

**Interviewee:** Anonymous

**Interviewer:** Wesley Kovarik

**Date of Interview:** December 7, 2020

**Location of Interview:** Interviewer's home and interviewee's home

**Format:** Zoom audio and video recording

**Transcriber:** Otter A.I and Wesley Kovarik

**Project in association with:** University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

**Abstract:** Interviewee lives in Eau Claire County, Wisconsin and is a nurse. The interviewee has endured COVID-19 through many different perspectives. As a nurse, mother of children, a wife of a husband, and as a representative of the interviewee's community. With these many perspectives, the interviewee will describe what living in the pandemic is like and what struggles the interviewee had and still has to endure. These perspectives will come from school, the hospital, the community, and the family home. The interviewee, as a health care professional, will offer tips and preferences that is believed to help keep people safe. The interviewee will also discuss government involvement and what can be improved.

**Wesley Kovarik:** Hello, my name is Wesley Kovarik. I am with the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, intro to public history course number 386. Today is December 7 of 2020. And it is currently 5:30pm. I am here today with anonymous. And would you like to say hello?

**Anonymous:** Hello!

**WK:** All right. And so, we'll get right on to the questions. So anonymous, how has COVID impacted your community?

**A:** Well, things have changed considerably. Just like - even just our small neighborhood, we used to have - you know, kids out playing, we were all doing things. And now it's - you know, we're just not out and about as much we are in our yards - you know, but the kids you know - in the actual neighborhood aren't playing with each other as much as they were. It's very interesting going to - you know, going out shopping, doing - you know, anything like that, because it's not as busy anymore, which I'm not saying I don't appreciate. It's kind of nice to go grocery shopping when there's half the people there. But it's just not - there's not as many happenings. It used to be a very active, busy area with music, like outdoor music, and then parks and activities happening, and it's just not - so we found a lot of things to do. Just in - you know at home. We fortunately,

like to go camping. So we spent a lot of time in the woods this last summer, which is good. But yeah, there's just not as much activity, I guess it's not as busy.

**WK:** Okay, and so speaking of just communities, have you noticed, like any huge changes when it comes to like stores like grocery stores, department stores, libraries, restaurants having an enormous impact?

**A:** I - we honestly haven't been to a restaurant. So I, I guess I can't speak to that, we've ordered in a couple times. But grocery stores is really mostly it, we've done a lot of you know - like order ahead and pick up like curbside pickup, which is a huge change. Very convenient, I will say it's really nice. I don't have those impulse - you know, buys because I don't go in the store most of the time, grocery stores - like I said, there's not usually as many people before I think back in March, the store that I typically go to - you know, requested that everyone wear masks, I would say about maybe half the people would wear them. And now it's mandatory. I think just because of the search locally in the community, you're trying to help and do what they can. So yeah, I noticed a lot of the smaller businesses in town, they've gotten creative with how they - you know, can still operate and - you know, still make money and still keep afloat, which is really neat. So yeah.

**WK:** Okay, cool. So then going off the community, how has COVID impacted your work?

**A:** Well, I work at one of the hospitals in town. So it's really kind of uprooted everything that we do, we had to make changes and modifications, not just in the protective equipment that we wear on a daily basis, which I work part time. So I'm not there for every step of the change. But it feels like every time I go into work, something has changed, or we have to wear a new layer or new something when I'm there. I usually facilitate programming with our patients. So we are based like in a group setting. And we taught we do talk about coping skills and therapy and treatment and whatnot and we've had to limit the size of groups. So we've had to completely change the entire schedule for the patients, and then trying to keep - keep it feel as normal as possible. So that's been really interesting, very unique. I know that we are currently, the hospitals have all been full in town, we're at capacity because they've had to turn different departments into COVID units right now. So, like electoral procedures are - and just like the outpatient services are very diminished. I know that so we've actually gotten staff that have come to help us from other departments that don't have a job at this point. So they're learning all new things. But just to keep them working and keep them afloat, too. So it's been interesting, I - I will say and we're doing our best to try and just keep, keep going with all the changes that keep happening. And so far, we're doing pretty good. I think. Just keeping our patients going and keeping ourselves going.

**WK:** Well nice and just working off of that has - so it has put like a strain on your job right? And just like - have you experienced anyone calling sick? Or - you know - like, a lot more work on ya (you but with an accent).

**A:** Yeah, so there was a point as I think a few weeks ago, we had several people out. Because the protocols and procedures are even if you're exposed, you have to be home for X amount of days. Or if someone around you has symptoms, like there's certain days, so we don't bring it back into the facility. So I actually was working in a position that I've never done before it was on our unit, but there was no one to do any of the RPCA work and help out on the floor with patient cares, and requests and our checks and things. So I showed up to do a job I'd never done before. So, it was interesting. I got a lot of steps in that day. And we've actually, I would say, several occasions, been short nurses, nursing staff. We've done our best, you know, as best as we can, but the past week, knock on wood, we've been fully staffed. So hopefully it stays that way. Yeah.

**WK:** Okay. So then we'll move on then and how has COVID impacted your family?

**A:** We've spent a lot of time together. That's a good thing. We like each other, right? Well - I mean, first and foremost, my husband's been working remotely since March and so we're fortunate enough to have - he has like an office space - he's always had one. So it wasn't too difficult of a transition for him, which was nice. But they're not, at this point going back into the office at any foreseeable future. And then the kids, we opted to do - I mean, they stopped in class school in March last year, so we were doing homeschooling or home virtual learning last year and we opted to do the option this year. They're called hybrid model and so they are home three days in the week, and then in school two days, so they could kind of limit the amount the class sizes. So I - we're attempting to be teachers three days a week, which is very interesting. They have adjusted pretty well - you know, but it's a big change for them. You know, I'm now their teacher for - you know, five hours on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. And so that's a really hard transition. However, it does make them very, very excited to go to school on Thursday, Friday. So that's a plus. Let's see here, I said, we, we like to go camping and you know, be active and do things. So we were fortunate in that sense that where we'd like to go. And what we like to do in the summer especially, doesn't involve a lot of people. And you know, state parks and county parks and things you can kind of do your thing. And you know, you're good to go, then that we haven't really been doing much we have got up north a couple of times to visit my parents. beginning of the summer, we actually spent like six weeks, we packed the camper up there, my husband worked from the camper, and so they got us for a really long time. So I mean, that was actually kind of nice. It was enjoyable to be able to spend that kind of time with them. But other than that, yeah, we just were home. We've, you know, working on projects, and then just, just kind of trying to keep our sanity. Because we're with each other every day.

**WK:** It's just - going off school. So, like I understand that you are also like a teacher, but for the teachers in the school. Are they transitioning well to online? Are they having a struggling or are they struggling a little bit as well?

**A:** You know, I can say from my end, they're doing an amazing job from my - like, my personal views, I can't imagine all of the things they got a week before school started to kind of get ready for it, you know. So the fact that they had a week to kind of get going and get into it and we have I mean, the organization of them, bless their hearts seriously. And then there's class meetings that they have arranged every day and the teachers that are going back and forth between you know, two cohorts, you know, when we're home, there's another group there so they're teaching there and still making sure there's meetings for us and our school has been fantastic, keeping us you know, updated, and we have all the resources that we need. I feel they've been doing great. I'm really impressed with the Eau Claire School District. Excellent. Actually, we haven't had to shut down. They after Thanksgiving break. They did we did a week of virtual school just to make sure people had you know if they started being symptomatic whatnot. They would obviously come back in, hopefully there would be enough time if they went traveling, they would know. And just so they could get, you know, the teachers, there was a concern of teacher shortages. However, we haven't had to shut down officially. And there's been a lot of smaller schools that didn't take as many precautions that have had, you know, shut down for two weeks before they could get back going. So, overall, I can't imagine, you know, the stress that they're under, and the pressure and how much work they're putting into it, because this is a complete change, but they're doing a fantastic job.

**WK:** Awesome. I'm glad to hear.

**A:** Yeah...

**WK:** And so...

**A:** We were a little nervous, I will tell you that we didn't know what was going to happen. But...

**WK:** I definitely understand that you'd be nervous with - you know, with all that's going on.

**A:** Yeah.

**WK:** And just in your - like, experience, have you ever been through like a quarantine before?

**A:** No, this is the first time this is - is just like - it's kind of surreal, right? So you learn about - you know, the Spanish flu like - you know, in school and you're like, oh, that would really stink, I can't even imagine that. Here we are, in 2020. doing the same things and having to be - you

know, extra careful and not do what we normally do, which - you know, in the long run to it's nice, we slowed down a little bit, which is good. You know, it's not a constant. We're always running on the go. Yeah, this is very different.

**WK:** Okay. So then we'll just transition on here. So in your experience with all that's going on with school, work, your livelihoods and all that. How do you think the government did like in terms of state, local, federal... you think they at least we're doing pretty good for a virus, it's been around, you know, for just experiencing a pandemic right now.

**A:** A... I think they've tried, at least statewide locally, I think they're trying to do what they can to help, because they can see that. At least from my point of view, people are maybe interpreting their requests for masking, for example, as a power play, and they're just trying to get people on board, because it is, you know, studies and research and science, I'll say that it can be effective, even if it's only a small percentage, which it's not - I mean, it's a decent percentage. You know, just wear the mask when you go out, but people see it more as I'm going to tell you what to do. And these are my liberties. And I don't want to - you know, cross that. So, I'm not - you know, I think they're doing what they can, but they don't have everyone's cooperation. So I think that makes it difficult. I do think federally, had we had a little bit more guidance, or leadership, or maybe on-boardness with some of this stuff, like from the get-go, versus it not being called a hoax, we might have a different outlook on it. You know, I can't say that we can't - you know, go back in time, we can't predict the future, what would be different, but I feel like there wouldn't be as much pushback from people, the citizens if we maybe had a little bit more of a positive influence on that end.

**WK:** Okay. And so then, just with your experience, and with the - with how you feel about the governments and all that, do you think they should stay involved? Or do you think that it should be more of a responsibility by the people? Or...?

**A:** It's a good question. I mean - really, all they can do, you know, is, you know, have these mandates. I mean, there's not locally, like our police force - you know, they're not going to every single time someone doesn't want to wear a mask, they're not going to arrest you or fine you a ticket you - because it's just not physically possible - you know. So there's, I mean, if we had a way to actually have follow up and maybe consequences, but I can't even imagine that undertake, taking, like, how would you even do that? So at this point, I don't know if they could really help I think it's probably more on us you know, more the, the business owners that don't want to enforce it because they might lose business. I will say like, for example, Menards even from the get-go required masks and people were mad about it and yelling - you know, like, there were all these stories and articles about how people were so angry about it. But we're now how many months into this and it's just oh, we have to go to Menards make sure you grab your mask. It's just like, yep, that's what we do. So I think if everybody like, not that it's just the business owners responsibilities by any mean, but everybody was just on board that Yep, we need you to wear when you come in. We would maybe be over this hump. By now with the people fighting, you're

saying I don't want to wear one and then more on a personal level, like the accountability of ourselves. It is just a piece of cloth and you don't have to wear it the whole time. And we were we wear them eight to 12 hours at work. And I'm still here breathing and - you know, I'm upright, and I'm here, you know, I think people don't maybe educate themselves with both sides, since that maybe complicates things a bit. So I think there's a bit of, quite a bit of personal responsibility. Absolutely. And then, you know, unless the government really wants to force your hand, I don't know. I don't know how much more effective they could be. You know, if they're not saying, if you don't follow this mandate, we will find you or we will are..., you know, I don't know how much more you can do.

**WK:** And then, just so pretty much as it should be, like a 50/50. Like, the government's doing their part, people do their part and together just come together and stop right?

**A:** That'd be great. Why can't we just do that right?

**WK:** Oh... yeah. Okay - well then. So then just in your experience, with your education and your knowledge and all this good stuff what do you think about masks themselves? Do you think they're a good starting point for, you know, this... to curb this pandemic? And would you suggest other health equipment if possible?

**A:** I think they're a good piece of the puzzle, I know that there's a lot of, of skepticism about it. I mean, you know, if you're wearing a cloth mask, and you don't clean it regularly, regularly, or if you, you know, you're still touching, or, you know, all of that and so obviously, we have to be responsible when we wear them. But it's also in combination with just trying to maintain your distance, your social distancing, that is huge. Keeping your, your... yourself apart from other people, as far as you can, you know, especially if you don't know them and then the hand hygiene, too. I think people forget that, like yes, there may be, you know, germs or whatnot, and the things I'm touching, but when I get back in my car, I just hand sanitize quick and yep. Then I can take everything on, I'm good. So I think that's part of it. I know at work, we're wearing protective wear, like goggles and shields at this point. And if we have a patient that is being tested for COVID, they're in isolation, and we have to put, put on the gown, gloves, shields, everything, just in case because of the type of virus that it is the droplet precautions, and so you have to be completely covered. I don't necessarily think that that is, you know, something that everyone should be wandering around in, because, you know, that's a little - a little much. But I think if you're out and you know, like, shopping is a great idea. And you there's not good ventilation, or shopping is a great example. I mean, you're in a store with 100 people just being respectful of each other's bubble, and each other space and having a mask on at least keeps the particles in your bubble, and not like everywhere on everyone else. So yeah, I think they're a piece of the puzzle. I don't think they're the only thing I don't think they're the answer. But I do think that they could help. Because I can, there are how many people that have tested positive and there's health care workers that work with them, and, you know, they do going up, they have every everything on and they're protected, and they, they follow the protocol, and they're still at

work, working with the patients every day because they've not contracted it because they are, you know, following these guidelines, so.

**WK:** Okay... and then so just following along with the mass, I've heard reports of people saying, you know, like, they're starting to become more of a marketing thing where, you know, like, you can see them and some of them are cute, like, you'll see like a Santa beard on some or, you know, like a quirky little phrase and I'm just gonna ask, like, do you think that takes away from the potency of the mask? Like, do you think there's some being cheaply made? Or? Actually, a better question would be what kind of masks do you think would be like, sorry, let me rephrase this. What kind of mess do you think would work for this virus like I heard this some that aren't going to be effective enough they don't filter the air good enough. In your expertise, what masks would work or at least do a good job?

**A:** Well, at work we are required to wear surgical mask because of the filtration and if like they get soiled or if they get damp, just from your breathing, you can easily throw them away and put a new one on and that's one of the biggest things you know if it gets wet or moist with your spit, it's now ineffective so we need to you need to change it out and get a new one. Our kids, they wear... we got fun cotton ones, fabric ones because we wanted to help encourage it. It's a lot easier to get them to wear it if it's something that they picked out, and they can choose and do that with, but I do send extra ones with the school. So if they get sweaty or dirty or whatnot, they swap them out right away. I think, you know, again, back to responsibility, being aware of it, obviously, surgical masks, if they are a better filtration would be ideal. But then you're also looking at the cost and the waste of that too, like, how do you keep that in check? fabric cloth ones can be effective, as well, if we use them responsibly. And so like I said, if they're really wet, or you season them or something like that, if you can change them out, if you're not constantly fiddling with them. I we don't personally like the ones we've got some from work that they gave us. So they're like a cotton spandex, almost, that you could put a filter and if you wanted to. But if you are keeping your distance, you know, and you're out in public and you're doing you know, and if you're sick, you stay home, that's a huge thing, too. If you're not feeling well don't go out. It just helps keep your junk to you. And that's one of the big things is so I mean, in an ideal world, obviously, we all could get the masks that we need at an endless supply. But that's obviously not feasible right? So yeah, I guess I don't know, I, you know, if because I, you know, at the hospital, if they're telling me that these are, you know, better filtration, and they're better to use the surgical masks than I would tend, if we could do that all the time. You know? Absolutely. But just, I mean, I can't imagine the costs that they're incurring, because some of us were four or five different ones a day, you know, because we'd have to change them out. And if they, if anything happens if we get too hot, so I don't know that - that's a good question.

**WK:** That's right! That's what I'm here for right? Okay - well, so before we just wrap things up, just gotta ask you, is there anything else you'd like to say, for the people who will watch this interview or listen to this interview?

**A:** Well, you know, it's been tough, it's been a huge - a huge adjustment for everyone and I have to say, I think my family's pretty fortunate in the sense that I do work part time and I'm very flexible, my schedule is extremely flexible, and that my husbands have been able to work full time from home. So we are in a probably a very unique situation, that we have that ability to, I can stay home on the days the kids are home, and do their schoolwork and make sure they're up to you know, caught up and doing that. And he's still able to work full time from home, no hiccups, no, you know, difference there. But they, I mean, we've made big changes to you know, we used to do a lot more with extended family, go, you know, visiting, and in the summer, we travel more and go do activities. And so we've learned to slow down, and we've learned to be thankful for the little things, you know, when it's quiet right now, this doesn't happen very often, you tend to take a different perspective. So, you know, it's tough, and you figure out ways to kind of manage it, and it is, it is doable, you know, you just have to kind of be flexible with the change. And we find, we try to do you know, not you know, like the news can get overwhelming, you know, what time so we try to do like fun family nights and things that we can do just to keep our energy in that direction versus being weighed down with oh my gosh, how many cases and how many deaths and but if this ever happens in the future, I sure hope that we have learned something from this, because we didn't seem to act like we learned anything from the Spanish flu. I feel like we're, you know, not learning from anything and just let's see what happens which is kind of unfortunate, but as tough as it's been. And then scary as it's been a there's a lot of anxiety around it. It's really, you know, because this thing affects everybody so differently. You don't know what's going to happen I could have it be just fine. My husband could get it and he could be in the hospital because just you know how it works so, so in the future, you know, if you're watching this... we are... dinner's ready. Although it might be tough, I mean, just look at the you know, try to find the positives and the silver linings if you can. So, as much as it's been difficult to spend so much time together. We've been pretty lucky that we're... my husband is going yeah. You learn about each other, I'll tell you that much. It's possible. It's absolutely, you know, doable and find the little things to find that you find joy in, you know, and appreciate them and take time for them. And this too shall pass. When, who knows. But if you know, there's any little thing you can do to help, you know, I'll get off my soapbox here, but wearing a mask in public, it's just a piece of cloth. It's literally nobody's trying to, in my opinion, take over your life by telling you to wear a mask. It's you know, but everyone's got entitled to their opinion, I get it, but do the little things to help out... help in the community if you can. But we'll get through it. We'll be here hopefully have learned something from it. Like I said.

**WK:** Oh yes, definitely. Thank you so much for your time.

**A:** You're welcome!

**WK:** And of course, great words to end off this awesome interview!

**A:** Well, thank you very much for asking me.

**WK:** Oh, yes and so again. This is Wesley Kovarik and again, I'm with the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, Intro to Public History course number 386 and thank you again for this interview. And we're signing off.