Transcript of "Jan Dutton, CEO of Prescient Weather in State College, Pennsylvania"

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're happy to introduce today's guest, Jan Dutton, CEO of Prescient Weather in State College, Pennsylvania. Welcome, Jan. Thanks very much for joining us.

Jan Dutton:

Thank you very much. I'm looking forward to it.

Kelly:

Jan, could you tell us when you got interested in meteorology and how it influenced your educational path?

Jan:

Sure. So, it's a bit of an interesting story because my father is John Dutton, and he was a professor of Meteorology at Penn State, and then Dean of the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences at Penn State. And so I kind of grew up with meteorology around me. But when I headed off to college, the last thing in the world I thought I was going to be was a meteorologist.

Jan:

And so I went to Colby College in Maine. And Colby has a program called Jan Plan, where for the month of January, you either stay on campus and take a course or you can go do an internship. And in my sophomore year, I went to the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, and I helped one of the scientists prepare the NCAR King Air for a research mission. And I was there for basically three weeks, but it completely turned me around in terms of how awesome science is.

Jan:

And when I returned to school, I had completely changed my schedule to continue studying physics and chemistry and calculus. And by the end of the second semester that year, I had declared a physics major, and I had already declared a Science, Technology, and Society major. And so that exposure kind of got me interested in the science. And then while I was at Colby, my advisor was Jim Fleming, a historian of atmospheric science.

Jan:

And so while at Colby, I also took a meteorology course for him, an Introduction to Meteorology course, which finally got me exposed to the science, having ignored it from my father growing up. And then as part of my Science Technology, and Society major, I had to do a final year thesis. And I ended up doing a final year of thesis on paleoclimatology, because in the summer before my senior year, I did some work at Penn State on paleoclimate modeling.

Jan:

And so I turned that into my senior thesis. And so basically my college experience, these off-campus experiences throughout college, exposed me to meteorology and the science. And I realized that I really, really wanted to be in meteorology at that point. And so when I was finishing school, I applied to graduate school and I applied for jobs. I didn't get any job interviews. And so I ended up going to graduate school for Meteorology. So I was a Physics major and an STS major, and ended up going to do a master's degree at Penn state in Meteorology.

Rex:

So how does Science Technology, and Society as a major differ from something that's more straightforward, like physics that's about the laws and the principles of matter, et cetera?

Jan:

Yeah. So the STS major was, and still is, it's about understanding the interactions of science and society. So rather than learning the hardcore aspects of the science, like the fundamental equations of motion and atmospheric science, you're learning more about how the science might impact society. And so it was also where I will say as part of that coursework, I became much more aware of the impact of climate change on society. That would be a great example of science and technology and society, understanding the impact of climate change on some aspect of society is the kind of thing that you would study.

Kelly:

So I'm assuming there wasn't a meteorology or an atmospheric science major at Colby. Is that why you stuck with physics?

Jan:

Yeah, that's correct. Yeah. I mean, I guess I studied physics because I knew when I came back from that experience at NCAR, I knew at that point I wanted to study Meteorology, and I knew I had to get more hard science focus to be able to do a graduate school. I don't know how I knew it at that point because I was still 19 years old or something. So Physics was the gateway drug to Meteorology, let's say.

Kelly:

Right, the foundation.

Jan:

Yeah, it was.

Kelly:

That's what you needed.

Rex:

Were there any meteorology clubs at Colby or other opportunities at that stage where you were realizing that meteorology was your focus? I know you mentioned that NCAR experience you had, that you kind of felt would be beneficial to moving you toward the direction you wanted to go in your profession.

Jan:

No, at that point that there really wasn't. So as we said, Jim Fleming was there and he is a historian of atmospheric science, but there was really no other clubs or anything else that would support the meteorology aspect of my interests. And I should say, I mean, Jim Fleming was great at supporting me. So he just retired from Colby, and a couple of students spoke and he's just, he's very supportive of whatever interests a student happens to have, but it wasn't like, again, let's say at Penn State, which is one of the larger undergraduate programs in meteorology. You can do more things than you could ever shake a stick at in terms of being supported for meteorological activities, but it wasn't the same at Colby.

Rex:

Sure. So once you got to Penn State, what did you shake a stick at, besides your essential coursework or main research for your PhD?

Jan:

Well, in the first two years of the coursework in a master's degree, it's particularly in the first year, it was really, really difficult. And I didn't have much time for anything, other than making sure that I kept abreast of the work that had to get done for the courses. And then also work on a master's thesis at the same time. So, I mean, I did outside things like, I guess I started to play guitar and stuff like that in graduate school. The week after graduating college, I bought a guitar and then I played it every day for two years, which included during the master's degree. And then I started an MBA, and I had to drop playing guitar every day at that point.

Kelly:

You must've gotten pretty good.

Jan:

Well...

Kelly:

Every day for two years.

Jan:

Yeah, after two years, I was pretty good after two years. But I will say that the graduate student experience is different, because at that point you're pretty focused on your profession and your career.

And, I mean, you're already knee deep in the science. And I found there wasn't much need to do any extracurricular activity around meteorology or climatology.

Rex:

And why did you feel the MBA was an important achievement for you beyond the hardcore research?

Jan:

Yeah, so as I was doing my work towards my thesis, and let's say getting exposed to the academic world, I realized that I didn't necessarily want to continue and be, say a professor at a university or work in government. And so what's left is to work in the private sector. And I actually, as I finished my master's degree, I really struggled internally with the decision about, should I go on and do a PhD, or should I go do an MBA, or should I just leave and try to work.

Jan:

And in doing research around what is the right course of action for me, I learned that Penn State has a program that if you do a joint PhD MBA, some of your PhD credits count towards the MBA. And at that point, the path became obvious. And I decided to do the joint PhD MBA program at Penn State. And so knowing that I wanted to work in the private sector at that point, I decided that an MBA would just help set me apart from other potential applicants to specific positions or something. And so I would be trained in the business side of things, and I'd be trained in the science side of things, and I'd be set up perfectly to work in the private sector.

Rex:

So, because you were at Penn State where there's a lot of meteorology focus, I just wanted to know in the MBA program, your fellow students there, were there other meteorologists, or did you feel either like an odd duck, or just a bit outside of what the other backgrounds were that were coming into that MBA program?

Jan:

So interestingly, there was a master's degree student one year ahead of me in meteorology, who went and did an MBA. So he did the masters and then an MBA, and then he went off to his non-meteorological career. And so he showed me that it's possible to do, which is say I became aware of the MBA because he was going to go do an MBA. And then I started researching it and thought it made sense for me.

Jan:

When I was actually in the MBA program, for a while I was getting questions like, "What are you doing here? Why is a meteorologist doing an MBA?" And then I actually ended up having to give a presentation, right? So part of what you learn in the MBA is public speaking and things like that. And so I actually gave one of my presentation tasks. I talked about the impact of climate change on business. And at that point, everyone was like, "Oh, okay. I get it I see why you're here."

Jan:

But then, I also say that the interesting thing about the meteorology work, the master's degree in meteorology, it's obviously highly mathematical. And it was a challenge. And when I went to the MBA program, I was a math wizard in the MBA program.

Kelly:

I bet.

Jan:

You know, the folks that I was with in the meteorology program, I was like middle ground. In terms of the ability to do the mathematics. In the MBA program, it was ridiculous how advanced I was compared to most folks there. I don't know if it'd be the same today, but. So, it was a great experience though.

Kelly:

So, it sounds like you definitely did your homework and you wanted to get a job in the private sector, and it sounds like you went through the proper channels to make yourself more marketable. So, what was your first job in the field and how did you end up where you are now?

Jan:

So, interestingly, when I left school, I ended up starting a business right away that was called Weather Ventures. And at the time, so this was in 2000. So at the time, the weather derivatives market had emerged and was starting to grow, and this was pre Enron crash. And so Weather Ventures was a business that was focused on, I created a tool set that allowed the weather derivative market to understand how a climate forecast should modify the value of a weather derivative contract.

Jan:

I had an investor, I had some beta software, and then Enron imploded, and the weather derivatives market sort of disappeared for a while. And all my customers were gone, and I decided to stop with Weather Ventures at that point. And at the time I was doing some consulting with what was then WeatherBug and is now Earth Networks.

Jan:

And I ended up joining WeatherBug, basically as a product manager. And so I was a product manager at WeatherBug. And then I took over as a sales manager, and then I left WeatherBug something like six or seven years later, and joined a New York-based venture backed firm called Storm Exchange. And Storm Exchange was focused on the weather risk market again. And then, so with Storm Exchange, we were trying to make a business in the weather risk market.

Jan:

And long story short, with the prior economic downturn, the venture capitalists pulled the funding on Storm Exchange, and I ended up joining DTN. It was then DTN, and is now DDTN. And at DTN, I was brought on board ostensibly to take the products that DTN—the weather information products that DTN had for US markets—and try to sell them internationally.

Jan:

And so I was focused on Europe and Australia. And so I did that for a couple of years, and then an opportunity came to lead, what is today called DTN Weather Systems. So, the business owned a company that sold very high-end airport weather observation systems in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. And so I ran that business for four years. And then DTN was acquired by a private equity company, and I ended up leaving. And so what was interesting in that experience was at Storm Exchange, my father was employed by Storm Exchange, and my two now colleagues, Jeremy Ross, and Richard James were employed by Storm Exchange.

Jan:

And so when I went to DTN, the three of them, my father, Richard and Jeremy started Prescient Weather. And when I left DTN, Prescient Weather was at a point where it needed some help growing its business. And so I joined in May of 2018, I joined Prescient Weather, and I've been basically in charge of marketing and sales of our two products ever since. So I like to joke that with my father and I, it's our third attempt at a business. So we were together in Weather Ventures, we were together at Storm Exchange. And now we're together again for Prescient Weather.

Rex:

And what is a typical day or a typical week like on the job in your CEO position? What sort of people or clients do you interact with, and where do you find your time seems to be invested?

Jan:

So, we have two primary products. One is called CropProphet, and the other is called the World Climate Service. And so CropProphet is essentially a corn, soybean and winter wheat yield forecasting product. Which interestingly enough, all things being equal, the amount of corn, soybeans and wheat grown in the United States is directly dependent on the weather conditions that occur during the crop season. So it's a pretty advanced climate services product.

Jan:

And then the World Climate Service is a tool set. It's an online tool set, designed to enable meteorologists to improve their long range forecasting and their long range forecast creation process. So, CropProphet serves primarily grains traders, and the World Climate Service supports primarily energy and natural gas traders. And so, we are very much in a mode where we're continuing to try to support existing customers and find new customers.

Jan:

So an awful lot of my time is spent in some form or another in marketing or sales activities. And so for example, right now the U.S. corn and soybean season is really starting to get into high gear. So I'm spending a lot of time actually, every morning figuring out what my Tweet strategy is for the day. So I'm putting out content to garner interest, with the idea of bringing them back into our property. So that the potential prospects will basically fill out our lead form and take a trial of one of our products.

Kelly:

So do you have to travel a lot for that? I mean, I don't know pre-COVID if you were traveling, as the sales portion of your position.

Jan:

So I was definitely traveling in that [role]. I always like to say that a face-to-face meeting is worth a thousand Zooms, right? And so just the face-to-face interaction is so powerful. And so I would travel once or twice a month to visit a customer, or visit a conference, or visit a prospective customer, or something like that. Post-COVID, I'm kind of curious to see what's going to happen. I have a theory that business is now conducted over Zoom, and that it's much more accepted as a means of meeting and communication. I also think it's going to be a long time until business travel comes back to pre-pandemic levels, just because everyone realizes now that the technology is here to make it happen.

Kelly:

Yeah, I think I agree with you on that one. I think people are slow to get back to the normal travel mode.

Jan:

Yeah, yeah. And I'll say, just in my work, I mean, I traveled pretty substantially for 15 years. When I was running a weather systems team, it was extensive travel to Asia, Middle East, Europe. I didn't realize how hard it was until I stopped it. And now that I haven't traveled since March 11th of 2020, I don't ever want to go back, to be honest, but I'm going to do what's required to be successful.

Kelly:

Right. So I guess that's not what you like the most about your job. So what do you-

Jan:

That is not what I like.

Kelly:

So what do you like the most about your job?

Jan:

So, it's really interesting. Right now, so as I mentioned, we're focused on building what amounts to climate services. And what is interesting in my PhD research, I focused on modeling of climate variability, and trying to understand the degree to which future variability might change because of a changing climate. And so one of the things that I really enjoy about my work today is I am commercializing the science that I trained myself on. Which is to say sometimes people, there's lots of people who they'll do a thesis on a particular field and become very specialized. And when they go get a job, they're not necessarily able to stay in that specialization, for whatever reason.

Jan:

Now I'm frequently amazed at the fact that what I studied in graduate school, I'm able to go out and try to convince customers that our solution is a superior solution. And it's really, it's pretty awesome. And then I'll say, the science: the founders of the company did pretty incredible. And it's just gratifying being able to know that people, our customers are gaining value from the science that's being done every day within the company. That part is pretty awesome.

Rex:

So on the flip side, where do you find some of the biggest challenges of running a company, or being significantly part of the leadership of a company?

Jan:

Certainly I'm in a pretty unique situation here. We're a small company inside. Like I don't have some of the demands on me that I would have for instance, as the general manager of the Weather Systems team. So the Weather Systems team was a hundred people. And as the leader of that group, I didn't actually spend much time on the, let's say the science or the engineering. It was much more higher level strategy work, market penetration work, employee strategy, things like that. In the current environment, I think one of the challenges for sure is just competing in the meteorology field, it's both very frustrating and very exhilarating. And I'll say, one of the things that I've learned and I tell people about the meteorology community, and particularly in the private sector, is that everything is ultimately re-creatable.

Jan:

And what I mean by that is, one, because it's based on science. Two, because a lot of the content/information that the private industry is based on is in fact originated from essentially government sources, whether it be the U.S. government or European government, or the ECMWF or something like that. And while you can run your own model and things like that, I can run a model as well, right? So I can have somebody who might try to differentiate themselves by running a particular aspect of a numerical weather prediction model. You know, I can do the same thing. And it might not be the exact same technology with this exact same special sauce that makes that model unique. But through marketing, I can make it sound, look like it does.

Jan:

And so one of the challenges for sure is building aspects of the product, building differentiators that are actually unique and then remain unique, or that you have to keep moving forward and remain unique. Right, so that's both. That's what I mean by it's frustrating and exhilarating. It's exhilarating, because you're always trying to do better and you're always trying to create a better product, but it's frustrating because I can release something today and a competitor can release something similar tomorrow. So, that's a difficult part.

Rex:

Do you feel when you were at Weather Systems being a little bit more removed from some of the science, that that was a little bit more difficult or less fulfilling in any way, versus at your current position, you have the ability to look across the spectrum of your organization's activities, versus like you said, being stuck in more of these high-level situations? Or is it just a difference that's kind of just six in one hand, half a dozen in the other?

Jan:

For me it's just different. I love being in the private sector of meteorology. It is so fun and it doesn’t matter what I'm doing, I'm probably going to enjoy it. And, again I mean, like I said, as the head of the Weather Systems team, there's just a different set of pressures, and some are self-imposed, most are

corporate imposed. But as a motivated individual, I'm just trying to meet the goals that are being set for me, or that I'm setting for myself. And it's just a different set of goals. It was still awesome though.

Jan:

I'll say one of the things that made it really interesting for me, one of my other loves if you will is aviation. So if there's an airplane flying overhead, I'm looking at it. It doesn't matter what it is, how high it is, I'm looking up to see where it is. And I actually, I'm one of the people, I soloed in an airplane before I got my driver's license, and I have a Single Engine, Land certification from the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration].

Jan:

So I love aviation. And so what was really cool about that work was that we were selling to national [meteorological] services, and civil aviation authorities with the aviation meteorology requirements. So, I was like, I was exploring a part of myself that I otherwise was unable to explore. And it happened to be aviation meteorology, right? So I mean, that part was pretty darn cool. So like I said, it was just different, but still enjoyable.

Kelly:

So, do you find that being in the private sector and trying to get more clients, that there are other organizations out there that maybe might not be as expert as they say they are, and you're competing with some of these organizations where you have to try to prove yourself, and teach the public that we have the expertise and you shouldn't just listen to any organization out there that's pitching what they do?

Jan:

That's a great question. I would say that we definitely try to differentiate our services through our expertise. And there are, I mean, there's absolutely companies that don't have the same level of expertise in say seasonal forecasting that we have. And so as an example, the company has been around since 2009. I actually don't know exactly when the monthly seasonal forecast started, but the team has produced a seasonal forecast every month without missing since roughly 2009. So it's something like 160 seasonal forecasts in a row for North America and for Europe.

Jan:

And there can't be very many other people that have done that, right? Or that have the level of experience. And that have the capability of asking questions and then diving into data to try to figure out what the answer is, and then using that information from then on. And so the only way that we can handle that is that customer use of our own products is going to differentiate from those that maybe don't have the same level of expertise or the same sophistication within the product.

Jan:

So we don't necessarily spend a lot of time educating the public. Like we will educate very specific customers that are interested in our products, but we don't, we're not like Apple, right? We don't have the budget to—

Kelly:

Right.

Jan:

—to educate the public on why our seasonal forecasts are useful and others are not, or something like that.

Kelly:

But even some clients, they might not necessarily know enough about the science to be able to tell.

Jan:

Yeah, we certainly operate under an assumption that, that our clients are generally knowledgeable of the long range forecasting or of the climate service that we're providing, but we're always willing to try to educate. And I mean, it ends up being, either I get on a Zoom with a customer and explain a certain aspect or a certain element of the science. And if I can't do it, then I know my colleagues can and I'll get them on with a customer to do it.

Kelly:

It's great to have that confidence, though. And have people you work with who are highly-trained.

Jan:

Yeah.

Kelly:

So looking back, is there anything you would have done differently in your career?

Jan:

So that's a great question, too. One of the things I would have done differently was when Enron imploded and Weather Ventures was out of money. Rather than move on, I would have tried to go raise more money. Come up with a different idea and go raise more money. That was probably what I should have done at that time, but I was young and inexperienced. It's one of those things. If I knew then what I know now, I would definitely have done that differently, but it's how you learn. You learn by making mistakes.

Kelly:

Right.

Rex:

And how has work-life balance treated you throughout your career? Is it at the best place it's been now? Where have you noticed it most strongly as it's fluctuated or whatnot?

Jan:

It is absolutely the best it's ever been right now. And I will say one of the benefits of working for a small company where obviously, I will say one of the founders is my father, and then the two founders I've known for a long time. You know, we have an understanding that there is a lot of work to do, but we're going to do it. We're going to do it on our own time, rather than say 9 to 5, or something like that. And so when I work a lot of hours, a lot of it is in the evenings and it's on weekends and I'm frequently up early. I'm frequently at my desk by seven in the morning.

Jan:

But then at the same time, I'll just say in my current environment, if I want to do a bike ride from 6 until 8 or 9 in the morning, I can go do that. And I know I don't have to be at my desk at a particular time. As we mentioned earlier around travel, in the current situation, I'm definitely traveling less than I did. And that's been very nice as well. So yeah, so right now it's probably certainly the best it's ever been.

Jan:

In prior times, I will say the work-life balance got a little out of whack, and in particular, the travel aspect of things really caused a bifurcation in the balance, right? So, I was doing trips where I'd be gone for three weeks at a time to visit one of my offices, and visit a couple of customers or something like that. And I was gone for three weeks. My wife is working. I had either an adolescent or a teenage daughter, and it's just really hard. And that's what I meant by I didn't realize how hard it was until I stopped doing it.

Kelly:

That's probably one of the reasons why people aren't so quick to end Zoom meetings.

Jan:

Yeah, I think so.

Kelly:

For that exact reason.

Jan:

And then in that situation, let's say I was gone for three weeks. I might be in four or five different time zones, right? So you don't catch up on sleep when you get back for weeks in that type of situation. So, it was really difficult and I just did it, because it was what was required of me. So I went and did it. But I will say in that environment, I started doing, when I took holidays, I was trying to do two weeks at a time and I would truly disconnect. It's a little bit more difficult to do in a small environment—in a small company environment. But, so you can try to find ways to get a little bit of the balance back. But I'm not sure I ever want to change from this situation.

Kelly:

Yeah, me neither. So how do you see the future job market for careers in meteorology and in your field in general?

Jan:

I think it's fantastic. There is an endless set of opportunities, I think, for graduates within meteorology. So, I will say over the years, I've come up with these little sayings that try to summarize a situation. And so, like one of those I said earlier was that “a face-to-face meeting is worth a thousand Zooms.” So one of the things I've started saying the last couple of years is that “meteorology is the original big data science.”

Jan:

And so the first attempts at computing were done to forecast the weather. And throughout meteorology as a science, meteorology has always produced what, according to current technology, were very large datasets in the form of Numerical Weather Prediction outputs. And then it has always dealt with very messy, messy datasets in the form of observational data sets of different kinds and things like that.

Jan:

And so in today's world of being—whether it be a meteorology, undergrad, or a meteorology graduate student—you should be leaving school with knowledge, whether you realize it or not, with knowledge of data science, of manipulating datasets in a programmatic form, whether it be with R or Python or something else. And that really sets people apart from other potential majors.

Jan:

And so now, and that being said, I think there's a certain data intensity to meteorology that certainly is only going to get worse or better depending on your viewpoint. But it's only going to increase. And I think skill sets in that area will be very important. And the increase in the demand for data and analytics is only going to increase as well. And all of that points to well-trained meteorologists will have job prospects for the next hundred years.

Kelly:

That's good to hear.

Rex:

So you've mostly spoken to what my final question was going to be, which is advice towards folks that are at the student level, or in a job seeking position at the moment, and are interested in the private sector work that you've embarked on over your career. But let's focus in a little bit and ask you what on a resume you might find that would stick out that would speak towards if you feel someone is on the right track, or maybe something in an interview that isn't as tangible on a resume.

Jan:

So, when I speak with undergrads in the present day, and we start talking about the private sector, working in the private sector, I always ask them, “How's your Python?” And they say, "Well, I use it in a class." And I say, "Well, that's not good enough. You need to make sure you're investing time to really work in Python, because that'll be a critical skillset."

Jan:

And what I then go on to say is find something you're really interested in meteorology, make it a research project, turn it into a mini paper. And then you've got something that you can leave behind in a job interview that demonstrates what you're capable of. And if you lay it out properly, it's an extension to your resume that defines why you're going to create value for the company that you're trying to win work with.

Jan:

And so that, I can't say it enough, that skills in data analysis are really, really important. So Rex, you asked me a while ago, what do I do on a daily basis when I talk about sales and marketing. And so just as an example, I have to produce all of the content that is associated with our sales and marketing activities, which involves processing some of our core datasets. Now I do it in R, right? So I do analysis in R to create visualizations that end up in our marketing material.

Jan:

So something that I've picked up in graduate school in the late nineties, I still use today because it's required to get the job done, it's a critical skill. The other piece that I would say again, going to my own background, where I did a graduate degree in both the science and then an MBA, is if you have the opportunity, take courses outside your major, in anything interesting. If you think you're headed towards working in the private sector, go take a marketing course, or something on the business side of things.

Jan:

If you are worried about the impact of climate change on society, think about a sustainability course or something like that. So the science is very, very important, but to be marketable, you need to try to broaden your horizons a little bit as well. And then I think the third thing I would say is just try to get experience in what it is that you want to do, whether it be an internship, or through your own work. Demonstrate that you're capable of doing crisp, analytical work, and then communicating about it.

Kelly:

That's really good advice. And I would imagine that having good communication skills, presentation skills, or taking a public speaking course, or presenting a poster at an annual meeting, AMS annual meeting would be favorable as well.

Jan:

Yeah, for sure. I mean these days communication skills almost goes without saying, but communication skills are obviously very important too.

Kelly:

Jan, before we end the podcast, we always ask our guests one last non-meteorological question, and I want to ask you what you've got planned for this weekend.

Jan:

In the last couple of years, I've gotten pretty heavily into cycling, and I got looped into a charity bike ride where we ride from Charlottesville, Virginia to Ashland, Virginia. So it's a hundred miles on a Saturday. And then on Sunday, we ride a hundred miles back. And this year's going to be a little bit more difficult than normal, because it's the first time we're riding back. Normally, in prior years, we've ridden to Yorktown, Virginia. This year, we're riding back to Charlottesville, and it's generally uphill.

Jan:

So we're going to do the last hundred miles. Actually the last 25 miles, it's quite hilly, and it's going to be very painful when we're doing mile 175 through 200 uphill. But it is for a great cause. The ride is called The Journey of Awesomeness, and it raises money to build solar-powered water wells in East Africa and to support the local food bank. And so the mission of the ride is to support the hungry and to support the thirsty. And it's a great effort. And we were talking about work-life balance. So, if you guys had asked me, what do I do in my spare time? I'm generally on my bike. I'm putting miles on the bike so that I can do 200 miles in two days this coming weekend.

Kelly:

So have you done this every year? Like have you done it a few years in a row?

Jan:

I did it in 2019. [That] was my first year. And then last year, I had a physical ailment that prevented me from doing what was a virtual Journey of Awesomeness because of the pandemic. So this will only be my second time doing it. I think it's eight or nine years old. The first time, it was like a group of seven people, or something like that. This year will be about 50 people.

Kelly:

I love the title.

Jan:

Yeah, it's wonderful. People always smirk when I say, "Yeah, I'm doing the Journey of Awesomeness."

Rex:

Well Jan, we'll be riding with you in spirit, and cheering for you at the finish line after those 200 miles have ended. So thank you so much for joining us, sharing your work experiences with us. It's been a pleasure talking with you and hearing you look back over your career.

Jan:

Great, thank you, and it was fun.

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 skypodcast@ametsoc.org. If you have any feedback, or if you would like to become a future guest.