

## **Transcript of Interview with Henry Wathan by Jacob Gerin**

**Interviewee:** Henry Wathan

**Interviewer:** Jacob Gerin

**Date:** 10/04/2020

**Location (Interviewee):** Copley, Ohio

**Location (Interviewer):** Copley, Ohio

**Transcriber:** Jacob Gerin

**Abstract:** This interview was recorded as part of The Covid 19 Oral History Project, a project of the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute associated with The Journal of a Plague Year: A Covid 19 Archive. This interview was conducted through the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of credit for HIST3158 under the supervision of Dr. Rebecca S. Wingo.

**Jacob Gerin 0:00**

All right. My name is Jacob Gerin. I am here with Henry Wathan. The date is October 4, and the time is 2:51. We are in Copley, Ohio. Henry Wathan, I want to briefly review the informed consent and deed of gift document that you signed. This interview is for COVID-19 oral history project which is associated with the Journal of the Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive. The COVID-19 oral history project is rapid response oral history focused on achieving the lived experience of the COVID-19 epidemic. We've designed this project so that professional researchers and the broader public can create, upload their oral histories to our open access and open source database. This study will help us collect narratives and understanding about COVID-19 as well as help us better understand the impacts of the pandemic over time, the recording demographic information and the verbatim transcripts will all be deposited in the Journal of the Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive and the Indiana University Library System for the use of researchers and the general public. Do you have any questions about the project that I can answer?

**Henry Wathan 1:11**

No.

**Jacob Gerin 1:12**

All right. Taking part in the study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to you which you are entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with Indiana University IUPUI or the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute, or the University of Cincinnati through which this project is being ran through. Participating this project means that you your interviews will be recorded in digital video and or audio format and maybe transcribed. The recordings are possible- or possible transcripts of any interviews, copies of any supplementary documents or additional photos that you wish to share, the informed consent and deed of gift may be deposited in the Journal of Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive and the Indiana University library system and will be available to both researchers and general public, your name and other means of identification will not be confidential. Do you have any questions?

**Henry Wathan 2:14**

No, sir.

**Jacob Gerin 2:17**

In addition to your signed document, would you please offer a verbal confirmation that you understand and agree to these terms?

**Henry Wathan 2:23**

I verbally understand and agree to these terms.

**Jacob Gerin 2:27**

I am also asking that you verbally confirm that you have agreed you that your interviewer will be made available- or your interview will be made available under the following license. Creative Commons Attribution new commerce- NonCommercial ShareALike 4.0 International CCVYNCSA, the COVID-19 oral history project, The Journal of the Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive and the trustees of Indiana University acting through its agents, employees or representatives has an unlimited right to reproduce, use, exhibit, display, perform, broadcast, create, derive- and derive works from and distribute the oral history materials in any manner or media non existing or hereafter developed and perpetually throughout the world. I agree that the oral history materials may be used by the Voices from the Waterways and IU including its assignees and transferees for any purpose, including but not limited to marketing, advertising, publicity or any promotional purposes. I agree that IU will have final editorial authority over the use of world history materials. waive any right to inspect or approve any of the future use of oral oral history materials. Moreover, I agree that the public has the right to use the materials under the terms of fair use US Copyright law Section 107 of the US Copyright Act. Finally, I want to ask for a verbal confirmation that you have agreed that your interview will be made available to the public immediately. Do you agree to things that I've just read to you?

**Henry Wathan 3:57**

Yes, I verbally agreed to the things that you have just read to me.

**Jacob Gerin 4:00**

Alright. So what is your name?

**Henry Wathan 4:05**

Henry Wathan.

**Jacob Gerin 4:06**

What are the primary things you do on a day to day basis, for example, your job, school or any extracurricular activities?

**Henry Wathan 4:17**

I go to school for mechanical engineering at the University of Akron. I am going to graduate at the end of this year. And I work in Aerospace Research with the university. That is all.

**Jacob Gerin** 4:32

All right. Where do you live currently?

**Henry Wathan** 4:34

Akron, Ohio.

**Jacob Gerin** 4:36

And what is it like to live there?

Henry 4:40

Cheap. Nice. Quiet.

**Jacob Gerin** 4:43

Do you live on campus?

**Henry Wathan** 4:45

No.

**Jacob Gerin** 4:46

All right. When you learn first COVID-19, what were your thoughts about it?

**Henry Wathan** 4:58

It was a foreign disease and could be dangerous. But not too sure, didn't know that much about it.

**Jacob Gerin** 5:08

Have your thoughts changed since then?

**Henry Wathan** 5:12

Not sure how dangerous it is in comparison to what the media says. I believe it is overplayed for political gain, but it is still dangerous nonetheless.

**Jacob Gerin** 5:27

What issues have most concern you about the COVID-19 pandemic? Personal or otherwise.

**Henry Wathan** 5:37

I think the economic impact is scary. The panic buying was scary, and I guess people dying on ventilators, it's also frightening.

**Jacob Gerin** 5:51

Have you been affected in your employment due to COVID-19 in any way?

**Henry Wathan** 6:00

They have a lot of testing at work. But no, I still have my job. And my hours were not reduced because of it.

**Jacob Gerin** 6:07

Alright, so has COVID-19 changed your employment status in any ways?

**Henry Wathan** 6:14

No.

**Jacob Gerin** 6:15

So do you have any concerns about the effects of COVID-19 on the future employment and the economy in a broader sense?

**Henry Wathan** 6:25

Yes, I'm concerned about lower class jobs moving to... everything's moving a lot more virtual, and that can be bad for like I just said, a lot of low class jobs.

**Jacob Gerin** 6:45

As the COVID-19 pandemic affected the employment of anyone you know?

**Henry Wathan** 6:52

No.

**Jacob Gerin** 6:54

All right. How has COVID-19 affected you and or your family's day to day activities?

**Henry Wathan** 7:04

Cancelled a wedding. My day to day hasn't changed, except for wearing a mask in front of my grandma.

**Jacob Gerin** 7:13

Do you have any opinions on wearing a mask in public?

**Henry Wathan** 7:16

No, it's not a big deal. I'll do it.

**Jacob Gerin** 7:19

How are you managing day to day activities in your household?

**Henry Wathan** 7:22

Same way I would if there was no COVID.

**Jacob Gerin** 7:26

Has the COVID-19 outbreak affected how you associate and communicate with friends and family?

**Henry Wathan** 7:34

A little bit.

**Jacob Gerin 7:35**

What is the “little bit?”

**Henry Wathan 7:41**

I guess, you know, wear a mask around each other sometimes. And maybe the dynamic has changed a little bit as to where we hang out, you know, normally we go to home and stuff. So mainly been doing that.

**Jacob Gerin 8:05**

All right. Um, what have you, your family and friends done for recreation during COVID-19 pandemic?

**Henry Wathan 8:16**

Hiking, a lot of hiking.

**Jacob Gerin 8:19**

Were you very outdoorsy before?

**Henry Wathan 8:23**

Oh, very.

**Jacob Gerin 8:24**

Very. So things haven't- have they changed for you in terms of recreation? In terms of hiking?

**Henry Wathan 8:30**

I'd say the amount of hiking did increase a little bit.

**Jacob Gerin 8:33**

Okay. All right, how is COVID-19 outbreak affected your community? We can say more specifically work and school.

**Henry Wathan 8:43**

School, it affected a lot of. My classes have moved online from in class instruction. And there's limits on what I can do on campus, which is a little frustrating as I have a lot of research like, that I like to do there. And it's limiting that. It also has affected the overall budget of my school, like most of the universities have been cutting away a lot of unnecessary spending. And sometimes that can affect student life. As for work, the only thing that's really changed is that I get tested at work and I wear a mask. Other than that. it's work as usual.

**Jacob Gerin 9:29**

How are people around you responding to the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Henry Wathan 9:32**

They're respectful about it. They all have, you know, they all understand that everyone has different opinions about it, but they wear the mask if they, you know, wear the mask in public like they're told to. No one's really making a big deal about it.

**Jacob Gerin 9:50**

So self-isolation and flattening the curve have been two key ideas that have emerged during a pandemic. How have you, your family, friends, community responded to a request for self-isolation and flattening the curve?

**Henry Wathan 10:00**

Following the CDC guidelines.

**Jacob Gerin 10:02**

Following the CDC guidelines. Has COVID-19 changed relationships with family, friends and community in any ways? For example, you know, friends that don't believe in it or believe in it too much- or believe in it in a more extreme manner than you do?

**Henry Wathan 10:18**

No, I'm not a stubborn asshole.

**Jacob Gerin 10:21**

All right. Um, have you or anybody, you know, gotten sick during the COVID-19 outbreak?

**Henry Wathan 10:26**

Yes.

**Jacob Gerin 10:29**

What has been your experience in responding to their sickness?

**Henry Wathan 10:33**

I had to self-quarantine and get tested because I interacted with the individual. And my work provided me free testing and were really- really cooperative with me taking that time off waiting for the test results to come back.

**Jacob Gerin 10:55**

And this individual had COVID-19?

**Henry Wathan 10:57**

He tested positive. He showed minimal symptoms. He was a young individual like me, so I didn't seem to affect him too negatively.

**Jacob Gerin 11:10**

In what ways do you think COVID-19 is affecting people's mental and or physical health?

**Henry Wathan 11:15**

Staying inside isn't good for your health. You're probably getting like cabin fever.

**Jacob Gerin 11:22**

What has been your primary source of news during the pandemic?

**Henry Wathan 11:25**

I don't watch the news.

**Jacob Gerin 11:27**

You don't watch the news. How do you stay informed?

**Henry Wathan 11:32**

Through other individuals normally, sometimes on the internet. I'll read like online forums or stuff like that.

**Jacob Gerin 11:42**

Is there any specific website you use?

**Henry Wathan 11:48**

No. I don't go to any sort of website for the news.

**Jacob Gerin 11:51**

So you would say your news sources, have they changed during the course of the pandemic?

**Henry Wathan 11:58**

No.

**Jacob Gerin 11:58**

No. So you would obtain your news the same way even if there was no pandemic?

**Henry Wathan 12:03**

Yes.

**Jacob Gerin 12:04**

What do you think are important issues that the media may- or that the media is or is not covering?

**Henry Wathan 12:15**

I think there's some issues with how it's covered. It seems like there's a political agenda to it and I'm not... there's definitely a political agenda to it. That's the problem.

**Jacob Gerin 12:31**

Okay. How have municipal leaders and government officials in your community responded to the outbreak. So we'll start with local and go on from there.

**Henry Wathan 12:43**

So starting at the local level, I haven't really seen too much. Ohio isn't- doesn't seem to be affected by COVID as much as other areas. I can't really speak for local. As for government at the state level, Mike DeWine has done a great job enforcing a stay at home laws, stuff like that, closing bars earlier, which I think is a good way to reduce interaction among strangers, which is

how you can spread the disease if it's not within bubbles.

**Jacob Gerin** 13:25

What do you think- what's your opinions on the University of Akron's handling of the COVID pandemic?

**Henry Wathan** 13:33

Good, but they shouldn't be charging me full price for online classes.

**Jacob Gerin** 13:38

Do you have any thoughts on how local state or federal leaders are responding to the crisis differently?

**Henry Wathan** 13:44

No.

**Jacob Gerin** 13:46

So this section is for the future. Have you- or has your experience transformed how you think about your family, friends and community in any way?

**Henry Wathan** 13:54

No.

**Jacob Gerin** 13:56

How does this pandemic compared to other big events that have happened in your lifetime?

**Henry Wathan** 14:01

Um, well it ruined my life. [laughs] I love to travel and so not being able to travel was really unfortunate.

**Jacob Gerin** 14:11

So did you have anything canceled due to the pandemic?

**Henry Wathan** 14:14

Yeah, a trip to Europe.

**Jacob Gerin** 14:17

And how can you imagine your life being in a year's time? So next year, what do you imagine life being like?

**Henry Wathan** 14:25

Hopefully working full time and being able to travel to Europe.

**Jacob Gerin** 14:33

And I would imagine that it's also what you hope for?



**Henry Wathan** 14:35

Yes.

**Jacob Gerin** 14:37

Knowing what you know now, what do you think individuals, communities, or governments need to keep in mind for the future?

**Henry Wathan** 14:43

Um, better prepared this and better professionalism when it comes to preparing for uncertain events, regardless of your political background and the political background of others who are advising you. I believe everything should be taken seriously, especially anything that involves diseases.

**Jacob Gerin** 15:20

All right. Well, thank you for your time.

**Henry Wathan** 15:23

No problem. Thank you, Jake Gerin. I love you.