

Transcription of Covid-19 interview

Interviewee: Barbara Hartwick

Interviewer: Alexander Hartwick

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Abstract:

Barbara Hartwick was born and raised in Minnesota and currently works between two nursing homes as a stylist. In this interview, Barb will describe how Covid-19 has impacted her life including both work and family. She shares her experience and her ways of dealing with not working and then eventually working during a pandemic. She describes the impact the residents had on her and the impact she had on her customers. She also had some other interesting experiences during these unprecedented times.

Alex Hartwick 0:00

Ready? Yep.

Alex Hartwick 0:01

So it is recording now. so is it okay with you that we are recording this talk?

Barbara Hartwick 0:09

Yes. Okay.

Alex Hartwick 0:11

Um, if you have anything you don't want to answer. I do have a couple questions I have here pre made. I'll try and make up some as we go along. But if you don't want to answer any questions, don't you can feel free not to answer at all. Okay. All right. So then we're good to go. I'm can you state your name.

Barbara Hartwick 0:32

Barbara Hartwick.

Alex Hartwick 0:34

Okay, and What's the date today?

Barbara Hartwick 0:36

Today is April 22 2021.

Alex Hartwick 0:40

All right. So we are talking about COVID-19 today and how that has impacted you. So when did you first hear about COVID-19?

Barbara Hartwick 0:52

Last? Well, 2019, we heard about a coming in. We just got done with going to New Zealand. So December, we heard about what was coming in like Italy, what has come from China, and that we were kind of worrying about it coming into the United States.

Alex Hartwick 1:12

All right. And when did you first get impacted by COVID-19? When did you first start getting changes in your life?

Barbara Hartwick 1:19

Well, as of March 17, I had to close down our our salons, basically, on a Tuesday, they closed the doors Wednesday, they basically didn't let anybody go from one section to the other. And then all of a sudden they said on Friday, you're closed until further notice. And that's two salons that I do at a nursing home.

Alex Hartwick 1:43

Okay. So I was just about to say and your occupation is cosmetologist, right?

Barbara Hartwick 1:50

stylists, hair stylists. at a nursing home.

Alex Hartwick 1:53

And so when they put in those plans, how did that affect you? Did you have to go through a quarantine or

Barbara Hartwick 2:01

anything if they they shut down everything. And from March to June 1, I did not have a job. I was stuck at home. And all then. So I work for long term care, assisted living and independent and they all were close into their, into their rooms. They could not go out of their apartments whatsoever. They had to sit in their rooms until June 1, I think. And then they finally finally let them come in one by one. I could only have like two people in this salon at a time. So the restrictions were still there.

Alex Hartwick 2:40

Anytime were you getting messages to come in? And do you hair?

Barbara Hartwick 2:44

Oh gosh, hours for two months, or like we miss you. Because they had nobody. So you're looking at March, April, May, June. So for four months, these people had nobody coming in to see them, maybe giving them a shower. And most of my residents will see me on a weekly basis. So they were lonesome for one thing because they haven't had anything out of their their rooms. And then to have no touching. No talking with anybody else. They're stuck in their apartments. So it was quite hard for them. And for me when you see him on a weekly basis.

Alex Hartwick 3:22

How did that impact you not being able to interact with the residents.

Barbara Hartwick 3:28

It was hard, very, very hard. I'm lucky I had somebody at home. But the residents, I tried mailing them cards, ask them how they were doing. I didn't get anything back. But when I came back, they all said thank you for giving me a card, or I gave them like little treats and stuff because they had no interaction other than just with the employees there that we're helping them bring them their food, no family members could be in there is pretty much isolation for those for those residents. So it was quite fun. I was able to get out. They couldn't. If they did, they would be quarantined for two weeks. And really nobody would see him again too. So

Alex Hartwick 4:12

and where you consider as an essential worker during that quarantine period?

Barbara Hartwick 4:18

From March to June, no, because I was just like any salon, they closed us all up. As of June 1, they let us come in. And I was pretty much the only person most of these residents were able to see actually until probably they just recently so like April, they're just starting to have their families come in the beginning of the year and it would be for only about an hour at a time that they could actually see their family members. But then that was that six feet away, washing their hands taking their temperature and then they had their COVID shots after like, end of January. So that was a little easier. For the residents. But I was the only one that they saw from well, assisted living and independent was from from June 1 till October, then it on October 1, I was able to do my long term care. So some of them didn't see me for almost 9-10 months. So their hair was long, and they missed me, they missed having that, that socializing, and the one on one feedback. So, when I came back, they were just thrilled. And then I got to see him on a regular basis. And that was really, you can see the difference in their, their attitude, just the liveliness, they actually kind of almost have, like a purpose came back to them to making them feel like a person again, it was hard on them very, very hard for them.

Alex Hartwick 5:52

Did you have any plans change because of COVID?

Barbara Hartwick 5:56

plan like what kind of plans

Alex Hartwick 5:57

future plans so,

Barbara Hartwick 5:59

everything was shut down. We had a lot of them. We had weddings, we've had trips and stuff that you just had to cancel, you couldn't have it at all. So and that was kind of that was depressing, too, when you're at home watching TV, and absolutely not being able to go from even state to state because as a person working in the nursing home, you couldn't even leave the state. If you did, you'd have to be quarantined for 10 days, or 14 days, 10 to 14 days.

Alex Hartwick 6:31

Now, when you were when you were able to go back into the salons? Did they implement anything at first?

Barbara Hartwick 6:38

Oh, very, very strict. Well, you have this just the Minnesota Bar Association who does all the regulations for us had their own state had their own so they kind of implemented them together. So when I came back, I had to do a lot of disinfecting of the chairs. You always do your your essential combs and all that that you use on one another. But it was basically before they even came into the salon, they had to sanitize their hands, their handles, other walkers, I had to make sure handles were clean, chairs were clean. In between everybody's everybody's usage of the chair, they had to be clean. All the capes and stuff that I use, I only had to use it once, then I had to make sure I washed it that night. So it was quite It was a lot of stuff that I ended up having to do now it's just old hat. It's it's more part of the routine now. But spraying on the chairs wiping everything down in between every person wearing a mask, wearing eyeglasses, or even a shield at first I had to have a shield. You couldn't you couldn't have glasses, you had to have a false shield, full mask and hand sanitizer to protect everybody's that came into the salon. Having two people at a time, we couldn't have more than two people six feet away. The big thing was the hair dryers is that gonna affect them? Is that gonna spray too many of the germs around is the ventilation was okay. So there's a lot of things that had to be put to test. So

Alex Hartwick 8:22

so when you you're working on here that's in between six feet. So how was, how did you, was all the face masks and gloves was that their way of preventing the spread?

Barbara Hartwick 8:34

Yep, pretty much they had to wear their masks throughout the whole time. They were there. That was why I had to wear a plastic shield at all times. So my shield kept it more towards my body. Plus you had your, your mask, and we were testing sometimes two times a week for the COVID. So we'd get tested on Monday tested on Thursday. But when the when the numbers were higher, we definitely have to do that right now. There's another spike. So they watch the numbers on a weekly to a monthly basis. If it starts to spike up, we end up getting tested twice a week that goes down then it goes down to one a week. So it all depends on how the numbers are.

Alex Hartwick 9:17

So you were working during this pandemic, did anything change I as you were saying, like they've implemented this stuff, but as like they did they go from like strict guidelines to more loose ones or is it still strict guidelines?

Barbara Hartwick 9:33

It loosened up. So in the beginning, nobody could see anybody. Nobody come and go unless you were a nurse, somebody that was completely essential. Once they let me come back in in June, I was doing independent and assisted living just because they were a little bit more looser at that time. Probably more healthier, whereas the long terms they wouldn't let me in at all until October. now. Come at As of January, they are starting to loosen up letting families come in. The restrictions kind of now, right now are guiding it through the polls, if there's a high spike, they kind of get a little bit more aware of what's going on. With the spiking even, it's more or less the people who are working that are getting tested. They know everybody's been vaccinated at the nursing home or the home care. So they know the residents are pretty, okay. It's just us that are working that we need to be more protective. So right now, they're starting to have more people coming in at dinner time. They're starting to socialize just in this last month. So March and April, they're starting to do cribbage boards, doing bingo with only like 10 people, but at least they're a little bit a little lifting up the restrictions. And hopefully in the next month, it would be better, but it's all due to what the numbers are. If they go up, they'll stop it. And if they go down, then they'll open it up again. That help? Yeah.

Alex Hartwick 11:15

Did you How long did you think that this pandemic was gonna still go on?

Barbara Hartwick 11:20

I thought it was gonna be like six months, but now it's been a year. It kind of made you almost think it's gonna be a normal. I can see this going out for at least another six months before they finally get a handle on it. I think once everybody's vaccinated, but that's something that goes with the CDC, who knows what they're going to say? Because you have to do the regulations with them, more or less?

Alex Hartwick 11:50

Did you have any scares for the flu? Because in a nursing home, the flu kind of goes around?

Barbara Hartwick 11:57

what's interesting with that, so November prior to 2020, a lot of my residents did have the flu. And they think, Oh, it's just the flu, it's just the flu. And then now, now that the pandemics around, we're thinking of probably was the COVID virus that really kind of got a lot of them that passed away. But now the flu, we haven't heard anything about the flu, nothing for at least a year now the regular flu that we used to be totally worried about.

Alex Hartwick 12:32

Do you think the mask usage could be accredited to the flu numbers being known?

Barbara Hartwick 12:38

It could be if people wore it the right way and covered their nose and cover their mouth, you get the ones that have the nose open, that's not gonna help you. I think in the long run, it really made probably more people washing their hands and be more careful at what they're doing. I think the mask probably made them more aware of it. And I think it probably did help. But some people say oh, no, it didn't. But I think we don't hear anything about the regular flu. And the COVID. We haven't really had any cases probably since March at in, in this home care facility. So it probably has helped.

Alex Hartwick 13:20

Did you have any people impacted directly by COVID? Like, did you have any residents get COVID?

Barbara Hartwick 13:27

Oh, yeah. I I was looking at just between one year and I probably have lost 25 to 30 residents. Maybe not due to COVID. But I think COVID helped him get? How would you say along with they probably have elements that just the COVID just kind of took them over? You know, there was a man and wife couple, she has Parkinson's. And he was seemed like a very healthy gentleman. And they both got the COVID he passed away and she is still alive. So you really don't know what COVID would really do. But you see a lot of it. You see a lot of them that that COVID just pushed it to the limit and they would pass. So

Alex Hartwick 14:21

Was there any backlash on COVID like the policies in the resident or at the nursing homes?

Barbara Hartwick 14:29

we get to the point where like the independent people who should have been independent and able to come and go as they please. They lock the door to the for the main door so they had to go out the other door which is where everybody comes and goes so it's one one entry. All that's for all everybody comes and goes so the COVID would be there, but they did not have the the ability to leave the premises without being quarantined for 10 to 14 days, they could leave out of the garage but and have no problem. But if they actually walked out whatever, they would have to go out the main door, and then be quarantined for 10 to 14 days afterwards.

Alex Hartwick 15:16

Did the so the nursing assistants there were they? Were they working hard and like doing a lot of sanitizing and stuff while you were working there? Did you get any glimpse at what the nursing assistants were doing?

Barbara Hartwick 15:28

A lot of them allow. The policy was you had to wear a face mask and head gear and, and gear. I wear plastic things. A lot of them when it came to the shots or the immunizations, a lot of them didn't want it. And being in a facility that we had. They had the opportunity, they could say no to it. But then they had a whole nother regulations of being tested probably more often than I did.

Alex Hartwick 16:03

So with the immunisations coming out, did a lot of the residents, like jump on it get there?

Barbara Hartwick 16:09

Yeah, they were. A lot of them are for it. They're older, they know better. And they've probably, as some of them say I think it was the Spanish flu. And they went through it all and they so they knew it's like a it's good. They couldn't wait for it to get it done. So and they were happy to get it.

Alex Hartwick 16:28

Yeah, with our with this a COVID-19 videos, we actually have some data from that Spanish, flu and then early 1900s. So it's kind of interesting that we're trying to kind of compare the two of them and seeing where those evidences lie similar.

Barbara Hartwick 16:45

Mm hmm.

Alex Hartwick 16:46

And learn from the past.

Barbara Hartwick 16:48

And it is fun to hear the ladies or the residents talk about it. And how they had to go through same thing, pretty much the same thing as what we did. So but not as fast. I don't think they would have gotten the immunizations that quick like we did.

Alex Hartwick 17:08

Was there any news reporting? Or like things from I don't know the news or media? media that was spot on? Correct? Or is there some like false theories that came out there anything that you kind of just remembered during this whole year long pandemic? You just like it was all that's interesting,

Barbara Hartwick 17:31

where can I start? No? Well, the thing is the mask. And I think that was the biggest thing for a lot of people, they didn't want to wear it, why do I have to do it, and they balked at it. And then they did a lot of things saying, This is what happens when you didn't wear and they had a lot of comparisons when it came to the masks. And then they find out, you know, when you don't wear it like the bars, so then I ended up closing, if they opened it up to 25%. Well, then they're too many people who are getting it realizing that, hey, maybe we did it too fast with the regulation with the masks. So then you kind of know, well, it does help to have the mask, and it does help to keep your distance. So I think it was a lot of trial and error that the CDC, the President, I mean, we don't know what we were getting into it, the first part of it. So a lot of media was going by with what the CDC was saying. And the President was saying at the time. And none of it was Mis Misrepresentative. And then they turned around and said, Oh, it does really work.

Alex Hartwick 18:39

was is there anything that you would have changed at the nursing home to help, keep the residents safe? during that time looking hindsight 2020?

Barbara Hartwick 18:49

Well, the thing that they ended up doing, like I said, we had the independent didn't really have anything changed, you have assisted living, didn't have anything that changed. But with the independent, the upper level had the long term care, the down below had the rehabilitation, and then they ended up taking one of the quadrants of the three and made it into a COVID unit. And the only thing that was really kind of stupid about it is that you're giving these we're taking people out of the hospitals with COVID and bring it into a nursing home where they're so delicate, they're more acceptable to getting the COVID Why would you bring in patients from the hospitals to a long term care facility or a facility of that sort? Because you're just intermixing you're bringing in that COVID and then you wonder why you had so many more fatalities? does that answer?

Alex Hartwick 19:51

Yeah.

Barbara Hartwick 19:52

Okay.

Alex Hartwick 19:53

what do you think, ever? What do you think this is a multi part one. What do you think that the nursing Home can learn from this. And what do you think that the world can learn from this, or at least the nation as a whole?

Barbara Hartwick 20:06

Well, the nursing home is probably, to stand up a little bit, and to say, Hey, we don't want this. You know, like I said, what the sick coming in the COVID patients coming in, and you got all these vulnerable people who are older and elderly, you don't want them to get the flu, leave them where they are at the hospital, or find a different facility where you're not contaminating all these older people. And then what was the second part?

Alex Hartwick 20:37

Like? What can the whole world learn or as a nation learn from like this COVID experience?

Barbara Hartwick 20:45

Oh, let's see. Well, the thing is, the distancing the washing of the hands, I think that's the biggest thing. And just being considered with one another. One of the things I found out that you do have a opinions of things. of some people are more strict when it comes to wearing a mask, whereas some people aren't. And they're more like, yeah, if I get it, I get it. But not to be mad at that person, if they don't wear it, but just wear it for yourself, or be with somebody that really does want you to wear it. Be considerate, if they want to be wearing it, hey, wear it for them. And don't fret about it, and don't say, oh, gosh, I have to do this again. But just continue that people do have their opinions and to obey by it. And then we're all the same thing I make, you're traveling and you're just you get a lot of different personalities. But you're able to just kind of protect yourself at the same time be consider the person that you're going to be with, you don't want to give it to them. And you really don't want to get it from them. So it's a two way, two way thing there.

Alex Hartwick 22:00

Do you think I'm on a lesser scale the flu? Do you think Once COVID is put into regular vaccinations, like with the flu shot? Do you think in more years to come? That we'll start to see more people being conscious of their hygiene and their safety? So in wearing masks during flu season? Do you think that because of the COVID virus that we might start seeing some of that stuff, be more for

Barbara Hartwick 22:36

people, more people are more knowledgeable about it, knowing that, hey, I feel it is all comfortable to if you feel comfortable during the flu season, you know that you probably get it let's say if you get it every year, the regular flu. And if you don't have it, if you don't get it when you're wearing a mask, I would wear it you know, it's more of a protection for myself. And now with everybody wearing these facial, you know, masks all the time, it's getting to be no big deal. You get a personality on the outside, you can put a smile on it, you can make it the way you want to. So it's kind of like part of your wardrobe. So it's more and more acceptable. And I think it's it's acceptable in China and in Japan, it's been like that for years for them. Because they're just taking consideration for the other people. If you're not feeling good. Say hey, I don't want to give you my my germs. So I'm wearing my mask. So you probably as a person like you, Alex, you would be able to say, hey, I've kinda you know, she's more considered for me, because I don't want to get sick, and she's on to get me sick. So I think it's more acceptable all around the world to have that mask.

Alex Hartwick 23:53

You think nursing homes will start to put masks on during flu season or when there's like bugs going around?

Barbara Hartwick 24:02

I would be I wouldn't be surprised. Because if it's kept a lot of the older people safer, I can see them doing it during that exactly during the flu season. And now they're getting so used to it anyways, they leave their rooms they put it on. So and they don't keep it on in their rooms. But then if the nurse comes in, it's part of their, their equipment, or part of the uniform.

Alex Hartwick 24:31

With the summer coming up pretty soon, how do you think these regulations are going to loosen up and when do you see them ending?

Barbara Hartwick 24:41

I really don't think they're gonna end. I don't think they're going to end especially in the nursing home. I think they're still going to probably keep enforcing forcing the hand cleaning and we'll see how the masks works. I think it's gonna be a while before they take them off even in the summertime Maybe outside, because you have more of the fresh air. But I think indoors, it'll always be used for at least another 6. Probably another year. Who knows?

Alex Hartwick 25:13

Now, looking at a little bit of your past employment history, I know that I was supposed to talk on beautician or on your stylist. But I know that you have some background as a flight attendant. And flight travel is essential for a lot of businesses. Do you think that these regulations are going to stay during for flights? Or do you think that they're eventually going to get lifted?

Barbara Hartwick 25:37

I think they'll probably stay for a while. If they do lift them, it'll probably be up to that person's wanting, if they want it, wear it or not just for their own safety, if it gets to that point. If it's a crowded plane, I would even consider it if it's still that kind of a, the flu season, let's say. So like I said before, I think with the flying like, I shouldn't even say this. But delta delta was really good about keeping the air the filters going. So you felt safer on a plane, even when you didn't have to have your mask on. And I was next to my husband, who says now if I have a person in between me and him, I'd probably consider wearing the mask just to be in the safety of myself. But it's all your preference yourself.

Alex Hartwick 26:34

And I think this will be maybe our last question. Maybe

Okay,

is there any silver linings that came out of this pandemic? Anything that you saw, that was like a little bundle of joy or like something that just like a sunflower on a cracked pavement like something? Good came out of it?

Barbara Hartwick 26:52

I think with all that has happened. Family wise, you look at how, how the world was running, running, running, going from one game to another game as a family and not having family time. I think families came closer to each other. The ones that got along. I know. You hear the stories about abuse? How would you say just the dynamics of the family either it really broke them in half, they had a lot of health

issues, mental health issues with a lot of people, I think the confinement with a lot of the seniors even really, they really struggled not having the communication. They the one on one, even just a hug or a touch of a hand does so much with people and then the elderly. I think that's as a stylist, your, your skin on skin, you're working with them on their heads. And they like that feeling of having just somebody touch you, that touch has a lot to say about it, where a lot of the residents there by themselves, they're in their apartments by themselves. And you think about six months, so March to October, some of them never really got touched at all, you know, and that's, that's hard. Other than maybe having somebody as a nurse come in and, and shower them once a week, you know, but they never touched them. One on one. And I think that has a lot to do with some of the mental health. Just the media only seeing TV for eight hours a day. Because some of this or even the radio, any kind of the media. That's all they had. Sometimes it's just that coming at them. And then you're thinking, Okay, even just recently, one of my residents goes, I can't see you because I have COVID and it's like cuz she's watching the TV so much. She thought she had COVID. So then I talked to the nurse and the nurse goes, Oh, no, she just thinks she has it because he's watching it on TV. Well, that's all they have all these is to watch TV. So I mean, that's really hard in the socializing for a while there they are able to be at their doorway, and play bingo. They can't see the person next to me they can see the person right in them. And there's nobody playing, talking the bingo you like a person action person. They had a computer doing it. So nobody was interacting with anybody playing bingo, but at least they got to do something which I think was a struggle for some residents, or the ones that couldn't hear. So think about it. You're stuck in your your apartment. can't hear anything. You can't watch TV, you can't read a book, what else is there to do, or they have the ones that can't see. So they still cannot see the TV, they can hear it, but they can't read a book, they can't read a paper. And it's all they can do is hear what's on the TV. You know, so you're really, you're confined and you really kind of go bonkers after a while. So that's, I think that was probably the biggest struggle with all of them. It's just the confinement and not having anything, or being confined with a spouse or with just your family. You started to probably play cards, watch movies together, you're communicating back with your families, a lot of them actually kind of like, fall in their families again, which is kind of really pretty special. You know?

Alex Hartwick 30:54

Yeah. And you were working between two nursing homes during this time period, right?

Barbara Hartwick 31:00

Yep. Because one of the ladies left the her position as a stylist because she didn't want to go back. So I was going between two of them. So both of them had lawncare. Even one of them had a memory care to that I did so. And I was the only one that got to see him other than maybe the receptionist, people who gave him food. So hopefully I made highlighted their day.

Alex Hartwick 31:26

And I think, unless I get more questions, this should be the last one. And did you have any experiences doing at a hospital during this? Pandemic?

Barbara Hartwick 31:35

say that again, what

Alex Hartwick 31:37

you have any experiences at a hospital?

Barbara Hartwick 31:41

funny you say that. So January or December 26. I cut my hand. And I had to go to the hospital. husband had a stale side in the car. And I was by myself for three hours in the hospital. And yeah, that by myself something if I had a little kid, it would be awful being by yourself without anybody helping you through that. And you get the nurse coming in, they leave you have the doctor come in and they leave. And they don't want to be with you more than 10-15 minutes, let alone touching anything either. But yeah,

Alex Hartwick 32:19

so that was like, was there any other notable things at the hospital? did They have obviously all their gear on?

Barbara Hartwick 32:26

Oh, yeah. The face masks that I growls and all that. And they were very, you had to be very careful. And for that, even with the the, the COVID were thick, you're by yourself, and you had nobody else to share anything with. And I think that was another one that was struggling for most people that you didn't have your loved one with you. And luckily, it was only a tenant that I could I could just imagine having a baby or any kind of operation. you're by yourself. So it'd be tough. All right. Well,

Alex Hartwick 33:05

I think I am out of questions. Thank you for coming on this interview. let you know how it turns out.

Barbara Hartwick 33:14

Okay. Thank you. Yeah, bye bye.