

Jeff Around Town – November 11th, 2025

Jeff: It's Jeff around town and my very special guest. I'm just so delighted he's here, Pat Hazell. I could go on and on about who you are, Pat, but just to keep it brief comedian, magician, playwright, host of a wonderful podcast about creativity. You're one of the original writers for Seinfeld. You've been on the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson, and I could go on and on as I said thanks for being here, Pat.

Pat: My pleasure. Boy, that sounds like a lot of different people the way you say that.

Jeff: Well, and you truly define how I think of as a modern Renaissance man. You're also an artist because I don't know if you remember this, but we met here at UNO in an art class back in the day. So, you graduated from Burke in...

Pat: 79.

Jeff: I graduated from Omaha South.

Pat: Okay, so I will tell you this, I love UNO, but I went here for 90 days same as Cash. You know, like I maybe was here for 18 months before I got a chance to go to open for Rodney Dangerfield and you know, a contest with Ziegfried and Roy for magic and I thought I got to see the world.

Jeff: I do recall that drawing class and I remember I knew of you, you were already doing magic I think at that time.

Pat: I'm sure I was, yes.

Jeff: Yeah, and I knew, I thought there's that, there's that magician and he's, you were, your drawings were actually really good and as from what I recall.

Pat: Let me tell you what, I'm a little cheat artist in that I like to draw, and I can communicate through drawing, but in high school... and I just love art. So, I know we were doing the play and I couldn't, nobody was painting the scenery, so I went down to paint this giant oleo curtain for the play and I would skip art class to do it thinking that I'd get some credit and that teacher said, no man, no way, you got these four things due.

Jeff: Yeah.

Pat: The night before, I remember drawing a picture, a half of a profile of a woman and that I couldn't finish. It was really nice. The other half, I drew the pencil laying on the pad and it was called artist on break, right? Like it was like an incomplete drawing and like the guy read through me, you know, he gave me a B for effort.

Jeff: Larry Bradshaw, I think was his name.

Pat: Oh my gosh, you're right, that was the teacher.

Jeff: Yeah, yeah. Something else I wanted to mention Pat, so I think you, you grew up watching Johnny Carson as I did. So, my dad, I don't know if you know this, he was a part-

time TV repairman, but he'd also been a big band drummer and had played with Johnny when Johnny was a traveling magician.

Pat: Okay.

Jeff: And so, because of that, because of my dad's love of Johnny and because my dad fixed TVs, every room in our teeny tiny little house in South Omaha had a TV and I had no bedtime. So, I got to watch Johnny night after night.

Pat: Oh, that's great.

Jeff: And I'd go in to school the next day, say, "Hey, did you see Carson's monologue?"

Pat: I knew that about your dad because I'd read the book *Inklings*. Yeah. And so, and I remember the art of all the TVs on the cover, but Johnny, my dad let me stay up. I had a bedtime, but he would sneak me in if there was a comedian on, like he would let me watch comics and then he'd send me back to bed because he was upstairs in his office and my mom was downstairs. So yeah, I got a lot of funny influence from that.

Jeff: And is, is that what initially inspired you to pursue comedy? Because you, and it had been your goal to be on the Tonight Show.

Pat: It had been my goal and I was, um, you know, as a magician, I knew tricks and I could do a pretty good job as a kid, but when they would fail, it was my comedy that helped me recover. And then people didn't know whether this is supposed to be funny or, you know, so it was my insurance policy to be funny over being good.

Jeff: Oh, interesting.

Pat: Because I would work the street corners down on the old market and I would, you know, um, and, and I, I always loved comedy and it was hard to give up magic in a way, but there was a transition when I moved to LA where I thought this is my chance. And I did do a standup comedy with Johnny on his show without doing magic. And that was like a, like a graduation day.

Jeff: Oh, I love that. So, what is it about Omaha? Do you, now you live in Austin, but you were in Omaha a lot.

Pat: I was born in Passaic, New Jersey, which I don't claim as my home, but most of my early years, formative years at Beverage and Burke and UNO and so forth was Omaha. There's something about the heart of America that you see in Johnny Carson that you see in Dick Cavett and you see in Fred Astaire, you see in all these people that I thought, Oh, they've got kind of a full toolkit of empathy and humor and heart. And, and I, I felt like that was the best way to go. So that's kind of, I, I don't keep my comedy clean because I'm a prude.

I keep it there because I feel like it invites the most people to experience.

Jeff: Oh, I love that. And I love that. Uh, Omaha is part of your, obviously it's part of your comedic DNA. And when you went to LA, did you find, find it difficult to sort of make that transition or were you refreshing because you're... from Omaha.

Pat: I wasn't refreshing. I can tell you that, you know, I would tell stories about being in the back of the country square wagon and going to Dairy Queen. And I was a foreigner to them. Like that didn't sound like I would say, I went to my dad's company picnic and they go, nobody has a company picnic, you know, like that was kind of Midwestern stuff. Um, so, but, um, but I kind of stuck with it. I just thought, you know what, my voice is there and I'll just find my way through it. And I did with Jerry Seinfeld and Jay Leno. Many of them appreciated that I was different.

Jeff: Pat Hazell, thanks so very much for being on Jeff Around Town. Really appreciate it.

Pat: Around Town. Let's do it.