

Transcript for Interview #1

Interviewee: Holly Tremble

Interviewer: Jacob Tremble

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Abstract: Holly Tremble lives in Hudson, Wisconsin a suburb of the Twin Cities and is currently unemployed but also is a care worker once a week at a nursing home in Northfield, Minnesota so that she can see her father during this pandemic. In this interview, Holly discusses how COVID-19 has affected her life, her employment status, and family and community life. She shares what it has been like to go through this pandemic as well as the different approaches to the pandemic that she experienced being on the border of Minnesota and Wisconsin and the difference in policies in the area.

JT-0:06: My name is Jacob Tremble. And I am conducting an oral history interview as part of an effort to archive the effects of the covid 19 pandemic, individuals and communities in the Midwest for both the western Wisconsin COVID-19 archive as well as the journal the plague year archive. Today's date is April 21 2021. At 4:04pm. As of now, there have been 31 point 6 million COVID-19 cases in the US, and 565,000 deaths. In Wisconsin, there have been 592,000 cases and 6721 deaths. And currently 26% of the US population is fully vaccinated. Today I will be speaking with Holly Tremble from Hudson, Wisconsin. Holly, thank you for joining us today.

HT-1:05: Thank you.

JT-1:08: So to start off, where do you live?

HT-1:11: I live in Hudson, Wisconsin. And it's 15 miles east of St. Paul, Minnesota. The Twin Cities?

JT-1:24: And do you mind sharing your demographic information?

HT-1:28: I'm sure. So I'm married with four children? I'm white, not Hispanic or Latino. I'm 56 years old. Anything else you need to know?

JT- 1:44: And a woman.

HT-1:50: Oh, female. Sorry.

JT-1:56: And what do you do on a day to day basis.

HT-2:00: Currently, I am unemployed. So I'm looking for a job. Um, and I'm also I'm caretaker for my father. So, once a week, I do that a lot, a lot of chores around the house is what we do now.

JT-2:23: When you first learned about COVID, what did you think about it?

HT- 2:31: when we thought about it, and knew it was gonna be baking. When I was looking for a job, there was a parent company over in France that suddenly pulled all of their job postings that was in January already. So knowing that it had been around in China for over a month at that point, we figured it was gonna be something big.

JT-2:58: Yeah, so I'm assuming your thoughts haven't really changed much since then.

HT-3:03: No. Still big.

JT-3:07: Now, what issues about the pandemic have concerned you the most?

HT-3:12: Um, I think the variance never knowing you know, making sure that the vaccinations still work for all the variances, but now been a huge plus. Getting everyone back vaccinated. been good. Yeah, so it's, it's been, it's been good things are opening back up.

JT-3:41: Um, so you've been unemployed? How has COVID affected your employment status and trying to get back into work?

HT-3:53: I'm kind of difficult because there's not a lot of jobs in my field that are open. And a lot of those. I think companies are hesitant to try and onboard someone new from outside the company. So it's, it's been a struggle, and I continue to look. So because I was unemployed, just prior to the pandemic. And I'm still unemployed and still looking so.

JT-4:23: And what is your job field?

HT-4:27: I was an electronic data interchange specialist. So what that does it it's an information technology department. We handle the electronic file transfers in and out of a company. Making sure that the data that comes in or goes out is valid and in the proper formats that it needs to be in. So we also I was also doing validation maps and Translation map. So if the data comes in, that's not in the right format that we needed, your right a translation map to put it into the format that's needed. And that way, you're also able to track the pertinent information is missing or not, and then you're working with your customers to get that corrected.

JT-5:23: And what concerns do you have about the effects of COVID on your employment and more broadly, the economy in general?

HT-5:33: Um, I think things are starting to open up. It's, it's uh interesting to see the companies, a lot of the larger companies are okay with people working remotely. And, which is a good thing for my part, since I, you know, I would be, you know, a lot of a lot of jobs would be unreachable where I am at? Um, if, if it wasn't the ability to be able to work remotely, so, yeah, so, so I'm able

to, I'm able to apply for positions around the United States, not just in my centralized area, even though those are still few and far between. It's, it's still opened up more, more possibilities.

JT-6:26: Has the pandemic affected the employment of people you know?

HT-6:31: Absolutely, um, there was a number of people in the company that I worked for about 20% of the workforce was laid off prior to the pandemic, and a lot of those people once their severance package ran out, we're, we're in was right in the beginning of or toward, you know, a few months into the pandemic. So, a lot of the older people just took regular, non technical jobs, not in their field, because they were finding that it was very difficult to find a position where they would train someone who is, you know, 60-62 years old. So, so they are now working, a lot of them are working either at, you know, like a Home Depot or a menards. Or some of them have just decided, they're going to try and make it and retire early. So they're, they're buckling down, not going anywhere. Maybe their spouse is still working, so they didn't need to have health care. So they're, they're just going forward. And it's hard. It's hard, but they're, they're making it work.

JT-7:58: And how has COVID affected your family's day to day activities?

HT-8:06: Hmm, well, I think that going out and about visiting sister's and kids stopped. It stopped. Please, for a while. Yeah. Yeah. But it's back open. Um, for the most part, we're still managing to get together once in a while just in small groups, quick dinners here and there. So it's been doable.

JT-8:35: And you have been working as a hospital care worker in order to see your father in the nursing home.

HT-8:42: Correct. Right. Right. COVID checks every week, making sure they're negative. Even though I'm Vax, fully vaccinated, which I do have my cart. Fully vaccinated. Um, um, so yeah, so getting out. Yeah, having to be tested. Everything's been good. So it's, it's very good.

JT-9:10: And, um, when did you get vaccinated?

HT-9:13: I got my first shot, which is Moderna in January, and then the second one on February 11. So then they said two weeks after that, we should be fully immune, hopefully, up to the 93% or whatever, that it's effective. So it's been good.

JT-9:39: How are you managing day to day activities in your household?

HT-9:45: That didn't change much outside of the week having pets. They are really needy, and every time you go out the door, they expect to go with you because they've been going with us for the last year. So it's, it'll be an interesting change if we suddenly get jobs outside of the household. What happens with the pets having to be cooped up for you know, 8-10-11 hours a day again, in the future, but we'll see. yard work is getting done yet. But it's kind of one of those things where you like to go outside nowadays just to be outside because setting up cooped up in the house is kind of boring.

JT-10:42: Yeah. That was the outbreak affected how you associate and communicate with friends and family.

HT-10:49: Ah, we've had I have sisters spread out a little bit spread out. One was living in Texas for the winter one lives in Georgia. So zoom calls are what we try and do not very frequent, but every once in a while. That also is what you do with some friends or some groups that we used to meet together. So soza was fun, very good.

JT-11:20: Um, one of the biggest challenges that you face during this outbreak?

HT-11:27: biggest challenges, I think, trying just trying to keep because I work with Boy Scouts just trying to keep troop activities kind of going. Um, it's been really difficult, because we were we were actually have been under the state of Minnesota rules. And they were in more a lot more of a lockdown position than what we were in Wisconsin. So it was it was an interesting contrast to see the difference between the two states and how the governors vary, or the governors or the and the houses, you know, representatives handled the pandemic requirements.

JT-12:22: So especially on the border of two states, correct?

HT-12:25: Yep. Yep. It's, it's a difference. Our, you know, our restaurants have been open, you know, was reduced for a while, but then they opened up a lot faster than what Minnesota's did. But what that did is it drove a lot of Minnesota is just to cross over the border to come over and have dinner, or have lunch. So it really benefited our state and the border, border cities and in Wisconsin, then then what it did for because the people in Minnesota were still out and about.

JT-13:07: So I'm one of your family and friends done for recreation, and the pandemic.

HT-13:13: Ah, so, I have a few friends that I've kind of kept in contact where we, you know, make sure neither of us are sick. And because I've been going for weekly COVID checks, making sure that I am not contagious or that my my test is negative, I'll meet a friend or two for lunch that I haven't seen in a long time. We're still kind of distance where we're at least sitting across the table from each other. Um, but then I also have friends that will not even want to see us in person until they're fully vaccinated. And that's fine.

JT-14:02: Um, how is the COVID outbreak affected your community?

HT-14:09: Um, I think who in here in Hudson, um, a lot of the activities that we that we were doing at a done for community basis were non existent in 2020. They like they we had the hot airfare here this past February, but there was no one allowed down on the on the field near the hot air balloons. So you could admire admire balloons from afar. And that, you know, that's different because some of those hot air balloons would sell rides and no rides were allowed. Other things that were going on is shopping like shopping even in downtown Hudson there There were limits on the number of people that could be in a store at the same time, or groups of people going to eat at the same time if they were open. And I think a lot of businesses really struggled with how to how to keep their business open, fresh and new, with all those restrictions

that were going on, and that was it. But in Hudson, it didn't last as long again, as it did over in Minnesota, so that was a good thing.

JT- 15:38: Um, how many how are people around you respond to the pandemic.

HT-15:44: So we have a neighbor, who works at a he works at a senior center, so he totally avoided everyone. For six months, we sigh and pulling out we saw coming back home. But with you know, no vaccine, you had to make sure you were safe. So, other people, you just wave from afar? Say hi. Make sure everyone's okay. So, yeah.

JT-16:28: Um, have you seen people around you change their opinions or activities in response to the pandemic?

HT-16:38: I think few neighbors are really tired of it. Um, they just want to have it over with. And I think they in you know, once the vaccinated, people were starting to come out of their shell, we're still socially distancing, making sure we're not spreading things. But starting to see some more neighbors and having some discussions. But, yeah, they're over the restrictions. For sure.

JT-17:17: Um, has anybody have you or anybody, you know, gotten sick from the COVID-19 strain.

HT-17:25: A few people have gotten sick. The neighbor who works at the senior center was sick, even his wife. Not too bad, but they were down, you know, for three weeks, one week being sick and then two weeks still quarantining afterwards. I had one cousin who actually passed away from it. But he was 71 and developed other issues when he was in the hospital. So yeah, but those were the only ones that really knew and had it handfull. You know, minimal. Scoutmaster now has it? Which was kind of surprising to hear in that so they're in week two of their quarantine. So, yeah. But that's what you do just totally avoid everyone and and then keeps the rest of us safe. Just good.

JT-18:32: And what ways do you think that the pandemic has affected people's mental or physical health?

HT-18:43: physical health, I think we're gonna see a rise in illnesses, cancers. heart attacks, simply because people have not been going to the doctor. I haven't gone to the doctor, you know, it's, I don't feel it's safe yet. And if I'm not feeling sick, I'm not going to go. Mentally, it's, it's a strain. It's hard to you know, keep your spirits up. When it's 15 below, not going outside much, but being able to go outside now. It's been great. It's good weather helps.

JT-19:38: Um, have you or anyone you know, had questions or concerns about the vaccine?

HT-19:45: Um, no, I'm glad the vaccines are all so wrong. Oh, good. Yeah.

JT-19:57: And you yourself receiving the vaccine. You haven't That any side effects or any of that,

HT-20:02: just a sore arm. And that was, you know, when my, when a couple of my siblings also had the vaccine. That's all they had to. So, yeah, just a sore. So just being prepared for it was good. And then anyone else that was feeling not not well, it was, uh, you know 24 to 48 hours and then done good. You know, ever friend who? Who has it and he is thirsty all the time. You know. So he districts a lot of water, and that's fine. Hopefully it subsides at some point, but could be worse things being parched.

JT-20:51: Um, what was your experience getting access to the vaccine, make an appointment?

HT-20:58: Mine was really easy. Because I'm a caregiver for my father they in over in Minnesota. They offered shots the same day is they open a shot clinic the same days that they were doing. The people, the residents there. So, so that was good. It worked even even with me living in Wisconsin, they were more than happy to, you know, let me do the shot.

JT-21:39: What have been your primary sources of news during the pandemic?

HT-21:44: Ah, I do watch the the nightly news. Usually it's Fox News. And I read the Sunday paper kind of catching up on on different things. So and I and I do like the nightly news is just just to catch up to find out the count see where it's breaking out some of the you know, like the Eau Claire station, at least gives us the county by county, which is nice. So, knowing that most of Wisconsin's illnesses are over, you know, in the Madison, Milwaukee Green Bay Area, and not, you know, so on the east side of the state, not west side, the state's been okay with me.

JT- 22:39: So have your news sources changed during the course of the pandemic at all?

HT-22:45: Um, no, I still prefer Fox News over many of the others. They, it's just who I was getting used to listening to. And that that's what I listened to. So yeah, but I do listen to more of the local Minneapolis stations than I do. You know, the Eau Claire stations, it's a little more a little more lively information coming out of Minnesota, and Minnesota also get Rhys reports Wisconsin State numbers of the COVID deaths and positive cases. So. So that's good.

JT- 23:37: Do you think there have been any important issues over the course of the pandemic that the media may not be may not have been covering?

HT-23:50: Hmm. I think that the, the COVID was taking center stage for for a very, very long time. And, and but being so close to Minneapolis, and having other issues that arose the news really took a turn for the Black Lives Matter police brutality. And in watching protests and watching you know, looting and vandalism. And I think that's hard to watch because in a COVID situation. You're seeing a lot of people doing very reckless things. And I don't I don't know if they ever did any statistics on the group's approach. testers only because I don't think if if they stated they were, they were in a large group of people and it spread that we I don't think those people were reporting that. But that I mean, having larger counts in the St. Paul Minneapolis area, which is definitely near near me, was kind of surprising. And you know, and we did, you know, but you just, you just don't you just don't go into the areas that you think are going to be COVID. More or more COVID response? Yeah, we're COVID possibilities over there. So, yeah.

JT-25:53: How have municipal and local government officials in your community respond to the outbreak?

HT-26:01: I'm actually receiving on a weekly basis information from the Chamber of Commerce here in Hudson. And they talk about it if businesses need help getting restarted or with masks and hand sanitizers, you know, to, to let the Chamber of Commerce know. The chamber also, lets us lets the community know if if the governor has changed any mandates, and then says you know, that St. Croix county or city of Hudson are following or they're doing something separate. At this point, St. Croix county is issued a mask mandate, which they have every right to do. So. You know, even so we still see a lot of signs all over the place saying masks are required. And that's perfectly fine. I totally understand until this is totally squashed. And, and we get the what they call the herd immunity out. I'm okay with staying extra protected.

JT-27:22: Do you think any local state or federal leaders couldn't respond to the crisis differently than they had? Or could they have responded differently?

HT- 27:32: Um, I think being this close to Minnesota, I think the governor in Minnesota kept too many businesses closed for too long of a time. It wasn't financially possible for a business to open at 25% capacity. It made more sense for them to shut down so they wouldn't lose money. Because how do you count on only 25% of patrons to come in? And if they're worried about not getting sick, they're not going out? So it was an all or nothing, you know, kind of deal. And it was it was hard to watch a lot of that. Because even here in Hudson, when it was at 50%. I think people really didn't need to turn anyone away. Because I don't think they were even at 50% capacity when they could be you know? Yeah, it I think, yeah, the governor's should have done it a little differently and not ordered the whole state to act one way. I think it should have been either. It should have been either by county or by by city municipalities. controlling it.

JT-29:11: Solely based off the area?

HT-29:13: Yep. Totally based off the area. Yeah. Like like they were doing for the schools. Just so. Yeah,

JT-29:21: But the people in those areas decide how?

HT-29:24: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yep. That's what I think.

JT-29:36: How has our experience transformed how you think about your family, friends and community.

HT-29:43: Um, I think it brought everyone closer because you only had the opportunity to see a few a handful of people. I think family was the first ones you were seeing. You know, so Yeah, closer. that's good.

JT-30:10: Knowing what you know now, what do you think individuals communities or governments need to keep in mind? For the future in case there's ever another pandemic like this one?

HT- 30:25: Huh? I suppose if there's another pandemic, hopefully they've done enough studies to see in what areas they needed more, I want to say policing of the virus. How can they get businesses? How can they assist businesses to stay open. And not just bars and restaurants, but all kinds of businesses, a lot of daycare has had to shut down. Because now the people aren't working, they're working from home, so their kids are home. And I and I hope that, you know, in the future, we have this basis of a vaccine, that it's not going to take. I mean, it was a short time I granted nine months is phenomenal to get a vaccine developed. But at least you have a basis now for going forward if you know this type of pandemic hits again, or if there's a variant that needs to be taken into consideration that we are going to go forward. And we're probably ended up with COVID annual COVID shots to hopefully keep at bay that the, you know, the COVID 19, or whatever variants just as we do with the flu shots, so I think it's important.

JT-31:58: Well, thank you so much for sharing your story and your perspectives. Have a good day.