

## **Transcript of Interview with Samantha Rearick by Hannah Yousef**

**Interviewee:** Samantha Rearick

**Interviewer:** Hannah Yousef

**Date:** 9/18/2020

**Location (Interviewee):**

**Location (Interviewer):**

**Transcriber:** Gilbert Lopez

**Abstract:** This interview describes my experience as a senior and now freshman in college during the pandemic. From deaths in the family to missing graduation, my story encompasses how I interpreted and dealt with the pandemic.

**Hannah Yousef 0:00**

So today I will be discussing Samantha Rearick's experience with the COVID-19 pandemic. So, do you consent to be interviewed today for the COVID-19 archive project?

**Samantha Rearick 0:10**

I do consent. Thank you Hannah,

**Hannah Yousef 0:12**

Do you mind stating the date and time for me?

**Samantha Rearick 0:14**

Today is Friday September 18, 2020. And it is currently 4:17 pm.

**Hannah Yousef 0:20**

Okay, so where are you from?

**Samantha Rearick 0:23**

I am originally from Hebron, Connecticut. And I lived in Shanghai for two and a half years and spent the majority of the COVID-19 pandemic in Jupiter, Florida,

**Hannah Yousef 0:33**

Okay, and was the town you were living in considered to be a hotspot area when you were there?

**Samantha Rearick 0:38**

It was actually one of the first counties to close down in Florida. So South Florida was considered to be one of the worst places to be in, during the COVID-19 pandemic. So I believe we started our original lockdown at the very end of March. We were definitely very late to it. But all of our beaches closed much earlier than everywhere else. And people tended to, like leave our town once everything started because it was a huge population in a little area.

**Hannah Yousef 1:07**

Okay, so you said that things started to get worse a little bit sooner than in the rest of the country in your town. So did not affect when you started to be concerned about Corona? Or did you ever become concerned?

**Samantha Rearick 1:18**

I actually started my concern very, very early on in the year due to my past in China. So I, when I was in Shanghai, I went to an international school and a lot of my friends actually, like remained there after I had left in the middle of my junior year. So a bunch of them had reached out to me and told me in the middle of January that they were being sent home back to America, and that the school was being permanently closed. I think my worry started a lot earlier, and I had told people like around me, oh, this is kind of something we should start considering to be a little more dangerous than we are. And everybody kind of laughed at me and was like, Oh, you're, you're crazy. But once my friends really started getting sent home, like that's when it kind of struck me like, alright, this is going to eventually become a serious issue, viruses spread, and eventually we're all going to be in the same situation as my friends in China.

**Hannah Yousef 2:11**

So how did you feel being sort of surrounded by, I know at the time, most people in the United States weren't taking everything as seriously, as you probably were. How did it feel to be surrounded by people who weren't really understanding things in the same way that you were?

**Samantha Rearick 2:26**

I think that it really was polarizing the difference of people who really thought it was an issue at the time in March compared to how I felt in March and even earlier than that. I had actually gotten up in front of my class on March 13<sup>th</sup>, I think that was the day that most people got sent home. And everybody was kind of really excited, like, oh, we're getting an extra long spring break, etc. And I made a joke in front of my chemistry class. And I was like, guys, I'm gonna give my senior speech now. We're not coming back. And they had all laughed at me like, oh, Sam, you're literally, you're out of your mind. And I was like, I'll see you next year or not totally as a joke, but people really, it was, it was just funny at the time, like how jokingly, we were all talking about things, but in the back of my mind, I was like, alright, maybe this really is it. And once we've ended up never going back, it was kind of interesting to look back on.

**Hannah Yousef 3:23**

Yeah, I'm sure. And um, what was your second semester of high school like after you guys were sent home?

**Samantha Rearick 3:29**

So my second semester was very problematic as I had lost my job due to COVID. And I was furloughed, and I am very financially independent. So that was very much a struggle for me. And then also online school is just not something I think anybody really likes. But for me, we had Zooms every class and as someone who suffers from relatively bad ADHD, it was very hard for anybody with a learning disability to make it work in a class over and over with your cameras on just having no participation, no seeing friends, nothing like that, like really took a mental toll on me. And also just second semester was a joke due to the way school is set up, and I think everybody just eventually gave up.

**Hannah Yousef 4:20**

And do you feel like other factors like stress from other things related to COVID-19 played a role in your ability to cope with and like perform well in school that semester, as well?

**Samantha Rearick 4:31**

I think it's actually really funny because I ended up getting the highest GPA I had gotten my entire high school career from online school, and I think that comes partially from the fact that I have nothing else to do except school. And then it was just, I was in my house all day. All I did was work and, but I definitely think it made it a lot harder for me to have the motivation to do work. So it's just kind of like the two factors of where you have so much time on your hands and then you also have like the stress of so many assignments, but you have nothing else to do. So of course, you're going to do it. And I don't know. I guess that's all.

**Hannah Yousef 5:11**

Yeah. And if you don't mind me asking what's been the hardest adjustment that you've had to make due to COVID-19?

**Samantha Rearick 5:18**

I think if we're talking adjustments, I was considered to be someone who was very social, and not always with friends, but I liked to go out on my weekends. And I did go to parties occasionally, and stuff like that. And so I thought it was really interesting that I wasn't as affected as other people by not having like graduation and not having prom, or being able to see friends like, I was more really concerned about, like, overall public health. And also I really adjusted to not seeing people and not being social. So when I finally was able to hang out with friends, again, I was just like, I don't know how to do this anymore. I don't know how to talk to people, I don't know how to hang out with people, because I really had not seen any of my friends until about June or July, when it was like allowed. So the only people I had contact with were my family and my boyfriend. So I think that was probably the hardest adjustment, like being around my family all the time. But it actually made us like a lot closer as a family.

**Hannah Yousef 6:18**

Well, that's, that's good to hear. And do you think your outlook for the future about Corona is optimistic? Do you think something good will come out of this or do you think that it's going to divide us as a society, as we've been seeing some people do?

**Samantha Rearick 6:33**

I think overall, my perspective on things generally goes to be more negative due to kind of human condition. And I think people only tend to care about issues in society if they significantly impact themselves. So I think I really started caring more about Corona like when my family went through a death and then lacked any like way to go to a hospital, or we couldn't have a funeral during COVID. But that was when I was taking things most seriously. And it's not to say that I don't anymore, it's just more like, when something happens, and it's right in front of

you, Americans especially tend to take it more seriously. So I think, for people who are not as affected by COVID, they just kind of don't care about others who really are. And it really shows like how polarizing groups of people can really be and how, when COVID does disproportionately affect different groups of people, others instead of stepping in, they kind of step back. So it just becomes I don't know, for the future I don't know how relations will be, but I know that COVID has really pushed apart socio-economic groups along with political groups, etc. So I don't know, if they will either come back together or be spread more apart after this whole pandemic is, quote, unquote, over.

**Hannah Yousef 7:54**

Yeah, that's a fair assessment. And for the last question, is there anything that going through this pandemic, so far has taught you about yourself?

**Samantha Rearick 8:03**

I think I kind of taught myself that, being around people all the time isn't really a necessity for being happy. And I ended up having a lot more time to really like reflect on what I was doing and the people I was hanging out with and how I really just wasn't happy during school, and how much I really missed my family because they were never home. So them being home really brought like my mom and I closer together. And I think for the future, it's also taught me to be a lot more thoughtful about what other people are going through and people who are not carrying the same amount of privilege that I do, and how this has affected so many people from so many different backgrounds. And I think everybody should really sit down and kind of consider that before going out and making rash decisions.

**Hannah Yousef 8:58**

All right, thank you so much. It was nice talking to you.

**Samantha Rearick 9:00**

Thank you.