

Jeff Around Town – May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**Jeff:** Joining me on Jeff Around Town is musician extraordinaire, Tag Ryan. Tag, thanks for joining me on Jeff Around Town.

**Tag:** It's a pleasure to be here, thank you.

**Jeff:** So, before we jump in, we're at the Village Grinder and I'd asked you where do you want to meet and you're not in town a lot and we'll get into that in a second and you suggested the Village Grinder. Why is that?

**Tag:** Because this is right across the street from my high school. I haven't been here in 10 years.

**Jeff:** Oh, wow. So, a little sentimental?

**Tag:** Just a little, little bit. I don't have any specific memories of this place. I was just asked to pick a coffee shop and I like novelty. Novelty is what makes life worth living and this place felt novel at that time.

**Jeff:** Awesome. So, you... your mom is Amy Ryan, who is the person who got the whole Benson Theatre started. And you're a creative... you're from here, but you are spending more than half of the year now... you're from dry land, you're from Omaha... but you're spending more than half the year on a cruise ship doing music.

**Tag:** Calling Omaha dry land sounds like an understatement, but yes, I do spend about eight to ten months a year at sea working on a cruise ship.

**Jeff:** As a musician, as a working musician.

**Tag:** As a performer and as the manager of the music department.

**Jeff:** So, you, you attended Berkeley School of Music.

**Tag:** That's correct.

**Jeff:** And one of the reasons you took the cruise gig was to pay off tuition?

**Tag:** That is right. I needed to go to school. I needed to go to college. And why not go to the best college there is? I actually didn't study performance or guitar in any sort of way. I studied acoustics.

**Jeff:** Oh, okay.

**Tag:** The science of sound. I really love physics. If I was not a musician, I would probably be a physicist.

**Jeff:** I'm curious, so when you're, when you're out at sea, are you longing for Omaha? What is it about, you know, do you take these Omaha experiences with you to sea or is it just a totally different experience?

**Tag:** Yes, yes I do take that with me. Now, I am not to country per se... but when I'm on a ship and I'm being introduced to people, I used to be in the bands and the bands are international. So, we have this person from Argentina, round of applause, this person from Colombia, round of applause, and this person from Nebraska. People would go crazy. And so, they have a slight expectation of who you are.

**Jeff:** Because you're exotic?

**Tag:** Yeah, I'm exotic. These are other Americans though that I'm entertaining. They're interested in Nebraska.

**Jeff:** Why do you think that is?

**Tag:** Because... this doesn't answer the American question, but in Germany, I saw a textbook... like a children's English textbook, where they had a whole chapter on Nebraska. And the reason for it is because the picture of Nebraska is... if you're not from here, you might imagine like a late harvest, you know, cornfield with an old barn in the back, with a windmill. That's what they think all of Nebraska is like. And that's not just kids in Germany with their school books, that's...

**Jeff:** People in the U.S.

**Tag:** ...other citizens as well.

**Jeff:** Yeah, it's incredible. Sometimes people in New York will say, Omaha, oh, that's in Oklahoma. No. (laughter) So, when you're out at sea, are you ever just daydreaming, missing, longing for Omaha though?

**Tag:** Yeah, there is a connection between the ocean and cornfields. There truly is. They're basically the same. It's just the color is different. That's it. Every time I look at an open ocean, it's breathtaking. It's been eight years and it's still breathtaking. It reminds me of a cornfield. Every time I see an open cornfield, it's still breathtaking. It reminds me of the open ocean. I can't win anywhere I go.

**Jeff:** Wow, just this grand openness, wide, big sky.

**Tag:** Yep. If I'm not around a grand openness, as you say, then I don't feel at home.

**Jeff:** Wow, I love it. Tag Ryan, thanks so much for joining me on Jeff Around Town and Bon Voyage.

**(Music)**

**Jeff:** We ended the interview and then you told me something interesting.

**Tag:** Yes, when we started, we said, hello, we're sitting with Teg Ryan and that stunned me because there's only two other people in the world who calls me Teg instead of Tag, which is my grandma and my mom. So now Mr. Koterba here has just earned third place on a short list of both the people I respect most in this town and people who say my name with a Wisconsin accent.

**Jeff:** (laughter) I'm honored, Teg.