

Transcript of Interview with Luis Cortez by Kristine Gonzales

Interviewee: Luis “Louie” Cortez

Interviewer: Kristine Gonzales

Date: November 17, 2020

Location (Interviewee): San Antonio, Texas

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Abstract: Luis "Louie" Cortez is an employee of St. Mary's University and in this quick oral history he gives us an insight into how life changed for him while working through a pandemic.

Kristine Gonzales 0:01

Okay, um, my name is Kristine Gonzales, and I'm here with Luis Cortez, the business manager of Information Services here at St. Mary's University. Louie, I was wondering if you could tell me about your experience, as far as your position goes, maybe before the pandemic, and after the pandemic hit and kind of how things have changed.

Luis Cortez 0:22

So, prior to the pandemic...um...the- my position was not the business manager, but the office coordinator for the Luis J. Blume Library. Just before the pandemic hit, I received a promotion that brought me into this position now. Um, and I was in the process, the process of transitioning from one position to the other when everything changed, when we got the word in San Antonio, that we were going to be uh shutting down and staying home and going remote. St. Mary's immediately initiated a stay at home program where employees could work remotely. My boss uh...was- my new boss was completely on board with me working remotely. And so, I would, I was issued a laptop and given clearances and able to do the majority of my work at home. I would come in once a week because my particular position requires certain items be processed on the network that I did not have access to from home, as well as getting invoices into a system. That's a closed system. So again, I couldn't do that remotely from home, not without setting up other parameters that we just did not have time because we were doing this so quickly and rushed on it. So we- I would come in once a week, usually Thursdays, Thursday mornings, because that's when my invoices would have to be turned into another office. So that's how that worked for the most part. Throughout the entire- in the initial transition. Once it began to slow down, we begin to call people back. My, my boss continued to give me, um to allow me to work from home on Mondays and Fridays, but I come in on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

Kristine Gonzales 2:36

And may ask like, how this pandemic has maybe personally affected you?

Luis Cortez 2:42

Well, I live with, I have four other roommates, one of them I'm married to but the other two, we all are pretty much homebodies to begin with. So, it didn't affect us as much as it affected others. Some people who isolated themselves did not have a network to isolate with. So, they stayed by themselves, physically by themselves. We had each other to lean upon, so we would watch movies together, we eat together. So, the social, there's still social interaction there because we have a- we treat each other like a family to begin with. But the social circles that we had, did disintegrate quite a bit. I'm, I'm a gamer, so I routinely game on the weekends. And that stopped because we were, we didn't want- we were trying to do our part to eliminate any kind of close contact with other people that we weren't immediately in, you know, so isolated with. So, for the longest time, many months, we stayed away from other people. But once San Antonio started to open up again, that's when we begin to relax our guard. It's only been the last month, within the last month that we've actually, my husband and I have actually gone to a restaurant, we wouldn't even go to- we wouldn't even go out to eat. And what I mean by that is actually sit in the restaurant. We would go pick up to-go or curbside but you know that was it, then we'd come home. We didn't go out. We didn't venture outdoors to any public places other than to spend only a few minutes there and then head home or go to another destination. So, gaming stores, comic book shops, theaters, all of those places that we would regularly go out to in addition to restaurants, we avoided quite a bit. And then even when restrictions begin to lighten, we still stayed away.

Kristine Gonzales 5:00

Well, Louie, I want to thank you for your time. I very much appreciate you speaking with me.

Luis Cortez 5:04

Sure.