

Transcript of Oral History Interview with Mike Streicher

Interviewee: Mike Streicher

Interviewer: Nathan Schenk

Date: April 17, 2022

Location: Erie County, New York

Abstract: Topics discussed include, working in the pandemic, the affect that covid had in the workplace and in Mike's own personal experience. Also, the protocols that his department took in response to covid and the vaccines, and how they affected the place of work with the ability to choose to get it or not.

Nathan Schenk 00:01

Hi, I'm doing an interview with my good friend who is worked in the government during the pandemic and this is for the Journal of the Plague Year [Archive]. So my first question for you is, What has been your experience with Covid?

Mike Streicher 00:16

Well, The constant threat of getting sick definitely weighed on people in the workplace. Every sniffle or cough you have puts you in a panic about whether your positive or just in your own head. I got sick once but thankfully my symptoms were mild and I didn't pass it to anyone else.

Nathan Schenk 00:32

Okay. How was working in at government job during a pandemic?

Mike Streicher 00:39

Working in the government during the pandemic has had its ups and downs. Working from home provided me with the ability to really zone in on tasks without the distractions of someone stopping by my desk to chat, a phone ringing or the copier going. People were much more difficult to reach though Many people I worked with had hybrid at-home/in-office work schedules and if you didn't have a personal number to contact them at you may not get to talk to them for extended amounts of time.

Nathan Schenk 01:10

And what changes occurred to make life harder for you in your job during the pandemic?

Mike Streicher 01:16

One huge limiting factor for me has been technological difficulties. If there was a server error or connectivity issues, it usually happened to a majority of users so you could be stuck without the ability to take care of specific tasks for hours at a time depending on how bad things were. Another difficulty was when dealing with businesses who were face to face interactions were necessary during the peak of the pandemic specifically. Every establishment had a unique

protocol for ensuring their staff's safety which is really good, but could make it difficult as an outside entity depending on where you were and who you had to speak with.

Nathan Schenk 02:00

Could you just elaborate on what the protocol might have been for your work?

Mike Streicher 02:05

Yeah so usually it involved filling out a forms saying you didn't have any symptoms in X amount of days. You would have to sign some paperwork, usually have your temperature read, stuff like that. And some people wouldn't let anyone in their buildings period and they'd have to either reschedule things or do it solely based on zoom calls or Skype voice video chats that sorta stuff.

Nathan Schenk 02:38

Alright. Since restrictions have eased has it been better or worse due the vaccine requirements within government? So like, cause people have a choice whether they want to get it or not. So how has that kinda affected the work place?

Mike Streicher 02:54

Personally, things have been easier as restrictions have eased, at least for me. You are still able to follow your own level of intensity for safety based on the information and guidelines from the Department of Health and CDC, but the broad restrictions from businesses are not as severe as they were earlier into the pandemic. Which makes dealing with other businesses in your district easier.

Nathan Schenk 03:19

Right, Right. Okay well thanks for doing this interview with me and I appreciate your contribution into the Plague Archive. It will really help a lot of people out in the future.

Mike Streicher 03:32

Thanks for having me.