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Montana Chester interview about life during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Interviewee: Montana Chester

Interviewer/transcriber: William Hamel

Date: 3/3/2022

Location: Albuquerque, New Mexico

Key words: COVID-19, pandemic life, remote school, working during pandemic, pandemic puppy



This interview is with Montana Chester, a freshman at the University of New Mexico. In this interview we talk about pandemic life and quarantine. “Quarantine” is a colloquialism used to describe the time period during and shortly after the exponential rise of COVID-19 cases in the continental United States of America. It can also be used to describe an actual quarantine time period mandated by state and/or federal government when one encountered a person who was COVID-19 positive, when one tested positive for COVID-19, or when a person came back or was going to another state and/or country. In this case, Ms. Chester, to the best of my knowledge, never had to physically quarantine herself. Overall, this was a fun assignment, I really enjoyed being the interviewer because I didn’t have to come up with any answers, I could just ask questions.

Will: My name is William Hamel and I am here, today, on March 3rd, 2022, with Montana Chester in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Today we are going to be talking about pandemic life. How are you today?

Montana: Yeah! I'm good, how are you?

Will: I'm doing good.

Montana: That's good!

Will: So, let's start off, how old were you when the pandemic started?

Montana: I was in my junior year of high school (short pause), so I was 17 when it started.

Will: You were 17-

Montana: Well, if we are talking about when everything shut down, and it was known in America, I was 17. But when it started in 2019, in other countries and stuff, I was 16.

Will: Okay, nice! So, do you remember where you were when you first got the news of everything shutting down into quarantine?

Montana: Yes, I actually do. So, funny story, we kinda knew that it was coming and (1:00) we heard about it and me and my mom were in my living room and me and my mom went to the pound and rescued our quarantine puppy. Her name is Thistle. (giggle)

Will: Nice! (chuckles) What breed is Thistle?

Montana: Thistle is a cattle dog mixed with some sort of Sheperd.

Will: Okay, nice, nice. (short pause) Do you remember the last time you got to hang out with your friends before all of the mask mandates came out and everyone started panicking and all that?

Montana: For me, like, all of my friends were super busy and, like I said, it started in junior year [of high school], and I had quit marching band at the end of my sophomore year and that's where a lot of my friend hang outs came from. So, I really only hanging out with my boyfriend, but I do remember, like not being able to see him for a while, which was kinda hard. But, other than that, the last I really remember would kind of just be going to get coffee with a group of my friends (2:00). But other than that, I don't really remember much.

Will: Okay, no worries. Moving on to pandemic life, what did your average day look like during online school? Like, what was your routine?

Montana: (sigh) Okay, so, I would literally get up ten minutes before class. If I had zoom, I would just sit on zoom and wait for my teachers to finish talking. But, a lot of my class work, I just got done in the beginning of the week, so Monday or Tuesday. So, I just kinda sit on zoom, not really paying attention. Just cause the class work was just kind of busy work.

Will: Fair enough.

Montana: Yeah, so (that's it).

Will: Yeah, just kinda get up, take a shower every now and then.

Montana: Yeah, and then I would go to work at night.

Will: Where did you work during the pandemic? (3:00)

Montana: So, at the start of it, I worked at Elevate Trampoline Park, and then I had to find a different job because we had it closed down a lot because of the pandemic. Then I started working at a Subway and then eventually, I worked at Subway and a church while going to school. And then, this past summer of 2021, I quit both my church job and my Subway job, and I got a job at a daycare. And then, once school started in the fall of 2021, I started working as a receptionist.

Will: Nice. Where do you work as a receptionist now?

Montana: I work at White Glove Moving Services, its off of Candelaria and Princeton area. It's just in a little office building.

Will: Yeah, so how did your work life change when (4:00) all the mask mandates came out and the pandemic first started?

Montana: So, it changed a lot, especially when I was at Elevate [Trampoline Park] because we had to minimize everything. We didn't have a lot of employees because they were scared to go to work. There wasn't a lot of costumers even coming because they were kinda scared. And, I'm not even going to lie, like not trying to (throw) shade, but the owner did not really listen to a lot of the rules and we had cops come and shut us down a couple of times.

Will: Oh, wow.

Montana: So, it was kind of hard and I was only getting scheduled maybe once a week for like four (4) hours. So, it wasn't good pay at all. And that was really hard.

Will: So, what was your favorite part about quarantine life?

Montana: My favorite part about quarantine life? (pause) I kind of like being (5:00) distanced socially. At stores and stuff, before the pandemic, sometimes people would stand really close to me. It's not like I'm like "oh my goodness, get away from me" before covid. There just needs to be some sort of space.

Will: Yeah.

Montana: So, I kinda like now that it's kind of been more normal for people to stand a little bit farther at stores, or things (like that). I kinda like that. I'm very much a "I like to go out and do things" [type of person], so being restricted at home was really hard for me.

Will: Okay, yeah! So, we are approaching the time limit not, is there anything else you would like to say about pandemic life or quarantine?

Montana: Yeah! So, I think that pandemic life had a lot of negative effects on people and it's kinda hard to find positives in it. But, I think that society has really worked together to make it the best it can be (6:00). I know there has been a lot of fights throughout the pandemic, but I think overall, since we are starting to get out of it, it was a good thing to experience in a way. Because it's a new life experience that not a lot of people had got to experience.

Will: Thank you so much for this interview, it was very nice with talk to you.

Montana: Thank you. (End 6:22)