

DC Oral History, 2020/04/01

Abstract: DC grew up in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, and that is where he currently resides. He has had a number of different jobs throughout his lifetime, but currently works in sales. He is an avid Pittsburgh sports fan and has been with his longtime partner DH for over twenty-five years. DC's life has been filled with many wondrous experiences from moving to Florida, travelling the United States, and living through 9/11. In this interview, DC details his experience living through the pandemic, safety precautions he is taking, the impact on the life of a small town, and many other intriguing experiences.

AH: Hey, how are you doing, DC?

DC: I'm well. How are you doing?

AH: I'm good. I just wanted to reiterate that we're going to be going over and doing a public history interview specifically about the coronavirus how it's affecting your life and the people around you. It is March 1st or April 1st, 2020. So as long as you are good to go, I am set up to record and I can just start asking the questions that's okay with you?

DC: Good by me.

AH: So, the first question that I have for you is what do you know about the coronavirus? This could be how it's spread, if its mutated, how many people it's affected, particularly in the United States. So what all do you know about it?

DC: Well, I know that a week ago—less than a week ago—we reached the milestone of a hundred people dying, and as of today, we're at a thousand people so it only took I think it only took three days to go from 100 to a thousand people who have passed away. It's a very sad situation.

But the coronavirus—again I might know a little bit more than, than most folks about these types of viruses because the field I work in—I work for company by the name of the Enviro-Master Services. We do restroom hygiene. We sanitize germicide disinfectors restrooms, and I'm a salesman for that. I don't do the actual work, but I know exactly what takes place in there that I can explain it to people. And, well, the restroom is one of the places where most germs hangout. This germ is quite different it can be passed on by touch, by sneezing. Are you touching something somebody touched, you know, it—it'll just transfer right over like that stainless steel?

It has its longest life there. I think it's like two or three days, and I think it's a few hours on cardboard. So, it's, it's quite a strong virus, and, uh... it really harms a lot of people.

The.. It started out, we're a little bit in behind the 8-ball in my opinion because well we, we didn't have all of the information at the very beginning to, to stop it. The people at the top of it didn't move fast enough because they really didn't believe it was anything that was going to be harmful to us. They thought it would go away. That it would dissipate in a day or two. Oh, here we are for 5 weeks since we were actually notified about it. It's been our government's been notified by since around January 2nd, but they did nothing to start to move forward with getting any of the items that we need to combat this stuff. But, I know that it makes people very ill very quickly and 14 days about the turnaround From what I see on TV, you're inside or passed away or you're, you're over it by that stream of it. So, it's a very telling type of disease that kills very rapidly, indiscriminately. It doesn't matter where you're at all across the United States. It just so happened it started in the hub of New York and from there, Detroit, Florida, Pennsylvania. And just the list goes on and on and on and on.

At the places Washington, the state of Washington, their governor did fantastic with it. They were one of the places, it was a quick epicenter they thought, and they quelled it by putting people, sequestering them very quickly and stopping it from spreading. They were very quick at it, very good. Same thing with California. They're having a great deal of success with it even though they've had a lot of deaths, but it's maybe like the second or third largest state in our country. So, they're bound to have more deaths than any other place. Just like, like New York leading the way at the Hub. They are really close together there, and spreads it like wildfire.

AH: Well, it definitely, definitely does. Um, so you'd mentioned that there, what you have been hearing about it is that there is some government inaction, that this was viewed as a hoax.

DC: That's right.

AH: In light of all of that, how have you been preparing, and how have you seen the other people reacting to this either in the community or even just on television?

DC: Well, I started preparing over a month ago. Oh, well over a little over a month maybe month-and-a-half ago. I started stocking food and stuff like that so that I wasn't going to be in a position where I had to worry about getting that most valuable commodity toilet paper. I've got plenty of that. I got food. I bought food for a month. It's going to probably going to fall short of about 2 weeks, and I'll have to go back out because I've only bought enough for a month. That's

how long they said we would down and out. Looks more like a month and a half before things are going to start happening, but I've got, I've got enough food for more weeks. I eat pretty good. I have breakfast. I have lunch. I have dinner. Every once in a while, I treat myself. Today went out for wings. There was nobody at the place when I went in. It's a, a small club that I try to support because they have wings on Friday or on Wednesday so I eat their wings and a take care giving them a little bit of money. But what was the other part of that question? About how other people are reacting? Was that what you were asking?

AH: Yeah, what have you seen in the media with how other people are reacting try and fight this? And if you need anything special like wearing gloves?

DC: Okay, I go out. I think I have gloves in my car and stuff like that I put the gloves on whenever I go out anything I touch. Once I go into a place and come back out, I take the gloves off while I'm in the right after I get out of the store and I throw them away or take with me if there's no place to deposit them. Then, I put clean gloves on. When I get in my car, I have a product from work that I kind of get lucky with. It kills the coronavirus. It only lasts about three days has a 3-day residual, but I go around, and I spray my, my house when somebody happens to pop in that I don't really know where they've been or what they've touched then go around and spread. I spray my car after I get done using it. I do things like that. I have my mask on. I've had my mask on. Well I've been, I don't breathe very well and stuff like that. It's been a lot of colds and flu so I had my mask on for that purpose where I was going, and I had to take care of everything. I want to take my gloves off I know the proper way to take one glove off. You hold it in your fist to take the other one off and it stays inside. You tie the glove off and throw it away so nobody else can get contaminated with the gloves that you're using because all the contaminated stuff is on the inside if it may be contaminated. I do little things like that. I'm prepared.

I'm coming down to about two weeks be able, going to have to go shopping which is not a fun time but it's what I have to do I think. But mostly stuck in the house doing housework. Doing things around the house to keep busy. Making sure that, uh, everything stays safe. Some of the things I noticed around me, I've got people that live across the street from me almost on a nightly basis. They have 20, 30 people over there are having a party drinking beer and enjoying themselves which is fine by me. It's just that I worry about other people getting sick also because that's how it gets. You aren't supposed to have a lot of people around you. It's just, it's not a good way to do it, but the those are some of the things that I see going on around me as we go.

AH: That's certainly interesting. Particularly with the different reactions of different governors from all 50 states...

DC: Oh, yeah.

AH: Since you are actually are living in Pennsylvania right now, and I'm doing this interview from Ohio, I know that at least some of the things that Ohio is doing. What was Pennsylvania's reaction to the coronavirus, and how did that affect your preparation how has that affected you in the past couple weeks?

DC: Well, our governor he, uh...he didn't do a complete shutdown right away. He only, he only requested that you, you stay at home. Now, we're on mandatory shutdown now but beginning it was do this you know you got to do is shut down. That's about when I got laid off is whatever they said look we're shutting my mainstays—bars and restaurants—for work, and they shut all those down, and when they shut them down well that means I'm out of work because I really have no place to, to go to sell my wares there's other places that use it, but they're not tenable as bars and restaurants and stuff like that. So, it's...it's a lot easier whenever you have those and, and they're open. So, that is probably going to affect me in the future. On what we do and how we do it even if I do get called back at, and I believe I will, but you never know until it happens. The things that, ... I lost my train of thought. I apologize.

AH: That's okay! I was just wondering, the reaction for, I believe it's Governor Wolf, with you said that the lockdown has now happened. How long is that been going on?

DC: That, that says it's only been about a week but a little less than a week, but it's kind of like they went into a lockdown. Instead of, instead of asking to stay at home or telling you to stay at home. They want everybody to stay right there and not, not go out. Not do anything, and you're only allowed to go out for the necessities like food and stuff like that. The restaurants are on very short life. I think they like most of the restaurants are opening up at 11, and they're closing at 6. So, if you aren't Johnny on the spot you might not get any food if you eat out. Me, I secured enough food that that I eat in.

So, the, uh, our governor is doing all the things necessary: trying to get the stockpile specifically is ventilators and stuff like that. our federal government who usually takes charge like they did at 9/11, and they would do everything and then distributed to the states so that they were doing bulk buys and no one would outbid the United States for things. Uh, but it's kind of a cluster. All the states are trying to buy the exact same thing and all they've done is running up the price.

Whereas if the federal government stepped in and said, "I'm going to buy everything," they couldn't run up the price. Because the federal government will be buying for all 50 states, and there's nobody I don't believe anybody in the world could compete with that, and that would actually bring the price down. But these folks think it's a good thing to have them emptying the coffers of the states by continuously raising the prices of stuff we need like gas. Excuse me. Not gas masks. The 94 mask. They have a number for the masks, and It's a 94, and it's the type they need for...for nurses and doctors when you're treating these patients and they didn't have nearly enough. They're not producing them in the United States. We're at the hands of China. These ventilators, a week ago they finally made some of the car manufacturers flip over and, and start making these ventilators that we need by the hundreds of thousands and they just, we don't have them.

I read today, there's a lady's name is Kay Ivey, Alabama governor who made the statement that people with handicap, that are handicapped will not get ventilators. So, she's already saying certain people will have to die because of any afflictions that they have. And, not being political, but the Republicans are the ones they don't like abortion because it's killing people. I don't know. I'm pretty sure this is going to do the same thing. If they don't allow somebody that's handicapped to have a ventilator and they can't breathe, I'm pretty sure they're going to die.

That sounds like stuff World War 2 Nazis used to do the people. Not just handicapped people, to all people, and that's what they're doing in Alabama. It's a pretty unkind thing. We don't have enough ventilators. We don't have enough gloves. We don't have enough of what they call PPE which is personal protection equipment face masks and stuff like that. The suits that they put on that viruses won't be able to penetrate so that these people can continue, the people on the front lines the doctors and the nurses and stuff like, that'll be able to continue to perform their duties and saving lives and things that they do because these people are the true heroes in this is war against us. I've seen some place the other day that 61 doctors already passed because of coronavirus. That means these folks are working through getting this stuff all because they don't have the proper equipment to protect themselves and those around them who are helping them, using the same mask for, for 5 days, staying in the same protective gear three or four days, is just unbelievable. And, then, our president said they must be selling it out the back door. They're only supposed to use these things once per patient and then move on and put other ones on. They're no longer ready because you can contaminate somebody who doesn't have coronavirus if you happen to walk up on them because they create whatever somebody comes into the hospital, as they're saying on the television, some people these people are assumed to have coronavirus, virus unless proven otherwise. So, you could go in with a heart attack and they're still going to think you have coronavirus first foremost above everything that way because they can't afford to take the chance that you have it even though you are having a heart attack. Even if that's what caused the heart attack. But, these are some of the things that they're trying to work on to, to get. And I see the Strategic National stockpile is nearly depleted. How can this happen? How can this happen?

AH: [begins to speak]

DC: Go ahead.

AH: It's definitely, um, an issue that everyone is facing and at this point. One of the other issues that you had brought up, actually was a shortage on toilet paper, a shortage on food. one of the things that I am curious about is since you were able to get roughly a month supply of food what did you make?

DC: Oh! I got, uh, I got one of my favorite foods. I only eat it once a year because of the amount of salt that's in it. But, I love sauerkraut and kielbasa. I mean, I just I just love it. When I make it I go to Sam's Club and they got these, uh, 1 pound jars of, I think I think it's 5 pound, this huge jar of sauerkraut, and I cook up. Well, first I prep it. I try to get as much salt out of it as I can. I rinse it three times and on the last time, I press it, I press it hard about next to the last time I press it pretty hard trying to get everything out that I figure a training again with the water and trying rinse more of it out. And I get a great deal of the salt out. And I also soak the kielbasa and I also soak it so long that the casing actually comes off really easy and that's another thing I like I get rid of the casing just to meet this in there. I'm hypoglycemic. I don't eat bread and I got to be careful about eating sugar so I don't eat bread but I make this kielbasa and sauerkraut, and I eat it. That usually takes me about a week to eat all the kielbasa and sauerkraut.

It is, when I get it all done with one of the things I like to do is I like spicy food. So, I get the cayenne pepper, jalapeno, this other red sauce that I put on there that has a Mexican on it. It, it's quite, quite a bit of heat in it. And I mix this stuff up and I usually end up eating that for about a week. And I have I have enough for lunch tomorrow and I'll have eating all that by then. By the way I also put that I get to 2 pound packages of kielbasa. I buy 5 of those. So I ate in about 5 days I ate 10 pound of Kielbasa and a big jar of sauerkraut.

I'm going to be starting in on some tuna noodle casserole probably starting tomorrow start make some of that but I won't, I won't eat that every day. Just once or twice and that's all I'll make of that. Then for a while and I just I like it but it isn't it isn't like my sauerkraut and kielbasa. I kind of go overboard with that because I don't get it very much but it's good for you that's the kind of cleaned everything out and makes you squeaky.

AH: Well, thank you for that. I was only just wondering like what people are deciding to cook particularly during a pandemic.

DC: I had also had like, like soup here. I've got the chicken and noodle soup some clam chowder I had for lunch today at a pizza place up around the corner a little bit of that stuff today. I had wings from a place down the road side so I kind of get around a little bit eating different things. I just don't pile up on it, but trust me when I eat but sauerkraut and kielbasa, I can eat that stuff still comes out my ears.

AH: Well, thank you again. One of the other questions I have for you is a two-part question. So the first part of it is: how do you think this pandemic will change society? And the second part of it is what will stay the same in the future?

DC: Well, it's already changed society. In our generation, our lifetime I think the last time where we had to stay in our homes was the Spanish Flu pandemic. I think it was 1815 or something like that. 1915 somewhere around in there? Anyways, staying at home and not doing anything is find it difficult to start to climb the walls. Really, talking on the phone is nice with people but the kind of person I like to get a hug and give kisses sometimes because well you got to show your love for your friends and the people you love. And I like talking to people. I'm an outgoing kind of person. I see somebody stranger or not I always like to say hello to him. Ask them how their day's going stuff like that. Most of the time they, they give you a uh-huh and keep on moving or sometimes people actually tell you they're having a nice day or it's pretty tough day or whatever they at least have something to say. Those are the kind of things that I that I like about these type of things.

It's the way it was back whenever, and 9/11, I was around for that one there, and we were attacked by an outside entity and it kind of brought everybody together fighting for one common cause. It's kind of like doing the same thing because this virus, any virus doesn't know anything about borders or anything like that. It'll, it'll take you out and federal government didn't react too well to it. I think they wanted to change and not become reactionary. I don't know, that's not the only thing I can think of, but they should have been out front of this out buying stuff whenever they knew it was going to happen, and they got caught with their shorts down, and it's just they made it ten times worse than it should. I saw here the other day three or four days ago we reached a hundred people had passed away. Milestone today we reached a thousand three days later. Incredible. 3 days from now that means maybe even 10,000. It's amazing. It's scary, and it's not they way it's supposed to be they're not, not reacting properly. I hope those things change.

Things that are staying the same. I live in a small community. I'm pretty sure we'll all stick together and do the things that we need to do in make sure many people that are near and dear to us come out of this healthy. I don't know about the wealthy and wise because as I seen on TV and talked about back in the Depression, last time we were in a depression the 30s stock market crashed and it was like 10 to 12% of the country was out of work. Here, today, unemployment puts his data is an approximately 23% unemployment and it's only going to go up because more people every, every week or now getting laid off. It's just a trickle-down effect. If people cannot buy stuff, and they only thing they're buying is food. If you're only buying food and essentials, you're not keeping a whole lot of people at work. You're not buying gas. You're not are you still buy a little bit of gas, but you're not you're not going little convenience stores. You're not going to the bars or restaurants or any place else in fact in that kind of like is going to change a lot of things because well a lot of these places aren't going to be able to come back.

For some places like in small towns like I live in, it could really be devastating to our business district, as small as it is, it could be devastating and take a lot of people out because, eh, like any business, especially small business, you don't make that enormous amount of money that the larger corporations do. They still have the same bills and everything else is everybody does they carry more of a burden. So, I just hope that nothing changes there, and all of our businesses come back, but if it doesn't that would be a particularly difficult for or our city because, well, it was bad enough before this and it'll even be worse because of this. Those are some of the things that I see happening and some of the things staying the same.

AH: One of those things I also wanted to ask you just to follow up with that is what should Americans in particular take away from the situation that we are all in?

DC: Hopefully, some of the things he'll take away is personal hygiene. Make your personal hygiene better. Pay attention when somebody says something like this is coming your way. Actually, go ahead and start preparing for it before it needs to happen. Take care of your loved ones keep them close even people you don't care that much for you got to care a little bit about them. But those things there I hope they get better at or we get better at. I should include everybody in that because you have somebody close to pass away it's a very difficult thing. My parents have passed away here, shortly, a little while back. It's a very difficult thing very tough to go through. They've been there throughout your full life and then all of a sudden, they're gone. So very difficult thing in there. Right now, there's a thousand people who their families are going through that exact same issue. They lost somebody who they love. Perhaps, the breadwinner. What are you going to do then? The person who's the head of your family is no longer there as they passed away. What do you do? A lot of people in America I didn't realize they just their paycheck to paycheck out of people and when they don't get that paycheck, things get very difficult.

Some of the things that I learned a long time ago. I moved away from home, I don't know. I was in my early twenties. Well, for a while I can tell you that wasn't a lot of food coming my way and things like that. There's a lot of things that you have to do whenever you don't have money coming in, and you have to learn to adapt to your situation, and sometimes there is a lot of food around. It gets scary. It gets you in shape rather quickly for all the wrong reasons. When you make it through when you come out on the other end it makes you a better person. You know whatever it takes to get tough you know you're going to make it through because your battle tested and ready for what's taking place. And you're going to you're going to make it through, but this stuff here, it can kill you. It's very difficult. It's scary because of that. But you just got to keep moving forward with the grace of God in the things you do properly and don't make any mistakes because it won't forgive you.

The stuff stays on metal for three days like that. People touch boxes and stuff like that it's there for a few hours. That's scary stuff because in today's society we use plastic to put our food in that comes wrapped up. It's like taking your own life eating out. Your own life is in other peoples' hands so to speak. But, those are changes, scary changes. Those are some of the things I have gone through.

AH: I want to touch on something you actually just said because this has been something that's been in the media and it sounds like you've been following this pretty closely. There have been reports of people just simply ignoring the stay-at-home notices, different cities are not necessarily follow the guidelines that have come out. What is your reaction to that?

DC: Well this lesson isn't learned and given back to you to keep moving forward. We have, to mention some places, Florida just went on lockdown, but they are a month into this and they just went into lockdown. They had spring break down there. Mardi Gras. New Orleans. That's one of the places where they had a Mardi Gras and it's now known as an epicenter, epicenter because it's a small class major city. They are now one of the places that has a great deal of this there. Their people are extremely sick in that area, and there's a lot of them all because they had Mardi Gras and they had people come in. They didn't heed the warning. I have people across the street from where I live. They have been partying almost every night drinking beer having a good time. Well, I can understand that, but I also, I don't know, getting together with my friends and having a beer isn't worth dying over. That's my opinion. But those folks in Florida had spring break down there, and it's just insane how many people are going to get sick down there just because of that. There's a lot of elderly that live there and when elderly get this, they have no chance. They're just dead. It's, it's not a not a nice thing. I don't like seeing when they say don't do this. I know it's very difficult to have somebody tell you not to do something specially in a free society

as we are, but sometimes you just got to listen and do what they tell you because the scientists know best. Those are the things that I see there. Did I cover your point?

AH: Yes, you did. Absolutely. You've touched on this basically throughout the entire interview, but it is one of the questions and if you want to touch on a little more that would be great. The last question I think I have for you is what other crises have you experienced and how did they affect you?

DC: Well, 9/11 was very sobering. It, uh, in a moment it brought everybody in America together one common cause as if we could have decisively found the group that did it. I think we would have annihilate them as a people. What I remember on that day, I remember exactly where I was, what I was doing, and everything. When the first plane crashed, and I happened to be in Bellevue which is the neighborhood near here, I watched it in a municipality garage on a black-and-white TV. Watching the planes run into the tower and it was a very sobering kind of thing and very scary because one of the planes happened to wreck or end up crashing. The heroes on that plane didn't let them get to their main objective. They got up and made their moves to make that plane crashed into what they wanted to. It ended up in Shanksville. There's a memorial for those folks right now. But it was one of the planes that was over our area whenever it did crash. Those are very sobering moments for that and do something that brought together.

And, also, something I remember that just popped into my head, they had on TV today, they had a line in our local area right here on national news. Which we don't get on national news because we don't do anything national here. But, anyways, there was almost two or three mile long line of cars. There was a food pantry that opened up and they were fixing food, giving food and canned goods and stuff like that to people. This line was two or three miles long. Them just handing out food to people. If that isn't moving, nothing is. I mean that's Americans being Americans and doing everything they can make life easier for everybody else.

Whenever I was younger in Florida, those are some personal trials and tribulations that I went through. Not having enough food. God bless, I had friends down there. I never had to sleep out there underneath the stars because I did but I didn't want to. I did go camping and sleep out underneath the stars, but I never was in a position where I had to sleep outside because I had friends there that we took care of each other. But, there was more than one or two days that I went without food. But that's okay. Life is good. They're experiences that make you stronger. What don't kill you makes you stronger, and that's the same thing that holds true with this coronavirus, if it happens, again in our lifetime. I'm pretty sure that we won't as a people—maybe our government might, I hope not, maybe they might learn a lesson, too—but I know the people who learned the lesson because the last time we had one of these was over a hundred years ago. So, you know, you kind of lose all of the things you should do when it's a hundred

years because there's nobody there very few people that are still around that would remember the Spanish Flu. I just know by people on the TV talking about it. But, those are some of the things I've experienced.

AH: Thank you for everything, and thank you for letting me interview you. I really appreciate your perspective on this like we can both agree on this is something is definitely unprecedented in my lifetime. And I appreciate you taking the time to go through this with me and that you're willing to add your voice to our history efforts here.

DC: Well, thank you for asking me. I appreciate that.

AH: Alright, well, you have a great rest of your day, and I hope you enjoyed the wings.

DC: I did. They were quite good. Thank you.

AH: Well, you take care and stay safe.

DC: Yes, sir. Bye, now.

AH: Buh, bye.

Transcribed by Ashley Hampton