

COVID 19 Oral History Transcription of Monica Valle by Carolina Flores Carolina Flores

Carolina Flores: My name is Carolina Flores today's date is March 9, 2021. Today we will discuss the experiences of people during the covid 19 pandemic. Today we are in San Antonio, Texas, and I'm interviewing...your name, please, Monica. So, I'm going to start with some simple questions. When were you born?

Monica: November 2, 1968.

Carolina Flores: Okay, awesome. Where are you from?

Monica: I'm originally from San Benito, Texas.

Carolina Flores: What is your occupation?

Monica: I am a Teacher and a Coach. I have been for 29 years now.

Carolina Flores: That's a long time to be a coach, how awesome. So, let's get more into the pandemic talk. When and how did you hear about the virus? Can you please explain your experience with that as well?

Monica: When and how? Excuse me?

Carolina Flores: When and how did you first hear about the virus?

Monica: Okay, so I remember, it was this week. And I remember this, we just heard, and we were going to a track meet, and I needed a substitute. So, the substitute showed up, and they were talking about water...buying water and I thought, what are you talking about water and toilet paper? And I said, "What?" and they said, "Yeah, the pandemic." and I said, "The pandemic?" and they responded with "Everything's going to shut down." I thought, huh? So, I remember getting the girls ready for a track meet, to showcase them. It was really exciting. I also remember a young lady coming up to me, and one of our athletes saying, "I'm leaving school. I'm withdrawing." And I thought, oh my goodness, I'm not going to see you again. She says "I'm withdrawing because of the pandemic, and school is not safe. My father said, so I'm leaving." And I thought, okay...all right. Fine. I thought, wow, they think it's really serious. We went to the track meet; I had a blast. It was fun. We broke records. We just had a really good time. I talked to one of the coaches, and I said, "Wow your team is doing great, congratulations!" She's like, "Yeah, they better be doing great this is the last track meet." and I said, "What? She says, "Yeah, well, everything that's going on." and I thought nobody was wearing a mask. Nobody. Everybody's doing their own thing. But it hit me, and I thought, wow, this is for real. That's when it really you know hit, I really got to hear from it.

Carolina Flores: Wow. I'm so sorry that it happened during your Track and Field season.

Monica: Yeah, yeah, there was I mean, it was shut down. We left to spring break. That was a crazy day before spring break started. We went off, never came back. But the rest of the year was crazy.

Carolina Flores: Okay, great response. So, can you explain how the Coronavirus has affected you,

your family, and friends? What has changed as well?

Monic: So, it affected us when it hit home. My sister got sick, and she had the symptoms. I was thinking she was ill, but she hadn't had a test. Then we were up there. We were in San Antonio for Fourth of July. I remember saying, "No, there's no way..." she's like, "I feel a little sick. I got a little sore throat." So, I know in her head she was sick, I could tell that her body language was telling her "I think I'm really sick." So, she went and got tested. I remember we were running, and she called, and she says, "I'm positive. You all should go." So, I said, "okay, we'll get back and pack." Then she calls and she says, "Well maybe you shouldn't go, maybe you should go test." So, we went to go get tested and she had it, her husband had it, my husband got it, and I tested positive. Um, it affected me for one day and knocked me out like the flu. It knocked me out, and I felt terrible. But the following day I woke up and then and I was okay. I was able to function now, I was normal. Everything was hazy though, and it was difficult. My husband and my sister... they were out. I thought one or the other was going to end up in the hospital. There was a time that I thought I needed to call the ambulance to come and get one or the other. I didn't know which one to send. But we treated them, and we took everything that we needed to take, and we survived it. We survived it, our family members. no extended family members have passed away. Actually, my cousin in Mexico, passed away. We're very sad. He went into the clinic at 10:30 in the morning, by six o'clock that evening...he passed away. It's been very difficult. I've had ex athletes who their parents passed away and they didn't know exactly what it was. Well, it was COVID, so it hit home so close. You know, last time we counted 34 in the family had COVID already. I think it's more now, it's more now but so far, you know, we're getting the vaccine so it's a plus. It's a good thing. We're not that happy that we're done with it. But we are we've survived, and those of us that have and we're getting through it. Has it changed our lifestyle? Yes. Washing hands even more, I carry all towelettes in the car, and I cannot put gas without wiping everything. Um, masks? We do not agree with the mask mandate of "no mask". No, no, no, we're going to continue. We don't feel good when we go to the grocery stores. We're running run out, we're not strolling along, we're running in running out. Things like that. Okay, definitely has changed.

Carolina Flores: So, it definitely hit your family members in a different way, I guess? Body wise, correct? Because you said you only had it for like one day?

Monica: I had it for one day, husband lasted 21 days, and sister lasted 21 days also. Something like that...something to that aspect. Definitely her husband shorter, maybe three days. So, it was different for all of us. Some of us could taste and smell, some of us couldn't, some of us had a recurring cough, and some of us got over that cough. But yes, everybody's different. No one is the same. No one is the same.

Carolina Flores: That's pretty crazy. Well, thank you for that great response. Let's get into the next question. So, can you please explain how COVID-19 affected your daily, or weekly routine like shopping for groceries, and spending time with family? I know you went into a little detail right now about that. Spending time with family...want to go into that??

Monica: So, uh shopping I told you it's in and out, whatever. Even now I just finished coming from the grocery store. Went in to look at the things I needed, got out of there ASAP. Spending time with family, I have a very hard time being away from my mom. She lives in San Benito, so 45 minutes away from me, and I need to be with her. I absolutely try and be with her as much as I can with mask whenever we could. Um, she had COVID, so I feel she's got a little bit of a meet immune system, a little bit higher immune system now. But I still try to mask up, wear gloves, or wash hands. Definitely the holidays were different. They were different! But to be honest, we kind

of like fell off the wagon. New Year's we couldn't stand it and then everybody was home, and everybody tried to be together, and it did result in you know cases of COVID. That wasn't fun. That wasn't fun at all. As much as we tried to take care of it, it's so difficult to be without family, but you just need to understand that you've got to be away...and we couldn't understand. Thanksgiving was different because it was like a to go plate. Christmas was a little bit different also. They took their gifts, and nobody opened gifts together. We were by ourselves, but um New Year's we messed up if I'm being honest.

Carolina Flores: Okay so we know you already went into detail on who has been infected with the virus that you know. Um so that was our next question...you named you, your husband, my uncle, and my Tia. So, since you already answered that we'll go ahead and go to our next one. How has adapting to the virus affected your work responsibilities?

Monica: So, I'm teacher and a coach, and as far as shut down for the students they actually had a choice. The students...well most of the students they had to stay home, I chose to still go on to campus, so I was working on campus. No students, no teachers around because no one wanted to go. There was a total of maybe six teachers, and I was one of them, so I did teach from school from the very beginning. I didn't stay home from the very beginning I went to school and because I felt sick when I learned that more people were coming, I did get a little nervous when I learned that the kids were coming. I got even more nervous, but we just cleaned up, and taking care and had germ x all the time and washing hands keeping distance we were able to handle it, so we took all precautions. Kids started coming more and more and more and we have just made it a routine of keeping the kids separate, of cleaning, or hand disinfecting their desks or tables. Wherever they're at where it's a routine so it's almost second nature, we're creatures of habit so because we're creatures of habit once you build a routine it just stays, and we've done a very good job of it. We remind each other and we're up on it we have more kids coming in, a lot more kids coming in now and it doesn't look normal because we're still wearing masks. We're still staying away from each other but it's getting back to normality I mean more and more kids, the numbers are rising and they're coming onto campus and they're feeling safer, and so now we're very good about you know disinfecting and taking care of ourselves so it's good adapting absolutely change is good sometimes.

Carolina Flores: Yes

Monica: Reminding us, hey wash your hands, stay safe, stop coughing on each other it's good, it's a good thing.

Carolina Flores: And I'm sure those habits will carry on into the future from now on which is a plus. Um when you were hit with the February's winter storm did you think about the virus why or why not?

Monica: When we were hit it was difficult. Did we think about the virus as far as we still wear our masks? Um, if we needed to run to the store, we were still careful, so it was still out there absolutely not forgotten. The storm was heavy, and the storm was difficult, and it looked like a like world war three had gone because everything on our side was blacked out. They lost power thankfully we didn't, but when we ventured out and tried to go to a store or to get gas it looked like desert storm...like nothing was going on. Do we wear a mask? Absolutely! Was I as zoned into as the virus? No, but I think it's become second nature to wear your mask, to clean your hands, to take care. I mean that's just second nature already, but the focus was oh my goodness the plants, the pets. You know hopefully y'all had water, our water we had to boil our water so there were a lot of

other things that took over, but never forgot that we're still in a pandemic...no never forgot.

Carolina Flores: So sad Texas never could catch a break as far as like water and Toilet paper and Lysol and stuff like that. Was there a difference in that? Like, as far as going to the grocery store during the winter storm. Did you see like a difference in what supplies were being bought out faster? As far as like people would get Lysol and wipes.

Monica: Yes, it was different, very different. People were trying to buy food. Anything they could cook fast because they didn't have light. You know, things like that. So, it was more food than essentials as far as toilet paper, or things like that. Now, water was scarce because we were in a boiling effect. We had to boil our water before we drank it, or before we cooked with it. So that was gone fast. I went to the store and I picked up the water and as she says, "Maam, I think it's only one." and I thought, why at all with the storm? so I had to put the water back on and I apologized. I forgot. Um, you know, it just seemed like, okay for me, but no, the water was very scarce. So yeah, the difference was that they seek out food and gasoline versus the essentials to clean and keep hygiene. Yeah, was different.

Carolina Flores: Alright, quite an experience. Okay, last question. What would you like to tell the future generations about the pandemic?

Monica: So, I always tell our students in school about taking pictures, maybe jotting down some notes and telling them, your great grandchildren are going to say, my great grandma was in a pandemic, she had to wear a mask, she couldn't be close to people, and they couldn't touch. I want that for them. So, I always tell them that they need to write down things you know, in a journal or just write stuff down, and take pictures. Lots and lots of pictures with masks, so that they can see that you know, we always get featured all messed up, but man mask on, you know, you're creating history. What do I want to, tell me the question again?

Carolina Flores: What would you like to tell future generations about the Pandemic?

Monica: It was difficult. It was sad. It was heart wrenching. We lost family members. All of a sudden, I lost a very good friend and coach. I thought how? He was so healthy. He was losing weight. He was how he was. It was in the very beginning, and we lost him. Now I know, it was COVID. He had it, he had it. I know. I know it because he had it that week that that it started opening up, and everything started coming out. So that hurts my heart. So that it was hard. It was difficult. It was a learning experience. It was something that happens every 100 years and we need to be prepared. What would I like to tell them? Live for now and enjoy yourself cause tomorrow... never promised.

Carolina Flores: Well, thank you Monica. For your great responses about the COVID-19 pandemic. That concludes our interview for today.

Monica: Thank you. I'm honored to be part of this.

Carolina Flores: Okay, thank you so much.