

Jeff Around Town – July 17th, 2025

Jeff: It's Jeff around town and my very special guest is my dear friend Anne Marie Kenny who is an incredible author, singer, teacher, entrepreneur, and so many other things. Anne-Marie, thanks for chatting with me.

Anne Marie: Well, it's so great to be here and here at this lovely locale of the Next Chapter bookstore.

Jeff: Oh, it's lovely and they have your book, your new book, A Song for Bohemia.

Anne Marie: Isn't that nice? Yeah. It's a memoir. I call it A Song for Bohemia because there actually really is a song that I wrote for the Bohemian people, my land of my ancestors, and I wrote it, this song anyway, not the book, the song right at the Velvet Revolution in 1989 when all of those Eastern European countries were being freed from 40-some years of totalitarianism and I've always wanted to tell that story, Jeff, and like if I'm sitting there with somebody like you or any other friend and they'd say, what'd you do in the Czech Republic? I can't tell it in five-minute segments. I knew someday I'd have to write about it.

Jeff: It's a tapestry. I recently finished it and it truly is a wonderful read. You get into your time in Paris and certainly in Prague and a lot of Omaha references and it's truly all tied together. When you went to Prague, you were there, as you said, right after the Velvet Revolution and you were an entrepreneur. In our modern age, we constantly hear terms like startups and hustle and the grind. I don't know if all those terms existed then but that's essentially what you were doing but there was no internet. There was nothing to help you do that.

Anne Marie: Correct.

Jeff: You just figured it out and it takes a lot of courage.

Anne Marie: You know, sometimes things just happen to you also if we are listening and aware but as far as being an entrepreneur, I think I always have been. I was a singer for most of my life before 1989 and had moved to France and talk about entrepreneur, I mean to get gigs. Let's say I'd even have an agent and I did from time to time but still you're very entrepreneurial when you are getting gigs and you're a singer and you are presenting yourself to the world. So then when I went to Prague as a singer, invited by President Václav Havel because I wrote this song and had sent him just the poetry of it. When I went there, I knew there was something about the place, about the people, about the vibe, about the spirit. Everyone was starting over.

Jeff: Yeah.

Anne Marie: So as far as, you know, recreating oneself, I was just one of many who turned from a singer to an entrepreneur, and I started working in business there.

Jeff: What do you say to someone right now who wants to start a business? What do you, and they say, well, I don't know, I don't have the money, I don't know how I'm going to do it, I'm kind of afraid.

Anne Marie: In the book, my editor said, Anne Marie, you cannot write a book just, you can't land in Prague. Readers are going to want to know who you are, where you were brought up, where you got your influence. Well, I was brought up right here in Omaha, Nebraska and my mom was a widow at age 34 with five kids. Her husband, my dad, died suddenly in a boating accident and that's why I, you know, I hear people today complain about, oh, I never have a day off with the kids and everything. Well, my mom never had a day off with the kids, you know, she had five of us and to watch her, just watching how she managed, went, got a secretarial job and pinched the pennies and taught us to stand up for ourselves. One of her sayings was never take a back seat to anyone but she didn't suggest we were better than anybody, but we definitely needed to look out for ourselves.

Jeff: Wow.

Anne Marie: We also started working very early on because we had to help with, with finances. So, I started babysitting at age 11 and what got me to realize I had to do what my heart, you know, was calling me to do was I read a book by Joseph Campbell and I'm not saying everything traces back to this but it was, it did revolutionize my thinking and Joseph Campbell's a mythologist and he had a saying, follow your bliss and if you follow your bliss, so here's what I would say to anyone and I say it to myself now, follow your bliss and he says doors will open.

Jeff: Yeah.

Anne Marie: Because we are doing what we love and that attracts.

Jeff: Anne Marie, it's just been a delight chatting with you. You're such an inspiration. Thank you very, very much for being on Jeff Around Town.

Anne Marie: Thank you so much.

Jeff: Thanks very much.

Anne Marie: This was a lot of fun.

Jeff: Thanks.