PODCAST NOTES-MANAGEMENT OF JUDGE’S OFFICE/HEARING NOTES

* Welcome everyone to another session of The Good Judge-Ment Podcast
* We have asked you to contact us at goodjudgepod@gmail.com and tell us issues that you would like to hear us address on the podcast.
  + Please continue to let us know the content that you want to hear
* One of our colleagues indicated that he would like to hear us discuss how other judges manage their office and keep up with hearing notes
  + This episode will deal with exactly that!
  + Tain and I are alike and agree on many things.
    - But there are times when we differ a great deal
  + In this episode, we are going to discuss how we manage our respective offices, specifically how we keep up with our hearing notes
    - And you will see how we are both similar and quite different
* KEEPING NOTES IN GENERAL
  + When I conduct hearings, I take notes. In trials, I take notes. If I have a pretrial *Jackson v. Denno* hearing, I take notes and when that case goes to trial, I want to have those notes to review if an issue arises during the trial
    - There are times when looking over the orders you previously entered does not tell the whole story (or remind you of the facts sufficiently)
  + [TAIN] (Notes from jury trials)
  + So when you come back to your office from court, what happens with your notes?
* WADE-NOTES
  + I have become essentially paperless. Now before some of you roll your eyes and turn off this episode, I ask that you hear me out.
* For years, I had a yellow pad and took notes in ink.
  + I cannot type quickly enough while paying attention to the trial and being able to rule on objections
    - So typing notes was never an option for me
* So I ran off some of the relevant pleadings and made notes on my yellow pad just as I had as a lawyer
  + But we did not have enough filing cabinets to stuff all of those notes into manilla folders
    - And it was very difficult to find the notes I needed when the case came back before me
  + So I began having my assistant take my notes and scan them into electronic versions of my pen and ink notes so I could retrieve them for the next hearing
* But I saw my assistant literally spending hours at the copier, scanning notes so we could retrieve them in the future
  + Essentially, I was taking electronic documents like pleadings, financial affidavits, etc. and making them into paper that I could hold. Then, taking my paper and ink notes and making them into electronic documents that I could hold onto until the next hearing.
    - That seemed sort of wasteful
* So a few years ago, I spent some time comparing the various note-taking apps on the internet
* I got an iPad with an Apple pencil and set up a Dropbox account
  + (We do NOT get any endorsement money from anyone on The Good Judge-ment Podcast so understand you could do the same thing that I am about the describe with a Microsoft Surface, their version of the writing utensil and One Note—or countless other available devices and apps)
* I use an app called Notability (I just liked it best—again, there are all kinds of options)
  + I created a few forms for civil hearings, criminal hearings and domestic hearings and I literally write on them during the hearing
  + When I close the document, Notability automatically saves the document to Dropbox without anyone having to touch the documents.
* THE KEY-and most important thing I could tell you about this whole process-is that you have to create a system for naming your files and FOLLOW IT EVERY TIME.
  + Even if you are using manilla folders and yellow pads, you need to develop a system
* We use following:
  + - [Plaintiff’s Last Name, Plaintiff’s First Initial, v, Defendant’s Last Name, Defendant’s First Initial, Case No, Type of Note]
    - If you do that, they will alphabetize correctly. Otherwise, they are all over the place and you will play heck trying to find your most recent notes
* So when the case comes back before me:
  + My assistant goes to Dropbox and creates a new file for that day’s proceedings.
    - She then goes and finds the old files relating to that case (pretty easy since they are all alphabetized correctly)
    - On hearing day, I insert one of my pre-made hearing sheets as the first page of the document and start writing
      * So all notes relating to those parties are in a single file!
* TAIN - NOTES
* MISC ORGANIZATION ISSUES
* I can be forgetful. In the first hearing of the day, I need to prepare and order and by the 8th or 9th hearing, there is a VERY REAL chance I will forget what I need to do from that first hearing
  + I try to take the time to make “to do” notes on my hearing sheets before I begin the next hearing.
    - There are days that I am better at it than other days
  + But when I created the hearing sheets, I added a checklist at the end where I can literally check the boxes on what I need to do next
    - Set another hearing
    - Wait until the parties have filed financial affidavits
    - Rule on a motion
      * But the parties have 10 days to file a supplemental brief
  + All of that detail began running together and I found myself worried that I was forgetting something
* So I also got another app (I am really not that computer savvy but…)
  + Evernote works on all platforms (iOS, Windows, etc)
    - Again, there are no endorsement deals on The Good Judge-Ment Podcast so there are dozens of good choices
  + My assistant and the Staff Attorney I share with Judge Danny Craig all have access and can add reminders with “alarm clock” types of reminders
* TAIN—TO-DO LISTS?
* Calendars, MNT status conferences, etc. (other stuff)
* BACKING UP COMPUTER-BASED RECORDS
* In the modern world, there appears to be a bunch of hackers
* Ransomware, etc.
  + I seem a pretty small target compared to most
    - But if they got my stuff, I would be shot
* There are big ticket options to back up your data.
  + But in talking with Judge David Emerson, I realized there is also a pretty easy option that I can actually handle myself
* Every so often, I take an external hard drive, plug it into my computer and make a copy of everything on my computer.
* Seems very 1999 but it works and I can do it myself
  + The “IT guys” do not have to be involved
* Next time, I copy the whole thing again and erase the prior download
* And I hope I never need it!