

Jeff Around Town – October 11th, 2024

Jeff: So have you ever, this is a question for you... have you ever spent time in a wonderful place but all you could do was talk about your hometown or maybe your adopted hometown? Or maybe you've lived someplace that was amazing but you still found your thoughts drifting to where you used to live. And we're not talking about you know homesickness exactly... exactly or familiarity but more about how you feel so connected in a deep and special way to that place where you used to live.

Well, if you're from Omaha or if you've been here a while there's a name you'll recognize, Mike Kelly. Mike was at the newspaper at the Omaha World Herald in some capacity for 48 years, reporter, sports editor and sports columnist and then a general interest columnist for the last 27 years at the paper. And over the years he's given talks and served as an emcee for countless events so there's a good chance that if you've been here a while you've run into him or at least know his name. And even though he no longer works at the newspaper you can still see his face on the side of a newspaper truck parked near the World Herald in one of the parking lots.

Anyhow needless to say he's a guy who knows Omaha and Omaha knows him. So, Mike and I worked together at the newspaper during my 30 years there where he became a good friend and mentor and recently we had a chance to catch up. Like me he loves Omaha, the old market, the newly redeveloped riverfront. So where do you think we met? Near the Missouri River at Am's Pub in the old market which we both love? No, not even close. Try not far from the Ohio River in Cincinnati and more specifically in a beautiful historic district called Over the Rhine and that's in Cincinnati.

He's originally from there and is now retired there. I haven't been to Cincinnati in many many years and was totally blown away by how far it's come. It's really lovely and by the way did you know they have the world's second largest Oktoberfest right behind Munich?

Anyhow the people there are really great as well and including Mike's wife Barb and while Mike has lots of family in Cincinnati and elsewhere around the country he does miss his adopted hometown of Omaha.

What do you think Mike misses most about Omaha? The old market, the riverfront, the College World Series, Husker football? I mean I'm sure he does but more than anything it's the people. The people of Omaha just like you that Mike and I talked about most. There we are in beautiful wonderful Cincinnati and we're just raving about how incredible all of you are.

That's something that you can't build. It comes from the heart. It's those connections that are true and authentic. And what's funny is that Mike actually has a crash pad at a friend's place in Omaha that has a Cincinnati theme and in Cincinnati he has a basement man cave called well what else the Omaha room.

So how about you? Are you from Omaha or elsewhere? Where do you long to be and when you're someplace else what is it about Omaha that you miss? And hey great news if you're like me and you've been missing Mike Kelly well there's a chance that you can see him next month, November 10th, as he emcees the 25th anniversary annual gala for the John Neihart Foundation. Neihart of course the famed Nebraska writer. That event is on November 10th at Gallery 1516 and that's another Jeff Around Town.