

Transcript of Interview with John Riley by Zara Sherman

Interviewee: John Riley

Interviewer: Zara Sherman

Date: 09/19/2020

Location (Interviewee):

Location (Interviewer):

Abstract: An account of one person's experience through the COVID 19 pandemic.

Zara Sherman 00:05

This is Zara Sherman here with John Riley. It's 10:20am on Saturday, September 19, 2020. We are recording this interview to post on the COVID-19 archive project website. John, do you consent to this video being recorded and posted?

John Riley 00:26

I do consent, you can post it to the COVID-19 archive project website.

Zara Sherman 00:31

First—so let's just, to get started, where are you from?

John Riley 00:36

I'm from Candia, New Hampshire. For anyone who wouldn't know, it's like in the middle of the woods, basically.

Zara Sherman 00:43

All right. And so, do you remember the—the moment that you got the stay-at-home order as it relates to COVID?

John Riley 00:54

Yeah, so I was, at the time, I was actually living in a different town, Bedford, New Hampshire. So, it was like in a regular neighborhood, or whatever, but I was in school and we had just entered, like the final block of our day. So, it was like the last class when everyone in the school got the email that we had to go home. And so I remember my teacher was like, yelling at us, because everyone was like, freaking out, and talking and screaming, and like, no one, not screaming, but like, they were all just

talking because they were interested that we were going home. No one really seem scared. But everyone was just sort of excited and sort of saw it almost as like a vacation from school, because I think that we all thought we're gonna be back in like a week or two.

Zara Sherman 01:39

So, for you, when did that shift in mindset really happened, where you started to realize that this wasn't a short vacation for school, but that this was gonna, really, affect [audio cuts out] for a long time?

John Riley 01:53

Honestly, I don't know if I ever really had that shift, to be quite honest with you. Because when we first got it, I had sort of done some research a little bit and looked into the news. And I figured that it probably wasn't going to go away. So, I sort of was already prepared that we weren't going back. Yeah, so I don't really think that shift ever happened in my mind.

Zara Sherman 02:17

So, did you transition to online school?

John Riley 02:22

We did. So, there were—the formats were slightly different, depending on the teacher. So, like some would post just like a document with questions of what we had to do in the hour and twenty minutes, and some teachers would do live video calls on Google Hangouts, or I think it's Hangouts.

Zara Sherman 02:41

Besides just the format of school, how did—how did that shift, change your experience, and especially with the end of year, and all the ceremonies that usually come with senior year?

John Riley 02:55

I would say that the online school definitely made school a lot easier, because you could sort of do it on your own schedule. And also, for since there's only a couple months left, teachers didn't really know how much work they should give us. So, like they would, sometimes, some scenarios give us too much work. And then they would say, okay, whatever you got done is fine. And then some teachers would give us not a lot of work at all. So, that was nice. So, that led to a lot more of like procrastinating the little things and like watching TV, Netflix and YouTube and all that stuff. And then as for the end of the year ceremony stuff, I wasn't planning on going my senior prom anyway, so that didn't really make a

difference. And for the graduation, we actually were able to have in-person graduation. But it was with these things we had called advisories, which are almost like a homeroom. So, there are only like 10 to 15 of us. So, that didn't change in the sense of having, being able to walk across the stage and grab a diploma. But it did in the sense of like the number of people that were there and being able to be there with all my best friends and stuff.

Zara Sherman 04:12

Were you working during the pandemic as well, or was there any-

John Riley 04:18

Yeah, I was working, my mom was working. And then my dad worked from home. And then my sister ended up also getting a job. So, we were all working.

Zara Sherman 04:28

And how was that with the potential stress of working when it can be potentially so dangerous?

John Riley 04:41

Honestly, it didn't really affect my family that much because being from New Hampshire, the COVID cases weren't ever really that high. So, I don't really think we were ever too concerned about catching it. It was just sort of more of a normal day to day life honestly, at that point for us.

Zara Sherman 04:58

Were you able to pick up any hobbies during quarantine?

John Riley 05:03

I was able to work a lot more, not really do that many hobbies.

Zara Sherman 05:08

Um, as far as the government responds both locally and nationally, do you have any thoughts on that?

John Riley 05:19

I think, from the local response, our government sort of did what most of the other ones did, and having everything shut down and that was in a relatively timely manner, I think. And then, as for reopening, we were a little bit faster, obviously, than most places because we had the low number of cases. So, I think the local government was fine. In fairness, they didn't really have that much to deal with, because they didn't have thousands of people flooding hospitals at any point and then as for the national response, it definitely caught everyone off guard and spread a lot faster than they thought. So, they were sort of already a step behind from the beginning of the process, I think, and I think that sort of reflected with how people assess their response at this point. As for when they knew certain things like getting masks and stuff like that, I think they did fine with being able to produce the number of masks that were needed, the number of ventilators that were needed. Because I know everyone's freaking out about that, and the supply chains were sort of backed up at the start.

Zara Sherman 06:27

All right. And finally, how, if any, has your experience through this pandemic, started to affect the way that you view the immediate or just your future in general?

John Riley 06:45

Definitely, it's affected certain like, sanitary habits, so like washing hands and hand sanitizing and all that stuff and touching faces. So, that's obviously playing a bigger role in my mind of making sure that I'm staying clean and keeping the germs away and stuff. And then I think mask wearing whenever I'm sick regardless, that'll definitely be something. And then, I think also, too, I think people are a little freaked out because they're saying in the news, how like nothing will ever be the same. I think there will be some sense of normalcy at some point. But it probably won't be for a little while, because I know they're promising a vaccine by the end of the year. But I'm not sure first off, if that vaccine will come out. And then second, how many people will be willing to take it because it's been through very limited testing if it's only been a year. Yeah.

Zara Sherman 07:44

All right. Well, thank you very much for the interview.