

Transcript of Interview with Jim Robinson and John Peyton

Interviewee: Jim Robinson

Interviewer: John Peyton

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Location (Interviewee): New Palestine, Indiana

Location (Interviewer): Indianapolis, Indiana

Transcriber: John Peyton

Abstract: Jim Robinson is the Town Manager for New Palestine, Indiana. He discusses his multiple responsibilities and how his small town was affected by the COVID-19 outbreak in terms of logistics and the town's culture at large.

John Peyton: All right. So we're recording. My name is John Peyton. I'm here with Jim Robinson and Joanna Reece. The date is March 29th, 2021. The time is 2:08. Joanna and I are in Indianapolis, Indiana and Jim Robinson is in New Palestine, Indiana. Jim, I briefly wanted to 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 epidemic. 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 understandings about COVID-19, as well as help us better understand the impacts of the pandemic over time. The recordings, demographic information and verbatim transcripts will be deposited in the Journal of the Plague Year, a COVID-19 archive and the Indiana University Library System for the use of researchers and the general public. You have any questions about the project that I can answer right now.

Jim Robinson: No.

John Peyton: Okay. So taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or you may leave the study at any time. 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 the study will not affect your current or future relations with Indiana University, IUPUI, or the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute. Participating in this project means that one, your interviews will be recorded and digital video and or audio format and may be transcribed. The recordings and possible transcriptions of my interview, copy of any supplementary documents or set or additional photographs that you wish to share. And 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 Library System, and will be available to both researchers and the general public. Your name and other means of identification that will not be confidential. You have any questions?

Jim Robinson: One quick question. John. Why interview me if I may ask?

John Peyton: Well, I'm interested in kind of how New Palestine in particular has dealt with the pandemic. Because I have heard, that some of the restaurants, for example, I think it was because last year I was hearing that the Frosty Boy that that people weren't social distancing. And I'm just hearing this word-of-mouth from my parents, from my grandma, even and you know Dee actually went there

and tried to kind of straighten that out. So I guess I'm interested in how small communities are dealing with this pandemic, if that makes sense.

Jim Robinson: Yeah. So my little geography is what you're focusing on here? Yes.

John Peyton: Yes, and so for two interviews, were basically responsible for interviewing a person from Indiana and also somebody from outside of the state. So for my outside of the state person, I'm actually doing a colleague of mine. He is a professor at Georgetown University, you know, which is right by DC. He's had COVID and all that too. So yeah. And also, you know, just so I can a little bit of insight also on the protests as I was saying. But, you know, the COVID-19 oral history project, that's the larger issue that we're going to be speaking about today. Cool. All right. Oh, where was I? Okay. In addition to your signed document, would you please offer a verbal confirmation that you understand and agree to these terms? So basically just say yes.

Jim Robinson: Yes.

John Peyton: Okay. All right. I am also asking that you verbally confirm that you have agreed that your interview will be made available under the license Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0). So that's one of the licenses that it's going to be available under. And also the COVID 19 oral history project, the Journal of the Plague Year COVID-19 archive, and the trustees of Indiana University, IU, acting through its agents, employees, or representatives, has an unlimited right to reproduce, use, exhibit, to display, perform broadcasts, create derivative works from and distribute the oral history materials in any manner or media now existing or hereafter developed, in perpetuity, throughout the world. I agree that the oral history materials may be used by the Voices from the Waterways and IU, including 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 history materials, and I waive any right to inspect or approve of any future use of the oral history materials. Moreover, I agree that the public has the right to use the materials under the terms of fair use (U.S. copyright law Section 107 of the U.S. Copyright Act). Do you agree?

Jim Robinson: Yes, I agree.

John Peyton: Alright, yeah. These are just formalities that we have to do as part of the interview. So thank you for your patience on this. Okay. All right. Finally, this is it. And then we can get into the interview. Finally, I want to ask for a verbal confirmation that you have agreed that your interviewee will be made available to the public immediately. Do you agree?

Jim Robinson: Yes.

John Peyton: All right. Sounds good. All right. So let's get into the to the basics of this interview. So we were talking about this earlier when we when we were doing our pre-interview, I think it's best if we start off with some with some background questions and get in a little bit to the COVID-19. What are the primary things that that you're doing on a day-to-day basis?

Jim Robinson: That? Well, I'm I worked for the town of New Palestine. I'm the town manager here. On a daily operations, I'm a building inspector, the planning commissioner. Right now. I have a license for a wastewater treatment. We're a small town. So you wear a lot of hats. So mainly daily operations.

John Peyton: Mm-hm. Yeah. Which of those responsibilities that you just mentioned requires the most time or would you say that they kind of all require about the same amount of time?

Jim Robinson: Well, right now it seems like the growth of our town. So I would say that the building permits, the building inspections are probably my busiest part, probably the last 3 or 4 months. But of course, with that our expansion of the wastewater or planning, it just kind of all comes together. So I'd say they're all important. All equal.

John Peyton: Mm-hm. Yeah. And how long have you been in that position?

Jim Robinson: This position? This is my this is my second year. I was a building inspector, then I became the planning commission are now in the town manager.

John Peyton: Okay. Yeah. So just kind of moving up then.

Jim Robinson: Yeah.

John Peyton: Okay. And yeah. So we got into this, you know, where you live and what it's like to live there. And you were kind of talking just about how, you know, how a lot of people, a lot of kids in particular, you know, kind of move away during our pre-interview, and kind of how you see a lot of kids buried in their smart phones and stuff like that. Can you kind of talk a little bit more about that and kind of how that kind of fits into the overall context of living in New Palestine?

Jim Robinson: I'd say New Palestine's, a typical little town. I think right now, not knowing the census, it should be out, we're hoping maybe this month or the first of next. We're probably a town of between three and four thousand. We're centered around our high school. So as far as what goes on in town, we have a lot of, we're known for, a lot of athletics. We've got great football teams, great softball teams, great wrestling teams. We're a tight-knit community. I'd say we're a bedroom community. People that live here typically get up and go to work outside our city limits, and then they come back home to their activities.

John Peyton: So very just very kind of localized, if you will. Yeah. Yeah. Because I mean, I do know that some people from New Pal like I like Angela Arhendts for example, I mean, you know, she was raised there but, you know, she she's doing big things with Apple and all that stuff now too. So, but generally, those are kind of exceptions is what you're saying.

Jim Robinson: Angie Arhendts was a very exceptional, very talented young lady. I mean, she has been since high school. Your mom and I were fortunate to go to school with her. And she's she's kinda go in the world plateau, you know. She's very recognized.

John Peyton: For sure.

Jim Robinson: Yeah.

John Peyton: Alright. So let's we're going to get in a little bit to the pandemic with the background questions. When you first learned about COVID, you know, like what, what we're kind of like your thoughts about it, like what was kind of going on in your mind when you first heard about the first outbreaks?

Jim Robinson: Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Ben, I apologize. I can't give you any dates, but you know, I do remember, you know, we had some counsel personnel. One of the ladies on the Council, she is actually a nurse that works at St. Vincent. So she probably brought the awareness into Town Hall as far as the people that work here. And you know from the first conversations, there was a real heavy amount of seriousness about it. You just didn't know what it was, what was gonna happen. I mean, there was a little bit of gloom and doom there for a little while. So we were we just didn't know it. I think we fell into the category of what when couldn't get hand sanitizer, we couldn't get masks for the community. You know, there was a lot going on there at the very beginning. A lot of concern.

John Peyton: Yeah. Just thinking about okay, how are we going to regulate all as well? Especially since we, since a lot of communities and whatnot, we're still trying to work out those types of issues last year it seems like.

Jim Robinson: We were saying we had some initiatives from the council level to kind of roll out a plan. Do we lock up town hall? Do we allow people in? Do they wear mask? Do we sit six feet apart? Or do we close off Town Hall, go to Zoom meetings? And eventually we did. It got to the point where the Zoom meetings was how we ran town hall.

John Peyton: So yeah. Yeah. I mean, were there a lot of people in your community that just that didn't want any type of regulations and I mean, was there a lot of push back on some of the stuff that you guys were trying to do in town hall, would you say?

Jim Robinson: No. Everybody pretty much understanding because you know what, it didn't matter if you were in town hall or if you worked at the gas station or if you worked at McDonald's here in town. Everybody everybody was under the same amount of, you know, what is going on, how do we how do we handle our business? And we were the same. And so I think everybody felt, you know, I think everybody felt the need that whatever we did was okay, so.

John Peyton: Yeah. And and kind of that general consensus that the town, has that has that kind of changed your thoughts about the pandemic sense since it outbreak, since it broke out last year? I mean, how of your thoughts changed about this about this pandemic over time?

Jim Robinson: I think for the town of New Palestine, I think everybody worked well together. I frequent the gas station every morning you know, and the restaurants here in town. I think they all did their part. But I do know that you brought up frosty boy was kind of in the news. I think it just got to the point where people didn't know how to act. If you generally, if you go to Frosty Boy, you will see a line out to the street. And that's just the way Frosty Boy has been for the last 20 something years. Well, now you're asking to separate people and they were they were kind of forced to tape up there sidewalks and, and flag off areas. I think corralling people and in creating movements in the grocery store. It just became a way of life. And you unbeknownst, you'd walk into a grocery store and you walk in the wrong way on an arrow, you turn around you with the right way or the way that they chose to run their traffic through their store, so.

John Peyton: Yeah. So yeah. And like even at those places, there really wasn't even that much pushback at like the Frosty Boy with all those regulations really.

Jim Robinson: No. And you got and I think, you know, the social media, and you know you're getting it from both ends. You're getting real life when you're walking into the store and you're getting it on the

media and then you're getting it on your iPhone or Facebook page. And there are some people genuinely upset. Some people's level of frustration showed showed on Facebook, so.

John Peyton: Alright. Now just just like just of your own personal background, I know that your responsibilities as town manager keep you very busy. Have you really had any experience traveling with in the past 12 months? And if you have, what was that experience like traveling during the pandemic?

Jim Robinson: I really didn't travel a lot. Now, one long trip I did take to Washington DC, I actually traveled there on January 6th, so. But that that was the extent of my travel. Didn't do any flying, drove myself, so.

John Peyton: Yeah. Yeah. Well, yeah, this is this is a good segue into that. Could you maybe talk about your, your experience at, at the and capital on that day? You know, like what your role was, what you saw. And, you know, your own involvement and like what you saw other people doing as well?

Jim Robinson: Yeah. My my reasoning for going was really, I was concerned about the election, whether there was election fraud. Whether was not. For the last four years. I've heard of the Russian collusion and it lasted for four years. My intent to go there was to show support and hope that those at the capital would at least take the time and listen to the 70 million people who voted for Trump, and maybe give it 30 days and look into it. And I just felt like personally, I felt like that wasn't happening. I think we were getting shut down and courts, I think we will get shut off the media. And that still kind of, I think that's just the way it's run. Now, now my involvement, I left on a Tuesday evening. I loaded up the Jeep and I drove 45 minutes prior to getting to the capitol. And I slept that evening at a hotel and then got up about 4:30 in the morning and proceeded to go down to the, the capital, not the Capitol building, but there where the rally was held at. Got A lot of pictures. I'm a historical guy. I stayed there all the way through the rally. It was very fine, very peaceful. I get here. People behind me saying, "Hey, we're on the Capitol building, you know, later today," but was just kind of talk, you know, from behind there was hundreds. To me, there was seemed like a 100 thousand people. I'm going to crowd estimator by no means, but a lot of people, but for the most part everybody was peaceful. I mean, they looked like grandmothers going to the Israel tours. They got off the buses and they had their flags, banners and this, that. But after President Trump gave his speech, I probably left maybe 30, 40 minutes after that. And I kind of ended my trip going through parts of Pennsylvania where my family came from and it kind of went through their own ordeal back in the 1600s. And they were, they were Quakers and they were actually, they left Germany because of religious persecution. And I was actually able to find the original mill, parts of the log cabin. It's still there. I had a great time. I mean, I went to some parts that I'd never seen before. And, you know, we've got a lineage that goes all the way back to early 1600s. That, and you can kind of see it and you can actually get there and touch it to where the Quakers ended. So that's kind of my day and then I drove straight home. So it was a it was kind of a long day and a half, 2 days, but that was my trip to DC.

John Peyton: What we're you're like, what were your reactions for like when you actually did see people going into the capital because, I mean, you said the people around you were generally peaceful and whatnot. So I mean, like when you did see stuff on the news, what were your kind of reactions to that?

Jim Robinson: Well, I I did not see that. I said I left probably 30, 40 minutes after Trump had spoke. And by that time my phone was dead because I got there probably 6:30 in the morning. So when I got into my car, I plug my phone on. If you kind of look on the map, Adams, Pennsylvania's about 80 miles out of

D.C. and that's where I drove. I stopped, got somebody to eat, and headed straight to Adams, Pennsylvania. And by the time my phone was pretty much charged up and I was actually at part of the log cabins in some of the homes around there. Actually, we have some descendants that still live in that area. I bought some rocking chairs that came out of a like a house that was built in the 1700s. By the time my family got hold of me, they were they were concerned and I didn't even know what was going on at that point. They were telling me that there were riots and this, that, and the other and I'm like, that's something I didn't see. I didn't have that, you know. I was out of there before any of that ever happened.

John Peyton: Oh, yeah.

Jim Robinson: I was very surprised. I'm like, You're kidding me. I mean, to me, everything was peaceful. But yeah. It was a crying shame. But then then what came over the media the media when I did, you know, kind of tune into it. I thought, wow, they're going to spin this a horrible direction. From my view, they spun it. It was it was horrible act, you know. No. Nobody should have ever been hurt. Nobody. They should have protested all day long outside that capitol building, but to break into it and destroy any of it, yeah, that was that was wrong. Yeah.

John Peyton: Yeah. I mean, because, you know, based off of what you're saying, it seems like your your issue is that, you know, a small minority of people weren't really getting their say in politics at this point. And that's kind of like why you, why you went out there, you know, but you weren't going to be one of these one of these people. And you condemn these people basically that are just going to march into the capital and wreak havoc. So that's what I'm hearing you say.

Jim Robinson: Yeah.

John Peyton: Yeah. Cool. All right. Let me think. Okay. So I guess, I we can kind of move on a little bit with COVID, you know. So we've talked a little bit about your background and all that stuff. Has it really affected your job? Or like how has COVID-19 affected your position as town manager?

Actually, you know, and you'll find it in a lot of government workers. It did not affect us. You know, there were some rollouts with the COVID relief. The town or New Palestine, I think our first rollout was about \$84,000. And basically that cost kind of initially was to go to, you know, maybe police. I think it started with the police department because they were the ones that would have to work through the COVID. But it just so happens that really everybody in our offices, we work separate offices here. We came in on a daily basis. So as far as work, it did not affect us. And we were very fortunate. We were very blessed and we we had a paycheck. You know, it did not shut us down. And you'll find with most government, most, most politicians, they didn't feel what I feel you know, that the other community has felt. I would typify my son lives in Chicago. He has 2 dance studios. Said he has worked heart and soul to get up and running. And he's just at this point where his membership is building like the gyms and things like that. You know, very typical. But in the community they were, and just outside of one of the suburbs of Chicago, I think it's Ravenswood. You know, they were asked like a lot of companies basically to shut their doors and that's where the aid needed to go. That's that's where this money needed to go, to small businesses like that. They're the ones that suffered the most because he was still paying his rent. He was still trying to keep his lights on, and blessed that he has. But really that that's one of my biggest frustrations about the monies that was given out for COVID. Even this last one, was it 1.9 trillion this money that's given out. I mean, it just boggles my mind that we can't sit down and figure out who needs

it and who doesn't. So right. Yeah, everybody's everybody's getting a check. You can be in prison. You're going to \$1400 check. I'm sitting here, I'm working. I have a good salary. Everybody in this building does. We're still getting \$1400 checks. But I do know that people that could not go to work that had kids. And to me that's not fair. You know, I just I don't think one shoe fits all on this one.

John Peyton: So just figuring out how we're going to, how we're going to get people that really need the money that they need essentially. And you can kind of speak to new Palestine. I mean, you know, are there a lot of local businesses within New Palestine that are kind of having those same issues right now, would you say?

Jim Robinson: Yeah. I would say right now, I think we're in order. We're in a good spot. I would say that, you know, 3, 4 months ago, when they were, not only were they closed, but when they were allowed to open, the CDC or at our county level. When the orange and a yellow came out, they were asked to limit their seating, and that they did. I mean, you know they had to mark off tables and so, you know, that's revenue that they missed. And if there is a way that they can maybe from last year this year, I think those wages need to be made up or those earnings need to be made up.

John Peyton: Yeah. So yeah. You've spoken about your employment status and that you've obviously remained employed throughout the pandemic. Can you speak generally just about other people within New Palestine? I mean, if they'd been able to maintain their jobs? Have a lot of friends lost their businesses because of this pandemic? Can you speak to that a little bit?

Jim Robinson: Personally, I don't know a lot of people that actually lost their job because of the pandemic. I do know that there was a lot of kids, maybe in that genome, 18 to 24 maybe that work in restaurants that lost their jobs. I know that the restaurants was probably hit harder than anything in our area.

John Peyton: Okay. So so, yeah, you've definitely spoken about your concerns. Yeah. I'm just kind of going through these questions right here. So I mean, do you have any other concerns other than the money that's being given or I mean, like how funds are being distributed? Do you have any other concerns, you know, generally about about employment and and the economy in New Palestine more broadly would you say, in terms of COVID?

Jim Robinson: No, No. I said that my biggest concern is there was a lot of money to be given out, maybe a little more forethought into how that money was going to be delivered, and to who was being delivered to. My big concern, of course, and it should be and because I have grandsons, two grandsons and you know, that money is going to be asked to be paid back through taxes and that money will have to be paid back one day. So just I just, you know, the government to business, at the end of the day it's a business, and the money that goes into that business, it comes off the taxpayers. So that to me that's very concerning. I'm conservative.

John Peyton: Yeah. Okay. All right. So let's talk a little bit just about like your family and your household. You've briefly gotten into your into your own son. The one that's the one that has the dance studio, correct? So my question here is, how has COVID affected your own day-to-day activities throughout the past year for last year?

Jim Robinson: Well, I mean, it's definitely curbed off now. I've actually had my first shot. I was really fighting whether to get this shot or not. The information from one side to another. You know, it's just

there's a lot complexities to that. And the virus or the shot to me, it seemed like it was remedied pretty quick. That I don't know. I'm not not a doctor. But you know, but I have. I've taken the first shot. I think that my second shot is April 16th. I probably wear my mask 80 to 90 percent of the time. If the area's crowded, I'm going to wear my mask. One thing that I really feel is the elderly, the ones that are in nursing homes. I've got on my wife's side, they have an aunt that has been in a nursing home in Shelbyville, and it's very saddening. And I fully understand it because they're very vulnerable. From the statistics. The elderly is very vulnerable, but they went through, they endured a lot. I mean, to stay in a nursing home, you know, day on and on week for months. It was tough. Very tough. It was just probably up to the last few, last few months that she's actually been able to have visitors, so

John Peyton: Yeah. Yeah. And this is and this is like family of yours basically, correct?

Jim Robinson: Yeah. Yeah. I do. I have two parents. They're both very healthy. They're in their 80s. You know, they've gotten their shots. There was a time where we were very careful about going over and visiting with my grandson. They were at home quite a bit. I mean, me we're very close family, you know, today. Now, they actually go to the wellness center twice a day. I think they've both been vaccinated. So hopefully we're going to have a better year.

John Peyton: Yeah. And they didn't have COVID at all?

Jim Robinson: No.

John Peyton: Okay.

Jim Robinson: Yeah and honestly, the close people around me, I think I had a couple nephews with COVID. We actually had three of the ladies here at the office. They got tested for COVID. It was a little ironic. I went to Washington in that week when I got back everybody thought, well, maybe I was the spreader and that wasn't the case. We all went and got tested. And I was the only one that was negative. They were positive. So we kind of shut down again a little, little deeper phase there for a few weeks, but we made it through.

John Peyton: Yeah. So what's what's been the biggest challenge that your family has faced this pandemic. I know that you haven't had a lot of people that have had it within your family other than those nephews that you were mentioning. But like what are some other issues that, that your family has kind of faced during this pandemic? And I guess another question too, I mean, has it really changed how you how you associate with your family now?

Jim Robinson: There was a time I mean, there was a little bit of a worry. Kind of a heightened worry because I have four sisters, or my daughter lived in three sisters that are nurses. My brother works for the fire department. So you know once again, they're kind of they're very targeted for the chances of getting COVID. And just, you know, luckily knock on wood. They all kind of managed through this. That was the tough times. Now as today, matter of fact, yesterday, Sunday, every third Sunday we have the family over. We have all the kids over, and they're all welcome. And we have a big dinner on the third Sunday of the month or the actually the last, I apologize, the last Sunday of the month. So we're we're kind of back to being a close knit. And I think you said it's getting getting a little better. How long you guys been meeting like every third Sunday, would you say?

Jim Robinson: This is our third month now.

John Peyton: It's been going on for a little while. Yeah. Okay. Alright. Let me just think here. So here's another question in regards to the to the community. We've already answered some of these community questions. How have you seen people around you change their opinions, day-to-day activities or relationships in regards to this pandemic?

Jim Robinson: I've seen it. Yeah, I've I've got some friends, some co-workers that are very heightened or very sensitive to COVID, very fearful of COVID. I mean to the point where, you know, they are a lot more, you know, they they they just take the precautions to the extreme. I mean, the mask, the distance, their relationships at home, their home, you know, it just it was very...you know I've seen a lot of that with a lot of people. To me, I mean, I was fearful, I'm very cautious, but I think there was different levels of how people reacted. And you'll still see that today. I mean, they're still your non-mask wearers. There still are some people who probably will wear the mask up until next Christmas. So you're going to see that. And so be it. I mean, I think everybody has a right to kind of get in their comfort zone and kind of deal with this.

John Peyton: Yeah, so just speaking to that, I mean, just like with your family and friends, you know, like have they they've been pretty receptive to responses and requests to kind of self-isolate and flatten the curve? Based off of what you were saying earlier, that, you know, that the community is responding well to these to these initiatives.

Jim Robinson: Yes. Yeah. You know the restaurants. Like I said, limited capacities. You know, the lines. You'll see the shields in the bank, shields in the stores, grocery stores, you know, hats off to these kids that worked at the grocery stores because, I mean, to me, you know, food's a necessity, we all we all have to have food. And these guys were asked to come in in, you know, everything that that person touched, this, you know, this teller would have to touch, or this cashier would have to touch that. Really, you know, not only the first responders and the police and the nurses, but, you know, a lot of people had...you know, it was very risky for a lot of people to go into work and they did.

John Peyton: Yeah. Alright, so, so we've, we've talked a little bit about the health and all of that, especially of your family. Can you talk a little bit more about people around you that have gotten sick from the COVID-19 outbreak. You know, what has been your what has been your experience and responding to the sickness itself for yourself? How have you responded to it?

Jim Robinson: Well to myself, like I said, you know, I've been very healthy through this whole process. I have seen and heard where people have passed away. And I always look into where there were there other circumstantial reasons why this person versus this person might have gotten sick or passed away. And I really can't draw definitive line. That's very frustrating because, you know, when you see a lot healthy, you know, 20, 30 year-olds that pass away from this. You know, that's a tough one. Yes. Like, you know, somebody maybe a diabetic or somebody that had been a lifelong smoker, you know, you kind of assume that they are there, they're more vulnerable. But when you take somebody that's healthy, maybe a small underlying condition and pass away that that's tough.

John Peyton: So yeah. Just based off of your own personal experience, you haven't seen that many people around you who were getting sick from this? Okay. Okay.

Jim Robinson: No, sir. No. The ones that I have I mean, the three ladies here in our office that were sick with COVID and they were up to ten days. I think one of them might have had a little bit of a symptom, but the other two were fine. I mean, 0...0 symptoms.

John Peyton: So yeah. I mean, in other words, I mean, it seems like, you know, as we've been saying, you know, your community, it seems like they've really been responding well to this and doing the social distancing measures and making sure people don't get sick. Which like all of my friends basically have had it. So it's, just kind of a difference in how communities are responding to this. So we're going to get on a little bit to news sources in regards to the pandemic. Have your...you've said that you're very conservative. Have your news sources really changed during this pandemic at all? Your primary sources of news?

Jim Robinson: Good one. Yes. Actually, it has. I switched over to NewsMax. I got rid of Fox News. That's probably my, you know, that that's probably one thing that I did do.

Okay. So what like what, what appeals to you more about Fox News, or about News max over, over Fox News, would you say?

Jim Robinson: Just, you know, I'm like anybody. And I and I really feel like I've got friends that are, you know, whether you say they're Democrat or Republican, or wherever you are, you always got to ask where do they get their information? Where they get their information, what do they see? You know, we're like children we're like sponges, you know, what's feeding us? It might be your teacher, or it might be your parents and, you know, it's coming from them, or it might be your news source. And ideally, you know, I guess my values and my background has probably been on the conservative site and that's probably where I've landed, and that's where I primarily get my information. Will I every once in awhile flip the MSNBC or CNN? I do. I do it for entertainment on my own because I see personally, you know, it's kind of weird because maybe the guy next to me that might be a Democrat and he might be looking at NewsMax as entertainment and I'm looking at CNN as entertainment. And I really think that the media, the media and the journals, they, they're responsibility, I don't think they realize, you know, how big of an impact they have on the situation that we're in now the divide, if I might go this far, the divide I feel everybody sees that's in the country. I think journalism has kind of been broken a little bit or very relaxed on accurate journalism. And to me, that's the scary. I mean that's really scary.

John Peyton: Yeah, I agree. You know, it's they, these new sources. They, focus on their own political initiatives basically. And they, they, skew that narrative when they, when they do the news. And you not only see that, I think not only with the stations, but also with the newscasters themselves. You know? So there's people on MSNBC, for example, that I won't watch because they're a little bit too far left for me on certain issues. So yeah, I would definitely say that that's kind of picked up more over the years.

Jim Robinson: And to me, you know I think, you know, I mean, this actually scares me more right now what's going on with the media, than COVID, whatever, you know. You know, how do you correct it? I don't know. Yeah, you know, what is fair and balanced journalism at this point? You're right. If you, if you bring in your party line into your narrative, it's dangerous to me. You know, just report the truth. Let the people decide completely and look for the truth. If you don't like it, you know, you still got to report it. It's a...I don't know. I think we've come a long way from good journalism.

John Peyton: Are there any other issues that, that you think the media...So what are some other issues that you think the media should be covering that they're not right now?

Jim Robinson: Well it depends of which media you look at, you know? I mean, look at look at what happened when I went to DC and look as bad as that, as bad as that was. And I'm not, you know, taking anything away from that. As bad as that was, you know, look how much that was put out there. And it was just every day. Every day. But then we look at the riots and things like that, that, you know, the left, you know, kind of turn their heads or, you know, it's very, a lot of soft reporting on, or basically they were saying they're peaceful protests when there were police stations, stores. I mean, they were destroyed. I mean, all summer long. Just like, just like I endured, you know, and I'm getting personal here, when I endured four years of President Trump getting belittled every every day. There was no acclimate to any thing that he had. It wouldn't matter, you know, that's frustrating for somebody like myself. You know, was he a great man? You know, far from it. I mean he had so many flaws of a businessman like that. I think. I think he was doing what he said he was going to do, and I had no problem with that. So yeah.

So yeah, it seems based off of what you're saying. I mean, it seems like you were, you were pretty frustrated last year with the George Floyd uprisings and Briana Taylor and all of that. That was going on last year with that writing because, you know, as you're saying, you know, you are seeing that on the left as well. Am I am I interpreting that right?

Jim Robinson: Yeah.

John Peyton: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. All right. So let's go on to the next set of questions here. And we've, we've we've talked about some of this stuff. So how do you how did you personally view like the government's response to the protest?

Jim Robinson: Which protest?

John Peyton: The, the, January 6th one in particular. But we can also talk about the, about the George Floyd and the Briana Taylor that happened last year. So we can, we could speak a little bit more broadly about protest for this question.

Jim Robinson: Well, I mean you know, if if you look at the January 6, you know, you use the word protest. Probably was for the most part. That was that was basically a peaceful, what I consider a peaceful protests. Nobody was burning down, nobody was nobody was hurt, nothing going on. Did the rest of the capital, I mean, the rest of DC, nothing was damaged. Nearly. It was really damaged was basically the Capitol Building. And that's that was probably the needle point there and that's why it was damaged. If I look at the the riots that lasted all summer, or whether it be George Floyd. Those were horrible, horrible instances. The app for George that was horrible. But the rioting the rioting after that, they lasted for days, weeks. They shut down the city of Portland. I mean, they basically manned off, you know, the whole city, and it was allowed. I don't understand. Like I just totally don't understand that. Why any any government of a city would allow that to happen to their city? To me, it was degregating.

So so yeah, I mean, basically what I'm what I'm hearing you say is, you know, why are people getting all hyped up about the January 6th uprising and that behavior when people on the other side are doing are doing the same thing.

Yeah. I mean, honestly, I think that, you know, we all need to look in the mirror and find out, you know, what's pushing us. You know. I just I just have a hard time understanding, you know, like why all these riotings lasted all summer long. And I attended one event. I left and it did turn turn ugly, you know, for, you know, it might have been 2 thousand people that, you know. And, and now of course, you know, now you gotta get into, were these Trump supporters or were these, you know, you know, implant, you know, that there's a lot of dark out here right now. And that's something that, you know, there might be some truth to this. Whether it's these riots in Portland. You know, who's, who's instigating all this? I mean, I can go to a rally or a protest and do what I feel like I need to do. But if somebody else is there to heighten it or to completely spin this in a negative way then I believe that's on both sides. Both sides. So I think a lot of these protests in Portland or any other major city, you know, I'm 100 percent with those. Now, the destroying tearing up and even the deaths, you know, no, I don't agree with that. And to me that I think there's something bigger than both sides of these parties. To me, there's somebody that are working these parties together. And I'm not going into conspiracy theories here. So we'll stay away from that.

John Peyton: Yeah. Yeah. But yeah, no. I mean, it does seem as you're saying, that there is a force that, that extends beyond these political issues. That's, that's bringing these people, that's bringing these people together in both camps basically for the George Floyd riots and the other riots that happened during the summer. And also for the January 6th uprising as well. And, you know, and I guess what I'm hearing you say, and I kind of agree with this. We have to look at these beyond this mere political context and look into the initiatives of the people that are rioting, that are breaking the glass, that are doing all of that. Yeah.

Jim Robinson: Very much so. I mean, we heard on January 6th, You know, I mean, the FBI was all over it. I mean, they were jumping in and they were look at they were going to do Facebook's my God, I looked at my Facebook via the only picture I think I had on Facebook of me at DC was over at the Lincoln Memorial, so. But I I personally know some friends that that had people contacted by the FBI and that's okay. You know, I understand that, but how active of a role was the FBI in all these riots through the summer, whether it be FBI or local police or the Sydney other prosecutors. I mean, we hear it on the left that money was actually given from the left to get people out of jail, so, you know, frustrating at best.

John Peyton: All right, so we're going to talk a little bit about about the future or actually, I had one more question. Was your experience on, uh, on January 6th, was that really your only experience with protests?

Jim Robinson: Yeah. It was. Yeah. I went to Chicago and I think my daughter went to a Black Lives Matter protest, but I wasn't in Chicago at that time. So yeah, that was my first initiative protest.

John Peyton: Okay.

Jim Robinson: Now I've been to rallies. When Trump came to Indianapolis, I took the advantage to go see him there prior to him being elected. Crowd motivator. It was good.

John Peyton: Alright. Yeah, so yeah, we're going to talk a little bit about the about the future during the last part of this interview. So so I mean, as your experience with COVID or, or in what ways has your experience with this pandemic and really just with the context of the past couple of years. How has it transformed how you think about your family, friends, and your community?

Jim Robinson: Well, I don't, I don't think it's really changed the way I think about my family, you know. Yeah, sure I now do I worry about this new form of virus that might be out there, might be an Africa, you know, what we hear you. Here we go. We're kind of being fed a little bit at a time, but I do have concerns for societal, uh, you know, this this virus wherever it came from, whether you want to call it China virus, the coronavirus. You know, it, it's, everything becomes a political fight. You know, let's just not there yet. Let's do some good journalism. I think I watched a show yesterday. I thought it was very fair. But I didn't watch it all because kids are coming over. But they were you know, this, this all originated in China and now just getting into whether it was an animal factory or whether it was something that was done in the design of a laboratory. These things need to be brought forth and I mean, for the world. Just, it was a little frightening.

John Peyton: So would you say then that your concerns is okay if something like this can originate overseas, could another virus more powerful come to the U.S?

Jim Robinson: Of course, whether it come from Korea, whether come from the United States. Any time that somebody working in a lab, for whatever reason a virus would be manipulated or are made, it needs to be questioned.

John Peyton: So basically government needs to act quicker in what you're saying to make sure that it doesn't spread as fast for the future.

Jim Robinson: Yeah.

John Peyton: Okay. Alright, so, and here's another one. How does this pandemic compare to other big events that have happened in your life? I know that you're my mom's age, so you're about 60. So you are there for Vietnam, like Vietnam, saw like a lot of that stuff on the news. You know, what are some other big events that that really I've just kind of stuck in your mind where were you remember where you were and what you were doing? How does that compare to COVID?

Jim Robinson: Yeah, there's a few big events. It's funny. You know, the biggest event, you know, when I was probably around seven or eight years old, I remember watching the news and Vietnam was on TV. That was first time a war was ever brought into your living room. And it was very, you know, there were segments of it, you know, that I can kind of vaguely remember, but it was the first time I've ever seen. And what I would consider GI Joe's. I watched what was going on in Vietnam. And the biggest event my life was 9/11. I knew exactly where I was besides Elvis Presley, passing away. But I knew with 9/11 where I was at. I was at my mom's kitchen. And the TV was on. And you just don't forget. It's just, you know, you've seen the first tower and you think, you know a wreck and you see the second tower. And then, you know, once that second tower is hit you, kind of go into it like a, like a fog or a cloud and you kind of watch the news, but you just, you know, it was a beautiful day that day and just wonder what what is going on. And there again, we're all glued to the TV, we're all glued to the journalism, and it, it comes out. And you hope that it comes out just like COVID. You hope that, you know, we get fair, balanced, accurate information. Do I know what happened 9/11? What I know is what I've read, what I've seen, you know, there's always the dark side, there's always the twisted. And it's the same with COVID.

John Peyton: So would you say that those, that those experiences, I know that COVID is a more long drawn out process than 9/11. You know, also like with some of these events in Vietnam, would you say

that your experience and seeing these things on the news and knowing where your, knowing where you were out. For example, like when you first heard about COVID, would say that those are pretty experienced or that those are pretty similar to past events?

Jim Robinson: No. They were just instant, you know, especially 9/11. 9/11 was just so instant. Covid took a matter of weeks before we hear about it. You know, politics was talking about it, this, that, and the other. Then it started knocking on your doors, you know, I mean, it was it was in your face. And now now we were making decisions on what to do with it. So, you know, so it was it was very taxing, you know. One thing we didn't go into this discussion, it was the schools and the kids, like yourself. But these kids in high school, there's a lot of kids, they've missed a year or more, whether it be high-school or athletics or proms and this that, and the other. I think the schools really had a hard impact how to deal with this. I don't think they really knew what to do. But you know, New Palestine, I think we're we're open now. They did a good job of marking every student where they sat throughout the day, if so and so caught it. You know, they were in a block, that block was taken out of school. It was very...that was a lot of work on the school's behalf to make school continue. And yes it did.

John Peyton: Yeah. So you would say, I mean, that the school districts as well, even though, you know, like a lot of school districts, they're facing these challenges. They've, they've done a good job, in other words, of, you know, really aligning with the technology in order to make good quality education continue in your school district. You know, I mean, have there been some families that have that have struggled with that, I guess is what I'd like to know, particularly kids, kids that really need that, that in-person, that in-person face interaction, for example, that don't have access to that. Were there kind of some negative experiences with that, would you say?

Jim Robinson: You know, I think I've heard through, you know, that there are kids struggling with the social aspect to this. I know a lot of parents suffered through this because they didn't know what to do with their kids at home. Do you really want, you know, you can't leave fourth or fifth or sixth grader at home to zoom into a class, you know, one parent had to give up a job to stay home with the kids. So back to our original discussion where this money needed to go for relief, that parent or that parent that might have lost jobs or hours deserved, you know, more of that cut, than some people didn't deserve any of it. That's my take.

John Peyton: Making sure that the local businesses and the people that really need that money, making sure all that money locally, that that that money is equally distributed.

Jim Robinson: Yes.

John Peyton: Okay. So what do you see your own life looking like in a year? I mean especially with the vaccines and all that. Like I mean, like what do you see your own life looking like with everything opening up?

Jim Robinson: Yeah, right now I think things are getting better. I can tell you why. We're going to have masks on end from here on out, we're going to have hand sanitizers because as, as a town function, we need it like anybody else. But hopefully that's one thing that we're not going to be left short with the next time because it is very possible that maybe the next flu season that pops up there might be some strains virus, and it might be that you're going to need extra hands soap, so you're going to need more masks. I don't want to be left short with that. We were actually fortunate enough to get it through some

programs and in some other areas. But, you know, like everybody else, it was very difficult. The United States as a whole is left short. And I'm like your kidding. We build jets, we build rockets, we can't make masks. You know? That, that's what it was. But as for me, I see it getting better. I think I was at the gas station this morning and the girls there, I think as of next week, cashiers, if they choose not to wear a mask, they can take the mask off. We'll probably see the plexiglass get removed. So I think that we will come to a normalcy in the very near future, hopefully within a matter of months. And hopefully we don't see a spike or a flare up and, you know, hopefully from here on out.

John Peyton: What about like, what about forms of communication that have become more prevalent? For example, like Zoom. You know, I can speak for my own personal experience. I didn't really use Zoom at all until this last year. Do you see those technologies, you know, persist? You know, do you see that stuff continuing even as you see, the cases drop and things kind of going back to normal? Do you see some of those, some of those things that were very common during the pandemic and in terms of communication sticking around?

Jim Robinson: Yes, very, very much. And hopefully we'll do a better job. I mean, we were like a lot of small communities, kind of caught off guard. We tried to do some of our first meetings when we were closed, everybody sitting apart. I think one of them was actually recorded with a telephone with somebody sitting in the front with a telephone with the council. And then that was being put out Facebook or our Facebook page with some of the funding that came in on the first COVID relief. We were able to, like other communities, get computers, Zoom, microphones. We got a camera for the conference room, camera for the the chamber or the councils. And now we're at a little more technical advantage. If something like this happened again, we can immediately go to meetings without the, you know, the public. So. it but, you know, broadcast it out in public. And that happened within the last four or five months. I think we were all fast tracking and everybody, every every community was taking bids from IT companies, you know, how to make this platform work. But you're right. Did I ever have Zoom before this? No. I think my son from Chicago did one Zoom Thanksgiving with us one year. That's this first I'd heard of it. You know, good examples. He did a lot of Zoom classes. He had a lot of students that brought, you know, they were doing their dance classes at home in their living room. And he was able to go to his studio and he set up a lot of equipment just to keep its doors open.

John Peyton: Yeah. Yeah. No, it's I mean, yeah. I agree. I mean, it's definitely just kind of changed the interface of things. And it seems to me like your own community has really had to, had to quickly adapt in order to maintain that basis of communication during this pandemic, especially with social distancing during the past four or five months.

Jim Robinson: Right, yes.

John Peyton: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Okay. So here's another, here's one more question. I think this will be the last one. So knowing what you know now about the pandemic and everything that's gone on within the past year, what do you think that individuals, communities, or governments need to keep in mind for the future and preparation for, for pandemics like this, for health crises like this?

Jim Robinson: Well, I think there again, you got to ask, do we want to rely on the government to kind of protect us or do we kind of, you know, maybe learn to protect ourselves? And that might mean, you know, keeping a small amount of supplies at home. When the Spanish flu hit, was that like 1918? A lot of people were caught off guard. And now we had this epidemic that was really one of our first big

epidemics in my generation or yours and you know, it, if it, if we don't get the next one for a 100 years, I think there's going to be a lag or people who had been forget about it, just like we did the Spanish Flu, but, you know, hopefully we don't forget about it. Hopefully everybody's more, more prepared if something happens in the near near future. I think we will be prepared. I think every once while we get caught off on our heels. And you know, bad things happen.

John Peyton: As they say, history repeats itself.

Jim Robinson: Very much so. Yeah, yeah.

John Peyton: So yeah, I know it's a cliché, but I mean, yeah, you know, I think it does. And I think, I think with this pandemic, I think it really just kind of caught us off guard. You know, you know, with, with all the technology that we have, with everything that we have with all of the advancements in science and medicine and all this, and then this pandemic hits us, and in 2020 in the United States, we start hearing things overseas. In the early parts of 2020, late parts of 2019, you know, but it doesn't it doesn't really register until it really hits us at home. And and I don't know, but I mean, it just seems like, you know, you don't really know how to react to something like that. You just don't and and, you know, like like with me, you know, I mean, I kind of felt like, oh man, this is like we're living in like the bubonic plague or something like that. You know, it's a time so distant from me and from you. You know that we really can't relate to. But, yet we can.

Jim Robinson: In all honesty. When we look at that, and you're right. We're, we're in an advanced stage of technology and did it have to, did it have to roll out like this. You know, if let's just say, you know, China was aware of it, you know. Did they hold on to this because it was going to affect them. Maybe any, you know, whether it be trade international, what, you know, why, you know, why did it have to happen like this? Could have been cut off? Or did it become political at one point which triggered 500-plus thousand people to die? You know, because somebody was too big to stand up and say, Hey, this is what's happened, this is what we gotta do. But, you know, we played that political football there for awhile. You know, whether we stop all traffic to China or if China town is welcome. You know that it became like everything, it became political. And I think that that was a sad point.

John Peyton: Yeah, I agree that this, it never should have been politicized.

Jim Robinson: They should just take care of it. Yeah. Yeah.

John Peyton: Never should have been. It should have been, honestly, it should've been liked the New Deal where people were coming together. And, and, you know, and really thinking about, okay, this is what we need to do. And I thank God, that we're actually having some of that happen now. Yeah. So yeah. Yeah. All right. Well, is there anything else that you'd like to add to this conversation?

Jim Robinson: No. Like I said, hopefully you get a lot of good input. Hopefully you get a lot of, you know, conversations, a lot of people, so you can kind of put this program together. Hopefully it works out. I appreciate your time there.

John Peyton: Yeah. Yeah. And yeah. I mean, if you have any anybody else that you know would be interested in doing an interview with, whether it's in your community or some people that you might have, that you might have known that were at the protest. Yeah. Please feel free to forward, to send

them to us. The more the merrier on this, on this project. We're looking for people that can kind of attest to not only COVID-19, but just the overall experience of people just within the past year.

Jim Robinson: I would, like I said, you know, my son, you know, how it affected him and how it affected me were totally separate. You know, he was a entrepreneur business. Everything was on his back. It was very tense and very struggling for him. And up in Chicago, you know, they really kind of shut it down there more than what they did here in central Indiana. So and there again, you know New York, California, some areas, you know, everybody was trying to figure out what to do. And did it adversely affect, you know? Now, you know what, what form or fashion, how it adversely affected their communities because of the decisions they made. So yeah, I'm more than happy to send you Seth's email or telephone number.

John Peyton: Yeah. Yeah. That'd be great. That'd be great. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. If you could do that, that'd be great. Cool. All right. Well, hey, Jim, thank you so much. Thank you for your time. And, you know, I'm always about hand-written thank yous. So you will be getting one of those from me in the mail. No problem. Alright. Thank you. Alright. Thank you so much. All right.

Jim Robinson: Have a good day.

John Peyton: All right.

Jim Robinson: Thank you.