

Transcript of Interview with Eric Chapdelaine by Hannah Tedawes

Interviewee: Eric Chapdelaine

Interviewer: Hannah Tedawes

Date: 09/19/2020

Location (Interviewee): Boston, MA

Location (Interviewer): Boston, MA

Transcriber: Clinton Roberts

Abstract: [from item description] Eric Chapdelaine is interviewed to share his perspective on the COVID-19 pandemic as a graduating senior in a small, private high school and as a current freshman at Northeastern University.

Hannah Tedawes 0:01

Before we start, do you consent to being interviewed for the COVID-19 Archive Project?

Eric Chapdelaine 0:06

Yes, I do.

Hannah Tedawes 0:07

Can you please state the date and time?

Eric Chapdelaine 0:09

It is September 19th, 11:27am.

Hannah Tedawes 0:13

Okay, can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Eric Chapdelaine 0:16

My name is Eric Chapdelaine. I am currently a freshman at Northeastern University. I'm originally from Bedford, New Hampshire,

Hannah Tedawes 0:24

And where were you in the first- when the pandemic first started out?

Eric Chapdelaine 0:28

So when this pandemic, COVID-19, first kind of came to light for me was the Thursday, I believe it was March 12, or that Thursday when my school, my high school, Derryfield, emailed people saying that the school was gonna close down on that Friday, which is kind of unexpected. We kind of thought it was gonna close, kind of the weeks, after- a few weeks after spring break, but we did not expect such a strong response so quickly.

Hannah Tedawes 1:05

How did you feel about the pandemic, when you first saw it in the news?

Eric Chapdelaine 1:08

So when I first saw on the news was way before this, just heard about some, like, virus outbreak in China. And since it was so far away, it didn't really affect me, and I didn't really give it much thought, which probably looking back isn't a good thing. But it's just kind of was another thing on the news, I did not pay too much attention to. I really started thinking about it when my school had an all school assembly, kind of specifically about this virus very early on. My friends and I were talking about how this was kind of we thought this was too strong of a response, we thought it was too quick. Like we didn't- we thought it just like this was just gonna blow over and that was it. But kind of my administration was very adamant saying, like, we might go online and, and whatnot. And we're just like, yeah right, that's never gonna happen. Obviously, looking back, that was definitely the right call to kind of bring that into the minds of everyone at school very early, and then kind of reassess from there. So I'm thankful that my school's response, um, but I will say I was very surprised.

Hannah Tedawes 2:12

So when if ever did you actually start worrying about the pandemic?

Eric Chapdelaine 2:18

So the weeks kind of leading up to spring break, there were more and more thoughts about kind of, "oh no, this coming to the States. Like, this is gonna affect everything. Like, school is going to close." And so we're kind of thinking about it like, seriously at this point. And we were kind of expecting, like I said, before, the first few weeks after break to be closed down, and but then we go back to normal and that's it. Obviously, when spring break came closer and closer, infection rate and kind of case numbers skyrocketed. So we were more like, "oh, wow, this is really gonna affect everything." And then it kind of did that Friday, when they canceled school and we were on Google Meet for the rest of the year.

Hannah Tedawes 3:07

So how else did it affect you, and your senior year of high school?

Eric Chapdelaine 3:11

Right. So this was my senior year, so we had a lot of things planned, so there's graduation, prom, a few other like, senior specific things that we're all looking forward to. And so obviously, all this had to get cancelled, we did still have graduation, but it wasn't what we're expecting at all. What really affected me the most about this, besides obviously, classes being online, and I would never leave the house, would actually be not interacting with kind of the people I would interact with on a daily basis. I would still talk to my friends because I text them and whatnot. But just like those people that I was friendly with in all of my classes, the last time I saw them was on a random Thursday, and that kind of really is the thing that kind of hits me the most.

Hannah Tedawes 4:00

Do you also have a job that was affected by the pandemic?

Eric Chapdelaine 4:04

So I did not have a job going into the pandemic, but I did get one kind of midway through the pandemic. And yeah, it was considerably affected by COVID-19. And years previous with this job was, is I would go and it was a camp, and I'd be a camp counselor and kind of teach kids computer science and how to kind of make basic video games. Obviously, that had to get switched online this year. And we tried to kind of keep the same experience as we had years previous, but that was very hard considering how much we had to change in such a short amount of time, especially since we're not in person with these kids. I'm actually surprised at how well we made it work. But at the same time, physical contact and being in person is a very important thing.

Hannah Tedawes 5:00

Looking forward, how do you think it's gonna affect your life or the lives of people in this society?

Eric Chapdelaine 5:06

Right. So it's, um, I don't think it's going to affect my life personally, beyond how the societal changes, such as kind of normalizing mask wearing, and hopefully social distancing, and cleaning and sanitizing everything. So this is, but this actually is going to be a huge effect on kind of the society as a whole. Because what I hope is going to happen is because we know that online things, such as like job- jobs, and school, can, obviously can work over Zoom, we are hopefully going to be more likely to kind of do that in certain situations, such as if somebody's sick, and doesn't want to come to school or work, any given day, they hopefully can just jump on to Zoom and have like that even after this pandemic, and just having that normalized. That's going to be a very important thing for our society, I believe.

Hannah Tedawes 6:03

So you mentioned some positive effects, do you think the pandemic will have any negative effects on our future?

Eric Chapdelaine 6:10

Absolutely. I think that the social divide that this has caused between those people who kind of care about minimize- minimizing kind of infections and those who don't really care that much, it's kind of growing. This is a very pressing issue. And I think that any social- social division like this is detrimental to society. So I think that that's going to be a huge negative fact, obviously, as well as those directly affected by COVID-19. But I think overall as a society, we are going to- this is gonna- we're gonna be- this virus is gonna be beneficial, and we're going to progress because of it.

Hannah Tedawes 6:552

All right, thank you so much for sharing your thoughts.

Eric Chapdelaine 6:55

Thank you.