

Transcript of Interview with Keith Anthony by Timothy Anthony

Interviewee: Keith Anthony

Interviewer: Timothy Anthony

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Transcriber: Timothy Anthony

Abstract:

Keith Anthony grew up in Sharon, Pennsylvania. He studied Computer Engineering at Syracuse University. After completing his degree, he entered the United States Air Force. He moved to the Dayton area to work at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, where he continues to live. There he met his wife, Denise Anthony. Together they raised four children. In this interview, he reflects on how difficult it is to be prepared for a crisis like the coronavirus pandemic and how crises can stimulate positive change in individuals. He also discusses what changes may occur in society at large because of the pandemic, especially in education.

TA: I am Timothy Anthony here with my father, Keith Anthony. I am interviewing him on March 31, 2020. We are completing this interview as part of a project with the University of Cincinnati Department of History for contribution to an archive about the corona virus pandemic and other crises. Since Mr. Anthony has been on the earth for quite a few years, he has a perspective on crisis and troubling times. So, yeah.

So, what do you know about the coronavirus?

KA: What do you know about the coronavirus?

What's being referred to as the coronavirus is a member of the family with the acronym of COVID. It's called corona because of the shape of what the virus looks like – a semicircle corona shape. This particular virus originates in Wuhan, China, where there is a Chinese government – I don't know if it's military – research facility that does virus research. It is a flu. It is like pneumonia. It infects – apparently it affects people with who already have other issues – respiratory issues – making them more susceptible to infection and death.

TA: Okay. [paper rustling] So, this whole – with the announcement of the pandemic and how virial it is, what do you know about that? Like, how much it spreads?

KA: What do I know about – the question is what do I know about how it spreads?

TA: Well, yeah. It's not one of the official questions, but...

KA: Well, I'm not an epidemiologist. I don't much about viruses, but I have seen research papers describing how epidemics – pandemics – happen and it – there's – then, of course, we don't know how accurate the popular movies are on the subject, but there's a variety of those.

There's an initial carrier and it spreads from them and it goes out and humans are carriers and apparently there's – oh yeah, in addition this answers the last question – apparently it came from a bat. I don't know how diseases go from bats to humans, but apparently, they do. Alright, that answers the question.

TA: You mentioned movies. Are you talking like *Contagion* and stuff like that?

KA: Well, your mother [Denise Anthony] and I just watched a movie *Outbreak* [laughs] the other day and there's *Contagion* and Stephen King's little six-hour miniseries called *The Stands* – starts with a worldwide super-flu infection that kills most of the people. Some people – a few people – are inhuman and they survive to set forth the rest of the plot of that movie.

TA: Do you think that these movies have shaped public perception on pandemics and in what way?

KA: I think popular movies like this desensitize the public to this sort of phenomena. So, yes.

TA: Do you think that these movies are bad, or do you think they're just entertainment?

KA: I think they're entertainment, but if someone were to have an agenda, they could use movies to accomplish a desensitization [microphone interference].

TA: Interesting.

Alright, so moving on to the next official question, with the pandemic spreading, how have you prepared for this whole – well – crisis?

KA: With the pandemic spreading, how have I prepared for the pandemic?

TA: Yeah.

KA: I think, in general, I have not really prepared for it. Neither has the population in general; neither has our government in general; or all governments of the world in general. So, I think laying blame on any particular politician is [laughs] completely unfair and – although, realistically we ought to have expected it.

TA: Do you think anybody – that any government excuse me – could be prepared for something like this, or is it just so unpredictable that they can't?

KA: [microphone interference] Could be or should be or would be is the question?

TA: Any of them.

KA: [microphone interference] Could be, yes. Should be, probably yes. Would they be? As current evidence indicates, most governments – populations – are not prepared. Some are prepared more than others because it's practically unlikely that people are going to expend resources on something with a low probability. It's a risk-reward thing. So, when the low-risk thing finally happens, it's going to have a big impact.

TA: So, otherwise everyone else has to play catch-up when something like that happens?

KA: They have to mitigate, not play catch-up. They're not going to play catch-up. Playing catch-up is too expensive. They got to mitigate, which is, to minimize the – like currently they're trying to flatten the infection curve – mostly so the hospitals will – are capable of handling with the influx of patients that they're going to get. If it was too many, too many people are going to die – if the growth curve was too steep. That's what they call flattening the curve. And it's a growth curve – this is exponential. [paper rustling]

TA: You're more on the math side of things, so you would understand more how the exponential expansion works.

KA: One day, its one. The next day, its two. The next day, its four. The next day, its eight, sixteen, thirty-two. After thirty days, two becomes a thousand. Thirty more days, a thousand becomes a million. That math might not be right, but something.

TA: You're just giving – trying to show – how something expands exponentially.

KA: Two to the thirtieth is a million. [microphone interference] After sixty days, two to the sixtieth power, which is a big number. So, my previous statement was incorrect.

TA: Hmm.

KA: But that curve flattens out on its own [metallic clanging sound] because as shown in artificial life experiments and Conway's early game called life where things have to have resources – they have to eat. If they don't have anything to eat, they die. So, viruses will eventually die out because they run out of victims.

TA: Isn't that the whole idea behind herd mentality? I'm sorry, herd immunity?

KA: It's about the equilib- the steady state [metallic clanging sound] point in growth. Things will level out to where there's a balance between resources and the population that needs those resources. Death and birth will even out. All other things being equal.

TA: That almost sounds Malthusian the way you describe it.

KA: That's not Malthusian, it's just science. Birth and death will balance out because of the available resources.

TA: Okay I see.

KA: It's the S-curve.

TA: Anyways, you say that people couldn't prepare for this, so how has the virus –

KA: I didn't they couldn't.

TA: Okay.

KA: I said practically they wouldn't.

TA: Okay. Since people haven't been prepared for this – this isn't one of the official questions – how has this impacted your life in Xenia, Ohio?

KA: Well, I have a research job which is done at a classified environment, but currently very little of research is actually classified, so I can actually do that research-development stuff at home and actually my internet resources are actually better at home than at work and I have a government job at a particular place – military – so that is probably why. A research job in academia or corporate that problem wouldn't really exist. My bandwidth wouldn't really be limited. [microphone interference] We aren't really under official quarantine; were just kind of in a minimalized kind of guidance. We won't get arrested, but I think we have – we can't go out after ten, what is that – a curfew. So, I'm doing work from home. I don't have to drive to work. I don't have to spend money going to restaurants for lunch. I have better resources at home and not spending money buying coffee at the coffee bar or for ordering out for lunch. So it's less travel spending less money. Its more productive.

TA: I know I'm saving money not going down to UC all the time.

KA: In numerous ways its better. [laughs] Although I have more distractions.

TA: I can imagine; you really love your dog.

[microphone interference]

Moving on to the next question

KA: Four?

TA: This is three.

KA: Three!

TA: Yeah, I know. I've asked a lot of questions.

So, before we were looking the more micro level – how it impacted you and whether – how, maybe if, anyone could be prepared for this. Looking at a larger scale, how do you think this pandemic will change society and what do you think will stay the same and what will change?

KA: I'm writing the question down because it gives me time to think about my answer.

How do I think this pandemic will change society?

How could it change society, will it change society, and how it will change society in the short term and the long term. In the short term, it is definitely going to have an economic impact, and that already my retirement fund, which is mostly in the government C fund – actually its more specific than that but its common stock– investments have gone down 25-30%, and that's maybe \$100,000 in my retirement fund. Of course, that's just paper money, so it doesn't really exist. You have actually to have it. So, if I wanted to get back to the same level, maybe I'll work longer. I don't know. Whether that is a permanent economic, it depends. Depends on how long the current social distancing and the stay home, work at home if you can, stays in place for that impact. Its disrupting supply chains and some of those supply chains will have to be completely rebuilt. [microphone interference] Long term, depends on what happens. I think will see it as an experiment in work at home kind of scenarios. I think that will likely increase. Denise [Anthony] and I were talking about this yesterday about lots of people are in effect homeschooling now because classes are done online and maybe they'll discover that that works better, it's cheaper than paying for daycare.

I think the jury is still out, but they're being of the conspiratorial ilk, but I am one to see agendas at work. And if those governments would like to be in control, they're in control a little bit more this time and they might decide they like it.

TA: Kind of like a libertarian's nightmare.

KA: I don't know about libertarians; I don't know what you mean by that.

TA: A government taking more control, libertarians, all that stuff.

KA: Well, that's not just a libertarian nightmare, that's a lot of people's nightmare.

TA: True.

So you mentioned that this whole thing has been an experiment with work from home and you mentioned how you have had generally a positive experience in-

KA: Well except that in anticipation of something like this, I actually paid to increase the home bandwidth, but in actuality my access seems to be spottier lately more to the effect now, and I attribute that that maybe the, in my case Time Warner Spectrum, I don't really think they

engineered their network well enough to accommodate the load. Should they have? Probably. Did they? No. We build things for the likely use, not the risk case use because that's more money.

TA: And that kind of goes back to how prepared are people and-

KA: So, we don't build cars like they used to with quarter-inch metal. It's now like an eighth-inch metal. So, when they get in collisions, they're more likely to be totaled versus the tanks that were built around the 30s and 40s and 50s.

TA: All right. So, moving on to question number four.

KA: Official question number four.

TA: Yeah. What other crises have you experienced, and how did they affect you?

KA: "What other crises have I experienced and how have they affected me?"

I'll ask the second part first. Crises are growth opportunities and they build character in people or at least they should. People should learn fundamental and reliable truths on which to base their lives, their belief structures through crises. They learn who they can depend on, who their friends are, who their enemies are, who the reliable people are, who are unreliable. They should learn what are silly life practices, what are good life practices. Okay, that part, and I could go on and on, but I'm not.

So back to part A, life crises. I'll talk about a few personal life crises. There's the crises of miscarriages. Now I'm not the one that had the miscarriage, so I didn't suffer like Denise did, but the husband still does go through stuff. What other crisis have I experienced and how have they affected me? There's a crises of death. Death of my father, grandfathers, death of friends, those are crises.

More general crises like I watched the 9/11 things, I heard about the first tower and heard it playing on the radio and I watched the second tower on live TV in a room at work. And this changed things. And that was about four or five, six years of different things there. You have to learn.

So, I think a person – now kind of shifting back to the answer B again – so you have to go through a crisis to understand how to go through a crisis. All things pass. Nothing's ever the same, but all things pass, and life moves on, but you have to go through things to adapt, to be flexible, to have the patience to go through them.

You're probably going to wake up the next morning, might have less money in your retirement account, might be not driving to work, might be around newly and hastily rearranged work from home office. But life goes on and it's not about convening to the status quo just because parts of my daily routine have changed. I don't derive my security from my daily routine. And if you do it will probably break you, but I don't.

TA: That actually reminds me of a book that's out there. There's this concept called antifragility, which is basically in crises, you get stronger.

KA: There's truth to, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." There's truth to that. It's true in diseases too.

TA: So that's all. That's all there is for the official questions. Did you want to kind of go back to one event to talk about the one event?

KA: No, I could write compositions on some of these questions, ramble on why this happened and how it happened and [inaudible 00:24:49]. No, I'm satisfied, I guess.

TA: It's all a very complicated situation, and I think that we're all learning to adjust more as a society and personally too. So, thank you for your time. About 28 minutes. We've done all right.