

Transcript of Interview with Suzan Keebler by Ashley Pierce

Interviewee: Suzan Keebler

Interviewer: Ashley Pierce

Date: October 21, 2020

Location (Interviewee): Avondale, Arizona

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Transcriber: Ashley Pierce

Abstract: Suzan Keebler is a Field Training Officer with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office Custody Division. Today, she speaks about her job, the global pandemic and how her job has been affected by the issues facing society today. In the course of the interview, she discusses how the pandemic has changed the day to day operations of her job and how communication with all the conflicting sides can help to bring resolution and closure to many of these issues.

0:02

AP: So today is October 8... uh... 21st. And it is 12:09pm. I'm here with Susan Keebler to do an oral history interview. Okay, we'll just dive right in with the first question. What is your name and where do you live? What is it like to live there?

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SK: Susan Keebler. Live in Avondale, Arizona. It's nice, quiet area.

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AP: Where do you work? And what is your job title? How long have you worked there?

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SK: I work for Maricopa County Sheriff's Office. I've been there six years. I'm a detention officer. Currently, I have the title of field training officer.

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AP: What is it typical day like for you at work?

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SK: Right now, I'm involved with training on our new philosophy and direct supervision.

1:06

AP: What were your thoughts? When you first heard about the COVID-19 pandemic? How have your thoughts changed regarding COVID-19 since?

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SK: Initially, before it really got here, I didn't think too much about it. Until it started getting more serious, people started dying. And it just got closer to home.

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AP: What concerns you most about the COVID-19 pandemic?

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SK: that it's gonna continue to spread, maybe even pick up steam? again.

1:46

AP: On to the family, friends and household section has the pandemic changed your day to day routine? If so, in what ways?

1:55

SK: With the initial lockdown, we were advised to stay at home as much as possible. Not that we went out a lot. But just being told that you can't and makes you want to go out more. And we couldn't. So, we've continued to stay at home. Even though things have kind of died down just a little bit. There's still that fear of catching it.

2:29

AP: What have been the biggest challenges you have faced during the pandemic?

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SK: I'm adjusting to wearing the mask remembering to use hand sanitizer. Things like that.

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AP: What have you, your family and friends done for recreation during the pandemic?

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SK: Want more stay in the home. We play card games, we play board games, watching a lot of movies, binge watching shows, Netflix or whatever has been damaged change the way you communicate and associate with friends and family house. So, I don't think it's really changed all that much. I don't have much family living around here. So, you know, we talked to them on the phone like always. I don't think it's changed all that much.

3:35

AP: Has anyone you know gotten sick during the outbreak? What has been your experience responding to the sickness?

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SK: There was coworkers that have gotten sick with it. We've had three officers that have passed away from it. What was the second part of the question?

3:58

AP: What has been your experience responding to the sickness?

4:03

SK: I haven't really had to respond.

4:08

AP: On to the employment economy section. Has COVID-19 affected your job? In what ways?

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SK: It has we're required to wear the masks to stay kind of six feet apart if possible. A lot more sanitizing workstations.

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AP: What concerns Do you have regarding COVID-19 in your workplace?

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SK: Law enforcement are necessary workers. Therefore, we have to go to work. You're locked in the jail with people you don't really know. Are they bringing this in showing symptoms? So, there's very real fear of catching it.

4:59

AP: What attitude your workplace have in regard to precautions for employees?

5:04

SK: we've taken it very seriously. the wearing of masks is mandatory. When you are work, even those first few steps before you enter the building and, on your way out, you have to have your mask on.

5:21

AP: What types of PPE, or personal protective equipment, have been provided for your workplace? Do you feel this is adequate or that more should be done to protect employees?

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SK: I think the sheriff's office has actually gone above and beyond. They've ensured that we've got masks, hand sanitizer disinfectant that we use for our workstations. The mandatory of wearing a mask. I don't think they could have done anything more.

5:56

AP: Has the pandemic affected the employment status of anyone you know? If so, how so?

6:02

SK: Um, nobody that I know, personally.

6:08

AP: Okay, Moving into the next section, law enforcement questions. Another big topic this year is the Black Lives Matter, police brutality, unrest throughout the country. Have these issues or stories affected your workplace? If so, how?

6:26

SK: Absolutely, They have. They've, when you hear things like that in the news, it kind of puts you on edge. Because I wear a uniform. We also had a demonstration outside of one of our facilities that was concerning. So, it absolutely concerns me.

6:49

AP: Do you have concerns regarding the widespread instances of unrest and violence in the country? Do you worry that something like this could happen in your community?

6:59

SK: Absolutely, It, it does concern me. It's the breakdown of law and order, breakdown of social rules and manners from my perspective. So absolutely, It could spread to all communities for sure.

7:21

AP: What do you think is the reason for the emergence of these issues now?

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SK: I don't know if it could be a little bit of panic behind from the COVID-19 forcing people to step up and be more outspoken about issues that have concerned them. As far as the police brutality, you've got bad cops, absolutely. But you've got, I think more good police officers and law enforcement who want to do the right thing. And they're getting grouped in with some of these officers that have stepped outside of policy and procedure and taking things into their own hands, which isn't fair to everybody else. But, [pause} yeah [quiet laughter]. That's all I want to say about that.

8:25

AP: Has the pandemic made your job more difficult, in what ways?

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SK: Um, I don't think it's, well, it might be a little more difficult, I mean, even people who have been arrested and are being housed in the county jail, they're on edge as well. You know, its, its the unknown. It's the uncertainty, the breakdown of our society, it seems to be going on in places. So I think it has made it a little bit a little bit more difficult because we're dealing with these things on the outside, but also on the inside of the jails to.

9:07

AP: How do you see the issues emerging this year changing how your job operates in the future?

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SK: Issues? I think law enforcement is gonna have to take a step back and maybe start to reconsider about policy, maybe some procedures. Keeping a closer eye on their personnel. I mean, police officers have a difficult job, absolutely. It's, it's a dangerous job for sure. Same as working in the jail. It's a dangerous job. You're dealing with a lot of uncertainty. Yeah, I'm not I'm not really sure, other than the law enforcement issue and civil unrest, that's, uh, we'll kind of have to see how that plays out.

10:12

AP: And then moving into the last couple of questions here, how does the pandemic compare to other big events in your life?

10:23

SK: I don't think you can compare the pandemic with anything. It's, this is something that most of us, the majority of us has never had to deal with in our lifetime. The last pandemic was the 1920s or 18 1920. So, most of us have never dealt with anything like this. So it's kind of hard to make these comparisons.

10:53

AP: How do you imagine your life being one year from now?

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SK: Well, I would hope for a successful vaccination or vaccine be created, the civil unrest to die down. I don't want to say have things get back to normal, Were they really normal before? But yeah, let's do one thing at a time. Let's get the vaccine done and then kind of deal with the other issues that are coming up.

11:33

AP: Has the pandemic year changed how you think about your family, friends and community?

11:38

SK: Absolutely. It's, it's scary. My husband and I are a little bit older, he's diabetic, and you know, I get concerned. If he gets it, how would you know his body react to it? And same with me? It's absolutely concerning, family, community. Absolutely. It's concerning.

12:05

AP: Okay, and last question we have here, knowing what you know now, what do you think people, communities, and governments need to keep in mind for the future?

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SK: That nothing is really settled by violence. Let's find a different way to open this communication and get down to some serious talks to see how we can remedy the situation.

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AP: Okay, well, thank you for taking the time to come and speak with me today.

12:43

SK: You're quite welcome.

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AP: Okay, and just to note it for the transcription here it is now 12:22pm.