

## Transcript of Oral History Interview with Darcy Brossow

**Interviewee:** Darcy Brossow

**Interviewer:** Karen Kilby

**Date:** 05/22/2020

**Location (Interviewee):** Wisconsin

**Location (Interviewer):** Eau Claire, Wisconsin

**Transcriber:** This transcript has been provided by Otter.AI with a 2nd pass for accuracy and formatting provided by Bryan Paintiff, HST580 intern, at ASU.

**Abstract:** Darcy Brossow works for a cheese corporation in Wisconsin and is considered an essential employee, so has not been laid off during the pandemic. Darcy then explains how covid has affected their place of work: employees always sanitizing surfaces, the company splitting breaktimes and staggering work schedules, as well as letting go all the temporary workers and just keeping full time workers. Next Darcy explains how COVID has not really affected them, their small town has basically operated the same and their county has had very few cases. Darcy does talk about how it was annoying to not be able to go out to parks because they were closed. Lastly, Darcy discusses how people who were laid off may have actually made more via unemployment and how that was unfair to people who were actually still working.

**Karen Kilby 00:00**

All right, this is the oral history interview for the public history seminar class. I am Karen Kilby and I am interviewing Darcy Brossow. The date is May 22 2020, around 3:02pm. So, and I live in Eau Claire Wisconsin. Darcy, where do you live?

**Darcy Brossow 00:27**

I live in Wisconsin.

**Karen Kilby 00:31**

What is your job?

**Darcy Brossow 00:32**

My job is working with cheese. We don't exactly process it. But we make it from like these big blocks of cheese down to like the shredded cheese, the slice cheese and like little portions.

**Karen Kilby 00:50**

Where do you work at?

**Darcy Brossow 00:52**

Marathon cheese Corporation.

**Karen Kilby 00:55**

And you're still working there now you haven't been laid off or anything like that?

**Darcy Brossow 01:01**

No, we haven't been laid off. I'm what you considered an essential employee because we work with foods.

**Karen Kilby 01:06**

How has the COVID-19 affected your job? Have we put like sanitary conditions in place, that sort of thing?

**Darcy Brossow 01:17**

Yes, they've implemented a lot of stuff. We have workers that go around like sanitizing every surface that they can sanitize. And then they have it where we're starting at work at different timeframes, so it's less congested when we're trying to clock out with like the time clocks. And then in the break rooms, they have different break periods that each line has to follow so they don't get too many people. And then they also have like plexiglass that they put on the tables so that people don't get infected, I guess you could say.

**Karen Kilby 01:59**

So did they have to cut people? Or did they actually hire more people during this time period?

**Darcy Brossow 02:07**

They actually cut a lot of people, we have what they call like, like, temps like temporary employees that they hire through like different agencies, they cut those back, we usually have college kids during the summer, they cut those back. But since like the governor reopen the state, they're actually coming back in now. But before like between March and April, they cut all those employees.

**Karen Kilby 02:45**

have you or anybody you know, been sick with the COVID-19?

**Darcy Brossow 02:50**

No, actually in Wisconsin, just recently, in Taylor County, they've had one case and that's it. Like every other county in the state has had at least one or two. But we've been really fortunate and not having any.

**Karen Kilby 03:11**

Have there been any challenges that you had to face during the outbreak?

**Darcy Brossow** 03:19

Not really. It just more, I have to say it's more mentally challenging because you- with the media and everything you're wondering what's true when it comes to like either the symptoms, the causes behind it and everything. So you're just kind of sitting here and wondering, its like, what can I actually go out and do? Versus do I just stay at home? And, you know, hope not getting infected kind of thing.

**Karen Kilby** 03:52

Let's see here. So what concerns do you have about the effects of COVID-19 on your job?

**Darcy Brossow** 04:04

I really don't have any, because like I said, we're an essential employee or they're like essential employers, and we really haven't had any cases. So it's just pretty much going about your daily life.

**Karen Kilby** 04:23

Do you have any concerns about like the effects of the COVID-19 on the economy or society?

**Darcy Brossow** 04:32

I personally haven't really looked into it and that's my wrongdoing, I guess you could say. But right now I round here everything's kind of getting back to normal with like, the jobs and everything. But I feel bad because I've heard like different stories about like, small store owners and everything going out of business and stuff and, like, I wish we could help, especially with like the farmers and stuff too.

**Karen Kilby** 05:05

Have you seen them actually dumping milk or anything like that, like I've heard of, in Wisconsin?

**Darcy Brossow** 05:12

I, I haven't really seen anything. But then again, like our dairy industry has been going down quite rapidly lately. But I also heard like it affects like, not just like the dairy part of it, but like the meat part of it too. Like they've had to get rid of like pigs and cows and stuff in order to supplement.

**Karen Kilby** 05:37

Yeah, has there kind of been short supply for marathon cheese? Or they've been able to fulfill demand, theirs like that.

**Darcy Brossow** 05:46

They have been able to fill the demand, we've been actually getting more cheese in than what they have out. Because I'm pretty sure when like the whole COVID started, everybody kind of bulked up on

everything. And then now that it's kind of going away, they have to use that so it's kind of just steadily like the the work still there. But it's kind of decreasing at the moment before it kind of hits steady again.

**Karen Kilby** 06:14

Have you noticed any of the businesses around town that have for sale signs now that they've seen that they're going to be closing?

**Darcy Brossow** 06:22

Actually, no, not not around here, like I said, because we didn't get hit that hard by it. And I think most of our businesses around here actually stayed open. Because most of them were the essential businesses.

**Karen Kilby** 06:38

So it's like some of the smaller businesses had to close their doors for a while or do like curbside pickup?

**Darcy Brossow** 06:44

Yeah, a lot of the food places had curbside pickup. One of them was like Subway they kept doing you just either had like an app and did internet or you call them and they'd fill it out and you go to them and be like, this was my order and they'll give it to you at the door and then on the way you go.

**Karen Kilby** 07:09

So how has it affected you, the quarantine affected you personally? What do you feel about it?

**Darcy Brossow** 07:14

I don't know. Because I've heard so many different opinions and like, different things because I had one person at work that's like, totally into it saying like, if they have like any cases, they're out, they've done their will and everything. But then I've had other people at my workplace that said, they think they've already had it before like the whole scare, because they, some of like the symptoms are the same. And that most of us are probably immune to it. So I've had like both ways, but me personally, it doesn't really affect me much. Kind of like small town living you don't really get a whole lot.

**Karen Kilby** 07:59

Like in your day to day life. Like if you don't mind that you're, you know have to stay home more often than not? That sort of thing.

**Darcy Brossow** 08:09

Sometimes it bugs me because I don't like staying at home. I'm an introvert. I don't like too many people. But I like going out and doing things and that's the hard part especially when you want to go out to like a park or something and they're closed. I know that's one of the big things was like my husband and I we wanted to go out to this one park and when we went out there there's like so many people and

it's like no thank you so we just kind of went back home and did whatever there. I know sometimes did a lot more housework though, more than I ever really wanted to.

**Karen Kilby 08:52**

How's it you seen affect the community mentally? Like are people tired of it? Are they enjoying it? That sort of thing.

**Darcy Brossow 09:00**

I'm pretty sure that everybody around Taylor County in Medford is sick and tired of it. Like bad. I've seen so many posts on Facebook from my friends list saying that they think the governor is an idiot that they can't wait for this like the whole state to open again. They're pretty much saying enough is enough.

**Karen Kilby 09:27**

Yeah, that leads me to my next question here. Like knowing what you know now, what do you think that the government could do better for the future when handling the pandemic?

**Darcy Brossow 09:44**

I honestly don't know. Because like for us rural areas. We don't get a lot of stuff. And it's easier to like [inaudible] because it's like an airborne disease and with like us and, you know, farm country and everything, there's not really anything there within sight. But if you have like a big city or whatever were, you know, you have like all these air systems that go through like a skyscraper, look at how many people can get infected through that way. So like, definitely a big city life is way different than out here in the country. I guess that's all I can, because I honestly don't really know a lot about politics and stuff and I haven't been reading up on it.

**Darcy Brossow 09:51**

So you're saying like the maybe the local government around there was, could handle it better than in some of the bigger cities maybe?

**Darcy Brossow 10:47**

Well, I think more of the bigger cities didn't, I don't know if I want to say like, didn't handle it well, but like, a lot of the smaller cities could have definitely given up some like their, like medical units to give to like the bigger cities instead of trying to be like, I don't know, something like that? Maybe? I'm sorry.

**Karen Kilby 11:10**

Oh, you're fine. You're fine. You're, good. Um, probably my last question here has, how is your experience transformed how you think about your family and friends and community? Like how what your relationship is with them? Has it brought you together, has it kind of brought you apart, that sort of thing.

**Darcy Brossow 11:35**

Like I said, I'm not a people person, so I honestly don't do a lot of stuff with my community, I just kind of do my own little thing in my own little world. So I don't know exactly how, like the community is doing and stuff. Or I'm just kind of indifferent to it. But when it comes to like, my family and stuff, it was decent enough, I actually work with my mom and my aunt, so I got to see them quite a bit. And then the thing is, we got phones, we got texting, we got, you know, Zoom, Skype. So it wasn't a complete loss, way better than what it would have been like, you know, let's say, like, 70 to 100 years ago, where you don't have any of that and you're left at home wondering. At least this way, you can like talk and communicate, even though you're not right there.

**Karen Kilby 12:31**

Has, how has it affected like, between you and your husband? Have you been getting on each other's nerves? Or have you, is it brought you closer together? If you're feeling comfortable to answering that?

**Darcy Brossow 12:44**

Well with like a lot more time at home, he just does his own thing and I do my own thing. Because when you're that close together, you know, you're gonna butt heads sometimes, whether you like it or not. So it's kind of nice, just when you have like a nice house is where you can be like, okay, here's his space, here's my space. And, you know, when we want to hang out together or do things together, we can, but if, you know, if we have to like, okay, here's your corner, my corner, no touching.

**Karen Kilby 13:24**

Anything else you would like to add or say to the project here?

**Darcy Brossow 13:30**

Oh, some of like this, the people that actually got laid off actually earned more than the essential workers by working. Because they got for like, unemployment, the regular, like, unemployment, but each week they got \$600 on top of that, for me in like, one week, I make like \$1,000. Well, I get every two week paychecks so like that two weeks, I get \$1,000 some of these families were raking in over \$1,200 every two weeks. So that probably helped a lot with like businesses too.

**Karen Kilby 14:16**

Does it, does that upset you, or does it, are you happy about that?

**Darcy Brossow 14:21**

Well I'm happy that it got to like people that needed it. But I'm also upset with like, the people that are just sitting on unemployment, that don't do anything and they got them anyways. That's the only thing you know, it was like every government you have like, you know, its flaws. And that's one of like the bigger ones. I know my husband was joking around with me, he's like, You know what, I want to get laid off so I can make this much money.

**Karen Kilby** 14:48

Yeah, I'm sure that's what some people probably feel.

**Darcy Brossow** 14:51

Yeah. I know like at work, a lot of people were like, they wanted to get laid off so bad so they could actually get it, This extra money. And then not only, there's this one guy that worked in have like a whole week layoff, but they were sometimes having like, a Friday off here or there. This one guy put in unemployment for that Friday. He had like \$100 for that one day. But then he also got \$600 on top of that, just because he was unemployed for that day. Yeah. So in one day, you're lucky if you make like, \$150 he made \$700 for one day.

**Karen Kilby** 15:32

I did not know you could, they could actually do that.

**Darcy Brossow** 15:36

Yeah. Because if you're- sorry.

**Karen Kilby** 15:41

Go ahead.

**Darcy Brossow** 15:43

Oh, if your work voluntarily, like, lays you off for that. Even like for unemployment, as long as like, you know, you could work but your work says you can get off. They'll pay for that. And they kind of switched up the unemployment because they got rid of like, oh, you have to be unemployed for a whole week before they pay you. But since with like the COVID they changed it to like, having. Yeah,

**Karen Kilby** 16:16

I see. I believe that concludes our interview here. Unless you feel like you have anything else to say?

**Darcy Brossow** 16:32

No, I'm just kind of like a small town hick girl.

**Karen Kilby** 16:35

All right. Thank you Darcy.

**Darcy Brossow** 16:40

Yep.