

Skull Session

March 20, 2018

Edwin R. Murray-Creek: Hello! Welcome to a special edition of Skull Session!

I'm your host, Edwin R. Murray-Creek. Tonight we'll preview the coming Sheriff's Candidate's debate, hosted by ThePineTree, to be held Wednesday evening at 6:00 pm, March 21 at the San Andreas Town Hall.

Sharing his expert insights into the politics of law enforcement campaigns in a rural environment is Doctor Galen Adams. Not many know that Doctor Adams was the political advisor and chief campaign architect for the most popular Sheriff in America – Sheriff Mathew Dillon of Dodge City Kansas, circa 1874. Most of you know Doctor Adams as "Doc."

MC: Doctor Adams

Doctor Adams: Call me Doc.

MC: Okay, Doc, thank you for coming. We want to get your thoughts on the Sheriff's election in Calaveras County, and perhaps get you to venture some advice to the candidates as they prepare for the big debate Battle for the Badge.

Doc: Well, okay. That's why I'm here, I guess!

MC: So, don't tell me Sheriff Matt Dillon ever had to debate?

Doc: Why sure he did! You think Calaveras County is the only place that has politics? We had debates every dang election ... right here in the saloon!

MC: That probably might not be a good idea today. So, what would your advice be to the candidates?

Doc: Well, like I always told Matt, just go out there and be yourself. People can spot a phony a mile off.

MC: That's always good advice. But is there anything else? Is running for Sheriff any different than running for any other office?

Doc: You're darn tootin' it is! At least in most places. Oh, I know nowadays there are all kinds of Sheriffs – in some places you even have women running for Sheriff! And some of 'em even win!

MC: Could a woman ever be elected Sheriff in Calaveras County, do you think?

Doc: Well, I don't think it woulda' been possible in Dodge City. Here, it would have to be some kind of woman to get herself elected Sheriff, I would think.

MC: Times have changed, Doc ... women couldn't even vote in your day.

Doc: Sure, I know they have. Shoot, I've met a few women that could get elected Sheriff anywhere you say. See, people want one thing from their Sheriff – they want to have confidence in him. If that "him" turns out to be a "her," then they'll vote for her, not him, know what I mean?

- MC: But isn't that the same as with a County Supervisor, or any elected office?
- Doc: Okay, sure – only the kind of confidence I'm talking about is different. A Supervisor is supposed to pass a budget and give out awards, right? On the other hand, the Sheriff is who you're countin' on to keep you safe from bein' robbed, or beaten, or worse. See the difference?
- MC: I think I see what you're saying So how does all this relate to the specific candidates for Sheriff in Calaveras County this year?
- Doc: Well, it looks to me like they're all real fine fellers. Yessir.
- MC: The current Sheriff was appointed, he's never run for office before. One of his opponents, Patrick Garrahan, ran for Sheriff in the previous election but lost, and the other opponent, Gary Stevens, is not as well known as the other two.
- Doc: It's always better to be the Sheriff, but it can turn out to bite you too.
- MC: How so?
- Doc: Well, the current Sheriff got himself appointed, but them other two fellers didn't, did they? So, all (forgive me if I pronounce it wrong), *DiBasilio* has to do is stand up there, be the Sheriff, and give people confidence that he understands what his job is. He does that, and he'll be fine.
- MC: Hmmmm. But it sounds like you're also saying that if he doesn't ...
- Doc: That's how it can bite. You don't have to be perfect, but if folks think you're not up to the job, they'll look at somebody else.
- MC: Sheriff Dillon wasn't always the incumbent, was he?
- Doc: Nope, 'course not. There was his first campaign, but that office was, uh, made vacant by a Colt .45 so Matt didn't have to face an incumbent. He lost that first debate, too, but it didn't matter. And then of course he got himself recalled over that Miss Kitty business...
- MC: What?!?
- Doc: Never you mind, young fella. You just ask your fool questions.
- MC: So, what debate tips would you suggest to Garrahan and Stevens, the challengers?
- Doc: Well, it's hard. You have to be a 'Sheriff' without actually being *the* Sheriff, if you know what I mean? You either have that quality or you don't. Matt had it. Now, both those challengers, Garrahan and Stevens, are real smart lawmen – and they're both probably going to try and show just how smart they are by, you know, talking about various "issues" and things like that. But as long as an incumbent Sheriff holds his own, nobody will remember anything about any dang issues.
- MC: Speaking of issues, in Calaveras County there's the Marijuana issue – specifically the Commercial Marijuana issue, but feelings being what they are, it's hard to tell the difference sometimes.
- Doc: What are you talking about?

MC: Didn't Dodge City have marijuana?

Doc: What?

MC: It's something you smoke, like tobacco. It's hemp. It is both an analgesic and a relatively mild intoxicant. There's been a thriving black market for it until recent attempts to legalize it.

Doc: Sounds like nobody should smoke that stuff – just like opium, right? Filthy stuff. Ruins lives. Reflects moral weakness, I say. Damn, where is that bartender, anyway? Can I get you something?

MC: It's still a little early for me.

Doc: Suit yourself. Now, where were we?

MC: Marijuana. The issue is important in Calaveras politics, and it's important in the Sheriff's race. Just how important is hard to say.

Doc: Well, let me ask you: is there any money behind this marijuana deal?

MC: I would say so, yes.

Doc: Well then it gets a little more complicated, don't it?

MC: Stevens, one of the challengers, says he "just hates marijuana" and presumably favors the ban on Commercial Marijuana, and Garrahan said a while back that he was against a ban in favor of regulations, but his website is silent on the issue.

Doc: What does the Sheriff say?

MC: The Sheriff liked the added tax money commercial marijuana brought to the Sheriff's Department, and I think he's worried about what happens after he loses it. I think the last thing he said was that as long as he gets enough money to keep the citizens safe, he doesn't care what happens with marijuana. His website doesn't say anything about marijuana either.

Doc: Well, that all sounds like a wash, if you ask me. What else do they have to fight about?

MC: Well, let's see. Garrahan's website ...

Doc: Just hold on – I have to ask you – what in tarnation is a "website?"

MC: It's like a handbill or a billboard. Anyway, his website stresses "leadership" and "professionalism" so I guess those are indirect attacks on the Sheriff.

Doc: Anything to it?

MC: Well, Dibasilio was a Sergeant, not even an officer, when he went after the Sheriff job and the Supervisors appointed him. That affronted some folks who thought he was being pushy. But so far there's been nothing specific about the Sheriff from Garrahan, so until then I guess you could just call it 'presumption of guilt.'

Doc: What about that other feller, Stevens?

MC: Publicly anyway, Detective Gary L. Stevens has not yet either directly or indirectly criticized the Sheriff. Doc, you may not know this, but if nobody gets over half the votes in the first election, there's a runoff between the top two.

Doc: You don't say? Hmm. That makes things mighty interestin' wouldn't you say? Hmmmm. Are you sure you won't have a drink? No? Well, let me see ... it seems to me the challengers have to be lookin' to make the runoff election against the Sheriff, who ain't likely to come in last. So, each of the other fellers needs to focus on beating the other, but not so bad as to let the Sheriff get over 50%. See what I mean?

MC: Yes, I think so. Doc, do you have any final thoughts? Any final words of wisdom for the candidates?

Doc: Well, I've been at this a long time. I'd say to each candidate, if you walk out of that debate thinking that your campaign is won, or lost, you're probably wrong. Nobody cares whether their Sheriff is a sharp talker or not. This debate is maybe a little important 'cause it comes early and who knows, it might be the only debate for a while. But it's hard work, not a lot of talk, that wins election campaigns. You got to get out and be with folks every day, every night. That way, if you really are a Sheriff, people will figure it out. And they'll vote.

MC: And on that note, we'll conclude this special edition of Skull Session! Our regular panelists will be back next time, so for now, good bye and good luck.