**Transcript of Interview with Edward and Jeannie Lehew by Amanda Lehew**

**Interviewee:** Edward and Jeannie Lehew

**Interviewer:** Amanda Lehew

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**Location (Interviewee):** Independence, Kentucky

**Location (Interviewer):** unknown

**Transcriber:** Chris Twing

**Abstract:**Edward and Jeannie Lehew, residents of Independence, Kentucky, have been married for 67 years. Interviewed by their granddaughter, Amanda, she talks with them about Covid-19, what they know about it, government response, how it has or will change society, and how it compares to other crises they’ve each faced. Jeannie compares it to a string of family deaths and Edward to his time as a small child during the Great Depression. They also talk about face masks.

This call is now being recorded. [Automated voice from Zoom recording software]

**AL:** Hello, can you both hear me?

**JL:** Yeah, we can hear you fine, honey.

**AL:** Oh, perfect. All right. Well, with everything going on in our world right now. It's a little hectic and I think we're all seeing something none of the generations currently living has experienced. And I was wondering what you guys-what do you know about the Coronavirus?

**JL:** Well, I know it's-they say it started in China. And it's spread rapidly-very contagious. I know they were working on a vaccine, but the funding was cut off in 2016.

[pause] I don't know if you're grandpa knows anything different.

**AL:** umm . . .

**EL:** No, I just know you're supposed to keep your distance.

**AL:** That's right.

**EL:** There's training videos . . .

**JL:** Okay.

**AL:** Do you have a fear of catching the Coronavirus?

**JL:** Well, actually we've been staying in, so I was just talking to him before. We haven't been all out the whole month, except the run over to Kroger's and pick up our groceries.

**AL:** Yeah, that's definitely a different way to live

**EL:** (\_\_\_\_\_\_???) so far from everything.

**JL:** Yeah. Even when I get the mail is-I ya know wipe everything off. I use gloves to go down and pick it up.

**AL:** Yeah, that's-that's good. It's definitely scary times, it's different. Do you feel like you are currently preparing for the virus or have-were you already prepared?

**JL:** Well, I've always you know, stocked up on items. I have plenty of things I-I can-we could live for six months without even going out for groceries. I have so much stocked up. Except for like milk and eggs, something like that.

**EL:** We don't have quite that much. But we got a lot.

**AL:** Do you think-you said, you've always prep-like-had always stocked up on groceries. Do you know when you began doing that?

**JL:** I've always been doing it, ever since we were married. I've always-couldn't afford to get a lot then but when they give sales, and I had the money I'd always stock up.

**AL:** How long have you two been married?

**JL:** Let's see.

**EL:** 67 years . . .

**JL:** It'll be 67 years in April.

**AL:** Wow, that's amazing!

**JL:** It's a long time, yeah.

**AL:** Uh huh. [affirmative] Do you think there-maybe did you get this from-maybe one of your parents as to why you stocked up on things? Or is experience in your life that happened that caused you to do this or is it just the incentive of sales?

**JL:** Well, I think you know, our parents grew up-I mean, they were in during the Depression, and I remember my mom saying that they ate a lot of rice, that couldn't afford anything else. And things like that, you know, I guess that rubbed off on me.

**EL:** Yeah, I was born in 30 [1930] into the Great Depression. So, we were used to people being poor and not having much.

**AL:** Alight. How do you think this pandemic will change society?

**JL:** Oh, my goodness! I hope it changes the people-that you know-that to think more about their finances for one thing. There's an awful lot of people getting laid off. In fact, I heard this on the news that 1700 people were laid off over in Cincinnati at City Hall- the workers and that tonight.

**EL:** And I hope that people when you go to vote for people, vote for people that they think can do a good job, instead of just being [interrupted]

**JL:** Out for thereselves.

**EL:** Out for thereselves.

**AL:** Yeah, definitely. I agree with that. Definitely for sure. Is there anyone in your immediate family who's been laid off due to the Coronavirus?

**JL:** No, not due to the Coronavirus.

**EL:** Well see . . .

**JL:** Well, our son, but I don't think it's-their business has been going down ever since Trump got in.

**EL:** Yeah, manufacturers say . . .

**JL:** To tell you the truth they haven't sold any machines. You know the only work he was doing it was going around fixing machines in different states and assets. You know, but no, no new machines were bought.

**EL:** Yeah, when they put it-when you put in the tariffs on steel and aluminum that manufacturing jobs were really hurt.

**AL:** Okay, so you think that your son Steve being laid off relates to the current presidential administration and not the virus?

**JL:** Yeah.

**EL:** Yes.

**JL:** Oh, yeah, definitely.

**EL:** Definitely.

**AL:** Okay, interesting. Okay, well, since I've asked you, how do you think it will change society? What do you think will remain the same?

**JL:** I don't know. I can't answer that. Just hopefully-what were you going to say honey?

**EL:** I just hope that when people vote, they think more about who they're voting for and look into their past.

**AL:** Do you think-do you have enough faith in humanity that they would do that?

**EL:** I don't know, I . . .

**JL:** Anymore you have to wonder.

**EL:** Well, [interrupted]

**JL:** You know, just what you see . . .

**EL:** I'm just going to say this for a little bit. We just saw on the news, this church in Louisiana, packed with people. And they're not making very good decisions. I mean packed!

**JL:** And after-in Mardi Gras, and all those people and there are so many cases of coronavirus down there wouldn't you think they would stay home? You know, most of the churches around here that I know of, you know, they don't-nobody goes anymore.

**AL:** That's good. I was just watching-we're in Kentucky and I don't know if you've been watching the governor, Andy Bashir, give his speech every day at five o'clock, but I was watching it today. And he actually was getting on some churches-I think he said it was Robinson County- about them not closing. And apparently his grandfather was the minister of one of these churches. And he was telling the Kentucky citizens how disappointed he was. And then . . .

**EL:** Yes, we finally got a governor with some brains.

**JL:** But it'll never recover if people don't do what they're supposed to do and stay away from one another. And ya know- I mean, that's what causes it to . . .

**EL:** Why do they . . .

**JL:** Go ahead.

**EL:** I think people are used to having the president run around saying it's a hoax. And it was brought up by the news and that and they've heard this so much, that-if he would have been saying the right thing, people would have been prepared for what happened, but running around calling it a hoax and blaming the news and that . . . I think he brought it on-that-it went ahead. But if we would have been prepared, it wouldn't be as bad.

**JL:** I don't think Amanda wants us to be political.

**AL:** Oh, no. I want-I want you-[all talking over each other]-sure yeah. I want you to say what you're feeling and what you're thinking and any-as well-I mean, yeah, I want you to say exactly that. If that's what you're feeling, and you believe, I think it's very important.

**EL:** mmm hmm [affirmative]

**JL:** Okay.

**EL:** That's not being political. That's mean-somebody should be doing the right thing. And thinking before they say stupid things.

**AL:** So, you think that if we had a different president, we could have prepared for the pandemic definitely or been prepared for it differently?

**EL:** Yes, I [interrupted]

**JL:** Oh, yeah, definitely.

**EL:** Definitely. . . Well, I don't want to go into more on him, but I could for hours.

**AL:** [laughs lightly]

**JL:** Yeah, how much time do you have?

**AL:** [laughs] You were talking about people experiencing financial loss or like I-is the government or-Kentucky government experiencing financial losses? Or people not being able to recover from that? Do you think that our current government, be it Kentucky's government or federal government- do you think they can come up with other plans to help alleviate those issues for businesses and individuals?

**EL:** Well, I think eventually they will recover but it'll be slow-I-I-and I just hope that Congress does a good job and don't just go work for thereself work for the people.

**AL:** Yeah, I think that's definitely what we always want. I asked that question because you both mentioned about preparation and that you learn these things or acquire this idea from the Great Depression. And as we know, part of like the Great Depression was the FDR New Deal. And I was just kind of thinking, if you think there's going to be something like that that's going to come after the pandemic?

**EL:** Oh, no, I don't think it's going to get that bad. Are you saying that if they do the right thing, I think everything will work out. But you got to have people that are doing the right thing.

**JL:** Yeah, use common sense.

**EL:** Yeah.

**AL:** Do you think so-we can all agree that you know-social distancing right now is-you know how-it one of the ways we're handling the virus. Do you think corporations are doing the right thing currently?

**EL:** Well, I think they should've-they should've been preparing in the beginning and it wouldn't have been as bad as it is right now. But it will get over but . . . it's gonna have to have people that do the right thing.

**AL:** Okay. What about-we'll start with grandma-Jean, what other crises have you experienced in your life?

**JL:** Well, one of the most I guess devastating was when our little 21-month-old-I think I told ya about her Amanda, granddaughter died she was-had meningitis. And then, three months later, my father died. And then three months later, my grandmother died. And then, I guess about four months later, Karen, the baby's mother, was in a bad accident. And she had a car ran into her and she had her teeth knocked out and was, you know, hurt but it seemed like I walked around in a daze wondering, you know what net-what was gonna happen next.

**AL:** How did you handle that? Like how did you get through that?

**JL:** Well, at the time I was working, and I just got up and went to work and just took one day at a time that's all you can do.

**AL:** You mentioned your granddaughter died of meningitis. That is a disease that there is currently-and I don't know if there ever will be, a vaccine for, so while it's not as-I guess common now for children to get it, it still happens. If they were to come out with a vaccine for the Coronavirus do you think everyone should be required to get it?

**JL:** Oh, yes. Oh my gosh, yes!

**AL:** Are there [interrupted]

**JL:** Don't you?

**AL:** Oh yeah, for sure. Do you think-so you have no like quarrels with anyone getting a vaccine that was created in a short period of time?

**JL:** You mean for the Coronavirus?

**AL:** Yes.

**JL:** Oh no. I think you know, they wouldn't-I'd have faith in the-you know scientist and all-that it was safe. You know to have it.

**AL:** Good. Are there any other crises in your life that have jumped out?

**JL:** What do you think?

**AL:** What do I think?

**JL:** mmm hmm [affirmative]

**AL:** I-I definitely think that we should be required to get it for sure.

**JL:** mm hmm [affirmative]

**AL:** Even if there is a chance that there's long term effects, I think if we can-you know-save people from dying, I think that's the most important thing.

**JL:** Yeah.

**AL:** Have you experienced any other crises in your life that stick out to you? Rather they be personal or political or reveal-a war?

**JL:** Well, several things, but there's nothing that was as bad is that is . .

**AL:** For sure. Yeah . . .

**JL:** I can't . . .

**AL:** Oh, Yeah, I can't imagine-right?

**JL:** Like live'n six, seven months . . .

**AL:** And does-does that cause you any anxiety?

**JL:** Oh, yeah. Yeah.

**AL:** Did you have any fears that-could possibly-like that anxiet-make you feel like you were next kind of thing?

**JL:** No, but I just kept thinking what's gonna happen next? Because it just seemed like every-you know-every other month, it seemed like there was something bad happening after Karen was in that accident. You know, it's all, gosh, what's next? You know and let everything settle down after a while but something you never-you'll never forget.

**AL:** All right, Edward, what about you? How is there been any crisis in your life that you've experienced.

EL: Yes. My mother died when I was nine months old. My brother and sister and I went to live with my grandmother who had six children of her own. My father was an alcoholic and wouldn't pay her any money. And in the 30s [1930s] The mo-women could not go to court and get money from men back then. And then when, in 1936, my grandfather had to go to hospital for a hernia operation and died during operation. And I'm sure it was a foul up. And then when he died, my grandmother only got a small pension. She couldn't take care of us. So, about a year and a half later, when I was about-between eight and nine years old, we had to go live with my father who was an alcoholic, and his girlfriend. And I lived with him till I graduated from high school and then joined the army. And it's no fun living with an alcoholic.

**AL:** I definitely can imagine that. Man, considering we're in social distancing right now. How do you think since you've been in a situation before? How do you think kids who are currently living with parents who are alcoholics are getting by right now?

**EL:** Well, alcoholics, they care nothing about their drinking. My-my father was not only an alcoholic, he gambled all of his money on the races, but alcoholics never change.

**AL:** Do you-so currently with the Coronavirus in the state of Kentucky they're keeping open liquor stores and alcohol is considered a life sustaining essential. Do you agree with that?

**EL:** Oh, I agree. I think people that smoke and drink, their life expectancy is going to be not as long. And all these young ones that were vaping they're in trouble too. If they get that because they've already damaged their lungs. You should always think of your health before you do anything. Jean and I have never smoked in our life.

**AL:** Do you agree with the Kentucky Governor keeping liquor stores open as life sustaining?

**EL:** Well, they're going to get their drink one way or another. So, you're not going to stop it. You're not going to stop it. People that want to drink are going to drink. They'll get it one way or another. Because there's the liquor stores aren't open, there'll be places where they can go and buy it. Believe me, that happened during Prohibition. When there were no liquor stores.

**AL:** Yeah. Do you think that might be one of the reasons why they're keeping it open? That they know it's just a losing battle?

**EL:** Oh, it's a losing battle if you try to keep them from getting it.

**AL:** You mentioned that you went live with your grandmother after your mother died, and so it was you and your siblings, plus hers six children. How do you think single mothers are handling being stuck at home and with you know-not being able to go anywhere-you have kids that-you know want to go to places and have to go to the grocery store and they you know-they're telling you just come by yourself to the grocery store. How do you think single mothers are handling this situation?

**EL:** Well, I feel sorry for women that are alone with children is going to be hard and I blame most of the problems on the men, not the women.

**AL:** Are there other crises in your life that stuck out to you, that you've experienced?

**EL:** No, but that was enough.

**AL:** Right, no, definitely for sure. That was a lot. Do you remember, either one of you, do you have any memories of the Great Depression since you were young children growing up during that time?

**EL:** Oh, kids that lived on my street. They were lucky if they got something to eat once a-once a day and when I was in grade school, they gave us a bean sandwich for lunch. During-in the 30s [1930s]. We got a bean sandwich. It was baked beans on bread. And that was your lunch. Although we always-when I went to live with my grandmother, we always had food because my grandfather worked. Not everybody was out of work. But there were people, the kids that I played with, that their parents didn't work, and they had a really hard time.

**JL:** And also, one of his grandma's son. His uncle had a grocery store.

**EL:** Yeah, he had a grocery.

**JL:** So, he would give them enough groceries, give her enough grocery.

**EL:** There used to be a lot, a lot of small grocery stores. A lot was just one person running it back in those days.

**AL:** Right.

**EL:** They had a public works. They built roads, built parks and that, and a lot of them work-the government-for the government back then, and would send money home to some of the people. And where Wilder is now that was all hobo camps, from hobos that rode the rails.

**AL:** Yeah.

**EL:** And I used to go and talk to them all the time.

**AL:** Interesting.

**JL:** And one thing I do remember is there used to be a hobo or bum-we called him a bum- would come through our-the back door-the porch, and wanna know if he could have some food. And my grandma was living with us then and she'd always fix him a meal, and I can-I was just a little kid but I can still see him sitting there-eating his-an sitting on the steps, eating his meal, and then she-you wouldn't seem for maybe two weeks and then he'd come back and ask for another meal. I guess he went around at different houses.

**EL:** There was so many of them out of work they'd ride rails [interrupted]

**AL:** Right

**EL:** . . . different places.

**AL:** So, actually that's what hobo means, a train rider. [talking over each other a bit]

**EL:** If you want to learn a lot about the Depression watch-there's a movie. What is that? Remember that one?

**JL:** I don't remember.

**EL:** How-I can't think of it with Henry Fonda and . . .

**JL:** Oh, yeah, that. They were Okies. Yeah.

**EL:** Yeah, about how they went to California to try to pick-so . . .

**JL:** It was *The Grapes of Wrath* [interrupted]

**EL:** *The Grapes of Wrath.*

**AL:** Oh yeah.

**EL:** If you ever get a chance to see that you should see that. There's two movies that you should always see is *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Inherit the Wind*

**AL:** Okay.

**JL:** But I think I was born-like just a bit when the Depression was getting over.

**EL:** Yeah . . .

**JL:** I don't really remember.

**EL:** See [interrupted]

**JL:** I don't know what-there- you know, I was told.

**EL:** See I was three and a half years older than Jean. So, I-I was around five and six and seven, along with the people on our street. Were really, really poor.

**AL:** I just-it makes me think that the Great Depression like-I know you said you don't think the economy is going to get that bad but it's just this-it is going you know-it is affecting people's lives right now especially because there are people who were forced to leave work.

**EL:** Yeah.

**AL:** And so, I think there are some connections between maybe-not to the extent of the financial burden, but I think there is definitely some connections to what is happening now to them.

**JL:** mmm hmm [affirmative]

**EL:** Yeah.

**AL:** So, it's interesting. So, Grandma, since you said you kind of grew up-I guess maybe more memories after the Great Depression, do you remember, and Grandpa, I guess you obviously were there too. How was that economic boom where people were getting jobs and you know, just getting back to life? Do you remember? Do you have any-give any memories from that time? And did you see maybe the people on your street who were poor, kind of go up in the world at all?

**EL:** Well, it just gradually things got better and better and better. But it took time and-but I do remember you know, the people being so poor back in the 30s [1930s] It was really, really, really bad.

**JL:** Yeah, I had a friend that lived across the street and they had nine children. And they were poor. And I remember their mother would smear like, lard on their bread and they'd eat lard-you know-lard and bread.

**EL:** Yeah.

**JL:** That's what they'd have to eat.

**EL:** Yeah. Yeah, people . . . unless you're our age . . . where they have-like a-people losing jobs. It's nothing like what it was in the 30s [1930s]. Nothing.

**AL:** (\_\_\_\_\_\_\_???)

**JL:** That's probably why I always seeing-seeing my mom and you know, being so careful with her-with the food-and her money and everything, that's probably why I always wanted to stock up on things and-and I always-I worked and grandpa worked but I always made it so that if something would happen to him if he'd get laid off or I'd get laid off, I always made it so that we could-we didn't overspend that we could live on one salary. And I know nowadays, a lot of these younger ones, both of them have to work. You know, they'll buy things and they have to work. And I always-I always made sure that if one of-one of us couldn't work, we could always live on what the other one made, then overspend?

**EL:** mmm hmm [affirmative] No, we-we never bought anything we couldn't afford. Never.

**AL:** I think that's really good advice . . . for anyone. I guess-do you have any final thoughts? Anything that I didn't ask about that you know about the Coronavirus or you want to get off your chest about the Coronavirus?

**EL:** No, I just think that it couldn't-wouldn't be as bad as when it was starting, and they knew it was coming here. And when it started coming, they'd have made plans and-and check the people coming into the country. Instead of just run around calling it a hoax. It wouldn't have got this bad.

**JL:** And making sure they had the [interrupted]

**EL:** Yes. Making sure that they got the supplies they needed. That met the health-people would have got their supplies. See when World War Two broke out Roosevelt had the-had the automobile companies within months making-within weeks even planning on making tanks and planes in that-he-he got the country mobilized instead of running around acting like an idiot.

**AL:** I think that's a really good point. Do you know if there was there any laws or I guess maybe, I don't know what you call them that, like a team of people in the government whose job it was-to you know-do this kind of thing in the face of a pandemic.

**EL:** Well see what real leaders do when emergencies come and they assemble the best minds they can get, and get opinions from them and-and work together instead of one person not paying attention to what health officials and other people say. That's the big difference.

**AL:** I think that's a good point because I know right now, one of the biggest issues is that hospitals don't have tests or they're not able to test everybody.

**EL** and **JL:** Yeah. [simultaneously]

**EL:** I can't think of anything else.

**AL:** All right.

**JL:** I can't either. I hope we helped ya.

**AL:** And I have a question for you Jean, because I know you are actually doing something to help with the Coronavirus would you tell me about how-what you're doing to help and how that makes you feel?

**JL:** Are you meaning making masks?

**AL:** Yes.

**JL:** Well, Joann Fabric [national chain fabric store] was-they had the kits where you get-they were given them to you-to go out and get all the supplies-the you know-the material and everything but then they ran out. So, I wasn't able to get any.

**AL:** Oh, no! Well, okay, and that makes a good point they ran out of those. And do you know-you know-do you know why they ran out of those?

**JL:** Well, they I guess they had so many and they had-you know, a lot of people in companies-I guess donated the material. And then they bagged it all up and got it all ready. But then there were so many people that when I called, they were already out of the kits.

**AL:** Who are they? What are these kits? Like who are they making these kits for? What are like these masks?

**JL:** Well, you know, on one place, I saw where the hospitals aren't accepting handmade masks. But then Aunt Patti said that St. Elizabeth had a-you know-on online they sure had a pattern and told you how you can do it. So, she made one. And it was-I know you don't know much about sewing Amanda, but there was two pieces of material, the front and the back, and then the inside, they were supposed to put flannel. And we both said, well, if the three-you know-if there's three layers of material-how would they be able to breath? Anyway, she made a couple and she gave them to Amy. Because Amy might-you know- Amy's off now, but then she might have to go someplace, you know, because she's a nurse practitioner. And they must have called her and asked her how many feet warm-warmers and how many different things that she already had. So, she's assuming that she'll probably have to go somewhere. So at least she can use some of those masks. But that's all I know. You know, I'm willing to make them but since they-you know-ran out of the kits-maybe they'll get more. They might make more-you know . . .

**AL:** So, St. Elizabeth is the hospital, sorry, Sam works at a hospital-and so, they're the ones who need the mask and is in such demand that even kits for the public to help are also gone.

**JL:** But I think most of the kids-the just people, your average person is supposed to wear them. I don't think they're-the hospital can wear those-you know.

**AL:** Okay.

**JL:** I don't think they're the right kind I think it's-it's like Rachel said, it's a cer-certain kind of material that they're made out of so, but I-we couldn't understand how it could be lined with flannel, because you know how that would be over your nose and mouth-that would be so sick with three layers of material.

**AL:** Oh, yeah. I already feel like I can't breathe with a regular one on.

**JL:** Yeah.

**AL:** How does that make you feel that hospitals are in need of their medical equipment?

**JL:** How does it make me feel?

**AL:** Yeah. What does that-what does that make you think about, like thinking that hospitals are-have such a lack of supplies that the public is, you know, chipping in help?

**JL:** Well, I feel like it's the government's fault that they didn't have all this [interrupted]

**EL:** And the government . . .

**JL:** . . . in the beginning-to begin with.

**EL:** They have the power to get companies to-the-to make things if they want to use their power.

**JL:** And then what was that World Health Organization offered I don't know how many hundreds of thousands of what was it-masks?

**EL:** Masks.

**JL:** Yeah.

**EL:** And test kits and [interrupted]

**JL:** And test kits and the government refused, said that [interrupted]

**EL:** Turned them down.

**JL:** They didn't need them. Said they didn't need them. . . That was about [interrupted]

**AL:** How do you [interrupted]

**JL:** Six weeks ago, I guess.

**AL:** Why do you think they refused them?

**JL:** I have no idea.

**EL:** Because . . . [interrupted]

**JL:** of the moron we've got in the White House.

**EL:** Moron.

**AL:** Yeah. Yeah, I don't know if I have any more questions. You guys have talked a lot about that actually I think grandma you made a point about-or-am-I yeah that they have the power to have companies make these items and grandpa actually mentioned that during, I believe you said World War Two, that the president had the automobile companies . . .

**EL:** Oh, they switched over real quick and we're manufacturing thing [interrupted]

**AL:** Do you think, oh sorry.

**EL:** A person- a really leader back then [interrupted]

**JL:** Well Amanda is Jake-is his company making-you know hand sanitizers? Because I-I saw where several companies like that switched their equipment and can make hand sanitizer.

**AL:** No because his company doesn't actually brew alcohol or make alcohol. They just distribute it.

**JL:** Oh, mmm hmm. [affirmative]

**EL:** Yeah.

**AL:** Since they just distributed, they can't.

**EL:** Yeah. You have to have the alcohol.

**AL:** Right. Yeah, I think that was a really good interview and I learned a lot and I thank you so much for taking the time out of your day to talk to me about this.

**EL:** Okay.

**JL:** Well, I hope that helps. You know, I hope we didn't give some stupid answers.

**AL:** [laughs] I don't think you gave any stupid answers. I don't think that's possible.

**JL:** Oh, well honey thank you.

**AL:** You're welcome. I'm gonna end the recording now.

**JL:** Okay. Love you