Transcript of "Irene Sans, Editorial Manager and Meteorologist at Weather & Radar in Miami, Florida"

Clear Skies Ahead: Conversations about Careers in Meteorology and Beyond

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Kelly Savoie:

Welcome to the American Meteorological Society's podcast series, Clear Skies Ahead: Conversations about Careers in Meteorology and Beyond. I'm Kelly Savoie, and I'm here with Rex Herbst-Horner, and we'll be your hosts. We're excited to give you the opportunity to step into the shoes of an expert working in weather, water, and climate sciences.

Rex Herbst-Horner:

We are happy to introduce today's guest Irene Sans, an Editorial Manager and Meteorologist at Weather & Radar in Miami, Florida. Welcome, Irene. Thanks very much for joining us today.

Irene Sans:

Thank you so much. A pleasure to be here with you guys.

Kelly:

Irene, could you tell us a little bit about your educational background and what sparked your interest in meteorology?

Irene:

Well, it came young. I think, I was, if you ask a dear friend of mine, Sandra, she'll tell you that I used to always talk about being a meteorologist in middle school. I remember more clearly in high school, but if she remembers it, it's because I used to talk about it, so, hey.

Irene:

And I always liked science and math. I always found myself being very good at those subjects. So I'm a little bit of a math nerd and science nerd. I would always take science classes as my alternatives or the extracurricular activities that we had to do within the school. And math, just because I didn't want to play golf, so I went for math. And it's too hot in Florida to be playing golf outside. And so I focused on those two subjects and then everything just fell so easily, after that.

Irene:

In high school, I used to TA for Ms. Bitty—that's her name—and she went to FSU. So she's like, "Oh, have you thought about where you want to go to school?" And I'm like, "Well, I want to go to college or an university, I just don't know where." I wasn't born in the U.S., so I didn't have this clear path of, okay, this is what you do in every step of your year. My dad did go to school here in the U.S. under a scholarship, back in the day, but I didn't grow up over here at least the first ten years of my life.

Irene:

So Ms. Bitty was a foundation of that, because she was the one that told me, "Okay, go to FSU"—FSU pride, Seminole pride—so I'm like, "Okay, I'll go there. I'll apply there." And I knew that I wanted to go to school for meteorology. When I started looking more into the schools and everything. Well, UM [University of Miami] in South Florida—it's private, so that's out of the question. So I applied to FSU, that's the only school that I'd applied to. That's the school that I got accepted to and that's the school that I went to. From there on it was meteorology.

Kelly:

Wow, so that's great that you had a mentor to help guide you through that. And she knew you were interested in math and science, and FSU is like a perfect school for meteorology.

Irene:

I wanted to do tropical meteorology. I mean, it's so weird because everything just fell so easily in the guidance, in the path that I took. I know I'm very lucky to have that. I'm very, very lucky to just not have that stressful moment of "Where am I going to go? What am I going to do? Who's going to..." Not even realizing that perhaps some people have not that guidance, so I've been very blessed since the beginning.

Rex:

We just recorded another episode with someone else that went to Florida State University and they also enjoyed their experience. They went on to do a PhD program there. So they found it to be a very vibrant hub for folks interested in meteorology. And they also found, it being a public school was very important to them as well.

Rex:

So you mentioned in high school, you were looking at electives in science. What about into college? While you were in school, were there any other extracurricular opportunities that you were taking on or after graduation into your early career that you felt are beneficial to helping you find what your meteorology job was that you wanted?

Rex:

Then I'm going to throw in a bonus question. So in high school you probably had an idea of what a meteorologist was, did that evolve as you went into college and as you learned more about the field? And did that evolution, if it happened, affect how you followed your career path?

Irene:

Well, you know what, now that you ask it that way, in high school, I took Spanish class. Obviously, I was bilingual. So I probably could have been taken another language, but I figured, hey, I know English and Spanish, I think I'm good. No more. So I took Spanish class in high school and then a more advanced Spanish marketing class in college. Again, looking back at it now, I think that created a foundation to keep my language skills in the Spanish language up. Without even realizing that that's what's going to be my main language that I would work in.

Irene:

So at home, my mom always told us we're going to speak Spanish at home. You'll learn English in school with your friends, but at home it's always going to be in Spanish. And I think that's something that I applied with my daughter, and she knows Spanish. And she's very fluent in her two and a half years old with her vocabulary, it's surprising. And I think it works well. It might not work for everybody, but it works well for my husband and I.

Irene:

And well, in high school, I took those Spanish classes in college too. I went into college knowing that I wanted to do meteorology. What first sparked my interest in meteorology was watching John Morales on TV. Don't tell him this, because every time I tell this story, he's like, "Oh, you're calling me old." Then I saw him, he was covering, I guess it was a typical severe weather here in Florida in the afternoons, in the summertime. And I'm like, "Oh, okay, that's cool. The radar. Oh yeah." And it just came so natural to me. Not that I understood the radar fully at that point, in, I guess, middle school at this point, but I'm like, "Okay, that's really interesting."

Irene:

I liked the images. I liked the radar images. I like what he's talking about. I mean, when I would look outside and see that dark cloud, and I'm like, "Oh, okay. So that's that? Okay. Got it." So he's been a big mentor in my career as well. And I have been working with his consultant firm also for, wow, I think a decade now. I mean, I had the pleasure of having him as my visual` goal in a way, not because he was on TV, but just because he was talking about the science and also now working with him. So, again, very blessed.

Irene:

And in college, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I didn't know if I wanted to do TV or to go more into the academic field or I don't know, private sector. All I knew is that meteorology had a huge field. I mean, I could work with insurance firms. I can work with airlines. I can work on TV. I can work with the government. I can continue my schooling and become a professor or whatever. So I'm like, okay, that's good. And hey—weather: it's always happening, so there's always going to be a need for it, so that's job security right there. That was like my motto, like, okay, I'm always going to have some sort of job, because weather's happening, so that's what I wanted in life.

Irene:

And then came a broadcasting course in FSU, and then came the FSU weather show, where Dr. Ahlquist was telling us, "Oh, okay, well, we would do the weather segments and on live TV." There used to be, I think, a half-hour weather show every day. We would produce it. We would make our own graphics. We would forecast. It was a great experience. And Dr. Ahlquist was like, "Well, do it in Spanish because we need a Spanish speaking meteorologist."

Irene:

The more I did research on that, I found out that in the US, at that time, it was John and Eduardo, and a handful of other people, not even a handful at one point. So I'm like, “Wow, talk about job security. Talk about having some sort of stability and being one of the few.” Because I think ultimately that whatever you do, you want to be one of the few that are good at something, or that specialize in something, that way you have more job security.

Irene:

So I did that and it worked out better—when you're starting out, I mean, my nerves were crazy. I used to get so nervous on camera. I was like, "Okay, I'm going to do it in Spanish that way nobody understands what I'm saying, and I'll be fine." All that they would criticize me [about] always was just, "You're talking too fast." Which is true, and I still do.

Irene:

So, I moved into broadcast, and then I'm like, "Well, I don't know if I want to do broadcast." My junior year came around and I didn't have an internship anywhere. It was May in my sophomore year, I was entering my junior year. And I used to always work while in college. At one point, I had like four jobs, not meteorology related, just survival related. And I think that's what delayed me into get a scholarship, just because time just went by so fast. It goes fast when you're having fun, too, right?

Irene:

So it just happened. And May 2007 came around and I was supposed to get an internship with the Emergency Management in Florida, just because, again, I had met a major in the Army at the restaurant that I was working at. And he used to work for FEMA in Tallahassee. So he's like, "Oh, what are you doing?" I'm like, "Oh, I'm becoming a meteorologist." And like, "Oh, we have a state meteorology, and I think they're looking for interns." I'm like, "Okay, that's great." So I applied and I was supposed to get in, but the guy that had the internship before me decided to stay for an extension of his internship, and we're friends now. And he stayed, so I had no internship at that point.

Irene:

So it was May the year before I graduated, I had a year left in school and I didn't know what to do. I'm like, "Oh my God, my life is destroyed. I fought all these years to become a meteorologist, to have job security, and now I'm going to graduate with no internship. My life is just going to end right here and the world's going to end."

Irene:

So I drove down to South Florida and I got in contact with John. That was the first time I contacted John about being a meteorologist. So I saw him, and he still tells me until this day, like, "Oh my God, why did you wait this long?" So I waited from middle school to almost my last year in college to contact John. Oh, God, do you ever think this guy is going to answer, he was like, he's a legend over here, why would he pay attention to a little middle school or high school or even college [student]?

Kelly:

Well, he's such a great guy, I'm sure he responded.

Irene:

He did. He did. I could be working with him for the last, I don't know, 20 years now, and here I am only with 10. So he responded, he invited me to the station. I met the bosses at the station, everybody. At that point, it was too late for an internship, but I had already contacted also the other news director in the Univision station in South Florida.

Irene:

Again, I go in and the lady, Ms. Silva, says, "We have no Spanish-speaking meteorologists and you're great. Yeah, just come in. Your internship starts in June." I'm like, "What?"

Kelly:

Oh, awesome.

Irene:

And it was a paid internship, so it was like, "Great." So I did the internship. By August, they had put me in the morning show, in the morning to cover for the weather personality at the time to do the weather in Spanish, in Miami. And I'm like, “Whoa, like this is moving really fast.”

Irene:

So I did that, then December came around, winter break came around. They also told me to come down so I can cover her vacation, so I did that. And then February comes around and now the Telemundo station, here, wanted me to do weekend weather for them, while I was doing my last six months in school. I said, "Yeah." And I did. And I finished my internship there with them, my internship freelancing gig at this point. By this point I was applying everywhere, because I didn't know if it was going to last. They weren't sure if they were going to hire like somebody with, I don't know, either more experience, or I didn't know if I wanted to stay in South Florida. Because I also knew that I wanted to maybe go somewhere else and explore, because that's the time I think that you should do it, when you're young and you have no-

Kelly:

No major commitments.

Irene:

Yes. Major commitments. And you're young, you don't have kids or you're not married, or if you are, your spouse can come with you, and it's just like, this is time to do it. So I started applying everywhere, everywhere. I sent over a 100 DVDs at the point, so not quite tapes, hey, but DVDs. And I heard back from a few of them, but I did notice that there was like, "Oh yeah, you want to do weather. Yeah, we're hiring a weather girl." And it's like, ah, it was discouraging to just always hear the weather girl terminology.

Irene:

Even though I was starting, it would get me excited to get a call back. But he was just so, in a way, a little bit demeaning, just, "Oh yeah, yeah. You were looking for somebody to do weather." It's like, "Okay, you're looking for meteorologist." "Oh yeah, for weather." It's like, "No, you're looking for meteorologist, right?"

Kelly:

Like a real scientist.

Irene:

Yeah. I got a job as soon as I graduated with WSI in Boston, so I moved to Boston for two years. I did that. And I think that was the best decision that I could have made at the time. I worked at what I call the weather factory for two years, so it was two years of doing, at one point it was probably like over a dozen weather segments a day, just for different stations across the U.S. and in Europe, and Al Jazeera.

Irene:

We would write, we would do radio, we would record on camera segments, so it was great. I had the opportunity to polish my presentations there. Something that, perhaps, I wasn't going to be able to do working in South Florida, because if I would have been working just on the weekends, perhaps, they were just going to put me on the weekends, and it was just a big, first fish. Which is fine to have a great opportunity at the beginning, but I don't know, I think being able to polish my skills and polish my knowledge of the U.S. a little bit better and just have different experience, helped me more in the future.

Irene:

So I did that. And two years after Boston, it was too cold. There was too much snow and this Florida girl wanted to be back. So I went back to Florida. And then that's when I guess my career in broadcast, that's when it really took off.

Irene:

But you know what? I missed something before graduating, while I was doing the summer internship and graduation, I also did work with Emergency Management. So I was able to get my internship with them in between all the gigs. So that was a great experience, too, because that gave me the knowledge of first responders, emergency management. We got activated for the wildfires in 2008, and that was such an experience, to be able to brief officials, to know what goes on behind the scenes. Because as broadcast meteorologists, we know what's going on in the newsroom, but I don't think a lot of people know what's really, really going behind the scenes as emergency management, and then why they think they do how they do and what they do things a certain way. And all the layers that are there during an emergency. So I think that was a great experience to have too.

Kelly:

It must've been so great having like professions in varied fields, because you were able to do emergency management, broadcasting, work for the private sector. It really gave you a flavor for what meteorologists do.

Irene:

Yeah. I mean, just knowing what the Emergency Management managers need, it's different for the public, but it's also very similar. But it's just, they're go like, "Okay, I need in the case of wildfires, wind and if there are going to be any storms. And out of where? Like out of the south, northeast or whatever." The public, it's more like, "Okay, how is it going to impact me?" So it's different. It's different in a way, but it's very much linked.

Rex:

Right, the public is asking, "Do I have to leave my home? Do I have to take my kids and my pets and my family somewhere?" So Irene, now, you're working at Weather & Radar, which I understand is a weather app.

Irene:

Yes.

Rex:

Can you tell us a little bit about how that's different from a traditional weather station that's associated with the TV channel and what you do on the job at Weather & Radar?

Irene:

Well, I think it's great to work with the team of scientists. I think that has impacted me and that I've welcomed the most. The team in Miami is small, but Abbott—the matrix company, the mother company—is in Germany. And one having different cultures, I mean, we have meetings where we have somebody in Serbia where we have somebody in India, when there's somebody in the UK, and I love it. I love it just because there's so much knowledge out there and not just meteorological knowledge, but just cultural knowledge.

Irene:

So that has been one of the most gratifying things this year, to be able to have moved into my new role, as opposed to working in a news station, where it's different. It's totally different. I mean, yes, you can have people from all different cultures. And I worked in Houston for two years. I worked in Miami for several years, forecasting for other stations across the nation, for Dallas, for the West Coast. And it was great to have also that cultural diversity of different places in the U.S., but now it's like really a cultural difference. So it's really, really cool.

Irene:

As far as the job itself, working for a news station, to me, it was exhausting. It's a lot. It's a lot. You have to be ready to... I've worked in teams, and the latest station that I worked at was in WFTV in Orlando. And we had a team, at one point, we had the largest team in Central Florida of meteorologists, so it was six of us. I mean, not a lot of stations have six meteorologists, nowadays, so that alone, it's great.

Irene:

So I did have that scientific team, but I was doing digital weather. I had already, I guess, retired from TV with my last station. Before that I worked in Houston for two years for the Telemundo station there. And it was, I mean, the people in Houston were just... the viewers were so great. I think that was the biggest difference that I noticed between working in Miami and working in Southeast Texas. Not that the people in Miami are not great, they are great as well, but people are just so much more welcoming. And I think it's because they've had more severe weather, more constant, and it's a more diverse city, believe it or not. You have people from a wide variety of countries.

Irene:

And here in Miami, you do, but a lot of them don't stay in Miami for a long time. Either they move on and off, back and forth to their country, so they don't really like set roots over here. As opposed to Houston, you have a lot of people that just set roots. Maybe a lot of people just come from Central America and they know that that's their home now. So I don't know, I don't know if that makes a difference in people being so warm and just kind in Houston. But I also found that in Dallas, so maybe it's a Texas thing, it's Texas Southern hospitality or kindness. And just having that background of working in different cities, it was great.

Rex:

So what is a day like on the job now?

Irene:

So, yeah, I mean, working for any TV station, when I worked with a team or when I worked in Houston, when I was the only meteorologist in the station, it's tough. I mean, if you're the only meteorologist you're on call 24/7 and more, if that's possible. There's a lot of weight in your shoulders. So I was lucky to do that when I was single and I didn't have a family with me, so I was able to just bury myself in work, and that was fine.

Irene:

But your priorities start to change. I wanted to get married and have kids, so I moved. I moved back to Florida and I was able to do that. I mean, working with the last station that I worked with, I knew that I didn't want to do TV anymore, because things are moving so fast within the whole broadcast field that I knew that I needed to jump ship, as they say, sooner than later, just because I needed to have that digital experience.

Irene:

I knew that that was where things were moving to. Even in the early 2000s, right after graduation, I mean, I was the first meteorologist in the station where I worked on the weekends here in South Florida that did a chat. It wasn't through Facebook because Facebook was a little bit of a taboo back then in the media. I had it, but they didn't have the ability to do chats or anything like that. And I just embraced that so much. And I liked that so much, because I think that that's what showed me that I could reach my people. I can reach the viewers, myself, and get feedback right away. And I love that. I love talking to people. I love asking questions, getting feedback and answering or not answering. So I think that's what made me move into the digital world.

Irene:

And now working with an app, I think that things are changing. I know there's a lot of bash out there as far as like, "Oh, a weather app, it doesn't even tell you anything." But there's a lot of work behind the scenes. In Weather & Radar, I mean, we're constantly tweaking things, not us in the office, but the developers, the big-time scientists that do the models and tweak the numbers and tweak the layers to make the clouds show up correctly, or the rain show up correctly. There's a lot of work that's behind that. And I don't think that that needs to be bashed because that's how a lot of people are getting their information.

Irene:

So that's what we need to work on, because the ultimate goal is to keep people safe, to keep people informed, so that they make the right choices. So if they're getting it from an app, well, let's improve the app. If they are getting it from the newscast, well, maybe, you need to upgrade the way you do the weather segments or do a combination of both, which a lot of TV stations are doing now. So you just have to constantly adjust.

Kelly:

So do you work closely with the customers who subscribe to the app? Is that what an editorial manager does? Or is it something that you do internally for staff at the organization?

Irene:

There's a little bit of everything. I mean, I write a lot of articles. I do customer service. I talk to any subscribers that may have an issue with their app, or perhaps they're not seeing their city, let's say, or the radar seems to always be jumpy on their city or the temperature might be a little bit too warm or a little bit too hot, and doesn't really feel correct. Or they want something added or they don't want to see something else. It's a lot of customer service, but it's great, because, again, you're getting feedback straight from the viewer, the user in this case.

Kelly:

Wow. That sounds awesome. And I'm sure it's a much better work-life balance than working as a broadcast meteorology at a station.

Irene:

Yeah.

Kelly:

Easier for you. So working in Florida and in Texas, you must've seen some severe weather. What's the most exciting weather event you've experienced?

Irene:

Well, in South Florida, when I worked in South Florida, we were brushed by Isaac, Irene, but it was, I mean, I don't want to diminish any weather event that did cause some sort of damage, but we didn't get a direct hit. That was exciting. And I think covering hurricanes in South Florida, like that one time that I did that chat back in the day, when they didn't have chats that was cool, that was exciting. I love tropical meteorology. So anything that's hurricane and tropical storm related was great. Matthew, when I worked in WFTV was, whew, that was hardcore. I mean, the storm didn't make landfall in Florida, as opposed to what a lot of people say, it didn't make landfall. But the eye just brushed over Cape Canaveral, and cause major damage, and erosion too.I think we went on coverage for a few days and that was such a rush.

Irene:

Then Dorian. Dorian, oh my God, Dorian. Dorian was just seven days. I was in Orlando, just continuous coverage. At one point, we knew that it wasn't going to hit Orlando, of course, but still you want to keep people informed, because people are just looking at these images of this huge storm, just sitting there

right next door, pretty much. And people don't know that it's just going to be picked up by a trough or pushed by a front, and people were just like, "Okay, that's going to turn any minute now." Well, that was exciting too.

Irene:

In Texas—oh man, the severe weather—I didn't have the chance to cover any hurricanes in Texas, because I was only there for two years, and those two years were pretty quiet for Texas. But severe weather in Texas, it's just a whole other ball game. I remember those lines of storms that would just sweep by and thousands and thousands of lightning strikes. You would see them. I would see them outside. That's incredible. I mean, I don't know if that... That doesn't compare to tracking or chasing a tornado or anything like that, but it's just amazing to have different experiences.

Kelly:

Wow, just the lightning storms alone, I'm terrified of lightning, personally, so that's scary enough for me.

Irene:

I'm telling you then spring and fall in Texas, it would be crazy for you because just lines, just a simple "line of storms," I mean, they would develop thousands of lightning strikes in minutes. So it's like, whoa.

Kelly:

I'd be hiding. I'd be hiding. I was going to ask you about hail. Is that a big thing in Texas to have like ginormous size hail?

Irene:

Yeah, I think last week I saw a post, Texas had the largest hail recorded in the US, I believe. And it was 20 inches wide.

Kelly:

Oh, my gosh.

Irene:

Almost two feet, almost two feet wide. Around 16 or 20 inches. It's like, what?

Kelly:

You don't want to be riding your bike during a hailstorm in Texas.

Irene:

No.

Kelly:

It'll knock you out.

Irene:

Literally, yeah. So I don't know, I always tend to gravitate more towards tropical, but every time I think about Texas, it's just like the flooding. Yes, I did go, it wasn't major flooding as Harvey, or any of the recent flooding situations or events, but flooding was huge in Houston. I mean, every time it would rain, it was just like, okay, flooding, boom. And then people just driving their cars or just being stranded, it's unfortunate.

Rex:

Right. There's no need for tornado chasers to get all the limelight. I think there's plenty of other very exciting weather events that are just as comparable.

Irene:

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Rex:

We can spread the love around to all the weather phenomenon.

Irene:

Thank you. I always feel bad talking about my little weather events, because then a chaser comes around and says, "Oh, look at this picture." And you're like, "Oh, well I just cover lightning or a hurricane."

Rex:

I think they're all important. So Irene, you've participated in many AMS boards and committees. I know, right now, for one, you review Spanish language applicants for the Board of Broadcast Meteorology. And I know you've reviewed with that board on the past for other candidates as well. Tell us about what other boards you've been on and participated in, and how those experiences have been for you.

Irene:

Oh, I love—not because I'm talking to you guys—but I love being part of the AMS. And I think that's one of my regrets that I didn't do while I was in college is to attend an annual conference, that perhaps could have changed my career somehow. I never went to a AMS annual. I did participate in the local chapter, but I didn't participate in the annual or any other meetings within the big AMS, until after graduation. So I think I missed out there a lot.

Irene:

I've participated in the Early Career Professional board. I'm still in that board. In the Broadcast board, I did two terms there. I've done, maybe, my second term is coming up now with the Early Career Professionals. I'm also in the diversity cabinet right now, and then, in CHALA. CHALA is the Committee for Hispanic and Latino Advancements.

Irene:

So it's great. I'm all for connections, believe it or not. I mean, I think that my career has been marked, my professional life has been marked by my connections, either from my high school teacher to John

too, to just my colleague right now is just everything... This is a small world. Weather, meteorology, I mean, yeah, how many members do we have Kelly? Like 10,000?

Kelly:

Right, about that: 10,000.

Irene:

About that, right. So I mean 10,000 people, but it's really small. The people that you get to know in meteorology, in the AMS have been so crucial in my development as a professional. And now I find myself meeting the future generation and it's exciting. That part is really, really exciting.

Rex:

So Irene, on your website, I noticed you talk about being an advocate for being well-informed about the weather and concerned about the lack of information in Spanish about the weather. And so I just wanted to ask you, how does this bilingual weather advocacy, what does it mean to you and how can we help move it forward to a better place?

Irene:

Well, that has been, I think even though the lack of Spanish speaking meteorologists helped me, in a way, because it gave me a lot of work options. We need more. We still need more. And there has been a huge increase since 2008, since I graduated, so we're still lacking in there. And the U.S. has a large, very, very large amount of Spanish speaking people. And most of them are in big cities. And most of those big cities have severe weather, either storms or tornadoes or snow, fires, hurricanes, so there needs to be more weather information in Spanish.

Irene:

And in Latin America, there has been a little more awareness, because of big weather events because of climate change. So in Latin America, the field, I feel like it's growing a little bit more, and also having social media platforms and just different digital platforms that have connected different scientists, I think have created more awareness by itself.

Irene:

But it's so important, because the wide variety of weather events that we have here in the U.S., they don't exist in Nicaragua, in Honduras, in Venezuela, in Colombia. Yeah, in Venezuela, we had thunderstorms. There was snow in the mountains, but you know, hey. And we got brushed by a hurricane back in the day, but that was wind. People take it like that just, "Oh, well, it's going to rain. Well, it's going to rain, take your umbrella. You're going to be fine." And it's like, well, what about lightning? There's not this big lightning campaign to make sure people are safe. Mexico has a wide variety of weather hazards. And I think that has come a long way in the recent past. But in the U.S., I mean, consider you're having people coming from a whole bunch of other countries that, perhaps, have never dealt with a tornado and they're moving to Oklahoma, go figure.

Irene:

Somebody that's moving from Bolivia and they're moved to Miami and there's this big hurricane coming, like, "How do I deal with that? What is that even going to do to me?" So having the information in their

language, I think it's critical, because there's nothing like receiving information in your comfort zone, which is your comfort language. And having that can create a more sense of calmness and help people be ready, and ultimately, stay safe.

Irene:

So I think that's the goal. And with CHALA, right now, with the AMS committee that we're doing solely to creating campaigns and working with the future generation of meteorologists and Spanish-speaking meteorologists, we're trying to do that. I mean, we are trying to unite the scientists within the AMS. And even if you're not part of the AMS, like just try to unite us all, so we're all on the same page. Then there's also the fact that we have different dialects, different slang. People that are from Nicaragua might say things different than somebody that's from Colombia, so that has to be added in the mix too. So it's important. It's important to put things together. And I think that, right now, we have started to do a better job in that.

Rex:

And social media and other like digital weather apps, are those playing a helpful part in personalizing the information you were saying, to an audience in the language they speak versus something where it's an English broadcast on TV? It's just flat and can't be altered at all. These weather apps, do they have more personalization in them that helps reach an audience in their comfort zone?

Irene:

Yeah. I mean, I think my people, and I say my people, my people, I think, we're more connected digitally, because we need to be in order to keep up with our loved ones overseas or in other countries. So I think we're used to receiving information in our phones in that aspect, and Spanish speaking people also watch a lot of news, because that's something that's very common in our countries too. But I think as we have moved into this digital age we're relying a lot more on our phones. I mean, we all do. We all do.

Irene:

But, I mean, a lot of Hispanics work outdoors. We do a lot of sports outdoors. We depend on our phones, and we're always plugged in to our phone. So I think having that information in Spanish, readily available, and warning you, not just every time you look at it, but getting that push notification in Spanish, I think that marks the difference.

Kelly:

Irene, now that you're established in your career, what advice would you give students to help them in their job search? What have you learned through your journey?

Irene:

Things will fall into place. I'm not saying that a cycle will become compliant, and just take it easy. No, work hard, and don't worry so much about, "I got to do this right now, because…"—at least that was my personal experience—"I have to run and get an internship right now, because my life is over. I can't do that extra year college because I want to graduate and I want to start paying bills." No, you don't have to. Don't do it. Wait one more year. And once you're in your early career, just soak it all in. Soak it all in, ask questions. I think that's something that, I don't know, when I graduated, I felt like, "Okay, I graduated, I'm a professional now, I can't ask any more questions."

Irene:

No, you can always ask questions. Is this a changing field? This is a science. We're all still learning, believe it or not. I mean, if you stop learning, then there's an issue with you. I mean, we are always learning in this field and we're learning from each other. And I think that's something that needs to be more highlighted. Just learn from each other, collaborate with each other, bounce off ideas from each other, not just forecast, but life, career wise, professional wise, next move wise.

Irene:

I think it helps out a lot to have a mentor. Make sure you get yourself a mentor and don't be afraid of ask questions. Don't be afraid of moving, if you can, diversify yourself. Try not to just have one job, try to have something on the side, if it's a hobby or if it's a separate gig for extra income, just do it. I mean, it's only going to make you a better professional. It's only going to make you a better human being. At the end of the day, you can change jobs, you can move. It's not the end of that.

Kelly:

Yeah. It's best to be flexible, and open-minded.

Rex:

And remember that you're never on your own.

Kelly:

Right.

Irene:

No. No. I mean, I'm always back in South Florida. Now here I am again. My parents live here, so I guess I was always like, "Okay, if it doesn't work out," and my mom used to tell me this, I think that's mom's love too, "If it doesn't work out, we live here, you can always come back." And not everybody has that fortune to have such caring and loving parents as I do still, but you always have a home somewhere. You have a friend somewhere, you have an aunt, a cousin somewhere that could be your home base.

Kelly:

Well, that's some great advice, Irene. So before we end the podcast, we always ask our guests one last fun question, unrelated to meteorology. And I want to ask you, what is one of your favorite books?

Irene:

Well, I think it goes very much with what I was just mentioning with the people. The people that you love and perhaps even the people that you might not realize that have left an impression of you. And I'm not going to quote a quantum physics books or anything like that. I'm just going to go simple, because with everything that has gone on in life these past two years, you start to weigh more the personal connection that you have. *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*. Simple book, simple book. Short book that it just makes you think about all the connections that you have in life. And even the connections that you might not think left a big impression in your life.

Irene:

The book just tells a story about a guy... It's a novel about a guy that worked in a circus and he dies and he goes to heaven and he meets five people. Five people that left an impression in his life or a lesson in his life. And some of these people, he didn't even remember. He didn't even realize that, “Wow, you did this for me, or you taught me this.”

Irene:

And I think in this field, it's important to realize that. And even if you don't realize that people that have pushed you to do things, perhaps, that were out of your comfort zone and you are just reluctant to do it or mad about it, or, "Oh man, why did you treat me that way?" Just, at the end of the day, you learn a lesson, and at the end of the day, you become stronger. And I'm not saying, “Oh, thank them because they made you stronger.” No, there are people that shouldn't do certain things. But at the end of the day, you have to get a lesson out of that. And that's what's important.

Rex:

Yeah. I mean, listen, Irene, we don't need quantum physics all the time, sometimes we just need to sit down and think about other people. So thanks so much for telling us about that book. And thank you so much for joining us and sharing your work experiences and all your enthusiasm and your journey with us.

Irene:

No, thank you. Thank you for listening.

Kelly:

Well, that's our show for today. Please join us next time, rain or shine.

Rex:

Clear Skies Ahead: Conversations about Careers in Meteorology and Beyond is a podcast by the American Meteorological Society. Our show is produced by Brandon Crose, and edited by Peter Trepke. Our theme music is composed and performed by Steve Savoie, and the show is hosted by Rex Horner and Kelly Savoie. You can learn more about the show online at www.ametsoc.org/clearskies, and can contact us at skypodcastatametsoc.org, if you have any feedback or if you would like to become a future guest.