

Jeff Around Town – June 14th, 2024

Otis: We're going about town, Jeff, about town.

Jeff: Otis, Otis, good morning.

Otis: Hey, buddy.

Jeff: Hey, you've shopped at Super Target, no doubt.

Otis: Yes, I have.

Jeff: Well, did you know that the very first Super Target in the country was in Omaha, 132nd and Maple?

Otis: And that's the Super Target I go to, although I didn't know it was the first. And I don't think I went there for many years after it was the first. Yeah, okay.

Jeff: 1995. Well, many years before that, there was a different store in Omaha, much like a modern Super Target or Walmart, and I'll get to that in just a moment. But the other day, I took a walk along 24th Street in South Omaha with our friend and colleague.

Otis: One of my favorite neighborhoods. You were down there with Gabriel?

Jeff: I was there with Gabriel Escalera, you bet. And for me, it was a bit of a stroll down memory lane, and Gabriel was so patient listening to my stories of the old days. I grew up on 14th and Missouri Avenue, and as a kid growing up in the 60s and 70s, a big outing for my family would be to go uptown to 24th Street. It was a mile away, but it was like, "Mom, can you take me up to 24th?" And I was telling Gabriel about how, when I was a kid, there was a Sears Roebuck and a JCPenney on South 24th. I think I had my baby picture taken there.

Otis: Alright.

Jeff: And there was Neneman's Bakery, where if you were a kid, just by being a kid, you automatically received a free sugar cookie. And now you have. Have you been to the International Bakery?

Otis: Oh, yeah.

Jeff: Oh, my goodness. Oh, it is. It's incredible. And Gabriel took me to one of his favorite grocery stores, El Pubrito. I have never seen, you know, they have the takeaway foods, guacamole and salsa.

Otis: Great stuff.

Jeff: It was like a guac and salsa heaven. And then it turns out we both love the same taco place, you know, Tijuana Tacos there and grabbed a couple of tacos. But OK, back to Super Target. Now I'm hungry. If you're of a certain age and if you're from Omaha, you might recall Phillips Department Store on South 24th. And it was sort of a Super Target before that even existed. And right now, the building is still there. It's a rent-a-center. But Otis, when I was a

kid, the main floor, on the main floor, you could buy clothing, appliances, housewares. And then downstairs.

Otis: Lawnmowers?

Jeff: I don't know. Maybe lawnmowers. Maybe. And then downstairs, there was a full grocery store, a pharmacy. And I'm pretty sure there was a restaurant there, too. I really loved the newsstand. You remember you could go to a newsstand, and you could get magazines about UFOs and model railroads?

Otis: I loved newsstands.

Jeff: I'd always get a model railroading magazine. Well, here's the thing about the groceries. So unlike Target, where there was no self-checkout. Now you're not a fan of this self-checkout.

Otis: Nah. I like to chat.

Jeff: Yeah.

Otis: And I hate the phrase, look up items.

Jeff: So, do you ever use the drive-up option at Target? You know, you order the groceries on your app, and they bring it up to the car.

Otis: Oh, no. I would never do that.

Jeff: I know people in my life who do that and that's wonderful. But no, I like to go in and have the chat. So, okay, there wasn't the drive-up option at Phillips. But Otis, there was a magic little door. So, you buy your groceries and they bag them up. And they take your groceries to the magic door where your groceries would disappear. And next, you'd go to your car in the parking lot and drive up to this little building.

Otis: Oh, okay.

Jeff: And they load up your car with your groceries. Now, when I was a kid, I didn't understand what was happening. A little later on, I figured it out. Oh, there's a conveyor belt. But when I was little, I thought this was magic.

Otis: Yeah, of course.

Jeff: And which seems fitting because you may know that when South Omaha was founded in the late 1800s, and it had all of this rapid growth and it overnight became supersized, it was nicknamed the Magic City. Now, it's true. And so South Omaha may not have a Super Target or Phillips now. But because of how vibrant and wonderful it is now, maybe we should once again call South Omaha the Magic City. And now I've got to go stop at the International Bakery. And that's another Jeff Around Town, Otis.

Otis: Yeah. Ah, yes. Department stores.

Jeff: Department stores.

Otis: Real department stores. Have a good weekend, buddy.

Jeff: You too, Otis.

Otis: Appreciate it. Yeah, memories. Jeff Around Town.