

Love What You Love Podcast

Episode 36: Storm Chasing with Lori Bailey

April 6, 2021

Welcome to *Love What You Love*; I'm Julie Rose. I'm insatiably curious about people and the world around us, and absolutely in love with passion and unselfconscious enthusiasm. Every other week I geek out with someone about something they love, and then I share it with you.

Hey, guess what? It's *Love What You Love*'s first anniversary! As you can probably tell, I love this podcast. I love doing it, love talking with our guests, love hearing from you. Thank you to everyone who's been with me on this journey. It has been such a privilege and such a joy, and I can't thank you enough.

If you'd like to rep *Love What You Love*, I have some sweet stickers I'm giving away, which are perfect for your laptop case, or for your travel mug, or put on your dog; I don't know, whatever. But they're pretty sweet, and if you want to get your hands on one, just drop me an email at LoveWhatYouLovePod@gmail.com by April 18th, 2021. When you send me an email, I'll enter you into a drawing to pick the winners, and for every entry, I will donate to three of my favorite charities; World Central Kitchen, The Nature Conservancy, and Humane Society Silicon Valley. So help me celebrate and get a sweet sticker at the same time.

Okay, let's meet this week's guest. Lori Bailey is absolutely passionate about weather and the natural world, particularly the desert where she lives and the incredible summer storms found there. A professional photographer, she's also a storm chaser and a storm photography expedition leader. We chat about desert rats, supercells, big dogs, our place in the universe, taking advantage of the time given to you, and so much more. So find out why Lori loves storm chasing and why you might learn to love it too.

Julie: Hey Lori! Thank you so much for joining me today.

Lori: Thank you, Julie. I'm excited to be able to have a chance to chat with you.

Julie: Me too. I'm so interested in what you are passionate about, which is... I hope it's the right term. I don't know if it's the correct term but, storm chasing?

Lori: Yep.

Julie: Yeah, so for folks who aren't aware of what that is, can you explain what storm chasing is?

Lori: Storm chasing is a little bit different to everybody. For me, it's just a matter of... You know, even if there isn't a tornado or some hurricane, storm chasing can just be as simple as enjoying a passing storm in the middle of summer. And you know, whether you drive... We actually call people who just love to enjoy the weather from their backyard storm chasers, right? It's called armchair chasing or backyard chasing, and that's the easiest to do.

But I think everybody loves a good storm. Everybody loves to be in awe of just those amazing skies, especially when the sun sets and all the colors in the sky just turn surreal. It transports you, you know, to a different place and it really just... At least for a moment, it takes all your problems away. It's bliss to be in the middle of that. So, a storm chaser like me, I will drive as far as I need to find that awesome-looking storm.

Last year we went to the High Plains up in South Dakota, Montana; we even went to Minnesota. And I live in Arizona so that tells you how far I'm willing to drive for a storm.

Julie: So, during the summer are you, like, monitoring the weather and you're like, "Oh boy, there's a big line of storms heading into the upper Midwest"? Do you just, like, get in the car and go?

Lori: Well, in the summertime actually... Storm chasing is kind of a seasonal science, to say the least. In the spring is really when a lot of the bigger storms out in the Plains really decide to roar. If you know what a supercell is, those giant storms that just twist and turn, they go sky-high to the top of the earth's atmosphere, the troposphere, those are the ones that are capable of producing tornadoes, and those things are quite a sight to see. But in the summertime, actually, living in Arizona, I live in what I consider the monsoon capital of the Southwest.

I live near the US-Mexico border, and that moisture that comes up from Mexico starts to channel north, deep from the Gulf moisture and from the Pacific. It pulls in moisture from both oceans and we end up getting these really awesome desert storms. And that's been my passion, that's where it started, and now I just want to go anywhere and everywhere. Hopefully even Australia some time.

Julie: Ooh, I'll bet there's big storms there.

Lori: Oh, the images I've seen from Australian storms are just surreal as well.

Julie: So did you grow up in Arizona?

Lori: No, actually I grew up in... I was born in El Paso, Texas, so I've kind of been a desert rat all my life, and I'm not ashamed to say it. I think I'll live and die in the desert, and I think I'll be okay with that. There's a special love you have to... an affinity to live in a dry and weary land, so to speak. But there's something beautiful about the life that struggles and, you know, rages at the dying of the light, so to speak. Life is brutal in the desert, and the plants and the animals that thrive, it really gives you just a sense of awe and wonder if you can connect to that.

Julie: Yeah, and so that must make the storms that come through, the monsoon... The comparison must be pretty stark between the normal desert life and the monsoon season.

Lori: Absolutely, and the monsoon season, at least here in Arizona, generally lasts from, like, the start of July until somewhere in mid to late September. So really, the majority of our rain happens in those three months, and it's so important that we get those rainstorms. But when they do happen, they often result in flooding, and high winds, and all sorts of crazy stuff. The best part for me, which is what I love to shoot the most, is lightning. Becoming a lightning photographer, it has its risks, to say the least. [laughs]

Julie: When you were growing up, were you into photography first? Were you into the weather first? Where did this all start?

Lori: You know, I've been asked that question before. People are like, "Why do you do this? This is silly." And some people think it's silly, and to be honest, I actually remember... When I was a kid, probably when I was ten years old or so, my mom would take me to the park; she was working her socks off, working midnights as a single mother, as a nurse's aide, and she still found time to take me to the park. She'd let me play on the

swings and all of that, but then we'd just lay down in the grass and we'd watch the clouds roll by. And in El Paso, you know, they have a little bit different weather, but it's still the same monsoon. And those clouds, watching that really sparked my love for weather.

Initially, I wanted to become a tornado chaser. When I was in high school I wanted to go to Texas Tech, and you know, life throws curveballs at you and we don't always end up doing what we wanted to do. So, I ended up doing a lot of different things, and only within the last four or five years did I decide to finally pursue that passion of photography, because I've always loved taking photos. But then I finally got a DSLR and started shooting weddings, and portraits, and doing all of that, which is an absolute blast. And you know, there's an adrenaline rush doing weddings, but... I guess I'm an adrenaline junkie because I love the stress and pressure of being a photographer in a wedding.

But when I'm not shooting weddings, then... In the middle of summer, there's not a lot of weddings, but that's exactly when the storms are there. And I've been inspired by others to actually go out there and do the same thing, and I realized that I had the same gear. Having a DSLR and some pretty cool lenses allows you to capture and point your camera, not just at people but now you can point the camera at the sky. So, it's expanded my ability, my photography skills. It's just fantastic to be able to get out there with my gear and take a chance on capturing something extraordinary.

Julie: In Arizona, or when you hit the road, do you do it by yourself, or do folks come with you? How do you do that?

Lori: Right. I'm actually one of the administrators in... That sounds so 2020 business-y, isn't it? [laughs] I'm one of the admins for a group on Facebook called the Tucson STORM Chasers, and that little group has just grown. We thought there would be maybe only 20 or 30 people that would want to join it, and I think we're up to close to 500 people.

Julie: Wow!

Lori: Yeah, so being able to get out there and do that... For me, I always tell people, "If possible, have a chase buddy." Sometimes we're going out to the middle of nowhere. Especially in Arizona; the hot desert sun and those wide-open roads in Arizona. You can really, really get out in the middle of nowhere, which is absolutely amazing. Isn't it great to just get away from it all? Get away from the city? But at the same time, there are other risks as well; from animals, to being stuck trying to cross a wash or something.

You can find yourself three washes away from the road and you can't cross them in the middle of summer because there's a flash flood in each one of them, and if you cross those you're going to die. I think the number one monsoon killer is actually flooding. So, lightning is a risk but that's not the killer here. And heat is, of course, the number one killer. But next to heat, the flooding is the killer here in Arizona when it comes to monsoon weather.

So, oftentimes I do love to chase with a friend or somebody else who's still learning the ropes on how to storm chase. Most often you can find me in the middle of nowhere with just myself and my two dogs. I have a Norwegian elkhound and a German shepherd, and they are my protectors. There's something special when I get to be able to take them out in the middle of nowhere, open the door, and just let them have a field day. Just running around, getting all the energy out of their system so when I get

back home they're exhausted. I think all of us, after a long day of chasing storms, we all get back home and we just want to sleep, and it's so cute to see the two dogs completely out of it as well.

Julie: [laughs] So, talking about the washes and, kind of, the danger of going out there, what is the sketchiest situation you've gotten into during storm chasing?

Lori: The sketchiest time I got into when I was storm chasing was probably when lightning struck probably ten yards away from me. I decided to... I was new to storm chasing, back in 2016, and I saw the severe warning just east of Tucson, and I thought, "Oh I can get over here," looking at the radar, "I want to get to this spot because it's a very pretty spot to shoot from." And I got there and the storm wasn't quite there, but the lightning was. And I got out of my car, and as soon as I grabbed the camera the bolt literally struck about ten yards away from me in the street.

All I could do was, like a rocket, shoot back into the car seat. But it wouldn't have mattered, of course. My reaction's not going to be faster than the lightning, but that was pretty sketchy. And then within a few seconds, these big hailstones started falling too and I was just like, "What was I thinking? That was just dumb."

Julie: What do you know now that you would have done differently?

Lori: I think it's really important when you learn to be a storm chaser: positioning is everything. I like to tell people who are new to storm chasing or who are intrigued by it that I would much rather... depending on how close I am, but I would still much rather be in a position, ideally, where the storm is going from my left to my right. It's traversing my field of view, instead of coming towards me, right? Or forming right over me. Because if the storm's coming towards you, obviously you're going to get wet and your camera is useless in the rain anyway.

So you want to be able to stay dry, you want to stay safe, and you want to be able to enjoy it like a movie, is what I tell people. I want to find that perfect movie theater seat where I get to sit there and even enjoy it with popcorn. Let the cameras do their business, let the dogs have fun, and watch the storm just traverse the desertscape at the end of the day while the sun is setting. Just sit there and enjoy it. That is the coolest thing ever for me.

Julie: So what do you think of these people on, like... What's that show called? *Storm Chasers*.

Lori: Oh, I love those guys. [laughs] Absolutely.

Julie: Yeah? Okay! So, is that something that you have done or want to do, where you, kind of, get even closer to a tornado or a supercell?

Lori: You know, last year we did chase supercells, like I'd mentioned, up in Minnesota and South Dakota, that area. And that was incredible, and learning to avoid baseball-sized hail versus, you know, penny-sized or dime-sized hail here in Arizona, that's a different gamechanger. That'll destroy your car at the very minimum. And of course, a tornado will just end your life if you're not careful.

We didn't see any tornados last year but we could have. The storms just decided not to produce them. But you know, being able to see that, watching the guys on *Storm Chasers*, that was such an inspiration. Seeing the big guns like Reed Timmer and Tim

Samaras, and Sean Casey, the filmmaker. Oh my goodness, watching those guys just get up close to it and being able to do that, that was such an inspiration for me.

So again, that was an inspiration watching those ten years ago, and then learning that I actually had the gear to do the same thing and capture those kinds of images was really incredible. But for a photographer's perspective, you really... It has to be the right look, and for me as a photographer, I love capturing the whole scene. So, chances are, I'm going to be positioned back a little bit farther from the storm anyway. Again, because I want to have that popcorn-theater view of the storm. And if you're chasing with a friend or somebody else and their life is in your hands, I will probably be back a little further.

If I'm by myself and just with the dogs, I may get a little closer to the storm to, kind of, experience it and feel it. But that doesn't mean I'm going to drive right into a tornado either. That's just not smart. I want to go home each and every day. And when I tell other people who want to be storm chasers and people who are new at this, you know, "We all want to live to see another day and another storm."

Julie: So would you say that you enjoy the adrenaline, but for you it's more the aesthetic and the wonder, versus maybe some other folks, they're kind of in it for the adrenaline junkie aspect?

Lori: You know, I think storm chasing is different for everybody. I know there are people who absolutely, every single time will try and get right next to a tornado where it's right in your face. And to be honest with you, that's the stuff that sells. If you're looking to sell footage and do this for a job... If this is your job and that's your income, you kind of need to get right up on that storm and put yourself in a position where, hopefully, you're not going to get hurt, but where you can get that grungy, ground-scraping, vortex churning up the dirt and pulling trees up off the ground and things like that.

But I'm still a new Plains supercell chaser, so I don't know what will happen when the opportunity is presented for me to get a little closer to a tornado. I may want to be still at a safe distance but I may want to see it a little closer.

Julie: What tools are you using, like in your car or... What kind of technology are you using to be able to know what's going on and where to go?

Lori: There are some people who... If you've ever watched *Storm Chasers* or if you've ever seen some of these vehicles, the way that people outfit their vehicles, they have anemometers, they have weather gauges actually mounted on top of their car, and it's pretty hilarious. I actually think it's super cool. To be honest with you, if I could afford all of that, my vehicle would look just like that. It might even have a turret in the top. I've actually seen someone remove a part of their roof so they could have a dome on the top so they could look up and see the storm above them. And I think that's really cool. That is such a nerd thing to do and I totally envy them for doing that.

But the equipment can... You can end up spending thousands of dollars on just the gear. From a laptop that's mounted in your vehicle, in the passenger seat. Goodness... like I said, the cages and all of that stuff to avoid getting hail destroying your car. But for me it's really simple. Being in a monsoon, it's a lot safer of course, so for me I like to keep it simple. And there's a reason I do, because I've actually tried the laptop and the other stuff, and what I found, for me, is that it's just too distracting.

We all know what the number one killer is once you're on the road, and it's probably going to be your driving or anybody else's driving. And I think that's the most important thing to take away from storm chasing, that the largest danger is not necessarily a tornado. It's probably something that's coming down the road or yourself.

I think back on one of the coolest guys who created our annual monsoon convention MonCon, Corbin Jaeger. He actually was chasing tornados about three or four years ago and he was struck and killed by other storm chasers in Texas. He was driving to chase a tornado, and he was doing everything safely, and these other guys were distracted and they ended up missing the stop sign. It was a really sad, unfortunate thing, and Corbin lost his life and they both lost their lives as well. I think that's just... If that's not the ultimate warning on the dangers, then what is?

It's really important that no matter what you do, whether you're just going to enjoy the storm, if the lightning is outside and you're looking up and seeing lightning bolts from above, you need to get inside. They say, "When the thunder roars, go indoors." When thunder roars, we just go. We're storm chasers!

But at the same time... People think that I'm being unsafe, and learning to understand the storm is priority one because when you do that... The gear that I have, to be honest with you, if I get even remotely close to a storm, you know what I do? I let the cameras do all the work. I'll get inside my vehicle and I'll just let the cameras, either taking time-lapse photography, capturing image-by-image, or I will... I have a lightning trigger that will try to capture the lightning during the daytime and get those bolts.

Julie: What is a lightning trigger?

Lori: A lightning trigger is a little device that... I don't know the technical aspects of it, but what it does is as soon as that initial strike happens it triggers the camera, it detects that within, like, milliseconds and it releases the shutter to your camera. It'll take, like, a series of three images, so oftentimes you'll get the return stroke, so it'll capture that faster than you can imagine. So, it's a really cool gadget. There's a bunch of them out there. A lot of them are garbage. A lot of people get so frustrated with spending the money. I use one that's a little bit more expensive but it really does a great job at capturing the images. The images that I've shared, especially during the daytime, almost all of them were captured using the lightning trigger.

Julie: Where are you getting your weather information?

Lori: Right. So, there's a lot of things that you can use, a lot of tools at your disposal. In this day and age we can have them all on our phone. So I do have my phone mounted to the dash there. I use a radar app called RadarScope, and it shows me... This little app can tell me not only where the storms are but where the lightning is dropping. I can see where the bolts are landing and I can also see the storms that are growing. I can see a storm as it's growing in height, which is really important for lightning, right? We want those storms to really elevate and we want to see that there's an updraft forming, because when you have the ice crystals in the upper atmosphere, and the positive charges on the ground, and the negative charges up in the atmosphere, then you end up having that negatively charged bolt.

There's going to be static electricity when you see those towering cumulonimbus in the summertime, and that will really... using that app will really allow me, along with of course just having a good sense of what you're looking at in a cloud, it'll really begin

to tell me where to point the camera. It's so frustrating to be in front of this awesome storm, or three or four storms, and not know where to point your camera. It's happened so many times where I'm pointing my camera in one direction and lightning hits just out of the frame. So frustrating!

Yes, storm chasing is such a great passion but it can also bring you down if you don't just enjoy the thrill of the chase. You're going to come home with mostly failure, if that's the case. And the secret I've discovered, the first couple of years I was ready to hang up my hat and just go back to playing guitar because I was so frustrated to drive 400 or 500 miles in a single day just for one day of monsoon chasing and come back with nothing.

But I've discovered that if I can just capture one extraordinary image... and I'm not talking extraordinary what other people think with 1,000 likes or whatever on Instagram, or Facebook, or Twitter, but something that's extraordinary to me, and it might not even include a storm, it might just be some surreal landscape that I've never seen before and I was able to capture this with certain colors or whatever. If I can come home with that one, then that's the big fish of the day and I'm good with that.

Julie: You mentioned Australia. Is storm chasing primarily an American thing, or does it happen all over the world?

Lori: You know, I've seen so many different people from different countries learning to do this. And being a storm chaser here and being so active on social media with many other people, it's amazing where you'll see people that are storm chasing. I now have friends who are storm chasers in Australia, but I also have friends and acquaintances from France and even India, because we all know that the true monsoon happens in India. And those are the ones that... Oh my goodness, these catastrophic floods and things like that. But these people are out there chasing *those* storms and I never knew that that was even a thing, and now I want to go to India to chase those storms.

But they are, and they capture unique, incredible images as well. It's really a fantastic thing. I think it's a global phenomenon. I think we all love weather. We all want to see really pretty skies. And I think modern technology's given us the ability to capture that, and bring that, and share that with others.

Julie: What do you think about the storm chasing industry as a tourism industry?

Lori: Those people are crazy. No, I'm kidding. [laughs] I'm one of them.

Julie: [laughs] Yeah?

Lori: Yes. I actually... You know, I've been pretty successful over the last four or five years of chasing and I've had so many people that just wanted to ride with me, and I figured, why don't I give it a try as well? And the last two years I've had monsoon workshops and a workshop on the Plains as well, and they were all just a complete blast. We made sure that we were safe, we made sure that we weren't... That's not the kind of tour where you want to get right next to a tornado, right? Where you're looking to just destroy your car and things like that. It's not that kind of adrenaline rush. It was more of a photographer-oriented expedition, so to say.

And I've actually... Thankfully now that covid is... we're starting to turn a corner with covid, it looks like I might be able to do some more monsoon workshops this year as well. So I tentatively have a couple already booked for the monsoon season, and those

people are super excited to go out there with me and be able to bring their camera gear and hopefully bring some really stunning images back home with them.

Julie: So what happens in one of your monsoon workshops?

Lori: It starts off... On day one we meet together at a certain designated location. We all gear up, and it might start off with lunch, talking about what to expect. But more importantly, I like to show people what I do to prepare for a storm. A lot of it has to do with the forecasting, and there's a lot of different websites I use to determine the target, right? Because you can find yourself driving 300 miles in the wrong direction and then realize, "What just happened?" It's a very, very sad thing for me. I will drive 200 miles away only to find out that there are storms overhead, and my daughter will call me from home saying, "Oh my goodness, where are you?! This is the best storm ever!" And I'll miss it because I decided to drive to a different target.

But you know, targeting storms with my group, my workshop, and then after that we just get after it. We may have to drive 100 miles or 200 miles to get to that area where the storms are going to start forming. So once you do that, once the adrenaline starts spiking, once they see those clouds going up, it's all about teaching them... imparting to them what I know. And so I love talking about what they're seeing because there's nothing better than learning to see the storm yourself and to know exactly what's going on. From identifying an updraft base, they call it a rain-free base, when you're looking at the sky and you don't see any rain falling but the clouds just look gnarly and dangerous, and they're dark, and you don't know what's going on.

But then a few minutes later, all of a sudden you get this huge downpour. And being able to show that to them and teach them to identify that on their own, you know, you're making other storm chasers at the same time during that workshop. So, what I want them to take away from that is to be able to do this on their own completely, and completely without radar, completely without anything other than, they step outside of their house and they go, "That storm is about to really blow up. I need to grab my camera and get after it."

Julie: Now, do you also, kind of, give them photography tips as well? Like the best way to shoot a storm?

Lori: Absolutely. The first year that I chased storms, I would literally just point my camera at the clouds and hold the shutter down. Each day I would end up with 2,000-3,000 photos, and I would have to cull that, right? I would have to go through all of those images, and I might have three or four bolts that are just so-so. And even then, if you don't know the right settings, if your aperture is too wide... Lightning is really bright, especially as it gets into nighttime. And if your aperture is wide open, you are going to have just, you know, a big white photo of nothingness. So yeah, there's a lot of technical aspects of learning to shoot lightning especially.

And the contrast in a sky, right? In the middle of day or even as the sun is setting, it's really tricky. You want to capture the storm but you don't want to overexpose the rest of the sky. That's the kind of stuff that you can only really learn when you're finally there and you see that the sun is going down, your exposure is changing every few minutes, and you have to be on it. You really need to be shooting in manual. And being able to teach people and impart to others to be able to do that on the fly, once they learn that there, it's amazing. Then you can shoot anything, right? You've really become an all-around great photographer if you've learned to be able to change your exposures and

change your settings on the fly in the middle of an adrenaline rush. That's the important thing, is to be able to work under pressure. Teaching them to do that, that's very rewarding for me.

Julie: How would you say this passion has changed you as a person?

Lori: My dad passed away in 2007, and I think that really kicked in an important moment for me that life is short. And we can go through our lives just going through the grind and not doing the things we love. Sure, we can do our jobs, and go into a job each and every day, but there are also things that we're passionate about. How many times have we woken up going, "I would love to do that sometime," and we just don't take that step? The quickness of life, and the shortness of our lives in the grand scheme in the universe, we are just a blip.

For me it's important... I don't know how many years I have left. I'm approaching half a century here on this world, and I don't think I have another half-century in me. I just decided that that's something that I absolutely love to do. I absolutely love playing my guitar, and spending time with my dogs, and getting out there and hiking, and camping, and being out there among the elements. And that's why I also shoot the stars as well. So if there's no storms, I still have the gear but I still think... I'm learning to become an even better astrophotographer, and there's so much that the night sky has to offer if you just get out there.

In the middle of the desert, we can see the Milky Way Galaxy like most people can't in the rest of the United States. And I actually live far enough away from Tucson that even this morning at about four o'clock in the morning I was outside with the dogs and I saw the Milky Way starting to rise because it's Milky Way season again. And I wanted to grab my camera, but instead I'm going to wait for a couple of days to get out there to a really awesome spot so I can have, you know, a windmill in the picture or something and get that extraordinary shot over just the ordinary shot. Sorry, I love it.

Julie: I love it! Me too.

Lori: I can settle into those thoughts very easily, as you can tell.

Julie: Totally. I'm with you, right there. So, you've been chasing for a number of years now. What was the most amazing thing you've seen so far?

Lori: Oh goodness... I really have to say, there's nothing like a monsoon storm traversing across these giant, what we call, sky islands. They're mountains with 9,000, 10,000-foot peaks here in Arizona, and they literally call them the sky islands. And to see these sky islands, these storms forming over the sky islands as the sun is going down and the sky just lights up... Every color that you can imagine. Nothing that you could see even on the computer screen compares to seeing that spectacle. And to be able to see those pinks, and golds, and oranges, and purples, and blues, and... Oh my goodness. It's just mind-boggling.

And then to feel the power. You feel the storm's power when you're even remotely close to it, and to feel that rush of energy. All of that energy that's being expended on dumping that much-needed rain on the desert floor. And to look out onto that desert floor and seeing all the birds jumping into the little pools, seeing the cows just enjoying that refreshing, cooling monsoon storm... That's why I have a passion for this. I just want to get out there.

If there's a storm... And all my friends know, I don't care about sleep. Sleep is for the off-season. I will literally get very little sleep just to be able to get out there and experience that. And if need be - which I've done many times - I will car camp. I'll just sleep in my vehicle or find a hotel if I'm too far to drive, because again, the most dangerous part of this is the vehicle and the driving. So, I just want to be safe doing it; I want to have my dogs with me. I do protect myself quite well. I've met some sketchy people in the middle of the desert. I don't know why. People have approached me in the middle of the desert and they are warned by my dogs not to get too close.

Julie: What has been the most surprising thing about storm chasing to you, so far?

Lori: Wow, that's a great question. Nobody's ever asked me that question. I discovered that the answer came very quickly. The most surprising thing about storm chasing is that every storm is unique and offers something new for even someone who's been chasing for four or five years like myself. Every single storm offers something unique. It's like no single storm is the same.

And the way that the bolts drop, you would think that lightning is lightning, but it really isn't when you're seeing lightning decide to crawl through the sky. They call those crawlers, you know, near the end of a storm cycle, the lightning just doesn't seem to reach the ground anymore. But when you're standing under this anvil and you see all these crawlers, they look like tree branches and it just dazzles. There's something new and unexpected for every storm. And I think that's the most important thing, that it doesn't get old because the storms are all unique.

Julie: Are there misconceptions about storm chasing that you just hate and want to fix?

Lori: Absolutely. You would think that... I think the people who first hear about people who chase storms is that, "Oh, that's just dumb because you're just putting your life at risk each and every day." Don't get me wrong, chasing storms is inherently risky. Everyone has to understand that. At the same time, learning to do what I do, like I said, you can be a backyard chaser and be able to enjoy a storm from a park or from a hill and you're watching a storm that's miles away off in the distance, or you can learn to get a little closer and still be safe knowing that you have avenues of escape, right?

The things that I like to teach, even during my workshops and in many of the presentations that I give in Tucson or locally when I'm asked to speak, the most important thing is learning to be safe and minimizing risk. I think what I do is a lot less risky than what most people do at their jobs, especially... Most of us that have blue-collar jobs; we get out there and we risk working on these giant machines and all of these different things that are dangerous.

So, learning to be a storm chaser is more about getting out there and getting in a position where you don't find yourself in a really bad situation. I think storm chasers are safer when it comes to driving in inclement weather than the average American because they know the risks and they know, "Nope, I'm not crossing that. Nope, I'm not doing that." And that's just because we've learned that those are the things that are going to get you.

Julie: So if someone were intrigued by our conversation and they wanted to get into storm chasing as a newbie, how would you recommend they get started?

Lori: There are a lot of people out there on social media, a lot of storm chasers out there, that just are super cool and willing to just share that knowledge, especially the

beginnings of it. They can start off by joining these storm chase groups. There are so many people who have great knowledge. Learn from others and how they do it because so many people are willing to help and share; from camera settings, camera choices, lenses, the right gear. Having a weak tripod, you know, buying one of those \$30-40 tripods and then deciding to chase storms where those winds get up to 50 miles an hour, that's not a good idea.

So, you learn what to buy, and hopefully, as you learn to do this kind of passion or hobby, by learning from others you won't have to make those same mistakes that I did and buy all this useless gear that just doesn't work for it.

Julie: Well, Lori, thank you so much for taking so much time to share your passion with us, and hopefully we'll get some folks who are interested in chasing storms as a result.

Lori: Julie, it's been such a pleasure. I'm so glad that I had a chance to actually meet you, talk with you, because like I mentioned before, learning to just live your passion... My goodness, people, we don't have tomorrow. We learned that last year. I lost my brother to covid three months ago. We don't have tomorrow, man. Let's just get out there. Let's do whatever we need to do to just inspire others, to be there for others, and to get out there and enjoy what we love, do what we love.

Julie: Amen.

Truly a heartfelt thank you to Lori for her wisdom, and her passion, and her story. You can find Lori on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#) @LoriGraceAZ. I'll include all those links in the show notes. I'll also include links to Lori's favorite nonprofits as well as my own.

All of the transcripts for *Love What You Love* are available for everyone on the website. Thanks to Emily White, transcription guru and proprietress of The Wordary. If you need transcripts, reach out to her at Emily@TheWordary.com. The music for *Love What You Love* is called "Inspiring Hope" by Pink-Sounds. A link to that artist is included in the show notes.

As always, thank you so much for listening, today and this whole year. Let's keep it going and let's hang out again soon.

Links:

Find Lori on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#)

Lori's Favorite Nonprofits:

[Retired Paws](#)

[The Multiple Myeloma Foundation](#)

My Favorite Nonprofits:

[Humane Society of Silicon Valley](#)

[Towncats.org](#)

[World Central Kitchen](#)

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