

Jeff Around Town – January 20th, 2026

Jeff: All aboard! This is Jeff Around Town with Charlie Duckworth. Charlie, you are an avid listener of KVNO. You and your dog.

Charlie: Every morning, Zoe and I listen.

Jeff: Zoe, you're a beautiful Australian Shepherd. You also are a model railroader. You worked for Union Pacific Railroad for what, 38 years?

Charlie: 38 years. I started with the Missouri Pacific in 1974 out in western Kansas and got into management and went down to Fort Worth for a while and then back up to Kansas City and St. Louis. So, did a little stint in Omaha in '86 and then moved back up here when they built the new building downtown.

Jeff: We're here in your basement in West Omaha. I feel like I've gone back in time, so what are we, what are we looking at here?

Charlie: Okay, the locomotive is actually a brass engine that a friend of mine in St. Louis built probably 25 years ago and I was able to buy it from his widow and painted it and decaled it. A friend of mine put sound in it and so we're watching the local travel down the branch. It's going through a little town called Loman. All the depots are prototyped with the, with the towns and then I scratch built the feed mills based on doing photographs and measurements, site measurements, so.

Jeff: And what made you choose this area, this, you know, this era, I guess?

Charlie: That's a great question. Linda, Linda is from a little town called Mary's Home.

Jeff: Your wife, Linda.

Charlie: Yeah, and she actually student taught in Eldon, which is the town over here behind us.

Jeff: Okay. Oh, wow.

Charlie: And my, my dad and I, before he passed away, when he retired from the railroad, we would travel the branch lines, former branch lines in Missouri, and so this one just caught my eye and, yeah, I like the transition from 1951 is kind of steam to diesel. It let me replicate the steam days back then.

Jeff: I had a model railroad when I was a young man and I have always loved model railroading and my understanding is that you're never actually done. It's not like something you build and then, oh, you're done and you enjoy it. It's the process and it's, you're continually updating. Is that accurate?

Charlie: Absolutely, yeah. You're either adding people to it, you're adding little vehicles. I build a lot of freight cars because I enjoy the weathering aspect.

Jeff: Weathering, yes. With like a little airbrush kind of thing?

Charlie: Yeah, airbrush. I use airbrush, oils, colored pencils.

Jeff: And we're getting into the weeds here, but you're using like lichen? Is that what, or for the bushes or trees, is that what they use?

Charlie: You know what... They used to. Now it's static grass, so if you feel the top of this, stands up from static electricity.

Jeff: There's like wild, I'm looking, I just, there's a little speed limit, 20 miles an hour sign, there's a car, there's a guy working on the car, there's like wildflowers, gravel. Is some of this actual dirt and gravel from outside?

Charlie: Yeah.

Jeff: Like your background? Really? How long has what we're seeing here, how long has that taken you and about how many miles of track do you have?

Charlie: Well, the prototype is 43 miles, which is doable. I didn't want the engine in one town and the caboose in another town. I like the fact that you got this town here and the next town is down in the corner.

Jeff: Okay.

Charlie: It took about, this is probably 15, 18 years I've had this layout.

Jeff: Wow. Why do you do this, Charlie?

Charlie: Well, I enjoy history.

Jeff: Yeah.

Charlie: Absolutely. And railroad history is just something that you can go down so many different rabbit holes. I've written three books as fundraisers for Historical Society about railroad history. I'm working on an article right now on the 1927 flood that impacted the railroad. So, enjoy that. And then I was an art major in college and a history minor, so it kind of blends all that together.

Jeff: Are there, is there graffiti on any boxcars? Maybe not in that era though. That's maybe more of a modern thing.

Charlie: They would take a piece of chalk and they would do a cartoon of somebody.

Jeff: Okay.

Charlie: There was a famous Mopac engineer in San Antonio called Bozo Texino.

Jeff: Mm-hmm.

Charlie: And he would get off work and his cartoon moniker is, he did hundreds of thousands of them and was, was famous back then.

Jeff: Well, speaking of cartoons, one last question. Am I right in remembering that we have something in common?

Charlie: Yes.

Jeff: And that would be we've both sold cartoons.

Charlie: Right. To Model Railroader.

Jeff: Magazine.

Charlie: I was probably about 18, 17 years old. And how old were you?

Jeff: I was about 16 or 17 years old.

Charlie: Yeah. And they paid me for it. And I don't think they ever published it.

Jeff: 100%. Oh my gosh. I don't think I knew that. Same thing.

Charlie: Yeah.

Jeff: They paid me, it was like \$25 or something, probably.

Charlie: Right.

Jeff: And I went to the newsstand every few months to see if it ever, and maybe they did eventually, but I don't know that it ever was published. Well, Charlie Duckworth, it has just been a pleasure to speak with you and to immerse myself a little bit into this gorgeous model railroad. Thank you so much.

Charlie: Okay, Jeff. Thank you. Enjoyed it.