

Transcript of Interview with Catherine Lee by Alicia Schneider

Interviewee: Catherine Lee

Interviewer: Alicia Schneider

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Location (Interviewee): Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Location (Interviewer):

Transcriber: Alicia Schneider and Aiden Ball

Abstract:

Catherine Lee may have been born in Maine, but she currently lives in Eau Claire, Wisconsin with her husband and two kids. She works at the Center for International Education at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and discusses how COVID-19 has affected that job, along with her family life and mental health. She shares how living through the pandemic with her family has changed her views on what is important and how she sees the future of her job. She also talks about her children in school and why she was glad to see her daughter go to kindergarten. Catherine shares that she urges more people to get vaccinated.

Alicia Schneider 0:02

Okay, my name is Alicia Schneider and today's date is May 5 2021 and the time is 3:40 pm. The current statistics for number, for the number of confirmed cases and deaths from COVID-19 in the United States, are 32,267,958 confirmed cases and 574,679 deaths. Current statistics for number of confirmed cases and deaths from COVID-19 in Wisconsin are 600,297 confirmed cases and 6,850 deaths. Lastly, I want to state the current statistics on the number of the US population that has been fully vaccinated and it is 248 million people. And in Wisconsin 303, 300 [Laugh] 136.7% of the population are fully vaccinated. So, first question, make it pretty easy, what is your name? And do you mind sharing demographic information for this study, such as race, ethnicity, age, and gender?

Catherine Lee 1:20

Okay, my name is Catherine Anne Lee. I'm from Eau Claire. Not originally though. I identify as female and I'm 42. And I identify as Caucasian, white. And I also have a cold, so I apologize to any future person watching this. It's not COVID. I've been vaccinated. Anyway. [Laugh]

AS 1:50

I feel like you can now do that joke a little bit. Like, last year? Probably not. But like this year, like [Cough] it's not COVID.

CL 2:00

No, that's - Go ahead.

AS 2:02

Oh, I'm sorry. I don't mean to interrupt. Like it's, it's like, yeah like, it's, it's some - what's the word? It's funny, but then you're still sad because people are still getting COVID.

CL 2:14

Yeah.

AS 2:15

Um, you mentioned that you live in Eau Claire. Do you mind like, saying where about you know.

CL 2:23

I live in Putnam Heights. So it's outside, I mean, south-central, I guess, technically. I live an hour from campus. About two hours from downtown. So two hours, two minutes [Laughs] two miles, one mile, and two miles [Laughs] Sorry. An hour when walking, walking.

AS 2:42

Have you ever walked to work?

CL 2:44

I always walk to work or bike. So it's only a mile. So it's really only [Laughs] No, it's only a mile from Putnam Heights to campus. And I walk and or bike every – Well when I was going to work on a daily basis. That's how I would get there. I didn't drive. So close. During the winter.

AS 3:05

I was gonna say did you drive in winter?

CL 3:08

Yeah. Wisconsin. [Laugh] Called good clothing. [Laughs] I'm from Maine originally. So I'm – I mean. I'd like to - not that Maine people are tougher, but we are. So [Laughs].

AS 3:26

Why did you move here from Maine?

CL 3:29

To - love question mark. [Laughs] No. My husband's from Wisconsin. And that's, I mean, that's a non-COVID longer story. But we met overseas and came back to his place as opposed to going to the east coast. So we're here! Been here for 15 years. 2008. Not quite 15, 13 years. 2008 we came back. Yeah.

AS 3:57

So why didn't he go, go to you? Because to be fair, I've lived in Wisconsin 32 years of my life. That's all my life. And I've always wanted to live in Maine. So who decided that was Wisconsin?

CL 4:08

This is a much bigger city and more support, not more support. So my parents, where my parents live - We came back from - he we were living. He was in the Peace Corps. I was overseas in the same country doing grad research and stuff. So, we didn't have anything and so we needed to come back somewhere where there was a good support network and a place where there were jobs but 2008 was a horrible time to come back because there were no jobs. And Maine although beautiful, absolutely beautiful. Lovely place. Not a lot of opportunity in - Yeah, especially where my mom lives. So, it just wasn't - we needed a place to stay. We crashed with his parents. And that's just how it - Yeah, and it's way cheaper out here. The cost of living in New England is I mean, it's not San Francisco West Coast, but it's, it's prohibitive

whenever we think I mean, I think about that, like, I wouldn't it be nice to go back. Like, let me look at the prices of how milk, beer, the essentials. [Laugh] It's too expensive. I'm like \$7 beer. No way. That's ridiculous. [Laughs]

AS 05:21

Wisconsin, the essentials, beer, and milk. [Laughs] So do you - So you've mentioned that like, living was cheaper here. So do you, you, I'm assuming you enjoy it because you've been here for 15 years so.

CL 05:40

I joke with many people. This is not living in Wisconsin was not on my bucket list. Like I've tried. I've lived in Germany, I've lived around the world around the world and a couple places in the world and traveled a lot. And like Wisconsin, I visited once and then it's like, it's okay. And was Madison. I mean, not that Madison's batty there, but it was never a place that I was like, yeah. [Laugh] But, um, as far as livability, and the things and especially Eau Claire as a city, like I don't know that I'd want to live anywhere else in Wisconsin. Maybe Madison, maybe Milwaukee, but probably not they're too big for me. And it's - there too far south. Like the city has a vibrancy and okay, except for the last year. [Laughs] But before COVID hit, I mean, there was just so much going on. And it was and then and such a great place to raise a family. I have two kids, two young kids now. And the things that I love to do biking, running, and cross-country skiing, or like, like it's, it's great. Like every - whenever I'm out running, and the trails around here and just like in the community that's around that and their sidewalks. Sorry, Maine does not have a lot of sidewalks. There are street signs that lets you know [Laugh] let you know where to go. Like and so it's, it's just a very different - So I, I really, I really love it, love it here. I hesitated a little bit, but I do and I don't tell my husband, I said that I always joke. [Laugh] Like, you drag me here, but I'm stuck in Wisconsin. Now. It's just a very livable, livable place. And there aren't issues. I mean, there's clearly issues related to I mean, affordable housing here to now. I mean, and I mean, there's equity, there's all kinds of stuff. I mean, it's not perfect, but I just, I there's a lot going on and I appreciate it and the community. People are friendly. Sometimes that catches me off guard but [inaudible].

AS 7:47

Yeah, cuz I'm not saying anything bad about Madison or Milwaukee, they're not that friendly. But as a fellow Wisconsinite you know, someone that's lived here. I welcome you. Thank you for calling, calling this home, you know, yeah, I appreciate it [Laughs].

CL 8:08

[Laughs] When people start complaining about Wisconsin. I was like, you don't know. Like, you have a pretty good here. Like it's not perfect, but it's like yeah, it's just it's very, it's, it's just different. It's very orderly and organized. It's very Germanic. So, I lived in Germany for four years [Laugh] before I came here and so it was like - I love Germany, but anyway, this is like a nice version. A nicer version of Germany. Everything's in line. You've got the, you've got Aldi. [Laugh] Aldi so - soon as I saw that all decided like alright, I can live here because there's an Aldi because they're, they're ubiquitously in Germany customer. It's a German company so.

AS 8:50

Yeah, because I was - I took German for four semesters because their brothers aren't there. So there's like a...

CL 8:58

Yeah, north and south. There's- Yep.

AS 9:03

I also have - I just - I'm taking a class about a Nazi Germany and now we're getting into the, you know, East and West Germany. So, I was just thinking east and west doesn't sound right. And now you're like, north, south. I was like dang it. I was just, four cardinal directions.

CL 9:19

[Laughs] Well, that well, and I could go, we could do a whole nother interview about Germany because that's - there's like the east-west, but there's also a very distinct north-south in Germany, too. So, there's the Protestant and the Catholic and then anyway, communist capitalist. It's, it's a fascinating. Love it.

AS 9:41

History is very fascinating. But [Laughs] Yeah, as you said, this isn't about Germany's. [Laugh] So, when you're when you first learned about COVID-19, what were your thoughts about it? Had and - How have your thoughts changed since then?

CL 09:58

That's a great question. Because - so we, we in - because I work in the international office. So, I think that's an important thing to, to know is that I work in the Center for International Education at the UW Eau Claire [University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire] campus. And so we were, I want to say, dealing, dealing with COVID before it was here in the US because that was in January of right - early January of 2020. And we're trying to get cohorts of Chinese students because that's our number one international student population. I'm an immigration advisor, so, and I work with orientation and working with getting students here and, and so we heard about this and what was going on. I mean, it was in the news here, too. And, so we were - and we got everybody in right before President Trump, former President Trump, closed the borders and like it was like, within the day to spare that we got everyone -was able to come in. And then - but there was all this fear, like, okay, what if one of them has it? And then student ended up with a fever and then had to be quarantined. And like, how was that and like, and then - she - there was a test. We had a COVID test in January and ended up being it, it failed, or it was the wrong - it didn't perfected it yet. [Laughs] Clearly. So, this poor one - of the students didn't end up having COVID, but still like there was all this panic and fear about COVID on the one end, but then the information that I feel like we were getting - we as a, I don't know what to say, as a country, but in the office like, this isn't any worse than the flu and maybe and so there's all this panic about COVID. Coronavirus wasn't even COVID at that time, it was still just called Coronavirus. And so it was all a Corona jokes about the Coronavirus. And, and, and so there was just this, like, Oh, it's not that bad and I believe that too. It's like, it's the seasonal flu is worse. And I remember they were trying to send out communication like to students like they should be more concerned about coming here and getting influenza because how many Americans in the US I mean, they die of influenza, it's staggering. I mean, and we don't, we don't care enough about that. I'd like to I mean, we don't care. I mean, because mask-wearing [Laughs] heavens no why would we do that? And why would we help protect our fellow citizens who might be vulnerable? Sorry, snark, it's about me. That's what I think. [Laugh] Anyway, so. So, we were dealing with this in January, and it totally was like, and I remember talking to my mom, and she was freaking out about, like, I'm not gonna get on an airplane anytime soon. Like mom, it's just like the flu. I even

told her that. And now I'm like, I feel like an idiot. But we didn't know a lot about it. I mean, there wasn't - an I don't know how free-flowing the information was coming from China or from any country. I don't know how I mean, it's not one country doing one thing. Everyone's I mean, it's hard. Some people just didn't know. And then, and then once people started dying so much in the US, it was just like, oh, but then still people don't believe it. I just don't understand. But anyway, so. So yeah, so definitely, things, perceptions changed. And it took a little bit, but I just remember, slowly, like, we'd have students, and I also work with our scholars who are on campus too. And they're just like, more and more concerned, particularly the scholars from China, who are here, and they're like, what's going on? What are the safety practices? No one wears a mask. No one's doing this. People aren't taking this seriously. I have a colleague, and she's originally from China. She's like, nobody's taking this seriously. Like, and I'm like, but it's just the flu. And so there's the people were very - We're trying, we're trying really hard to give us warnings that this is, this is much more serious. And I think it didn't really hit. I mean, all the, all the stuff in New York City and Seattle area, like that was just like, it mean, but it was still it was far away like that's far away. That's not Wisconsin, not gonna come to Wisconsin. And like people saying, Oh, it's gonna come here like, no. So, I think we were in a, I mean, I felt like, I was just naive, like, it's not going to come here. We're not going to go online for classes like it's just going to go away. And whether that was in part because of the public rhetoric that was given publicly from the government at the time because that was an official statement by the president at the time. It's just going to disappear. So yeah, I guess it was, it didn't. I remember it was becoming more apparent it was going to come and we were going to get a case in, in Wisconsin and get a lot - just remember watching it like there's was - it's in Illinois now. It's in Minnesota. Now it's in Milwaukee like, and then it's just like creeping, creeping. It's like this, this, like the murderer that keeps coming closer and closer. And then and I was just, there was one day, I was petrified like I was - we had students coming in, because they knew they were going to - we were going to - they're trying to leave, because they knew that we were going to be going online, eventually. And so we have to sign documents and do things. So this was in, in March, early March. And I remember like, Oh, my gosh, this, everyone's just coming in the office- has all these people in the office. And I just, I had these visions, because I had a one-year-old son, and I still have my son, I think he's one at the time. And I just had this vision of mini coffins, and my son in the mini coffin. And I'm like, I have to get out of here. Like, I was just bawling. And I went for a run and, and I'm like, I can't work here. I mean, I can't physically be here. There's just too much. And it turned. I mean, it was just the anxiety that not knowing like that was what was - like all last spring was just like nobody knew. And then there was like the over. And so if you don't know, for people, and I reacted to be like, way over cautious about stuff, and which I don't think is necessarily a bad thing at all. But, there was just so much so much anxiety. And, and, and oh, yeah, it was it was rough March, April, and then just being at home just waiting, and just not knowing when's it going to come? And how's it going to affect the kids? And like, Do I have a condition that's gonna make it worse? And like-Yeah. That was yeah. But now, I mean, now that we know so much more, it's like, I just think of where I was a year from, a year from now. And it's like it was it's not fabulous now, but it's like, it's so much. I mean, there's, there's, there's some hope that's there's some, and you just, but it's still terrible. I mean, you look at India, it's still absolutely horrible. It's horrible. So, anyway, I kind of went over what I was supposed to talk about.

AS 17:08

You are totally good. I love to see this. You know, like we discussed before I hit record that I was afraid that you weren't going to talk, but you're great. [Laughs] You know, you're totally, you're getting it. Um, so have you been back to the university? Like and done anything? Okay. Oh, yeah,

CL 17:28

I was into this morning. So, um, I don't know when I went back in. Because one of the issues - that issues is that I have to issue documents. So I – students - I deal with immigration documents, and there's some students who are still on campus. And I have to go, I mean, I print them off here. And then I, I bike or run down to the office to drop them off, or I'll go in for a little bit. I mean, but I'll just drop stuff off. I don't like go into the office. Our office is still open. We still have since I don't know the director, Colleen never left. [Laughs] But I get in, some people, I mean, just they work better in an office setting and not from home and I, and that's, that's fine. And then we can stay open. And she can answer any questions. But she was saying there was - the summer, last summer there was nobody there. Nobody there. So, but yeah, I usually go in once a week to drop off stuff or, um, today I actually ended up, I decided to have an in person, in person masked, in a large room meeting with a, with a colleague return to just work on some stuff. And it was just going to be easier doing it in person and trying to share screens and do all that stuff. And that was good. So I'm and - it also helps to like slowly like, transition, we're going to have to go back. I mean, I'm - we're student facing and we're, we have students, I mean, we'd like to be available. Depending on how students want to interact, they want their questions answered, some are really in-person and international, international students are like that some are like email or a phone call or a Zoom is fine. But we want to be there for them for those who really want it in person or drop it and have a quick question. So we're going to go back. So like going in and planning to go in a little bit more, like clean out my office because it's true like my shoes are still in there. Like [Laughs] Like I go in there and like - and the other thing so - and I kept this up just because it was a happy like my office, they kind of decorated my office when I came back from maternity leave from my one-year-old. All that stuff is still up and he's two like okay. This is gonna go down like it was just, it was totally like we got the, the order from Governor Evers like, okay, you're going home now. And we just left like this and I actually I think I went a day earlier like, I can't do this anymore. Like I'm just going to work from home. Because I can't I just - from a mental standpoint, I have too much anxiety. But I've been in there it's like nope, this this this needs to go down. He's not that no, no But it was weird. Like, because article The New York Times about that too, like when you go back to your office space, it's clear that you would just left, like, in a rush, like here comes but I don't know, whatever. But it was it's definitely been that feeling and I think it's good to slowly like transition back in I'm okay with kind of jumping all in but why, like I can, I'm just gonna, like go in for a little bit longer and maybe have a couple meetings with colleagues like in-person meetings and just to get used to, to that. So.

AS 20:29

Um, let's keep going with that because it's, it seems like it's really interesting. So like, when you first went back to your office, and you saw all like, the decorations and you haven't been there for - did like it make you I don't know, anxious is the right like, word but like, did it like make you go back to like that moment where you were anxious? I need to leave, my family is important at the house and it makes you think about like, like the COVID like scare type of thing or?

CL 21:01

Not really. It was more like someone needs to clean this up. [Laughs] I'm very practical. Sorry. I guess. Um, yeah. Well, in a way, like the shoes like, oh, wow. It's more like it's more kind of an astonishment and, and the other thing is like, I haven't thought about this for a year. And now I see. I was like, Oh, yeah, okay, well, someone's gonna clean this up. Like the shoe is like, Oh, I haven't even looked for these shoes. So, I haven't had they're like my work shoes. And like, they're super nice. But it's like, they're like pairs of heels. Like I haven't lifted where needed. Nobody needs to wear heels. But record

heels and they had like going out work shoes on. I mean, I'm wearing my running shoes all the time. So I can go on a run whenever I want. So to see that I just like, Oh, well, that's where they are. If I ever need them again, I'll probably just give them to Goodwill. [Laugh] So yeah, it was yeah, It was just kind of this needs to be cleaned up. To be fair, I'm kind of a forward thinker. I don't try to dwell too much in the past, I'm trying to be better at that. Because it's good to remember the past and to like, learn from it. But I'm like, Okay, alright, that's done. We've gone through that, let's move forward. But I mean, some good reflection time is valuable, too so.

AS 22:24

I understand I'm trying to be one of those like, like being the moment person and take one thing at a time and then look to the future. Don't look at the past, you know, unless you need to, obviously, I want to be a Historian. And so I have to.

CL 22:39

You're a past person. [Laughs]

AS 22:42

So how do you think your job will be next semester? Do you think it's going to be more in person or how do you think it's going to be for you?

CL 22:55

Well, I first - what I think it will be and is what I hope it will be [Laughs] are two very different things. I think, I think we're gonna be - I'm planning on and mostly planning, I'm not a - first, I'm planning on being there in person, whether that's full, all full-time, five days a week, or if there's if, I mean, there's talk of having some kind of flexibility, because at first, it was an adjustment to being - to be working from my basement. Um, and it was really hard when the kids were home, because that's when the height of the anxiety-like we kept them home, I gotta grab a tissue. Sorry person watching this in the future. And so we had everybody home, my husband home, me home, I have a six-year-old daughter too. So we were all home. And it was just like - I was - it was crazy. My husband's making PPE with, with 3d printers going on. But he works for the [inaudible] and all this stuff, which was great, but it was - and we just didn't know. And so we like pulled everyone out of society. [Laughs] We got a [inaudible] here. And then we drove ourselves crazy. I'm like, okay, daycare is going to be fine. And so we let them go. And so it's been actually good. I mean, I couldn't work from home with my kids here. And I feel for any parent who's had to do that. And, oh yeah so hard. Um, we've had to do I mean, they've had quarantines and they have all this stuff. So we've had to deal with that as it came up. So we have had a lot more disruptions. But I also look at them as like, this is great. Like, I'm actually kind of having a second-third maternity leave with my youngest, like, thinking of how much time I spent with my youngest at this age is more, significantly more than what I had with my oldest because she just went to daycare and did well. I mean, she's and it's that is what it is. But we've - and it's been good with her. This whole time we've spent more time with family, a double-edged sword. But, sorry I sidetracked, the question, yes, we will be going back to in person, I'd like some flexibility, I'd like to be able to because my daughter will be in elementary school and so the elementary school schedule does not match, does not match the regular working day schedule, and which is just the - it's just a systemic problem in our society. And what my fear is, is that nobody's going to learn from this. And like, that, we're just going to go back full, full speed ahead, we got to get the economy going, and everybody working again, and we're just gonna, like, this was a blip, and it's never gonna happen again. And like that, like that stress of like, okay, I

gotta be at work at eight o'clock, I've got to be, I gotta get home, I gotta get this, I gotta do this, all this like, and that I don't have that now, like, I get to my desk, downstairs, when I get to my desk. And if I mean, I'm not going to, I can't cut off my kids, if they're in the house. And they, I mean, they haven't left yet for whatever, like. So I just, I hope they'll still be grace given to parents. And I think and I don't know that that's going to happen, because it's been so apparent, not that I didn't know this already, that the US is not family-friendly at all. Not in not in this, this shed a light on that. But I don't have hope that corporate business work culture is going to change to accommodate that because they don't care. Because it's not run by people with families. It's still run by old white men who never had to deal with raising kids. [Laughs]

AS 26:49

I agree with you not like, not over here being like, oh my gosh. You know, I agree with you.

CL 26:55

So that's because I also feel like the us as a country and as a culture is not good at remembering. It's an I'm productive, that that's why I say like, I'm like, alright, move forward. Am I gonna learn anything from this? So I'm pointing fingers at society, but I'm part of that, like, if I'm going to try to it's been great not having to rush to activities or to like, there's just been more. It's been stressful. Like, we're never bored. So the people who were bored during COVID I'm like, Who are you? [Laughs] Because I'm not bored. I'll give you my children and you can not be bored for it's just like, it's just really funny like that. What you hear like the New York Times because it's all like city and no kid culture, like, and like the boredom of and languishing during COVID. Like languishing, languishing like, no. Like, we're seeing like, we can't give our kids to grandma could just not vaccinated yet. For like, two hours, please. Anyway, so it's Yeah, it's just so am I gonna remember I'm trying like I and, like, edit really started in January, cuz I was still like, with COVID at the election and everything was just like, it's so much anxiety. I'm like, I'm angry. I'm frustrated all the time. Like, I started doing yoga. I'm like, normally I'm like, No, I'm just gonna ride on that day. Like, no, I need something that's a little bit more for my mental health. And, and it's just been wonderful. And it's just much more the moment. That's all you have. You have the moment. And you had these wonderful children for a reason. They're wonderful children. So enjoy it. Even though it's frustrating sometimes. So it's just nice to she's six, she tries to run the house like there's no there's no. Like if it's never boring, and it's never quiet until they go to bed. [Laughs]

AS 28:57

I understand my, my boyfriend has a five-year-old so. Oh, I totally understand. I get it. Um, so your son is two when he was one when this all started, so I'm assuming your daughter was about five?

CL 29:13

Yep, she just turned five.

AS 29:14

Okay, perfect. Um, how did you explain it to her? Like, how did you explain cuz that's very interesting to me? Like, how did you explain COVID to a five-year-old?

CL 29:26

We call it the virus, but she still calls it a virus. That there's this virus going around, and it's making people really, really sick. And so we can't, and we just don't know enough about it. And we - there was -

so we have to be really careful. And so we can't go. It was hard. Like, no, I'm sorry, we can't go see Grandma. Because the hard part and this is where a lot of the anxiety was, was that even within our own family and within social circles, everybody had different levels of comfort, and navigating that was so stressful because I've got a mother-in-law who's like, something stupid and then other people who just like, well, let's go hang out outside and run a bonfire. And like, at the time, I was like, no, not yet. No, like, no, no, no, no, no, like, we're not - not comfortable. Just like hanging out. Like, we're not supposed to be hanging out. We just don't know. I mean, now I'm okay. I mean, we're vaccinate everyone's vaccinated, and then probably outdoor thing is not a big deal, like, but that was really hard. And so trying to explain like, no, you can't go roller-skating with grandma, call her grandma-grandma, long story, but whatever, we can't go roller-skating with grandma because of the virus. And, then there's also this level of trust that you have with people like you, they say they're gonna do something and like, are they really gonna do it? Like just relinquishing that control over your immediate family was like, really hard for me. And I probably took it to an extreme and I'm sure I was cursed behind my back, but I don't care. Like, this is my because we don't know, like, my, like, I have a blood condition that I take medicine for. So I'm on blood thinners, but when I'm reading about, like, vascular issues, or one of the big side effects or big complications from COVID, I was terrified because like, probably my kids have it. It's a dominant, it's a genetic condition is probably one of my kids has it if not both of them. Like no idea. Like, I mean, and so there's this terror, like, I gotta take that risk. So I was just so much so much anxiety, and it's a lot and just easy good to like, okay, going back to like, semi-normal relations and like have. Yeah, but it's better now. And again, yoga helps. But that was Yeah, that was so hard, because people just wanted to get together and like, how about doing them? Like, no, no, we're not comfortable with that. And like, you stop pressuring. I just felt so much pressure from people to do things like no, we're in a pandemic. We're not supposed to do things. But by the way, it's better. I don't think relationships were damaged irreparably. But it was pretty, yeah - late summer and fall. We're trying to [Cough] excuse me.

AS 32:21

So she's starting kindergarten next year. Okay, perfect. Um.

CL 32:27

No, this year, she is in kindergarten now.

AS 32:28

I'm so sorry. So how has that been with her like, I'm, isn't it like when you're over five? You have to wear a mask?

CL 32:39

Yes. She's, she's a serious offender. No. [Laughs] No. And I don't think she means to - it's - she's five. No, she loves school. We did the hybrid. We did that from the get-go. We, I mean, we trust in the science, like, okay, the cohorts are super small. She had eight people in the fall for most of the year and like the two days a week. And it was, it was great. And they yeah, they had to wear - and she goes to daycare, too. They have to wear masks there too when they're inside. And it's just become, it's like she knows she has to do it. The other day, she was just wearing one for funsies. And she tends to like, put it all down under her nose. And then she chews on it. But she's, she's six. So it's not that I think, and this was something I just remember what everyone was all up in arms when school started, like, oh my gosh, how are kids going to wear masks and other kids and - not the kids. You can tell kids to wear what they want. You just like threaten them with suspension and they're way, way better rule followers than the

adults. And that's where, and just that fear of like the kids getting, the kids are going to transmit it and the kids are going to know it's you baby boomer going to a bar to a packer game and refusing to wear a mask. I said it. [Laughs] That's what it was. And that's what it is. Because it's not the kids - like everyone's - the kids are going to because yes, generally you get your cold from the kids. Kids a little germ machines, but this isn't a disease that it is one of those like, but no one can like, move beyond that kids are major carriers for them for COVID. So anyway [Laughs].

AS 34:32

So at her school, like I'm assuming she probably maybe has a desk are there like any barriers, like how is school situated for? Do you not know this?

CL 34:42

That's a great question. I'm not sure. So I think um, yeah, I don't know. That was I have to say the first day, slight [inaudible], but the first day of kindergarten was slightly terrifying. Because, I mean, we live really close to the schools and, and it's Like an A, there's just like that. Oh my gosh, my babies growing up, blah, blah, blah. And I'm not super emotional about stuff like I wasn't balling, but I was like, I got a little - like I saw, like, we couldn't go in, we've never seen the inside of the building. Like, we just didn't really know. And I'm sure it's fine, like, but it's just this weird like, and, and I just remember, everyone's kind of lined out, everyone's kind of outside, socially distant, they want to put their mask on. And then the bell rings, and then she has to go into the specific door. And then she just gets and she has no fear. My daughter has no fear. She's the most amazing person. I - the most frustrating person, but the most amazing person is my daughter. And she has no fear. And she just, and she's just like, bye, mom and she just walks right in. And she has no fear. And she just chats up the teacher at the door. And I'm just like, oh my gosh, like, but like COVID. But it's like, just the questioning the decision to even do that. And it was fun. Like, I mean, the and I am tearing up a little bit. So I'm a little emotional. But um, but yeah, it's just, it was that was really, and I didn't think I'd get emotional. And then there's like, that's a but she loved it. She just loves she loved school. And I think with that initially before they went back to the everyone together what they're doing now, they had one person at a desk, everything was social. Just I don't think there are barriers. I don't think so. I shouldn't didn't mention that. But they all had to wear masks. And then they all I mean, they're stuck in the room the whole time. And then they can't when they get lunch delivered to their room and stuff. So but then now she has I think there's got like a table desk and like a bigger desk, but she's got a person next to her another, another friend. So um, so yeah, it was, but the communication on all ends, like with the school district was great. They like and that was like, yeah, there was a case of COVID and, and families have notified me to quarantine or whatever. And same with the daycare, like the the communication was just was great. I mean, it was frustrating when you found out it was your kid that was probably exposed, but it'd be at least you knew. Yeah, we had to like, and it was both at the I mean, at the at the daycare, but it wasn't it wasn't from other kids. It was from staff. Always from staff. It was never from another kid. And I know that maybe different situations, but I mean, but there was never kid-to-kid transmission. Because but it was adults who had gotten it outside of work. at the bar at the packer game, anyway. Yeah, I'm sorry, hey, it's my story. That's how I feel. And not. And not everybody was like, I mean, there's just such a dividing line in our system in our society of like, no, we're gonna follow the rules and like, screw the rules, I'm gonna do whatever I want. Don't tell me what to do. Like, anyway. [Laughs]

AS 38:08

I can probably understand that because, you know, like, kids have such a low rate of getting the virus and everything like that. So it's hard to you know, trust other people with your, your children, and you're just like, I'm hoping you're making the right decision. You know, everything. Do you think your daughter's missing out on essential things cuz of COVID like they experience in school, you know, type of thing? Or do you think it's going to be more in the future that something might change when schooling?

CL 38:45

I don't think so. I think well, she doesn't know what she does - she's in kindergarten. So, she's never done it before. She has no basis of reference. So I think kids who were used to going to five days a week, like I feel for high school students, like that's when you're at the height of like, that's when you're trying to get away from mom and dad and your peer group is your main influencer, not your parents anymore. So she's still I mean, she loves school. She's, I mean, that's her. And she's thriving with school. Like, she's learning to read, she can do her math like so. And I think that's kudos to how the Eau Claire school department and not everyone will agree with me, but I think they've done a good job of like, even with the online stuff, like she was able to learn but she, she comes from a privileged family and we have internet we have all these things that we're there to support even though we're both working at the same time we have the flexibility in our jobs, to be sure that she's doing what she needs to do. She's also not dumb, sorry, not the kids are dumb. She also excels at that type of learning. I mean, everyone's got different type of learning, but she's a very she's that she just sucks that up. I mean, so I don't think what she's missing. She's been asking about like, she used to be used to swimming lessons and other gymnastics and dance and that kind of stuff, which we haven't done. She's been she'd asked about that, just kind of an asking periodically, not nothing major, but I don't think I don't think she's missing out what was great this winter, because of winter, like and I, we loosened up with the whole because outdoor stuff like the transmission Outdoors is like minuscule unless you're like, huddled around a bonfire, like talking really close to the person like, right, you know, like it's so like, odds are small. So we did, like she started ski jumping. And like regularly, she'd done it once or twice last year. But then she started doing it regularly. And then they had cross-country ski lessons out at Tower Ridge, once a week, all through January and February. And they had COVID. Like, they had to wear masks while they're out there. And they all this stuff. And so she was still doing things. So I don't feel like she was missing out. But she's missing on what I do feel frustrated about. And I don't know that there's any way around it. It's just come sooner than I wanted to deal with as a parent is the whole screen thing. And the whole iPad I like. And I just and I you know, and that's what it is. And she's, but we do other things, too. So it's not like that's all. But I do that was kind of like, what they were looking at like we have three devices for our child like this is so wrong. But I don't know some things that she's learned a lot from some are useless, but I don't know. I mean, from a developmental standpoint, she's still doing fine. And I'm not. I'm not worried about the future for her at all. At least in that sense, at this point. I mean, it'll change as we when she's 13 Oh, my goodness. [Laughs]

AS 42:06

Yeah. So we'll come back and give this COVID oral history interview again. 13. You know, when she's 13. You think, how you feeling now? [Laughs]

CL 42:15

I'm sure she'll remember stuff because she has, she has an amazing memory. And so she'll probably bring stuff up and just be like, remember when, like.

AS 42:25

Do you think that she'll read about this, like in hit - Do you think history classes will like do this? You know, study it, you know, talk about it?

CL 42:36

I hope so. But so, and this has just been by experience. And I'm hoping that history, the teaching history in elementary, middle school, and high school has evolved since when I was in school. We never got beyond World War Two. Like when we're talking about US history like we never made it past that. And so, and we always started with the Romans like it was just this. I mean. So yeah. So I hope that there's that, that it's taught very differently. And that this is an I don't know if it comes up in history class, or if it comes up, I don't know where it comes up. Or if it's part of if it's like, like we never had we never learned about the Vietnam War. Like we never I mean, it's just like, and what we did was all it was all glossed over. Maybe that's just an indication of what word expanders are for main. Um, yeah. I hope so. And I hope when she has grandchildren if she does because she's telling me, "No, I'm not gonna have kids." I'm like, good, smart. That she's interviewed for what it what was it? Like, with COVID? What was it like? And I hope that happens. But I don't Yeah, I don't know be interesting to see how that's approached. In recent is there going to be like, because we have like, with 9/11 there's like, the first few years after you have this big emphasis on these memorials, these grandiose things, but this is also like COVID gonna be with us for a long time. And so is there going to be that those modifications where we remember, like Pearl Harbor day, like, I remember not knowing what Pearl Harbor Day was, the day after my birthday. I'm like, this is Pearl Harbor Day. I like, but even that, like, it's not that far removed from me. I mean, like, and so it doesn't take long, like as I mentioned before, for the US to conveniently forget Sorry, I'm gonna be honest, I think it's a convenient forgetting of what happened. And it gets airbrushed over. So that's another reason this is important to do this project. Thank you for, for providing this because I don't know that. Yeah, I don't know that it's gonna, like I said, I don't know, we're gonna learn from anything. I don't know how it's going to be taught after there's like, more or less more of that. But then you reach a point where you're like, Oh, yeah, even sadly 9/11 which wasn't that long ago is it especially if you aren't in New York City or like, to be fair, I wasn't in the country at the time. So I have a very different relationship with it. So I should just probably, but it's just, it just seems like it's fated for some, not for others, but it's just as history is fascinating. And how we, how we document and remember significant events and how that changes over time. But Gosh, darn it, July 4, we should have those fireworks, and brats gets bigger every year. [Laughs] It's great. I'm not filtered. It's awesome. I

AS 46:26

I love it. Like, I feel people are gonna watch this be like, wow. She really let it all hang out. And I'm like, great. I love it. No, but um, I agree with you. I hope they do mention something about it. Like it's remembered. It's always going to hopefully be remembered. Because I know when they brought up the like, in school about the 1918 flu pandemic, I was like, What? Right, that was a thing, you know, like we were forgetting, you know, we're choosing what to forget type of thing. If Germany cannot forget the Holocaust and have memorials, they talk about it. It's not shied away, you know, as you I'm sure you will know, it just feels like sometimes the United States puts things under the rug, you know, swiped it on the rabbit. And it's, um, do you think that's kind of what's been going on? Because I know a lot of my friends are like, Oh, I'm not getting the vaccine. It's, it's too. It's too brand new. Like, what happens if I die? I'm like, you could die from the flu tomorrow. Or get hit by a bus? You know, Mean Girls, Regina style. Whoo, you know, type of thing. But um, how how do you feel about the vaccine?

CL 47:57

I got it. Um, initially. I was, I mean, that's I was a little were a little wary. It was really fast. And I was like, is this even gonna work? And then what are the side effects going to be? And again, like, I have a blood condition. I'm like, what's going on? Um, but then it just kind of came up are like we got, that's the cost we have to pay. Right now for this pandemic. Like, there's so many people have died. So yeah, there there's a risk. Assessing the true risk, like yes, it's going to be a die of getting, I mean, I clearly didn't die of getting the vaccine. It's been, but like, driving it back. We, let our kids go over to friends houses with pools, like that's different, right? Like, there's great. Freakonomics is a fabulous book that goes about like, more rational, thinking of like, risk and how or like, odds of things happening and how irrational we are as humans like, flying, it's way less risky than driving a car. But somehow we just have this thing with flying, or some people do or just so we're, and what we're, what we're able to deal with. And I think because something's new, we're like, okay, that's risky. But if we look at the things that we've just gotten, our body or minds have just numbed to, like, we just accept it, we're fine with but it's just taking that step back and like looking at the data science, like what are the odds and then just looking at it from a public health perspective, it's like, yeah, so many people have sacrificed their lives. the least I can do is get a vaccine and like to try to stop all the mutations or slow them down and there's just so much I just, and I get I mean, but they're always going to be tweaking it to like it's not I mean, I don't know I - it's, it goes back to just trusting the science and then looking at - look trying, trying to shut off the irrational mind and to think rationally about it, which is really hard when anxiety is so high and people are just scared. But then the not vaccinating just, I just I don't have a lot of I get it if there's an underlying true underlying medical condition, but just to not do it. It's frustrating because it could really, but then I also think, sorry, more of my thoughts is the people that and this isn't everybody, I'm being judgey. And I'm making assumptions. But I am. I feel like the people who haven't let COVID affect their lives who have gone on just done for the most part, but they would normally do anyway, no masks, social gatherings, and ever, they are the ones who aren't going to get vaccinated. And because it hasn't, they don't see the need to because the COVID hasn't changed their lives. But for those of us, I'm putting it us in them. Sorry. But I mean, it's really affected our lives, and we want to do something proactive to be able to do the things that we want to do again, but there's some like big, like, big concerts, my husband works for the public. So like having like, those types of shows like, no one's gonna have any shows until more people are vaccinated, and it's like, lower rates of infection and stuff like that, but they don't care. They don't go to cons. They don't I mean, but Sure, well, though, there's some performers that will carry there, and they'll do I mean, so it just, it's just frustrating that there's not more of a collective togetherness. But what did I expect from this country at this time? Like, it's just not? It's not there's no and was there ever? Like, I think there's just there's just always that, that tension. Public good. I mean, public versus private. And there's me, me, me or us. Yeah, just been a lot made even more clear. [Laugh] This past year.

AS 52:14

Well gonna come to a close, but I - one last thing I want from you is, um, a lot of people are gonna watch this, you know, this is going to be on a website. So well, you know, this, discussed all about this. And we're you agreed to the recording and everything with them. I want you to give me a sales pitch for everybody out there. Why should they get the vaccine? And why is this important?

CL 52:47

Oh, a sales pitch. You should get the vaccine because it saves lives. Because it will decrease the spread. And people. And I'm really worried about the variance like you need that. If more people keep getting it, people think oh, I don't need to, I don't need to worry about it, because it will make me that sick anyway, but it'll mutate inside you if you don't get super sick. And then there's going to be new variants. And then we have to adjust. It's going to spiral. I think spiral to back. But it's just it's not going to be controlled out if it's ever going to be controlled. But yeah, and then you can I mean, things can go back to sort of normal. I mean, I don't know that we're ever gonna go back to normal, but yeah, I think it's - think of the other people like because somebody else and the size is - it's not risky. It's not. I mean, the blood clots. Yeah, that was a need, but I've had blood clots. It's but I don't know. I just sorry, that was a great sales pitch, but. [Laughs]

AS 54:09

It's okay. I love that you I felt like I feel like with you being stuffy because you're sick, you kind of almost seem like act desperate for. Guys please do it. [Laughs]

CL 54:21

Do it. Do it for humanity, man. Do it for me. [Laughs]

AS 54:24

I felt it so someone's gonna watch me for just a blip of that. They're like oh my God, this woman is really feeling that I should get a vaccine you know type of thing. You are going to be like a meme. Maybe one day, you know.

CL 54:38

No. [Laughs] Stuffy woman.

AS 54:41

How I've explained it to people about the vaccine is every time you get a medication there's side effects. Every like, every medicine that I have worst side effects: death. You know, my birth control, my other medications worst side effects. You know, so it was.

CL 55:02

Right! Every single waiver for a risk of skiing is a, it's a dangerous sport, you could die. Okay. Sure. Every one. Every year someone collapses at the Berkey I don't know if that they die. [Laughs] But yeah. I mean, and life has risks. I mean, everything has a risk, There's nothing risk-free, nothing. And you're gonna, so I'm just trying to play to that like, rational thought but it's hard it's hard to move people because I think it's, it's been so politicized that people are just adamant not to do it just out of principle because no, no.

AS 55:49

But I thank you so much for like, all your great insight. I love that you didn't hold back, you know, you gave your perspective because that's what this is about. It's about you, and understanding your life with COVID you know. That makes it sound like you have COVID, I'm sorry. [Laughs] But you know what life was like your family, your work life. And I appreciate you. Thank you for sharing and, you know, being open honest, and that's what I love. I - cuz I'm the same way so I love when someone doesn't hold back because I just like, hold them back. I know it is. But um, thank you so much.

CL 56:33

Absolutely It was fun. Got a lot off my chest. No, I've told other people this too. People who know me, know that's what I say. No secrets. [Laughs]