

Jeff Around Town – September 9th, 2025

Jeff: Joining me, Jeff, around town is Matt Barnett, broadcaster based in Indianapolis, also a cartoonist in Omaha. As we speak, Matt, welcome.

Matt: Thank you, good to be here.

Jeff: You have spent the majority of your career in broadcasting, but you now find yourself not only drawing cartoons, but writing cartoons, including for Dennis the Menace.

Matt: Isn't that something? I mean, you know, we grew up reading Dennis the Menace, and here I am writing for Dennis the Menace.

Jeff: Yeah, so that's a little bit, in a weird way, kind of opposite of what I've done. I've spent a majority of my career as a cartoonist, and now I find myself in broadcasting. You're in Omaha because you did this cross-country trip to see the Schultz Museum.

Matt: Yeah, we drove from Indianapolis, took three days, four days to get out there, but drove from Indy to Santa Rosa, California, and the entire genesis of the trip was, I just needed to see the Schultz Museum. I had to go and see it. You've got cartoonists, legendary cartoonists, and then Schultz is, you know, the giant.

Jeff: The giant, yeah. I mean, it's amazing, you know, and it's amazing how after all of these years, his stuff is still running in newspapers. That's sort of like if I Love Lucy was still in primetime on TV.

Matt: Oh, absolutely. Not only is he still running, Peanuts is still running in newspapers, but they continue to produce TV shows and movies. You know, the Peanuts movie came out in 2015 to a huge success, so he's still very much relevant in today.

Jeff: Incredible. So, again, you have spent a number of years in broadcasting, so now you're tapping into this cartooning side of you, and often we talk about on Jeff Around Town how creativity keeps one young. There's something about that childlike spirit about drawing cartoons that I think keeps us young, and you have a very youthful spirit about you, Matt.

Matt: I appreciate that. I'm very enthusiastic about this. I drew when I was a kid. I think all children draw. I mean, it's just what they start doing in life as, you know, little kids. You start drawing on walls. You start drawing on furniture.

Jeff: Until somebody says, well, you can't make a living doing that, or you shouldn't do that.

Matt: Right, just like radio. You know, you shouldn't do that if you want to make a living. Yeah, I mean, in the fifth grade, I met one of my best friends, and we got kind of hooked on the Flintstones, and so we kept challenging each other to see, you know, who could draw the better Fred. I started doing that. He unfortunately passed on, but about the time he passed on is when I got into radio, and so I kind of put that drawing part aside, and it was dormant for, you know, up until 2023. I don't know what it was. I was at my wife's parents' house on Thanksgiving, and it was, I'm always up strangely early.

Jeff: Same.

Matt: You know, and I wish I had this get up early gene earlier in my career, because I would, you know, oversleep tremendously if I was doing the morning show. But anyway, I was up early and sitting on their couch, and I don't know what, I don't remember. I wish I could document it, but something hit me. I had my iPad, and I'm like, I wonder if I can draw Charlie Brown. And I started, and then it just, it unlocked this gene, and all of a sudden it just came flooding back in, and I became mildly obsessed, and it still hasn't left.

Jeff: So Matt, what do you say to someone who, you know, says, well, I always wanted to do this or that, and well, it's too late, or I don't have time. What do you say to that?

Matt: Well, I don't, I don't ever think it's too late. It's too late when, when the doctor pronounces, that's when it's too late.

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: But you still, you know, if, if that's a passion, you've still got to go for it. You know, you've, if, if it's inside of you, then you have to tap into it, and especially if you know that you, this is what you want to do, or even if it's just a side hobby, just do it.

Jeff: It brings joy to you and to others.

Matt: Yeah, I mean, you're a cartoonist extraordinaire. I mean, my goodness. I mean, I don't even know how I'm sitting here, because I've been reading your stuff. You're like a legend, and your stuff is so good, I can't believe it.

Jeff: Well, Matt, and now you're, you are writing gags for Dennis the Menace, which is incredible to see your stuff in print now, ideas that you're coming up with, and they're buying these, yeah, these ideas. Yeah, it's great.

Matt: Yeah, I, short story is, I ran out, I've never been to a comics convention. I'm not a, I'm not like a superhero kind of person. I don't, I don't follow that at all. I'm into the classics. Hagar, Beetle Bailey, you know, Peanuts. So, I, we went out to this, it's called Heroes Con in Charlotte, North Carolina, and I met the guy who draws Dennis, and we hit, we hit it off right away. He's 83 now.

Jeff: Wow.

Matt: And he's still drawing Dennis. Speaking of, it's your passion.

Jeff: See! Keeps you young.

Matt: Keep it going, yeah.

Jeff: Oh man.

Matt: And so, so I met him, and I came up with an idea, and I just bounced it off of him casually. He's like, hey, write that up and send it to me. I did. He ran it by the guys at Dennis the Menace, and they're like, let's use it, and we're off and rolling.

Jeff: I love it. Matt Barnett, such a pleasure chatting. Hope we can chat again soon in the, in the future.

Matt: Sure. Thank you. Thanks for having me.