

Christine

This podcast is produced on the ancestral homeland of the Nooksack and Lummi people. They have been its' stewards since time immemorial, respecting the land, river and ocean with the understanding that everything is connected, related and alive. We acknowledge the elders and their collective and individual plights and achievements. We consider the legacies of violence, displacement, migration and settlement that bring us together today and we pursue ongoing action to build lasting relationships and grow together so that all may prosper.

(interlude music plays)

Neil

WCLS in Whatcom County presents Library Stories, a podcast to open your eyes to all the ways your local public libraries matter. Join us as we reveal the power of sharing at the library. I'm your host, Neil McKay, Online Experience Coordinator for the Whatcom County Library System and today...

All right, I'm here with Claire McElroy, Adult Programming Coordinator according to the badge that she's wearing right now for the Whatcom County Library System. How are you doing, Claire?

Claire

I'm doing fine. I'm so glad to know that you know my title by reading my badge.

Neil

You know when you're in the business as long as I have been, you take any opportunity to cheat.

Claire

I understand. You just wanna to get it right. I appreciate that.

Neil

I want to get it right. I want to get it right because I could have just said programming coordinator, but you're the adult programming coordinator. You also have a 7-year-old who is the child programming coordinator.

Claire

Right.

Neil

So. You're just coming off of the Whatcom READS season.

Claire

Indeed.

Neil

How was that?

Claire

Ohh man, I'm just basking in the glow of another great Whatcom READS season. The dust is beginning to settle a little bit and so now we can just kind of look back on it and just revel in how great it was because it really was such a fabulous year. I have to say.

Neil

Yeah. And so of course we had, we had author Erica Bauermeister, whose book *No Two Persons* was our pick. I'm saying this, not that I don't think you remember that but.

Claire

What book was it again?

Neil

But it's for posterity, because years from now, they'll listen back and they'll hear how you talk so glowingly about this season, and they'll wonder who was the author. Well, it was Erica Baurmeister.

Claire

Exactly. That's right and the book was *No Two Persons*.

Neil

Yeah. And so of course Whatcom READS is just this whole series of events that lead up to Erica speaking this year at the Mount Baker Theatre, and we'll talk about that. But how about the other events? What stands out in your mind as memorable?

Claire

Oh wow. For the lead up programming for before? Oh, gosh, I would definitely have to say that 2 events really stand out in my mind. The first one is the life of an audiobook narrator with Jayne Entwistle.

Claire

That was at the Whatcom Museum in the Rotunda Room, and Jayne was interviewed by Thom Barthelmess, who is our Youth Services Manager here at the.

Neil

Yes, he's not seven years old. Like I said before, but.

Claire

He's not 7. No, he's not 7. And he did just have a milestone birthday, but I'm not going to say what it was.

Neil

Oh.

Claire

But Jayne was interviewed by Thom, and she just, it was a great hour of her talking about what it is like to be an audiobook narrator because of course, the reason why we had that event is because one of the characters in *No Two Persons* is an audiobook narrator. And that was a great afternoon. It was a stormy Saturday and we filled the Rotunda Room with people and it was just a wonderful conversation. And then after that the following week we had a virtual event with that was on bibliotherapy and that was with Emely Rumble, who was a license bibliotherapist, as well as other accreditations, but she specializes, I guess you could say one of her specialties is bibliotherapy and she just talked about what, what Bibliotherapy is and how books can heal us. How we can find healing just through reading and that was a wonderful conversation between Emely Rumble and one of our PSA's, Meagan Wheeler.

Neil

Yeah, that was and that was just amazing. And we captured that on video. So it's up on our YouTube channel.

Claire

Indeed.

Neil

And on the Whatcom READS's website.

Claire

Mm-hmm. I recommend anybody watch it because it's fabulous.

Neil

Yeah, it was. It really blew me away. I was at both of those events, actually, and they were just both, you know, great choices to have as lead up to the author, Erica Bauermeister, coming into town, which she did last week and had how many events?

Claire

She, well, if you include the dinner that she attended at Evolve Chocolate and Cafe on the mezzanine level of Village Books, she did 5 events. Yeah, we kept her real busy, and she was such a good sport about it. She was up for everything we threw at her, and she was so gracious and generous with her time. We're very grateful.

Neil

So, we, so you, what was her first event? Well, Evolve dinner was the first event. What happened next?

Claire

Then the first kind of free event open to the public that anybody could attend was the book discussion out on Lummi Island.

Neil

Mmm. How did that go?

Claire

Ohh it was, it was so great. It was a beautiful morning. We took the ferry over to Lummi Island and it was held at the Grange Hall and the Grange Hall was just filled with people. It was packed to the gills. There were 80 people there. And.

Neil

80 people. And were they all from Lummi Island?

Claire

They were from across Whatcom County. There were folks there who were from Maple Falls. And then we also had even further afield. We had two ladies who, this is just a bit of

an aside. They came up from Vancouver, WA and made this their vacation. They went to every event, including the dinner at evolve with Erica and just had the best time going to all 5 events and they, I think they got an Airbnb or I can't remember what their accommodations were, but they just made this. They're fans of Erica Bauermeister's. They wanted to know where she was going to be speaking next. So, they happened across the Whatcom READS's website and they just said, "hey, let's make a vacation out of this." And they came all the way up from Vancouver, WA and they were, so they were at Lummi Island. Yeah. There were people from all over, definitely people from Bellingham who were at that event. People from all over, it was wonderful.

Neil

What a great idea to make a vacation of coming to follow an author who you know is going to be presenting at 5 different events. That's, keep that in mind, folks.

Claire

Mm-hmm. Yes. And much like the book, I mean, *No Two Persons*, no two events were alike that Erica presented at for us. I mean, they were all very different, and we really appreciated that too. I mean, I went to all of her events, and I can definitely say that they were unique. There was not repeated information, not repeated. She just didn't do the same talk every time and answer the same questions the same way every time. Every single one of the events was different. It was great.

Neil

Well, that's great. Well, I didn't get to the Evolve dinner and I didn't get to the Lummi Island event, but the next event was the Allied Arts show. Is that right?

Claire

Yes, yes, it was. She was really busy that day because it was Lummi Island and then the Allied Arts exhibit where she viewed the art pieces that people created across Whatcom County who were inspired by *No Two Persons*. So, visual, I don't know what's the word, visual representations of how they were inspired after they read *No Two Persons* and so the artists themselves were there so that they could each talk individually with Erica and explain, explain their pieces. And Erica was very moved by that.

Neil

Yeah, yeah, yeah, I was there taking pictures and I'll put some pictures of that up on our podcast episode page. And I know, you know, I knew at least one artist there.

Claire

Yes, that was me.

Neil

That was you.

Claire

Yes, I for the first year I submitted an, a piece of art for the art challenge. I'm embarrassed to say it's the first year I've done that. Every year I intend to, but I was really, really inspired by *No Two Persons* to create something that was inspired by it. So yeah, I was really happy to be there and honored to share my piece with her.

Neil

It was a very meaningful piece.

Claire

It was. Yes.

Neil

And clearly the book affected you.

Claire

Yes.

Neil

And those pieces are still at Allied Arts?

Claire

They are at Allied Arts through March 29th.

Neil

OK, so get down and see those pieces if you got a chance. OK. And then that was a busy day because right after that, what happened?

Claire

Mhmm. Sip and Savor at Bellwood Farms. And that was great fun. That was where we departed a little bit. We, well, we really departed a lot from *No Two Persons* and instead this event was crafted around the idea of the books that had impacted Erica's life. So, we asked her for a list.

Neil

Ah.

Claire

Of five books that because you know the Whatcom Writes challenge was or prompt was the book that changed my life. And so we were curious to know what books had really impacted Erica's life, so she gave us a list and then we thought, "hey, this would be fun to pair the books with beverages." So, we had a list of books that we passed to Bellwood Farms and Erica provided some really great descriptive words about the books, and then the folks at Bellwood came up with some drinks that they thought fit those descriptive words well. And so Erica and Mary Vermilion, Community Relations Manager, your boss who's usually sitting in this hot seat right now.

Neil

My boss. This is true.

Claire

They had just had, they just went book by book and had a great conversation about how the books were important, how each book was important to Erica, and then they would take a little sip of their beverage and decide whether or not to discuss whether or not it they felt like it was a good pairing with the book and then of course, Village Books was there, and they had copies of all of Erica's recommendations, those books, and it was just it was a fun night. It felt very festive, very casual. Yeah, we had a good time.

Neil

Well, and also that night. That was the night that I was able.

Claire

Yes.

Neil

To steal Erica away into the tasting room.

Claire

That's right.

Neil

And hide sitting at the bar and conduct the interview that we're going to hear after this. So.

Claire

It's a great interview.

Neil

Yeah, it'll be it'll be a lot of fun because she wasn't really. Well, no one ever expects what they get from me when I interview them, you can't say that you've expected.

Claire

No.

Neil

This interview to take the turns it's taking.

Claire

Nope, I never. I never know what's gonna happen with you, Neil.

Neil

And I never do either. So that's what makes it so, so fun and so surprising that I get to keep doing this week after week. But Erica and I sat down and just had a fun conversation, and my goal was Erica's doing 5 events. Is that what we said?

Claire

Mm-hmm.

Neil

5 events talking about this book, so I didn't want to talk about the book, so we just had a chat and it seemed to work. She seemed to be relaxed and enjoy hanging out with me.

Claire

Yeah, yeah, she's, you can, it comes through in her voice I think that she's just enjoying hanging out with you, especially when she describes where you are, where you're sitting and sort of what she's seeing as she's looking around in the tasting room of Bellwood.

Neil

I put her to work. I figured she's a writer. So but. That wasn't the end of it. After this, what happened after that event?

Claire

Oh my goodness. No. Oh gosh. Then the next morning was the Art and Craft of Writing at Village Books.

Neil

Ah, yeah. I attended that too.

Claire

There were over 40, almost 50 people there, including you and me.

Neil

And my boss, Mary Vermillion.

Claire

And your boss, Mary Vermillion.

Neil

She keeps it close eye on me when I have, when I go wander.

Claire

She does me and she is always watching Neil. But it was a wonderful event where she led folks through kind of a writing class or a craft workshop where she had a specific exercise that she had us all do.

Neil

Mm-hmm.

Claire

And the feedback that we got from that, I was actually just looking at the feedback forms a moment ago and people were just really inspired by her talk. There was, there was some feedback where folks were like, "I wasn't really expecting to go in there and actually write anything" or "I was just going to listen" but then you know they felt inspired to actually do the prompts and ended up with a little piece that they got started on. So.

Neil

Yeah, so that was great. OK. So what happened after Village Books?

Claire

Ohh gosh then the main event in Mount Baker Theatre. An evening with Erica Bauermeister and boy was that.

Neil

Wait, wait.

Claire

Oh no.

Neil

And evening with Erica Bauermeister and..

Claire

And friends, yes, this was the first time we had that “and friends” component.

Neil

Yes. What friends were there? Because you didn't have me up there. And I thought I was really getting to become friends with her.

Claire

Yeah, I wasn't up there with her, so I guess I wasn't really becoming her friend either.

Neil

So.

Claire

But no, we for the first year ever there was a musical opening act. The first half of the show was the Bushwick Book Club Seattle and thanks to Bellingham Public Library for organizing that event and hooking us up with Bushwick, and specifically Miranda Leon Jones, the Event Coordinator at BPL, she was kind of the connection with Bushwick and we had, so we had five musicians who played songs that they composed that were inspired by *No Two Persons* and that was. That was a really special part of the evening that some people expected because we had advertised it and then the other people, it was a complete surprise that we were going to do that. And again, overwhelmingly positive feedback, that boy having that musical component at the beginning was really special. And Erica herself was moved to tears. Her own admission. She said “I am not a crier, and I was sitting there just crying while I was listening to some of those songs.” So it was great. And then her

presentation was wonderful. We had a Q&A at the end with Paul Hansen and Kelly Everett, co-owners of Village Books. And then round it out with a book signing. It was lovely.

Neil

No, no, that's a great way to end the whole season. But wait.

Claire

There's more.

Neil

There was one more event.

Claire

There was one more, yes, on Saturday morning. The night the day after the Mount Baker event, Erica did a virtual event and that was in conversation with Katie Bray, a librarian from Bellingham Public Library. And so this was a it's a great way to sort of finish the whole Whatcom READS series, especially for folks who maybe couldn't make it to any of the programming. That was in person. You know, folks can still attend an event with Erica in real time and hear what she has to say. So, it was a lovely way to finish the whole season.

Neil

Yeah, it was great and we used up every bit of Erica.

Claire

Oh man, we did.

Neil

We just pushed her to her limits.

Claire

We did.

Neil

And I hope that she came away with a knowledge that Whatcom County is a county full of book lovers.

Claire

Yes.

Neil

Who show up to things.

Claire

That is exactly what she said. She sent us a lovely thank you and just said she was overwhelmed by the love she felt in Whatcom County and so, I don't know that it gets any better than that.

Neil

Yeah, well, it might because next year we have a new book. Yes. Tell us about that.

Claire

Ohh, so Erica got to announce the 2026 Whatcom READS title, which is *Solito, A Memoir* by Javier Zamora. And we are thrilled that this is the 2026 selection and this is a memoir about, told in the first person by Javier, he recounts his journey at nine years old, from El Salvador to the United States, going through Guatemala. It's a pretty harrowing account of what he went through and it's a really important, it's an important story.

Neil

Hmm.

Claire

And it's nonfiction. This is all really happened and I am excited for people to read it.

Neil

Yeah, when I read it about halfway through, he writes so well I forgot it was nonfiction. I thought it was a story and I had to.

Claire

Yeah.

Neil

Shake myself back into reality. Yeah, he's a poet. And as well as a writer. And that really comes through in that, in this book.

Claire

Yes.

Neil

So he's coming to town next year, next March.

Claire

Mm-hmm. That's right.

Neil

Yeah. And we'll, we'll run him through the gamut of exercises and events.

Claire

Yes.

Neil

It'll be great. So keep an eye on whatcomreads.org for that. But for now, we're going to switch over and we're going to listen to my interview with Erica Bauermeister at Bellwood Farms.

Claire

Great.

Neil

So thanks for joining me, Claire. Thanks for working so hard to put everything together for Whatcom READS, you and the whole crew, you know, Whatcom READS is a product of all of the libraries in Whatcom County and Village Books.

Claire

That's right.

Neil

Contributes so much to it too.

Claire

It's very much a team effort.

Neil

Yeah. So thanks everybody for bringing this to us every year we really. The amazing things that libraries do for a community.

Claire

Yeah.

Neil

This is right there. All right, let's switch over and listen to Erica Bauermeister.

Claire

OK, let's do it.

(interlude music plays)

Neil

So I'm here with Erica Bauermeister at Bellwood Farms in, well, on the guide, if you're a local person, you just say it's on the guide, but we're here between Bellingham and Lynden, WA. How are you doing, Erica?

Erica

Good. It's been a marvelous day.

Neil

That's good. What have you been doing so far?

Erica

Well, so this morning I was out on Lummi Island, and then this afternoon there was the an opening of the at Allied Arts for the various artistic responses to *No Two Persons*, which is always incredible to see.

Neil

Yeah, I was down there too. You probably saw me.

Erica

I did.

Neil

It was great. There was, you know, we do that every year with Whatcom READS and people. It's just surprising what people come up with as they first they read the book, of course. And then they come up with something, some, it inspires them somehow, and it's just like it could be anything.

Erica

Yes. And they're all so different. That's what I always find fascinating.

Neil

Yes. Yeah. And then you get to chat with the artists.

Erica

Yes.

Neil

So that's always a nice, you know, great thing for the artists, of course they're, you know, so happy to talk with, you know, their inspiration basically.

Erica

But it's also just so much fun for me to hear their process, which, because I'm not a visual artist, I'm word artist.

Neil

Yes.

Erica

And so to be able to see it from another side is just really inspiring.

Neil

Yeah. So yeah, you are a word artist and I'm actually while I have you here because I know you're going to, you're going to go present pretty soon, and I may never have another chance to talk to you. I picked up your older book, *The Scent Keeper*, and I'm hoping you'll autograph it for me.

Erica

Uh-huh. I will like right now. All right, OK.

Neil

Yeah, right now. I mean, I said I should do it before we do the full podcast because you, I don't know how you're going to feel about me by the end of the podcast.

Erica

All right.

Neil

But yeah, *The Scent Keeper* was the first book I read of yours, and I was just utterly charmed by it. It's yeah, my favorite of all of your books.

Erica

I like to say it's the one that's steeped in the northwest. You know, many of my books are set in the Northwest, but this one feels marinated.

Neil

Yeah. Ohh that's good to know. I'm going to reread it. I read it was a few years ago. It was when actually you came to, well, you didn't come to us before, but we interviewed you before.

Erica

Yeah, yeah.

Neil

In, I have it written down here somewhere.

Erica

I think that one was for *House Lessons*, but. I'm not sure.

Neil

It was in, yes, it was for House Lessons. It was in August 2021, which is.

Erica

Welcome to the pandemic.

Neil

Four years ago. Yeah.

Erica

Yeah, I was in the middle of writing *No Two Persons*.

Neil

Wow. So, let's set the stage here. So we were having an event that was sort of like Whatcom READS where we were trying to get the community to read *House Lessons*, which trying to, it wasn't hard to twist their arms to read that book. It was a great book. And we interviewed you.

Erica

Mhm.

Neil

Through Zoom, as we did back in 2021.

Erica

Yes.

Neil

I didn't actually interview you. It was, it was such an important interview that I handed it over to Lisa Gresham, who is the head of our selectors.

Erica

But as I recall, you were there.

Neil

I was there. Trying to you know.

Erica

You were there in the background.

Neil

Trying to make you laugh or say something witty. I don't know that I did a good job, but that was the first time, you know, we talked with you.

Erica

Mhm.

Neil

And now it's five years later, you've got another, you know, great, powerful moving book going on and we're really looking forward, well, when this podcast comes out, you'll have done all the all of the events, but I'm you know, I'm just really happy to have you here in Whatcom County. How do you feel about Whatcom County?

Erica

I love Whatcom County my husband and I, we drove up last night for the dinner, the incredible dinner that Christy did at Evolve and.

Neil

That's right.

Erica

We were saying that if we hadn't found our place in Port Townsend in 2001, this is a place we would absolutely have considered moving to from Seattle just because it has so many things that we love. Yeah, you know, it's got the water, it's got the books, it's got people, it's got a university.

Neil

So speaking of Port Townsend and you're not the only famous author that's come from that area.

Erica

Ohh, heck no. We're lousy with writers as we like to say, yeah.

Neil

Yeah. One of the, maybe the first really nationally popular authors was Betty MacDonald. Are you a fan of?

Erica

I think her writing, I, well, I'm a huge fan of Mrs. Piggle Wiggle. I used to read that to my kids all the time and I passed the Egg and I Road every time I go from Port Townsend to Seattle.

Neil

Yes. Do you really? Do you really?

Erica

So, and I think she's very funny. I mean, it's a little dated some of it right now, but.

Neil

For sure. It was written in 1943 or something.

Erica

Yeah. But she was such a sharp, funny writer you know.

Neil

Yes, yes, I know that she inspired my mom to write. She wasn't a published author, but she, that didn't stop her from writing.

Erica

Mhm, mhm.

Neil

You know, as many of us who are, you know, inspired. We write a lot, even though we don't get published.

Erica

Sure, absolutely.

Neil

How did it feel to get published the first time?

Erica

Stunning. I mean, I had. I have been trying for 15 years, so I. American Idol was a big deal back then and I kind of felt like I'd want American Idol quite honestly to just you know.

Neil

Wow, I can imagine it would be that that powerful, yeah.

Erica

It was that life changing. Absolutely, you know, to have something you wanted to do your whole life. I mean, my first novel was published 2 months before I turned 50. So that's a lot of patience, honestly.

Neil

OK. Yes, so the lesson here, the house lesson here is never give up.

Erica

Well, yeah. And the other thing that I tell writers is. And I'll say, "oh, I've written two or three books and they haven't gone anywhere." It's like, no, they yes, they have because they've taught you how to write. And so, each book that was rejected each time I learned new skills and I became a better writer. So that by the time I was grown up enough emotionally to write the kind of books I'd always wanted to write, then I had the writing chops to do it well. And so, I think it was just a very long education and I'm OK with that.

Neil

That's really wise. That's really wise. Speaking of education, I did a little research on your website.

Erica

You stalked me.

Neil

And I stalked you a little bit. I don't prepare very well for these things, but I do a little and I found out that you are a doctor.

Erica

I am.

Neil

You are Doctor Bauermeister.

Erica

I am a book doctor.

Neil

Do you? That's great. We have a book hospital at the library where we repair books. So maybe you could come and.

Erica

Fix the spine.

Neil

Intern for us. Yes. One thing I try to ask people in these podcasts is, you know, what's your library story? What?

Erica

Can I have two?

Neil

You certainly can.

Erica

OK, so I have two. My first one is from when I was quite young and we were given a lot more free range back in those days. So you were, you know, as a little kid, I was allowed to go to the library by myself, you know, and I still remember the summer reading challenge where you got this little card and it had a train on it and you had to, you got to put a little sticker on each wheel of the train as you read a book. And I was very star oriented, and I wanted my stars and but that really got me into consistently reading and I just loved the smell of the place. I loved the quiet of the, I had a big family, and the library was quiet and you know, I don't think that story is unusual honestly.

The second story is actually the one that got me writing. Which is I was in college and I was taking all these literature classes and we were focusing on Moby Dick and Hemingway and was like big white whales and war and all that, and I like I honestly didn't care. I mean, I knew these things were important. I could value the clarity and the beauty of some of the sentences, but I didn't, they didn't resonate with me. And then I was in our at the library at Occidental and it had this wonderful reading room with these big leather chairs. And mostly you would go in there to sleep. But I went in there with Tillie Olsen's story *I Stand Here Ironing* and read it and it is the story of this working class mother or single mother who is standing at an ironing board having an imaginary conversation with her daughter's high school counselor. And this is she wrote this and I don't know if it's 1940s or 50s, but it's middle, you know, middle of the of the 20th century.

Neil

OK.

Erica

So early and Tillie Olsen was a working class writer and she's talking about this woman is talking about her life and how because of the life she has, the things she hasn't been able to give to her daughter. You know, the times that she had to leave her daughter with a downstairs neighbor that the daughter was scared to go to. But she had to go work and Tillie Olsen took these very ordinary and I'm air quoting that word, details about this woman's life, and she made them extraordinary and beautiful. And just by the power of her

attention that she gave to it and kind of this loving attention that she gave to it. And I thought, I want to do that, you know, I want to do that because we need to do more of that. It's not just all big white whales, so.

Neil

Right. It's home stories it's people, it's the people we know and the places we know. And I think you do that really well.

Erica

Yes, yes. And it's unveiling the extraordinary and the ordinary. And I think that it is there and we just need to pay attention to see it.

Neil

OK. I didn't plan this, but it occurred to me that I could put you on the spot right now because we're in a very, you know, ordinary and unordinary place.

Erica

Mm-hmm.

Neil

So, Doctor Bauermeister, could you tell us where we are? Could you give a little description of this?

Erica

Oh, we are in what looks like the tasting room of the distillery and the part that I love. Well, you know, I also study architecture and the psychology of space and where we are. And so the beautiful thing about this room is it's set up almost like a theater. And you have chairs that go around and then the stage is the tasting area where the people are going to be behind the bar. But behind that, which is kind of like behind the stage of a theater. There are these beautiful windows that allow you to look into the whole distilling part. And these machines we were, we were talking about before, it's like this combination between punk, you know, steampunk and this gorgeous artwork. I mean, they are really some of the most artistic distilling machines I've ever seen, and they have big open windows looking outside. So, you have all this natural light coming in and it's really a very gorgeous place to be, honestly.

Neil

It's a great place to sit and have a little conversation.

Erica

It is. We just need the cider with us.

Neil

Yes. So, yeah. Again, we're at Bellwood Farms where they, it's an apple farm for those of you who don't know. And they, among other things, they distill their apples into spirits, I guess. All sorts of spirits, gin and vodka and.

Erica

He said rum and cider and brandy.

Neil

You can make anything out of apples if you try hard enough, all right.

Erica

Mm-hmm.

Neil

Before I let you go because I know you've got an audience building out there and they're waiting for you. Can I get a book recommendation from you if.

Erica

Mm-hmm.

Neil

So I'm a person who, like I like stories with interesting people. You know the cast of your story has to be has to engage me.

Erica

OK.

Neil

What would you? What would you recommend? What have you read lately? Or what did you read that inspired you way back then, what should I read?

Erica

I mean, there's a book and it's dark, it's dystopian climate fiction. So get ready. Florida doesn't fare well, but it's one of the most beautiful books I have read in a long, long time.

Maybe forever. It's called *The Light Pirate*, and it's by Lily Brooks-Dalton. And it is set in a not far not too far in the distant future, the 1st 80 pages are a woman in labor during a hurricane and it's gobsmackingly good.

Neil

Wow, wow, ok, we'll put a link to that on our thing. And it occurred to me when you just said Florida doesn't fare well, that sounds like a good book title in itself.

Erica

It's easier to say than *The Light Pirates*, which is a difficult title to get across, yes.

Neil

The Light Pirates.

Erica

Indeed.

Neil

This is impromptu. I only do good with impromptu things. Are we ready? Sure. OK. We're doing good.

Erica

Do I have time? I'm fine.

Neil

It's 20 till. I can. We're going to wrap this up really fairly quick anyway, because I've gone through all my notes, I think.

Erica

Hi.

Neil

Well, not really. There is one, but it's a little deep and it might be a deep question. So again, I did extensive research on your website. [Www.ericabauermeister.com](http://www.ericabauermeister.com). Yeah, yeah.

Erica

Go. Keep it simple.

Neil

And in it. You talked about a friend suggested, a friend suggested once that every author writes the same book over and over, remember?

Erica

Yes.

Neil

So what? What book are you really writing?

Erica

Well. I. It's several things. One of them is I like to write about the subliminal. I always write about what we aren't paying attention to. So how **w does food affect us**? How does architecture affect us? What is our sense of smell doing when we're not even paying attention to it? And all of those kinds of things, like how is, how is it when we read, we're not paying attention to the filters we are bringing to the book, right? And so every book I write, I'm trying to say, pay attention to this, see if it changes how you live to pay attention. And I also love to pay attention to what people aren't saying as much as what they are saying, but underneath all of that, I think the book I write about is about compassion every time because I think that is probably the most important thing, and it has been that way my whole writing career. I think it's even more so now.

Neil

On that note, I'm going to be compassionate and let you get back to getting ready to greet the crowd.

Erica

Well, thank you. It's been delightful to talk to you.

Neil

Well, it's been a pleasure for me, too. All right, that's it.

Erica

Thanks.

(interlude music plays)

Neil

Well, that's our Whatcom READS wrap up. I want to thank my guests the fantastic Claire McElroy and the remarkable Erica Bauermeister. And thanks to Bellwood Farms for allowing Erica and I to sit in the tasting room for her interview. You can find videos from this year's Whatcom READS events and information about next year's events on whatcomreads.org. If you enjoyed the podcast episode, visit WCLS.org/podcasts to listen to more amazing library stories and take care my friends.