

Transcript of Interview with Kyle Sauley by Ellie Lawson

Interviewee: Kyle Sauley

Interviewer: Ellie Lawson

Date: 04/21/2021

Location (Interviewee): Indianapolis, Indiana

Location (Interviewer): Indianapolis, Indiana

Abstract:

In this interview, Kyle Sauley shares his experience with being a graduate student during the COVID-19 pandemic and also discusses how the pandemic affected him post-grad in terms of his career, personal life, and more. Kyle also talks about his involvement with the Black Lives Matter protests in Indianapolis that occurred during this time.

Ellie Lawson 00:01

All right, it looks like we are recording. My name is Ellie Lawson. I'm here with Kyle Sauley. The date is April 21, 2021. And the time is 8:58pm Eastern time. I am in Indianapolis, and Kyle's also in Indianapolis but in separate locations. Alright Kyle, I want to briefly review the informed consent and deed of gift document that you signed. This interview is for the COVID 19 Oral History Project, which is associated with the Journal of the Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive. The COVID-19 Oral History Project is a rapid response oral history focused on archiving the lived experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are- we have designed this project so that professional researchers and the broader public can create and upload their oral histories to our open access and open source database. This study will help us collect narratives and understanding about COVID-19 as well as to help us better understand the impacts of the pandemic overtime, the recordings, demographic information and the verbatim transcript will be deposited into the Journal the Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive and in the Indiana University Libraries system for the use of researchers and the general public. Do you have any questions about the projects that I can answer?

Kyle Sauley 01:37

No.

Ellie Lawson 01:38

Perfect. All right. Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or you may leave the study at any point. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with Indianapolis Indiana University, IUPUI, or the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute. Participating in this project means that one, your interview will be recorded in a digital video and or audio format and will be transcribed, two, the recordings and possible transcripts of my interviews, copies of any supplementary documents or additional photos that you may wish to share, the informed consent and deed of gift may be deposited in the Journal of the Plague Year: A COVID-19

Archive and the Indiana University system and will be available to both researchers and the general public. Your name and other means of identification will not be confidential. Do you have any questions?

Kyle Sauley 02:50

No.

Ellie Lawson 02:51

An addition to your signed document, would you please offer a verbal confirmation that you understand and agree to these terms?

Kyle Sauley 03:00

I understand and agree.

Ellie Lawson 03:02

Awesome. I am also asking that you verbally confirm that you have agreed that your interview will be made available under the following license, the- one, the Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial Sharealike 4.0 International and the COVID-19 oral history project, The Journal of the Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive, the trustees of Indiana University IU acting through its agents, employees or representatives has an unlimited write to produce, use, exhibit, display, perform, broadcast, create work from and distribute the oral history materials in any matter or media now existing or here- hereafter developed through the world. I agree that the oral history materials may be used by the voices from the waterways in IU including its assigns- its assigns and transferees for any purpose including, but not limited to marketing, advertising, publicity or other promotional purposes. I agree that IU will have final editorial authority over the use of the oral issue materials, and I waiver any right to inspect or approve of any future use of the oral history material. Moreover, I agree that the public has the right to use the material under the terms of fair use. Finally, I want to ask for a verbal confirmation that you have agreed that your interview will be made available immediately to the public.

Kyle Sauley 04:48

Yeah, I confirm.

Ellie Lawson 04:50

Perfect, awesome. Okay, that is all for the legal stuff, and we'll get started. So Kyle, just kind of go through what your- your day to day life looks like right now. So, like extracurricular activities or jobs, things like that.

Kyle Sauley 05:11

Yeah. So I'm 24. I turn 25 in like two weeks. I currently work as an admissions counselor at Franklin College. So down in Franklin, Indiana, about 30 minutes south of Indianapolis, small school about a

thousand students. It was my undergraduate institution. So, Monday through Friday I'm there, typically from eight to five, with some fluctuation with that I'm looking into like the nighttime hours. I also coach. I'm a volunteer assistant coach for both the men and women's tennis teams down there. So I pretty much spend my entire life on that campus. And then, in my brief spare time, I live on the north side of Indianapolis, about 10 minutes from Broad Ripple. So, when I'm there, I'm just kind of hanging out. But those are the main things that take up my time. I give tennis lessons to a couple of the middle school students that I coach in the Fall for a little extra income, but that- those are the main things that I'm involved in.

Ellie Lawson 06:23

Okay. So when you first learned about COVID-19, what were your thoughts? Maybe what was the primary day to day things that you were doing? And how did COVID kind of affect that?

Kyle Sauley 06:36

Yeah, so I'm drawing back just a little bit. Um, it's been over a year now. But I started to hear about Coronavirus and COVID-19 in either January or February 2020, so before it actually hit stateside. I was in my final semester of the public history Master's program at IUPUI, so Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. So I was wrapping up that. I was taking two classes, I was interning at the Indiana Historical Society in their public programs department, and I was also working part-time at the Indiana State House in the tour office, as well as coaching tennis at the college. So, life was pretty busy at the time. I didn't really think much of it in January, February. I think we were all, you know, kind of assuming it would be the same things that we'd heard of with like Ebola or things like that, where there was this big uproar, and really nothing came of it. Near the end of February, I actually- I got strep throat, so I was actually pretty sick. I got a lot of comments, a lot of jokes about "Oh, you've got Coronavirus," Like, "That's wacky you're the first person." I didn't- sure don't think I did. But you know, at that point, we were still you know, pretty loose with it. We were, you know, we weren't too worried about it. It was just kind of a, you know, this fun thing to joke about. And then March rolled around. We were still, you know, treating life as we were before. I know March 7th, I worked a big event at the Indiana Historical Society. I believe it was the State of Women event. We had about 200 guests there that day. No masks or anything like that. And then my roommate and I actually had a party that night. So we had about 20 people over to our apartment. And by the next week, we were on lockdown. So I know, March, I remember March 11th, I was watching basketball with my roommate, and they started, you know, one team had someone test positive. And, within about 30 minutes, we watched the entire NBA season get canceled and, then the next day March Madness was called off, and we were sent home from our internships. I know initially, I thought like, "Oh, cool, we got an extra two- an extra week of spring break, like that's really fun." And, I'm still on that second week of spring break, apparently, because we still haven't returned to normal. So, we were definitely, you know, we weren't- just like the general population, we weren't too scared of it and, you know, up until March 14th, that's a rough date, but around like March 14 right in there, and then, you know, things turned really quick. It wasn't like it was a subtle change at all. It was a "Oh shoot. Things are gonna look a lot different for quite a while."

Ellie Lawson 09:50

So how did your thoughts about COVID evolve through, you know, through being shut down in lockdown? Maybe walk me through those first couple months.

Kyle Sauley 10:04

Yeah. So, I was living down in Southport, Indiana. Technically still an Indianapolis address, but it's about just as south as you can go and still be in Indianapolis. I had a three-bedroom apartment and two roommates. Spent a lot more time with one of my roommates than the other. And, you know, at first, I said March was kinda like, "Okay. this is gonna, you know, we'll be here, you know, maybe we'll be in for two weeks, maybe three weeks." It was kind of the assumption that things would return back to normal. I had summer employment lined up with the State House. So I was just kind of banking on, you know, being virtual through, you know, maybe April, you know, hopefully not May, and then, you know, going back to work in June, and then things kind of picking up as normal. You know, by the time we got to three weeks in, it kind of became pretty apparent that it wasn't going to be as quick of a turnaround as what we expected. I know like my- we all went and bought a bunch of groceries there, right, like right in the middle of March. I don't think we grocery shopped again, for at least three weeks, if not, you know, four to a month, which was definitely a change of pace, because we lived within five minutes of five different grocery stores. We had a really prime real estate in terms of grocery stores. So, we would just go over there, you know, it seemed two or three times a week, just pick up little odds and ends. So, that was definitely- definitely the first trip to the grocery store was chaotic. I had to buy just the worst spaghetti sauce in the world because there was none left. It was just like a fancy \$4 bottle, and it was spicy, and it was terrible. [laughs] So, you know, that was definitely something different. Looking into April, we, you know, kind of recognized, we're strapping in for a little bit longer, got a lot more comfortable doing virtual work. Admittedly, I'm not put out for virtual work. I need to talk to people. I need to be engaged. So, I was, you know, I was getting off away from my computer all the time, just because I can't sit in front of a screen just look at spreadsheets and do research and stuff. I need to talk to people. Lots and lots of Zoom meetings. I've never done Zoom before March 2020. We did one Zoom class, in preparation in case something were to happen, and, then, I lived on Zoom for the next six months. So that was definitely a big change there. You know, May came around, we started to get a little more stir crazy. I think we, you know, we did a really good job about just kind of staying in place. We'd go on like walks throughout the neighborhood right next to our apartment complex just about every day, if not twice. I know I checked, at one day, we were walking about five miles a day. So, I was actually in really good shape. But come May, it started to get a little more stir crazy of like, "I want to see people like, I want to hang out." So, you know, we had to find ways to entertain ourselves. I know I- I saw my sister on May 3rd because she just adopted a dog and that was the first time I'd like gone and saw people since, you know, almost two month, which is unheard of for me because I'm just a social creature by nature. So, that was definitely a big transition was just, you know, getting used to being stuck at home. You know, we did the same Netflix binges that everyone did. We watched Tiger King in two days. I finally finished Glee and then restarted Glee, and finished it again. So, we were finding ways to entertain

yourself. You know, I was lucky to have an apartment where I had two roommates. So, there were at least other young people around. I wasn't just, you know, stuck in a place by myself because I would have gotten crazy. And that's a real long winded answer. You're gonna get a lot of those from me, but hopefully that at least touches on your question.

Ellie Lawson 14:32

Yeah, no, that's great. So, you got a job at Franklin during COVID. So, how has COVID affected your job? Maybe walk us through a little bit of- of that transition.

Kyle Sauley 14:52

Yeah. So I'll start even just talking about job searching, and I'll talk about like my job in specific. So, as you know, the public history degree really gives itself towards, you know, cultural institutions and museums that are public facing. I planned to graduate in May 2020, that's when my classes finished up. I did not enter grad school expecting to graduate in a pandemic. That was not part of my plan. If I had known that was part of it, I probably would have changed my plans. But, museums were not hiring summer 2020. They were cutting staff left and right. Um, so just an absolutely terrible time to enter the job field. For that, like I said, I planned to work for the State House, do Camp Indiana, which is their summer camp for the children of state employees. Over the summer, you know, use that time to apply for jobs, and hopefully have someone full time by, you know, August 2020. Camp Indiana ended up getting canceled. So, I was without a job. I know the Department of Administration, which is the department of the State House was in, they did offer us pay for a month or two of the virus. So, that was nice. You know, I was still working virtually for the Historical Society through my grad school internship because I had a 10 month contract. So, that was still being audited. So, I was bringing in money at that point. Once May rolled around, about a quarter of the way through, a weekend, the state emailed us, the Department of Administration said, "If you want a job, we will find you a job." It's kinda hard to turn that down in a pandemic. So, I ended up working for the Department of Corrections for about two months. I mowed grass out at the Plainfield Correctional Facility. So definitely not what I intended to do when I started 2020. I like to make a lot of jokes about back when I was in prison because I spent two months working there. I'm really thankful for that opportunity just because I made really good money over that summer that really kept me afloat while a lot of people, you know, a lot of young graduates didn't have that opportunity and really struggling through it. I wrapped that up at the end of the July, went back to the statehouse in August, worked at the statehouse, at first, doing like an information desk in the State Government Center South as part of the Department of Administration, and then returned back to the statehouse near the beginning of August. At that point, I was working more than I normally worked at the statehouse, just because most of the staff is- most of the staff were high risk individuals, individuals who are 60-plus in age. So, they wanted to have, you know, the young guy who was less likely to kick the bucket if he got sick work, which I completely understand and appreciated. So I was working about four days a week for August. I started coaching middle school tennis down in Franklin at Franklin Community Middle School. So I was doing those things to kind of keep myself afloat and, you know, trying to find full time employment, but kind of struggling at that.

And then November, I was able to get that job for admissions at Franklin. All three rounds of my interviews were over Zoom, which is not what the typical protocol is for those positions. They are usually in-person interviews. But, those were all in over Zoom. And I've been at Franklin since November. So, about five months now. So, I was never, you know, really unemployed. There's probably about a week or two, you know, where I was between the prison and the state house. There wasn't a whole lot going on. Taylor Swift released an album in that time. So, I got to really, really dive into that which was a blessing. But, I had pretty consistent employment throughout, and I really recognize how blessed I am for that because there's a lot of people who can't, you know, say that. There's a lot of people who lost jobs because of COVID. I had, you know, five, I had like four or five- I worked for the census for a while. And I have way too many W-2s when it comes to doing my taxes this year. I blame COVID for that. But you know, you got to do what you got to do to make ends meet. Since then- since I started at Franklin, they'd returned back to, you know, on-person- on campus work, so I've been in office since November. When we do staff meetings, we do staff meetings over Zoom instead going on in the conference room, which is what they used to do. So, it is a little bit different. We are having students come to visit campus. When students from my certain region that I'm responsible for visit, we do meet with them face to face. I meet with them and their families. We will do that. Normally we would do that in our offices, but we're not any meetings in offices right now because of COVID. So we're using other conference room or a media room, which are larger spaces downstairs to meet with the students, and we are masked the whole time. When I'm in my office, I don't wear my mask, but when I'm outside of my office and am engaging with, you know, prospective students, I am masked, and when I walk around campus, I'm masked. And then, you know, we aren't doing like college fairs. We're not going into high schools. Normally, you know, half that job is going into high schools and meeting face to face with, you know, classes of students, things like that, and that's not happening. We've been doing virtual college fair. So we've been, you know, basically hopping in a Zoom room and then beginning a presentation and opening up for questions. But, students are really tired of virtual learning. They're tired of Zoom events. I know, I understand that. I'm tired of Zoom. I appreciate Zoom very much, but I'm tired of it. So, I definitely understand their fatigue with that. And, you know, it's frustrating from my end, because I will sit in a Zoom room for two hours, because there's a statewide fair for the state of Kentucky, and no students pop into my Zoom. But, I also can't blame them for that like, they spend their whole lives looking at them while I do it after school hours. Um, so that's looked a little bit different. In terms of tennis, it changed college athletics. So, for Franklin, which is in the Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference, it's a division-three conference of schools of Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky. All fall sports were postponed. So, everything that would have happened in Fall 2020 is happening in Spring 2021 which means that we have both the men and women's tennis teams playing at the same time, which has been a little stressful, a little tiring, just because that means we're doing, as coaches, we're doing double the practices. We can only take six individuals in one of the passengers- I think 12 passenger vans. That's what the college rule is. So, if we want to take six girls and a coach, which is pretty much what you need to have a lineup, you're expected to take two vans. So that's definitely been stressful with that, just kind of having to work- work around there. It's kind of put more obligation on the volunteer coaches, like myself. And also there's just more teams traveling. And since they can't take as many

people, they're using more vans, so getting transportation from the college has been a problem. Some schools are requiring students to get tested before they travel to that school. So, we play a match at Rose-Hulman this upcoming Saturday. So, the entire team that's traveling had to get tested for COVID this morning and Wednesday. So, you know, that's definitely- definitely different. You know, it depends on the school. But, you know, we're taking student temperatures. We're doing random testing. I know back in the fall, we had to do the full-blown PCR tests. The dreaded COVID test that tickles your brain, as they say. So, that was not fun. They sent out- they shipped our results off to the hospital and something spilt. So we had to do it again in a week, which was terrible. But, you know, things have definitely changed in terms of just jobs across the board and life in general. I'm looking forward to, you know, getting hopefully getting back into high schools this fall. You know, getting to meet with my students from my region, and just kind of get to meet my guidance counselors I'm working with, because right now, I know a lot of names, I know a lot of emails, but not seen a lot of faces. There's another incredibly long-winded answer to your question. [laughs]

Ellie Lawson 24:04

No, that's great. So, have you had any people that you know, been affected by, you know, COVID-19 and their employment? Maybe you could speak on the people that you interact with maybe on a daily basis.

Kyle Sauley 24:27

You know, so I've since moved since my last apartment. So I have one roommate that came from the last apartment with me and then a new roommate- the new roommate, he has worked fully virtual since the pandemic started. So he's not been in the office since then. He kept his job, things like that, but he's not gone in and then my other roommates doing a hybrid schedule. I know I've had a lot of grad school friends who are incredibly competent people, I would argue they're way more competent than I am, who have struggled to find employment. There's no reason for these, you know, these incredibly bright, young professionals not to just have jobs knocking down their door trying to get them to work for them, so that's definitely been a struggle. It's just watching, you know, my colleagues, my friends, really, really struggle to find jobs and kind of have to take job off their field about because it's hard to be picky right now. We really aren't in a position where we can be super picky. With that I mentioned the State House staff, it's a lot of retired individuals who are just doing, working there part time. You know, they like that extra- that extra income and for most of them, they went without that income for, you know, for four months at least. So, that's definitely, you know, a big change. I'm trying to think right off the top of my head, if I know anyone who... I do, I had a friend who worked in Indianapolis for a company that did programs related to music, and she was furloughed because of it. So, she's actually moved back home to Madison, which is my hometown. So, Madison, Indiana. So, she's, you know, had to kind of uproot her life. Leave her apartment. Um, it's turned out really well for her, she got a good job down there. She's bought a house. So you know, really happy for her. I definitely miss her being up here in Indianapolis. It was nice having, you know, another friend from back home up here. But, she's the one that comes to mind. I know a lot of people moved back in with their parents who never really intended to. That was

kind of a strong sticking point for me as I will, you know, do manual labor, I will do whatever it takes, I really don't want to go back to my hometown. I love my hometown, love my family, but I think I would have just gone crazy if I had to go live back there. You know, I wanted to stay here in Indianapolis, even if, you know, I wasn't working, when I wanted to work, I knew that the opportunities were better here. So that was really my strong sticking point. But I've known a lot of people who have lost, lost jobs or had jobs affected. I know, my dad works at a factory down in Madison, and he spent, you know, about a month where he wasn't working there. So, he was doing unemployment for the first time in his life. You know, he didn't lose his job, his job- they weren't in. When you're hourly, if you're not working, you know, you're just out of luck. So, that was definitely, you know, a big shift for him. Kind of a preview of retirement because he's a year away from retiring. So, he got to kind of do a test drive, which honestly, is probably pretty nice. And, I know he wasn't, you know, he did all right for himself with retirement and, so, it wasn't like he was hurting for funds too much. But so yeah, it's affected a lot of people a lot of different areas. I know a lot of people who started driving, you know, doing like Uber Eats or DoorDash or things like that, just because, you know, it was one of the few things that they could find jobs for. But yeah, that's definitely- I think that's all that comes to mind right now. I'm sure I'm missing something. My sister and her fiancé are both teachers. So, you know, it drastically affected what their school life look like. You know, they're both teaching in Indianapolis, in, you know, school corporations that aren't in the wealthiest neighborhoods. So, I know, a big part of like what they struggled with was just, you know, getting students, you know, access to iPads, or computers, or iPhones where they could, you know, access the internet and, then, getting students to WiFi because not every student had Wi Fi at home. So, that was definitely, you know, a challenge for them. And, then just, you know, you can't really fail a student because of COVID. So, having students who weren't, you know, doing their work, but kind of situationally didn't feel right to punish them. So, you know, it's- definitely was a struggle across the board for most job fields.

Ellie Lawson 29:07

Do you have any general concerns about how COVID is affecting employment, or maybe just the economy in general?

Kyle Sauley 29:46

I mean, definitely, like I feel incredibly lucky to have found a full time job when I did. I was starting to worry that I was just- wasn't going to find full time employment when I went to grad school and shoot myself in the foot, because I, you know, skipped out on a halfway decent job market to pursue a passion and then left that program in just a terrible place to find a job. You know, I feel pretty secure in my position. I'm not really worried about, you know, if there were like a second wave, or if they were economic effects, like, my job is pretty secure. So I feel- feel alright that way. But, I do worry for a lot of like small businesses, especially in tourist dependent towns, because we're seeing, you know, a lot of- summertime, it's really a big tourist season for those towns, and they didn't, you know, they didn't get through 2020. Starting to see places that aren't getting much of a 2021 independent opening. So definitely, you know, effects that way. You know, I don't want to see, you know, my favorite little mom

and pop shops go out of business. So, you know, I've been trying to find ways to support them, you know, virtually to support them online, do some online shopping, things like that. But you know, it's hard to support restaurants when you're an hour and a half from home. So, you know, just trying to do what I'm able to do, but those are definitely my big concerns. Admittedly, I'm like, I understand economics to a point, but I'm not the most economically fluent. Quite frankly, I just, I don't care to put it bluntly, economics just kind of goes in one ear out the other. I don't understand stocks, anything like that. So, if I were more in tune with that, I'd probably have more to say along those lines, but like I said, I do worry about like, the small businesses. I'm sure, you know, Amazon made a killing like they always do, and it's probably a great year for Amazon, but you know, probably a terrible year for the mom and pop stores that, you know, I grew up shopping at and things like that, that, you know, weren't built for a virtual world.

Ellie Lawson 32:03

Alright, so let's move on to some questions about your family or the household that you're living in. How are you managing day-to-day activity within your household? You have two roommates, and they have different jobs than you, so maybe just kind of talk on that.

Kyle Sauley 32:28

It's definitely an interesting dynamic. Like I said, my one roommate is working fully virtually. My other roommate, Matthew, is fully virtual. He works, you know, eight to five, five days a week from home. My roommate, Noah, is a grad student, so he is working about 20 hours a week. His internship has virtual classes. He is doing like a hybrid schedule for his internship, so he's probably in one or two days a week and working from home on a couple hours a week. And then, I am fully in person working and, then, you know, fully in person for tennis, as well. So, you kinda got opposite ends of the spectrum where, you know, one roommate is probably here 22 hours of the day, goes to the gym, go shopping, things like that, but really is you know, here, most of an average day. And then, from most days from you know, 8am- from 7am when I leave till 8, 9, 10pm, depending on how late practice goes, I'm not here. It's definitely different dynamics with that just like, who's around. Matt, who's here, does more like the cleaning just because, one, his personality is kind of geared towards that but, two, he's just here. It's pretty rare to have- it's not rare to have all three of us here, but we don't get a ton of time just to sit down and hang out. I've skipped tennis practice the last two nights because it's been 30 degrees and snowing, so we weren't having it. I'm sure we'll touch on this later, but I got my second COVID vaccine yesterday too, so my arms pretty sore, so I don't want to play tennis anyway. That was nice just because we actually, all three got to hang out. Even on the weekends, I'm not here too terribly often. I've got a girlfriend that lives down in Bloomington, so about an hour away. It seems like most weekends I'm heading down that way. So, we're not seeing a ton of each other, but you know, we make it work. It's been interesting, you know, kind of living through COVID, but it's not been too bad of a struggle for the three of us. Noah and I moved up into this apartment in July and Matt was already living here. We moved during COVID, but we weren't here at the start. I think the rough, the roughest months from March, April, May, when you were getting used to it. By July, you know, the weather it was a bit nicer,

things dipped a little bit. Restaurants are open, you just had to wear masks, things like that. We were out of the deep quarantine at that point. We weren't out of quarantine, but we were out of like, the deep, I don't see anybody quarantine part. It's great having two roommates that are here most of the time, because I have people to interact with. I feel bad for being gone all the time, because that's one less person to have interact with, but what can I do about it? Not really anything.

Ellie Lawson 35:38

Has COVID-19 affected the way that you communicate with your roommates, maybe your family, other friends? And how so?

Kyle Sauley 35:52

Especially like my grad school friends, they took it pretty seriously just as a group across the board, so there weren't any like, hangouts over the summer, things like that. And at that point, we were- we'd graduated, so we all kind of started going our own separate ways. Most of my grad school friends weren't local. I had one or two that were from the central Indiana region. So, people kind of started spreading out, which made it even more difficult to see each other. We've done a couple different Zoom hangouts. I've been a little less receptive to Zoom hangouts just because, like, I'm Zoomed out too like, I'm just burnt out on the virtual platforms. But, it's been something where we like, we went from seeing each other twice a week for class to not seeing each other. Some of my good friends from grad school I've not seen since March 2020, because they went virtual. They quarantined and they moved home. So, that's definitely been a change. My friends from Madison, I've seen them a couple of times. Typically, I don't get home as often as I should. I probably get home three or four times a year. I saw them with the holidays, you know, we tried to- tried to do it socially distance the best that we could, but, also, at that point we were nine months and we just kind of wanted to hang out. So, there's some- some give and take with that. We have a very active Facebook group message that we've used since we graduated high school to keep in touch just because we went to different colleges all across Indiana. So, that wasn't too difficult, but that's definitely changed. In terms of family, I try and call my parents every couple of weeks. I should call them more often than I do. My older sister calls them every weekend, because she's the perfect child. I get them every- every couple of weekends. That's definitely been a big thing is just trying to stay in contact with them. See how they're doing with it. They're a little more at risk. My dad is going to turn 65 this year, and then my mom just turned 61 this year. Obviously, they are technically in that at-risk category. They're both pretty healthy, so I'm lucky with that. But, just trying to get them to buy into like, "Hey, stay socially distance, hey, wear your mask," things like that. They didn't really resist it too much, but with southern parents from southern Indiana, it's a labor of love.

Ellie Lawson 38:53

Awesome. One last question in this section. What has been your biggest challenge that you faced during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Kyle Sauley 39:08

I think from like, a day-to-day standpoint, especially like in the early parts, I've alluded to this quite a few times, I'm a social person by nature. I don't like being stuck inside. I want to see people. I want to hang out with people, so I definitely was really stir crazy with that. There is a lot of anxiety of just being stuck inside, not going to go out and do, just hanging out with people things like that. There were anxieties with trying to find a job and just kind of already feeling burnt out on school, and then doing it virtually did not help in the least bit, so that was definitely a big challenge. Not even- like my like biggest day-to-day challenges was just trying to not get burnt out and not have that fatigue with it. For a more personal, like one situation standpoint, I mean, we lost my grandmother to COVID back in January. That was definitely like a big, big blow. She was in a nursing home, so they did like a great job of keeping Coronavirus out of the nursing home for about nine months, and then this January, they kinda had a spike. So, that was definitely just like a personal thing. I kept trying to come home and visit the nursing home just to see her, and it seemed like every time I'd come home, there'd be like one person that was related to the nursing home who would test positive, and then shut it all down for two weeks. I was just super unlucky with getting back home to see her, but they were able to get us in right there in January, but at that point, things had taken a turn for the worst. So, not what you want to see by any means, but that's definitely was a struggle as well, just dealing with that. Kind of seeing a funeral from that side too. Doing a funeral in masks, seeing fewer people come through than what you normally would because it's all socially distanced. They were limiting people. So, not something you think about when it comes to the pandemic, but you know, it affects so many aspects of life, so even- even funerals look different, which is not what I would have thought.

Ellie Lawson 41:36

Alright, so a little bit more about community, we'll move to this section. How are people around you responding to COVID within your community? So, that could be anywhere from your roommates, your family, but also maybe Franklin College, tennis, all those.

Kyle Sauley 41:59

I will say Indianapolis has done a really good job with enforcing a mask mandate. It really feels that like Indianapolis has, you know, bought into that. I know there was a bit of a culture shock when I went back home to Madison, even when the statewide mask mandate was in place. I went to Walmart and just no one was wearing them, and it was just- it was startling almost 'cause I was so used to going to a Walmart here, and it was without question, you wouldn't see people who weren't wearing masks. I don't know what the- the staff had to go through to enforce that. I'm sure they've had some people complain. But you know, without fail, if I go to like my local Kroger, or my local Walmart, everyone's wearing a mask. It's not a question. And, I think I was in the minority when I went down to the Walmart in Madison. I was in the minority for just wearing a mask. Most people weren't wearing them, so that's definitely a big change. Most of the people I hang out with understand the importance of masks. They've kind of bought into those. Franklin College has done a really good job of enforcing a mask mandate. We require people that are on campus to wear masks. If you are in your dorm room, you don't have to wear a mask, but if you're in class, things like that, you're- you're masked up. I know I've had to ask a couple of guests in the

admissions building to put masks on, even after the statewide mandate ended on April 6, I believe. I don't know if it continued in Johnson County, where Franklin is, but immediately after the mask mandate was lifted, the president of the college came out and said that we are going to continue with our 'Fortify Franklin' guidelines, so, you know, masks are still going to be required on campus. So that's just been kind of reassuring as someone who works on campus and deals with outside guests. I like that we're following that mask mandate. I know, in terms of tennis, there's pretty good acceptance that you wear a mask at tennis court, you don't wear it when you're playing typically. I know our conference has a rule where if you were playing indoor tennis matches, everyone has to wear a mask, during play. Admittedly, I think that's a little bit silly. Mainly because they didn't make that rule for basketball where they're bumping up against each other. But, tennis we're 30 feet across from each other, and they required it, but they don't pay me to make the rules. So, we'll follow it if we go indoors. Outside of that, I know Franklin switched a lot of its programming. They do a lot of the trying to do a lot of like off campus programming during the school year. They used to be called 'FC on the town' where they just try and take students out into the community. We'll take them to Pacers games or go to Kings Island in Ohio, things like that. They've tried to bring a lot of those entertainments to campus. They did like an iceless ice skating rink, which I don't know how you do that, but they did that. They brought a lot of food trucks. Just trying to give students that opportunity, you know, the opportunity of trying to do fun things still. It's definitely like a bummer. I'm super glad I'm not in undergrad right now. I feel so bad for those students. I feel terrible for the seniors who lost their last couple months. I feel terrible for especially like the student athletes who were in their season who never really got a cap to their athletic careers. I feel terrible for the freshmen who came into college like, this is not the college experience you dream of by any means. I feel bad for people who turned 21 during quarantine. They're missing out on some fun times for sure. But, all in all, I think they've done a pretty good job. The more out of Indianapolis I get, the less masks I see. If I stop in some small town between here in Madison, or if I'm going down to Bloomington, if I stop at one of the small towns between here and there, a lot of times I'll go to a gas station or something, and no one's wearing masks, but at this point, I'm not surprised by it.

Ellie Lawson 46:30

Have you been around or seen anyone in your community, in your circle that's changed their opinions, or maybe day-to-day activities because of the pandemic or change their behaviors?

Kyle Sauley 46:50

I mean, I know a lot of people who have basically lived in their apartments and hardly left for over a year now. Those are the people who've bought in the most. Those are the extreme cases. I know there's still like a lot of resistance to wearing a mask, things like that. Seems sometimes to be more of like a political issue of just like those certain people don't want their like freedoms overstepped. I've been impressed with like, what I've seen from my family. Like I said, small town in southern Indiana not often too- too friendly to change. So, seeing my family wear masks, things like that, has been encouraging and sometimes surprising. I know my father gets his second vaccine later this week. I wasn't always sure he was going to get it to begin with. So I'm super excited that he's getting a second.

That's kind of a relief. Some- some weight off my shoulders. And, then, I've seen my sister less. Her and her fiancé, they're not married yet. They get married here in a couple, about a month actually. They've been pretty hesitant to have people over, so I've not seen them nearly as much as I typically would. She lives about 25-30 minutes from my apartment. It's not much for me to get over there and grab dinner with them or things like that, but I'm probably seeing them once every two months right now, which is a lot less than what it was. So, those are the main things that come to mind. I know just like, I go to a gym down the road. They have shut down like every other treadmill, things like that. It's a lot more difficult just to get your workout in because certain- certain equipments closed off for COVID mitigation protocol. Things like that are pretty common. I'm trying to think of anything else that comes to mind. I've seen some big events throughout the state get canceled or postponed, things like that. The Indy 500 was ran without fans, and that was something I'd already bought my tickets for that one for last year, so that was definitely a bummer. It's where things have fallen down, like where those like events have fallen down. You've seen a lot more people like go hiking, things like that. People have found other ways to get out and get engaged. I'm sure like the state parks have seen a boom. I went and saw like a drive-in movie over last summer when COVID was still a pretty big, quarantine was still pretty fresh. That was probably June or July. I was in my last apartment, so it had to be July, at the latest. They were super busy, so I imagine that was part of COVID was just like that was a safe thing to do. So definitely seeing things like that. But, yeah, that's like I said another long-winded answer.

Ellie Lawson 50:16

That's fine. Okay, so let's move on to health, and I just want to remind you that you don't have to share anything that you don't want to. Also, that if you're talking about someone, just make sure you don't say any identifiable information about them.

Kyle Sauley 50:41

Yeah.

Ellie Lawson 50:42

So, you mentioned you just got your second COVID vaccination. How are you dealing or responding to the vaccination itself, but also its rollout within your community, within the United States?

Kyle Sauley 51:04

Yeah. I just got my second shot. I got the Moderna vaccine, so it's one of the two shotters. Admittedly, I feel pretty alright. I'm tired. I've been worn out all day. I got it yesterday, so I was pretty tired near the end of yesterday. My arm was pretty sore. My arm is still pretty sore today, but I haven't had the nasty side effects. I haven't had many chills. I haven't felt super achy, things like that. I'm pretty thankful, you know, for that. I was able to get it a little bit earlier than most people around my age because when they unrolled it for like education adjacent people, we were able to kind of swing that as people who were meeting with high school students. Also, with my role as a middle school tennis coach, I was kind of able to swing both of those into a vaccine. So, I got my first shot before it was unrolled for people under

the age of 30. I would have liked to see, personally, probably quicker rollout, but I also understand the need to get it to those high risk individuals first, so getting it to those older people or frontline workers. I think teachers and children should have been pretty early in the rollout, just since a lot of places were doing in-person school. Beyond that, I don't have a ton of complaints about the rollout. Admittedly, I wish we'd been more on top of things from the very beginning. I feel like we probably could be a month or two ahead if the last administration had started working a little bit earlier on it. I'm just thankful to have it. If I'm thankful to have my vaccine, I'm thankful that my dad was implicated his. I'm thankful that I know people who have gotten theirs and that we're starting to move towards a more vaccinated society as a whole. I don't want to complain too much because that is- is a massive undertaking. We didn't know a whole lot about Coronavirus fifteen months ago, and now we've got three different vaccines in the market that are helping fight it. That's pretty cool. That's pretty amazing. So, yeah, wish it would have been done faster. I wish things return to normal quicker but, all in all, it's hard to complain.

Ellie Lawson 53:48

So, again, you don't have to answer this if you don't want to. Have you or anyone you've known had COVID? How did that affect you? How did that affect them and their lives?

Kyle Sauley 54:07

I've not. I've, at least, to my knowledge, I've not had it. There's always the chance of having it asymptotically. I had paranoia anytime I felt like the slightest scratchy throat or something with like allergies. I always was kind of paranoid with that. I had an ear infection back in February, or January, something like that, and I was thoroughly convinced that I'd caught it at that point, but hadn't. So, no, I have not had it. No one in my close family has had it besides my grandmother, who I had mentioned already. I've known like a handful of younger people who have tested positive. No one I know has had too rough at times with it. A handful of people were pretty asymptomatic, don't think they had it and just tested either false positive or don't really kind of know what happened with it, but tested positive to their two weeks. I can't think of anyone I know at least in my age group, who tested positive just felt absolutely rotten. So pretty thankful for that, too, that no one I know, outside of things I've already mentioned, has gotten super sick from it. I'm trying to think of if there's anyone else that comes to mind. I've had a couple people I know who've lost grandparents and things like that. I've had a couple people friends that were my age that older parents, like I do, whose parents got it, and they had a pretty rough time with it. I know that it's really scary and something that I was praying wouldn't happen on my end. So, it definitely seems to be something that affected the older generations more, but I don't know anyone that had it in my age group that really struggled with it, at least.

Ellie Lawson 56:27

Have you seen COVID-19 affecting people's mental health or physical health through the pandemic?

Kyle Sauley 56:36

Yeah. I think just with that shift to lockdown, you know, people aren't going out as much. They're kind of stuck inside their homes, and that's going to take a negative effect on people's mental health. I know a lot of a lot of my peers struggled with jobs. Either finding jobs or keeping those or things like that, so that definitely has affected those individuals' mental health. I'd say anxiety, depression, they're definitely big issues across the board, especially in our younger generation that's more willing to talk about that and just kind of express those feelings. But, I would say that, at least in my estimation, there is definitely a big spike in that since March 2020. I know, I felt more anxious during this, especially in the summer months than I had previously in my life, and it wasn't anything that was unbearable. It wasn't something where I needed to seek medical attention or anything like that, but it wasn't all rainbows and happiness. It was definitely a struggling time. Something that we weren't accustomed to. It was a big shift in terms of just what we're accustomed to, and there's a lot of other things going on. Like, if you look at the events of 2020, even removing just the pandemic between politics and social movements, things like that, it was a pretty stressful year. And, that's not to say that there weren't good things that happened over 2020, but there's definitely a lot to weigh on that people's mental health things like that. Physical health, if you're stuck inside your apartment, there's a lot of risks with that. If you're not getting exercise, if you're stuck in with groceries, and you're eating out a whole bunch, I know a lot of people who struggle with their physical health or weight, things like that. I got pretty lucky because our outlet was walking. We were walking like five miles a day, and then when I started working at the prison, my job was outside. I was mowing grass, so I was out in the sun for five, six hours a day in the summer so I was sweating a whole bunch and lost a bunch of weight that way. So, I stayed in pretty good shape. I know a lot of people who just kind of sat in their homes and not getting the exercise, things like that, and that definitely affected their physical health, as well as their mental health.

Ellie Lawson 59:29

Okay, so we're gonna move on to the social movements, the protests that happened in 2020. When and where did you attend protests during the pandemic?

Kyle Sauley 59:46

Yes. I attended, I want to say it was June 6th. It was an early June Black Lives Matter protest in downtown Indianapolis. It was one of their larger ones following, I think it was the week after the killing of George Floyd. It may have been two weeks after. It was not very long after by any means. Down at the State House and then marched to Monument Circle and then down Massachusetts Avenue. That was, I think, that was probably the largest day of protest. I would have liked to participate in more but had some trouble working it into my work schedule. That was one on a weekend, so I had the day off. That was the one that I participated in. I really want to say that was June 6th, but I know for a fact it was a Saturday.

Ellie Lawson 1:00:49

What did the protest look like for you that you participated in?

Kyle Sauley 1:00:55

I mean, it was very well attended. It was really the first crowd I'd seen since the pandemic started, which in itself poses some issues pandemic-related, and I will say everyone did a very good job of wearing masks. It was very communal situation, like there were people that bought like 24 packs of water and we're passing them out, things like that. But, everyone was doing a good- doing their best to follow social distancing guidelines, to have some sort of facial covering and things like that. I know that there was some flack given too. You know, we can't gather, we can't go to sports games, but you call it a protest and have all these people together. I still see those comments on Facebook all the time when the Reds said they're only letting so many people and they say, "Well we call it a protest, then we can let in everybody." I'd say there were a couple thousand people there. Mostly young, mostly 20 to 40, would be my guess, but you're not limited to that by any means. It was on the statehouse lawn, on the south side, I'm using my statehouse tour guide knowledge here, and it kinda of stretched on to the east and west. So, it took up most of that grassy area on the back half of the statehouse facing the Simon building. There were- the organizers had a blow horn with speaker systems, and they were using the south steps as their meeting place and then most people were kind of facing out, or facing towards them. I know there were a lot of people there. I knew there were people that I knew were there who I was not able to find just because of the number of people there and the size of the crowd. It was definitely a large crowd. I guess a couple thousand, probably, but I don't know the exact number. I'm sure it's out there for like the June 6, if it was June 6, I guess I think it was.

Ellie Lawson 1:03:19

What motivated you to go and protest?

Kyle Sauley 1:03:25

I definitely had been following the Black Lives Matter movement for a while, had grown increasingly upset about what I was seeing. Growing up in southern Indiana, I kind of had a conservative upbringing and then I shifted more left politically, as I went through my undergrad. Part of that comes kind of having that eye-opening experience, or that just kind of becoming more aware of social issues I was seeing. You can't tell me like instances of police brutality, specifically against members of the black community that we've seen in the last five, six years. So, definitely just kind of starts to grow on itself. The George Floyd one was definitely kind of the catalyst nationwide that got a lot of people to step in and kind of take place in their first rallies. That's definitely part of it. Just kind of wanting to see accountability, changing. It's almost like one is enough and, at this point, we're well past one. We're at hundreds of instances of it. So, trying to do what I can. I didn't know what else I could do. Donate some money. I donated a couple like the bale relief funds in Louisville, post-Breonna Taylor, and Minnesota, post-George Floyd. Beyond that, I've thought getting my voice heard being a part of a bigger movement, amplifying the voices of the organizers was probably my best way to have any impact.

Ellie Lawson 1:05:27

How did you hear about the protests?

Kyle Sauley 1:05:33

There were a handful of protests throughout that week. I know earlier on in the week, I had gone downtown after work, and just kind of seen what Indianapolis look like. There were businesses boarded up that was graffiti on them, things that said 'Black Lives Matter,' things like that. So, I heard about it through social media really. I followed Black Lives Matter Indy, which is the Indianapolis Black Lives Matter chapter on Twitter. I saw the tweets about it, but I actually think I found it as a Facebook event that the organizers put out on Facebook. It had been shared by a couple of my friends from undergrad who had been involved in some of the movement in the past. So, that was actually how I found it out, I saw it on Facebook, reached out to a friend of mine, who I kind of figured wanted to go and went with him. It was a lot easier to kind of take that jump with somebody than it was to go alone. That's not to say I wouldn't have gotten alone, but definitely was easy to go in together. Like I said, I've been texting with him about ways to get involved, and we saw that and hopped on it.

Ellie Lawson 1:06:58

Awesome. During the protests, could you tell me how the protesters and the Indianapolis Police Department interacted with one another? Was there a relationship there that you could see?

Kyle Sauley 1:07:15

Not particularly, to be quite honest. It was more of a... it was a peaceful protest. Like I said, there was no damage, things like that. The police department kind of kept itself at an arm's length. It kept themselves kind of removed from the situation. The crowd wasn't violent, wasn't actually hostile, but also clearly would not have been too eager to interact with the cops at the time. So, you know, both sides kind of stuck to themselves. I saw- there was some riot trucks or riot van type of deals with the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department that were downtown, just kind of stationed on some- like a couple blocks away, but the two parts kind of stayed separate themselves. If that was on Saturday, I think I went downtown Wednesday or Thursday, just kind of to check out downtown, and that day, I went the- the state capitol was surrounded by the National Guard. There was a National Guard member, probably every 10 feet surrounding the outside of the State House, which was definitely strange to see as that being a place that I work. You never really think you're gonna see the place you work surrounded by men and women in camouflage, holding guns. That was kind of startling. It wasn't something that necessarily made me feel any safer just because, at that point, if there's a chance of escalation that just knowing that there are guns didn't really bring any relief to me. But the State House was safe, I reckon. Nothing happened to it, so that was definitely a strange thing to see. You just don't expect to see your workplace surrounded by that. The day that I was actually down there for the protests, the two parties, the IMPD and the Black Lives Matter movement protests, they kind of stuck to themselves.

Ellie Lawson 1:09:40

Is there anything else you want to say about the protest specifically, like that day that you're protesting?

Kyle Sauley 1:09:50

I had issues getting back in Indianapolis after the protest. I picked up my friend that went with me down near the University of Indianapolis campus, which is on the south side of Indy. I was south of Indy, I took him back down there to drop him off, tried to grab a bite to eat, so going back up to the north side where I live now. I was actually going to visit my friend who now lives here. Was not able to get any food because all the restaurants had closed at like 6pm, because of the curfew. Wasn't able to get to the interstate because, the way I needed to go, I had been blocked off by IMPD about 30 minutes before the protests before the curfew would have taken place. So, I was not able to get up to where I was going before curfew ended. I got there a little bit afterwards. It kind of seemed counterproductive, in my opinion, but they don't pay me to make those decisions. So, that was definitely an interesting aspect of it. Having streets blocked off, being told you can't go through, you can't get to the interstate entrance ramp that you need. That was definitely something like I said, the process itself, really had a communal sense. Obviously, there's a lot of emotion behind it. There's a lot of outrage, but it was a really friendly place to be. Like I said, they were caring people who were passing around sunscreen, they were passing around bottles of water, things like that. They were taking care of each other. It was a very communal place. It felt very safe. People were very respectful of like, doing their best to social distance, as much as you can with that number of people in that space. It overflowed onto the sidewalk a little bit, but didn't like, it were floating on the road that it wasn't blocking any traffic. Like I said, the protests marched over to Monument Circle and then down Massachusetts avenue for quite a while. There wasn't any traffic there. To be quite honest, I can't tell you if those roads were blocked off by IMPD, but there wasn't any traffic on them. It wasn't like, there was light traffic, but they had no cars around, so I had have to assume that some of those streets have been blocked off. I assume there's probably some line of communication between the organizers and the police just to kind of let them know. I guess police either wanted to give the protesters safety from cars or just wanting to try and avoid damage one of the two and maybe a little bit of both, but a couple of the streets were blocked. But that's- nothing else really comes to mind. Like I said, it's been- it's been almost a full year, which is crazy to think about. It's been 10 months. So, drawing back in a little bit of memory. I just- what was a pretty stressful, pretty stressful and chaotic day. So it's not locked in too crystal clear.

Ellie Lawson 1:13:14

Have you noticed any changes in public consciousness since the protests, whether that's in your community, globally, nationally?

Kyle Sauley 1:13:30

Yeah, I really feel like they increased awareness of the Black Lives Matter movement. I know, this interview, it's happening at a convenient time because the ruling for the trial of Derek Chauvin, who was the officer who killed George Floyd. The ruling came yesterday, and he was found guilty on all three charges. That doesn't happen if there's not one, if there's not the video that was taken by the people that are in the scene, but a lot less likely to happen if there isn't this big spotlight on it. A lot of times things like that get kind of brushed under the rug. So, that's definitely something just across the board. I mean, I

think drew more attention to the Black Lives Matter movement. If you agree to disagree people were talking about it, especially summer 2020. You see it, I said I'm a big sports guy, and you see it in the NBA, professional basketball, Black Lives Matter was on every court during the playoffs. Players didn't have their last names on the back of jerseys, they had words like 'equality' and things like that. They had messages on the back of their jerseys that they got to choose. So it definitely just increased public attention on the movement, and I'd like to say it solved everything, but that's not the world that we live in. It's still an upward battle. The fight continues, but hopefully it made changes for good. That's- that's all I can hope.

Ellie Lawson 1:15:25

So, just trying to round it out. What can you imagine your life being in a year?

Kyle Sauley 1:15:36

Man, a year from now. That's tough because I don't even know what I'm doing next week. A year from now, hopefully in the same job and hopefully still employed. I really hope we're getting back to some normalcy in terms of going back to having events, having crowds. I know I had mentioned sports a couple times. I'm just a big- huge sports fan, and there's nothing- I shouldn't say there's nothing I want more, but there's very little I want more than be able to get to a sporting event, you know, get a beer, sit there, and watch the game. Hopefully, we've moved past the point of wearing the mask and hopefully, we've moved past the point of needing them. If we need them, I'll still be wearing one, but hopefully we've moved past the point of where we require them. Beyond that, where do I see myself in a year? You know, hopefully just keeping on. Hopefully, I'll finish my thesis by then. But if there's another pandemic, I'll be back inside. If there's more social unrest, I'll probably be out in the streets. But we'll see.

Ellie Lawson 1:17:03

And knowing what you know, now, what do you think that individuals, communities, and even governments need to keep in mind for the future?

Kyle Sauley 1:17:19

I feel like, just as a nation, we had a slow response. March 2020, April 2020, May 2020, that was a pretty slow response. Hopefully, we're a little quicker to action next time around. If there is a next time, hopefully we actually could get out in front of it. And it's super frustrating seeing, you know, some of these countries who really bought into COVID prevention early, who have very much returned to normalcy. They have- I see videos, I mentioned it earlier, I'm a huge Taylor Swift fan. I see videos of bars that are doing like, Taylor Swift theme nights in these other countries that got ahead of COVID, and I want that so bad. I just, I can't have it. Because we didn't get ahead of the curve. We're still suckin' our thumb. So, if we take anything else. It's just buying into society better next time.

Ellie Lawson 1:18:27

Is there anything at any point of this interview that you want to add to? Something that you didn't get to say, or anything like that?

Kyle Sauley 1:18:41

Nothing's coming to mind. I talk a lot, so there's a lot of ground covered in there. So, I think I'm good.

Ellie Lawson 1:18:50

Awesome. Well, thank you so much.

Kyle Sauley 1:18:52

Absolutely. That's what I'm here for.