

Interview with
SHERRY LARSON SYPHUS

November 29, 2020

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

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SHERRY LARSON SYPHUS

Sherry Larson Syphus was interviewed on November 29, 2020 in Washington, Utah by Emily Syphus. She related her experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ES: Alright, this is Emily Syphus recording. It is November 29th, 2020; we're in Washington, Utah. If you just want to start with your name and date of birth, where you were born, background information, that sort of thing?

SS: So, I am Sherry Larson Syphus and I was born in St. George, Utah and my birthday is February 19th, 1977. And, yeah, [laughter] that's me.

ES: Sweet. So, you taught, correct?

SS: Yes, I taught elementary school when I was first married.

ES: And you stopped because—?

SS: I had kids [laughter]. I taught for a couple years. I taught when my— until my second child was about a year old.

ES: So, when did you first hear about coronavirus and the outbreak?

SS: In February, towards the end of February, might even have been the first part of March. Yeah, just— you know, first hearing about it being in China and hearing about them having to quarantine, and they were kind of shutting down the country and shutting down the borders. So, I remember hearing about it first before there were any cases here in the United States. And I believe after China, the first cases, if I remember right, were in Italy. I think that they had cases there first, and then we started hearing about cases here. So, and actually it was, you know, it was February, it was actually towards the first middle part of February.

ES: Do you— what was the first time you heard about the severity, like the cases here, when you were really concerned about it?

SS: Honestly, I wasn't really concerned about it until it started affecting my life [laughter]. Which I— you hear a lot of things on the news and it's hard to gauge the seriousness of it until it starts being something that you're seeing that will affect what you're doing. I mean, I was obviously worried about it, but I also remember talking to my youngest who is eleven. Mostly, I just remember hearing— 'cause they were hearing things at school, and they were hearing things on the news, and, of course, hearing adults talking about it. So, I remember just talking to her about it and saying, just trying to reassure her that, yes this is kind of a scary situation, but the reason why it's scary was just because we don't know that much about it because it was new. Not because it was horribly deadly and not

because we were worried about catching it ourselves. But just trying to explain to her the reason why there was so much news coverage about it and why everyone was so concerned was because it was something new, and something we didn't have a vaccine for, and something we didn't know a whole lot about yet. I mean, we were still hearing conflicting stuff about it, and how it was being transmitted, and how easily it was transmitted. So, I just remember the first time it started affecting us was in February, and just talking to her about it and making sure that she wasn't scared, and just trying to reassure her that the reason it was such a big deal was because of all those unknown factors. But it wasn't— yeah, that we didn't have antibodies for it and so if you were exposed to it, you were more likely to get it than some of the other things that are out there.

ES: Sure.

SS: But as far as it affecting my life and starting to make me worried, was the first time I went to the grocery store and things were not on the shelves. Like that, as a parent, that was really a scary thing. Even though it was something I didn't necessarily need—

ES: Sure.

SS: I've never in my lifetime gone to a grocery store and had empty shelves and things that we didn't need. And I just remember just being really surprised, too. I remember I went to Harmon's and I was going to get— I was just doing my normal grocery shopping, and, of course, this was before you had to wear masks in the grocery store. This was at the very beginning, it would have been in February, maybe the first part of March. It kind of all blends together. I do remember the last time I went to Costco. So it was— yeah, this would have been in March. So, I just remember going to Harmon's and there was no toilet paper. That was the first thing that there was a shortage of, of course, everyone remembers, but— And of course, I don't buy toilet paper all that much [laughter] so I wasn't overly concerned, but it was just really weird just to see this huge empty section. And, of course there were a couple of them. I remember you couldn't get toilet paper; you couldn't get hand sanitizer; you couldn't get a lot of the cleaning stuff, like bleach and Clorox wipes—

LS: [Third person in background.] Kitty, kitty.

SS: — and things like that were unavailable, too.

ES: Did you find it weird that those were the things that you couldn't get access to?

SS: No, because I had been hearing on the news that— Actually, I think I heard about the toilet paper shortage about the same time I went to the store, 'cause I remember hearing about toilet paper shortages in California. So I think it was, honestly, the day before at work someone was talking about— You know, that's where I got a lot of my information was, you know, around the water cooler kind of thing—

ES: Uh-huh [affirmative].

SS: — talking about what everyone's heard and what's going on. So, I remember hearing that there were shortages of toilet paper in California and thinking, "Okay that's weird, that has nothing to do with any of the symptoms—

ES: Right.

SS: — like, diarrhea's not a symptom, that seems like a weird thing to be out of, but okay." And, of course, I had plenty of toilet paper at home, so I wasn't overly concerned about it. And then the next day was the day I went to Harmon's and—

LS: Hi. [Inaudible].

[Recording paused.]

SS: Anyway, so it was about a day after I heard about the shortages in California while at work, and when I went to Harmon's, just noticed that there was no toilet paper and I thought, "Well, that's kind of weird," but wasn't worried about it. And I remember I was going to pick up hand sanitizer, but they didn't have any; and I was going to pick up Clorox wipes and they didn't have any. But there were bottles of bleach and I thought, "Well, I can just make my own disinfectant," and I had some bleach at home, but I bought a couple more bottles of bleach and I bought soap. There was still a little bit of soap, although not very many bottles left. So, I remember I grabbed maybe four or five bottles of soap. And that was the first time it was kind of like, "Oh, this is going to start affecting our lives." And I just remember being so surprised at how upsetting that was to have empty shelves. And then you start worrying about, "What else am I not going to be able to buy?"

ES: Right.

SS: And I just remember every time after that, every time I would go to the store— and I wasn't one of the ones that jumped on the hoarding thing. But I just remember the following time I went to Harmon's, the new thing that was out was all the easy meal things. So, a lot of the canned stuff— like, I remember I was going to get some Manwich [sloppy joe sauce] and there was some there, but there was a limit on how much you could have. And things like macaroni and cheese, gone. Things like—

ES: Pasta, wasn't it, was also gone? I remember you saying—

SS: Yeah, pasta was really gone. Basically, all the things that people who don't know how to cook would be able to cook [laughter], like those were the things because they were starting to close things a little bit. And so people were like, "Okay, if I have to cook at home [laughter], what can I cook?" [inaudible]. And then after that, it just kind of felt like it was snowballing. It just felt like there was something new. Then maybe months later, probably, it was when chicken was suddenly hard to get. And I remember during

the summer, during the Fourth of July and the Twenty Fourth of July, hamburger patties were impossible to find and they were way more expensive than they usually were, not quite twice as much, but way more expensive. So, just seeing prices fluctuating and seeing things being out of, and then, of course, hearing about all the lines at Costco.

So, my daughter's birthday was the end of February, on February 28th, and I remember I went to Costco and got her birthday cake, I think maybe the day before her birthday. So it was the very, very end of February and everything was normal at that point. And I remember thinking— of course I was kicking myself later— I remember thinking, "Oh, I should get toilet paper while I'm here," and didn't 'cause I was kind of in a hurry. So I just grabbed her cake and I think that's literally all I got. I think I got her cake and maybe one or two other things. And then we had her birthday, and that was the last time I went to Costco for probably two months. Because after that, I would hear, again at work, at the water cooler kind of a thing, where they were talking about there were lines to get into Costco, and they were always out of toilet paper and so they had to limit it. And people were just waiting in these huge lines just to be able to get in because they were only letting so many people in. And at first, they were making everybody go through a certain route through Costco to make sure that it wasn't crowding, that there was a flow to it. And you never knew if they would have toilet paper or not, and that was one of the many— I'm sure there were other things that they were running out of, but that was the main thing that I heard about, that and paper towels and Clorox wipes.

And I don't like standing in lines and there was nothing I had to have at Costco so bad, so we just didn't shop at Costco for like two months. And then my husband discovered Costco Delivery, so then we ordered a few things and had them deliver them, and that was good. But, I usually go to Costco every other week and we didn't go for two months until things settled down enough that there weren't lines outside of Costco waiting to go into Costco. That's when it first started becoming real.

ES: So, did you find that it was more kind of a gradual thing or was there kind of like a moment where situations, like 9/11, where you knew exactly where you were when you heard or—?

SS: No, it was a much more gradual thing than 9/11. Like 9/11, I could tell you exactly where I was. Yeah, that's very stuck in my mind. This was a much more gradual thing. Like I said, everything kind of runs together, although I was really, really careful about journaling as I went along because I knew from the very early onset— As soon as we started getting cases in the United States, which, of course, I'm pretty sure everyone realized was going to happen eventually. There was no way with as much international travel, there's no way it wasn't going to hit here. It never occurred to me that it wouldn't come here, but just realizing it was such a unique, momentous situation— and I remember telling all my kids, make sure you're journaling about this.

Probably the biggest thing was when they closed the schools. So, that would have been— it was around spring break, so it was in March, and they basically kind of said we're not going to come back after spring break. Or maybe they went back a little bit after spring

break, but it was around spring break, so it was the end of March when they said, “Okay, we’re going to send all the kids home and we’ll figure out this online school stuff.” And of course, now it’s working pretty well. The end of last year’s school year was a little bit rough. Last spring was a little bit rough, but that was when it really got serious, ’cause to my knowledge, that’s never happened. I mean, the running out of things in the stores, I mean, if you lived some place where they have hurricanes and things like that, that happens to them all the time when people are trying to prepare for some event that’s coming up, but we don’t live in an area where that’s ever happened before.

So for me, when they closed the school, that was when it was like, “Oh, this is not going to be a quick thing.” Which, I knew they weren’t going to come up with a vaccine quickly. In fact, when they were saying they were going to have them by the end of the year, I really didn’t think that was ever going to happen. That’s actually pretty impressive that they have a vaccine, several vaccines now, that they’re getting ready to mass produce kind of a thing. But I thought, there’s no way we’ll have a vaccine for another year.

ES: Yeah.

SS: If not eighteen months, a year and a half. So, I didn’t really expect that. The closing of the schools was a big thing, and of course, you, my oldest daughter, getting ready to go to college—

ES: Yes.

SS: — was going away to school. That was a big change, so that was a big thing, too. So I guess, in fact, I guess I kind of do remember, because it was Easter weekend, the first weekend in April that we were supposed to go look at apartments in Salt Lake [City, Utah] and it was like, “Nope, everything’s getting shut down, so there’s no point” [laughter]. So, the unknown part of it was really scary, especially when it started affecting the schools ’cause that’s not something that is taken lightly. That’s a big deal. Not only because it affects the kids’ educations, but for working parents that creates a childcare situation. I mean, that’s something that no politician would do lightly ’cause that’s a big deal for families.

ES: As a teacher, do you understand more about why and does that affect how you view the seriousness of shutting down schools, or is it more, like you said, a childcare sort of thing?

SS: No, both. It’s just education is such a big important thing for our culture, and that affects our economy down the line. I mean, it may not affect it— I mean, it does affect it right now, because you’ve got teachers working and stuff. But I mean, that’s— anything you do with the education system, that has lasting effects. I mean, that’s putting kids behind on testing, it’s putting kids behind on college. I mean, even just looking at how it affected universities, where the students are saying, “Wait, I’m not getting the education I paid for, that’s not fair,” but universities are saying, “Well, we’re doing the best we can, we can’t take a loss on this,” ’cause, you know, it is a business. So I mean, that’s a big thing.

Especially, 'cause it's affecting not only the education system, but the healthcare system. I mean, those are two of the biggest—

ES: Industries?

SS: Yeah, those are two of the biggest—I don't know what you want to call them—not agencies. Those are two really important factors in people's everyday life. So yeah, that's a big deal.

ES: You mentioned water cooler talk. Where did you get most of your information about coronavirus?

SS: So, I've been off social media for several years now, so I can safely say I wasn't getting a lot of false information there. Mostly the news, I usually watch the news, channel two, I think it's CBS. So, I usually watch CBS in the morning when I'm getting ready for work. If I'm not watching it, I just have it turned up really loud and I'm listening to it while I'm getting ready in the morning. So, I'll listen to the local news and then the local news turns into that [national news] at eight o'clock.

ES: Okay.

SS: So, I was watching both the local news and then, for Utah, which, of course, is mostly northern Utah. And then the national news show that I was watching is based out of New York. So, I was honestly, probably getting more freaked out by that than necessary because New York was such a hot spot. I mean, California too, but New York became such the center of everything and was affected so much. Which again, not surprising, it's such an international city. Of course it's a lot of people in a small space, so it's not surprising that that became such a red zone. That was a little bit scary for me, because I know we're kind of in this little bubble in southern Utah, but watching how it affected people in New York was really worrisome for me. Like, I know this isn't going to get to us quickly, but eventually that's going to be in all the bigger cities and how's that going to affect Salt Lake? Eventually, that trickles down to us.

So, most of my information I was getting from the news and then, of course, when I'd get to work, I'd hear about all the other things that people are getting off of social media. [Laughter.] Never been so happy to be off social media than during the dual nightmare of an election year and the coronavirus, 'cause I do feel super strongly that had the pandemic happened in a non-election year, everything would have been handled differently. I do think that that really was a factor in how the country handled the pandemic, and how the citizens responded to the pandemic. I think it was a much more polarizing situation than it would have been if it hadn't been an election year. So that was kind of the perfect storm of awfulness. [Laughter.]

ES: Did how you get information change throughout the last few months?

SS: Yeah, in fact, it's interesting to think about it because, you know at first, we were all so freaked out. And so, I remember— I work in an account firm, and so this was all happening during tax season, so the accountants— and I work in payroll, so it's not a super busy time for me, but for everybody but two of us in the office, it is a super busy time. So, they were really busy and tired and working a lot of hours, and then the governor did his very first mandate. And that would have been the first part of April? It was before the tax deadline, was supposed to be, before they extended it. The first part of April, they did the two-week mandate, where they basically said, "If you're non-essential—" Well, let's see, what was it? They shut down all the non-essential, and we didn't have to close our office, but they did have all the seasonal workers leave for two weeks, take two weeks off basically, until they kind of reassessed the situation. And the purpose of that, they were trying to limit how many people were being exposed to other people. They wanted us to stay home as much as possible, to only go out if you were grocery shopping. If you had a job that you could still go to, they were still letting you, but we had to— they started enforcing things like social-distancing and wearing masks. Did we wear masks then? I think we did, I think that was the first time masks became a thing.

Yeah, it was much more gradual. For a while there, it seems like every day there was something new. Something new that you couldn't get at the store, something new that some city was doing, something new that some state was doing; different cities around the country were shutting down. There was a lot of water cooler talk. So, there was something new every single day. It was so hard to keep up. And it was interesting to watch the way people felt about it change. At first, we were all so, so worried about— Traveling was a big thing, you don't travel anywhere, and then after a while we just kind of got, what do they call it? Corona burn-out or pandemic burn-out— fatigue. Coronavirus fatigue.

ES: Gotcha.

SS: It seriously is a thing. Eventually, it became normal.

ES: Did you feel that happened with everybody or just your peers?

SS: I think it happened with everybody, although to varying degrees, because you have the people who think it's— I mean, I work with a couple people that are pretty sure the whole thing is a conspiracy. I mean, yeah, they think that the coronavirus is a real thing, but they think that all of the numbers are inflated. And it's [a] hard thing because statistics don't lie, but liars use statistics. And everything you hear, you kind of have to take with a grain of salt, knowing that whatever their agenda is, is how they're going to portray the numbers. You know the big joke is always like everybody is dying of coronavirus. And a couple people at work, like I said, think a lot of it is, not a conspiracy, maybe that's the wrong word for it, but they feel like funding is being given to hospitals if they report deaths as being coronavirus even though there are underlying factors. And it's hard to reason with people that are very adamant—

ES: Decided.

SS: Yeah, it is. It's a very polarizing thing because either— Yeah, you're not going to change— and of course, I'm not one to want to change anyone's mind either. I'm just kind of like, I will happily listen to them spout their craziness and I don't necessarily agree with them, but I respect their right to feel differently about it. Yeah, we all have to work together so we all just respect each other's opinion and just know that some of them— I mean, there's a huge range. We have everyone from it's a conspiracy theory to we all just need to do what they're asking us to do.

ES: Do you feel like your day-to-day life has changed a whole lot?

SS: Not now. Not now that it's easier, now that it's not affecting my grocery shopping. Because, like I said, that was a really big thing. Especially as a parent, because like, "Crap, if I can't get things, what am I going to do?" But not really. We've been really lucky that everybody in our household that was working before the pandemic is still working. Our kids are all in school full time. One of my daughters is taking online classes, she's taking a combination of both, but that's mostly because they're concurrent classes or college classes. So really, it's not affecting us nearly as much as it did back in February or April. My husband doesn't love wearing a mask, but he does. I mean, like most of us, I don't love wearing a mask either. At work, we just wear a mask if we're meeting with a client, but I generally am not, so I just go in my office and I don't have to wear my mask in there. So, it's not really affecting us that much anymore.

ES: How do you feel about things like the protests against masks? Like you said, you don't love wearing a mask obviously, but you don't mind it?

SS: Yeah, I don't understand it, to be honest. For me, especially, because there's options out there. It would be different if you had to wear a mask and you couldn't get food if you didn't. But you know, if you don't want to wear a mask in a grocery store, then don't go to the grocery store. You can do the online pick up, you can have groceries delivered to your door. Because there's so many options and you're not being forced to do something; there's a loophole for you. I don't understand it. Now, I can understand people feeling like their rights are being taken away from them, you know, if like I said, there was no way for them to get groceries unless— but even then, I'm kind of like, it's a business, they have the right to set the rules.

ES: Right.

SS: So, I really don't understand the protesting. It's not a hill I'm willing to die on, to me. And I get that things happen slowly, you look back at— and this is not comparing masks to the Holocaust in any way, shape, or form, but I think a lot of these people that are very against the masks are just worrying that this is the first right that's being— you know what I mean? I think they're worried, you know, with the Holocaust and stuff with the Jews, they started with small things like, "Oh, we're not going to do anything to you, we

just want to know who you are” kind of a thing. “So, wear the star, so we know who you are; so we can protect you.” You know what I mean?

ES: Yeah.

SS: I can see why they’re worried. I just think it’s jumping the gun a lot, especially because it’s a mask. I just don’t think it’s that big of a deal. I truly just don’t understand.

ES: So you don’t feel like the restrictions have been unreasonable or—?

SS: No. No, not at all. To me, it’s a small thing to ask. And several of the people I work with go on and on about how it doesn’t do any good and it doesn’t help at all. And for me, I’m kind of like, even if it doesn’t do anything but make people feel safer, I feel like there’s value in that. And I think that it does help and I don’t think it’s the be all, end all of everything, and it’s not going to save us from getting coronavirus if we wear our mask all the time. But even if it just helped a little bit, it’s a small thing to do and not a big deal.

ES: Do you feel that has to do with what you mentioned before, the polarization with the election year? Do you think that has had an effect?

SS: Yes, I think it was definitely politicized. But I also think that, just as a country and as Americans, we don’t want to be told what to do.

ES: Yeah.

SS: There are other countries that are used to being told what to do by their government, and we just don’t fall into that category. Whenever our government has ever asked us to do something, you’re always going to have a very vocal group, and they’re probably a smaller group, but they’re vocal. So, the squeaky wheel kind of a thing. I think that any time any person in our government asks us to do something as a people in America, we’re going to have a group of people that are going to throw a fit about it. Because we’re Americans, that’s who we are, [laughter] you know what I mean? We do not want to be told what to do, and that’s not a bad thing. Like I said, I do respect people’s right to be upset, I don’t agree with them, but I’m glad that I live in a country where they are able to voice that opinion that they have, even if it’s not the same opinion I have. But I do think that that definitely put our country at risk, not them, but the whole idea that we don’t want to be told what to do.

I mean, if we had been a country more willing to trust our government, I think maybe the pandemic would have been handled better. But I also don’t think it’s wise to blindly trust your government, either. So, I don’t know that it could have gone that much better. Definitely being in an election year made it worse, because it just seemed like when you have your political leaders, some saying, “Wear a mask,” and some saying not [to] wear a mask, that’s confusing for people and they start—

ES: Questioning.

SS: Yeah, and it turned into a political thing. And it was especially hard because even the president is not listening to the scientists. You know, when you have people that are in positions of power that are not willing to listen to those that have the knowledge and the education and the background, you know what I mean? Everyone's got their own agenda, and even scientists I'm sure have their own agenda, but I think it's arrogant to not listen to experts in their fields. And when you have every expert except for the one in your pocket telling you one thing, you know what I mean? When you've got a yes man telling you what you want to hear, and everybody else is saying something else? You should have listened. [Laughter.]

ES: What kind of things, like out in public, have you noticed the biggest changes? What sort of things do you see and recognize in your head, "That's so much different than a few months ago?" Or is there anything like that?

SS: Obviously, with restaurants and stuff doing a lot more takeout. I remember when the restaurants shut down and then when they reopened up, the dining rooms were still shut down, but you could still do online orders and you could still do takeout, pick-up, you could do those things in the drive-thrus. It was interesting to see all the signs that would be advertising for takeout all of the sudden. And I think that that's something that's going to have a lasting effect, too. I think that the way that we eat out is never, probably, going to be quite the same.

And going back to the fact that we were all employed, when the restaurants had to shut down their dining rooms and we're just relying on takeout and stuff, we made a point to— and I don't know if my kids even noticed this, but we made a point to get takeout at least once a week, just trying to support the businesses. I just remember feeling bad that, you know, we still have jobs, and there's a lot of people that are on unemployment. And because I work in payroll, seeing how it's affecting businesses was also really enlightening. So, just trying to still support restaurants and things like that in any way that we could.

But yeah, going back to your question, I think probably the biggest thing [was] seeing how the schools are going to be different, and how restaurants and things like that are going to be different. And of course, all the face shields in every business now. That is one thing I don't like about masks, it's really hard to hear people. Oh my goodness, when we went to Costa Vida the other day, I was using thumbs up and thumbs down when I was saying what I wanted on my salad because it's just— you've got this plexiglass thing and then they've got a mask on and you've got a mask on. I mean, goodness.

ES: Communication has definitely changed.

SS: Communication is getting a little bit harder and I'm just thinking like— oh, if you were hard of hearing— My dad wears a hearing aid, I'm like, that's got to be so frustrating.

ES: Has it been hard to still connect with friends and family, things like that? Has that changed a lot?

SS: I'm a very big introvert, so for me, not so much. I know for a lot of people it's been hard, but honestly, it's kind of felt like a really, great, fantastic, no-guilt excuse to not be social [laughter]. So for me, it hasn't. I mean, there's things that— I would have been sad if we were not going to do Advent during the Christmas holiday, but we are, so it's okay. I do miss the interaction with church members. I'm grateful that we're able to go as much as we are. So, we can go in person every other week and we watch a broadcast every other week. But I do miss having classes and just being able to interact with people. I am starting— I mean, it's taken me a good six months, but I am starting to miss that. So yeah, a little bit, but probably not as much as a lot of people. And again, because I am still working, I'm still getting a lot of social stuff at work. And we have family in town, so I feel like I can still see all of my family. So for me, the social part of it has not been hard and it hasn't felt like a big sacrifice.

ES: How do you feel that, I don't know, where you are mentally about the pandemic? How has it changed from the beginning? Do you feel less concerned about the pandemic? Do you feel more like you know what's happening, sort of thing?

SS: Definitely less concerned. I just remember the unknown part of it being really scary. Like I said, when we didn't know how long it was going to take to get a vaccine, when we didn't know if we're going to be able to get— When all the factories shut down and that disrupted the chain of distribution of items that we buy at the store. All of that, as soon as that died down, it was a lot less scary.

And we had had a trip scheduled for July to go to Mexico, and so when everything started it was like, "Okay, we'll for sure be able to go still in July." And then of course, July came and it was kind of like, "Okay, yes you can go, but then you have to quarantine for two weeks." So a lot of the anxiety that I felt was all of the unknown factors because everything was changing so fast, from day to day. And I feel like that has really settled down more. I mean, I guess I'd feel differently if I had another trip planned. But once it was like, "Okay, we're not going to Mexico, we're just going to have to hope for next year maybe, if we're lucky" kind of a thing— As soon as I didn't have any big plans that it was affecting anymore and I wasn't as worried about that, it just felt like the anxiety part of it has died down quite a bit, because the unknown has died down quite a bit.

We know more about how it's transmitted, we know more about that. Yes, social-distancing and wearing masks has been proven to help. With vaccines being developed and having such a high success rate— Although, I'm not going to lie to you, I am all for vaccines, I've already gotten my flu shot, but I'm not lining up to be the first person to take that. I mean, especially, it's kind of like when you see people go up to space and spacecraft that went to the lowest bidder kind of thing, you know what I mean? [Laughter]. I'm really grateful that our scientists are amazing and that they rushed and got this done, but I'm kind of like, but—

ES: Don't want to be the first?

SS: Yeah. I mean, I will for sure take it, but not lining up to be the first round of people to get that vaccine, just because who knows? But I do believe in vaccines, I'm not— like I said, I've got someone at work, they don't even understand why anyone would get a flu shot, let alone a coronavirus vaccine. So, I don't know that I'm lining up to do that. But for me, the anxiety of the pandemic has died down a lot and I think everyone I know, that I've talked to, is feeling the same way, that now that it's not affecting us so— And of course, I'm talking to people that are employed, so I guess that's definitely a big difference. If I was in a restaurant industry where it was affecting that, that would be a lot scarier. But for me, the people that I'm working with, we're just kind of tired of the whole thing. We definitely have coronavirus fatigue.

ES: Done with it a little bit?

SS: Yeah, we know everyone's opinions about it now and so now we're just kind of tired of hearing about it. It was so nice to go away for Thanksgiving for a couple of days and I didn't even think about— because we didn't really go out that much, so the not having to wear a mask and just not talking about coronavirus for two whole days. It was like, "Oh wow, I didn't realize I've never gone two whole days without talking about coronavirus." So, I think all the things that have changed, like the wearing masks, and the school situation, and the work situation, I think that we're getting used to it. It's kind of becoming a new normal and hopefully it won't be the new normal. Hopefully, there will be a time where we don't have to wear masks because I got to tell you, I don't love it. [Laughter.] It's making my face break out a little bit. I don't love it, but willing to do it and it's fine.

I do feel bad for the people it's affecting more directly. I have a couple of restaurants, actually a couple of small businesses, one's a restaurant, one's a landscaping business where they're just kind of having to shut down for the rest of the year and see how things go. Because I work in payroll, I watched a lot of businesses applying for the PPP [Paycheck Protection Program] loans, all the different loans and programs they had that the government set up to help businesses stay afloat while they were having to lay off people, and actually that was to prevent them from laying off people. So, it's scary to see how it's affecting a lot of small businesses. I mean, and there's going to be quite a few businesses that are not going to make it.

ES: Not be able to recover?

SS: Yeah. I have two right now, one went out of business for sure and the other one, I'm thinking it might have too. And of course, one's a coffee shop and one's a restaurant, so they're the ones that are getting hit the hardest and I feel bad about that.

ES: Is there any other thing that you want to talk about with coronavirus, or any other observations that you noticed?

SS: Just the one upside, which I will say that when everything got shut down to begin with and it was basically like, “Okay, no more in-person school,” you know, talking about last spring. I had a daughter that was about to start softball; that was a no-go. I had another daughter that was supposed to start the soccer season; that was a no-go. I got to say as a mom, the scary uncertainty, anxiety of not being able to buy groceries and stuff was offsetted by how nice it was to not have to do all those things. I’m grateful that my kids are in sports and I’m grateful that they’re involved in things, but it was really nice. Usually, springtime is super crazy ’cause I’m working a lot and we’re doing softball and we’re doing soccer, and so I’m having to get them to practices and coordinating all that. And that all just went away. And it was just like, okay, I would go to work and I would come home and everyone would be here. And for a homebody and an introvert, that was kind of nice. It was kind of nice to just have my family home all the time and not have to take them anywhere, not have to do the mom taxi thing, and just have all this extra time.

We did a couple of fun things as a family. We did family themed dinners where we would pick a theme. We picked one of our favorite movies, *The Mummy* and we had themed food and we watched the movie. Or we did a prom night where we all dressed up in prom dresses and put on a dance. I mean, things like that, that was really fun. And as soon as school went back, we haven’t had the time to do that because now all the extracurricular stuff is coming back. And I’m glad that they are, but it was kind of a nice break. That was definitely the upside of the whole thing, was just having some forced family fun time [laughter].

[END OF RECORDING. END OF INTERVIEW.]