

## Transcript of Interview with Deborah Miller by Kristin F. Miller

**Interviewee:** Deborah F. Miller

**Interviewer:** Kristin F. Miller

**Date:** 03/30/2020

**Location:** Cincinnati, Ohio

**Transcriber:** Kristin F. Miller

### Abstract:

Deborah Miller grew up in North Kentucky before moving to a suburb in Cincinnati, Ohio, after her marriage to Greg Miller, where they still live today. The couple raised five kids in a tiny Cape Cod house with one bathroom to the amazement of her daughter-in-law. Deborah has worked in the banking industry for over forty years while Greg retired from Hamilton County Job and Family Services after a long career. Deborah was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma, a form of blood cancer, in 2019. She is thankfully doing well. In this interview, Deborah reflects on issues she has encountered as an immunocompromised person during the coronavirus pandemic so far, as well as offering encouraging words for society.

**KM:** Hi, my name's Kristin Miller. I'm here with my mother-in-law, Debra Miller. I'm interviewing her via Webex video conference on March—30—30<sup>th</sup>, 2020. We are completing this interview as part of a project with the University of Cincinnati Department of History for contribution to an archive about the coronavirus pandemic and other crises. So, hello, mother-in-law.

**DM:** [laughs] Hi, Kristin.

**KM:** [laughs] I guess, first off—the—I want to ask, what do you know about the coronavirus?

**DM:** Pretty much just what I hear constantly on TV that [it] started in China [laughs] and has spread it spread rapidly throughout everywhere in the nation, and it just appears to be getting worse and worse every day you hear of double the number of the previous day or the previous couple of days and [microphone feedback] deaths are piling up in the numbers that they're [microphone feedback] kind of predicting the next three, four weeks seem to be kind of ridiculously high [laughs], but who's to say.

**KM:** Yeah. Did you see, I just saw a [microphone feedback]—or an article that in New York they're having refrigerated trucks, and they're putting bodies in there.

**DM:** Oh no, no . . .

**KM:** Yeah . . .

**DM:** It's, you know, all of the other people coming around the naval ships and the, I guess the, you know, the ships, the travel ships and what have you kind of come in to help I guess house

people or whatever [laughs] necessary to, to quarantine 'em or whatever. But yeah, I hadn't heard that one yet. It's pretty sad.

**KM:** Mmhmm (ph), yeah. Do you, are you getting [microphone feedback] most of your information from the news?

**DM:** Pretty much our, I mean, our work sends, you know, emails out. Most of its more specific to what they have to do for work and what they are doing for work. But—I— we don't get any kind of numbers except for through the news.

**KM:** Yeah. And you just started working from home today, right?

**DM:** Today, yes. This afternoon mmhmm (ph).

**KM:** Do you feel better? Working from home?

**DM:** I do. I do. I felt like I [laughs] was going in with my mask on and my plastic gloves on and it's like, don't touch me. Don't get anywhere near me. And with my wipes out and [laughs] everything else. So everybody was pretty, pretty good about that, and they were starting to kind of spread the people that were going to be staying at the office into cubicles that were further distance from each other as well. So, it was good to see.

**KM:** Yeah, that's what they did with Dan [Miller]. They were I guess coming in checking. Saying, like, are you guys far enough apart? Are you far enough apart? But the way their cubicles were set up it was impossible.

**DM:** Impossible. Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

**KM:** [laughs] Yeah.

**DM:** I think that's how they were kind of looking at the high risk, which I am, and then just some other people so that they would have the room to then, yes, stagger the desks, both, you know, [so] every other one across from you wouldn't be there as well. Kind of staggered that way as well.

**KM:** Yeah. Yeah. How are you preparing—for— to be home?

**DM:** As far as work goes, or just in general?

**KM:** In general, mmhmm (ph).

**DM:** I mean, I was on vacation all last week, so pretty much the only thing that we could do was [laughs] kind of stay in. [Kristin laughs] Not a whole lot of preparing to do. Greg's [Miller] run out to Krogers once or twice and had a couple of prescriptions to pick up, and so he's been doing that for me, so I don't have to go. As far as work goes, I brought all my stuff home today and for

the first time ever I am working from home. So that's kind of the new, new reality for me. But, yeah, we'll see how it goes.

**KM:** Do you think you'll like working from home?

**DM:** I—it might get a little tiring [laughs] after a while. You know, you kind of miss going in and seeing people. But you know, we'll, we'll have to see how it goes. [laughs] I don't know, by the end of the month or two months or whatever we have it, and maybe since I'm retiring in August, maybe they'll tell me—that uh—well, you just stay at home until August, so [laughs] that'll be okay.

**KM:** Yeah [laughs] I don't think you would complain about that. [laughs]

**DM:** No, no.

**KM:** And then—so you had four kids—or five kids—I'm sorry, ...

**DM:** Five kids.

**KM:** So, you were always used to, I think, stocking up anyway and making [inaudible] trips. So, when everyone else was running out and getting toilet paper you were probably like . . .

**DM:** Exactly, yeah, we, we still, we have, you know, we have a freezer, a deep freeze and pantry downstairs, so it's usually stocked too much cause we may end up going through after a couple of years and finding the things that are greatly expired [laughs] and end up throwing it out, so I guess we'll just have to definitely rely on using those things that we have access to. But you're right. I mean I still have—a habit's hard to break. We still get the toilet paper and the paper towels and the Kleenex and stockpile just 'cause those are those little things that you hate to just have to run to Krogers every week or every other week to get. So we always have plenty of that, so we're good on that.

**KM:** Yeah. I think Dan's plan in case we ran out of anything was to just go to your house and raid it. [laughs]

**DM:** [laughs] Well I have plenty of sanitizer if you need it 'cause I bought a gallon of it when—I went through the cancer treatment. So, I have a whole gallon of sanitizer. [laughs]

**KM:** Gosh. [laughs] Did that make you nervous going into work, being with—immunocompromised, being immune compromised?

**DM:** It did. It did. I—I kept asking my boss when I talked to him last week, are you sure you can't just, you know, send, send things home to me or [laughs] have somebody deliver it. But unfortunately, to get the system all set up, you have to be there in person, to verify that everything gets signed in okay, and then the other things that you have to sign into in—in—that are extra for working at home. So, it kind of made it mandatory.

**KM:** Yeah.

**DM:** But yeah, it'll work. We used a lot of wipes. [laughs]

**KM:** [laughs] That's good. [laughs] How do you think the pandemic will change society?

**DM:** I, you know, I haven't been through any great big, huge issues in my adult life I think that affected me personally or anything other than just what happened to me this last year. But I don't think as a society that people will change. I think they'll get through it and then I think for the most part people will be back to normal.

**KM:** Mmhmm (ph).

**DM:** I don't think that, you know, it's just one of those other things that happen in history, I guess, like Ebola and whatever else went down, you know, over the years, and I don't know that people will change. There may be that—obviously there are some people that are going to be affected, especially if they had losses— that's really going to be affecting them. But I think lifestyles in general will go back to normal.

**KM:** Do you think they should change?

**DM:** [Pause] I don't, I don't know—what— how that would be because—I— you know, I don't know it's—just because it happened or started in a foreign country, it could happen here just the same.

**KM:** Yeah.

**DM:** You know, depending upon what it is that caused it to begin with. I don't know, I heard somebody ate a bat and that was it, and I don't know if that's true or not, or someone released some sort of [laughs] you know, agents—in— in the air. I, you know, I don't know how that is, but um, yeah, I, I don't know. I, I mean I don't know what it would be that would be changing or that you would— would, would be—yeah have to change or would want to change.

**KM:** Yeah. I don't know. Have you seen the movie *Contagion*?

**DM:** No. HmmMmm (ph).

**KM:** It's on—line to watch, and we watched it last week, or two weeks ago?

**DM:** It's scary I bet. [laughs]

**KM:** It's scary like how—I think it was made in 2005— and it's basically exactly what is happening except with the novel virus that has a higher, it's like 20% death . . .

**DM:** Death, yeah.

**KM:** Instead of like the under-five. But it's scary how similar—like the movie [is]—to what's happening now.

**DM:** Right.

**KM:** So—[inaudible]— changes like that, or things that they did in that, and things are happening now. It's like, I think there's, like, maybe institutional changes that we could . . .

**DM:** Right.

**KM:** Where . . .

**DM:** We have to learn from it.

**KM:** Yeah, learn from it, exactly. Yeah. That maybe it's not affecting—like changing society—but that we can learn from it. And so, if it happens again, be like better . . .

**DM:** Right.

**KM:** . . . equipped. Yeah, or have the . . .

**DM:** Right, right.

**KM:** . . . or have the safeguards in place.

**DM:** But then things don't happen for 20, 30 years and you let down your guard and then it's like—or things are outdated from what you, you know, what you planned on 30 years ago. So it's like, yeah, are you going to be, or that's maybe three times worse and are you going to be able to handle that? Because now it's not just those numbers that you had this year, but you know, you have that many more people or whatever. So how are you going to handle that? So . . .

**KM:** Yeah.

**DM:** You know, it's always hard to say [clears throat].

**KM:** Yeah, it's hard to predict, I think.

**DM:** Right, right.

**KM:** [background noise] Do you think—so you don't things will change. You think they'll mostly stay the same?

**DM:** You know, I, I think that, like you said, I think that they will maybe take this into consideration for future, but I think as a whole, I don't think people are going to change in general. I don't think lifestyles will change. We'll all go back to our old habits.

**KM:** Yeah. Well, Dan told me that he saw, or that Greg witnessed at the grocery store today at Kroger, two men fighting over toilet paper.

**DM:** Oh yeah. I think that was the other day. Yeah. When he had gone.

**KM:** Yeah. That—a man was— loading too much, that there's like two-roll limits and his wife was putting more in her cart and a guy came and was like, no [laughs] like . . .

**DM:** [laughs] Yeah, that's, that's pretty sad. I mean he was a—I think he said that he had like two huge packs and then two smaller packs and somebody was kind of getting upset that he had that. I don't know if this was an elderly man who maybe thought that he couldn't get out again, so he wasn't going to take any chances or you know, what the situation was there. But I guess it's depends on which side of the fence you're on. If you're that old man that can't get out that often and this is what you have to do, or maybe you're getting it for someone else as well in the family, or if you're the younger person who yeah isn't able to get anything, then you know—it's—it can be bad on both ways. [laughs]

**KM:** Yeah, and I think on social media there's a lot of, I want to say shaming people for doing certain things, like being out or . . .

**DM:** Right.

**KM:** . . . or stuff like that. When, is it really warranted? Yeah. Like do you know the situation? But . . .

**DM:** Exactly. Exactly. You have to know the situation. Exactly.

**KM:** Yeah. Have— So, you haven't experienced any kind of pandemics before, but are there any kind of major crises, in like, in society that you've experienced and how did they affect you? At—like— I know you had, you know, family like in wars previously and . . .

**DM:** Right.

**KM:** Yeah, just kind of disruptions.

**DM:** Yeah. I mean, during my lifetime, the only one that aside from, well, no, those were uncles and stuff would be pre, pre my birth. [laughs] But, uh, my brother was in the Vietnam War. He was a—he was drafted, but lucky for us, he was not drafted to Vietnam. He actually spent most of the time in Germany [laughs] so, he was a CPA [Certified Public Accountant], so he did accountant work in Germany. [laughs] So luckily, you know, luckily for us that he yeah, didn't have to witness the war part of it, so he—didn't—he kinda came out unscathed. But that's really, I mean I can't really think of anything. We haven't really had any major, major things that have happened in my lifetime. You know, aside from a death here and there of course. But . . .

**KM:** Mhmm (ph). You've lived in Northern Kentucky or Cincinnati [Ohio] your entire life.

**DM:** Correct. Uh-huh. I'm born in Northern Kentucky. Right. Moved to Cincinnati when I got married. Mmhmm (ph).

**KM:** Crossed the river? [laughs]

**DM:** Crossed the river . . . [laughs] I'm no longer a hillbilly. [laughs]

**KM:** [laughs] I don't think you were ever a hillbilly.

**DM:** [laughs] I don't know. Greg still calls me a hillbilly so . . . [laughs]

**KM:** Well he married you.

**DM:** Yeah, he married me, right, he's stuck with it. [laughs]

**KM:** Yeah. [laughs]

**DM:** So . . .

**KM:** [laughs] Well that's all the questions that I had. Is there anything you want to add or that you can think of that you—we haven't touched on?

**DM:** No, I mean I guess, you know—the—I guess the only thing that you can really take away for this is just, you know, [microphone feedback] to love your family. You know, you have to deal with it as it comes. You have to learn how to, you know, change to I guess to accept what's happening and you know, not much else you can do about it. But yeah . . .

**KM:** Yeah. Just help each other.

**DM:** Help each other. Yeah.

**KM:** And I think we have been seeing that— people helping people.

**DM:** Yeah. Yeah, definitely a lot of people coming forward and doing things that they can do, you know, whatever they can do for whoever they can do it. And just like, you know, your, your husband and [laughs] my son and my other two sons and I, you know, have all called and said, “Well what can I do if you need anything, give us a call and you know, we'll be glad to pick it up.” So yeah.

**KM:** And—and the question earlier, that do you think society will change. I do think that maybe, or maybe it's more of a hope, that the way people are coming together now that that will survive this.

**DM:** Right, right. Well and I, I think in a lot of cases like this, I think, I don't know that people necessarily have changed [pause] those, those people have changed. I think that there are those

people that are always willing to do those things to begin with, and this is now a time period where they can actually put those skills and what have you to work.

**KM:** Mmhmm (ph)

**DM:** ‘Cause it is needed. So I think that it's giving them the opportunity to, to show what they can do. Yeah.

**KM:** Yeah.

**DM:** And I would imagine that some people that if they're—not that you can really volunteer anywhere because you can't go out to volunteer. But, if they are doing things that yeah, they might find that hey I enjoy doing this and you know, let me find out that something that somebody else needs those skills, then that I can continue to do what I'm doing.

**KM:** Yeah.

**DM:** Not that we'll be making masks and things forever, but you know, just anything that they're doing. But you're right there, there are those, I'm sure that will change.

**KM:** Well, thank you for spending the time with me.

**DM:** You're quite welcome. I enjoyed it. We don't talk enough. [laughs]

**KM:** [laughs] Oh don't—tell—put that out there! [laughs] People used to when we—so, when we used to live right behind you, people would say like, “Oh, like how was that living behind your mother-in-law?” And I was like, well, we pop over more than . . .[laughs] at your house unannounced . . .

**DM:** Well, I couldn't, I couldn't hop the fence. You guys could hop the fence. So yeah [laughs] you know, you were coming to me.

**KM:** Well also I—you know—I haven't wanted to come by and get you sick either.

**DM:** Right yeah no I understand. Yeah, it's—well—kind of a rough year, 2019. I didn't think 2020 was going to be worse, maybe. [laughs]

**KM:** [laughs] And yet . . .

**DM:** [laughs] Yeah, exactly. Mmm (ph).

**KM:** Well, you're still young. [laughs]

**DM:** Yeah, young at heart. [laughs] It's tell my body that. [laughs] Yeah.

**KM:** Well, thank you.

**DM:** You're very welcome. We'll talk to you later.