

Jeff Around Town – August 26th, 2025

Jeff: Joining me on Jeff Around Town is Tom Becka, broadcasting extraordinaire, known for work on TV.

Tom: You and I have a different definition of extraordinaire.

Jeff: Radio, you're an author, you're currently the columnist for The Daily Record, you're a real estate agent, and you are also someone who has had to reinvent himself multiple times. We're sitting on a bench in Omaha's Dundee neighborhood, we'll get to that, why we're here, in a second. Mainly, I wanted to talk to you, Tom, because this month, August, is the 53rd anniversary of KVNO, where you got your start.

Tom: I remember that, like it was yesterday, walked into that studio, it was the old Storrs Mansion, which is gone now, it's where the Alumni Center is, it was located there, but I remember walking up into the third floor of that building, where the studios were, and the minute I walked into the studio, I just felt like I was home. It was amazing, it was just such a feeling like, yeah, this is what I was meant to do, and from then on, it was just, spent most of my time at UNO, to the demise of some of my other grades, up there at the radio station.

Jeff: But you loved it.

Tom: Incredibly loved it, yeah, still do.

Jeff: Radio was in your DNA, even maybe before you got there, you just loved it.

Tom: Okay, to be honest with you, I always wanted to do something like that, but with this voice, I didn't think I could. But there was a student station there, WSPO at the time, and where any student could go and be a disc jockey, and so I went and tried out for that. So, I was a student disc jockey, and you know, with this voice, back in those days, everybody had the announcer voice, like Otis Twelve, right?

Jeff: Right, exactly.

Tom: And I didn't, but I just fell in love with it, and hung out of the station, and wound up, you know, getting some full-time work as a DJ, and the rest is history.

Jeff: You know, Valerie Geller, whom we both know, who coaches radio talent across the world, she has said that that idea of the broadcasting voice, it's changed over the years.

Tom: Yeah.

Jeff: It's more about being authentic and telling stories, but did you feel, though, you had to overcome that with your voice, though?

Tom: Well, remember, this was back in the day of Top 40 Radio. I was doing Top 40 Radio at the time, you know, with a disc jockey, sort of talk like this, you know, and it was all very high-energy stuff.

Jeff: Yeah.

Tom: So, I felt that way at the time, but as it progressed, and I was listening to talk radio when I was seeing that develop, I realized that, yeah, like you said, be authentic, be yourself, tell stories.

Jeff: And when you were on KVNO in the early days, were you introducing classical music, or were you helping, you were assisting other on-air hosts?

Tom: No, they had this, they had a show for the students at night, called The Last Radio Show, and I was on the air from like 10:30 at night until 2 in the morning on Tuesdays. That was my shift, right? The rest of the time, I was just basically a board op, because they didn't want to have, you know, the students announce, and quite honestly, I couldn't do what you do. The pronunciation of some of those names and stuff, it's very, it's difficult, man.

Jeff: 6 o'clock in the morning, okay. So I had asked you, you know, if there was a place special to you on the UNO campus, of course we couldn't go to the original station, or if someplace in Dundee that maybe you hung out as a student, or that's important to you now, so you chose, you chose to come here.

Tom: Yeah, to the corner of 50th and Underwood. I've just spent so much of my life in this neighborhood.

Jeff: Yeah.

Tom: Both, when we first moved to Omaha, when it was in '72, my folks lived just maybe about 10 blocks west of here, and my, you know, my apartments, my apartment building was the one right behind the old Dundee Bell that they tore down for parking. That was my first apartment.

Jeff: Wow.

Tom: You know, so I mean, I've lived in this area, and I live in this area now, so this part of the town is very special to me.

Jeff: And we are on which particular bench?

Tom: We are sitting on the bench where Warren Buffett and Paul McCartney had ice cream. Now, that's an interesting story. I was over at the Cork and Bottle having a cocktail, I think it was a Sunday, you know, afternoon, evening, early evening, and one of the neighbors comes up and says, I don't know if you guys are interested in this, but Warren Buffett and Paul McCartney are having ice cream.

Jeff: I don't know if you're interested, but Sir Paul is around the corner.

Tom: So I was around, you know, and I have my camera with me, so I was just taking pictures left and right, you know, and that, and I'm the one that tweeted it out and everything, so I was like the first, I just happened to be in the right place at the right time, so, and Paul McCartney said hello to me, so you know, we're tight, you know, me and Paul are tight.

Jeff: Tom Becka, such a pleasure to hang out with you on this gorgeous Sunday morning in Omaha's Dundee neighborhood.

Tom: And congratulations to KVNO for being around for what, 53 years now?

Jeff: 53 years.

Tom: 53 years. You know, it had been like just, it had only been on there a few years when I first walked up there. I thought I'd been on it forever, but now I find out that it was still pretty much a brand new station back then.

Jeff: Tom, thanks so much for being on Jeff Around Town.

Tom: Thank you, sir.