

## **Transcript of Oral History with Matthew Bonfanti and Advika Chaudhari**

**Interviewee:** Matthew Bonfanti and Advika Chaudhari

**Interviewer:** Matthew Bonfanti and Advika Chaudhari

**Date:** September 23, 2021

**Location:** Boston, Massachusetts, United States of America

**Abstract:** Matthew and Advika take turns interviewing each other. They focus both on what their thoughts and emotions were during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

**Matthew Bonfanti** 00:02

So can you tell me the date and time and your name, please?

**Advika Chaudhari** 00:06

The date is September 23, 2021. And my name is Advika Chaudhari. And the time is 5:19.

**Matthew Bonfanti** 00:17

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

**Advika Chaudhari** 00:21

Yeah, I do.

**Matthew Bonfanti** 00:24

Alright, so my first question is, when did you first see the pandemic as a real issue? And how did you react?

**Advika Chaudhari** 00:31

I first saw the pandemic as a real issue when COVID began spreading, like, really quickly around the US around March and school like shut down. And I heard about people that I knew who are contracting COVID and I saw, like the effect it had on everybody's lives, because during this time, like, all the stores were shut down, and no one was interacting with each other. And we were all in quarantine. So, yeah, it was like, scary to know that even though the symptoms of COVID weren't that bad, people were still dying from it. And yeah, it just like, I think people became nervous and anxious about contracting COVID and spreading it to people. So that was like the time where I saw COVID as like a real issue.

**Matthew Bonfanti** 01:19

Yeah. So my next question is how has the pandemic affected you or your family?

**Advika Chaudhari** 01:26

The pandemic had like a pretty big effect on my family, because my mom's a doctor. So she would have to like work long shifts at the hospital, and then she would treat like COVID positive patients. So during that time, like my family wasn't allowed to see her that, as much because like, she didn't want to risk passing the virus on to us if she was positive. And that was just hard on my family, because like my mom's kind of like the center of our household. But yeah, as the cases went down over time, I was able to see her more.

**Matthew Bonfanti** 02:02

All right, and then what are some quick changes to your lifestyle that you made during the pandemic, that you think you'll continue when it ends?

**Advika Chaudhari** 02:11

One of the changes I made to my lifestyle was exercising more, because during the pandemic, everyone was locked indoors, so I got bored, and I started looking for things to do. So I started exercising, which is like, a pretty healthy lifestyle change. And I know I'll continue to do that when it ends, too.

**Matthew Bonfanti** 02:33

All right, that's all I have for you.

**Advika Chaudhari** 02:35

Okay. So, can you state your name, and if you give consent to be interviewed for the COVID-19 archive project?

**Matthew Bonfanti** 02:52

My name is Matthew Bonfanti. And I do give consent.

**Advika Chaudhari** 02:56

Okay. So first question is, what was your reaction to the pandemic, after you heard about it spreading in China? And did you ever think it would come to the US and have the effects that we see today?

**Matthew Bonfanti** 03:11

Yeah, so I first heard about it when my dad, like read an article about it in like December, and I didn't really care, and he was like, maybe you should care because my sister visited China, like, over winter break. And she was kind of nervous that she might have had it because she, like had a cold, but she didn't get tested. And then it was just cold. So she was fine. But we didn't really know what the symptoms were anyway, so we weren't sure if it was an issue or not. And then, later on, like, I started spring CUS in March, we got like, the like, we got an extra day of school off before spring break started. Because the tea- [Audio cuts] needed to learn how to use Zoom. And we all thought it was kind of dumb, because we didn't really think that'd be a real issue. And we felt kind of, at least as I did, I felt kind of separated from China and then Europe. And I thought we'd be better off. And I'm not really sure

I felt that way, or why I felt that way. But I did. I just generally figured it would blow over and not really be a real issue in the United States.

**Advika Chaudhari** 04:16

Yeah, that makes sense. How did you do with remote learning? Did you like it? And like, how hard was it to adapt to learning from home?

**Matthew Bonfanti** 04:28

I really did not like online learning because our school changed our schedules so our classes were longer. And then they were more spread out. So I kind of got bored in the downtime. And while I was in class, I found it really hard to focus and because they didn't want us like on Zoom all the time. We had a lot of asynchronous work, and I wasn't really motivated to do the work. So I kind of like lost motivation to do well in school. And aside from that, I didn't really like being at home because I miss seeing a lot of people every day like at school. And it was just kind of lonely doing school in my room. But I did like having extra time in the mornings because I could wake up later, instead of commuting to school. And I had more time to like during my lunch breaks, I could cook food downstairs. So it was mostly bad, but there was some good parts.

**Advika Chaudhari** 05:24

Yeah, I agree with that. Were you nervous or anxious during the peak of the pandemic or in April? And what about now?

**Matthew Bonfanti** 05:34

Yeah, so I was mostly nervous in March or like late March, because I was in Buffalo when the stay at home orders happened, and I live in Delaware. So I was visiting family, and my dad was like, Yeah, you can't really go out anymore. So I stayed for the weekend, and I drove home and the highways were like, completely empty. And like, it was just like, kind of like nervous like, when I was like pumping gas. I use hand sanitizer and stuff. But when I went out like grocery shopping and shopping and stuff, I wore my mask, like I washed my hands and stuff. So I kind of had an average reaction, I guess. But towards like, more recent times, I got my vaccine pretty early because of my job. And then I still wore my mask after that when we no longer had to, but towards summer I just stopped wearing it, didn't have to anymore. So I used to be pretty nervous, but now I'm not as nervous.

**Advika Chaudhari** 06:40

Yeah, it's the same thing for me too. Yeah, I think those are all the questions so...