

Merrimack College COVID-19 Oral History Project

Interview Subject: Julianna De Luca

Interviewer: Ana Maria Serratos Vela

Date: December 3, 2021

Location/s: Manchester NH (Ana), Tewksbury, MA (Julianna)

Transcript edited by: Ana Maria Serratos Vela

Additional editing by: Walker Robins.

ASV: Hi Julianna! I am Ana Maria and I am interviewing Juliana DeLuca. She is a transfer student at Merrimack. Today is Friday, December 3 [2021]. First, I just want to say thank you for joining us and for letting me interview you for our project.

JD: You're welcome.

ASV: So first thing, what I want to do is—I just wanted to let you know of your rights. So you can refuse to answer any question, you can ask me to pause the recording or ask me to withdraw at any point. And we are recording this in order to be collected for Merrimack College's public history project like I had mentioned to you, which would be available to the public, so are you willing to participate?

JD: Yes.

ASV: Okay, alright, so in that case we shall begin. So, as you know, obviously COVID started in March of 2020, so my question to you is—what was going on in your life prior to the pandemic starting?

JD: So I was working at Lahey Hospital in Burlington as a CNA. I just started the job the beginning of March. I was training on like all different kinds of floors and I was at a different college. At that time I was at Middlesex Community College doing some prereqs in order to come to Merrimack and yeah.

ASV: Do you remember the first time that you heard about COVID and then, could you just describe it like what did you think was gonna happen? You know, just different things that were going through your head.

JD: So when I heard about COVID was when I was actually working at the hospital. We had this patient come in with this case of the symptoms of fever of 104, shortness of breath, and just like all the symptoms that the news was like listing off and we didn't know really like how to attack it at that point—we kind of had no kits to test the patients because it was so new and like we kind of just saw it was you know, like the flu in a way. Like we didn't really know what to think of it, like we just thought the news and was like making this up and we're like, oh, it's just like the flu, like it's just like a harder strain of the flu, like it will pass. Like we didn't know what to expect of it and I didn't really know what to expect of it, and I didn't really know what to expect of it, too.

ASV: Yeah, so obviously did you guys have to do anything specific for that specific patient obviously because COVID was so new you guys thought that it was a flu—did you guys start wearing masks? Was there anything in particular that you did for that specific patient during this whole start of COVID?

JD: So I wore a mask but other nurses didn't, because they didn't think the patient really had it because the patient has—the patient was in ICU and she's been like the patient was there for a while in ICU, so they thought she was just like you know coming down with the flu or like a bacterial infection so like. Obviously I took into consideration of you know, wearing a mask just in case if anything happened, but some of the nurses were skeptical to put one on, just in case she didn't have it. But also one of the doctors said, “You know there's a new virus going around and her symptoms correspond to what the news has been saying, and like the CDC has been saying,” so they actually put this, this COVID precaution like it was like a new sign I've never seen before, it was a red sign and it said “airborne droplets, gowning up, and N95s” and of course, at the time we had no N95s, which is a mask respirator in order to prevent droplets coming in to the mask because sometimes the regular surgical masks don't prevent that and they're like not really airborne safe. So, we kind of were like going in just fighting it like basically we had no idea what to do, we were kinda just like “we get it, then we get it.”

ASV: Right yeah, especially because it was so new obviously. Do you remember when this all happened—was it the March of 2020? Or do you think it happened at the start of the new year, if you remember correctly?

JD: It happened like in the middle of March, where it hit hard.

ASV: Okay so like when—so speaking of that, on to my next question. So because it was in March when the first lockdown started happening in Massachusetts, what did the lockdown look like for you and, obviously, what was the hardest part? I know that you were also in school, so if you could just elaborate on that as well.

JD: Honestly lockdown for me wasn't really lockdown because I became essential because I had to work during the pandemic. We all got called to the hospital to work—we all had you know, we had different like actual like acute care staff coming in because we needed the help so bad because we're getting hit hard so lockdown for me wasn't really lockdown because I was constantly going to work and constantly helping you know fighting through this. But when I was like before work I would participate in school online. So that was a little hard because, you know, online you kind of can't focus you're at home and you get a lot of distractions and then you have this virus on your mind, so like that was kind of hard and like another hard part was when I was working in this pandemic and fighting COVID, I was scared that I was going to bring it home to my family because I had no idea what this virus was, of course, at the time. And I didn't know if it was coming home with me with all my clothes so like that was kind of hard, because I kind of had to distance myself from my family, and you know I went through like a phase where I like I mentally like it hit me where I was like, "Oh my God like, I can't do this like this is a lot, like I don't want to get sick and I don't want anything to happen to me or my family"—like that was like kind of hard and then like—you know you kind of tough to talk yourself through it, like you, gown up, you do all the right protocols, you kind of just have to say your prayers that nothing happens. Like, I think that was like the biggest part that I was very scared of.

ASV: Yeah it definitely makes sense, obviously working through the pandemic working where there's COVID positive patients, you know just being careful, so I definitely understand. So were there any positives for you throughout like the start of the pandemic, start of the lockdown?

JD: I think a positive was as time went on during this pandemic, we kind of knew how to tackle it more. I think, you know, I got good at gowning up, and timing myself how long I'm in a patient's room—that way I'm not exposing myself any longer than I need to and that way I can keep myself safe, so I kind of got good at that. Another positive was, you know, I got to be with my family more, but yeah yeah it's like kind of really it, I mean you know lockdown wasn't that fun, I mean we all couldn't go anywhere, so I guess family time was like the most positive, and then learning more like how to gown up and stuff

ASV: Definitely, definitely, so basically would you say working through the pandemic was like an experience for you, obviously because you are a CNA?

JD: It was a huge experience like I've never dealt with that before. I mean, I've worked in medical since I was 16 so I've seen a lot, but this virus, we were just like, "Oh my God, what is this?"

ASV: Definitely. So on to my next question, do you remember the first time that you ever wore a mask? I know you did talk about it earlier, but if you just wanted to explain the very first time that you did actually wear a mask.

JD: It was in March. I was at work, kind of the end towards March, where we kept getting more and more COVID patients and I just said that's it! I'm coming to work, I'm wearing a mask, I don't wanna I don't want to expose anyone, I don't want to get sick, I'm wearing a mask from now on, and then, once that happened the hospital actually started passing out masks to us which happened in like beginning of April.

ASV: Okay, and then I know because you worked in a hospital, you had to wear N95s, can you elaborate on your first time actually wearing an N95 because I know those are more—they are a little bit more uncomfortable—to kind of elaborate—

JD: So the first time I was wore a N95 was when I got sent to this floor, which was all COVID positive like the whole floor—like there was 18 beds, the whole floor was positive. And there was airborne patients, which means they are on this oxygen which is like called high flow, that means it's like an extreme oxygen to help these people breathe, because they cannot breathe with regular oxygen so they needed more—they needed extra strength, in a way. And that's considered airborne, so when you see that you have to put this N95 on, and now I just did not have to wear the N95, I actually had to wear another mask over that. So I had to wear an N95 and then a surgical mask over that to protect myself, which—it is not easy to breathe out of that and you're breathing in your own carbon dioxide in because you're not getting like the regular oxygen that you breathe. So imagine wearing this for eight hours straight, 12 hours straight. You have lines on your face like you wouldn't believe you have a huge migraine at the end of the day.

ASV: Yeah I mean, I can only imagine. So obviously pre-pandemic going into March, you know you have April, June, and then once we hit summer of 2020, most of the states started reopening back up or had a plan to go back up—was there something that you were really excited about for opening back up?

JD: Yeah, I mean I just was, you know, seeing other people like my friends, I was really excited to see my friends, and you know kind of like do more stuff, kind of like go out but be safe going out like you know—obviously still wearing masks we had to during 2020 because the plan was you can't enter any any local areas without a mask to go into places—so I think that was kind of happy about that. And it's just, it was summertime like the weather was nice and actually during summer 2020 COVID kind of died down a lot, which I was shocked about.

ASV: Definitely, yeah. Was there—so obviously we're going into, you know, we have started in March, summer—was there a point where you felt that this was the new normal, and then, how did you obviously realize it?

JD: I think the point or I thought the new normal where this was the new normal what the [inaudible] like everything was probably towards the end of summer of 2020 and August, where I was like okay this is still around and I don't think it's—I don't think it's going away anytime soon so. What I was thinking was, okay we're gonna have to wear masks for like a while now until this actually really dies down, and there is actually barely any COVID. You know, nobody likes wearing a mask. I mean, it's just horrible, like when you leave the house you're just like, “Oh, like, I have to get my mask.” Before 2020 hit, in 2019, we never had to be like, “Oh, I have to go get my mask, my keys, my purse.” No, we never had to wear masks until this happened. Now you have to be like, “Okay, do I have my mask? Do I have my keys? You know, am I ready to go?” So, like it's just—it's kind of a lot and it kind of—it's horrible that you have to see people in the streets wearing a mask and it's horrible you have to, you know, wear a mask when you're with people who are immunocompromised. So, it's tough but it's gonna be like that for like a bit, I think, especially since you know COVID is still here to like a year later, two years later, so. And I think it's going to be here, unfortunately for a bit.

ASV: Yeah, just definitely something like the flu. You know, but yeah we're never gonna get rid of it. So what obviously aside from COVID—and you know you did talk about pre-pandemic, and that was in 2019 before this whole thing started—what do you miss from obviously this COVID thing? Like what do you what's like the biggest thing that you missed before—that you missed before COVID started?

JD: Um I definitely miss, I wish I could do more and I wish I definitely miss not worrying about getting sick.

ASV: Mm-hmm.

JD: I definitely miss that—I wish I like I did more things before COVID. Like I missed that I didn't go out like I did, and I missed that, um you know, like—I don't know it's kind of a tough question. I just, I definitely miss not wearing a mask 24/7 and not going to work without it and like not having to wear a mask at work, not worrying about, “Oh my God do I have to take care of patients today with COVID?”

ASV: Right, yeah. Oh, yeah, I definitely understand you. You know, obviously, before the pandemic, you can see your friends, it was less on social media, less stressful too. Like even you know for the pandemic, how did you stay connected with people if you couldn't see them?

JD: Social media—I texted my friends, you know we did our we did our mental checks on each other, you know, “How you doing? Like what's going on? Anything new? Like miss you?” Facetime. You know, just social media but before the pandemic hit too I also missed that, the news did not talk about this so much because social media is really going at this and social media is also giving false information about COVID too.

ASV: Definitely, oh yeah. I definitely understand you. Was there—was there anybody that you knew that was affected by the virus? You know your friends, your family members.

JD: Oh yeah, a lot of people. So a couple of coworkers I work with got the virus from work. My friend actually got it and—she's my age, she's 21—and she got hit hard with it, too, like she couldn't breathe. She actually got what's called “COVID toes” which everything and you're like—you're basically, your toes swell up and they like almost turn blue in a way because they're not getting enough oxygen like oxygen is not circulating through the body, it's attacking the lungs mostly. So she got COVID toes, she actually got COVID hands and COVID lips, so basically everywhere where oxygen wasn't traveling to swelled up.

ASV: Oh, wow, that's crazy.

JD: Yeah, and at one point she almost thought she had to go to the emergency room because her oxygen was dropping and she also has no underlying conditions. She's active, she's healthy, but she got hit hard with it.

ASV: Definitely. Did you—I mean obviously you worked at the hospital, you were being careful. I'm just curious—did you ever get COVID at all?

JD: I don't want to like say anything because I don't want to jinx myself.

ASV: Oh, no, definitely not. {Laughs} I will take that as a “no.” Was there anything that had been a routine for you, but was strange or vice versa? Obviously, during the pandemic.

JD: Not really, because, you know, I was used to gowning up and constantly changing the clothes when you get home. Honestly, actually that is a lie. So what became kind of strange was I started Lysoling myself when I got out of work, like I bought it—like I literally brought a can of Lysol to work every day. When I got to my car I Lysoled my whole body before I got into my car. So, that became like a strange routine for me and like it's kind of been that way ever since, like every time every time I go to work and I get out I just Lysol myself.

ASV: Oh, yeah, definitely, and are you still doing that today?

JD: I am yes.

ASV: Oh, wow, that's crazy, yeah that's crazy—definitely a new routine for you. So aside from obviously work, anything else in your daily routine that became strange or new to you?

JD: I guess washing my hands a lot, like anytime I touched something or I just think my hands are dirty or like I just like I don't know, like oh COVID still going around I just like constantly wash my hands so like that kind of became strange because, like, I never—I mean obviously I washed my hands, but it wasn't like this frequent—like anytime like I touched something like the slightest, I wash my hands like I don't know. It's just like something and like just—I guess from being at work all the time and, like dealing with this, it just becomes like you feel like you constantly have to wash your hands. Which is honestly not good because it dries your hands up so much—it's sad that you have to do that now.

ASV: Oh, definitely. Yeah, I get that for sure. My next question is, was there a particular moment where you felt that there was light at the end of the tunnel during this whole pandemic?

JD: [Sighs] No, not really because I literally thought I was gonna have to keep dealing with this for the rest of my life.

ASV: Mm-hmm.

JD: Yeah, like during that whole time of 2020 it was kind of just like a dark moment like I never like—it was like no positives I guess kind of like when you go to work and you just see everyone's face—we're miserable and we just like we just think this is like caving in on us and there's just no light. Like, what that what the heck are we going to do? I mean we're dealing with this and it's just like a constant, “Oh, COVID positive! COVID this! COVID that!” So, like no I didn't think there was any light—

ASV: Oh, definitely, yeah I get you on that—you know you work at the hospital you see it every day, so you know it's hard, for sure. So, aside from the pandemic, obviously I know you went to school, to Middlesex in March of 2020. What was the transition for you? Were you in person before or were you always online?

JD: So, I was in—I was in person before COVID hit. I was going to school, I think like Monday through Thursday, so that's school for like a lot. It was all in person, no online classes, like we were just having like you know—like before Covid hit, regular classes. You go to campus, you learn, and then you're just there. Everything's taught to you. There was no online yet.

ASV: So when the pandemic hit obviously, and they shut everything down. When you did go online, what were you thinking? What was going through your head at that point?

JD: How the heck am I going to do school online? I can't learn like this. Like, who wants to go on a computer and listen to a teacher for an hour and whatever minutes when you're at home and all you want to do is just like watch TV, sleep, do whatever you want to do—nobody wants to log onto a computer sit there and listen to a teacher and then you know get distracted by other things going on in your household. Like it's not fun—I mean it's definitely hard like it's just—in person way better because you're there, you can focus. Everybody else is there listening, nobody's like distracting you. So it was definitely a big change and definitely a lot of like, “How am I going to do this?” and, “This is going to affect my grade, because I cannot focus in my house right now.”

ASV: Yeah how many classes were you taking March of 2020 if you don't mind me asking?

JD: I was taking—I was only taking two, because I didn't need a lot of prereqs at Middlesex so I was only taking two and then the two classes I was taking were kind of easy—I think I was taking English and then I forget the other one I was taking, but they weren't too hard classes. I think if they were harder classes, it would have been even more difficult for me.

ASV: Definitely, yeah. So I know you are—so from March 2020 you're a transfer at Merrimack starting fall of 2020 and then—what is your major?

JD: Health science.

ASV: Okay cool. What was—so obviously in 2020, fall of 2020, we started going back to campus and obviously it was a combination of hybrid campus online—were you on campus or were you online?

JD: I was both. I was on campus and then some of my classes were hybrid so I was on campus and online.

ASV: Okay perfect. How was that for you juggling in person and online classes?

JD: It was tough. I mean, it was tough because one—like one class you could ask your teacher questions like right there and then go to the office hours in person and understand it more and then, you know, the second class that you're in it was online so like your limitation—those kind of limitations—like you had to email the teacher and wait for the email to come back or you have to attend a different day for the office hours or—yeah it was just like it was kind of a challenge, it was hard.

ASV: Oh definitely—obviously they weren't online. How was—so I'm curious to know, were you were you new to Zoom or did you already use Zoom in the past in your past school?

JD: I was totally new to Zoom. I had no idea what it was. I was like, “Zoom? What is Zoom?” It kind of took me a bit to figure it out too, because I had a lot of like computer issues and, you know, some of the browsers wouldn't let you in so, like I was like, “This, this is awful. I don't like this.”

ASV: Yeah, you know it's definitely hard. Did you find it easy to communicate with your teachers who were online or was it difficult?

JD: I thought was kind of difficult because you know if you wanted to communicate with them over Zoom like say during a class time or like say during like an office hour—during a class time you have to message to them privately and sometimes when you're on the Zoom and you're like trying to message the teacher while they're teaching you sometimes submit the question openly when you didn't want to submit openly—like you directly wanted to go to the teacher—so like that's kind of hard and then sometimes when the teachers would be teaching online they wouldn't see your email or they would

like, you know—we'd have to wait until they get back to you to communicate, or when you're on Zoom you know, there's like computer issues and wifi issues where it just crashes, and they're going—like the service is horrible, so you can't hear them or you can't understand them, because it's so staticky so that was another big issue of communication, which was tough.

ASV: Definitely, yeah, it's definitely hard. What made you actually want to be on campus instead of fully remote fall of 2020?

JD: I just—I can't learn over a computer. I need the material taught to me and in front of me, because, you know, it's kind of hard to learn something through a computer screen and I'm more of a visual and hands-on person rather than just, you know, seeing it once and then picking it up. And I was sick of looking at a computer screen all day.

ASV: I definitely understand, yeah. What was your feeling being on campus when—obviously you did go back fall of 2020—like what did you feel when you were there? And then my other question—follow-up question—is, where did you see that things started to feel normal?

JD: So when I got back on the campus on fall 2020, I felt like more free in a way, like, I didn't have to log on to a computer and sit there for hours and I didn't have to, you know, do like a lot of work on the computer like I was. In a way it was like a big relief walking onto campus and actually seeing people—I mean you still see people with the mask on—but just like human interaction was better, you know. Rather than interaction through a computer screen like you actually got to see the person you actually got to hear their voice and like that was like ten times better. A point where things started to feel normal—I guess, I guess you know being with people and having a mask on I guess it kind of became normal in a way. And like—and I guess the every other seat kind of became normal—you're just like, “Okay like yeah I get it. There's a there's a pandemic going on, so I get I can't sit close to you so.” Yeah this is like—this is like the new normal where you can't like eat in groups anymore like we like we used to so I guess that was kind of the new normal feeling.

ASV: Yeah, no definitely, it is definitely. And I'm sorry I should have asked, are you a commuter or a or do you live on campus?

JD: : I'm a commuter.

ASV: Alrighty, I should have asked at the beginning, but—

JD: That's okay.

ASV: Also, can you describe any specific differences that were before the pandemic and then during the pandemic, when you did go back to campus?

JD: So before the pandemic, there was a lot of things going on, like a lot of like you know—people would just feel like more like full life and like happy to be there, like there was like more like, I want to say, like noise in a way, like people would be like playing music and there'd just be like—so on campus right now we have you know some times, where they like do like this food station outside and kids line up to get food over there, and they cook it for you, like pizza or just like special things during the holiday like fall candy apples. So, it was more lively, I should say, more like alive at school, where now it's kind of like dead in a way, like there's no events going on and like people just want to like—people won't even like say hi to you anymore, or like come up to you anymore, because they're so afraid of like getting the virus or did they just want no—I feel like human interaction has gone down a lot due to this virus where people don't want to connect with you or like say hi to you anymore because they're so afraid.

ASV: Definitely, do you think so—do you think that, obviously, in that aspect of campus life was the most affected by the pandemic?

JD: Oh 100%, 100%.

ASV: And then so aside—well on to my next question you know we see obviously human interaction, you know it's not the same anymore going back—what was your day to day life in class, around the campus, getting tested for COVID, everything day by day in your schedule.

JD: So obviously I'd go to class, you know sit there, teacher would lecture. You know sit there with a mask on and sit every other seat you know, come in and clean your area before you sit down and then during the middle of the day, whatever time or day you had to go get tested, you go. So I think I was—back in fall of 2020—I think I was getting tested twice a week because that was protocol. Like that's what I would do all the time and then, you know, I would just leave, like I didn't want to stay on campus and do homework, or like—just do anything because human interaction was just so like dull and dead. I was just like, okay like nobody's doing anything and there's nothing going on. Alright, I'll go home—like this is boring like I don't like this.

ASV: Right, right. You were a transfer student—did you know anybody at school—I mean obviously you are a transfer student—did you know anybody who went to Merimack?

Were you able to make any friends in your classes? Were you able to interact with other people in your classes?

JD: So, like that's another thing, since human interaction was so dull, it was kind of hard to talk to people and, like you know, I didn't know anyone either, so that was like another downfall of being a transfer student, because you know absolutely nobody. And then my experience was, I would go to try to like talk to somebody in my class and they would kind of like want nothing to do with you, and they just did not want to talk, which I kind of found strange. I was like, you know, "Is it me? Is it because they don't want to talk because of COVID? Like what's going on?" So, that was definitely hard. I mean, I get it. People, they don't really want to talk to you in class like—I don't know—they don't know you, like they have their groups in a way—they don't want to talk, but just the human interaction, I thought was just outrageous. I'm just like, "Wow, nobody wants to talk to one another anymore!"

ASV: Oh, yeah, definitely. How were your classes? Like course load-wise, homework-wise, test-wise? Can you just elaborate a little bit on obviously if they were online, if your homework was easy, were your classes hard—just things like that?

JD: So some of my classes were easy, some of my classes were hard. There was definitely a lot of papers that I had to do which were—you know nothing is written anymore, so you have to do all the typing on the computer. So it was a lot of typing I had to do, and a lot of online work because, like I said, no more paper but—yeah, it was it was like a balance, like some were hard, some were easy. Some of them you didn't get work at all because they were like you know, like the classes you like need for like the credits so like some didn't really have a lot of work, but I would say it was—there was like a few.

ASV: Did you—so obviously you know in school you feel that pressure—did you feel that academic pressure on you when you went back fall 2020 during the pandemic?

JD: Oh yeah. I was like now, I actually have to try. Now I actually have to put in the work, so there was a pressure.

ASV: Definitely, yeah, definitely being on campus and online. So how were you able to maintain that school life balance, during all of this and you going to Merrimack?

JD: Definitely focus—a lot of mental-like preparation, like kind of just have to push through. But obviously worry about your overall well being, like you know if something gets hard, or like you don't understand something you definitely have to be like, "Okay I

need help,” or if you've been at an assignment for a while and you're just getting constantly frustrated, you have to walk away for a bit. You know, you can't let this work—it's important, but also, you have to worry about yourself, too. So there's like aspects you have to take into consideration, like you have to be like, “Okay well I've been at this for a while I need to take a break.” Like, if I don't take a break, I will mentally go insane and I will mentally like not be well because there's so much pressure and there's so much school work I need to get done that's getting piled on me. So I think what I did was—I know gyms weren't open up the time—so what I did was I actually worked out at my house—just to like step away and get my mind focused and get my mind like off of schoolwork, so I would take breaks and I would go work out or I would just you know relax for a minute just to take my mind off of it.

ASV: Right, so that yeah definitely—that makes sense, you know. And it—were you were you able to go out at all, just like your social life, was that still impacted because of COVID?

JD: I was—I was able to go like kind of out like just like for dinners and like lunches I could go—like I'd go out, but like nothing too big. I mean, a lot of it was people didn't want to like really be with you at the time before there was a vaccine so like they kind of just were like, “Yeah, no, I don't think we're gonna hang out yet because you know COVID's still here and I'm just like afraid,” so that was kind of like an aspect too—like okay people are so worried about this and, like you can't see your friends, because they're worried about getting sick .

ASV: Definitely, yeah. So obviously—we're like getting down to my last final questions—how do you think Merrimack went about this whole COVID pandemic process returning back to campus?

JD: I think they handled it good. I mean with the testing and everything and like you know you have to wear a mask in classrooms and on campus. The only thing I kind of didn't like was, when you're outside—like say like you're not in classrooms and you're not in any buildings like you're just walking—you had to have a mask on. I mean, I get it—like COVID's airborne and everything, but when you're outside you kind of want to breathe, you kind of want to pull that mask down and then just breathe in fresh air because you're breathing in your own carbon dioxide the whole time you're there, so that's the one downfall I didn't like was we had to wear our mask 24/7 even when you're outside.

ASV: Yeah, definitely it does make sense. And then were you—so obviously Merrimack did pretty good about it—we did have a couple outbreaks I remember in fall of

2020—were you affected by any of them? Did you have to quarantine? I know you were a commuter. So you just want to explain?

JD: So actually I had this weird situation happen to me. I got tested one time, and my test came back inconclusive, and I was like, “What?” Like I got contacted by them—they’re like, “Yeah, like you to come to get tested again.” I’m like, “What do you mean?” They’re like, “Um, it looks like your test came back inconclusive.” I’m like, “What does that mean?” They’re like, “Um, we don’t have enough specimen for you.” I’m like, “What do you mean you don’t have enough?” So my test didn’t come back negative or positive, but I had to go back and I had to get tested again because the test came back weird.

ASV: Did you—was that something that worried you a little bit? Maybe you thought you were—you had come in contact—maybe you were positive—what was going through your head when you got that call?

JD: I was freaking out a bit, I was like, “Oh, my God, like what is going on? Like, why is this happening?” Like I don’t remember being in contact with anyone—I remember wearing a mask and washing my hands like, “What happened?” So I was freaking out, I was freaking out.

ASV: I mean I’m sure your test came back negative after you did do that. So my last final question for you is, after—I mean obviously we’re still in the pandemic—how have you changed? What have you learned? And then is there any lessons, any advice?

JD: Um, lessons? Definitely that people are more not friendly, so when you go to talk to somebody just be aware that they’re not going to talk to you. Another lesson—I guess COVID’s real. This virus is no joke, and when something gets hard, like when life hits you hard, especially during a time like this, you can get through it—like it may not seem like it in the beginning, like I said, you know when I talked about, there was a dark past like a dark time during March of 2020 and like the whole 2020 where we never thought we were going to get out of this and like it was just like no light—I look now and I’m just like, yeah, like I actually did it—like you know I am still dealing with COVID today in the hospital but I know how to tackle this, like you know. You definitely, definitely become stronger as you work through it and I know a time where we were also known as heroes, because we fought this, we were fighting this awful sickness and we were just like—people admired us and everything so like that was—you know that kind of made you feel good like, “Yeah, like I’m fighting this. I’m fighting this horrible thing and I’m getting recognized for this work.” So that was a big lesson and that was a big—kind of like shaped me in a way that like I feel like proud of myself because I was able to do this

and I was able to fight for so long, rather than you know—some people at the hospital did quit because they couldn't do it anymore, like it just like came over them and—don't get me wrong! I was right there with them! I was thinking about quitting because I was just like, “Oh, my God, I can't do this!” But you know I told myself, “Look, if you want to be a nurse—”--which I'm going to school after I graduate from Merrimack for, I want to be a nurse—there's gonna be times where you get hit with this, like you get hit with different sicknesses and you don't know how to tackle them—you just have to tell yourself like, “Look, you can get through it.” There's gonna be challenges but push because there's goals and there's going to be a time back in your life where you're like, “Wow, I did that.”

ASV: Definitely. Definitely, well you just answered my last question. It was what would you want people to know. Obviously, aside from that, is there anything else that you want people to know? Like future generations or just in general?

JD: There's gonna so—for future when somebody tells you you can't do something that you have this goal set for, or somebody says like, “You can't be that,” or like, “You can't do this,” do not listen, because you can do it, you just have to have that mindset, and you have to discipline yourself saying, “I can do this, like, I can like get through it and I will show you I can get through it, too.” Whatever happens, like whatever you are going through, and like you just you want to give up, do not give up because you will regret it, and you will look back and be like, “Wow I shouldn't have gave up, I should have pushed through.”

ASV: Definitely. So that is my final question. I do want to thank you again for being part of this and allowing me to interview you for our public history project. So thank you very much.

JD: You're welcome anytime.

