

Interviewee: Kirsten Dutzle

Interviewer: Weston Weisensel

Date: November 10th, 2020

Format: Video recording, Zoom

Location of Interview: Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Transcriber: Weston Weisensel

Additional Transcription Equipment used: Otter.ai

Project in association with: University of Wisconsin Eau Claire

Abstract:

Kirsten Dutzle is from Elk Mound Wisconsin and due to the pandemic is out of work. Despite COVID-19 she is currently pursuing a business degree at UW Eau Claire. In this interview Kirsten discusses how the pandemic has affected her job at Camping World, and her ability to be a successful student. Most importantly, Kirsten details what it was like to be deployed with her National Guard unit around the state to assist in Covid testing. She also touches on how politics affected the U.S. response to COVID-19

WW: All right, it is November 24th, 2020 at 4pm. Currently there are 12.5 million cases of COVID-19 in the United States, 250,000 have died. In Wisconsin. There is currently 380,000 cases with 3,175 deaths. So, to get started, what is your name and share some demographic information about yourself.

KD: My name is Kirsten Dutzle. What do you mean demographics about myself?

WW: Like your race, ethnicity, age, gender, that sort of stuff.

KD: I'm a female. As you can see, I'm very white. I don't know what else you want me say.

WW: Your age?

KD: Oh, I'm 21. I'll be 22 in December.

WW: Okay.

KD: Okay.

WW: So where were you when you first heard about Coronavirus?

KD: I was at work and I was working at Gander Outdoors, which switched over to Gander RV, and is now Camping World.

WW: What was your position there?

KD: I was in the shipping and receiving.

WW: Okay, so were you working with a lot of customers at the time?

KD: Yes, and no. Gander is very out of the way and a lot of people don't go in there [laughter].

WW: What was your initial reaction to COVID?

KD: Honestly, my initial reaction was like, Oh, this seems serious, but not so serious because I just felt like it was more of a cold than anything. But now look where we are.

WW: So you weren't concerned---were you concerned about your with like your job, you're in contact with a lot of people, were you worried about getting Corona when you first heard about it anyway?

KD: No, I wasn't too worried about it.

WW: Alright, when would you say did you start to see it more seriously?

KD: When we got shut down for COVID, and then we had the mask mandate. And then once they call the National Guard to go out and test people, that's what I had to do. I left in like March. Yeah. No, I left in May.

WW: So.

KD: yeah.

WW: What's your role in the National Guard? Like, what unit are you part of, your rank and whatnot.

KD: So, I'm an e4, which is a specialist. I am in the 1158, which is out of Black River Falls, Wisconsin. I am a truck driver. I haul tanks. Drive one of the biggest military vehicles there are, it's called a HET. And then it was very interesting when they called a bunch of truck drivers to go test people. We had to go do training over in the Madison area, and it was basically just like medical training to stick a really long q-tip up people's noses.

WW: Did other people in National Guard, did they feel the same way that you did about Corona? Initially? Do you know?

KD: Yes, and no, I think it was a good handful of people who thought the same thing I did. But going in and then getting put on a certain team and then seeing everyone's different like, perspectives of Corona, it was kind of interesting, because there are some people who are really crazy and they wouldn't get you know, the six feet thing they wouldn't get near you. They wear gloves too, which I thought was kind of wack. But like they're very [laughter] they're I don't know, they're just very, like, different compared to most of the people on my team. Yeah.

WW: Do you agree with like the mask mandate and for that call to like, socially distance? Do you think that's necessary?

KD: I think it's necessary to like because they said that Corona is more harmful to, you know, like older people. And so I feel like yes, that and then there was like that one point during the summer where a bunch of like kids like our age, were going out and like drinking and partying and then they got it, and then it became more of a like that certain age was getting more of it just because they're hanging out, so I mean, at first I thought that a socially distancing and mask thing was kind of stupid. And but it made sense for people who actually like, needed to be distance from so we didn't catch Corona and then possibly die. But there's like so many, like things out there saying that the masks don't help, and social distancing doesn't really help. I just think it depends where you are.

WW: Okay. Yeah. So, in, with the National Guard, since you are now testing people where, where were you doing the testing?

KD: I was traveling everywhere. So, I went from, well we started in Madison to and we went around the Madison area, more like the small towns that were like in the middle of nowhere. So we started there. And then we worked our way up to the Chippewa area and Eau Claire area, so I was originally around this area, and then we just kind of ventured out, so we would we, [?] put us in a hotel, which was very nice. So, we stayed to like the aquaria and a hotel, and then we would just travel so many hours away. So, we went to like Thor, this one place that was like literally in the middle of nowhere, I don't remember what it's called, is really small town. We just did a bunch of small-town stuff. There was one point that we did go further north and hit small towns over there. I don't remember the names of them. But from there, then we went all the way back down to Milwaukee, and then yeah, so I was pretty much everywhere in Wisconsin.

WW: And with that amount of traveling, did that make you any more concerned about getting Corona? Since you're coming into contact with people who very well could have COVID since you're testing them?

KD: So, when we were test, I mean, I guess I wasn't too worried just because how we had to do everything. So, like with the training, you had to wear gloves, you had to wear these, well, okay, let's start over. So, first, you had we started off with wearing our gas masks. So, we had to wear those. And then we had to wear these suits that were like body suits. So, you put those on, you know, your gas mask on, and you had like your hood over top of you to clinch it, gloves on. And then after every person you tested like, so you had a tester and then you had two other people with you wearing the same thing, who was taking like the information and then handing you the test tube and then putting the test tube in a little bag. So, the tester the person who had stick the Q tip of the nose had to disinfect and change gloves every time they tested a person. From then it's we downgraded until it was just a regular m95 mask, which is like those blue ones. And a face shield, a blue smock and then gloves, the tester had to have double gloves. And then it was just a constant like changing gloves and then yeah, so I guess because I was a tester for some parts, I wasn't honestly I was not worried at all just because of the whole routine we had to do after every test like tester But, no, I wasn't too worried.

WW: So, the gear you were required to wear made you feel pretty safe.

KD: Yeah.

WW: When you had to downgrade to just a normal mask and whatnot, did that raise your concerns at all or was your concern pretty, pretty steady throughout the whole situation?

KD: My concern was pretty steady. I think I thought it was ridiculous that we to wear gas masks because those things like well, literally suction your face so and it was we were doing two-hour shifts. So, after those two hour shifts with a gas mask on you're not I don't know, you just get really bad headaches and then yeah, so I guess I just wasn't I wasn't very concerned at all and then after like downgrading from a gas mask to like regular masks I just felt like maybe this whole thing was a joke. That's why we were downgrading but yeah.

WW: Okay.

WW: Was there a specific reason why you downgraded your equipment or was it just you couldn't maintain the same level of like safety with the gas masks and everything, like you just didn't have enough resources to maintain that they had to kind of downgrade

KD: Can you ask it again.

WW: Sorry, so was there like a reason? Do you know of like, why you downgraded your safety equipment?

KD: I honestly don't know why we downgraded. I think it was just because we were getting all this equipment that we could like use. So, I don't know it was better for us just because like the whole gas mask thing was just making everyone tired and like giving them headaches and everything. So, I don't know. It was just downgrading, I don't know, it was weird. I really don't know why we decided to do that. I think it was more of a better way to do it, instead of cleaning your gas mask every time because that's a pain. So I think it was just easier just having regular m95's and then the face masks and just changing out your gloves and disinfecting. I mean, it's just easier, it was a easier process than having a gas mask. Yeah [laughs].

WW: Do you know if any guard members felt like they should continue wearing a gas mask. Did anyone feel safer doing that versus just a m95?

KD: No.

WW: Pretty much everyone disliked the gas mask?

KD: Yeah [laughter].

WW: So how many people do you think you ended up testing throughout the whole period that you were doing it?

KD: Oh, I think I had this number. Hold on. [interrupted by someone] I'm in the zoom thing. Go away. Go away. Just go away. I think I have it, it was a lot. Let's go on to the next question. I'll find it.

WW: Okay. , so what was the timeframe of testing? Was it just from March? until like, it was just like March or was it for a extended period of time?

KD: , okay, so some people got called in March, I got called and sent out in May. Yeah, I called in and sent out in May. What was a question I totally forgot. I was thinking about the one post I left.

WW: just what was the timeframe that you were testing people?

KD: May to August, but people are still testing now. So, like some of the people like on my team from like, May to think January, possibly, possibly longer to because they keep extending it. So, they're still Yeah, they're still doing that. I can't find the number.

WW: Do you think mobilizing the National Guard to test people for Corona, do you think that was necessary?

KD: Yeah.

WW: Okay, so do you think that our health care system could not handle the pandemic as it is without help from the National Guard?

KD: I mean, I think it was very helpful just because, stop [interruption by person] I think it's very helpful just having like those extra people go out and do it, like test people for it, I thought was helpful and to some Guard members, you know, if they go overseas, but then we do at that, I don't know, National Guard's like what we're here for. That's why we had I don't know It's why we had to do it because like statewide, we're not like active duty, we're doing this 24/7, we're doing like duty stuff 24/7. Yeah. What Parker [interruption]?

WW: So then, how did doing the testing, I guess overall, how did that make you feel? Did it make the pandemic seem any more real to you?

KD: No.

WW: Okay. What have been the biggest challenges that you've faced during this pandemic?

KD: Biggest challenges?

WW: Yeah.

KD: Hmm.

WW: Like, is it school? Is it just trying to find a job?

KD: I don't know. I don't know, I really don't feel like, I mean, my life has changed a lot because of this. But I feel like it's [pause].

WW: How has it changed?

KD: How has it changed? Well, I got laid off from Gander. I'm still guaranteed a job there, but they're not reopening till like, January. School wise, I think is different, like having to go to school and then wear a mask all the time. That's just because the mask mandate, but then like, social distancing, and then not making anyone else mad, about like, not wearing a mask, you know, like getting close to them or something like that. Just like, I think, Okay, I think the biggest challenges is being around people who are like, way over the top with this stuff, because, like, it's just insane, like how they act and then they're the ones that get COVID. [laughter] That's my thought process.

WW: Okay, so the people who religiously wear a mask and use hand sanitizer and social distance are the ones who are a problem?

KD: Yeah, because they just have attitudes.

WW: Okay.

KD: You know, because if you think about it, I just think it's funny, because before all this, we were just living our normal lives or whatever, and you get, you know, like, a cold or like the flu is getting something else. And then once this happened, all these people are like, freaking out about it. And like having hand sanitizer, 24/7. It's like, bro, you didn't, you weren't like this before. So why are you doing you now. And then another thing I found out, like doing the whole COVID testing is that people are gross.

WW: Just like hygiene wise.

KD: Yes. Just like like seeing like ok, you didn't think about it before because no one handed you know, wear masks like have you know, and now because you're everyone's like so cautious on like wearing a mask and doing certain things. You really didn't notice it before until now that people are gross. Just like how they do things. Like for example, you like how some people lick their finger and then flip the page because the page stuck together? No one really like cared about it until now [laughter].

WW: Do you think people should change their habits then? To be more hygienic?

KD: Yeah.

WW: Okay. What about like doing online classes? How do you feel about that?

KD: There is some classes that we have online, that should not be online, they should be in person. Because I think if you're in person, you get a just a better learning from that than, you know what I'm saying?

WW- do you think—

KD: What

WW: Do you think the college should have made a bigger effort to have more in person classes, or for you to have the option to go to in person class, as well as to have it online?

KD: I think they could have done like more of like an option. Because I mean, there's some classes on there that you can do online. But for example, I'm taking information systems and that is not a class that you should have just strictly online because I have no idea what I'm doing.

WW: Do you think it's more difficult to reach out to your professors with questions then?

KD: face to face? Yeah. Not through email because they don't understand what you're saying. And then they then you try to set up like, say a zoom meeting with them and then it doesn't work out because everyone's time is just different. So I feel like it'd be just more beneficial just to have class in person and not online so then you would have these issues.

WW: So then, how has Corona affected the way that you interact with friends and family?

KD: Well, you have to wear a mask wherever you go. I mean, I still live at home so I'm not like living in the dorms or anything like that. So I mean, I come home every day, but ROTC wise, like I'm in that [call breaks up] for school, and we have to wear a mask all the time and then social distancing ourselves.

And so it's kind of hard when you're doing like a workout because some, some of the workouts require you to be kind of, like, closer to each other than we're supposed to. But if I'm gonna be honest, I, like it has changed just because like the whole mask thing, but honestly, like really hasn't on at the same time, because I think like, in the beginning, everyone just had to be quarantined. They couldn't go anywhere, they had to stay home. But then as like, it went on everyone else, I don't know, I think some people are just like, Oh, this is kind of db. It's not real. And then, you know, just kind of like, no one's really listening, I guess you could say.

WW: Right, so the public at large, do you think they're kind of experiencing a COVID fatigue, everyone's just kind of sick of the pandemic and so people aren't caring so much about it anymore.

KD: Because too, I feel like if we're stuck at home all the time, and not being able to go out, it just kind of messes with your health, your mental health, because you need that kind of human interaction at some point. I mean, I know like some people don't like human interaction, and they'd rather stay at home. But but people who, you know, want that human interaction and like need it, just because that's the kind of person they are I think it's actually messing with a lot of people's mental health.

WW: So then, do you think there will, with Biden being president now do you think that there's going to be another complete Lockdown where businesses are shut down, and that people can't go out as much as they can now?

KD: It's possible.

WW: Do you think that would be a good thing to happen to try and lessen the spread of the pandemic?

KD: I honestly don't think it'd be a good thing to have another lockdown. Because I think it's just gonna create more people to just, I don't know, like protest or something. As an example, because it's just gonna mess, It's just gonna mess with people. So.

WW: Okay, what about so how is the pandemic changed your recreational activities? Like your hobbies?

KD: I don't think they've changed much, just that you have to wear a mask.

WW: So, do you still spend time with like, large groups of people?

KD: No, I don't have that many friends.

WW: Have you been to like bars or anything? During the pandemic?

KD: Yeah, but not a whole lot. Okay. So, yeah.

WW: Do you think bars should be shut down?

KD: No.

WW: Okay.

KD: Because that's like a that's like a business that someone has. So if you shut those down, then they're not profiting anything.

WW: Has anyone you know gotten COVID?

KD: Yeah. Two people on my team got COVID when we were testing people, and that was just because, and it wasn't from testing people it was because they went home. They had like a leave date. They went home and hung out with a large I'm talking like a big like house party and then got COVID and that's how. Yeah, that's how they got it. And then another person from ROTC got it. And the reason why she got it was because she went to The Pickle. And was just like, really, really close to people there. So yeah.

WW: So, do you think, so what was like your response to hearing about your team members getting COVID? Were you worried at all, that you would get it? Did it change any of your habits at all?

KD: so, when we found out that the one person on our team got COVID, it was during a mission. I'll tell you the story. So, we got to the testing site. And then he was like, Oh, I don't feel so well. Like he said that he couldn't taste or smell anything. So, then he decided to tell our chief, well, why would you tell our chief like, during a mission that we're doing, why would you say that because if that happened, then we'd all have to, like, leave that test site. And like, go and quarantine. So, we sent him back, he went, got a test and got his test results back right away. Got tested positive, the guy that was sitting next to him on the bus to the testing site got it. So, when we ended up like going back, we all had to get tested. And we all had to quarantine for 14 days. So that just kind of ruined a lot of things for us. Because we weren't able so during like orders you you're in the army, so you have to like keep like a physical standard of like workout and everything you couldn't work out. We make, obviously you make friends on the team from like other places, so you won't be able to see them anymore. Like workout with them, like go play basketball and stuff like that. So being quarantined since then I thought like it did affect everybody's life. You can't do anything. Yeah.

WW: Did that change your outlook on the pandemic that, you know, make, make it seem more real and serious to you after that?

KD: No, I still thought it was pretty stupid.

WW: Okay. So then what's your opinion on the Trump administration's reaction to Corona?

KD: I thought it was very smart of him to shut down like the airports, like the ones like coming from China over and then just like, making sure like, no one else was like traveling anywhere else because of it. I thought that was very beneficial.

WW: What about Trump's recommendations on how to like cure COVID using chemical bleach?

KD: What was that? Did you say cure Covid?

WW: Yeah, he was kind of recommending for a time on like, ways you can cure COVID by like drinking bleach or something? What?

KD: I didn't hear about that.

WW: Yeah. , do you think the administration could have taken more proactive response to COVID? Or do you think that the Trump administration did a pretty good job trying to contain the pandemic?

KD: Repeat the first question. Just the first part of the question.

WW: Do you think the Trump administration had a pretty proactive response to the pandemic? Or do you think more could have been done by the administration to stop the spread of Corona?

KD: I think enough was done. But too, how are you supposed to stop a spread? So, I mean, there really wasn't much else to do. Because you can't really like stop people from seeing each other no matter what, even if you, you know, say like, Okay, and then the mask mandate, you can't really tell people to wear a mask, because I've seen a lot of people who don't wear a mask in stores when you're supposed to. So, I mean, I don't know how you're supposed to stop a spread.

WW: Ok, then, do you think anything will change when Biden becomes president?

KD: No, I don't think so.

WW: Okay. Well, do you have anything else you want to add?

KD: Nothing I can think of.

WW: All right. Well, thanks for letting me interview you.

KD: Yeah, no problem.