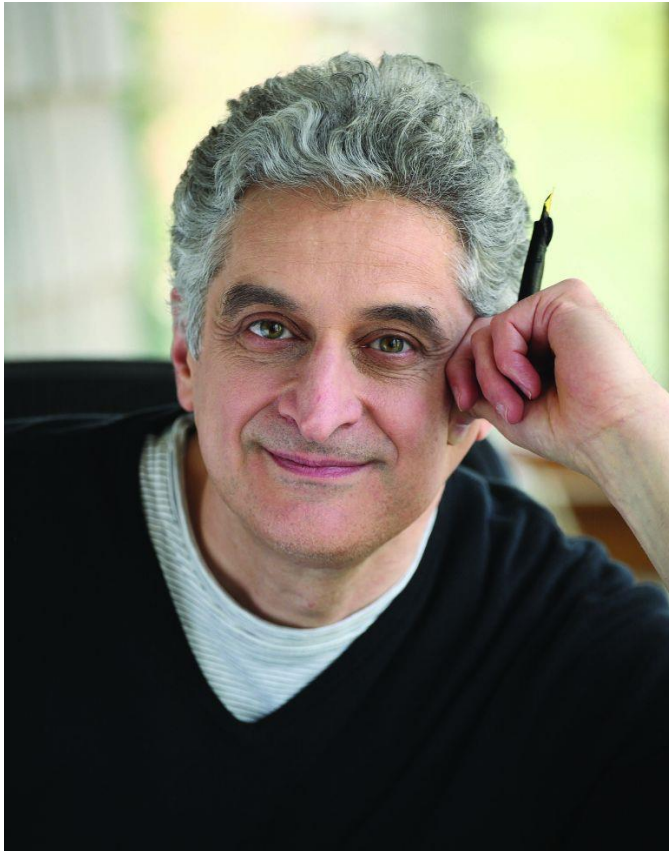


an **EVEN** exclusive interview –  
with  
**Patrick McDonnell**



**Award-winning  
Cartoonist,  
Author, and  
Animal Activist**

**Patrick McDonnell** is a cartoonist, author, and playwright. He is the creator of the daily comic strip **MUTTS**, syndicated since 1994, which appears in more than 700 newspapers across 20 countries. McDonnell has won numerous awards for

both his artistry and for his activism in animal welfare. ***Peanuts*** creator, **Charles Schulz**, called MUTTS "one of the best comic strips of all time."

In 2009 McDonnell collaborated with author **Eckhart Tolle** to create ***Guardians of Being***, a philosophical book about nature and the present moment. In 2012, McDonnell's children's book, ***Me...Jane***, based on the childhood of Dr. Jane Goodall, was awarded the **Caldecott Honor**. It was later staged as a children's musical for the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

The MUTTS characters appear on the **New Jersey Animal-Friendly license plates**, which fund state pet population programs. *The Art of Nothing*, a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary monograph, has recently been published by Abrams.

Patrick was a member of the Board of Directors of the **Humane Society of the United States** for 18 years. He currently serves on the boards of the **Fund for Animals**, the **Charles M. Schulz Museum**, and **D&R Greenway Land Trust**. He resides in New Jersey with his wife Karen, their rescue dog, and a formerly feral cat.



McDonnell uses **MUTTS** to advocate for all animals and to support animal welfare. He strives to see the world through the eyes of animals and to use his voice to speak for them. His website, [MUTTS.com](http://MUTTS.com), donates a portion of all sales to the **HSUS Animal Rescue Team**.

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This is their planet, too. They have intelligence and relationships, they feel pain, and they contribute to our beautiful planet in so many ways.... It's up to us to make space for them and not interfere with their lives. They should be allowed the ability to simply live.  
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## **EVEN: How did veganism become part of your life?**

**Patrick:** As a young teenager in the early 70s, I was kind of a hippie and aware that being vegetarian was a cool thing to do for social, health, and environmental reasons. During that time, I dabbled off and on with being vegetarian. Later, when my wife Karen and I got married we decided we would only eat meat once a day. Looking back, it makes me realize how far we've come. Shortly thereafter, we began eating meat once a week — and then the “ah-ha” moment arrived. Becoming a full-time vegetarian was the best decision we ever made. Over time we became more and more plant-based and have been 100% vegan for the last 15 years.

## **EVEN: Who was an influential person in your life earlier on that led you to veganism?**

**Patrick:** It's very helpful to have a partner who is part of your food journey. Karen has always been my support. Another major influence was our dog, Earl. He reminded me every day that all life is sacred and deserving of compassion and respect. To quote my friend, poet Daniel Ladinsky, *“Love is respecting the beings who can't speak, and treating them as if they could.”*

## **EVEN: What, in your opinion, is the most misunderstood idea about veganism?**

**Patrick:** There are a lot of misconceptions. A major one is that vegan food doesn't taste good. Boy, has that been proven wrong! Another is that you don't get enough protein on a vegan diet.

Broccoli has more protein, ounce for ounce, than steak. Another is that you can't build muscle or stamina on a vegan diet. So many world-class athletes are becoming vegan and say that their performance has improved as a result.

As far as finding great vegan food — that is no longer an issue in most places in the world today.

**EVEN: What do you think makes veganism hard for people?**

**Patrick:** It's hard to find and accept the truth. The facts about how we treat animals are hidden from us.

Everywhere we are lied to: how animal products get to our plate, that animals don't have feelings. And people are happy to believe the lie. The truth is just too painful.

What's also hard for people is the cultural and family food traditions that are so ingrained in our psyche. But every cuisine can be adapted.

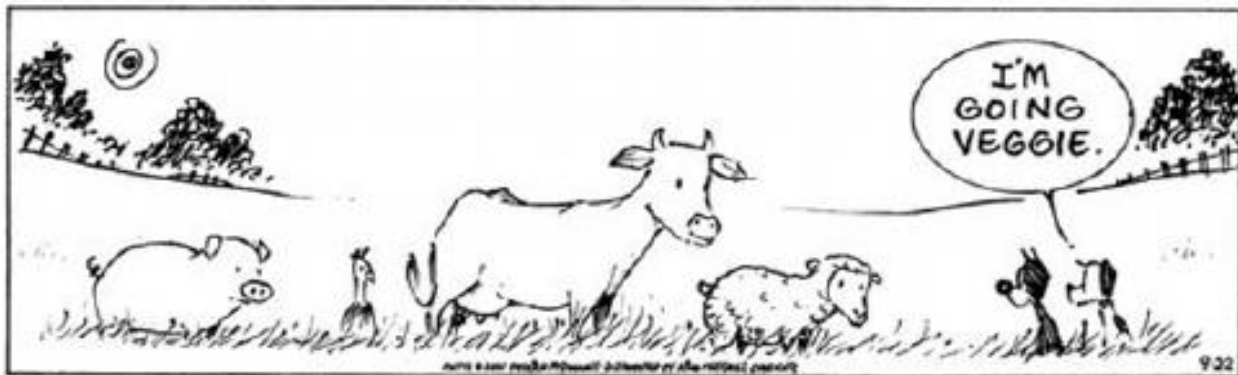
I'm always amazed by how many smart and informed people still eat meat. It's a blind spot. People feel that it's all or nothing. I always say you can be vegan "except for" something. People will say, "I can't be vegan because I love pizza." I say, so be vegan except for pizza. Or Thanksgiving dinner. Or milk in your coffee. Or all three. That will establish a rule that you can build upon.

**EVEN:** What one thing from your thinking in childhood do you wish you could change?

**Patrick:** Don't we all wish we could let go of fear?

**EVEN:** If you were to mentor a younger person today, what guidance might you offer? What encouraging words might you share with a newbie?

**Patrick:** I don't need to encourage most young people (although I do). A lot of them get it. There are so many who are keenly aware of the perils facing our fragile environment and are socially active and vegan. I've met quite a few and I'm hopeful that this beautiful planet will survive with their spirit and actions.



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**EVEN:** What advice would you give to a vegan advocate wanting to become more of an activist?

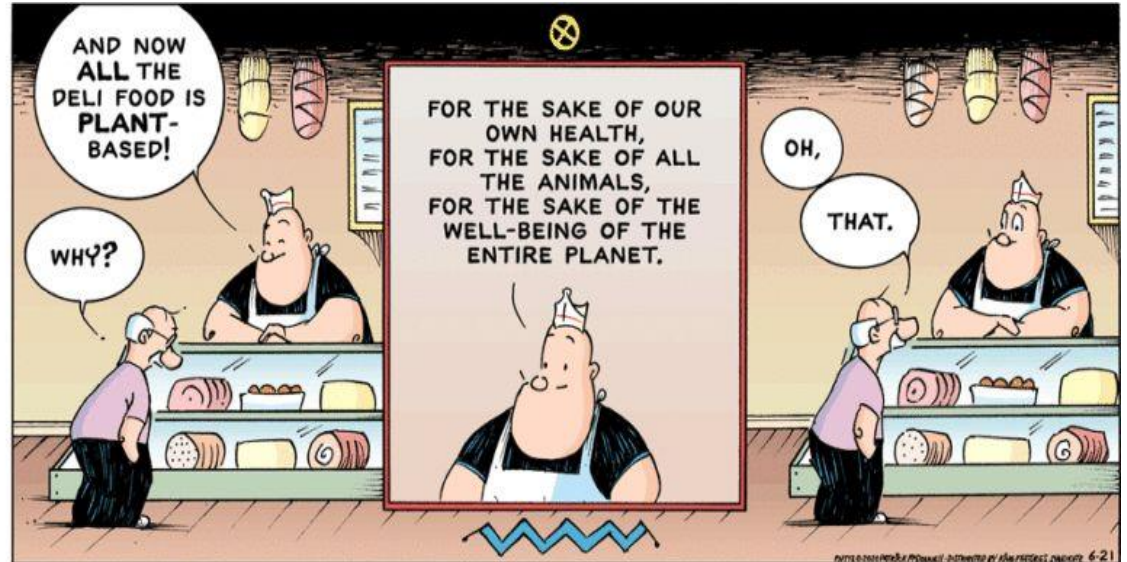
**Patrick:** Be a great example. Inspire people to rethink their choices. Change their hearts, and their minds will follow.

I just came across a great quote by the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg: *"Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you."*

And it doesn't hurt to introduce all your friends to the many great meat alternatives!

**EVEN:** Do you have a favorite vegan meal or food you can tell us about that really makes veganism work for you?

**Patrick:** I love food – and I love cooking. I have too many favorites to just pick one. Any food can be veganized and taste just as good or better. Vegan food is tastier and healthier.



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**EVEN: What one thing makes veganism worthwhile for you?**

**Patrick:** Not one thing, but everything.

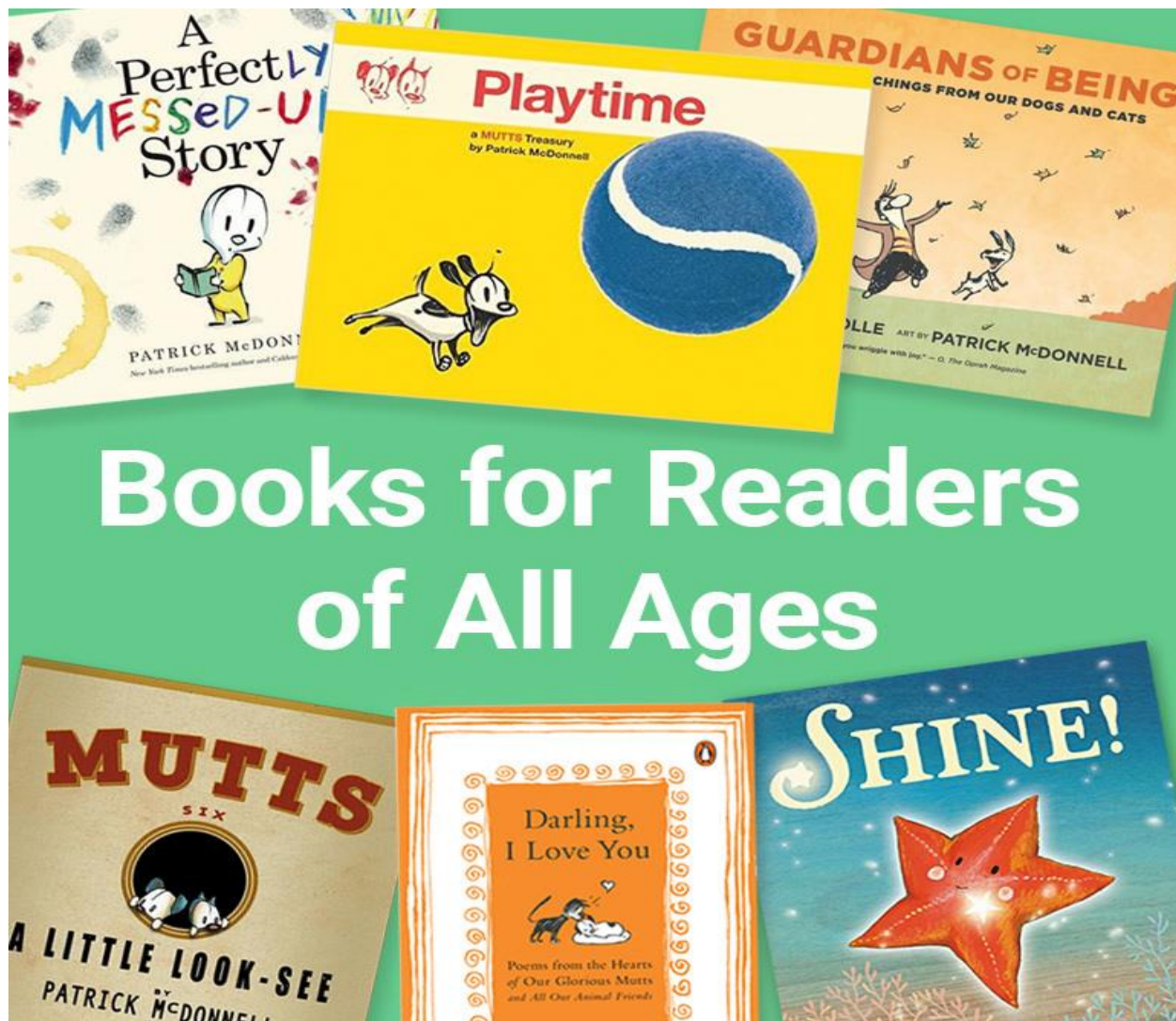
My commitment is to all animals, but the health of the planet and my own health are of primary importance as well. These things are completely intertwined.

Animals have lives and are here for their own purpose. This is their planet, too. They have intelligence and relationships, they feel pain, and they contribute to our beautiful planet in so many ways. They are not so very different from us but are completely at our mercy. They have no rights, no voices. It's up to us to make space for them and not interfere with their lives. They should be allowed the ability to simply live.

**EVEN: Any opinion or insight on the future of veganism in today's world?**

**Patrick:** Now, more than ever, with COVID-19 and climate change, it's obvious that everyone needs to adopt a plant-based diet for our future survival. For someone who has been at this for many years, I'm impressed with all the amazing choices being offered. All the vegan meat-cheese-milk-egg options are becoming mainstream. I've always felt the world would be saved by vegan chefs and now it's coming true!

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To learn more about Patrick and the MUTTS comic strip, visit [MUTTS.com](https://www.mutts.com). If you're interested in receiving the newest strip each morning, subscribe on the MUTTS homepage to get a comic (and an uplifting or thought-provoking quote) delivered daily, right to your inbox. For a list of Patrick's currently available books, [click here](#).