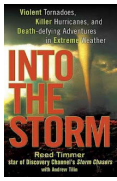


Into the Storm



Tuscaloosa, St. Louis, Joplin, Missouri? Do these names ring a bell? Unfortunately, they've been ground zero for a few of this season's most serious tornadoes. While checking the new shelf, I came across Reed Timmer's new book about his odyssey from a geeky 19 year-old college student to the most famous "storm chaser" around.

I don't get the Discovery Channel, but I've seen clips of some storm chasing videos, including Timmer's since he is now the most famous of the bunch. While watching a huge bruiser of a storm scour the landscape, I couldn't help thinking these guys are absolutely nuts. Timmer agrees but in this book he explains his passion. He describes his childhood as a Weather Channel watching-compulsive. His mom taught science in high school and encouraged his interest in meteorology. For college, he chose the University of Oklahoma at Normal--not only a great school for the science of weather but it's also situated in the heart of tornado alley.

The book is exciting. The author shares his adventures finding tornadoes, racing toward them, even being pummeled inside them. He's the first to admit that too often he threw caution (if you'll excuse the pun) to the winds. He also describes the personal side of storm-chasing--how it can ruin relationships, what young woman would want to spend her time worrying about a guy racing across states to put himself in danger?

And if you think they do it just for ego, Timmer has some surprising revelations. He hates seeing the destruction. He helps with rescue when he can, but his most important help is notifying the National Storm Center about the characteristics of these mega-killers on the ground. During these storm chasing years, the author also got his PhD in meteorology so he brings to those notifications, a scientist's knowledge and experience. And he offers some amazingly practical suggestions: everyone who lives in tornado country should invest in a \$20 weather radio, everyone should heed warnings and seek safety.

Also, included are several storm trips to hurricanes including one in 2005 to Slidell, Louisiana to seek out Hurricane Katrina. During this trip, Timmer and his buddy ended up in jail and they had to hitchhike back. Their vehicle became toast, mushy toast.

Also, check out Mark Levine's F5: Devastation, Survival, and the Most Violent Tornado Outbreak of the 20th Century.

Posted by Dory L. on May 24, 2011

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