

Transcript of Interview with Sarah Barber by William Savage

Interviewee: Sarah Barber

Interviewer: William Savage

Date: 09/17/2020

Location (Interviewee):

Location (Interviewer):

Abstract: This submission is an interview about the interviewees experiences during Covid-19.

William Savage 00:00

My name is William Savage, and I will be conducting the interview.

Sarah Barber 00:03

My name is Sarah Barber, and I am the interviewee.

William Savage 00:06

Do you give consent to be interviewed for the COVID-19 archive project?

Sarah Barber 00:09

Yes.

William Savage 00:10

What is the current date and time?

Sarah Barber 00:12

It is September 17, 2020 at about 3:20pm.

William Savage 00:17

Question one, do you remember where you were when schools canceled/stay-at-home orders went into effect?

Sarah Barber 00:22

For me, it happened on Friday the 13th, which is a little ironic, um, I was actually at traffic court, and I ended up missing the last day of senior year because of that, and I remember sitting in the courtroom, getting the email and thinking it would be just like a great fun two-week break off school and then everything completely changed.

William Savage 00:43

Was there a moment when the severity of the pandemic became more real for you?

Sarah Barber 00:48

So, a day or so before our school ended up closing, other schools in my area had been closing and then it- so it kind of started becoming more real, but then it really hit when the Governor of Illinois canceled the St. Patrick's Day Parade, which is like a huge deal for us in Chicago and like me, and all my friends were planning on going, and I remember being in class and there was like, a complete uproar and like our teacher couldn't get through the lesson. It was, it was really crazy. And then also, like later, after school had been fully canceled, they rescheduled our prom and then two days later cancelled it for the second time.

William Savage 01:22

What were your last semester classes like?

Sarah Barber 01:24

Our last semester classes were super laid back, our grades weren't allowed to drop below what they were when the school closed, they could only be raised based on how much work we did, and the class I actually had the most work in buzz choir, because she would make us attend Zooms every single week. But all the other teachers I had, which were mostly AP honors classes, they just kind of let us do our own thing and take the class at our own pace.

William Savage 01:46

As a senior, what was your graduation experience like?

Sarah Barber 01:49

So, my school organized a drive thru event where we would get out of the car and our parents would like drive next to us. Everyone was wearing masks except the graduate, and then everything was distance.

So, we got to walk across a fake stage, get a diploma and have our picture taken. So, it was pretty cool for the situation it was in.

William Savage 02:09

What were some things you missed out on because of COVID-19?

Sarah Barber 02:12

Um just generally having a normal senior year graduation, prom, things like that. I also do competitive journalism at my high school. So, I missed out on doing that, which I've been looking forward to for the entire year, because we've been going to state and doing really well. So that was gonna be exciting. I was supposed to go on a spring break trip, which would have been like my last big trip with my family before college and then obviously, because I'm in the NUN program, like I missed out on going to London.

William Savage 02:38

Did you work during the pandemic? What was it like and how big was the change from COVID?

Sarah Barber 02:42

Yeah, so every summer I actually work in a pool as a lifeguard, but the pool didn't open because it's like, a really big place and the capacity so large that there wouldn't have been any way to control the number of people. But I ended up working at the restaurant Raising Canes where I'd worked during the school year as well. And we went from a dine in and drive through service to a drive thru only service. And then we added partitions over the drive through windows masks and our entire staff ended up being split into two teams, and we weren't allowed to come in contact with the other team.

William Savage 03:12

Are you typically in close contact with anyone who is immunocompromised? How did this affect your daily life?

Sarah Barber 03:17

So, my mom has pretty severe asthma and she ended up staying inside the most. And I think for the first like two months, she like actually didn't leave like at all, except for like going in the backyard and stuff. Um, my dad is a pilot, so he's traveling nationally about three to four days every week, and if it hadn't

been for his job in the fact that he was already exposing our family, I probably also would have stopped working. But thankfully we didn't have any issues with any of it.

William Savage 03:45

What was your opinion on the nation's response to the pandemic?

Sarah Barber 03:49

I was really impressed with the plan put in place by the Illinois governor, J. B. Pritzker. So, he organized it into a five-phase plan where every phase depending on the number of cases different things were allowed to reopen, and even though people thought it was really harsh, it was a big reason why the Illinois cases ended—ended up decreasing pretty quickly. Although now they are rising up a little bit again, because Southern Illinois doesn't really like to follow the guidelines. But I was overall underwhelmed by the response from the federal government and the governments of like neighboring states. So, I live pretty close to like Indiana like, my cousins live there and they'll go and do like completely normal things, and it's so weird and because there's so much like traffic—interstate traffic between Indiana and Illinois, I think that's ultimately hurting Illinois because our restrictions are so high, and like so tight, but Indiana kind of just doesn't care and so that ends up hurting Illinois.

William Savage 04:43

How did you cope with all the restrictions put in place and still have fun?

Sarah Barber 04:47

So, I tried to focus on what good things could come out of it. The big thing I did was catch up on my sleep. As the restriction lifted a bit more though, I had distance events with my friends, and we would have like bonfires where we'd set up chairs that were all six feet apart. And on the day that was supposed to be decision day, May 1, we all brought our cars to school parked in the parking lot, and we all like wore our collared shirt. So, we could still kind of feel like we were having like one of the normal senior experiences that we weren't allowed to have.

William Savage 05:15

Did the pandemic make you worried or anxious?

Sarah Barber 05:19

For me, it felt like it was a lot of out of sight, out of mind. I did like follow restrictions, because I felt like it was my responsibility to do my part for like everyone I was coming in contact with. But it honestly didn't feel like a real thing until we started going to school and my friends that went to other colleges like University of Illinois and University of Tennessee started getting it.

William Savage 05:39

Was the way Northeastern handled the pandemic expected? Was there anything surprising?

Sarah Barber 05:43

I think that their response has been really interesting and really impressive. Publicly, they're being very adamant about everything that they're doing. But the only place I've seen consistent social distancing being maintained was- is at the testing center. Because I know in the dining halls, it's like a little bit of a free for all. But ultimately, ultimately, I think we're doing a lot better than every other school. And I think that because our test rate is around like, .06%, we're definitely in good shape to hopefully stay open.

William Savage 06:13

Did you feel confident and safe coming to Northeastern despite being in the midst of a pandemic?

Sarah Barber 06:18

Yeah, I did. I do. Um, I did feel that way, and I do continue to feel that way. Mostly, because I know all my fellow students are extremely committed to, I mean, as we say, protecting the pack. But um, ultimately, I haven't really seen anyone without a mask, and if they are, they're eating or drinking and so everyone is pretty committed to the restrictions.

William Savage 06:37

How are you enjoying the Northeastern experience? Are you coping well with all the changes?

Sarah Barber 06:42

I'm really enjoying it. The hardest part for me is probably not being able to socialize a ton in the Westin because I don't have a roommate. But even that's improving, because now we can go to all the places on the third floor and the fourth floor. Um, all the restrictions like make me feel more confident that we will be sent home. So as much as it is harder to socialize, I'd rather have restrictions and feel safe than have no restrictions and get sent home.

William Savage 07:07

What is one thing pre COVID that you wish you could still do?

Sarah Barber 07:11

Probably just being able to socialize freely, especially the first week, it was really hard because we were all quarantined in the public spaces were really limited.

William Savage 07:19

What kind of historical impact do you think COVID will have?

Sarah Barber 07:22

I think that it will have a really big impact because it's completely changed the way that the world works in terms of education and profession. We'll never have another snow day and people can now work remotely instead of commuting, which will save a lot of money for many people. And pandemics are always political, but this one especially has exposed so much within our country, and with the election coming up, It's definitely something I think will be included in future history classes. Thank you.