

Jeff Around Town – June 10th, 2025

Jeff: Joining me on Jeff Around Town is Maureen Toberer Mangan.

Maureen: Yes.

Jeff: And thank you for being here. You are an artist.

Maureen: Yes.

Jeff: And we have some other things in common besides art. We're both storytellers. And you, like me, we've both been hit by lightning.

Maureen: Yes.

Jeff: So, when did that happen for you?

Maureen: For me, that happened... My children, I had five children. They were all young. About three of them were in the car. I was driving down, I was probably in my 50s.

Jeff: Okay.

Maureen: I was driving, it was on a highway, and I can't remember...

Jeff: Was this here in Nebraska?

Maureen: Yeah, oh yeah. I don't know where I was going, maybe to Lincoln or something. And there was a storm and it was raining and all of a sudden this flash hits the top of my car. It happens so suddenly.

Jeff: Well, it happens in a flash. (laughter)

Maureen: It happens in a flash. And it went all through my body.

Jeff: Oh my gosh. Wait, you were in the car?

Maureen: While I was in the car. That saved my life, I think.

Jeff: Wow.

Maureen: And then I was holding on. I could feel it like go through the steering wheel. It went all through out my legs and rounded itself on the ground. And it was like a flash. I pull over. Oh my God, I think I was just hit by lightning. And so then, I thought, am I okay, am I okay? I didn't know if I should keep driving, but I was fine.

Jeff: Wait, did you say your kids were in the car?

Maureen: My kids were in the car.

Jeff: Okay.

Maureen: And they were just kind of freaked out.

Jeff: Were they also hit by lightning?

Maureen: No, it hit the top of the car.

Jeff: Wow.

Maureen: Went through my body and I thought, what? And then the only thing that I had for quite a while was a very metallic taste in my mouth because I had metal fillings.

Jeff: Wow.

Maureen: And I'll never forget it.

Jeff: What did you do after that? Did you go to the hospital?

Maureen: No.

Jeff: You know my story.

Maureen: Yeah.

Jeff: So, I was 17 and watching a storm because I was a big storm geek. And in Mother Nature's light shows, this is in South Omaha.

Maureen: Yes.

Jeff: And I'm standing in the front yard and I was struck by lightning. My dad had kept warning me and I ignored him, of course, because I was 17. And my mom wanted to take me to the hospital. I mean, I was knocked down.

Maureen: Oh, yeah, you were knocked down.

Jeff: And I believe I was dying. And instead of going to the hospital, my dad gave me my first shot of Jack Daniels. So did you feel like you were dying?

Maureen: No, I was just, like, in shock.

Jeff: Literally.

Maureen: Yeah. Yeah, I didn't. I just didn't. I felt lucky.

Jeff: But how did that change your perspective moving forward in your life, just as an artist or how you see the world?

Maureen: They say that you excess a gift sometimes when you've been struck by lightning. Somebody that survives. For me, I think I just became more keen to the natural world. And I

felt like I understood it. I felt like it spoke to me. And then I started, I would have experiences with birds and it just kind of became my religion. It was phenomenal.

Jeff: Wow. Sounds powerful.

Maureen: And now I work with nature.

Jeff: In your art.

Maureen: In my art.

Jeff: Yeah. Wow. Yeah. And folks can find you at hot shops?

Maureen: I have the wall on the outside of my son's studio, Dan Toberer. And he's one of the main ceramic potters and makes really big pots. And he's pretty well known around there.

Jeff: Well, Maureen, thank you so much for sharing your story about lightning and your art. Thank you so much for being on Jeff Around Town.

Maureen: Thank you so much. I'm honored.