

Jeff Around Town – April 1st, 2024

Otis: One of my favorites, of course, you know it too. Morning is Broken by Steven Georgiou. Well, that's his birth name. And then he took the name Cat Stevens and now calls himself Yusuf Islam. Morning is Broken. La Pieta, Angèle Dubot and her violin. It's quarter till seven on a Monday morning. Let's go out on the town with Jeffrey.

Jeff: Good morning, Otis.

Otis: Good morning, bud.

Jeff: Otis, have you ever been to the Kennedy Space Center in Florida?

Otis: Yes, I have on a couple of occasion. Once for a launch that did not happen.

Jeff: Oh, that's so frustrating.

Otis: But I made it all the way to the press area.

Jeff: You weren't an astronaut though.

Otis: No, no. Not after I turned in my Jett Jackson decoder ring.

Jeff: Well, Otis, this is a story that launches at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida on Easter Monday, 2010.

Otis: So, you're back, this is 14 years ago today.

Jeff: Today, and lands just a few days ago here in Omaha. So, my family and I had been invited to Nebraska's astronaut, Clay Anderson, his launch aboard Space Shuttle Discovery. At the time I was the cartoonist for the World Herald and Clay was taking two of my cartoons on board the shuttle.

Otis: Oh, wow, didn't know that.

Jeff: It was incredible. I didn't get to go, but my cartoons did. So, as we waited for the launch, I saw this display of famous newspaper front pages from the first moon landing. And there are only just a handful. And one of them was from the World Herald. And the big headline read, "First footprints on an alien world mark a giant leap for mankind, moon is a magnificent desolation". And then Otis, that is when I saw Neil Armstrong, who of course was the first human to step onto the moon.

Otis: So, he was right there?

Jeff: He was right there. And I went up, I was really nervous, introduced myself and nervously I'm trying to talk to him and I'm pointing to the World Herald front page, trying to explain that that's where I work. But he seemed really tired, so I didn't say a whole lot more.

Otis: Okay.

Jeff: What I didn't tell him is that that front page meant the world to me and that I saw it every day in the hallways of the newspaper because there were all these-

Otis: They had it posted, yeah.

Jeff: Yeah, famous front pages.

Otis: I remember that hallway, yeah.

Jeff: Exactly, exactly. Otis, when I was first hired, one of the first people who took me under his wing was a copy editor by the name of Bill Anderson. And Bill was respected inside the hallways of the World Herald. But you know, copy editors don't usually have bylines. They're sort of anonymous to the public. But to me, he was kind, he was a friend, he was a mentor and he was so humble. And many, many times, Otis, in those early days of the newspaper, we would stop in the hallway and chat about journalism near those famous front pages. He eventually retired and I lost touch with him. But I know his daughter, Jill. I believe you might know Jill.

Otis: Yes, I do.

Jeff: Incredible singer and actress. Well, she posted on Facebook that her father had passed away, and I felt terrible, of course, because I hadn't stayed in touch with Bill. So, the memorial service was two Saturdays ago, and it included this beautiful narrative by Jill and her mom with great singing, of course, from Jill and her band, it was incredible. And they were showing, of course, a slideshow with images from Bill's life and his career at the World Herald. And then, Otis, to my surprise, one of the slides was that famous front page with that wonderful headline, "First Footprints on an Alien World Mark a Giant Leap for Mankind. Moon is a Magnificent Desolation". Far from the Kennedy Space Center, I only learned just the other day in Omaha that it was Bill Anderson who had written the very headline I'd pointed out to Neil Armstrong, me showing one hero the work of another unsung hero back in Omaha.

Otis: Bill had a great reputation, no doubt about it.

Jeff: He absolutely did.

Otis: And deservedly so.

Jeff: Of course, and Otis, the world has its heroes, but so many more unsung heroes. And so for all of you, if you have a hero in your life, sung or unsung, sing their praises from here to the moon and back.

Otis: There you go.

Jeff: Otis, that's another Jeff Around Town.

Otis: Lovely memory, lovely memory. Of course, when I make it to the press section for a launch, who do I see? Scotty from Star Trek.

Jeff: Captain, if Ben Rasmussen were here, he could do probably the perfect impression.

Otis: Yes, he could. That's a lovely story. And to Bill, yeah, a salute from here and to his whole family and Jill and everyone.

Jeff: Absolutely.

Otis: So, thanks.

Jeff: You bet. Thanks, Otis.

Otis: Around town. Jeff, around town. When are you going back to Paris?

Jeff: Hopefully soon-ish. Maybe we'll do around the town from Paris.

Otis: There you go.

Jeff: That's my hope.

Otis: Tell me, will we always have Paris? Never mind, never mind. This could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship, Louie. This could be the beginning of a piece by Beethoven.