

Interviewer: Emily Martinsen

Interviewees: CeCelia Zorn, Carin Keyes, Wilma Clark, and Nancy Wendt

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Abstract:

CeCelia Zorn, Carin Keyes, Wilma Clark, and Nancy Wendt are residents of the Chippewa Valley, and were brought together by their love of music. The women talk about the “Deck Concert”, an event that CeCelia and Nancy organized. Carin and Wilma attended this concert with their families. All women talk about the details of the concert, down to the safety measures they put in place to make the concert safe for all. The women mention Wayne Zorn, CeCelia’s husband, who was able to sing in the concert, despite being diagnosed with Primary Progressive Aphasia (a degenerative brain disease that attacks language and other cognitive abilities). In addition, the women talk about the Stand in the Light Memory Choir, as well as other so-called “silver linings” that have shown them the good in such an uncertain time.

Interview:

[Dog Barking]

EM: Okay, so my name is Emily Martinsen. And I'm conducting an oral history interview as a part of an effort to archive the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals and communities in the Midwest, for both the Chippewa Valley COVID-19 Archive and the Journal of the Plague Year COVID-19 Archive.

Today's date is November 25th. The time is now 11:09 am. As of now, there are a total of 16 million COVID cases worldwide and 1.4 million deaths. In the United States, there are a total of 12.7 million cases and 260,000 deaths. Today I'm speaking with Nancy Wendt, Marge Bottoms (who will be joining us momentarily), Carin Keyes, Wilma Clark, and CeCelia Zorn. All five ladies have ties to the Chippewa Valley, Eau Claire region, where there are currently a total of 7,438 cases, and 60 deaths in Eau Claire County, and 4,420 cases and 49 deaths in Chippewa County. So, ladies, thank you for being here with me today, virtually, I appreciate it. [Pause] So, the first thing we will start with, we can start with Nancy and kind of go around I guess, if you just want to introduce yourself a little bit more, and then how I said the demographic info. So, your age, your gender, your race, ethnicity, so that kind of thing. And if you forget what I asked, it's okay, because I will just remind you again. So, Nancy, if you want to start by all means go ahead.

NW: I am Nancy Wendt, and I am 62 years of age. I am white female, and my ethnicity is Swiss and English. I have been a retired teacher from the Eau Claire Area School District for about seven years where I worked for 34 years in the system as well.

EM: Okay, thank you. Wilma, if you would like to go and introduce yourself.

WC: I am Wilma Clark. I am a retired English professor from the university in Eau Claire. [Pauses] I live, I forgot. Let's see, demographic. Yes.

EM: Yes.

WC: I am Caucasian. I - my ethnicity is Czech and German. Age, I'm in the high-risk group. Can we leave it at that?

EM: Totally fine. [Laughs]

WC: High-risk group.

EM: Perfect. All right, CeCelia?

CZ: Thank you. I'm CeCelia Zorn, and I am in my healthy 60s. I'll leave it at that, [EM Inaudible] Wilma's comment. I'm a retired professor from the university and I'm also a registered nurse. I am Caucasian and have Polish ethnic background.

EM: Perfect, thank you. And, Carin.

CK: Hi. My name is Carin Keyes. I am Caucasian, I am 41. And, I guess my background is Swedish and Norwegian, so Scandinavian through and through. I am a stay-at-home mom, but I also am a speech language pathologist who works with the Chippewa Valley aphasia group. And I have two children that came to the concert we're going to be talking about, they are 11 and 7, daughters. And I've lived in the Chippewa Valley for about eight years. But I went to school here for four years for my undergraduate, so I was here previously, left, and came back. [Laughs]

EM: Alright, perfect. All right. Thank you for introducing yourselves. I appreciate it. So, Carin, you mentioned the deck concert, so we can jump right into talking about that. So, when did you guys put on this concert? And any of you can answer.

[Pauses]

NW: August 2020.

EM: Okay, perfect. So, during the summer. So, what inspired you all to come together to create something like this?

[Pauses]

CZ: This, I think it was probably an effort to bring people and music together. I think people who are interested in community and relationships and sort of social connections as well as people who appreciated music and like to listen to it and like to learn about it and our expert and

novice musician, so it was really combining sort of people and music in an outdoor setting – maybe?

EM: Okay, okay. Let me think I am –

CK: Emily, do you think we should kind of explain what the deck concert consisted of -

EM: Sure!

CK: Ahead of time for people who are going to be watching later?

EM: Yes, that sounds great. So, Carin, if you would like to explain what the concert was, go right ahead.

CK: Okay, well, I did not plan the deck concert, but I did attend it. So, I can explain, kind of from my point of view, what the deck concert was, to me. It was a concert that was put on outside somewhat - someone's house, Marge's house, actually, who isn't here yet. And it was where we had piano playing, flute trio, and also singing. And so, people were invited to sit around outside and listen to the music and have some snacks as well. Does that - anyone want to add anything more?

WC: I can add something, I was not involved in performing, I was invited to attend. And for me, it was a wonderful opportunity to do something outside my own house. I - being in a high age group, as soon as we heard about COVID. And my husband is especially vulnerable to things. We took the rules to heart, and we followed everything that we were supposed to very severely, trying to protect ourselves. So very seldom, through March, April, May, June, July, did we have in person contact with people, there were a few times. But here was an opportunity to actually come out of the house, go to a spot where there would be real people, the chairs were carefully separated in this huge big backyard, six feet apart. All the people there wore masks, there were neighbors on the other side of fences, listening to the music also. So, everybody was distant. I felt safe. And it was a remarkable time to be with other actual, not virtual, actual people and it was a beautiful experience, so.

EM: Wow, it sounds like it. [Indecipherable] Oh, go ahead! [Laughs]

CZ: I was also feeling some urgency. Like if we don't do this, pretty soon winter's going to be here, and we're not going to be able to be outside. So initially, I worked with, I worked with Marge in doing some of the planning along with some of the musicians. And initially, it was kind of end of July. And for some reason we needed to delay a little bit. And I was getting a little not frantic, but thinking oh my god, this snow is going to be coming and we won't be able to get together and be outside. So, sort of the clock was ticking, if you will. And it seems funny to say that now because it was only August. But still, that was that sense that I was feeling.

EM: Well, and that makes sense too, because being in Wisconsin winter likes to come early.

[Women chuckle]

EM: So, it makes sense. And you know, even if it wasn't going to snow, it gets cold.

CZ: Right.

EM: You know, it gets cold really quickly. And you know, nobody wants to be outside when the temperature is, you know, not at a great you know, not at a great spot. So, no, I understand that. How long did it take to plan this concert?

CZ: Humm, maybe just a [stutters] month or so, I-I think it sort of came together naturally. And then [clears throat] pardon me, and then grew with sort of integration of people and some of the details. So maybe just a month, three, four weeks.

EM: That's pretty impressive still for how successful you know, the concert was. I mean, taking it a month, you know to - and I think especially too with all of the restrictions and, you know, safety measures that you have to take, you know, it's not, it's not like a regular, you know, planning of sorts, you have to take all of these different things into account. So, it's, it's very impressive. I think, so. And then you said, you space - everything was outside, and all of the chairs were socially distanced, and everyone still wore masks, even though it was outside.

WC: Mm hmm.

EM: Okay. Was there anything else, like any other safety measures that were taken?

NW: Typically, you know, you'd like to have just snacks laying out for people to grab, and when everything was prepackaged for everyone, you have their, like bottles of water, were just, there weren't like pitchers of things to have, it was all prepackaged things were way - or even our - we - someone had made a beautiful program for us. And it was just laying in a basket so that we didn't have to hand out, uh, just trying to limit all of that contact that we would normally have at a concert, but still maintain the feeling of being a concert.

EM: Right. Okay. And how many people attended? Or at least, I guess you could say, because you had some people, like behind their fences, you know, in their own yards listening, like roughly how many people do you think attended?

[Pause]

CZ: I think there may be were about 25 people -

EM: Okay.

CZ: Somewhere in the 20s.

WC: Mm hmm.

EM: Okay.

CZ: And in addition to Nancy's comment about the prepackaged beverages and snacks, the - the setup was that the musicians performed on a deck. So, it was raised, you know, maybe like three feet from the lawn seating area. So that felt safer also for the musicians who are performing without a mask while they were performing, of course. So, there was that sort of geograph-maybe geographic setup that felt safer.

EM: Mm hmm. Okay, and Wilma and Carin you two were spectators in this concert, so did you feel safe attending this? You know, with everything being socially distanced, and all of these measures that were taken? Did you feel safe and you were able to enjoy the performances and everything like that?

CK: Yes, I definitely felt safe there. I [Pauses] I did a lot of pic - taking pictures. And so, I even was able to walk around and take pictures of everyone at the – the gathering and I felt very safe. Everyone was respectful of each other, keeping their distance but still being able to talk when there was downtime. I did not feel a sense of, I don't know, urgency to leave or anything like that. It was - it was wonderful.

EM: And what about you Wilma?

WC: Well, I agree with everything Carin says, and as soon as I was perched into my chair there and felt distant enough from everyone and with the masks, I forgot all about COVID. And I was concentrating on - It was just like a magical interlude in a dark time. And I was concentrating on the people. Of course, the music was beautiful. Let's just get that right out there.

[Women laugh]

WC: Beethoven and then we had a break. And then we have Beethoven, then we had piano, we had Nancy doing a beautiful tribute to her mother who had passed away not so long ago, we had Wayne with heart-touching, singing because he is a person who has aphasia. And it's just a miracle that he with CeCelia's support and Nancy's coaching is able to sing so beautifully. For a person who can barely speak. So that is a different topic. I guess we could talk about that for quite a while. Anyway, I was concentrating on all of these things and the connections of people. Many of CeCelia's friends from her - her nursing days were there. I didn't know all the people, I knew them. But even on the stage, I was thinking, I have connections with CeCelia because I have had some home recitals like this with her in my home with a small number of people and musicians. Nancy has played the piano in my house for Wayne, singing in my house. And I thought, oh, these dear people, here they are, I was thinking about that. And so, the connections among the people and all of the friendliness, I could feel behind the masks, we had the masks, but it was though the friendliness and the connections among the people were still being expressed very beautifully. It was kind of a miracle. I guess that's my word for it. I've talked enough. But – [Inaudible]

[EM Laughs]

NW: I have to admit that when we first started thinking about this, then CeCelia said, what do you think about it, I was a little nervous just because of all of the restrictions needed for COVID. And needless to say, playing flute and singing are two what they call super spreaders [laughs], which is not really something that you really want to be at a concert with, unless you really take those precautions. But once we got going into it, and really thought it out, it wasn't like, well, let's just do this, if - there was a lot of thinking to this, and how to be respectful and to be responsible amidst all of this. I think the underlying tone of it always was, there is so much power in music, and just in the healing and the touching to be with other people, that you don't have to have physical contact to touch people. And I think that was what kept me going was that we're doing this not only for ourselves, but for the others to enjoy.

EM: Mm hmm. Wow, that's - I really like that, that purpose behind it too, because, and I think you all could agree with me, [pauses] masks have a barrier almost too and you're just not seeing all of somebody, you know, facial expressions and everything too and you almost just, I think for me personally, especially, you do feel that sense of isolation from others. And you know that physical contact and just being around people, it's very hard. So, I really appreciate how you all were able to, I guess, think outside of the box to figure out how you can still reach people in a different way. I think that's really beautiful.

CZ: Something unexpected that happened, and I will just share it, assuming Marge may comment on it when she joins us, but her brother and her sister-in-law, her brother's wife, were driving through Eau Claire very unexpected, and she hadn't seen any of her family since the shutdown in March. And for her to welcome her brother and sister-in-law into this gathering was just, was just absolutely so heartwarming, because this was the first family member she had seen, she has been very, very locked down, if you will, with trying to be careful because of her vulnerability. So, it was it was sort of this spontaneous, unexpected piece of joy that happened for her. So, there were some you know those tidbits along the way.

EM: Mm hmm. Because it seems like to me that she wasn't expecting her brother to be driving through.

[CZ shakes head no]

EM: Really?

CZ: No.

EM: Wow.

CZ: Yeah.

EM: Yeah, that's - that's really special.

CZ: Mm hmm.

EM: That's really special. Wow. Yeah. And especially for you know, taking the lockdown as seriously too, what would that be months that she went without seeing?

CZ: Right. Yeah.

EM: And that's hard, you know, for some people and I think especially, you know, no matter if you're more introverted or extroverted or how you were, you know, before everything shut down, it's - really is different for everyone you know, you say you do kind of keep to yourself, or you don't visit people very often, you know, but that now you really can't because there's these restrictions for our health in place. It's just different because you feel stuck. So, and that's, that's hard. So, it's nice to hear, you know of stories like that happening. Wow. That's really special. So – go ahead.

NW: When you think about pre-COVID and in the post-COVID with just family getting together or doing a deck concert like this, or just being somewhere, it used to be you just did it [noise of exclamation]. Come on over, or stop on by, or let's just get - let's just play to this afternoon out on a, you know, deck. And now it's like everything is - has to be planned out. And you have to think of all the other pieces. That spontaneity, I think is the one thing I have noticed is just in planning, this was the same thing. Let's make sure we've got all the pieces of the puzzle in, whether it's the family stopping by or concerts like that, that spontaneity has been gone.

EM: Mm hmm. Definitely. You know, and it's strange, because I think, you know, especially with the world, I guess, that we used to live in, you know, we're so quick to make these decisions and plans and put things together, you know, almost last minute, and now we can't do that anymore. But I mean, from the deck concert that shows that that's okay. You know, because it you know, carefully planning things like that, too. I mean, created something really, really great for yourselves and for your family members and community members. So, yeah. And Nancy, you say that you played the flute, and you sang. CeCelia, did you sing or play any instruments?

[CZ reacts]

EM: No? [Inaudible]

CZ: No, I reacted to the singing. I-I don't sing. But I did play my flute.

EM: Okay.

CZ: Part of the, the flute trio. Flute Evolution is Nancy – can-consists of Nancy and another flutist and myself. So, the three of us played our flutes you know, in a trio situation, and then I do some help with Wayne as well, when he was singing, because of his Primary Progressive Aphasia that, that Wilma alluded to.

WC: Mm hmm.

EM: Okay.

CZ: And the idea of planning, you know, just takes on a whole life of its own, doesn't it? When Nancy was talking about planning, I was thinking, oh, yeah, Nancy brought her portable - would you call it a keyboard, Nancy, a portable keyboard? Piano?

NW: Yeah, yeah, it's a full electronic piano. But it's like thinking about the cord. Oh, the chair. Oh, a table to put it on? Oh, we got to have some kind of a microphone. Oh, stand? Oh!

CZ: Right.

CZ: And all of that happened a week or two or so before the concert. And Nancy graciously brought the piano and checked out the setting and so on, just to make sure that things were - will be as good as they can be in the in the situation. So yeah.

EM: Was that hard to rehearse, at all, you know, with social distancing? And again, since I mean, I play a musical instrument myself, I play the clarinet. So, it's just, I'm sure it's challenging just to you know, be mindful of, you know, taking off your mask, I'm sure playing your instrument. And then would you just - what, how did that process work for you both?

NW: Well, for rehearsing, first of all, for Flute Evolution, our flute trio, we were at the home of our - the third flute player in our group. And she has a huge open concept. And so, we were like 20, I think we measured it was like 20 feet away, as we're trying to each in three different corners of her big, great room, try to practice inside. And then when we came to the deck concert, we were six feet. So, it was much different. We actually had to adjust being closer [laughs] to each other and reading each other, through our - through our motions and our face motions. But we would practice in that home, same place all the time, and we would be that far away. And we did that. Wayne and CeCelia, part of the time, we were able to come and work out on my front deck. And I would haul the electric piano out there. And we would practice out there outside as best we could. We also did FaceTime and tried to work through FaceTime, I would videotape myself singing the song for Wayne to practice - we'd send it to Wayne. They'd bring it up on FaceTime. And we would practice through that. So, it was just readjusting, but we did it.

EM: Right, adapting to what you had to do. Wow. And then it - going back to Wayne. Now Wayne is your husband, CeCelia? From my understanding?

CZ: Yes.

EM: Okay. So, you mentioned that he has aphasia. So, I think when I flipped through the program, I think I read a little bit about it, but if any - would anyone care to explain what aphasia is?

CZ: Wayne has Primary Progressive Aphasia and it's a degenerative brain disease that begins with loss of language, and then progresses through cognitive loss. And currently, Wayne was diagnosed seven years ago, nearly seven years ago. And his Primary Progressive Aphasia is very severe. And he has essentially no speech now, except for a repetitive phrase that he repeats thousands of times a day. But he's able to sing with time, and practice and coaching that Nancy and his speech therapists provide, so his singing is still possible. So, he was part of the program.

EM: That-that's incredible.

CZ: Carin and – and - and Nancy, and Wilma of course, have - have seen his skills and his progression and his ability to – to - to still do some things that he loves to do.

EM: I'm assuming he sang before his diagnosis too?

CZ: He did, not professionally, just you know, for weddings and funerals. And he's always loved to sing. And he breaks out in song once in a while when he hears music on a, you know, virtual recording or something. So yes, singing is his love - one of his many loves.

EM: Wow. Wow. And how was that hearing him saying? I know, Wilma, you touched a little bit on how it was hearing him sing but I mean, Carin if you would like to talk about that, too, or just your thoughts, and -

CK: Sure. I've heard Wayne sing probably about maybe at three different times. And each time is the same. It's just - it's very moving. It's wonderful as being a speech therapist myself. I just love to see people doing what they love. And he does it with - he looks like he does it with ease. You know, I'm sure it took - takes a lot of practice. But he does a wonderful job. My two daughters know CeCelia and Wayne as well. And they love going to see Wayne sing and it moves them as well, just to hear him sing, because, you know, when - when we talk with them in a different setting, Wayne doesn't use his speech. And so, when he sings, they're just amazed about, you know, to hear his voice and the intonation. We love - we love seeing Wayne sing and the flute players were wonderful, and the piano and singing, just very moving.

EM: All around just very touching, it sounds like.

WC: Emily, this branches out a little bit, so tell me if we should not do this. But hearing about Wayne singing makes me want to mention two things. One is, that there is in the Chippewa Valley I think called the Memory Choir. And Nancy plays the piano for this Memory Choir. And then there is of course a director of the choir and the people who sing in the choir, have various conditions that make it difficult to sing, but they sing. And it's a very beautiful kind of concert to attend. It happens, I think a couple of times a year when we're not in COVID. And Nancy can talk more about that, of course. Well, I'll stop now. Would you like to say anymore on that?

NW: I am the accompanist and assistant music director for Stand in the Light Memory Choir here in the Eau Claire area, which is for people with early to mid-stages of memory loss or Aphasia, and we combine them with a caregiver or a singing partner from the community to help them throughout the semester. We do give two concerts per year. And we allow that opportunity for people that are dealing with and living with memory loss, to come out of isolation, to make some new connections, to make some new memories, to use music again as that power to heal. And that's how I met Wayne and CeCelia, was through - they joined the choir in 2018. And I was able to get to know them. And then CeCelia asked me whether I would be willing to help coach Wayne to see if we could get him to sing at a recital that was being held at Wilma's place. That's how the whole thing started. And I was like, yes, let's do this. Let's figure this out. And - and

then from there, you know even up all the way up to the deck concert. He is still sharing his love of music and bringing smiles to many people.

EM: Wow, I really like that. But that's it, you know, just say hearing that music even just brought all of you together, music and song. But I really like that. CeCelia, you look like you wanted to say something.

CZ: I know Wilma had another point as well. But when Carin was talking about Elise and Ginny, her daughter's, enjoying Wayne's voice. And I-I do as well, you know, just because we practice pretty much every day or at least five times a week. And I just think, you know, now I get to hear Wayne's voice when he's singing. Otherwise, all day, I don't hear his voice except in his repetitive phrase. But now I go and get to hear his voice when he's singing when we practice at home. So, it's not really, you know, a grueling practice at all. It's joyful, because I get to hear his voice in a - in a different way. So, it's - it's - it's so special in that way. Yeah.

WC: So, Emily, the other thing that I'd like to mention is I just saw the other day. And you might be interested in this because it is related to COVID. So, if you have people who want to sing like Wayne, and who have Aphasia, or other memory loss and other conditions, Aphasia, I guess is this group. How are you going to do it across geography? Can it be done virtually? Well, yes, it can. Because the other day I saw and probably the others here also saw a wonderful performance of people like Wayne - Wayne was in it. He was singing, CeCelia was there standing by him as he was singing. I - pictures across the screen. I saw this virtually; it was created virtually. And I saw it virtually, people from United States, Great Britain, Australia, Argentina, all singing together "It's A Wonderful World".

EM: Oh!

WC: And so how did that happen? Well, we had people like CeCelia and Wayne here in Eau Claire, practicing and practicing, and then making up a video themselves of their piece. And they sent it in. And then all these other people sent in their videos from all around the world, and some wonderful technological person put all this together, and it seems as though all of the people are in the same room singing together, maybe you've seen something like this. I've seen it a couple of times now. But it just is so remarkable. What can be done even during COVID to continue these wonderful enterprises. So, I thought I'd like to mention that to you.

EM: Yeah, I appreciate that. Go ahead, CeCelia.

CZ: And I was just going to emphasize, it's really, you know, music coaches, and music teachers and speech language pathologists like Carin and her colleagues, and the community Aphasia group. And it's really just a network of people that make that possible, who come together in that way.

WC: I am imagining that Nancy helped Wayne, prepare for that. Is that true?

CZ: She did. Indeed. She did indeed work by word over and over and over and using a variety of methods along with speech therapy. So, it's really a combination of, of music expertise, like

Nancy's and speech therapy expertise, like Carin and - and her colleagues, particularly Tanya Risky, who's our individual speech therapist. So yes, it's - it's a - it's really, you know, cliché. The village idea.

EM: Well, it's true.

NW: It's amazing to see - I just sat back and watched, I've been waiting for the premiere to come out. And when it did, I just sat back and watched it, all I could do is just smile. And just think how wonderful this is, you know, just to see all of the people that were on it, doing what they love to do, and the sense of accomplishment and success they had. It just warmed my heart.

EM: I was just gonna say it's very heartwarming.

CZ: And in that it involves people. 55 people I think were - sent in their recordings from five continents around the world. You know, the international flavor of that was just for me phenomenal. It just brings the whole world together around music in a beautiful way. Thanks for bringing that up Wilma.

WC: Well, and then the Chippewa Valley was represented on - I think Chippewa Valley, sunflower field. Here's CeCelia and Wayne and oh, yeah, took a picture of - somebody took a picture of them in the sunflower field with these beautiful smiles and sunflowers. And that picture made the show too, so.

EM: Oh, how cool.

WC: Yeah, our own area got in.

EM: That's really cool, that's really cool. And, you know, and it's, and you think about it, too, you know, if we weren't in the midst of everything that we are right now, I feel like those experiences getting to sing essentially, with people from across the world, you know, we might not get to do that day-to-day. So, I think, you know, so I think it's - it's incredible that, even though we're isolated, in a sense, we can still find these connections, you know, kind of like how we've talked about, and we have these opportunities, weirdly enough, that we might not have had, you know, in other times.

WC: Mm hmm. You know, Emily, I watch the news, I'm sure we all do. And I, I try to absorb the horrible things that are happening for people in their illness and in their death and in their poverty and, and they're not getting a paycheck and not have any health insurance that I try not to forget, because I feel personally so fortunate that I can pay my bills, and that we haven't had the disease yet. But anyway. So, I try to remember all of that. And yet, I can't help but realize that once in a while something good has come out of this COVID thing. And we have just been talking about some wonderful things that have happened. And I wanted to mention that in our own family, we have a small family, only six people, two daughters, one son-in-law and one granddaughter. And we're very close, we're always, or we used to fly across the country, or drive across, often to see each other and be together and do things together. But I didn't realize until this COVID thing that we never really talked that much. And now, we started back in March,

doing a family Zoom, for at least an hour, once or twice a week. And we have never had such wonderful conversations. And I am getting to know my people, my very own people so much better. And I think this never would have happened without COVID. Because when we get together, we're always busy, do stuff. Go places, make plans. And so, I just thought I'd mention that there are probably other bright spots for people, even though we would never have wished it to happen. There are some bright spots.

EM: Definitely. Do any of you have any, like bright spots? Like how Wilma said? Like what, or have you seen any silver linings like through all of this? I mean, I know the deck concert was a very big one. But I don't know if there's any other experiences or moments that you would like to touch on.

NW: I know and speaking back with our even our Stand in the Light memory choir, we've kept that going virtually. So, we have our virtual rehearsals every Thursday, we are now stopped until we meet again in January. But they did host a virtual showcase sort of concert about a week ago. And we did similar things of having all-most of our people record and being a part of that and showcase a little bit about the choir. So again, because we couldn't meet in person, and it was such an important piece for people to see, at least, virtually we can see each other. I think many times prior to COVID, everyone was texting or emailing, and you never saw the face. And I think that's the one thing with virtual and Zoom and these kinds of things. We now have to see the face again and be able to talk to people that way. And there's something about seeing that facial expression or the - the eyes or the body language. I think that's been very helpful. I know my mother-in-law has suffered a stroke and was tested positive too for COVID but is in an assisted living and we have not been able to really see her since that's all happened. And we know that that lack of contact, that lack of seeing, that lack of speaking, and she's unable to use a phone so it's very difficult. We keep thinking, you know, it's just hard to under - know what's going on and make sure that she continues to be happy.

EM: Mm hmm. Yeah.

CK: I have an experience to share.

EM: Go ahead.

CK: Back in the spring, when schools closed and went online - sort of - they weren't as organized as they are this year, but we had an opportunity to be in touch with our family in Germany. We had a foreign exchange student stay with us when I was in high school. And because of, you know, the time difference, we weren't able to do a lot of talking, or have our kids talk to each other. So, in the spring, we set a time every week, and we would FaceTime or Messenger with each other, and our kids would play games, back and forth. So, we'd get out, you know, like the "Guess Who" game or we send each other, the same thing so that each of us had a board. And we could play back and forth. And it was a - we were able to do it, because we would do it in the morning. And they would do it in the afternoon then. And we hadn't done that before. And I was kind of nervous about it, because I wasn't used to showing my face online like that. And maybe others felt the same way to just kind of awkward. And but by now it's, you know, almost December, and I am very comfortable with it now, because everything is online. So that

was - a really good experience for us. And something that good - something good that came out of it, as well.

EM: Do you think you'll continue doing that, you know, once COVID settles down, and you know, we get some sort of vaccine or plan in place? Is that something you'll continue to do?

CK: I hope so. Definitely.

EM: Mm hmm. Yeah. What about you, CeCelia?

CZ: I was just thinking when Nancy was talking about - about the choir rehearsing online now every Thursday morning for an hour or a little bit more. And in the past, when we did that, in person, we had a sort of pre rehearsal social time where people sort of gathered at tables and had a coffee and a snack before they went into, into the practice area. But now I think Zoom is, and other programs, of course, are sort of demanding some sharing in a different way. So, what the choir has created, and Nancy may have been part of this is to spotlight a member and his or her care partner, if, if that's pertinent every week, so everybody is seeing and listening to one person's story for two or three minutes. And I've just gotten to know the choir members in a way that I didn't know before, I just would say, Hello, good morning, you know, I'm glad to see you here today. But you know, isn't it cold outside or hot outside, you know, the usual sort of social little, you know, talk. But in this sort of spotlight, I think it's really helped me to meet people and hear their story in more detail. And everybody in the choir is listening, and in - and seeing what the life of that person is, like, at least just a little snippet of that. So, I - you know, it's kind of like Wilma talking with her family in a way maybe that - that hasn't happened before or with Carin's connections in Germany. So, in that way, I think there's quite a few silver linings really.

EM: Mm hmm. Yeah, definitely. And I, you know, and with all again, with all of the bad that seems to be going on in the world, it's important to, to remember those things, you know, because I know I get frustrated, and you know, sad and lonely, you know, all of the above during this time, but it is, it's important to remember the good things, you know, even - even though it's hard sometimes I will admit that, but like you all said there are - there are some silver linings, and hopefully, you know, hopefully after this, you know, people continue to work to make those connections and work to you know, get to know each other a little bit better, because you all are right, we're so used to, you know, rushing around everywhere, you know, being busy, not getting to know, you know, people as well as we'd like to so it's, you know, it's a positive thing, getting to make those connections and thank goodness for technology, you know? [Laughs] Yeah, thank goodness.

WC: Emily, I would like to ask something.

EM: Sure!

WC: I have felt so grateful that I am in my age group. Because I'm not at a point in my life that is a decision-making point or - and I feel, I have been feeling for people who are graduating from high school or have graduated from college or who just in between things, and how everything is delayed and obstructed. And I wonder how it's been for you? Your vocational path?

EM: Yes, well, thank you for asking. [Pauses] It's not how I imagined, you know, everything to be, you know, you get into college, and you think you have a plan. [Chuckles] But you know, of course, plans can change, and things can happen. So, I was explaining to Nancy, actually, I went to UW [University of Wisconsin] Whitewater for my undergraduate degree, and I graduated this past May, but that's when everything shut down. You know, and I was working, you know, like, me and my friends and all of my other classmates, you know, four years of, you know, assignments and hard work and all of these memories, and, you know, that accumulates to, you know, a ceremony at the end of everything, and it's symbolic, and it's rewarding more than anything, and I didn't get a ceremony, you know, I didn't get this in person ceremony, I didn't get to walk across the stage and get my diploma that way. So that was, that was definitely hard. But kind of going back to, like adapting and finding those silver linings, I was still able to celebrate, you know, my accomplishments with my family, and my friends, it just was in a way that I didn't expect, but that's okay. You know, because the way I see it, you know, being a person who is studying history, I'm gonna look back on it, and it's gonna be a good story one day, and it's, you know, and it's gonna be unique to me, you know, and what I always remind myself, like, yeah, I didn't, you know, get to do these things. But since I'm going for my master's in history, now, the hope is that I will be able to walk across the stage and get my diploma and you know, get, I think you get hooded for a Master's, but I could be wrong, that might just be doctoral programs, but anyways, the way I see it is, all right, well, I'll celebrate getting my bachelor's degree then too. So, walking across the stage and getting both but it's, it's definitely hard at times, and it's definitely lonely, because I haven't gotten to meet a lot of people in my cohort for school, because everything's online, you know, all of my classes online, and I don't get those connections that I would get in the classroom. But again, it's going back to technology and almost being creative in how I connect with people and how I get to know people that way. And it's definitely, you know, pushed me I think outside of like, my comfort zone and has made me adapt. So hopefully, that answers a little bit of your question. [Laughs]

WC: The resilience of the youth. [WC and EM laugh]

NW: I keep thinking and hoping that this is creating better problem solvers in the future where they - we've got to think differently and - and I just, it's just nice to hear the young talking about well, okay, if that's not gonna work, then I'll try this, and we'll just move on from there. So, hats off to you.

EM: Thank you. And you know, that's-that's all I can do. You know, and it's okay to get frustrated and get sad about everything because yes, you know, there are these experiences that you know, I'm missing out on, but it's completely out of my control. You know, it's completely out of everyone's control and it's not like it's just happening to me, everyone's missing out on something you know, and just putting it into perspective that way too. It's a little bit better because you know, it puts in mind like - like everyone is missing out on something, everyone is losing something but again, like you were saying, Nancy, it's you know, you learn from it and you move on and you find new ways to - to go about the situation you know, and I hope in the future that it makes me a better person and more understanding and more easygoing go - with - the - flow [Phone dings] because that's, that's really all I can do. So, yeah. [Laughs]

WC: I heard a bell [EM inaudible], are we supposed to stop now? No, you

EM: No, you are okay. That was my mistake, I put my computer on “Do Not Disturb”. But it disturbed me, so that’s confusing. [Laughs] No, so you are totally okay.

WC: There are some other things too, but I wanted to mention, you know, sometimes there will be a beautiful, beautiful moment or evening like the one we had with the deck concert. And whenever those happen, I always wish oh, how can we just save it? I mean, you know, you have your memories, people say you have your memories, but that's not enough. And so, we had this wonderful photographer there, oh my gosh, Carin. And I didn't realize how it was all going to turn out. I knew she was there with her camera. She was here and there and all around. But then I saw the beautiful book that was a product of her photography - photography, and it does preserve the beauty and the emotion of the evening. And I just wanted to say thank you to you, Carin. Blessings on you. It was really, really nice.

CK: Well, thank you very much. And CeCelia and I kind of put some pages from the book and other things together. And we did submit it to the project. I don't think it's online yet, because it is quite long. But I do think that for people who are going to be listening to this later, if it's, you know, if they're able to look at it. If- if I may, I would like to share one - share my screen for one picture. Is that all right?

EM: Yes, totally.

CK: I have it ready. Let's see. I - hopefully it will work. Okay. So here is -

[Women exclaim]

CK: A picture that I took from the back - of kind of trying to gather everything together. And this is when Flute Evolution was playing one of their pieces. So, it kind of gives an idea of, you know, how people were sitting and how the flute – flutist, is that how you say it, were separated. So, if - I think it's a good picture, good shot of just how beautiful the day was, and all the flowers. And just so that everyone can see what it looked like when we were there.

EM: Definitely. It looks like you guys had perfect weather. [Laughs]

WC: We did.

NW: It was - it was gorgeous. And it was so neat, because it was - the sun was shining. And as it got later on, there was a stream of sunlight that just kind of came right straight through the trees. And it was just like, oh, this is just an awesome experience, it couldn't have happened at a better time.

EM: I love that. Thanks for sharing that photo.

CK: All right, I’m gonna stop sharing, there we go.

EM: Perfect [Laughs] But yes, the - the book that you submitted or the document that you submitted to the archive, actually one of my jobs too, as a grad student, I actually work on that archive too. So [Laughs] I will be processing that and uploading that as well. So that'll be - that'll be a great addition to that, too. So, we'll have our own little collection within this collection for this desk concert - for desk concert - deck concert for it being the oral history, and then the document that you all worked on together. So that'll be really exciting.

NW: [Inaudible] I get it. And I'd like to say thanks to Carin too, for doing that. Because being a part of it, you know, I was constantly either playing or singing or helping and it was constant. I never got a real chance to sit back and listen and take it all in. And so, to actually see it was - was beautiful, was wonderful. So, thank you for bringing that to me as well, Carin, through your pictures.

CK: Well, thank you. I wish that we would have done more video, but I was focusing on pictures and my daughters did video with my phone. But you know how it is with kids doing videos, it's kind of all over the place. So, it didn't really turn out. [Laughs]

CZ: And then Carin put the pictures with some text together in a book that she gave to Wayne and to me as a gift. So, it was a beautiful, just a beautiful gesture on your part, Carin. Thank you.

CK: Yeah, my pleasure. It was a beautiful evening. I really enjoyed it, so.

CZ: Mm hmm.

EM: I love hearing about all of this. [Laughs] It's very, very exciting and it does, it makes me smile because I love - I love music myself. And just to hear that that brought you all together makes me very happy. So, well -

CZ: I didn't tell anybody, but I'm just kind of cooking up an idea for - for Wayne and me to host songs at summer solstice, which is Monday, June 21, in our backyard with some music so that's all I know so far. So just stay tuned.

[Women laugh]

WC: Are we going to have witches and druids and things like that?

CZ: Well, I don't know Wilma. That might be a good idea, I'll ask Ginny and Elise to put something together.

CK: I'm sure they would love to put something together about that.

CZ: Yeah, it's a Monday night. It's a Monday, the 21st of June, but so what, we can do music on Monday. There we go. Music on Monday.

EM: Music Mondays.

CZ: Music Mondays.

[EM laughs]

NW: [Inaudible, dog barking]

CZ: Sorry, Nancy?

NW: Find a time to maybe –

[Dog barking]

NW: Wayne's working on that one.

CZ: Yeah, a Cat Stevens song.

[Dog barks]

EM: Well, very nice. Yeah, hopefully that turns into an annual – an annual event. So.

CZ: Well, Wilma's held - hosted beautiful recitals over the years. So, we just have to kind of look at different ways and additional ways to make that happen.

[Dog barks]

EM: Well very nice. Cool, well, we've been talking for about an hour, I think now, which is exciting. So, if you all have any last points that you'd like to make, you're welcome to do that. But I do think a lot of great stories and insights were shared. So yeah, it's really up to you all. If there's anything you would like to say to finish this up, by all means, or if not, I will stop our interview.

[Pause]

CZ: Sorry about the pooch.

[Women laugh]

CZ: He was supposed to be in the laundry room. I think he - somehow, he got out.

EM: That is okay. I - my dog earlier was whining because nobody was petting him. So, it's – [laughs]. They have a tough time. [Laughs]

NW: They are used to having us home all the time.

EM: Yes, they are for sure. [Laughs]

CK: I know I've gotten a lot more dog walking in since March than I had before. They're getting a lot more attention.

EM: Yes, and I know they love it too. [Laughs]

CZ: Thank you, Emily, for taking us on and all the prep work and the interviewing here and making it all happen. We really appreciate the opportunity. Thank you. And good luck to you in grad school.

EM: Well, thank you, thank you, I will definitely keep in touch with all of you. And if you would like, I would happily send you the interview recording if you would like just to have it for your own record or watching back on. But it will be in the archive too so yeah, so thank you for meeting with me as well. I really appreciate it. So. All right.

[Women say goodbyes]