

## Transcript of Oral History Interview with Caitlin Daugherty

**Interviewee:** Caitlin Daugherty

**Interviewer:** Maria Simpson

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**Abstract:** This is an interview with a college freshman and her experience graduating high school during a global pandemic. She shares her story on what it was like choosing a college, graduating, and being isolated from her friends.

**Maria Simpson 00:00**

Hi, can you please state your name and today's date?

**Caitlin Daugherty 00:03**

Hi, I'm Caitlin Doherty, and it is September 20, 2020. And it is currently 12pm.

**Maria Simpson 00:11**

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

**Caitlin Daugherty 00:15**

Yes, I do give consent to be interviewed for the COVID-19 archive project.

**Maria Simpson 00:20**

So, when was the first time you were aware COVID existed?

**Caitlin Daugherty 00:24**

Um, so I remember just seeing the news reports about Wu Han and China and their whole situation, because I'm a very avid news reader. So, I definitely kept up with that. And then in terms of like the United States, I remember hearing of a few isolated cases here and there. And then actually, pretty quickly into it entering the United States. I had a case 10 minutes from me at the hospital near us. We were one of the first places in the state of Illinois to get a case. So my community was made aware of it pretty quickly once it entered the United States.

**Maria Simpson 01:06**

Do you remember around what time of the year that was?

**Caitlin Daugherty 01:09**

It was probably the very beginning of March, when that happened.

**Maria Simpson 01:16**

Do you remember how you reacted to school shutting down or when it shut down and what your thoughts were?

**Caitlin Daugherty 01:21**

I remember, um, so the weeks leading up to like my school being shut down. I think two weeks prior, a private school near us got shut down. And so, for us, it just felt like a matter of time until we got shut down. My school is one of those schools where they do not shut down ever, unless they are given like a very valid reason, like snow days, cold days, anything of the sort. My school is very stingy on their shutdown policies. So, I remember, even the day before, like more and more schools were getting shut down. And then my school specifically, we got shut down on Friday, March 13. I remember very clearly, we got told the news that we were shutting down third period. So, we were all just sitting in class. And then an announcement got put on to the speaker saying that we would be closing a week early before spring break. And then we would have an additional week, possibly after. But that was never confirmed. It was at that moment, just a week, extra spring break for the most part. And I remember us being super excited. It was kind of terrible, because we were in such an awful situation. But to us, it literally just felt like Oh, well. Covid is probably just like a little case of the flu, you know where it'll be fine, in a week or two, and then we'll just be back to normal. So everything, it really was just a longer break to us at that point.

**Maria Simpson 02:49**

Did you have a moment when you realize that your school wasn't going to reopen? And how did you react to that?

**Caitlin Daugherty 02:54**

I say from the beginning, I did have a hunch that we were probably not going to be going back after we had an additional week after spring break added. But my school didn't say that we were going to be shut down for the entire year right away. What they did was that they kept extending it like every two weeks. And so, they'd be like, well, we'll reassess the situation in two weeks from now. And so now we're just gonna say two weeks at a time. And then I remember I'm probably at the beginning of April, they said May 1, we are planning to be back on May 1, which was also decision day. So that was something that us as seniors were, like really looking forward to. And I think, because they said we're coming back on, like such an important day and exciting day. Um, a lot of us really clung to that hope, even though it really wasn't feasible at the time. Um, so I think, on May 1, when we did not return, that's when we all for sure knew that there would be no way that we would come back, but my school never honestly, up until the very end never really said that we are going to be gone for the whole year, it was still like a push off thing. So, we held on hope for a long time.

**Maria Simpson 04:07**

A lot of senior traditions take place in the second semester senior year. And I know that as your school is online, the second semester, the majority of it, did you like integrate these online? or How did you do these?

**Caitlin Daugherty 04:18**

My school tried to do a few things here and there. I remember for like decision day, they had to submit things like wearing our shirts, and just showing off like where we were going. Um, but other than that, our school really didn't do much personally. Um, I kind of met up with a few friends on decision day, socially distance, of course and whatnot. But that was a really nice thing to be able to see each other to be able to celebrate our college decisions. Um, other than that, though, my school truly didn't have that many traditions. Decision day was kind of the really, really big one at my school. Um, so, that got a little skewed, but I was still able to spend it with my friends. Another one was senior ditch day. Yeah, which we normally have. Um, so that was kind of a big bummer to not be able to do that, because that was always something that I was super excited just to do, we live pretty close to a Six Flags amusement park. And so on ditch day, a lot of the kids would just go on up to six flags and spend the day like at the amusement park. Yeah. Um, so that was kind of a bummer that that couldn't happen, even though I guess every day became ditch day with online school. But it was still a bummer.

**Maria Simpson 05:37**

Um, did you see your friends frequently throughout lockdown? If so what precautions Do you take if you took any at all,

**Caitlin Daugherty 05:43**

Um, I really did not see many of my friends throughout the entirety of quarantine, I saw two of my closest girlfriends, every now and then probably once every two weeks. And what we do is we would go into a parking lot with our cars, and we'd each sit in our individual trunks, we'd probably be like 10-15 feet away from each other. And we would just talk we would talk for a few hours. And then that was kind of my interaction. When it got closer to like, mid May, kind of the beginning of June even. That's when I started to see people like a little bit more frequently. That's when I got to see a lot of my friends that I just hadn't seen during lockdown. But yeah, I really did not have that much social interaction during the whole thing.

**Maria Simpson 06:33**

How did you deal with the isolation that comes with being quarantined from COVID?

**Caitlin Daugherty 06:37**

I said, it was kind of a big bummer. But I didn't have a huge problem with it. It was more because like I have this thing with like, it's like the fear of missing out. Yeah, but the thing is, I didn't really have that in quarantine because there wasn't anything I was missing out of, because

everyone was just in locked down. So it wasn't that bad. For me. The only thing was just being like stuck with my family. Like definitely went crazy there. Um, but it truly wasn't the worst thing ever. I think it would have been much worse if it was like just me in lockdown.

**Maria Simpson 07:16**

Yeah. Um, did your school do graduation? Do you have any closure with high school in that sense?

**Caitlin Daugherty 07:23**

Oh, so my school we did a virtual graduation. But we did it in like a kind of like a hybrid version, I would say. So. Basically, over the course of two weeks, they had each of us actually come into school. And they would film us walking across our like auditorium stage in our cap and gown all dressed up. And then they would take some professional photos of us for graduation. And then on actual graduation day, what they did is they played back all of that footage of us walking across the stage, and all that which was really fun. Um, I think honestly, they did a really good job for the situation that we were in, because I had a class of about 600 to 800 kids. So socially, distance graduation was just not plausible for us. I mean, we were just too big for it. So they did a really nice job. And then we actually got to see each of us walking across the stage. Even if it was just recorded. We were alone at the time with no one in the stands. But um, it was nice. They did a good job.

**Maria Simpson 08:30**

Okay. And finally, your birthday was during the summer. How did you celebrate?

**Caitlin Daugherty 08:35**

Ah, so my birthday is August 12. So it was kind of the tail end of summer, we were all about to head off to college and all that. And actually, my town we throughout the whole COVID process did not have that many cases at all. So I actually was able to spend the day with two of my friends. It was pretty nice. Yeah, we just hung out on it. It was nice. It was almost refreshing. Like I didn't really feel like we were in COVID times for that day. But yeah, I know my town. Um, they did a good job of quarantine controlling the spread. So I was able to see people and it was nice.

**Maria Simpson 09:19**

Okay, well thank you so much for allowing me to interview you. Thank you.