

Jeff Around Town – February 4th, 2025

Jeff: And time now for another edition of Jeff Around Town. So, imagine that you're catching up on some work at a popular coffee shop. Let's say, oh, it's The Mill on Leavenworth.

Your laptop is open, your notebook is out, your laptop bag is open there on the chair, when suddenly, out of nowhere, a vanilla latte comes splashing down on you and your table. And, well, your first reaction, of course, is to make sure that your laptop is okay. And it is.

The person who spilled it clearly feels terrible, but you tell them not to worry as you rush off to grab napkins and to ask the staff for a towel. When you come back, the other person still feels bad as she and her friend are also trying to do what they can with napkins. Oh, how many times you've been in that other person's shoes, knocking over, oh, that Aperol spritz in Germany, the glass shattering all over the bar floor. Or that time in a darkened movie theater in Austria when you accidentally knocked over your beer glass. Because, yes, when you go to the cinema in Austria, they give you an actual glass for your beer.

Oh, that slow, excruciating sound of the glass slowly rolling towards the front of the theater, ending in the sound of the glass smashing during a quiet scene underneath someone else's feet. And then worse, after the movie, well, your German isn't very good to apologize. So that's a tough one.

Anyhow, back at The Mill in Omaha, a staff member has now come over to help. And as you all work together to clean up the spilled latte, the other person, Sherry Hine, recounts a story to you and her friend, Sierra, about that one time she knocked over a bottle of red wine in Italy and that the waiter wasn't very nice about it.

What a lost opportunity on the part of the waiter, you think. You want to imagine that the waiter reassured her that, you know, it was okay that they had a nice laugh over the whole thing.

You know, a way to connect with a stranger in a moment of vulnerability. Because isn't it authenticity and kindness the world needs now more than ever? Anyway, everything's now cleaned up. And a moment later, the barista brings over a new latte on the house.

Sherry, Sierra, and you continue chatting. You think how lovely that you're now connecting with two nice humans, all thanks to that spilled latte.

Sherry then tells you something that takes your breath away. She says she normally introduces herself to strangers by telling them that her son died. It's a way to put it out there right off the bat, to be vulnerable, authentic. It happened a couple of years ago.

Her son, Miles, was a teenager and had dealt with a lifetime of health issues. She tells you that he loved birds and that could tell you anything and everything about them, especially birds native to Nebraska and Iowa.

After his passing, Sherry decided to raise chickens in a way to honor her son's love of birds. Eventually, she'd end up with 70 chickens in all. She would name them and get to know each and every chicken. She'd give them names like Dolly Parton, Anderson Cooper, Joni Mitchell, and Stevie Nicks.

Later, you think what a lovely blessing it was to hear your new friend's story, to have this truly human exchange, all thanks to a spilled drink. And then you think, gosh, maybe someone should spill a drink on me more often.

Thank you again for the chat, Sherry and Sierra. Oh, and Sherry, say hello to Dolly for me, won't you? And that's another Jeff Around Town.