

Transcript of Oral History Monologue with Winnie Tomsheck

Interviewee: Winnie Tomsheck

Interviewer: Self

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Transcriber: Lily Crigler

Abstract: Winnie Tomsheck answers questions about life during the COVID-19 pandemic. Winnie discusses a variety of topics such as family life, online school, and the response to COVID-19 by the local and federal governments.

Winnie Tomsheck 00:05

Hi, my name is Winnie Tomsheck, and this is my COVID-19 oral history object. So the time and date, it is April 17th, 12:35. And what is my name? My name is Winnie Tomsheck. And what are the primary things you do on a day-to-day basis? So on a day to day basis, I attend classes at my college at St. Mary's College, which is in northern Indiana. After my classes, I go to softball practice, or sometimes I have games, but my day-today life consists of online school, going to classes, going to practice and doing homework and such.

Winnie Tomsheck 00:55

Where do you live, and what is it like to live there? I currently live on my college campus. And... but during like the nonschool times, I live in Glenview, Illinois, which is where my family lives, and I live with my family. It's a nice suburb, it's 10 minutes north of Chicago, and it's I would say, like a typical suburb.

Winnie Tomsheck 01:24

So what, when you first kind of thought COVID-19, what were your thoughts about it? How have your thoughts changed since? When I first learned about COVID-19, I was at college, and it was the beginning of my second semester. We all thought it was no big deal, it was gonna go away quickly. We even joked about it in the athletic training room. My thoughts on COVID have completely changed since, I know how serious it is, and I know how horrible it can be and how it can affect your life and the people around you.

Winnie Tomsheck 02:06

What issues have most concerns you about the COVID-19 pandemic? I've been most concerned about my grandparents and other family members who are high risk and having them stay healthy. I also have a lot of family in the medical field and on the frontlines, I was concerned for them and their safety. In general, it concerned me when people didn't follow the COVID guidelines and like putting on a mask and things like that, because I felt like it was the most basic thing to do to help other people, so those are my concerns.

Winnie Tomsheck 02:44

Employment: has COVID-19 affected your job and what ways? So currently on campus, I do not have a job. However, during the summer, I have a job. I am a head coach for a travel softball team. And, I mean, it hasn't affected my job in the sense that I still had a job this summer during COVID. However, like different little things have changed about my job, I have way more responsibility in making sure that all my athletes are safe and spectators are safe. So I'm in charge of like sanitizing all the equipment and keeping track of like temperatures and who's got practice, when are the practice and just making sure everyone's safe, and the teams we play and making sure they're safe, so all of that, so it's just like added responsibility onto my job.

Winnie Tomsheck 03:42

Has COVID-19 changed your employment status, in what ways? So it has not affected my employment status. However, it has made it more difficult for me to find jobs, specifically like this summer, like not a lot of people are looking to hire, and if they are looking to hire, they're hiring people they have in the past for safety reasons, I guess and just because they know them, but yeah.

Winnie Tomsheck 04:10

What concerns do you have about the effects of COVID-19 on your employment and the economy more broadly? I guess I just wonder how it will affect me in the future. I go out into the workforce New Year, and I plan on being a high school history teacher, and I guess I just am curious and hope that it doesn't affect me in a negative way. I've heard that there's actually a lot of jobs for teachers right now because a lot of teachers have retired, so hopefully that's the case.

Winnie Tomsheck 04:44

Has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the employment of people you know? No, and yes. Not a lot. It hasn't really affected my... both my parents had to work from home for a month. And like little things about their job changed in terms of like wearing masks and like sanitizing, stuff like that, but after that month, my parents were back in person. They're both considered to be essential workers. So my parents were lucky enough to have jobs during the pandemic. So, no, not a lot of people I know have been affected employment-wise. However, there have been a lot, I know a lot of people who their family has been affected by it.

Winnie Tomsheck 05:31

Family and households: how has COVID-19 affected you and your family's day-to-day activities? So currently, like I said, I am, I am on a college campus, so I'm not with my family currently. However, we were sent home at the beginning of the pandemic to be with our family, and so I can talk about that time. So when you initially got sent home, how does it affect my day-to-day activity? I spent a lot of time online taking online classes, both of my brothers had online school, so it was just a lot of like, we were all in our separate rooms, doing our online school work, would come down to meals, and they kind of like clean up a little bit and then go back to our schoolwork. We spent a lot of time with each other, though, like in the evenings as a family as a whole. So that's how it affected my day-to-day activities.

Winnie Tomsheck 06:30

How are you managing day-to-day activities in your household? So when I was home, like I said, I was managing my household activities pretty well. I was, like I said, doing online school every day. I found myself online in front of a screen for very long, but yeah, I was able to maintain it. Yeah.

Winnie Tomsheck 06:55

So how has the COVID-19 outbreak affected how you associate and communicate with friends and family, in what ways? So I definitely hung out with my family more during the pandemic, and when it initially hit. In terms of communicating with my friends, I did a lot more of that, we FaceTimed a lot more because you couldn't see each other at school because we were just trying to stay within our own bubble, and we didn't want to put other people at risk. So definitely FaceTiming more. But currently, while I'm at school, I probably talked to my family the same amount I did before the pandemic while at school, and I communicate with my friends the same when I am at school because I see them now, and they're part of my family unit.

Winnie Tomsheck 07:43

What are the biggest challenges you have faced during the COVID-19 outbreak? The biggest challenges I faced during the COVID-19 outbreak have been school-related. Since COVID-19, I feel that like school has been more challenging for me. I find myself more stressed out and busier than normal. I go through these like very busy weeks to like a little bit of a break and then busy again, and it's just like really not good for my mental health. So in addition to school, like mental health has been a huge challenge for me. And finding like motivation, like there was a huge lack of motivation, so that's been a challenge.

Winnie Tomsheck 08:20

What have you, your family, and friends done for reaction during COVID-19? Well, we, me and my family went on walks, more like family walks. We did like family workouts together. We also had like a bonfire every night, every Friday night, I mean, with our nextdoor neighbors who were in our bubble. And we did, we watched a lot of TV shows together, we watched Tiger King together when that like came out in the spring. And then we also like watched Below Deck together, and then we watched a lot of TV shows together and did a lot more stuff together with my family. Yeah, me and my friends at home went on a lot more walks because like that's just like the safest place or was the safest, like activity to do during the pandemic.

Winnie Tomsheck 09:18

Community: how has COVID-19 outbreak affected your community? So I have a bunch of different communities. So my community of like my college campus and my college, we were sent home while we're on spring break. And when we returned in the fall, there were a lot more rules regarding COVID, and I would like to say that we came together as a campus to follow these rules and regulations, so I

would say that yeah, COVID has really affected our community. We were sent home, we have a bunch of new rules and guidelines you have to follow, but I would also say that in a positive outlook it brought us together... Another community I'm a part of is the athletic community on my college campus because I do play softball here. And so we were sent home on our spring break trip for softball because of COVID, and our season was canceled last spring. This season, we have a bunch of new regulations and changes for playing. For example, we're on the playing teams in our conference, and we get COVID tested before every game, and if we don't have games that week, we get tested minimum two times a week. We also have to get our temperature checked before every practice and fill out a survey form about our symptoms, how we're feeling that kind of thing. Lastly, we're limited to who can watch our games, so I am only allowed like two spectators to come watch me play, and they have to be immediate family. As a whole, our community of athletics, I think we're just really appreciative of the season that we have. And it made us realize and not take for granted, like the practices that we have, again, it might seem long and tiresome. I think we're all just happy to kind of be there. That's how it affected that community.

Winnie Tomsheck 11:18

How are people around you responding to the COVID-19 pandemic? So everyone that I know around me has responded by following the guidelines of COVID-19, and they've been very respectful of the different guidelines there are. I think that a lot of us are at a point where we're just looking for a little bit of normalcy back into our lives. But again, I would say the people that I know, responded, great, we responded by following guidelines and maintaining social distancing and such, so... that's how people I know responded.

Winnie Tomsheck 11:58

Have you seen the people around you change their opinions or day-to-day activities or relationships, in response to the pandemic? I would say that the people around me, since the pandemic, are more cautious about like, where we're going, who we're going out with, and who we're seeing. People that I know have also been more considerate. If you like, for example, explain that, like you can't do something or you feel uncomfortable because of something related to COVID-19, I found people are more considerate and understanding, which is nice. In terms of day-to-day activities, like I said, I am a student, so pretty much everyone around me has the same day-to-day activities. We go to classes online, we get meals, and kind of just stay around in doing that same thing. Relationships, again, more respectful of each other and such, so yeah.

Winnie Tomsheck 13:04

Self isolation and flattening the curve have been two key ideas that have emerged during the pandemic, how have you and your family, friends and community responded to requests to self isolate and flatten the curve? So my family has responded by following those regulations surrounding the guidelines. We have family members that are high risk and that are frontline workers, so we take the guidelines pretty seriously and like have taken it pretty seriously. I would say that my friends have also done the same,

and my community, too, that we follow the community. That the community here definitely taking it as seriously as possible. My college campus definitely taking it very seriously with our rules about how many people can be in classrooms with different times the classes are so that were spaced out and not all with each other. The dining room guidelines and such. A lot of my friends, all my friends are very respectful of the guidelines and have taken them seriously.

Winnie Tomsheck 14:02

What has, sorry, has COVID-19 changed your relationship with family, friends and community, in what ways? I would say that COVID-19 has brought me closer to my friends and family and community. It made me appreciate them more, however, I don't really think there's been some major changes in these relationships.

Winnie Tomsheck 14:20

Has, have you or anybody you know gotten sick during the COVID-19 outbreak? Yes. Both me and my dad got COVID. We both had mild cases; we got them after, we got them at the start start of 2021 in January and literally, I think January cycled in when we got it. We are tested positive June 2nd, I mean January 2nd of 2021, so we got to kind of late. That being said we knew how to handle it. We were lucky enough that, during when we had gotten it, my grandparents, who live in the same town as I do, were at their condo in Florida, so their townhouse was open, like no one was living there, so my family sent me my dad there until we recovered. But yeah, both had cases, my dad still can't taste and smell, but besides that, we are all good.

Winnie Tomsheck 14:20

So what has been your experience in responding to the outbreak? I mean, like my family and I responded in the way that everyone else did. I'm doing what I can to protect myself and others. I mean, the pandemic is really frustrating, and I guess that's how you kind of feel like you're stuck in this like, loop. But it means, I think I've responded pretty well.

Winnie Tomsheck 15:56

In what ways do you think COVID-19 is affecting people's mental or physical health? I think COVID-19 has a huge impact on, on mental health, and I think it's even spotlighted the issue of mental health. As a future teacher, we've discussed a lot of ways that COVID-19 has been impacted students, and both of my brothers are in high school, so I can see how it's affecting their mental health, and it has taken a huge toll. I mean, it's taken a huge toll on my mental health, too. I feel like a lot of the times during this pandemic, you find a lack of motivation, and it can be very frustrating. And you find yourself in a rut and just with all this isolation and the lack of human interaction, I think it can be very hard. So yeah, I think it's had a huge impact on mental health, huge.

Winnie Tomsheck 16:55

Information: what has, had been your primary sources of news during pandemic? David Muir on ABC News. My family watched David Muir every night. Yeah. Has your news source changed during the course of the pandemic? No, we've always watched ABC World News. However, maybe we watched it more frequently as a family, like my parents watch it every night, but I think we got together as a family, we would watch it more just so you would know what's going on in the world because you're not actually out in the world, so yeah.

Winnie Tomsheck 17:30

What do you think are important issues that the media is or is not covering? So during this pandemic, the media has done a lot of coverage on Black Lives Matter movement, and the protests that come with it. I think that's been great. They've also had a lot of coverage on the riots on the Capitol Building and election. Again, great. I think that the media has kind of, or like mainstream media has lacked from reporting on the Asian hate that is going on. There's been a lot of Asian hate in response to the pandemic, and I think that the media has not covered that enough.

Winnie Tomsheck 18:10

Government: how have municipal leaders and government officials in your community responded to the outbreak? So in my town, Glenview, um, in the northern suburbs of Chicago, and in Chicago, there was a huge outbreak, so there's a lot of, we had a huge outbreak, like it was a weird hotspot area. So my local officials, Glenview followed all the CDC guidelines kind of right from the beginning. We, when the mask mandate went into effect, we had the mask mandate. When indoor dining closed, when outdoor dining, when all dining closed, like we did there, we were there. When we reopened, it was reopening when the majority of the country was, was reopening, and so on, and following the how many people and the distance, and so on has been the same. Illinois, in general has been very, has been the same way, stricter on some of their guidelines in the sense of them loosening them as time has gone by. And they've been a little slow at the beginning at getting the vaccine out, but they're doing great, now. People are getting the vaccine if you need it, and that's great.

Winnie Tomsheck 19:22

Do you have any thoughts on how local, state, or federal leaders have responded to the crisis? I think that how we initially as a nation responded, I think we responded too late. I think we've laid it off as a joke, kind of, and I think that affected how seriously we took it. I think that there probably needed to be more federal like across the board regulation, so we could have cut the spread of COVID. However, I think the new administration is doing a great job of distributing the vaccines and giving this, getting those stimulus checks out to those who need it,

Winnie Tomsheck 20:01

The future: has you experienced transformed how you think about your family, friends and community, in what ways? Yeah, I think that it is affected how I think about my family my friends. I definitely don't take anything for granted, and I appreciate them more than I did before because they have been out of

reach for me, and they've done, someone I can, people that I can confide into. And it just makes me, just made me realize how much I appreciate them and everything they do for me, and I appreciate that they're there. And yeah, especially considering how many lives were lost and like, you don't know who's next, and it can happen to anyone. This has definitely made me realize and made me appreciate them more, and I don't take them for granted. Knowing what you know now, what do you think that individuals, communities, and government need to keep in mind for the future? Um, I think government-wise, we just need to prepare for the unthinkable and how to plan and know how to respond. I think... yeah, you know how to respond and take things more seriously when things happen and respect people's concern, so yeah.