

Interview with
JOHN “JD” DOTY

November 25, 2020

**THE PANDEMIC YEARS: COVID-19
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

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JOHN “JD” DOTY

John “JD” Doty was interviewed on November 25, 2020 by Maggie Yunker. He related his experiences as a high school senior in Ivins, Washington County, Utah at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

MY: Hello and welcome. Could you please state your name and where you are from for the interview process?

JD: So, my name is JD Doty; I’m from Ivins, Utah.

MY: Okay, thank you. Do you go by any other names?

JD: I go by JD, that’s kind of my nickname. It’s the first letter of my name and the [first] letter of my [last]name put together so, just JD.

MY: Okay. Alright, thank you. So, this interview is about your experience from the coronavirus pandemic. When it started back in March, clear until now. So, whatever you want to disclose, that’s totally up to you.

First off, what were you doing before the coronavirus pandemic started?

JD: So, I was getting ready for our track season. It was— this was my senior year in track and all my other sports. So, we were getting ready for this huge track meet that we had just set up, and we got the news that Governor Herbert and everything was going to shut down the whole state because of the pandemic. But we were, this was two days before our track meet. We had teams from all across the country coming to this. And we got special permission to host this event, and I was able to help my team excel. But after that, we went into the whole two-week mandate and didn’t end up finishing our track season. We did online school from there. We weren’t able to finish the season.

MY: Were there any other sports— You said that it was your senior year in your sport, your final sports season. Were there any sports that, other than track that, you didn’t get to finish?

JD: I was looking forward to helping my rugby team I’ve been with since I was in seventh grade. We’re, I couldn’t play that this year because of a knee injury that I had that occurred in football. And I was looking really forward to helping coach my little brothers’ team, the high school varsity team. I was really looking forward to helping them and excel in the positions that I played, and help them as an assistant coach. And I’m really sad that I didn’t get to finish out track or rugby. I was looking forward to both of them.

MY: Thanks. Tell me about some other events that you missed after school shut down.

JD: I did miss out on a lot of those big things you look forward to as a senior. You have your senior slough. We were gonna go to Wet and Wild in [Las] Vegas [Nevada]; we didn’t

get to do that. I don't think I ever got my money back for my ticket, but that's okay, it goes to a good cause teaching kids and stuff. But, another really big one for me, was senior ball. I did not get to go to a senior ball with the school, which really sucked. And then the whole graduation thing, being able to actually be with my friends and watch them as they walk down the whole graduation aisle and everything. It was definitely very weird having a very, very virtual like, I want, hearing the honor roll students and stuff like that speak. Who's that one person? The valedictorians! Them, hearing them speak online, online and everything, watching the video of us all walking down. It was just, it was definitely different. Didn't have to sit in an auditorium for four hours, so I guess that's an upside, but it still kind of sucked.

MY: With that, was your family able to come?

JD: So, for the actual filming, so they had us in separate, they separated us into cars and everything like that and they could only have a certain amount of people walking through. They kept us socially distanced. My mom and my dad were able to walk in there, they'd see me walk through the aisle, they'd take some pictures, and then from there it was just, straight beeline out and I was done, graduated. I graduated.

MY: Very impersonal.

JD: Yeah, it was not very personal, [laughter] it was like a conveyor belt.

MY: That's a good way to put it. So, you said that classes went online. How is that with finishing up your senior year classes?

JD: Online was really hard for me going from—I'm a very in-person learner. I like having examples, demonstrations, the teacher that I can actually ask questions to. I'm not emailing them and then waiting a couple days for an answer on a test that I need or homework assignment that I need now, trying to get it submitted. It definitely was a learning curve for me, because even though I was born in this age of technology, I still don't know how to work technology [laughter]. It was very interesting and it, I mean, it is crazy to see how much we have come so far in the year. Like, I've learned a lot of things online and it's been very interesting, I will say in the least of things.

MY: Did you notice your grades shifted or were you able to maintain?

JD: I noticed they did shift a little bit. It was kind of like that whole in-person thing; I wanted help and stuff like that, and it's really hard to do that when you're in quarantine. You can't really have study groups or anything like that. Granted, you can look up everything online, but we don't want to get in trouble here, do we? So, try not to do that unless it's on a homework assignment and I need some help, I'll look it up online. Kahn Academy is a really good one for me when I was doing my math stuff, and, like, those other sources that I could use; it was helpful for sure.

MY: What were the challenges of being home for that time and being quarantined?

JD: I think one for me was being active as I was. I was a multiple sport athlete, love being outside, love working out. When the gym's closed, it was a horrible time for me, it was

just like, “Welp, I couldn’t get that summer body, getting ready.” So, I got a little bit of it left over from the quarantine. But that was a really hard one for me, was not being able to go outside. Hanging out with friends was another major one. That’s how I connected with people, especially through sports. That’s how all my friends did everything I did, definitely kind of shut it down there for a minute, so—

MY: You talked about not being able to connect with your friends. How are you able— did you connect with people while you were at home quarantined?

JD: So, I actually did, that’s the amazing thing about this technology. You have FaceTime, Zoom, you can still call people, send out emails, that kind of stuff, if you send out emails. It still, I was still able to connect with a lot of ’em. Some [of] my friends had gaming systems like I do, and we were able to connect over gaming systems and we can play certain games like, *Call of Duty*, *Fortnight*, that kind of stuff. You’re able to still be able to talk and communicate and hang out virtually, so it was kind of cool to see that aspect of it. But it still doesn’t replace that interaction with, like, a human. [It] doesn’t replace that, that’s my, that’s my favorite thing is human interaction with people.

MY: So, from then to now, what have your days been like? Go ahead and talk us through your summer and even up until now. Now that you’re graduated what are your— We’ll get to that part.

JD: So, for the most part, especially, like, once stuff started lightening up and, like, they were allowing us to go out, I started working at my old summer job at Dig Paddlesports and I spent the summer renting our kayaks and paddle boards to people. And it was crazy to see. I mean, I’ve been working there four years now and see people coming through. There was so much more traffic this year as people are like, “Well, let’s get outdoors, let’s try and socially distance from people,” and the lake is the best option. When your temperatures are around 110° [F] every day, [the] lake’s the only way to go. So, it was crazy to see, like, how many people were, like, coming into the lake, how many people we sent out and interacted with. We still did our best, we made sure to socially distance, wear our masks, and spray everything off [to] try to kill the virus as well as we could. I mean, it was a really good time. That’s what I did for the majority of my summer.

I had some little vacations here and there; I’d go out and I’d go into the woods and stuff like that with my buddies, and we just try and socially distance away from people as best as we could. Just kind of the whole aspect of keeping everyone safe was a really important priority, because you don’t wanna get people sick and then you feel really bad.

MY: What about now? Now that summer’s kind of over and you’ve graduated, what are your plans?

JD: So, I just finished up at the lake as of like two days ago. It’s been a little chilly out there, not a lot of people, but I’m getting paid to sit there, [laughter] so it’s pretty nice. But, as of right now, kind of just chilling right now. [I’m] probably gonna look for another job as the season’s come to an end, but getting ready to serve a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And that’s been a really hard experience for me, just because of it has shut down a lot of people going out of the country and serving their missions, it’s brought ’em home. And it’s just, I mean, it’s kind of crazy to see how that’s affected

a lot of missionaries. Missionaries are now staying home or, just because it's a lot easier. But that's kind of why I've waited it out. I'm trying to wait it out so I can actually go out and enjoy and serve my mission. So, yeah—

MY: Where are you hoping to go?

JD: Well, if I had to pick, I definitely would go down to Fiji, as seeing as I've been there before. And I, the islands, dang, it just can't get much better than 75° weather and sunny outside. Granted, I'll be wearing a suit, so I won't be, I won't be getting no tan, but it'll be okay.

MY: What kind of— You talked about how the lake got super busy, what other changes did you notice in the community?

JD: So, I noticed a lot more people became aware of different, like, health issues that certain neighbors have. I know me personally, so my girlfriend, her mom's had cancer in the past and she's a very, with what she had, is very high risk and everything. So, it's just amazing to see that, like, we have to take those precautions so she doesn't get sick because I would hate to be the cause of that happening to my girlfriend's mom. I don't think I could live with myself. But, it is another crazy thing seeing people, how they treat you differently based on if you're going to wear the mask or if you're not, how you interpret the virus. Certain people interpret it way different than others. But, you see, for the most part, communities growing together trying to stay as healthy as they can, and try to help each other out. Because I know sometimes people can't go out because they have the coronavirus, you see people drop stuff off, make sure that the neighbors are taken care of; they'll try to do the best they can without getting too close and trying to keep them safe.

MY: What other changes have you noticed, like in, in the environment? You said you work out outside a lot, you went out camping, have you noticed any changes that way?

JD: I've noticed a lot more people have been out and about. I know the lake got a lot of visitors this year. It is crazy to see, as people come in, I'm really excited that they're enjoying the beauty that we have surrounding us, especially here in southern Utah. But, it also kind of sucks because all those people do bring wear and tear to the environment, that kind of stuff. So, it is crazy 'cause I love seeing people out there, but I also love, I want to keep the environment as good as I can. So, like, especially when I go camping and that kind of stuff, I'll make sure to pack out everything I possibly, I had. I made sure everything was as it was when I first got there. I try to keep the environment as it is and I'm really hoping people were too, trying to do that. But, I knew pe— I know people, they're getting into this whole new environmental thing, and trying to actually go out and in the environment. I'm like, they're saying, "I have been in the environment." Always just try to help people, make sure that they know that the environment, even though it is there, we want to keep it there as long as we can, so make sure you take care of it.

MY: This one's kind of a little bit touchier but, what about the political environment? What changes have you seen there?

JD: Political, they, I feel like both sides have taken advantage of this whole coronavirus ordeal and it is crazy to see how political parties have turned on each other. They definitely have changed a lot. Whether you be Democratic, Republican, Libertarian, whatever you are. Me, personally, I know masks are a good thing, but I also know, like, if I don't have to wear 'em, I'm not going to. But, if it's for the safety of others and it's, and it would make people feel better, of course I'll wear the mask. I want to make sure that people everywhere feel safe, if that's the case I'll wear the mask. It's no big deal to me. It's just, if I don't have to, I don't know, [laughter] I'm just really lazy and I don't want to pull the mask up in my pocket and throw it on. But if it's to help people feel safer and everything like that, I'm okay wearing a mask, it's okay with me. But it is sad to see that, like, both sides have picked it up, and they're like "'Kay, I'm gonna use [this] for my political agenda." I mean, it's a health issue. I don't know if it really should be a political thing, it should just be health, so yeah—

MY: Have you noticed the difference between different governments worldwide, how they've handled it?

JD: I have seen that. I mean there's mandates in certain— So, I know we have mandates here and stuff like that and guidelines, but I know some places they have been enforcing it and you do see a lot of side effects of that. You see the people that do wear it and everything like that, they're good about it. And then you see the people that don't wanna wear about, er wear 'em and everything like that. And, you know it's causing some tension and stuff like that in different countries. Especially, where it is required and if you do not have it on, you can get jail time, fines, stuff like that. It's definitely changed the whole dynamic, because at that point people are like, "Well, this is against my personal freedom," and that's where the whole civil unrest comes from. And I definitely think it could be handled better in certain countries and stuff like that, and even in our own country, it can be handled better. But, it's, I mean, you have your own choice and it is up to you whether or not you're going to wear it or not. I'll just do what I think is right, and you can do what you think is right, and we'll just go from there. That's how I view it. I don't wanna try and get into an argument with somebody at the store because I walked in and grab a freaking two-dollar candy bar or something, and this lady's yelling at me and I'm like, "'Karen' go away. No one cares. I will be in and out, 'kay." If a mask works, it works, okay. Yeah, that's kind of my view on the whole situation worldwide. So yeah—

MY: Very cool. — So, what advice would you give to people in the future who are reading this now?

JD: If I were to give advice, I would definitely say, just try and keep, 'cause obviously your overall health is very important and it probably should be your number one, because you can't help others if your health is not okay. So, always make sure that your health is okay and good, and make sure that your loved one's health is good and okay. And then, from there, to start focusing on everyone else and try to get them to do the same. 'Cause I mean, you can't really help anyone if you're dead, or if you're bedridden, you can't really do anything. So, I would say the people that are, if they ever do hear this, I would just say, "Try to take care of yourself first, and then from there, because you gotta take care of yourself to be able to take care of others." I definitely say, just do that and then make sure

you are helping people because everyone around the world has their own struggles, everything like that. Make sure that you can help them in any way you can.

MY: Kind of expanding on that, how have you personally taken that into your heart? Like, have you reached out to people and helped them? Do you have any examples?

JD: So, I know, especially, with being locked down and everything like that and not having social interaction, we see depression, anxiety, all those mental health issues have arisen, in the, in this whole COVID pandemic. I've seen that arise. And even just the simplest smile, helping, like sending out a text, just seeing if, check on people if you haven't heard from them in a while, make sure that they know they are loved and everything like that. Because I know I've done that and it has helped people. I mean, you see it all the time where one person, just smiling at one person can change that whole person's day, whether or not they could end up trying to commit suicide, stuff like that. Just that one spot, a smile to know that they are appreciated and they're known, can change a whole, could save someone's life. Just make sure that you're always reaching out and helping people; try and do your best. So—

MY: Thanks. Anything else that you want to talk about?

JD: Um.

MY: Have you noticed any changes in your family life, home life with the pandemic?

JD: Sibling tension has definitely gotten the best of us a couple times. We've had some situations.

MY: [Laughter.] Go ahead and talk about that.

JD: I mean, I have a little brother and little sister, and I just know for fact I like my own personal space, that's why I made myself my own room.

MY: [Laughter.] I bet that was a project.

JD: Yeah, I created a room in the back of our house so I can have separation from those two. It's definitely hard, especially when— I mean, we are family and everyone has their own things, but growing up in a small house and not having any space for yourself, it definitely does create some tension. I used to share a room with my brother. Oh Lordy! So many Legos! I couldn't stand it; I had to get out [laughter]! I mean, I love my family and I know it's definitely been a growing experience knowing that, like, I have been stuck with them for so long. And I know we had our fights and issues, but I also learned a lot about how to tolerate and stand them and learn to love them a lot more. So, I guess in a weird perspective or a weird way, I have grown to love my family a lot more seeing as I have been able to spend quality time with them. But I've also learned not to spend as much [laughter] quality time with them. Sometimes our love grows more when we don't see each other as much.

MY: Yeah. So, outside family, how did you, how did you stay connected to, like, grandparents and cousins and stuff, who don't live with you?

JD: That's the same thing. Social media is a really big one, I can always stay in touch. Snapchat was an easy one for me to text friends and my cousins, in fact, some other family that has it. Not really the adults, that was really just texting or giving 'em a call. I know with my grandpa, I cannot do text! He gets a text and he'll call me and be like, "Dude, I don't get text. Tell me what you need." It's just, it is hard though. But, I mean, you can FaceTime. FaceTime is a really good one. There's several different apps. Marco Polo is a really good one, you can send videos and that's another way of communication. So, it's really just technology is, we were really blessed to have technology in the day that we have, that way we can stay connected to those we love 'cause it would kind of suck to send a letter and then have to wait, especially if everything shut down, you can't get no letters.

MY: So, with the upcoming holiday season, with it being Thanksgiving tomorrow, are you gonna, do you notice that there's going to be, how is this holiday season going to be different for you?

JD: I feel it's gonna be different. I don't know personally for me, because, I mean, it is Thanksgiving and stuff, but I feel like a lot of people, especially like, when it comes to those that are high risk, or like your grandparents and stuff like that, it is going to be hard because you don't want to put them in danger or anything like that. So, it might be a little different; Grandma and Grandpa might not be there but, you know, you can still have them in your heart and your spirit and everything like that. And you can do that, maybe get some little picture frames, stick them up there with some food. You can do that, I've seen people do that. So, I don't want to—I definitely think it's gonna be a little different. People are gonna kinda be more cautious trying to help, like, protect their family, so— But yeah, who knows?

MY: Who knows?

JD: Who knows?

MY: Alright. Well, if there's anything else you wanna say, we'd love to have you say it.

JD: I would say what my grandpa says but, I'm not gonna say that, 'cause that'd be—

MY: Go ahead!

JD: So, in closing, this is the iconic grandpa line that my grandpa says anytime he says goodbye to us and I'll be using that today. Peace, love, sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll, and you'll have a good time.

MY: Alright.

JD: Thank you for having me over.

MY: Thank you for participating. This was really fun.

[END OF RECORDING. END OF INTERVIEW.]