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Jesse Thorn: Hey gang, it's Jesse. Before we get into this next *Bullseye* interview, I wanted to give you a heads up on something really exciting. We are ringing in 25 years of *Bullseye* all through this fall. 25 years! I started this show in my dorm room when I was 19!

What does that mean? Well, we will have a whole month of special shows, new and old, this Autumn. And we're also going on the road, bringing you three very special anniversary live shows. Thursday, October 16th, we'll be at LAist in Pasadena, California. I'll be joined by Roy Wood Jr. and Jason Mantzoukas. We will have music from Rebecca Sugar, the creator of *Stephen Universe*. And! Comedy from the great Aparna Nancherla. Saturday, November 1st will be at the Kuumbwa Jazz Center in Santa Cruz, California. I will be talking with Adam Scott, Boots Riley, and Glenn Washington. We will have comedy from Scott Simpson. Finally, on Saturday, November 15th, we'll head to the Pit in New York City, the Pit Theater. My guests: Jad Abumrad from *Radio Lab*, H Jon Benjamin from *Archer* and *Bob's Burgers*, comedy from Josh Gondelman, music from songwriters Kristin Anderson-Lopez and Bobby Lopez—the latter of whom is an actual EGOT. It is going to be an extravaganza in all three cities.

I hope you will celebrate with us. Go to MaximumFun.org/events for info on all of it. That's MaximumFun.org/events. And thanks.

Transition: Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.

Promo: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.

Music: “Huddle Formation” from the album *Thunder, Lightning, Strike* by The Go! Team—a fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.

Jesse Thorn: It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. Odds are, if you know Nick Offerman, you know these facts about him. First, he starred on *Parks and Recreation*, playing the grumpy-but-lovable Ron Swanson, foil to Amy Poehler's endlessly cheerful Leslie Knope. Second, you probably know he's married to the actress Meghan Mullallyyy. She played Karen on *Will and Grace* and most recently played Lori on the latest season of the *Righteous Gemstones*. She also played Tammy, Ron's ex-wife on *Parks and Rec*.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

Ron Swanson (*Parks and Recreation*): She's near.

Tammy: Hey, Ron.

Ron: Tammy.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Jesse Thorn: Third, you may know Nick Offerman is also an accomplished dramatic actor. Maybe you saw him recently in Alex Garland's *Civil War*, where he played the President of the United States.

Fourth, you might know that as good as Nick Offerman is in every performance he's ever given, he's probably an even better woodworker. For nearly 25 years, he's run his own woodshop here in Los Angeles. He's written books on the topic too. 2016's *Good Clean Fun: Misadventures in Sawdust at Offerman Woodshop* is a guide for those curious to learn more about woodworking with lessons on how to make stools and coasters and kazooos. Nick followed that up with *Little Woodchucks: Offerman Woodshop's Guide to Tools and Tomfoolery*. The book contains, as the title suggests, woodworking activities that grownups can do with kids. Like, fun stuff! Wanna build a box kite? It's in the book! Build a little free library? Guess what? In the book. And what about Nick Offerman? He is in my studio! Let's go talk to him.

Transition: Chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: Nick Offerman, welcome back to *Bullseye*. It is so nice to see you.

Nick Offerman: Thank you. I love to be here.

Jesse Thorn: Your newest book about woodworking is a book of woodworking projects for adults who are working with children or for children who have the backup of adults. Do you have a favorite project in there?

Nick Offerman: You know the one that springs to mind is the kite. The second one that springs to mind is the slapstick. But the kite, it's a box kite.

Jesse Thorn: It opens with the slapstick. That's like—you can tell whose perspective this book is coming from.

(Nick giggles.)

But tell me about the kite.

Nick Offerman: Well, I mean, the thing about the kite is— You know, the sort of manifesto of the book is there are so many things you can choose to do—especially with your kids or your grownups or your siblings or your neighbors—that aren't curated by Elon.

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Like, that aren't—they're not a choice you can get on your phone. It's a box kite. It's like making a structure using cork and dowel and paper and glue. And it works incredibly well. Like, it's really hard—it's a really idiot-proof kite. And then you have to go outside and like be in the weather and enjoy the park and fly a kite. So, it just makes me feel really joyful, and it sort of sums up the manifesto of the book.

Jesse Thorn: When was the last time you flew a kite?

Nick Offerman: When we were engineering this last fall. It's the kind of thing where once you do it, once you get your kite up in the air, you realize, “Ah, this is something I can do to keep myself from all the distractions of the world, and also to keep myself—speaking personally of me—out of the pub.” Like, not only are these things productive and delightful, but they're also medicinal in that I can't shoot up while I'm flying a kite.

(They laugh.)

I've crunched the numbers.

Jesse Thorn: Did you do any research on kites before you designed this box kite?

Nick Offerman: No. I mean, in a word, no. This excellent woman who ran my shop for ten years, named Lee Buchanan, co-wrote the book with me. And she has two awesome little boys, Demetrius and Simeon. And so, they were our main Guinea pigs. So, she and I— It was really fun putting our knowledge together and our experience over the years to come up with what projects would work as good vehicles to teach different hand tool skills. Generally woodworkers go to things that I think are a little more stodgy, 'cause they're things that like a grandfather makes for grandkids.

Jesse Thorn: You're talking about little cars. Or train... engines.

Nick Offerman: That's right. Little cars. Little monochromatic cars. Which have their place, and they are inspiring. And we make a vehicle. We make a log truck that specializes in hauling sausages. The kite just came out of the net that we cast of like, “What are all the things we can make that doesn't take us outside the realm of the woodshop?” Which means no knitting, no ceramics. You know. The whole point of the book is to like get your screens, put 'em in the other room. And like, first of all, take your kid or your kids and just look 'em in their face.

(Jesse “uh-oh”s playfully.)

Just look at their face! Even when we're together, we're taught to isolate ourselves and be like, “Are you okay?” Yeah. “Great. Alright. I'm gonna be doing my wordle or whatever.”

Jesse Thorn: Nick, just you bringing this up made me uncomfortable looking you in the eyes.

Nick Offerman: I get it. I always remember my dad, growing up, would shake my hand. Part of it was always, you know, teaching me to shake hands. But then he'd hold on to my hand, and he'd feel—I could feel him checking my arm strength and then nodding. And you know, the first several years, the nods were, “Yep, you're not there yet.” And then eventually, in the mid-teens, the nods grew a little more stoic and like, “Oh. Here we go. *(Laughs.)* You can make a living with tools, or you can carry heavy objects.”

Jesse Thorn: Not “you can defeat me in combat”?

Nick Offerman: No. That—

Jesse Thorn: Because that's some people's relationship with their dads. Not to put too fine a point on it.

Nick Offerman: For sure. But this book may be a way to avoid that kind of dynamic.

Jesse Thorn: You are not a person with children, unless there's news that I don't know about.

Nick Offerman: No kids.

Jesse Thorn: Do you think that there is a special relationship in the world with children for the childless person?

Nick Offerman: These things, I feel like they're spoken about too generally. I feel like at the moment there is a loud, conservative voice that says, like, “If you're not contributing children to your voting bloc, you should be exterminated or something.”

Jesse Thorn: “Voting bloc” is a generous way of putting it, but yeah.

Nick Offerman: *(Laughs.)* But I feel like it's a very subjective thing. I mean. I have three siblings. They all have daughters. So, I have a passel of nieces. And you know, the way my role at the dice went, I met Megan later, and we chose to be the kids in our household. And it's been really fun and gratifying, and we have kids in our lives that we can contribute to when we feel bereft in any way. But I feel like, generally, I have had a wonderful experience with the parents in my life. And so, even though I don't have direct kids to pass this onto, having a knowledge of your family—

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—and like maintaining a center of affection and morality and a household is something that I want to engender and practice myself.

Jesse Thorn: For a guy who is deeply invested in adulthood, you are also a guy who is deeply invested in childlike behaviors. (*Chuckles.*)

Nick Offerman: For sure. I mean, but that's always been my bag. Like, I think that's how I ended up an entertainer is— I was a good student in school. I was a little bit of a class clown. But at the same time, everybody, do we have to take it so seriously? And I learned that from my farm uncles and my mom. They all have this attitude of like, “We bust our butts to keep our farm afloat, but like it's a lot more fun. Even though we're sweating our keisters off in the shoveling grain in the silo, let's have some fun, because this is really hard work and depressing.”

And so, I've always just maintained I absolutely want to work as hard as anybody here and do great work, but let's also have a laugh and not like— 'Cause otherwise, you end up yelling at each other, and there's no need for that.

Jesse Thorn: So much more with Nick Offerman still to come. Stay tuned. It's *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

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Transition: Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Nick Offerman. He, of course, co-starred alongside Amy Poehler on *Parks and Recreation*. He's been seen and heard on shows like *Fargo* and *The Great North*, just to name a couple. He's also a veteran woodworker who owns and runs a shop here in Los Angeles, California.

Offerman and his colleagues recently published a brand-new woodworking book called *Little Woodchucks: Offerman Woodshop's Guide to Tools and Tomfoolery*. It's a book filled with fun woodworking projects for kids and grownups. It's great. Let's get back into our conversation.

Now, you weren't a UCB guy, Upright Citizen Brigade guy. You weren't a Second City guy. You weren't a standup comic. When you moved to Los Angeles to be an actor, did you think you were moving to Los Angeles to be a comic actor? Or did you think you were moving to Los Angeles to—you know, one of the first jobs you got in LA was on *ER*. Did you think you were gonna just be on *ER* or equivalent?

Nick Offerman: That's a great question. And the context is important, because I moved here right at the top of 1997. At the time, this was long before the internet took over the world. There were kind of two worlds of performance going on. One was centered around Second City and Improv Olympic. It was the pipeline of comedy that, famously, all these people then rode to *Saturday Night Live*. I didn't even know that was a choice. If I had known that, I most certainly would've looked into it pretty hard. 'Cause I was a pretty big fan of *SNL*, and I really loved making people laugh. But I didn't do characters or voices, per se, or sketches. I worked at the legit theaters, Steppenwolf, Goodman.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I was gonna say, you were— Well, yeah. You were at the big Chicago—like, Chicago, legendary theater town—and you were at the Serious Theaters with capital S, capital T, town.

Nick Offerman: When I met Amy Poehler there in the early '90s, and I said, “So, lemme get this straight. You make (*censor beep*) up in a bar? I perform works of literature in buildings that were designed by an architect.” (*Laughs.*) Like, there's this horrible, defensive snobbery. So, when I moved to LA, I was pretty ignorant. I didn't really know anybody. And I also didn't know that it wasn't a great theatre town. I just assumed I was continuing my ascension. (*Laughs.*)

Jesse Thorn: In the American theatre?

(*Nick confirms.*)

You thought you were gonna do *Follies* at the Pasadena Playhouse?

Nick Offerman: Or something, yeah. So, there was a wonderful casting director named John—I'm blanking on his last name right now. Sorry, John—who cast *ER*, and I think then he ended up casting the *West Wing*. He cast the John Wells shows. And he loved cashing in on Chicago theatre actors, because we had a great work ethic, and we were dependable for dramatic work. So, I ended up on *ER*. And so, you do a couple of those. I did *Deadwood* and the *West Wing*.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

Speaker: CJ, we'd like to tell you the story of Pluie.

CJ: Who's Pluie?

[00:15:00]

Speaker: I'm glad you asked.

CJ: That's Pluie?

Speaker: Yes.

CJ: Pluie's a wolf?

Speaker: Yeah, she is.

CJ: And you're gonna tell me her story?

Speaker: Jerry?

Jerry: For four years, scientists have tracked Pluie as she made her way from Banff National Park in Alberta, up and down the Rockies. In that time, she's made three round trips between Canada and Wyoming, covering 40,000 square miles.

Transition: A whooshing noise.

Nick Offerman: I reached a point then where I had to say to Amy, a few years later, “How do I—? Like, I can't even get an audition. Like, Will Ferrell just did a basketball movie with 71 men, and I didn't even get an audition for it.”

And they're like, “Oh, we didn't know you do comedy,” the world said.

And so, Amy had me come do a couple shows at the UCB theater. And then, overnight, the world was like, “Oh, Offerman's—we'll put him on *Parks and Rec*.” So, I ended up—

Jesse Thorn: And you're like 33 years old or something.

Nick Offerman: I was 38 when I got *Parks and Rec*.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

Ron: This is a mistake. Why would you call it that on your menu?

Waiter: I don't know how to tell you, man.

Ron: Just give me all the bacon and eggs you have. Wait! Wait. (*Very seriously.*) I worry what you just heard was “give me a lot of bacon and eggs.” What I said was “give me all the bacon and eggs you have.” Do you understand?

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Nick Offerman: And then the funny thing is then I had to convince people that I could do dramatic work. (*Laughs.*) The same people were like— It's as though you do a tennis movie,

and they're like, "Well, we're not gonna read you for basketball. You're—aren't you a tennis guy?"

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. You're a tennis actor.

Nick Offerman: Yeah. And then *Parks and Rec*, even to this day, we constantly have people approaching us saying like, "It's one of our comfort shows, and it got us through the pandemic," and so forth. I mean, that's a dream. But there's a caveat where it's like, alright, you can win the lottery and end up on *Seinfeld*, but you may then not get a lot more jobs. Because you're George Costanza or— It's a wonderful problem, I think, to be saddled with. So, I'm very grateful, since *Parks and Rec*, that the world allows me to continue to work in other genres and mediums.

Jesse Thorn: So, years ago, your wife—the comedy genius, Megan Mullally—was on our program, and she told a story about the two of you walking down the beach and being essentially discovered by Gary Shandling.

(Nick confirms.)

Tell me what happened from your perspective.

Nick Offerman: The Gary Shandling thing was crazy. RIP Gary. Because you know, in terms of like, "I guess I'm gonna move to LA and try to like get work as an actor," there were things in my life that were saying, "Bad idea, guy." But then there were little moments, for example, where I'd get invited to do a reading, or I would do some little job and just get a compliment from the right person, where I was like, "Well, Bill Macy said he thought I made funny faces," or whatever. But this is so standalone. This is the unicorn of these experiences.

Megan and I were out in Malibu on a date. It was sunset, walking along the ocean, ankle-deep in the surf. And somebody's approaching. It's lovely. We're holding hands. And somebody's approaching, and it's Shandling—who I hadn't met. Megan had maybe met a couple times at like award shows. And Gary was like, "Hi, Megan!" You know, like they did the thing that famous people do where it's like, "Hi, we're not friends, but like, I love you." And he kinda—I caught his eye. He looked at me a couple times. And he was like, "So, what do you do?"

And I was like, "I'm an aspiring actor." And he just said— He looked at me in the eye and said, "Stick around. You've got something. You're gonna do something."

(Chuckling.) And I mean, I almost started crying just recounting it. Like, that was so insane that he did that. It was so important and generous. I mean, that bought me like four years of my landlord *(laughs)* screaming at me. And I was like, "Hey, man. Shandling said, 'Stick around.' So. Tell it to him."

Jesse Thorn: That's unbelievable.

Nick Offerman: It was incredible. I mean, 'cause like I said, Meg— You know, Mr. Mullally. Like, my wife is a walking Mel Brooks movie, and I'm like, "Eh, my thing is

different and quieter.” Living with Megan, who—in a creative, artistic way, she has aspired to sophistication her whole life.

[00:20:00]

Musically, the things she reads. She just loves—just the outfit she creates every single day. She's trying to ascend. And so, the fact that—(*giggles*) especially when we met, I was this sweaty carpenter who had just finished putting the plywood on the walls at the theater, and then we sat down and did a table read, and somehow that she chose me. That was also just a similar really big deal where I was like, “Well, she thinks I'm funny. Or good or something. So, I'll keep doing the dishes.”

Jesse Thorn: It's interesting to me the corollary career that you've had in carpentry and woodworking. Because it, for many years, was central to your financial life before you were one of the stars of a long-running hit sitcom. And then in the years since you became one of the stars of a long-running hit sitcom, it has been central to your emotional life—like, your creative life. Like, the two things— You know, you were building decks or whatever for many years in order to make sure that you had enough money to pay the rent while you went to auditions for *ER*. And then eventually, you were working all day on *Parks and Recreation*, and you knew that you had, back in Atwater Village, a warehouse full of wood that could be your—you know, (*chuckles*) your rock.

Mixed metaphor. Apologies.

Nick Offerman: It's uncanny. It's something I think about a lot. When parents say to me, “How do I get my kid where you are? Can I send my kid to your agent?” You know.

And I'd say, “Well, the first funny answer is study woodworking if you want to have a successful acting career.”

Jesse Thorn: I mean, it worked for Harrison Ford.

Nick Offerman: It is me— There's the big three. Harrison and Jesus and myself.

(*Jesse agrees with a laugh.*)

We're showbiz carpenters. But—

Jesse Thorn: Uh-huh. Known for razzle-dazzle.

Nick Offerman: (*Laughs.*) I do say to them, “Pick a theater that you like, and show up, and make yourself a nuisance. Just keep showing up.” You'll get to know the front of house manager. You'll get to— Like, go around back, see who's—see the dumpster situation. Who's sweeping what, where? And eventually, there's gonna be an opportunity where you can help somebody do something. Carry some scenery in, sweep a floor, or something. Let them know like, “I'd love to help out if I can.”

“Here, hand out these programs,” whatever. You will be put to work, like you'll be valued.

And I was brought up with this work ethic. I went to a very nice theatre school at the University of Illinois. And they summarily said, immediately, “You're not very good. So, you're not gonna be cast.” But as part of the program, everybody had to take a lighting class, a costume class, a scenery class.

So, almost right away in the scenery class, I was like, “Oh yeah, like this.” And I hammered a flat together with nails. And there was such a record scratch, and all these kids from the suburbs were like, “How—?”

Jesse Thorn: “Nails?!”

Nick Offerman: “What? How did you do that?”

And the guy running the shop, Ken Egan was like, “Hey, great. I'll pay you wages. Like, you're actually—” I had worked as a framing carpenter, so I simply had those tool skills. And that— As you pointed out, like I was able to pay my rent well into my 20s making scenery in Chicago while I worked on plays. And then even when I got to LA it turned into decks and cabins and then fine furniture.

Jesse Thorn: There is something that I was thinking about as I was listening to you talk to my public radio colleague, the brilliant Krista Tippet. I was thinking about your commitment to the rural/agrarian values of your youth—whether it is field work or carpentry or the kind of like librarian and teacher jobs that are endemic in your family as well, and the stagecraft and acting that you've done since. I had a job as an apprentice stage electrician when I was in high school. And what I loved about it was very similar to what I loved about acting in a show. Which was it is so satisfying to show up on time, work really hard with a bunch of people who are also dedicated to the same thing—who also showed up on time; because if anybody doesn't show up on time, ppft! They're out on the street. Because everybody has to get those flats up by a certain amount of time. Every gel has to be set.

Nick Offerman: The curtain's going up at eight o'clock.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. And it's really hard work.

[00:25:00]

Like, I would never diminish the work of an actor or a craftsperson in entertainment, because it is genuinely very hard work. But it's like really satisfying and rewarding.

Nick Offerman: It is. I mean, it— You know, it sounds a little facile, but it's really, incredibly gratifying to put on a show. You need a collaboration. Even a one-person show is actually a 17-person show; there's just one of you on stage. But to see that happen and to see the effect your collaboration has on an audience? Aristotle wrote about it. It's like this is medicine. We get up and make dumb shows for each other, and it actually heals us. It's a way to improve our society.

And just to finish that last thread, the crazy ending of the conflation of my tool life (*giggles*) and my acting life is when I got cast as Ron, and they ended up making Ron a woodworker because of my—I was always at the shop. We ended up shooting a few episodes of *Parks and Rec* at my woodshop! Like, Ron's shop is my shop, and Ron's canoes are my canoes that I built. And so, by now my woodshop—that is still OffermanWoodshop.com; we are making beautiful custom pieces here in Los Angeles. That's just a huge part of my life. At one point I was feeling guilty, because I'm traveling the world performing, entertaining people as a humorist and encouraging them to garden, among other things. Get to know your food, you know? Know some farmers in your area. While I'm not doing that, I'm traveling the world entertaining you.

And it always weighed on me. My parents are amazing gardeners, and I have not had a garden, 'cause I'm never at home much. But then I realized that my woodshop is my garden, and these employees that I have—and that you can garden in many ways, not just growing rutabagas.

Jesse Thorn: I imagine at some point you look down while you're on stage, and you're like, “Oh, right, I made this ukulele.”

Nick Offerman: (*Laughs.*) Yes, I do. And the next big thing on my list at the shop is to make a guitar, because I think I can do a whole evening about this guitar that I made. And I'll play some songs, and I'll speak slowly, and people will be bemused and hopefully not get angry.

Jesse Thorn: We'll wrap up with Nick Offerman in just a minute. On the other side of the break: Ugh, I'm feeling tense. It's been a busy week. Kevin, do you know any masseuses? (*Beat.*) What's that?! You're saying my guest, Nick Offerman, studied deep tissue massage?! And he's willing to give me a demonstration?! Book it! We're all about self-care on *Bullseye*, for MaximumFun.org and NPR.

(ADVERTISEMENT)

Promo:

Music: Jaunty, playful music.

Amber Nash: Hi, I'm Amber Nash, the voice of Pam Poovey on the groundbreaking FX animated comedy *Archer*. Remember *Archer*? I sure don't. That's why I started *RePhrasing: An Archer ReWatch Podcast* on MaximumFun.org. Join me and a bevy of special guests as we discuss every episode of *Archer* starting from the very beginning. *Archer* executive producer, Casey Willis, and editor Christian Danley will provide insight and fun and help me remember everything I've forgotten about *Archer*—which is a lot.

So, join me on *RePhrasing: An Archer ReWatch Podcast* on MaximumFun.org. 'Cause I can't wait to watch *Archer* again for the very first time.

(*Music ends.*)

Transition: Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

Jesse Thorn: I am Jesse Thorn. You're listening to *Bullseye*. I'm talking with Nick Offerman. The actor and woodworker has a new book out. It's called *Little Woodchucks: Offerman Woodshop's Guide to Tools and Tomfoolery*.

[00:30:00]

What other things do you like to do with your hands besides woodwork?

Nick Offerman: Well, I think everyone has a gift. Everyone can do something with their hands. And my sensei just passed away this year. His name's Shozo Sato. And I have three scrolls that he painted me in Japanese calligraphy hanging in my shop. And one of them says, "The way of the arts is the way of the Buddha." And what that means—in my clumsy interpretation—is that the art in you, it's your responsibility to discover what it is. It might be child rearing, cooking, sewing, accounting, woodworking, performing, dancing. Whatever it is, figure out what it is, and the world will tell you. They're like, "Wait a second. Was that you whistling? Do that again!" That's your thing.

And whatever it is, the way of the art is the way of—that's the part of you that's touching God. And so, your service to other people—which is what life is all about—is to give of that gift however you end up doing so. The hand-eye coordination that we have, these opposable thumbs—the things we can do with them is a gift that is more and more atrophying as corporations get us to just sit there and look at screens in whatever way we do. But you can make lasagna; you can knit; you can embroider; you can make cowboy boots; you can massage. There are many forms of massage.

In my great theatre program, we took a semester of deep tissue massage. I'm announcing this to really every college program. Teach your kids a semester of deep tissue massage. Because whatever your students are doing, they're stressed out. But even to this day, decades later, I regularly massage my wife, legitimately. I mean, if she has sore body parts, I regularly give her massages. I love to cook. I love to tinker with my vehicles. Like, anything that makes me feel like I could hold my head up around my charismatic Illinois family. And I love playing music. Talk about "the way of the art is the way of the Buddha," the fact that like this clumsy donkey can play some chords on a guitar and make it sound like an Elvis Costello song is like, (*whispered*) "Ww-whaaat?!" So, you know to me, that sends me.

Jesse Thorn: I watched a *Craft in America* about a woman who makes cowboy boots named Lisa Sorell.

Nick Offerman: (*Gasps softly.*) In Guthrie, Oklahoma, I believe.

Jesse Thorn: Man, these cowboy boots were out of controool!

Nick Offerman: Oh my god. Because of the crazy place that our civilization has come to, the idea that I make furniture out of pieces of trees— This is something that families all used to know how to do. You would— And you had trees earmarked on your farm. “Okay, eventually our grandkids will probably make a kitchen table out of that oak.” And it was called coppicing. It's a way that you maintain your woodland so that it keeps growing in perpetuity, so that you can get firewood and building wood. But now I run a company where for me to make you a three-legged footstool will cost you the price of like a used car (*laughs*). Or a pair of these cowboy boots where it's like—

That's something that drives me crazy, that we make a beautiful version, but a quotidian product. You know? Something that is just a dining table that I want to be in your family for generations, I can't make it affordably for a working-class family. And that drives me crazy. But that's happened to our food, and it's happened to our household accessories. Everything is meant to go to the landfill, and that's how the billionaires stay in control. And so, this book announces itself as a radical manifesto of—it's anti-corporate. It's making your own life. It's not putting money in Elon's pocket, but instead keeping it in your own while you play cards on the table you made with your kids.

Jesse Thorn: When I was in college, this girl named Rebecca was sitting with me in the dining room. And she said to me, “I have a hard time hanging out with you and your friends Gene and Jordan.”

And I said, “Why is that?”

And she said, “Well, I can't tell if you're joking or not.”

(*Nick titters.*)

And I said, “Well, I mean, we’re both joking and not joking.”

[00:35:00]

Out of that came a sort of joke-not-joke cultural movement that we called The New Sincerity. Which was about rejecting the sort of ironic, defensive attachment that we saw in the generation before us—yours—and embracing Bootsy Collins. Things that are both for real and ridiculous.

Nick Offerman: I've just always considered you a peer, and so—

Jesse Thorn: No, I'm just bald.

Nick Offerman: It surprises me to learn that we're in different generations. But also, I feel like if I had sat at your lunch table, I would've known when you were kidding. Like, because I had the same problem. Like, those of us that were aware of irony and holding ourselves apart from the hallmark generation.

Jesse Thorn: I think that in some ways the way that you have pursued your career and your public persona is reflective of this set of imaginary ideals that I jokingly set up 25 years ago, in that you are deeply sincere in your convictions and completely unconcerned about being ridiculous. Like, you embrace ridiculousness.

Nick Offerman: Sure! I mean, it's complicated. You know, I'm a human being, and so I have things that I feel very strongly about, and so I'm often earnest. And then I feel myself being earnest, and I'm like, "But don't forget, I'm a—I'm a farting donkey." Like, I always open with my fallibility. I'm like, "Look, if anybody's gonna (*censor beep*) up here, it's probably me." That said, (*giggles*) I never dreamed—I mean, when I was 30, and I met Megan Mullally and became Mr. Mullally, and was like the husband to—I would go to see every taping of *Will and Grace*. And it was my PhD program, just getting to be there on the floor and watch them masterfully make that show. And I got to be on *ER*. I couldn't believe the pinnacle at which my life had peaked.

I was like, "This is far beyond my wildest dreams." And so, part of shouldering that is maintaining like a firm foothold in this earnestness, where I'm like, "If I continue to write and talk about these issues—" As human beings, we always have to keep saving ourselves. And I'm my first target. So, it's to keep me on the straight and narrow. I learned so much from my collaborators on *Parks and Rec* where we're like, "Oh, we're making, you know, a top show. In certain ways, we're the top TV comedy professionals at the moment. We're among them. And I can literally rip a huge fart right now. And not even—like, Amy will be upset. And she's not wrong. And nonetheless, I won't lose my job or even any points."

(*Jesse laughs.*)

And I'm all those things, you know what I mean? (*Laughs.*) And I know that they're not all great things, but my heart's in the right place, and I want everybody to have healthcare.

Jesse Thorn: Nick Offerman, you are a gifted deep tissue masseuse. I've been preparing for a tough interview all day, and I'm a little tense. You wouldn't have a massage in you for your local public radio host, would you?

Nick Offerman: Sure! Would you like me to climb onboard?

Jesse Thorn: Yes, please. And bring the headphones. Thank you.

Nick Offerman: (*Unclear.*) ... my headphones on.

Jesse Thorn: Very professional.

Nick Offerman: (*The audio quality of his recording drops slightly.*) The epicenter—it's all about pressure points. So, most people carry their stress up in this neighborhood. It's the neck-to-shoulder matrix. So, I want you to just kinda relax and focus on those and breathe in deeply through your nose. And then as you exhale, try and let all of that sensation out of your body while maintaining your posture. But you don't feel— You feel like you do a good job of not holding on to too much of your tension.

Jesse Thorn: That's very kind of you. I let it all out into migraine headaches once a day or so.

Nick Offerman: I mean, it's not lost on me what's painted on the door of your office, and that is Maximum Fun.

(Jesse affirms with a chuckle.)

And so, not unlike me, you've chosen to perform a very serious service; you talk on the radio and produce radio content for NPR. You put it right on your placard.

[00:40:00]

“We’re gonna have fun while we do this serious business of disseminating information.”

Jesse Thorn: It's—*(sighs happily)* it's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just tuning in, actor Nick Offerman is giving yours truly a deep tissue massage around my shoulders and neck. He even did that like choppy hands thing, which felt great!

(Jesse's voice undulating as he “oooh”s through the choppy hands thing.)

Ooh!

Nick Offerman: Just a taste.

Jesse Thorn: Wow! The Nick Offerman experience here in the studios of *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*!

Nick Offerman: Was it effective? I don't want you—

Jesse Thorn: It was genuinely effective. No, I was like, “Let's just stick with this instead of going back to doing a radio show.” But obviously, we had stuff to do.

Nick Offerman: Well, I don't need the affirmation. I just want your audience to understand that it's very—

Jesse Thorn: No, that was a for real, genuine experience. That was not “I’ll just sort of press around and see what happens.”

Well, Nick Offerman, it is always so great to have you on the show, and so nice to see you in general. Thank you for coming by.

Nick Offerman: My pleasure. Right back at you. Thank you for your work.

Jesse Thorn: Nick Offerman! His book, once again, is *Little Woodchucks: Offerman Woodshop's Guide to Tools and Tomfoolery*. You can pick it up at your local bookstore or on Nick Offerman's website, which we will link to on the *Bullseye* page at MaximumFun.org.

Transition: Upbeat, jazzy synth.

Jesse Thorn: That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye*, created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun—as well as at Maximum Fun HQ, overlooking beautiful MacArthur Park in Los Angeles, California. Hopefully you didn't hear, but they're hitting those hydraulic wrenches pretty hard at the tire yard that's next to my house.

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producers, Jesus Ambrosio and Richard Robey. Our production fellow at Maximum Fun is Hannah Moroz. Our video producer, Daniel Speer. We get booking help from Mara Davis. All our interstitial music comes from our friend Dan Wally, also known as DJW. You can find his music at DJWsounds.bandcamp.com. Our theme music was written and recorded by The Go! Team. It's called Huddle Formation. Thanks to The Go! Team. Thanks to their label, Memphis Industries.

You can follow *Bullseye* on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube where you'll find video from just about all our interviews, including the ones you heard this week. Do you want to see Nick Offerman give me a back rub!? Great news. It's on YouTube. *(Beat.)* You freaks.

I think that's about it. Just remember all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

Promo: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.

(Music fades out.)

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