)

That has resonance with people decades later, that has a second life.

John Hodgman: I'll say it again, mm.

Jesse Thorn: Let the record reflect that the judge says, “Mm.”

John Hodgman: Mm. That's one of those things that make me go hmm.

(Jesse laughs.)

Robert: I'm trying to decide if that's good or bad.

John Hodgman: Well, it's a reference to Arsenio Hall.

Robert: Okay. I think that's good.

John Hodgman: So, good.

Jesse Thorn: Probably good. Yeah, good. Yeah.

John Hodgman: He's good. Speaking of coming to America, also. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: I interviewed Arsenio Hall one time, and the main thing I remember is how huge his hands are. Just, the guy has incredible hands.

(John “hm”s.)

Robert: You know, everybody—generations watch. Like, I can mention it to a younger generation, and I think they would know what I was talking about.

John Hodgman: Can you?

Robert: I think I can make references to things like Marcia, Marcia, Marcia and oh my nose, and *The Brady Bunch*—and the theme song, and people would know it.

John Hodgman: Go ahead, sing it.

Robert: Okay. *(Singing.)* “Here's the story of a man named Brady...” *(Trails off into nonsense syllables.)*

John Hodgman: Na-na-na-na-na, meow-meow-meow. Yeah, that's as far as I've gotten to.

Karl & John & Robert: They were four men living all together, yet they were all alone. (*Falling out of sync and losing the lyrics.*) Until one day when this fellow met this lady—and they knew it was much more than a hunch.

Jesse Thorn: You guys are litigators. You know that we can't get in trouble with ASCAP BMI here. We haven't got that kind of budget.

John Hodgman: It's true. It's true. But I mean, I really love the idea of this going out. When we put this on the YouTube channel, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#), let's make sure that you capture us not just singing this, but also in this zoom configuration, where we're stacked up in boxes the way they are in the opening to *The Brady Bunch*. Now I'm going to venture to say this, Robert—that there is probably a—like, despite that all of the kids who listen to this program tend to be super smart, intelligent, old souls who deserve to watch *The French Connection*, I bet you a fair amount of them did not know what we were doing when we started dad-humming *The Brady Bunch* theme. That's just my impression. Jesse, what do you think? I mean, you're a full decade younger than me.

Jesse Thorn: That's true. I'm an older millennial. And to me, *The Brady Bunch* is two things. It ran far longer, I think, on Nick at Night, than most of its contemporary shows. So, it was still, for sure, on Nick at Night—which I would occasionally see when I went to my friend Jody's house, because he had cable—well into my childhood. And I think that theme song is absolutely iconic. I don't think that the... the things like which of the Brady kids was like a hunk or a dreamboat or like which of the Brady kids was which.

(*They laugh.*)

Or what qualities the parents had of any kind other than being the parents—I don't think those things have endured in the same way as that theme song. But I do think that the theme song and the aesthetics of the opening sequence are about as well known, even intergenerationally, as certainly anything of that age on television. I do think, like as a millennial, the thing I most know *The Brady Bunch* from is as a fixation of Generation X, like as a subject of mockery and discussion and, you know, like far more than any of—*The Partridge Family* or even *All in the Family* or any of the great television shows of the 1970s. Like, *The Brady Bunch* is certainly the iconic television show for Generation X.

John Hodgman: I mean, definitely *The Brady Bunch* had an extended lifespan, because it was being shoved down our throats in syndication and on Nick at Night for a long time. I mean, it was just out there all the time.

Karl: If I may, Bailiff Jesse, I'd submit that *The Brady Bunch* is to Gen X as (*clears throat*) *Saved by the Bell* is to your generation. And if Rob were your age, he'd probably be honoring Screech on Strava someday and insisting that *Saved by the Bell* was a classic show.

Jesse Thorn: I think that is a canny move, Counselor, to compare those two shows. Because it would be difficult to find a show as iconic as *Saved by the Bell* that's worse than *Saved by the Bell*. *The Brady Bunch* is pretty corny, but it's definitely better than *Saved by the Bell*.

(They laugh.)

Robert: Do I have to point out that *Saved by the Bell* did have a spinoff?

[00:25:00]

John Hodgman: Which was it?

Robert: *Saved by the Bell: The New Class*, and then *The College Years*.

John Hodgman: Weeell, are those spinoffs or reboots, Counselor?

Karl: Reboots.

Robert: Well, one of them is about the same kids in college.

John Hodgman: Yeah, so that would be a reboot, I would say. Because there was, after all, *The Brady Brides*. Which was—and *The Bradys*, which was the adult contemporary version of *The Brady Bunch* that they tried to relaunch as a reunion show in the late '80s.

Robert: True, but those aren't—

John Hodgman: But those aren't spinoffs. Those are reunions.

Robert: But *The New Class* had all new high school kids, and Screech was working in the principal's office.

John Hodgman: If they had called it *Screech*, then yes. But because they called it *Saved By The Bell: The New Class*, it was an extension. It was not a spinoff. If it had been *Screech*, (chuckles) and Screech was now the hard-bitten editor of a newspaper in Chicago or something and had completely changed tone, like they did with Lou Grant and *Mary Tyler Moore*, then that would be a spinoff.

The point that I was trying to make, in terms of asking Jesse and so on, is that I feel like—you know, I've always been astonished by how much culture Jesse and I have in common. Because we are, you know, not the same age. And yet Jesse is also an old soul, I think. And a—not a consumer, but an observer of culture. But also, I think generationally, probably Jesse and I have more in common with each other than maybe Jesse has with someone, you know, who's 15 years younger than Jesse. Nick at Night and broadcast television were still very, very common well into the early 2000s.

Jesse Thorn: Although this is, in some ways, like a time of renaissance for *Brady Bunch* style television, right? That like there was a long period of time where streaming meant trying to produce the highest quality programming possible. Because all those streaming services were trying to become distinctive by producing something that got critical acclaim or won awards.

John Hodgman: Yeah, they all wanted to be HBOs when the HBO existed.

Jesse Thorn: And just in the last couple of years, the streaming services have almost all taken a hard turn towards things that are easy to watch in large amounts, which is probably the best quality of *The Brady Bunch*. It is... entirely pleasant. And you know, that's what the—you know, they call it the *Suits*-aissance or whatever it is. Right?

(John laughs.)

It's like television shows—the television shows that are easy to watch have made a big comeback in the last couple of years. Scripted television shows, specifically, that are easy to watch.

John Hodgman: But—that's very true. But you know, people are watching *Suits*, not *The Brady Bunch*. *The Brady Bunch* is not back. I'm just making the argument, and I don't know how to test it. But it seems germane to this discussion—with regard to how well it has endured—do the kids know *Brady Bunch* now? I bet you fewer do than did 10 years ago, for sure.

Karl: I don't believe the younger generation is streaming *The Brady Bunch*.

John Hodgman: So, Robert, let's get—if you were to say what it is that makes *The Brady Bunch* classic, is it its endurance? Or do you disagree with Karl about its quality?

Robert: Both. But what—everything that Karl said about *The Brady Bunch*, setting up those tropes about the parents and the children and the middle children, is what makes it a classic. It is the show, I think, the family sitcom, the model family sitcom. It is the family sitcom that I think everybody harkens back to when they talk about family sitcoms.

John Hodgman: Karl, Robert raises a point here. You say that, like—you know, Cindy is a trope, but didn't Cindy create the trope?

Karl: I think—well, I think Sherwood Schwartz created that trope.

John Hodgman: Way to erase Cindy and the actor, again. You hate these actors so much.

Karl: I don't think it's a classic example of the family sitcom.

John Hodgman: *(Mockingly.)* What is? *My Three Sons*?

Karl: I never watched that either. It's before my time, your honor.

John Hodgman: Name a more iconic octet than *The Brady Bunch*. I'll wait.

Karl: Oh, that's not possible.

John Hodgman: What would be a more classic family sitcom than *The Brady Bunch*?

Jesse Thorn: *The Simpsons*.

Karl: Oh, *The Simpsons* is definitely a classic family sitcom.

Robert: I think *The Simpsons* only exists because of *The Brady Bunch*, though.

(*John slide-whistles then makes an explosion sound.*)

Jesse Thorn: I think it's fair to say that *The Simpsons* only exists because of *The Honeymooners*, like as a definitional sitcom—of which it is. You know, to which it is a sort of homage.

[00:30:00]

But I don't think *The Simpsons* only—even with all those brilliant Gen X pop culture miners who created *The Simpsons* and defined *The Simpsons*, I don't think you can trace its roots directly to *The Brady Bunch*.

John Hodgman: Yeah. If you draw a through line through Dana Gould, famous comedian and *Simpsons* writer, I might even argue that *Planet of the Apes* has more influence upon *The Simpsons* than *The Brady Bunch*.

Jesse Thorn: There is, I guess, a somewhat reasonable argument to be made that *The Simpsons* is a sort of comedy riff on *The Brady Bunch*. Like, what if *The Brady Bunch* had jokes in it or was funny at all? (*Laughs.*)

Karl: I don't see any ever long-lasting impression upon TV from *The Brady Bunch*. I mean, what show—what quality shows came out that mimicked that? I can't think of any.

John Hodgman: *Eight is Enough*, *Family Matters*.

Karl: Again, these are not classics.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, *Full House*.

John Hodgman: How dare you. *Full House*.

Karl: *Full House*! That's a very comparable show. Yeah.

John Hodgman: And not a—but not a classic.

Karl: Absolutely not.

John Hodgman: Because classic has to mean—?

Karl: High in quality, enduring quality.

John Hodgman: And *All in the Family* would be the gold standard?

Karl: For that era, I would say yes. Maybe *Mary Tyler Moore*, maybe *M*A*S*H*.

John Hodgman: It has to have a seriousness, if not a certain self-seriousness to it? It can't just be a fun show that people like?

Karl: No, it can be fun.

John Hodgman: It can't be a fun show that people like, even sort of sarcastically—as Generation X loved *The Brady Bunch* so much?

Karl: If they're—I mean, if you're enjoying it as a parody, that doesn't make it a classic. That kind of undermines the claim that it's a classic, if people are enjoying it because it's such a parody.

John Hodgman: Hm. Interesting.

Jesse Thorn: Like the legendary classic film, *Airport 72*.

John Hodgman: Karl, I do feel like I haven't yet gotten from you a comparable sitcom from that era or just before or just after that is classic by your own definition. Family sitcom.

Karl: Family.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Well, I mean, *All in the Family*. It's right there in the title, I suppose.

Karl: Yeah, is that a family sitcom? Yeah. You had the Meathead and Gloria living at home. That's a family sitcom that would qualify.

John Hodgman: His nickname was Meathead; he was not called the Meathead.

Jesse Thorn: The Meathead is the monster. Meathead is the doctor.

John Hodgman: But they're adult children. What about a classic sitcom with children-children? And I'm talking about a comedy, right? I'm not necessarily talking about social commentary. I'm just wondering if there's something that takes the place of *Brady Bunch* if we eliminate it from the pantheon. You can think on it a little bit.

Karl: Maybe *Family Ties* before it jumped the shark by adding the little brother.

John Hodgman: There's always a cousin Oliver. When they try to extend a show beyond its natural life, and they bring in a new little kid.

Karl: That's *Brady Bunch's* contribution to the art.

John Hodgman: That was—that's its only contribution to culture is that they introduced the term The Cousin Oliver Curse?

Karl: It's its contribution to sitcoms.

John Hodgman: For those of you who don't know, Cousin Oliver—you know, there were six *Brady Bunch* children until they started to age out, and they all turned into teenagers. And they were trying to figure out how to keep this show going. I guess because it was popular and successful, despite what Karl says. I guess they wanted to continue it, and they tried to inject some new life into it by bringing a new little kid. A little blonde, toe-headed kid with glasses, a little delightfully nerdy kid named Cousin Oliver, played by Robbie Rist. Cousin Oliver also played Dr. Zee on *Galactica 1980*. Robby Rist now is a musician and occasionally an actor, best known for his role in helping to produce and write the music for an act in *Sharknado*. A classic film.

It says here, Robert, that if I were to rule in your favor, you want Karl to, quote, “Fonzie”, unquote. What does it mean to “Fonzie”, quote/unquote?

Robert: Okay, so basically when you have dug in and refuse to admit you're wrong, and later are forced to admit you're wrong. It's called a Fonzie, because in the classic episode of *Happy Days*, Fonzie was unable to tell Richie he was wrong about something. And when he had to do it, he went, “I was wr-wr-wr-wr-wr—I was wr-wr-wr-wr-wr—I was wr-wr-wr-wr-wr.” So, when you reluctantly admit you're wrong about something after digging in for a while—let's say a few months—you have to Fonzie.

John Hodgman: So you want Karl to say, “I was wr-wr-wr-wrong,” the way Henry Winkler did in that very famous episode of *Happy Days*? A show that I know and think of a lot, but maybe a younger generation doesn't anymore. Karl, is *Happy Days* a classic sitcom, yes or no?

Karl: I believe it was for a short period of time before it jumped the shark, but it jumped the shark long before it jumped—long before Fonzie jumped the shark.

[00:35:00]

It jumped the shark several years before that.

John Hodgman: That's right. Because jumping the shark is a phrase—is a trope that you see on the TV Tropes. I believe that's where it first started gaining currency on the internet, but perhaps I'm wrong there. But there is an episode in later days of *Happy Days* when they were starting to replace the cast left and right as people were leaving and so forth. But later on, they tried to gin up some excitement by having the Fonz water ski over a great white shark.

It had to have been in the wake of the *Jaws* phenomenon, I suppose. And that was when people on the internet started saying that show got too silly at that point. It jumped the shark. You're saying it jumped the shark before Fonzie actually jumped the shark.

Karl: Yes, your honor.

John Hodgman: When did *Happy Days* turn sour for you, Karl?

Karl: At the very latest, when Richie left the show, and the kids were all at college, and they start focusing on Joni and Chachi. And perhaps a little earlier, when it became more of a total Fonzie-centric show, I thought Fonzie was much cooler when he was wearing his members only jacket than when he was wearing his leather jacket.

John Hodgman: What a hipster you are.

(They laugh.)

Only the most contemptible television snobs even know what you're talking about right now. Oh, it says here that your ideal ruling is for Robert to Fonzie! You want him to admit he's wrong. What would you have him say?

Karl: I want him—I want an on the air, on the podcast, full-throated Arthur Fonzarelli wrong. That's what I want. And for him to buy me a beer.

John Hodgman: The difference, of course, is that when Richie got Fonzie to say that he was wrong, Fonzie knew he was wrong. And I don't know that I'm going to be able to order either of you to say you're wrong when— I mean, the question I have is like how can I convince one of you that you're wrong? You're never going to back down. You're attorneys.

Karl: Now, we're both attorneys. We both knew that we waived all rights to appeal by appearing before your fake honor. It's kind of like an arbitration proceeding. We have no recourse. So, we're stuck and bound by your decision, your honor.

John Hodgman: Mm. Mm. Karl, you say that by definition—once you explain that words have meaning, by definition, Adam had to change his mind. Where do we find words—where do we find the meanings for words, typically?

Karl: Dictionaries?

John Hodgman: Dictionaries. Interesting.

Karl: I believe I submitted evidence of the definition of classic with my—while I was Martialing, Martialing, Martialing my evidence last week.

John Hodgman: How dare you?

(Jesse “wow”s.)

Yeah. You sent me a link to [Merriam-Webster.com](https://www.merriam-webster.com) dictionary, classic. And this was your ninth-grade personal writing essay opening. “The dictionary definition of classic—the dictionary defines classic as buh-buh-buh.” This was your big evidence that you were going to show to me, correct?

Karl: (*Laughs.*) That was one piece.

John Hodgman: Then tell me—then let's walk through the other pieces of homework you tried to give me, the other links that you sent me.

(*Karl laughs.*)

Link number one, cute picture of Tiger. That was the dog on the first season who disappeared from *The Brady Bunch* mysteriously and was never mentioned again. Tiger, the dog. You sent me the obituary of Sherwood Schwartz, the creator of the show. And then you send me this link to the dictionary.

Karl, have you ever in your career in general litigation stood up in a courtroom and said, “Your honor, the dictionary definition of blank is blank.” Is that ever something you've tried in court before?

Karl: Dictionaries are often cited. Yes. Sure, sure.

John Hodgman: Dictionaries are often cited. Why?

Karl: Trying to break down the meaning of a statute. You have to look at the instruction of the statute and the meaning of the words. Sometimes plain English meaning, sometimes *Black's Law Dictionary* meaning. Then you get interpretations.

John Hodgman: We love the Merriam-Webster dictionary, even though they say a hot dog is a sandwich. Don't love that.

Karl: Well, they're clearly wrong, your honor. They're wrong.

John Hodgman: But because you introduced it, I have to follow it, don't I? I have to at least give your evidence—

Karl: Some weight.

John Hodgman: Some weight. “Classic. Adjective. Definition 1-A) Serving as a standard of excellence of recognized value.” What do you think about that, Robert?

Robert: I think “of recognized value” is pretty much what *The Brady Bunch* is.

John Hodgman: Why? Because it made money for Sherwood Schwartz and his ungrateful nephew?

(Karl chortles.)

Robert: No, because it entertained generations of people, and later, mostly children.

John Hodgman: “Definition 1-B) Traditional, enduring.”

Karl: I don't see anything enduring in this show at all. I mean, we already discussed this—that no one in the younger generation is streaming this show.

John Hodgman: “Definition 1-C) Characterized by simple tailored lines in fashion year after year.” (Chuckles.)

Robert: Clearly. The Johnny Bravo thing alone is clear lines of fashion.

John Hodgman: This is my question, Karl.

[00:40:00]

To you and Robert. Can I convince you, Robert, that *The Brady Bunch* is not a classic show? I think Karl has made some pretty strong arguments, to be honest. I've been raking him over the coals. I've been jumping him over the shark quite a bit, for sure. But I mean, you're not convinced? Or are you just stubborn, Robert?

Robert: Well, I'm not convinced by Karl's argument. Whether or not your honor could do it—I wouldn't say you can't. You know, I'm not completely recalcitrant.

John Hodgman: But none of those arguments—I mean, you know, I think that we've established—I don't mean to make common cause with people who dislike *The Brady Bunch* necessarily. But I mean, I think Karl makes an argument that it's pretty pedestrian. Right?

Robert: Right, that is his argument. But my point is that, beyond that, its influence, the way it's gone on through generations, the fact that it can be parodied so readily, and everyone knows exactly what it is that's being parodied.

John Hodgman: What we need to do is get SNL to do a parody of *The Brady Bunch* this Saturday, then we'll know. Well, let's just wait. I'll call them and invite them to do that. And they'll say yes. You folks—you guys just stay in the studio until Sunday. Okay? Then we'll know.

Robert: Alright. That's fine.

John Hodgman: Karl, is there any way that I could convince you that this is a classic?

Karl: It's, uh—(*sighs*) it'll be hard, your honor, but I will abide by your honor's decision.

John Hodgman: Robert, why is this important to you? Why is it important to you that Karl say he's wrong?

Robert: Because of the—well, because of the way it arose, right? I sent this out there fully expecting everybody to say, “Yeah, *The Brady Bunch* is a classic.” I didn't expect everyone to push back and go, “How dare you honor Bobby Brady? Like, he's unworthy.”

John Hodgman: Is that what Karl said? How dare you honor Bobby Brady?

Robert: Essentially. Yes, different words, but yes. Basically, he said like why are you—why is this guy worthy of my time reading your text?

John Hodgman: How dare he mock your third of a mile jog?

Robert: Yes, exactly. Thank you.

(*Karl laughs.*)

John Hodgman: But Robert, is this something Karl does a lot? You come up with something and Karl shoots you down?

Robert: That—yes, and yes.

John Hodgman: More often than you shoot Karl down?

Robert: Probably.

John Hodgman: And what would be another example, if you have one, of Karl being contrary?

Robert: Okay, so we were talking about this before. I'm a huge Beatles fan, and Ringo Starr's qualities as a drummer comes up all the time. And Karl will say how he thinks Ringo basically is a terrible drummer and only, you know, was lucky to play along with the Beatles. And then I'll point out to the number of drummers who over the years have said that Ringo is an excellent drummer and was integral to the sound of what I think is the most popular recording act in the history of recording acts.

John Hodgman: Big claim. The Beatles.

Robert: Yeah, it is right? Going out on a limb there.

John Hodgman: Robert's going out there. He's going to say it. Beatles, popular.

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman, an iconic argument, but not a classic one.

(They chortle.)

John Hodgman: I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I'm going to go into my sunken den with that really cool wall to wall carpeting that Mike Brady designed for himself as an architect. I'll be back in a moment with my verdict.

Jesse Thorn: Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)

Karl, how are you feeling about your chances?

Karl: I think I'm feeling pretty good.

Jesse Thorn: Why is that?

Karl: Feeling pretty good. Because there's been a lot of—the judge has made a lot of references to iconic, the word iconic. And he has also talked about the show being rather pedestrian. And I suspect that he will respect English language and find that a pedestrian show is not a classic.

Jesse Thorn: I like the idea that you're using like a mind control technique on the judge, where you figure if you repeat the word iconic enough and then get him to say it—it's like when someone is trying to sell you a car, and they keep nodding and it's supposed to make you nod, and then you agree to buy the car. *(Chuckles.)*

Karl: I don't think I have those powers of persuasion, unfortunately.

Jesse Thorn: I think we need a prop. You need to bring in a too-small glove or something. Robert, how are you feeling?

Robert: Not as good as I felt coming into this, to be honest. You know, when I was talking about this with people at home and friends and family, they're all pretty much convinced that I was right. And I think I might have to be ordered to Fonzie here, I'm starting to think. But I will accept the ruling.

Jesse Thorn: Well, we'll see what the judge has to say when he comes back in just a moment.

[00:45:00]

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: We're taking a quick break from the courtroom. Our thanks, of course, to every member of Maximum Fun. The MaxFunDrive, now receding into the rearview mirror, but our gratitude is not. Our gratitude is everlasting. Thank you MaxFun members for making this show possible. You all absolutely rule. You're the reason that we have food and modes of conveyance, and we can support our children and so on and so forth. And we're ever grateful to you.

John Hodgman: It was max, it was fun, and it was even drive. And it was all wonderful. And I'll just echo Jesse and my own self, as I've said over and over again: I don't know what I would do without the show and without you all, and thank you for making it possible.

Jesse Thorn: John, you have Solid Sound coming up around the corner.

John Hodgman: Solid Sound is happening. I mentioned it the other week, and I'm going to say it to you again. Solid Sound is the biannual—that is every other year—festival of music and culture and arts and everything else, held at the beautiful former electric parts factory that has been turned into one of the most incredible large-scale installation art museums in the world: Mass MoCA, the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art out there in North Adams, Massachusetts—the pride of the Housatonic River. And who hosts Solid Sound? Well, the band Wilco! They play two big concerts and have all of their incredible guests come and play music and do other things. And then they even invite me to curate the comedy stage, and we've got quite a stage for you with Jean Grae, Dave Hill, Sydnee Washington, Brittany Carney, and more.

Solid Sound is a really, really special thing that I'm so grateful that I get to do every other year. And it's a lot of fun. And if you Google solid and sound—those are two different words—you will get there, and you can get tickets, and you can join us. I believe that there are single day tickets available now, if that's something that makes it easier for you to access. And our comedy stage runs all afternoon on Saturday, and it is indoors! Which is good for comedy. That is to say people like to be on stage inside when they're doing comedy, 'cause laughter doesn't dissipate into the heavens. And it's good for you, because you won't get rained on or too much sun.

I mentioned also that friend of the show, Paul F. Tompkins, is going to Maine. I don't know if that show is sold out yet, but you can find out by going to PaulFTompkins.com/live and seeing where else he's performing with his *Varietopia* variety show, which is a really good show, and I think you should go. And maybe I'll see you there.

And also, finally, speaking of Maine, I just want to give a shout out to the Colonial Theater of Belfast, Maine. It's a beautiful, historic movie theater in Belfast, Maine, of course, that was threatened with closure and disrepair and collapse. But it was saved by the town, and they're putting on some really great movies there. Belfast is a terrific town if you're able to get up there. Maybe after you're seeing Paul F. Tompkins, continue up the coast and go see a movie at the Colonial. They've got a big old papier mâché elephant on top that they stole from Perry's Nut House. It's a whole story. Check it out. The Colonial Theater in Belfast, Maine. Maybe we'll do a show there sometime!

Jesse, what do you have going on?

Jesse Thorn: This week on *Bullseye*, my NPR and MaxFun pop culture interview podcast, we have the great Alison Brie—a wonderful conversation with Alison Brie wherein we find out that her middle school locker is featured in the film *Halloween*.

John Hodgman: (*Laughs.*) Really?!

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. It's true. She's from South Pasadena. So, South Pasadena is like Nice Suburb USA in every film ever made, including *Halloween*.

John Hodgman: I was very lucky to appear on an episode of *Community* and met all the cast and. And Alison Brie is truly one of the most delightful of the delightfults, boy. And an incredible actor.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, let's get back to the courtroom and *Judge John Hodgman*.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Please rise as Judge John Hodgman reenters the courtroom and presents the verdict.

(*Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.*)

John Hodgman: So, first of all, I've been giving both of you the business. But I want you to know that I think you are both wonderful. Even though I've been yelling at you a lot, maybe I've been encouraged by the fact that you're both attorneys, and it's my job to yell at you as a judge. I never really had a chance to run a courtroom this way. But on the other hand, I'm troubled a little bit by my saying, “You know, I've been really giving you a hard time, but I like you,” because that's what bullies say. You know what? That's what bullies say. That's like when Jesse Thorn asks Karl like, “How does Robert feel about you stomping all over his opinions?”

“He expects it. He loves it. It's fun.”

I don't know if it's fun! Maybe think about that. Now I've been thinking about this. ‘Cause Karl, you do make a pretty compelling argument. Can something be a classic if it is merely just sort of there and present in our lives for so long, as *Brady Bunch* was?

[00:50:00]

I think that's a reasonable question. You know, because like we've heard a lot of elevator music in our time. It's just there. That doesn't mean that it's classic. We've heard a lot of Coldplay songs. They're around, for sure. And I don't even know why I'm making fun of Coldplay. I couldn't name a Coldplay song. I just know that it's a trope, a cliché if you will, that Coldplay is pretty pedestrian. Maybe it's even a classic trope. It has given me pause. But

I keep coming back to influence. *Brady Bunch* had a profound influence on a couple of generations, despite its initial uncelebrated run. In syndication and in reruns, it left a real footprint on the brains of Gen X and, to a lesser degree, some older millennials. And to a maybe greater degree, a little bit younger Boomers, whatever that one is. I don't know. Like, everyone knew what *The Brady Bunch* was in the English-speaking world in North America for sure.

The fact that it was so widely parodied, the fact that it was so widely quotable, the fact that—well, I mean, it gave birth to some pretty important careers. I mean, before there were the parody films in the '90s, there was the *Real Live Brady Bunch*, which was an off-Broadway show created by Joey and Jill Soloway with Becky Thayer and Andy Richter and Jane Lynch in it, among others—where all they did were, essentially, line by line recreations of episodes. Karl would deny us Andy Richter. Karl would deny us Jane Lynch. Karl would believe that these careers should never have begun. Because they were imitating a bad show.

If anything, I think that *The Brady Bunch* For good or ill—and there are arguments both ways, right?—not merely left a cultural footprint on the brains of Gen X, but the hating on *The Brady Bunch* became the whole—sort of part of the whole genesis of meta comedy of that '90s period of smarty-pants, mostly White comedians who are obsessed with popular culture, remixing that into *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, for example. You know, that kind of riffing, parodic homage, that kind of looking at pedestrian popular culture and appreciating it and making fun of it, but in a kind of loving and subversive way. That's a whole style of comedy that I think went hand in hand with the sheer omnipresence of *The Brady Bunch*.

Now you make a good point in that it does not have any spinoffs. I think that's true too. Like, it certainly did not move the cultural conversation in the way that *All in the Family* did or *The Jeffersons* or *Maud* or any of—you know, or *Good Times*. That whole family of highly socially conscious Norman Lear shows. You're right! And if anything, like when we talk about the self-referential comedy of the '90s, which is when maybe the making fun of *The Brady Bunch* reached its apex, it's reflecting the fact that *The Brady Bunch* only ever reflected upon itself. Like, the only—there were no spinoffs. There were just reunions, starting with the variety show that they did in the '70s, the cartoon show they did about the Bradys on the Saturday mornings, the two parody films, the multiple reunion attempts to reboot and—failed attempts, to your point, Karl, I suppose. The failed attempts to reunite the cast and do, you know, updated versions of *The Brady Bunch*.

It was always only about itself. Which you might think makes an argument that it is merely iconic and not classic. And I understand that. But for me, as I've thought about it over the course of this very lively conversation, the fact of the matter is it only reemphasizes to me that it is—and I don't—this is a Latin term, but not a legal one: *sui generis*, in and of itself. For all—there were not many attempts to copy it. One could argue that *The Partridge Family* was something of an attempt. Certainly *Eight is Enough*. But not taking away from the merits of those two shows, they just weren't *The Brady Bunch*.

[00:55:00]

Not even *Full House* as kind of the best comp, I think, from the '80s and '90s to *The Brady Bunch*, in terms of sort of like a generally not thought provoking, fun family sitcom. No show

would attempt to imitate *The Brady Bunch* that way, because they just knew *The Brady Bunch* was it. It's its own thing. It's its own thing. And I think that speaks to the fact that *The Brady Bunch*—its weird of-its-time-ness and not-of-its-time-ness. It's a 1950s button down family show in kind of groovy Johnny Bravo '70s drag. It is absolutely not socially alert at all. And the fashions and the style are much more contemporary, but the attitudes—with the exception of it being a blended family, but even then. It's like they were a blended family for one episode, and then they might as well—they never addressed that issue again. It never became a dynamic at all; it was just a family with six kids. And then a weird cousin.

Like, all of that doesn't make it bad. All of that makes it interesting. And I think that there's a reason why people—it's not just that Nick at Night and syndication were shoving it down the throat. It worked in syndication. It worked at Nick at Night. It worked on people's imaginations in ways that, say, *Too Close for Comfort* did not. No offense, Ted Knight. You know, it worked on people's imaginations in some way. And I think that it is—*The Brady Bunch* is essentially undeniable. So, it makes sense that *The Brady Bunch* was on Nick at Night, which described itself as the first classic television network. And it also makes sense that while it does not conform to the definition of classic in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary 1A—it may not meet your standard of excellence or recognized value, Karl—it absolutely is traditional and, I believe, enduring. Even if it is slipping to a certain degree from cultural currency now, I think if you had this conversation 10 or 15 years ago, that wouldn't even be an issue. Of course, everyone knows what *The Brady Bunch* is, and therefore it is enduring at that time. And therefore, by definition of 1B, it is classic.

Karl, you're wrong. And you're wrong to presume that Robert automatically expects and enjoys your abuse. (*Chuckles.*) So, keep an eye out on that last thing. But for the meantime, I need you to Fonzie me right now on *The Brady Bunch*.

Karl: (*Clears his throat.*) I was wr-wr-wr-wrong.

John Hodgman: Robert, do you accept that Fonzie?

Robert: I do, your honor.

John Hodgman: This is the sound of a gavel.

Clip:

Jan (*The Brady Bunch*): Marcia, Marcia, Marcia!

John Hodgman: Judge John Hodgman rules that is all.

Jesse Thorn: Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

(*Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.*)

Robert, having received a Fonzie, how do you feel?

Robert: I feel great. I mean, I feel like it's the biggest case I've won in the whatever number of years I've been doing this. I may have to retire.

Jesse Thorn: Karl, how do you feel having Fonzie?

Karl: Uh, I don't know. I just—I feel like, I got in front of a judge who was a *Brady Bunch* fan. (*Laughs.*) Knew every episode. But I'll live with it. It's okay. Rob's happy. And that does matter, of course. And we had fun.

Jesse Thorn: Well, thank you both for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

(*They thank him.*)

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Another *Judge John Hodgman* cases in the books. We'll have Swift Justice in just a second. First, our thanks to Redditor u/UsefulBiscotti9548 for naming this week's episode “Court Martial, Martial, Martial!”. Join the conversation on the Maximum Fun subreddit, [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun). You can chat about this episode and submit your own ideas for names for future cases. Evidence and photos from the show are on our Instagram. That is [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman). We are also on TikTok and YouTube, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJHodgmanPod). Yeah, there's video of *Judge John Hodgman* now, so make sure and go and watch it. It's really fun.

John Hodgman: It's a lot of fun. I agree with you. What you said is correct.

Jesse Thorn: I'm sending a special message only to video viewers. You'll never know what it is unless you watch the video!

John Hodgman: And by the way, I want to say a special thank you to Andy_Camp over there on Apple Podcasts for the five-star rating. They say about the show, quote, “I've been a listener and a MaxFun member for a decade.” Thank you very much, Andy_Camp. “There's not a bad show on the network, but this one is the best.” Oh, shucks. Well, I mean, they're all terrific. “Jesse and John are a great pair.”

[01:00:00]

That I will agree with. Thank you, Andy_Camp for listening. Thank you for being a member, and thank you for making this show possible with your membership. And if you're listening to us on Apple podcasts and you like the show and you've got some time, why don't you go over there and give us a rating and a review? It really does help new listeners find the show. Or just tell your friends about it.

Jesse Thorn: *Judge John Hodgman* was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman, this episode engineered by Rich Macar at Button Sound in New York City. Our social media

manager is Nattie Lopez, our video editor is Daniel Speer, our audio editor is AJ McKeon. Our producer, the great Jennifer Marmor.

Now, Swift Justice, where we answer small disputes with quick judgment. This one's from Josh. "My partner, Chuck, likes to use the term Air Budding to mean dog-napping. I think it would be better understood to mean teaching a dog to play basketball."

John Hodgman: Boy, talk about cultural references. I have made that joke about "there's nowhere in the rule book that a dog can't play basketball" too many times, even for someone my age. But I confess, I have never seen that movie. Is the dog kidnapped in *Air Bud*?

Jesse Thorn: I believe the dog is kidnapped in *Air Bud*, but the real bad news kidnapping situation is in the movie *Bingo*. Which is sort of a poor man's *Air Bud* that features some dog peril that is truly alarming. I believe someone wants to make the dogs into hot dogs in *Bingo*? Yeah. It's bananas.

John Hodgman: Oh no. Oh, please don't *Bingo* those dogs into non-sandwich hot dogs. And by the way, Air Budding means teaching a dog to play basketball. That's the whole plot. That's the main part of the movie, right? He plays basketball.

Jesse Thorn: Air Budding doesn't even mean teaching a dog to play basketball. Air Budding is playing basketball when you're a dog.

John Hodgman: You know what? I defer to my Bailiff Jesse Thorn. That's right. Air Budding is playing basketball when you're a dog. So, take that, one of you. And by the way, speaking of animals, do you have a dispute involving animals? Do you want your cat to carry items from room to room and they refuse? I'll find in your favor, of course. Or do you want to get into birdwatching, but your hiking buddy doesn't want to hear about warblers or anything regarding animals and pets? We're long overdue for a big old pet docket. So, submit your animal cases to this kangaroo court at MaximumFun.org/jjho.

Jesse Thorn: In fact, submit any case at MaximumFun.org/jjho. No case too big or small. We judge them all! That's MaximumFun.org/jjho. We'll talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

Speaker 1: Maximum Fun.

Speaker 2: A worker-owned network.

Speaker 3: Of artist owned shows.

Speaker 4: Supported—

Speaker 5: —directly—

Speaker 6: —by you!