

Paleo Solution - 219

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Robb Wolf: Howdy folks. Robb Wolf here, six listeners can't be wrong and this is the Paleo Solution podcast and I am incredibly excited to have our guest today. She is a primitive skills expert, an alumni of the wildly successful and popular Naked and Afraid show, Laura Zerra. Laura how are you doing?

Laura Zerra: I'm doing great, Robb. Thanks for having me on. I'm really excited.

Robb Wolf: I am so excited for this and you know just getting the podcast going is kind of – it's maybe allegorical for the fact that we should not rely on technology.

Laura Zerra: [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: Because it was a pain the ass getting this thing going so .

Laura Zerra: You can throw me out in the back country anywhere, I'm good. You try to get me to use technology and it's just a big fail.

Robb Wolf: Don't go there. Don't go there. It's just

Laura Zerra: It's so good.

Robb Wolf: It's just sorrow and pain and suffering and all that stuff. So hey let me do our podcast sponsors really quick get that stuff out of the way and then we will talk about you and all of your shenanigans. So folks should check out FrontDeskHQ.com. FrontDesk is your mobile based solution for service based businesses, Crossfitn dogwalking, Pilateing, yogaing, anything that's got an ing in it is service based. You want to check out FrontDeskHQ.com.

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Catalyst Athletic Store. MasaNaturalMeats.com, Masa Meats are the folks that I get my meat from. They're outside of Orland California. Phenomenal people, really good quality products that they have. They have both grass-fed meat or beef and lamb and I think they may be doing some goat here, which will be amazing.

Finally Highlite.com. I was an early adopter on the athletic brand Highlite. Really, really good for any of your workout type activities. Use the discount code, RW25 and you'll receive a 25% discount on that. Okay. That bullshit is out of the way. Let's talk about you. [Laughs]

Laura Zerra: [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: So Laura you have a really amazing bio. Can you give folks a little bit of your background? Like I could just read it off of your site and it would probably be somewhat amazing but you talking about it would be far more amazing because you've got a hell of a story.

Laura Zerra: Yeah. I mean I think it's one of those things where I never really know where to start. I feel like a lot has happened in my 28 years. So yeah I basically well for the past 10, they've been the more interesting ones. I had a childhood that I spent a lot of time in the woods but it really started to get crazy about ten years ago. I kind of hit the road, started traveling all over the place, putting myself in different survival situations, and new places that was the big thing. Experiencing places I wasn't familiar with because that always made me push my limits on what I thought I knew. Yeah picking up all sorts of funny odd jobs along the way from you know, being a butcher and a taxidermist to –you know, I was a former vegan, which I think most people find interesting.

Yeah then going you know, doing from mushroom hunting out in Oregon, going to – I do little bit of offshore crabbing. I mean I don't like to be bored. So I've kind of kept interesting.

Robb Wolf: Well you know, most people particularly you are absolutely gorgeous. You're clearly very smart. What compels a young woman like you you know, to keep from getting bored usually that's like go to an urban center, do clubbing, find some corporate job that took mine. It doesn't involve scavenging road kill from the side of the road to start creating hats and suits out of them. Like what was that process? I mean what drove you in that direction?

Laura Zerra: I mean... I think.. you know, that's kind of been the question in my life, why oh why. But it really it started out with me wanting this deeper

connection to land and to place and also to feel like I have ultimate freedom. So I'm not connected and tied into certain people or certain resources like knowing that I can email and basic needs that's kind of what drove me into survival. It wasn't about surviving a zombie apocalypse quite frankly. In the zombie apocalypse I kind of want to be one of the first ones to go.

Robb Wolf: [Laughs]

Laura Zerra: But it's about having that freedom. Like when I know what my needs are, I can meet them and I like going out into wild places and so it was kind of natural for me to learn how to exist there without needing the latest gear or the fanciest tent or the latest in dehydrated food. I wanted to have connection to my own food. So yeah I kind of spiraled out of control and it led me to where I am now.

Robb Wolf: Or wildly in control one or the other depending on how you look at it.

Laura Zerra: Right.

Robb Wolf: So you know, I think it's really – it's interesting to me anyway that in this kind of paleo ancestral health scene I would say one of the largest groups of folks who kind of migrate this direction are actually former vegans. You know, I think that people look at the – both ways of eating as you know, some potential benefits for health and whatnot. But I think that there's also a deep sense of kind of impact that we leave throughout our lifetime on the world around us and you know, some accountability based around that. You know what do you think about that and what kind of – you know, I don't want to lead, ask too leading of a question but what led into the veganism and then how did you proceed out of that? Like what was the process of changing out of that and kind of recognizing this interplay cycle of life lion king type deal you know?

Laura Zerra: [Laughs] Yeah absolutely and I think a lot of people wonder that and really I started being vegan because I really loved meat and I looked into where it came from which was a big mistake. When I found out, I was obviously horrified. The whole factory farming system, I mean I was still pretty young at the time so yeah it was just absolutely horrific. I cut all the meat out and then I realized that by not – you know, by still having dairy products and by still eating eggs and such I was still supporting that system. So I cut everything out.

I started eating a lot of soy and stuff like that and the more I thought about it, the more I traveled, the more I saw where my food was grown, I

realized that –you know, I grew up in New England and if I’m eating a mango in the middle of the winter, there was obviously a pretty big impact that that mango had to get to me. The soy farms in South American and Central America were devastating. I mean jus the amount of deforestation. Furthermore it’s the way my body fell. I didn’t feel good and I didn’t realize how bad I felt until I ate my first piece of meat. That kind of came about because I always said if I could get a piece of meat that I felt good about eating, I would have no problem eating it. Well all of a sudden this road kill deer comes along and I take my first bite and everyone tells me oh you’re going to get so sick, you haven’t eaten, eaten forever but I’m human. My body doesn’t forget how to digest meat just because it’s been a number of years.

Not only did I not get sick, I felt absolutely incredible. I felt you know, I was – I think I was 18 when I started eating meat again and I thought that I just didn’t have energy because oh I must be getting old. [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: [Laughs]

Laura Zerra: So ridiculous. And then it became apparent that for me to be healthy personally, I needed meat in my diet. That was important to me but I needed to feel good about where my meat came from. So that’s how I started eating road kill because I felt like you know, it was something that was going to go to waste anyway. The sacrifice that are even made, why not make use of it. Then that led to me wanting to have this connection to what I was eating. If there wasn’t a road kill deer on the highway what was I going to do? Was I going to go back to eating soy?

Robb Wolf: Soy.

Laura Zerra: And thinking about how many deer my tofu truck took, hit on the way to get to me. What was I going to start hunting? And that kind of was a game changer for me because looking an animal in the eye and deciding that I was going to take its life and my life was worth taking that animal’s life, it was a really powerful motivator for me because it made me realize I had to make my life worth it. You know, I couldn’t just decide that my life was worth killing other creatures for if you know, all I did was laid around and watch TV and doing nothing with myself. So --

Robb Wolf: I mean it’s a gut check taking a really beautiful animal and like you’ve said looking at it in the eye and taking its life. I think that when you do that too like the inclination to just simply look for T-bones and loins and stuff like that kind of goes out the window.

Laura Zerra: Absolutely.

Robb Wolf: When I have an animal processed, because I still have not fully done one myself at home, but so I still hand this off to be processed. The processor was shocked because I want everything. You know, the intestines, the giblets, the shanks, I mean they're kind of like wow, I usually feed most of this to my dogs and I'm like oh that's good but I'm going to eat that stuff. So I mean it's an entirely different approach to that but I still think even people in the ancestral health scene, I'm sure that you will get some resonance with some people but we have such a cultural aversion to thinking about like grabbing something that was hit on the side of the road and eating it. But that totally makes sense.

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Laura Zerra: [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: I mean it completely makes sense but it's just so fascinating that the process with that. Have you ever done like Myers-Briggs personality test?

Laura Zerra: I haven't.

Robb Wolf: I would be – that would be interesting to see where you play out on all that stuff.

Laura Zerra: I don't know if I want to go. [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: For me it was I never really - I was reasonably popular and high school, reasonably popular in college like people liked me. I'm affable and everything but I never quite fit in. Like I'm always a little bit of the odd duck out and ancestral I seem to be like a pig in shit because everybody else is kind of goofy too. So I think it's good in that regard but it would be interesting to see where your personality kind of profile plays out on that. So you know, you started thinking about hunting what was the process of actually taking some action in that direction.

Laura Zerra: Yeah. It was intense. Going out with people I knew that hunted, I was going out and taking part and helping them track animals. That's kind of how it first happened is I wanted to know that if I shot something, I didn't get caught up in the heat of the moment. I wanted to know that I could still be focused and aware on the tracking part so I started tracking injured deer and then finding them and occasionally having to finish things off when I found them if they weren't quite there. It was really intense. It was very intense and then going out in certain survival situations then it's just this really intense gratitude. I think that's what

surprised me most is that I was very fearful of the killing part of things because you never know where you're going to be with that until you're doing it and I guess I think that was the overwhelming feeling I had. It was gratitude and just especially when you really need it. It's pretty humbling to go through with taking something's life.

Robb Wolf: Absolutely.

Laura Zerra: I hope that never changes.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, yeah, no that totally makes sense. So when did you first start going out on your own then and doing some hunting and what was the method that you used? Like I know you have some skills in making your own bows. Did you start with that? Did you start with a rifle? Like how did you do that or what was the kind of technology process in that whole story?

Laura Zerra: Yeah. So I first started out going out and I would just have my knife and that's when I was still doing tracking. It kind of how I first started killing things was actually in survival situations using a throwing stick. Yeah that's intense. A lot more failure than success certainly, I still do not have the best arm. It's probably one of my biggest weaknesses. But yeah trial and error for sure. I'm definitely not opposed to hunting with a rifle. I do rifle hunt. I also make my own bows and go hunting with them. It's one of those things where if I am not practicing 100% consistently with my bow I'm not going to go and point to anything because having witnessed several archery hunts gone array, I never want to be in that position. It's just it's not a good feeling. Wounding something terribly and yeah knowing that it lived and suffered for at least another week, it's like I never want to do that.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Laura Zerra: So I have no problems with the rifle. I want to actually get more up with the atlatl. That's kind of a dream of mine is that I'm headed to Australia the end of April and I don't know. I got to look into their laws. A kangaroo with an atlatl, it's kind of a dream of mine.

Robb Wolf: That would be legit.

Laura Zerra: Yeah, absolutely.

Robb Wolf: You can stay with us in Reno and I can get you – I still practice with the atlatl at least once a week. I don't use the traditional dart for the practice. I actually use some stuff that is very similar to kind of fiberglass

tent stakes. So they have a lot of the same characteristics and the same kind of spinning activity that I can flub a ton of throes and have them go in the weeds and rocks and stuff and they don't shatter.

Laura Zerra: Yup.

Robb Wolf: So it's --

Laura Zerra: Absolutely.

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Laura Zerra: That's awesome. I'm totally going to take you up on that.

Robb Wolf: Open invite. Anytime you want to do it, just get here before the baby arrives. Otherwise it will be complete chaos so.

Laura Zerra: [Laughs] Absolutely.

Robb Wolf: So you know, when you're building a bow what's the process with that? Like my good friend Billy Berger also you know, on the Naked and Afraid show which after the beating that I took on at Caveman I was like I'm not doing this stuff anymore. He actually got in and did the Louisiana Bayou which I mean out of any of the shows that I've seen everybody has had a rough time but honestly I think that that was about the roughest one that I've seen. Because they had --

[0:15:03]

Laura Zerra: Oh I feel so bad for them.

Robb Wolf: French foot and they were freezing and they were basically you know, in ankle deep water the whole time. But Billy starts with basically whether he's using you would or orange wood or whatever like he starts with a shank of wood and starts working it. He makes the cortege from like tendon out of animals that he's gotten from previous hunts. Like what's your process in making it say like a bow and arrow setup.

Laura Zerra: First of all I just want to say that Billy is a total badass.

Robb Wolf: He's amazing. I love that guy.

Laura Zerra: [Laughs] So he's awesome. I really like Billy. But yeah I mean same processes. What I love about it is that you really have to listen to the piece of wood. You can go in there with whatever idea you think you

have about what kind of bow you want to build but at the end of the day, if you don't listen to the type of wood, if you don't listen to that exact piece of wood and how it grew, you're going to have a blowup in your face. So it's really an interesting, I mean it's something that you know if you're just going into it because you want the final product, you're probably not going to be a good bower. It's all about the process. There is countless hours that I have invested in all the bows I've built and it's really for me just kind of almost a meditation, you know, listening...

All right. I think...

Robb Wolf: We're back. Okay, cool. Clearly the technology gods are pissed at a couple of Luddites talking about building those from scratch so sorry about that.

Laura Zerra: [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: So you were talking about kind of the meditative process of building the bow and are you mainly making low bows at this point? Have you played much with recurves or laminated recurves or anything like that?

Laura Zerra: I haven't done anything laminated. Sometimes I recurve my long bows.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum.

Laura Zerra: Just you know, especially if I have a bow that's particularly sluggish. I'll give it a little recurve. But yeah long bows all 100% just wooden bows, just a chunk of a tree

Robb Wolf: Nice.

Laura Zerra: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: Very cool. So tell us a little bit about the naked and afraid deal. Like how did those folks reach out to you, how did you get on the radar and tell folks about that experience?

Laura Zerra: Yeah well over the ten years I spent traveling around I would stop in at various schools and kind of guest instruct and teach different places and. When the casting company started kind of putting their tentacles out and seeing who was out there they found me and stalked me on Facebook and sent me a message. It was kind of game on from there.

Robb Wolf: Nice, nice.

Laura Zerra: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: Did you have any – did they tell you guys where you were going to go, what type of environment you were going to be in so that you could prep a little bit ahead of time or like how –you know, you went to Panama right?

Laura Zerra: Yes.

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Laura Zerra: So my first experience out there was Panama and then I went to the Peruvian Amazon in let's see last November.

Robb Wolf: Okay.

Laura Zerra: So the first experience I had you know, about a week knowing where I was going to go. I kind of got my ticket and I was like oh, okay, I'm you know, flying into Panama City, cool. The second time I actually only had five days' notice before I left to go film. So I had no idea that I was going to be brought back and they kind of just called and were like hey what are you doing on Saturday.

Robb Wolf: [Laughs]

Laura Zerra: [Laughs] I don't know you tell me.

Robb Wolf: Do you feel like losing 30 more pounds how about that?

Laura Zerra: Exactly yeah. Do you want to screw up your whole body again that will be great. [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: So you know, walk folks through that thing. You know, they bring in, they drop you off, like what was – to me kind of the frustrating thing is that these you know, 21 days of experience gets condensed down to an hour so there's so much stuff that I think is really, really interesting that ends up just never seeing the light of day. It would be pretty cool if they had just like a ton of B real stuff that they would stick online.

Laura Zerra: Exactly.

Robb Wolf: Or something like that. But you know tell folks you know, what it was like. You know, I think something that's really interesting for me is just like

figuring out what the priorities are of like getting a camp set up like do you start with shelter first, do you start with fire first, how long before you start looking for food. You know, what type of tools are you hoping to bring to the thing. Like walk people through some of that.

Laura Zerra: Yeah. Well the craziest part of it is you know you dropped off and you're naked and you have one item and you're also with a stranger who has their own ideas about how things are going to go. I think that was one of the craziest things is you go in and you have your idea and they have their idea and then you have to try to reconcile the two and work together as a team on it. It's intense because it's not only a survival show. It's not only you know, a real survival experience but it's a television show so that you're going to have to talk to the camera when you want to actually just shut up and build your shelter.

[0:20:07]

Robb Wolf: Right.

Laura Zerra: So yeah the first thing that I always do is shelter because you're not going to die immediately from oh no this is not working again.

Robb Wolf: You're good on my side.

Laura Zerra: Oh okay.

Robb Wolf: Yup.

Laura Zerra: So you're not going to die from hunger immediately. You know, you got a couple of days before you're going to die of dehydration but you can die in a matter of hours from exposure. If it starts pouring rain it doesn't matter if it's a beautiful tropical climate. You're going to be in trouble if it's even 70 degrees and pouring rain, it feels cold. So --

Robb Wolf: Right.

Laura Zerra: -shelter is a priority, definitely water is going to come up behind that. Fire is occasionally necessary if you're in a freezing cold climate that's going to be something you want to get going right away. Or if you need it to purify water then it's really going to be up there on the list. But shelter is my number one.

Robb Wolf: And for Panama so how did that all play out versus the second experience that you had like as far as needing to process water and stay warm and all that type of stuff.

Laura Zerra: Panama actually was – well it was I think an easier environment overall although it was a challenging, a very challenging experience now in retrospect it was easier. We found water actually on our first day. We were walking towards where we were going to build our little campsite. We found a spring. So that was amazing. I mean you find freshwater and you get to drink cold water every day and you don't have to boil your water. I mean that's pretty luxurious.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Laura Zerra: So the hardest time, the hardest thing we had, the biggest thing we had a problem with was the fire and finding the woods that were going to work for the bow drill was very, very difficult. Everything there was like a sponge. It was like trying to light a sponge on fire. So even the trees that look like hard wood, you hack into them and they'd have this.....

Talking to you on Skype,.

Robb Wolf: [Laughs] So a much larger challenge was maintaining internet connection versus starting a fire in the sodden rainforest of Panama, okay check.

Laura Zerra: If you're like caveman I'm here like hitting my computer. [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: [Laughs] Work, work damn it. So you know, when we did the I Cavemen Show, it wasn't –I don't think it was as hard to find dry material as what you had but two weeks before we hit that scene outside of steamboat springs, everything was under three to four feet of snow.

Laura Zerra: Oh yeah.

Robb Wolf: So it was pretty wet and we spent a good five hours I think just looking at –I was pretty paranoid about the whole thing because I've seen people smoke themselves trying to get a fire started and we had the benefit of having ten people there. So like potentially we could rotate through some people but I also knew how hard the skill set was. So I mean how much time did you spend just prepping versus getting in and actually trying to start the fire?

Laura Zerra: Well I mean by the time the first day was over, you know, had thought about fire. We didn't have a lot of time to spend on it. The second day, we just started hitting fire hard and there was a lot of problems kind of that we had to deal with. I had cut my finger pretty bad within the first couple hours of filming.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum. Uh-hum,.

Laura Zerra: So that was one setback. Then I actually ended up getting stung by a venomous caterpillar on the other hand. So it was one of those things where I felt like I was all thumbs doing it anyway. Trying to go out and just get the material. I mean it was a good couple of days work that we spent and then it just started completely pouring rain and we honestly didn't even try to start a fire again until day 8 and then we got it.

Robb Wolf: Wow.

Laura Zerra: So it was one of those things where we [Audio Glitch]

Robb Wolf: No, no it's not me, it's you. No. [Laughs]

Laura Zerra: [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: So day 8?

Laura Zerra: Day 8.

Robb Wolf: There were naked day 8, the internet wasn't working and we decided to try fire again.

Laura Zerra: This is why a computer was not my one item. You cannot count on them. Right

Robb Wolf: [Laughs] Right. You can count on them to fail right at the time that you need them.

Laura Zerra: Right. Exactly.

Robb Wolf: So tell me some metrics of – how hard was food gathering in that environment? Like if people have the sense that the tropics are just flushed with food but sometimes that's not the case.

Laura Zerra: Right. It's really I think anywhere you are, it's about knowing your environment and knowing how to secure that food and that was the learning curve. That's where that came in. You put someone who's grown up there in that environment and yeah they're going to do well because they know exactly where the resources are. But you head into a jungle and again you start off with these ideas of thinking that you know something and that's the biggest mistake I think.

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There's just a learning curve. I think it was one of things where if we had stuck around we would have started gaining weight back because by the end of it, we were actually starting to store food and not be able to eat all the food we were obtaining. But you know, it took about until day 18 to get there so.

Robb Wolf: And what were the main –you know, what were the food sources that you had like heart of palm or were you – you were in kind of a title area too.

Laura Zerra: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: So you had some access there. Like what did you start with, what were kind of the first finds and then where did that subsistence grow into?

Laura Zerra: So to start off with our first food was coconut.

Robb Wolf: Okay.

Laura Zerra: You know, everyone knows a coconut, you're really excited about it and for the first few days it's awesome and then you get horrible diarrhea because you ate too much of it and you know, it wipes out your whole system and you never want to touch it again. But no that was a really great staple to have there. But you know, everything in moderation. We found this tree called the Water Apple tree which was incredible. A lot of water in the fruit as well as sugar which is great. We had another fruit called the guaba, not guava but guaba and it was big seed pod and inside of them there was a bean and bean as covered with a white fleshy fruit that happened to taste just like ice cream.

Robb Wolf: Nice.

Laura Zerra: Obviously that was my favorite.

Robb Wolf: Shocker.

Laura Zerra: Yeah exactly. What? So those were kind of our fruit staples. We had the heart of palm which was great, although you know, a little bit energy intensive but a sure thing once you cut the tree down. Then we had the ocean. So we had snails, which were very tiny and you know, it kind of old, smashing snails open and trying to get the tiny little fleck of meat and not eat too much shell.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Laura Zerra: Sea urchins which if you went out diving, you could get a sea urchin. My partner wasn't exactly fond of eating them but I found them incredible and lobster which I ended up catching two of in a lobster trap that I made and that was like the best thing I've ever eaten in my life of course.

Robb Wolf: When I first watched that, I was so stoked for that because I tend to do a lot of lobster you know, going after them by hand and then also setting up traps and then also crayfish. So I was pretty stoked about that.

Laura Zerra: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Laura Zerra: Oh it was delicious. We actually got two and we couldn't eat them both the same time. We had to make – I kind of modified the trap and submerged it in water so we could go back and get them later because one of them was pretty lobster.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Laura Zerra: And then we also got a caiman. There's was a bunch of baby caiman and we kind of learned the best way to get them. So yeah we had stuck around. It would have started to get a whole lot better.

Robb Wolf: Right. Just about the time you get your feet under you, they're like okay you made it, you're out of here so.

Laura Zerra: [Laughs] But the protein is huge. You know you can – when you have a good protein source it's huge.

Robb Wolf: So you know, were you like in the back of your head, like how important as the whole like kind of optimum foraging strategy deal you know, where you're thinking about okay, how much energy am I going to burn going after this versus that? Like was there much of that discussion going on or was it just wild flailing trying to find anything that you were slightly higher up the food chain and that was the whole decision process?

Laura Zerra: Well I think my partner was a lot more conservative as far as calorie expenditure.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum.

Laura Zerra: I learn pretty quick off the bat it's – I'm a solo hunter. I go out of my own when I'm going out hunting and you got –you know, a camera man following you around. All I'm thinking about is oh my gosh, everything in the world can hear me coming now.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Laura Zerra: So I kind of figured that going and trying to hunt and trying to procure something that way wasn't going to be the best option and I kind of was like I got to learn how to work this fee because I know there's food just sitting out there. So I was willing to expend the energy for minimal calories knowing that there was that learning curve and that I would be getting over it. It worked out for the best luckily.

Robb Wolf: Right. Right.

Laura Zerra: So yeah definitely something to think about for sure.

Robb Wolf: So now how did that contrast with your second experience? Like what were the food, food options like what was the environment like and easier. You said that the second time was maybe a little harder.

Laura Zerra: Yeah, definitely. The environment was much more intense. Everything in the Amazon is just so alive and has its own personality and the rule book pretty much went out the window and everything I thought any about jungle survival, you had to let the Amazon reteach you because the mosquitoes to start off with were the most intense thing I've ever experienced. I mean enough to just drive you completely insane. We had to learn how to deal with those. You'd think okay well we'll light a smokey fire. No. The mosquitoes do not care about the fire there. They're actually **[0:29:53] [Audio Glitch]**

Robb Wolf: Literally done like ten shows and had zero internet issues. So this is totally amazing.

[0:30:00]

Laura Zerra: No, it's me. It's definitely me.

Robb Wolf: Okay. So the mosquitoes laughed at your attempt at a fire. They just used the **[0:30:09] [Indiscernible]** as flavoring agent on you guys.

Laura Zerra: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: What did you figure out that worked?

Laura Zerra: So we figured out that the best thing to do was to be semi nomadic. So the more you moved, the less the mosquitoes could congregate. It's like the first night you were there, the mosquitoes were pretty bad. The second night they were about ten times worst. The third night they were 20x worst. It was like they would just start inviting their friends over for dinner. They would just set up camp with you and so whenever things would start to get bad, we'd have to move.

Robb Wolf: Wow.

Laura Zerra: And staying move was the biggest thing. Of course if you're on the move, you have to build new shelters. you have to learn your new environment because there's so many little you know, microclimates in the area that we were that the environments were vastly, vastly different. So you know you get one food source that you think is a give me and then all of a sudden you're leaving it behind because you're moving to a new area because you're going to go insane with all these mosquitoes. So --

Robb Wolf: Wow.

Laura Zerra: --yeah it was, it was much more intense that way but I think my partner and I really came into the experience with the same goal and the same attitude and obviously the experience of a first... You know, we had an experience like it before and so we kind of you know, had that to go from and yeah. It ended up – it was incredibly trying but in ways it was easier I guess.

Robb Wolf: But the mosquitoes, I tell you a good mosquito infestation can be an immediate deal breaker for me. Like I will pack up and I'm like I am getting the F out of here, I am good so.

Laura Zerra: Yeah. [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: So you know, I was thinking about kind of the mental toughness strategy of this stuff. Like how did you cope with not giving up? Like what was your internal dialogue and what was going on with that? I get to hang out with some people in like military special forces and different things like that and I've heard some different coping strategies. Like what were your coping strategies?

Laura Zerra: Well pretty much you know, going into this, you know, that if – you assume that production is not going to let you die out there right?

Robb Wolf: Right.

Laura Zerra: So things get really bad but you can't focus on the fact that you can quit. Because if you focus on the fact you can quit, I feel like you're going to quit. I went into just I'm finishing this no matter what. If they drag me out of here in a body bag, they drag me out of here in a body bag. I'm not quitting. There's nothing that's going to make me give up and just not having that out as an option you're going to do as good as you can do. I feel like the greater the need, the greater the result. So when you need to get out of something, you are going to get out of it. I don't know I think I'm an optimist in general so even when things are really bad, EJ and I would be down by the river swatting mosquitoes just you know, in the throes of torture. We'd look up at the sky and there would be a million stars and there would be fireflies all around us and there would be lighting on either side of us but it would be clear above us and we look at each other and we'd go you know what, this isn't half bad. Like --

Robb Wolf: Right.

Laura Zerra: --this is cool. Like who gets to do this. You know?

Robb Wolf: Right.

Laura Zerra: see there was that too.

Robb Wolf: It's interesting for me I think I had a little bit of the steely result but I actually and this is something that's interesting. I use the -- okay I'm not going to give up right now but at noon, I'll give up. I'm going home at noon.

Laura Zerra: [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: And then I would get to noon and then I'm like ah fuck it, I'll stay here until four o'clock. So you know, I had a little bit of both of those words like in the back of my head I'm like I'm not giving up but then part of the immediate -- that was kind of like the long term kind of anchor but the more immediate thing I was like yeah I'll just go for four more hours and then I'll bail. I can bail anytime. So --

Laura Zerra: That's how I get through most of my crossfit workout.

Robb Wolf: Okay, okay, perfect, perfect. So yeah, yeah.

Laura Zerra: I mean I think you know, another part of it is just the fact that being out there is so incredible and you so fully experience every single second you're out there even if it's not you know, a fun situation. You're experiencing it to such an extent that it just makes it, it makes it amazing in its own way. You know, you can kill three hours on Facebook and not remember a single thing you did but I remember every second that I was out in these 21-day experiences and knowing that it just – it's an awesome feeling.

Robb Wolf: So what's it like coming back after that? What was your experience coming back to like real life after that?

Laura Zerra: [Laughs] That's the worst. That's the worst. I mean to be honest with you after coming back from this first experience I got a little depressed. It was like --

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Laura Zerra: --how could anything be so exciting. So I try to live my life in an adventurous way. I think when I came back I wanted to kind of put all that energy into a business and kind of almost settle down and then the other opportunity came up and I just absolutely leaped at it. I was just ecstatic that I was going to be going out again. You know, I try to just keep the ball rolling as far as what I'm doing, an adventure. I think you know the hardest part beyond that of coming back was the effect that it has on your body which to have control and not throw my computer out.

Robb Wolf: [Laughs] Oh well it's all good stuff. So that's why I set the bar purposely low on this show then there's nowhere to go but up. So you're good. So you were talking about the effect that this experience has on your body. Like what was the effect?

Laura Zerra: Yeah. It's a really intense hormonal effect. I think when females especially go through the experience it kind of it changes just your whole – any hormone level whatever you have going on in your body kind of goes into this survival state. Coming back I think the biggest thing I noticed was I'm usually really fit. Trying to put muscle back on when you return is incredibly difficult. Your body has to take everything store it as fat because it doesn't know if you're going to get thrown back out there again, you know?

Robb Wolf: Right.

Laura Zerra: Muscle burns more calories than fat so I feel like going into these situations it wants to have fat. It wasn't to be storing fat. So yeah it's interesting and it takes time and I've learned the best way to deal with it is just being patient and not trying to –you know, I tried to push myself the first time and I ended up hurting my back for the first time ever in a workout. So that was --

Robb Wolf: Oh wow.

Laura Zerra: -- a mistake but yeah. So it's just like letting go of those expectations and being patient with your body and yeah. it's pretty intense.

Robb Wolf: I was definitely smoked after my gig. Like I lost a lot of weight. Definitely feel like I had some cortisol and thyroid stuff going on for a while and it took a good chunk of time to get the wheels back on the wagon. So I could fully believe that and that's where it kind of surprised me that several of you whipper snappers have gotten out there and done back to backers on this stuff. I'm like clearly I am getting old and beat down because I would --

Laura Zerra: No, no, you just --

Robb Wolf: not have done that.

Laura Zerra: --have to figure out your body. I'm just, I'm really cruel to my body [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: [Laughs] Man. So you know, what would you – if you had say like a list of like three to five survival skills that you feel like everybody should have some aptitude with, you know, how would you order that stuff out? I know it's going to change enormously whether we're talking about like a desert environment versus like an Alpine environment and stuff like that. But what are some things that you feel like everybody should have steeping in?

Laura Zerra: Well I feel like the first is really kind of more of a mental preparedness thing. I feel like in our culture, we don't remember how to meet our own – we don't know what our basic needs are. So we don't know how to meet them. So we have kind of our basic needs met by all these systems around us. When you talk to someone they think the first thing to address in a survival situation, they're worried about food, you know, because who wants to miss a meal? That sucks. But I think it's really putting everything into perspective and really relearning what it takes to keep you alive and understanding what order to put things in. So I think

that is huge. I think that knowing the basics of starting a fire, I mean I've met a lot of people who've never even started a fire with you know, a lighter, just a lighter before.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Laura Zerra: So knowing how to do that in any environment and understanding the most basic. Even if you don't know friction fire, some of those most basic of starting a fire that's huge and yeah I feel like honestly when you know those two things and you're able and willing to adapt once you get around to a situation you can kind of look around and once you know what your needs are, you can kind of figure out through your adaptability how to meet them. I mean you don't have to know what every single plant is and you don't have to know all your materials on a first hand basis. That obviously helps to a huge extent but if you're in a – you know you had dropped off in a jungle you might not know what exactly you're touching hopefully. You know, it's not one of the many species of poisonous plants but you see the tree with the big leaves and it's kind of instinct, okay well I'm going to make shelter out of that.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Laura Zerra: That can --

Robb Wolf: Very cool. So what are you doing to help people learn about all this type of stuff?

Laura Zerra: Yeah. So beyond you know, hopefully sharing my experience and adventures more in a –you know, with media, I am all about teaching workshops and [Audio Glitch]... I'm sitting on the router looking at it and it...

Robb Wolf: So you offer workshops and how to dismantle routers and throw computers against the wall. What else do you offer?

Laura Zerra: Yeah. **Remember that** scene from office space where they're just like smashing all the electronics that's what I want to do right now so. [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: Soon soon

Laura Zerra: [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: I'm telling you technology is the root of all evil so we'll just use it to our best benefit but not let it kill us.

[0:40:00]

Laura Zerra: [Laughs] That's good. But yeah teaching and sharing what I do is really important to me so.

Robb Wolf: So where do folks find you for that stuff and like what type of programs are you offering and that type of stuff?

Laura Zerra: Well I'm on the road. I'm doing a little bit of filming still so I'm not – I don't have any workshop currently but LauraZerra.com is my website and I really keep that up to date with whatever I'm doing if I'm going through a town and I'm going to have a workshop or give a speech or something like that. Then I keep everything posted and on there. Also on my Facebook fan page which is just Laura Zerra and then Twitter @LauraZerra. I try to keep everything updated so that whatever names people follow me by they can kind of stay up to date.

Robb Wolf: Fantastic. Well cool. Well so that we don't kill your computer or router or anything, we'll cut this one at about 40 minutes. But I was super stoked to have you on. I've been looking forward to this for a long time. So --

Laura Zerra: Thank you so much Robb. IT was an honor to be on your show.

Robb Wolf: Huge honor having you on and whenever you have something happening, please ping me so that I can get that out on my Facebook and Twitter feed so that folks know about it.

Laura Zerra: Definitely. Will do and I'll let you know when I'm up for some atlatl practice.

Robb Wolf: Any time, any time. We've got a place for you to stay and there's lots of critters to stalk around Reno oddly enough. There's quite a bit of that.

Laura Zerra: Perfect.

Robb Wolf: Quite a bit of varmint around here so.

Laura Zerra: [Laughs] Awesome. Well thanks again.

Robb Wolf: Awesome Laura. Talk to you soon.

Laura Zerra: Take care.

Robb Wolf: Okay.

Laura Zerra: Bye.

Robb Wolf: Bye-bye.

[0:40:35] End of Audio