

Transcript of Phillip Hoile Oral History, 2020/07/25

Interviewee: Phillip Hoile

Interviewer: Clinton Roberts

Date: 07/25/2020

Location (Interviewee): Blanchard, Oklahoma

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Transcriber: Clinton Roberts

Abstract: Phillip Hoile grew up in Texas, before moving to Oklahoma as a young teenager. He spent 35 years as a police officer, becoming a homicide detective for the Oklahoma City Police Department. After two years of retirement, Phillip returned to service as a background investigator which he continued until recently. He is married and has three children and five grandchildren. Phillip offers his feelings about seeking alternate recreation for his granddaughter after family plans were changed. He also touches upon his thoughts of the media and nature of politics in the gathering of information. He further adds insights into having a coworker test positive for COVID-19 and the ways his employment was affected multiple times. Phillip reflects upon how his community, Blanchard, compares to other larger cities and how suggestions by medical officials determined his family's decisions to use precautions. As a thought to the future, Phillip speaks about living through other difficult times and offers words of encouragement to those that face these uncertainties; they will pass.

Clinton Roberts 00:01

This is Clinton Roberts of Arizona State University HST 580 for the Journal of the Plague Year archive. Today is July 25, 2020, and I'm conducting an interview with Phillip Hoile. Phillip will be talking about how COVID-19 pandemic changed his employment status and activities he plans with his granddaughter. Phillip, what do you do for a living?

Phillip Hoile 00:23

I'm a background investigator for police applicants for the Oklahoma City Police Department.

Clinton Roberts 00:29

Did the COVID-19 pandemic affect how you do your job or the status of your employment?

Phillip Hoile 00:35

It absolutely did. When it first came out and more isolation of businesses created a tax deficit for the income to the city of Oklahoma City, which they eventually made a decision to cancel a police academy. We traditionally have two academies a year between 50 and 75 cadets in each academy. Due to the shortfall on collectin' taxes, they've canceled our next academy and as a result, the eight people in my unit were furloughed because of the cancellation of that academy.

Clinton Roberts 01:16

So, would you consider this status change permanent or temporary?

Phillip Hoile 01:22

I think that's going to depend on the economy. With the city businesses opening back up the tax base, the income coming back in he should dictate at some point...that we've come over the hump but we need to put together another police academy.

Clinton Roberts 01:42

Okay, Phillip, where do you live?

Phillip Hoile 01:44

In Blanchard, Oklahoma.

Clinton Roberts 01:46

What's it like living in Blanchard, Oklahoma?

Phillip Hoile 01:48

It's a lot quieter than living in the city. You don't have as much concern about crime. Maybe pollution, it's everything is slower. People seem to be nicer. It's just a good place to come to as a refuge when you work in the city.

Clinton Roberts 02:09

When did you first hear about COVID-19? And what were your first thoughts about it?

Phillip Hoile 02:13

I first heard about it in March. And in fact, the...it was presented to us at work at that time. Due to my age that I was one of the first ones offered the ability to work from home to restrict my exposure with people coming and going at my workplace. Now, did I fear it? No. Did...I was I concerned about it and did I follow precautions? Yes, I did. And I did that as a courtesy to my co-workers, citizen on street I came in contact with, and hopefully prevent bringing any kind of maybe contamination to myself home to my family.

Clinton Roberts 03:01

Since that first experience that you had at work, how have your thoughts changed since then?

Phillip Hoile 03:08

I'm...I have a lot of questions as the- truthfulness of all the information that's being broadcast. You hear multiple stories of, for example, when it first came out. In New York City, the most common causes of death had disappeared. And they...now it's COVID-19 deaths. So your-your SIDS death for your-your babies, cancer deaths, coronary deaths, those almost fell off the scale in the number of COVID-19

deaths increased to a number that made most people very skeptical of the honesty, not so much that the disease was there, and it was killing people, but not at the rate that was being reported.

Clinton Roberts 03:57

So how has your daily routine changed now since COVID-19?

Phillip Hoile 04:03

Well, I was home, working from home for maybe three weeks, and then that's when they came in and furloughed eight of the people in my unit. Now how it's changed is rather than working from home, I'm constantly at home. So obviously it gives me more time to do things around the house and around the acreage. It also limits our ability to go into public more and we're more- we use more precaution when we go into public. If we go into- if we go shopping for food, anything we may need from a local hardware store, we use preventative the masks the disinfectant stuff. So, it definitely has affected us.

Clinton Roberts 04:53

So has the COVID-19 outbreak affected how you interact, communicate with friends and family in any way?

Phillip Hoile 04:58

I wouldn't say so much with family, again, you-you take the precautions when you're out in public. Having in mind- the back of your mind that you don't want to bring any of this back to family. As far as friends, we communicate now we're Facebook, text-text messages, over the phone. So, we try to avoid almost completely interacting face-to-face.

Clinton Roberts 05:22

How has the COVID-19 outbreak affected Blanchard in general?

Phillip Hoile 05:27

I think for the most part, it's-it's the same reaction here as it did as it was in the city. Everybody's leaning towards, you know, the precaution more so than extreme. You know, you can't do this, you can't do that. But they're kind of giving you, if you want to do something, be smart, social distancing, use the santa-sanitizers, do the face mask. So, it's not-not as much as hysteria that I've seen, you know, it's just common courtesy. Let's-let's do what's better for everybody till this thing blows over.

Clinton Roberts 06:04

So, do you think that people in Blanchard responded differently than bigger cities?

Phillip Hoile 06:10

Having been isolated, I haven't had enough contact with individuals to be able to determine the basis on that to come to any conclusions.

Clinton Roberts 06:21

Does the news media depict COVID-19 the way you experienced the pandemic in Blanchard? In what ways is it lacking or accurate?

Phillip Hoile 06:27

The media right now, I think is reporting things that they don't...that they want to report. I think they're creating a narrative more so than reporting, possibly the facts. You know, there's several different numbers come out and nobody's ready to say, these are definitive. Here's the number of people that have it, here's number of people that have died from it, and here's the number of people that that have recovered. So, it's hard to say that I think the media has done more harm than good.

Clinton Roberts 07:02

So, you and your family, you said that you've gone through some of the measures of social distancing, wearing masks. Was that because of response to national and local requests? Or did you do it more based on just your own safety?

Phillip Hoile 07:15

I think more for-for safety of us individually and for our family. You know, you take the recommendations of the people, you-you put a little faith in and you know, a doctor tells you it's a good idea to you to do it. Why not do what they're recommending? And I don't do it, because, for example, in certain areas, you're mandated to do it, okay. I don't need a mandate. I just know that if-if a doctor of authority is saying it's a good idea to do it, that's all I need.

Clinton Roberts 07:47

Have you or anybody you known gotten sick during COVID-19 outbreak? And what has been your experience in responding to illnesses?

Phillip Hoile 07:53

I did have a co-worker that was hospitalized with COVID-19. He was in ICU for some period of time, he completely recovered. I didn't have enough contact with him during the period that he would have been contagious. So, I wasn't fearful of that. But that was just kind of close to home. The eight of us in that unit, one of the eight got it. So again, that's-that was, to me it was the deciding principle for well, you know, working from home, and then you know, later the furlough.

Clinton Roberts 08:34

And I think this leads right into the next question. Does living in Blanchard seems safer and more dangerous during COVID-19? And how so?

Phillip Hoile 08:42

I think it seems safer. Because, again, there's not as many people. We're not exposed to as many people as we would be maybe in the city. We have the ability to buy, you know, small items of grocery here with minimal contact. So, I think it's safer. We're not in large, we're not in areas of large concentrations of people.

Clinton Roberts 09:05

How have your local and state governments responded to the outbreak? Do you think their response was enough? Not enough? Too much? How so?

Phillip Hoile 09:11

That's-that's a teeter totter. It's on both ends of it. You see, outcries of people saying, "You're infringing on our civil liberties by demanding that we wear face masks in public." And then on the other hand they say, "We're gonna give you the option. If you want to wear them, we recommend it." To me if they don't have to dictate to me a-an order that it's a must. It's common sense to think even if it's 10% chance that it would save you from bringing that home to your family. You know, it's worth wearing it. You know, it's a little inconvenience, but what's the inconvenience of bringing home to your family and multiple members of your family getting it.

Clinton Roberts 10:01

Based on your pre-interview, you had spoken about some of the things that you were, I guess you would noticed about changes in your plans and things like that. What are some of the things that you've altered? What kind of plans if you alter to spend time with your family that you were doing differently now than you would have done pre COVID-19?

Phillip Hoile 10:20

Well, this December, we had planned a family vacation in Louisiana. Obviously, when this the heat of this battle, that wasn't something that we could do. It's not to worry, you could bring the thirteen members of family together in an area that at the time was being reported pretty much as a hot zone, it still is. So not only could you go to a different state, we had a house rented, you couldn't enjoy any of the amenities of traveling, going to different events and seeing things that you would normally be able to do. So that for that reason, we cancelled that. And so, and there's a lot of other things that we plan to do that we could not do because of it. But we felt, you know, it's safer to take the precautions, stay home, let this thing blow over than it is to go out and get a bunch of people sick.

Clinton Roberts 11:16

Have you adapted those plans to allow for different activities that-that kind of allow you to have entertainment or to plan events that maybe are safer?

Phillip Hoile 11:28

Yes, we on two different occasions, we took our granddaughter to our local wilderness, which is a basically drive thru Zoo. And so, you stayed in the car and the only contact you had with anybody, as in who's in the car, would be the- when you pay to go in. And from that point on, you drive around in this zoo, you're in your car, you're not exposed to people. Again, we-we found a-an event that occurred here in Oklahoma City, they call it a Jurassic Quest. And it's a-an area- a large area of parking lot where they've set up dinosaur displays with Dinosaurs growling, moving. Again, we took our granddaughter to that. We stayed in the car. She enjoyed both-both venues, both activities. And when we felt like we were 100% safe in doing those things.

Clinton Roberts 12:29

When thinking about the future, do you think COVID-19 will have a lasting effect on Blanchard beyond this year? And why so?

Phillip Hoile 12:36

I don't think so. I think that hopefully there's going to be a better response next time this shows up. I can't give you specifics on what that would be. But hopefully everybody involved in this, other than people that are using it as a political doorstep or a media doorstep, are going to be better prepared to handle a situation like this. And I think as far as Blanchard goes, I can't think of anything they could do to prepare themselves for something like this. And hopefully this is not an annual event. This is a...we look back and 50 years, "Oh, I remember 2020." You know, the foresight and hindsight in 2020 is going to be something we'll all remember.

Clinton Roberts 13:25

And so, looking to the future, what would you want future generations to know about what it was like to live during this time, if for some reason, they never lived through anything like this?

Phillip Hoile 13:35

It's probably not different from a lot of things we've lived through. Growing up I remember the, for example, as small kid the Cuban Missile Crisis. We didn't know from day-to-day, whether we were going to be involved in nuclear war. So, you know, that's stressful times. And I think those times are coming and going. Am I going to be able to tell great grandkids, here's what it was like, and here's the hopefully you don't have to go through it? You know, I think it's not that big of a burden. I think, you know, we're living through it. We're eating, everybody seems to be healthy around us. It's something that's gonna pass.

Clinton Roberts 14:18

Alrighty, that does it for this line of questioning. Thanks, Phil, I appreciate your time and thank you for contributing to the archive.

Phillip Hoile 14:24
You got it. Thanks.