

Cosette Dumas COVID-19 Oral History Interview

Interviewer: Meagan Ginnaty-Moore

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Meagan Ginnaty-Moore: All right, so when do you first remember hearing about COVID-19 and what did you think about how it might affect you?

Cosette Dumas: Let's see [short pause]. I feel like I first heard mention of it around like late November/early December, but it was just in passing with someone. It wasn't until basically like two-three weeks into second semester that all of a sudden it was a lot bigger of a deal because, since I'm in the Game Design program, there was talk, even that early, of one of our biggest conferences in the industry being cancelled.

MG: Mhm.

CD: Which is just unheard of, so we were all like "ahh, there's no way." But that's when it was really starting to be like "oh shoot, this is a thing to be aware of [laughter]."

00:01:08.000

MG: Yeah, definitely. What might you say to your past self, based on like what you know now?

CD: Probably: one prepare yourself because it's going to suck [laughter]. And then two, but it's not going to be as bad as you might think [laughter] because, I mean, graduation getting cancelled and all that sucks, but there were some pluses that came out of it too [laughter].

MG: What were some of the pluses?

CD: Well, so I got a job back in November. I got a job offer for after graduation. And without COVID-19 going – taking us all into quarantine, I would've had to finish Finals Week, have one week at home to pack everything, and then move to my new job the next week, without really anytime for family or my two dogs or anything like that. But then because of quarantine and being home for school and all that, I got to spend an extra two months with my dogs and my family that I wasn't even planning on having in the first place.

MG: Yeah, definitely. That is a good plus. Congratulations on the new job, though. That is exciting.

CD: [Laughter] Thanks, I've just started [Laughter] Monday.

MG: Nice.

CD: Yeah.

00:02:25.000

MG: So, what have been the biggest changes you've had to deal with?

CD: Thankfully, with my program Computer Science, its pretty computer oriented from the beginning. So thankfully, classes actually moved relatively easy but there was still some classes like, since like I said, I'm a Game Design major, and our senior project is interdisciplinary so we work with artists and all of sudden we had to figure out how to get our art team to stay on track with the programming team because they didn't have access to lab computers or anything or any of the software they need to make assets. So that was a big like "ah shoot," we lost production of our game for about two weeks while we were figuring out how in the world do we get this stuff which is kind of a big deal when you're in your last semester and it's due at the end. And then just like – I don't personally do not take online classes if I don't have to, just because I know for myself like I'm not the best at managing myself to stay on top of them because it's really easy to say, "well this one can wait because I have a different in-person class." So, it was a lot to like figure out to what is my new schedule to force myself to get all these things done now that I'm not meeting someone in person to hold me accountable too.

00:03:50.000

MG: Yeah, definitely. I'm the same way. Online classes are hard for people who aren't always great at time management.

CD: [Laughter] Yeah.

MG: Or being super disciplined.

CD: Mmhm.

MG: Are you surprised by anything about how people have responded or how life has changed?

CD: At first, I was surprised because I thought that everything was happening like early early, like January, was a major overreaction because – I mean, we'd had the Ebola outbreak a few years ago and that didn't really go anywhere. Like it still caused devastation and death, but it never really reached us. So, it was kind of like this "oh, well we're just kind of overreacting." But then as things got more real and quarantine started and it was affecting the U.S., then it was definitely more of a switch to like "oh shoot, this is a lot worse than we thought. How do we – we shouldn't need to be stock piling toilet paper so that elderly people can't [laughter] get toilet paper and all that stuff." But now all of a sudden that's the real world we're living in. So, it was a lot of how do you keep yourself safe but also like, keep other people safe too and give people the resources they need, but still protect yourself and your family? It's a lot of confusing stuff to figure out.

00:05:11.000

MG: Yeah, absolutely. What are you doing to remain connected to friends and loved ones?

CD: Well like I said, when – I worked for University Housing, I was an Academic Resource Coordinator for Fleming-Hovlid Hall – so I had a little bit of information, a little bit earlier than the average student populace just because in Housing we’re dealing with how does this affect us if it gets into the dorms or what kind of steps are we taking? So, I had a little pre-warning to like the dorms shutting down but I still didn’t expect it to happen when it did.

MG: Mmhm.

CD: And so like, leaving my RA [Resident Advisor] staff, because I had been in Housing for three years so like now all of a sudden, I wasn’t getting the good-byes that I was planning on having with that staff, but like before I would graduate. We weren’t getting to celebrate as a class, graduating with all the people that I’ve gone through four years with. So, it was like really hard to figure out how do we still do that, even though we can’t see each other. So, we ended up doing, like my game team has already had since the beginning of our game, we used Discord to communicate and that has a lot of screen sharing and like text channels, that sort of thing. So my game team really didn’t lose communication other than in-person game nights. But then we started using that stuff more with like my RA staff. We set-up a Discord server so that way we could all talk to each other and like meet up on there and see how everyone’s doing. And then being home with family, like that was kind of didn’t even expect to have so. Then I got to be with my dogs and stuff, which dogs are a good coping mechanism too so [laughter].

00:06:56.000

MG: Absolutely, I agree. I would have so many dogs if I could [laughter].

CD: [Laughter]

MG: So, what kinds of things have you done to stay healthy or to protect your mental health?

CD: Yeah, so, I mean I’m not the most – I guess as the typical [air quotes] term is – I’m not a super extroverted person, so I think I was in a fairly good set-up, just in terms of I usually rely on myself a lot anyways. But being home with family, obviously like there’s always someone home when you’re all living at home in quarantine, which can be great but can also be a little, getting on your nerves because now you’re in a confined space with lots of people all the time. But yeah, I guess I made sure when things did get difficult, like obviously everyone has a breaking point at some point, but I tried to like identify like “okay, I’m really stressed this week so I’m just going to shut my door more when I’m in class. And I’m just going to like keep myself to my room during ‘school hours’ and then go out to the living room” and see everybody and that kind of thing to give myself some form of routine. And then getting outside. I know, unfortunately [laughter], on top of all of quarantine, we also had really bad weather for most of quarantine, so it’s hard to get outside which isn’t good either. But once it did get sunny, going outside, like we have a nice backyard, so we were able to get out there. That definitely helped too.

00:08:28.000

MG: Yeah, absolutely. Keeping track of how you’re doing personally and keeping busy is always a good way to deal with any stir-crazy feelings.

CD: [Laughter] Yeah.

MG: What has been challenging about learning or keeping in touch online and has anything worked well?

CD: Yeah. Thankfully, most of the professors at Stout, that I had, especially – throughout all my schooling, but especially this past year – they’ve all been really good at – especially after quarantine happened – of posting when their [air quotes] office hours were and then when they were like reachable by. Some of the – I think even some of them gave out phone numbers just to like have students text them in case they needed anything. And then they were also really understanding about things are going to take longer. So I had like one professor who, because he’s also a Game Design professor and I had him in a different class, so he was aware that I had a lot to do with my game, so he gave me a little bit of leniency in the other class I had that wasn’t related to my game with him, just because he knows that like it’s hard to stay on top of things when you’re in quarantine and all of sudden switching instruction and then you don’t have help as easily available because you can’t just show someone in person what you’re dealing with. So, they were just really flexible with like extending deadlines if needed. As long as you communicated with them, I didn’t run into any problems where someone like shut you down like “no, you can’t get an extension on this, or you can’t turn this in like a day late or something.”

00:10:08.000

MG: Yeah, definitely. Have there been any silver linings for you in the crisis? I know you talked about having extra time with family but is there anything else? Or do you want to talk more about being with family?

CD: Yeah, definitely. Family and dogs were a big silver lining also just more time between when [air quotes] technically classes finished and when I’d be starting my job. So, I had a less stressful moving that was really nice. And also with my senior project, it’s a yearlong project – we start it in the first semester, so being in the online format, it was really easy then. I didn’t have to take time out of my day to walk to classes or anything like that, so it was really easy to dedicate a lot of time that my game needed to get it done to the level that the team wanted that I don’t think would’ve been necessarily as capable, at least on the programming side, without having the quarantine set-up. Just because like you can spend a lot more time when you don’t have like staff meetings for Housing to go to and other organizations that you’re a part of. When you don’t have those things, you can focus a lot more on your homework.

00:11:21.000

MG: Yeah, definitely.

CD: Of course, it’s not as fun though [laughter].

MG: No, you do lose a little bit of that like social aspect.

CD: Mmhm.

MG: You know, those little like sidetrack moments in group projects.

CD: Absolutely.

MG: Where you just start talking about something completely unrelated, but you have fun.

CD: Absolutely, yeah.

MG: What have you done to stay busy? Have you taken up any new hobbies or gone back to things you haven't had time for?

CD: Yeah, like specifically during school or even like post-school?

MG: Either. Just the entire time that this – that COVID has been around [laughter].

CD: [Laughter] Okay. Yeah, well – during school, classes definitely kept me busy enough because with my senior capstone project, like I've been saying, it was kind of a big deal. That's what you work for all four years when you're in this major and so, basically, any waking hour that I had that wasn't forced to be in a different class, I was working on that game because: one, the team, we would meet together so it's a good social outlet to just talk with people and then we could really just, there was always just something to do on it. In fact, that's one of the I do right now to keep myself busy, aside from starting my new job. The team has decided to keep working on it after graduation. So, we still meet with each other, and we still work on different goals for – we work in sprints, which are two-week periods. So, we still have our goals to meet for that and we still have something to do on the weekend then and we still have a way to stay in contact with each other.

MG: Yeah, definitely. What's your game called?

CD: It's called "Shepards Sky". It's about a farmer who has lost his sheep to a – we call it the Wolfclops, it's a wolf with a cyclops eye that's really big. And then you have to fly around a terrain to find them with a leaf blower, a fishing pole, and a balloon to try and hook them.

MG: That sounds really fun.

CD: [Laughter] I think it is, but I'm also biased.

MG: I mean, I think it sounds really cool – I mean I'm kind of, I'm a gamer. I used to be a Game Design major.

CD: Oh cool.

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MG: Yeah, but that sounds really fun. We also are doing this thing with this project where you can submit stuff, or like examples of what you've been working on in quarantine or just ways that like – just different items or pictures or whatever to kind of paint how quarantine has been going. And, if you would like to, you can submit a file of Shepards Sky. I interviewed somebody

last week and they were – they had a senior game – project and they submitted their game to us. If that’s something, you –

CD: Are you able to say what game it was [laughter]?

MG: Oh, it was called “Pestilence”.

CD: Yep, okay, yep. That’s the same class that I was in. We were the two teams from that class.

MG: Yeah, yeah. They submitted their game. It looks really cool [laughter].

CD: Yeah, theirs was fun.

MG: Yeah, but yeah, they submitted theirs. If you would like to do the same, you’re more than welcome to do that. Email –

CD: Oh, for sure. Then you can get the really dark with the really happy and put them together.

MG: Yeah, absolutely. When he said that his game was about like some deity losing their disease, I was like “oh my goodness” [Laughter].

CD: I know. It’s terrible timing, unfortunately, but that makes it so much better [laughter].

MG: It really does, but I mean, who hasn’t watched a movie about an outbreak or something [laughter]?

CD: Right, right.

MG: The first week of quarantine, I watched a whole bunch of those movies, but –

CD: It sounds [?] like the appropriate thing to do [laughter].

MG: [Laughter] Basically. I think if you can’t laugh at it a little bit, I think, we’ll go a little crazy, at least I will.

CD: Right.

MG: But anyway [laughter].

CD: [Laughter].

MG: Yeah, if you want to like send me a link to the file of your game or where I can get your game or whatever, it can go into the Archives.

CD: For sure.

00:15:38.000

MG: Great. So, next question [laughter].

CD: [Laughter].

MG: What are some of the things that you worry about how people are responding or what the effects might be?

CD: Yeah, there's so many things to be worried about. I know there was a lot of concern, especially like within my whole household, not just with me, of like the longer that we're in this, how hard is it going to be to get back to normal? How hard is it going to be like – we tried to eat local as much as we could just to try and support those local businesses but how many of them would that not be enough for. And then all of a sudden, the community of your area changes because you're don't have something that used to be a staple there or something like that. There's definitely a lot of concern about what happens to the small stores and just like the ways of life the longer we stay in quarantine. Like my family enough that neither of my parents lost their jobs, but like, that's not the case for every family. So, then it's also thinking of like we're fortunate enough but we're still not like the biggest family on the block or anything but now how are the people that aren't as fortunate as us going to get through this. We can't help out super much because we're not like the richest family around either so like there's a lot of concerns just on that kind of a thing. And then also you just get stir crazy and it's like at some point I just want to go out and get a drink [laughter] with a friend instead of like just sitting here. I know my mom went a little crazy, she's like "I just want to not [laughter] cook for one night, I just want to go get food." So yeah, there's just a lot of concern about how can we go back to normal the longer that we stay here?

00:17:40.000

MG: Yeah, absolutely. And I know a lot of local businesses aren't going to come back from that and [short pause] local businesses are more likely to put more money into the community –

CD: Right.

MG: – Compared to larger corporations.

CD: Right.

MG: But you know, you do what you can. Is there anything that you're hopeful about?

CD: Yeah, so you know, I don't know how much of this just like [air quotes] Facebook News and how much of it is real news or anything like that, but as quarantine started and people started commuting less and like human impact on the environment seemed to go away for a little bit because people were inside, they weren't driving as much unless they were essential. All that, there was definitely like a silver lining like "hey, according to some news thing I read like the dolphins came back to the Venice Canals or something like that –

MG: Yeah.

CD: They've shown a decrease in the carbon footprint because not as many cars are driving and sort of a thing. So, my hope that people see, like if those things are true, that they see that just being reduced for this amount of time has made this big of a difference to the environment that we live in, then maybe people will start taking things like that more seriously and be like "hey, we don't even have to go this drastic, but maybe if more people start carpooling. That's less cars on the road." And so maybe that will help, and we can start seeing some – just because we've been in quarantine for what like, three months now?

MG: Mmhm.

CD: And that news was coming out a month and a half in. So, like if a month and half of people not driving as much, did that much of a thing, how much can we actually plan for and then it change?

MG: Yeah, definitely. I mean, I've seen similar articles. I saw one where, in – I think it was a city in Asia, I can't remember specifically what country – but their smog levels went down –

CD: Yeah.

MG: – Drastically. Like you could actually see the sky on days where usually you wouldn't. So, it was –

CD: Yeah.

MG: – Kind of amazing.

CD: Yeah. No, I hope some of that stuff like – I'm pretty sure at least some of it's true, so I hope some people see that and be like "okay, one month did this. Let's see what we can plan for."

00:20:12.000

MG: Yeah, absolutely. What do you think will change after the pandemic is over if anything?

CD: I think, at least for a while after things – assuming everything is back to full normal – I think for a while, I feel like stores are going to still keep some cleaning habits up that they didn't necessarily have before. Like maybe they don't wash the cart every single time after you touch it, but maybe every night they now do a sanitizing over all of their carts for their stores. Or just like little things that don't make a huge difference or impact the work of their employees but maybe keep things a little cleaner and a little safer without the need for a pandemic to cause it [laughter].

MG: Yeah, definitely. I mean, a lot of people are going to realize the importance of hygiene –

CD: Yeah.

MG: – Just basic, everyday hygiene.

CD: Yeah, I think people are going to hug each other a little more too afterwards.

MG: Oh yeah. There's some friends that I am not really near who I would love to hug right now, but just can't because –

CD: Yeah.

MG: – You can't really travel right now.

CD: Right.

00:21:21.000

MG: So, what kinds of technology are you using to communicate with others and stay busy or entertained?

CD: Well, there's definitely the staples of streaming services. I'm a big Apple fanatic. So, I have the Apple streaming services that I've been using. And I actually use an iPad for taking notes and stuff for classes, so that's been really nice because I – in all the moving, I didn't lose my notes because it was all digitally stored. So, I didn't have to worry about that moving out of the dorms and everything. But otherwise, like my game team, we still communicate on Discord. Now that I'm at my apartment, I'm not living with my family anymore, so I facetime like my family and that kind of a thing. Netflix and Hulu are an everyday occurrence. Yeah, I mean, I guess like the basics. Probably what the average person is using. I use a lot of Microsoft Teams at my job to see people because I can't do training in person, I have to do training from home so.

MG: Yeah, definitely.

CD: And video games. I play a good amount of video games.

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MG: Of course, yes. I mean, me too. So, what items or services have you had a harder time purchasing or obtaining?

CD: Clorox wipes. I moved and I wanted to like wipe down the apartment and I can't buy Clorox wipes anywhere and like the cheap little off brand ones just don't do it. And I really just want the yellow container of Clorox wipes, but I can't find them anywhere.

MG: Yeah.

CD: Thankfully, toilet paper is back in stock. We didn't have to deal with that for too long, thankfully. I know it's still limited; I think you can only buy a pack per guest.

MG: Mmhm.

CD: I go to Target a lot, so there's that, but yeah, I don't know. Clorox wipes is the biggest one I want right now.

MG: Yeah, I get it. It's always like finding treasure when you find Clorox wipes.

CD: Yeah, well the other ones just don't stay wet and feel like [laughter] they're doing nothing.

MG: Yeah, well I feel like the off-brand ones – we use off brand ones at my other job – but the way that they close, they don't have enough like area, like free space within the closure to keep like the excess wipes in [laughter].

CD: [Laughter] Oh.

MG: So it's just like, this isn't going to stay dry [laughter].

CD: No, it doesn't work so well.

MG: No, it doesn't.

CD: [Laughter].

MG: But I get it, I feel the pain.

CD: Mmhm.

00:24:07.000

MG: How does news coverage you see differ from what you've personally seen or experienced?

CD: Well, granted, Menomonie is a small town, in the middle of Wisconsin, which is lots of rural area and stuff. So, I know there is like certain cities were definitely hotspots during all of this. I know like the Florida hotspot, New York, and San Francisco and all those big cities. Surprisingly though, Minneapolis did not get bad. Like I thought it would. Like Milwaukee got a lot worse and I want to know why because Minneapolis has an international airport. And I would have expected it to be a lot worse. So, there was definitely – you could still see the local counts of how many cases there were and how many deaths there were, but I think, locally because of the area that we're in, especially because we're so close to Northern Wisconsin, where there's even fewer people because they're so spread out. I think thankfully, we were able to avoid, in this area at least, the big impact of spreading of cases that the bigger cities unfortunately had.

MG: Yeah, definitely. And I mean, I've wondered that too why it hasn't hit Milwaukee as much. And like my first reaction is like "Wisconsin had like an open election where people were going and had less polling places." Even before then, it seemed like Milwaukee was hit worse than Minneapolis.

CD: Right.

MG: So, it is an interesting concept to think about that like “why is that?”

CD: Right.

MG: We are pretty lucky in Menomonie that it hasn't hit us yet, too bad.

CD: Right.

MG: [Unclear]

CD: Like, I think there are like a couple cases, but I don't think I really ever saw it got that big. And one of my friends who works in Housing, she is immunocompromised. So, we were concerned about her.

MG: Hmm.

CD: She worked for Housing but she ended up living in Menomonie afterwards because she didn't have like have the right arrangements to get home, so she lived with a friend. But I know she was even more concerned than me, and I mean I was concerned for her, just because like going to pump at the gas station –

MG: Yeah.

CD: – Like you don't know who touched the gas. Thankfully she had a friend who went and did that stuff for her so she didn't have to go out there.

MG: Mmhm.

CD: Yeah, it was definitely still – it wasn't as bad as I think the global news showed it in other places in Wisconsin, but it was still a concern.

MG: Yeah, definitely because you never know.

CD: Right.

MG: Like who was there before you or who even is right next to you standing in line.

CD: Well and then some people don't – there was so much confusion on what actually is a symptom or what isn't a symptom and why do some people show symptoms; why do some people not even know they have it at all. So, like you don't even know, the person next to you isn't coughing, isn't doing anything, but do they have it? You have no clue [laughter].

MG: Yeah, like the asymptomatic cases are always like super concerning because they have no knowing unless they get tested and testing has been kind of spotty in the U.S. So, –

CD: Yeah.

MG: – It’s scary.

CD: Yeah.

MG: Especially if you’re already immunocompromised.

CD: Right.

00:27:44.000

MG: So, what are the things that you miss most about campus or – and the Menomonie community?

CD: I miss stir fry at Fireside [Fireside Café, campus dining option] [laughter] because I would get that every single Tuesday and Thursday.

MG: Yeah [laughter].

CD: And then I got my first week of full classes after Spring Break at home, I got to Tuesday and I got done with my morning class which gets done right by lunch time, and all of sudden I was like “why am I so hungry, specifically for stir fry [laughter]?”

MG: [Laughter]

CD: And then I figured out it was because that’s what I would do every single day. So that was really sad. I definitely miss being able to go there.

MG: Mmhm.

CD: I miss – also like I was in Housing for three years and I was on North Campus for all three of them – so like I definitely miss the staff that I had up there because a lot of them were continued staff members. So, like seeing them every day and then like – even if I was busy, I could always walk down to the basement and there would be people studying down there. Or since I was an Academic Resource Coordinator, I would host my own Study Nights as part of my job, so I always got to see residents and staff through that. So, there’s a lot less of those kinds of interactions that you don’t really think of because it’s just “oh, I got to go to Study Night” but then when you don’t have that, you forget how many people you’re actually talking to and interacting with. So that’s definitely a big miss too [exhale].

MG: Yeah, definitely. It’s hard to fully realize how social your activities are when all of a sudden you can’t talk to people face-to-face.

CD: Right. Or even in classes [laughter].

MG: Yeah. Like there’s always, right before classes, people are talking, other times people are just on their phones, but still, you’re with people.

CD: Right.

MG: In a room, all together. And that's just, it's part of college. You know?

CD: Right.

MG: Like you're in a classroom.

CD: Yeah, and the Senior Game Lab that you've [laughter] been working for four years to work in –

MG: Yeah.

CD: – and then you get to show up to class every day in this super cool room with cool game equipment around you –

MG: Yeah.

CD: – All the time like the new green screen and the motion capture and all the people who are just like brilliant and creative and you get to –

MG: Yeah.

CD: – Interact with them every Tuesday and Thursday and then you go to nothing, and you feel like you're missing [laughter] something.

MG: Yeah, definitely. I mean, whenever I got to go into that room when I was a Game Design major, I was like “this is the coolest room on campus.”

CD: Right? I –

MG: As soon as quarantine started, I was like “I'm kind of glad I am not in that major because I don't know how I would do it [Laughter].”

CD: Yeah, it was so sad because I'm the team lead for Shepard's Sky and I was also – my family lives in Eau Claire, so not very far from Menomonie – so when the emails went out to go clear out stuff in Micheels and Jarvis, or in Applied Arts, I was the closest one, so I went to pick up our stuff from the Game Lab. And it was just so sad to see all of these posters that we had made and all these sketches on our whiteboard and all of our inside jokes that we had put on there and have to sit there and take them all down and erase the board and know you're never coming back to that room. It was really sad.

MG: Yeah, yeah. I can only imagine. And it sucks because [short pause] they say all throughout your time in that major, like senior year, you're going to get to make your own game, you're

going to be in this room, making all this stuff with this group of people and then you're going to show it off at the Game Expo [Stout Game Expo (SGX)] or whatever.

CD: That was the worst part. The Game Expo being cancelled, that was probably the worst news I got. That was almost worse than graduation. Just because that is – in this major, that's such a big goal to work towards.

MG: It is.

CD: My team was set to be in the front center of the room for this SGX with our senior game and how to engage people and what kind of freebies/fun things to have and like – we worked for that for four years and then it just got taken away [laughter].

MG: Yeah, but I mean the game is still out there. Like you still made it and that is an accomplishment.

CD: Yeah.

MG: Like it is hard making a game.

CD: Yeah, and this was 3-D [Three Dimensional] and no one –

MG: Yeah.

CD: – Had done 3-D until you get to this class.

MG: Yeah, definitely. Like –

CD: But yeah, and Virtual SGX went really well honestly.

MG: Mmhm.

CD: In case that ever needs to happen again, I think they set up a good format. I know from talking with all the teams, the new way that they did voting, a lot of people enjoyed that it's voting done by the faculty because they're the ones who are technical people in our field, so they know what to look for, instead of whoever has the most relatives coming, they win the award.

MG: Yeah.

CD: But we still think there should be a "People's Choice" vote for like relatives to vote on their favorite game.

MG: Yeah.

CD: But then we really liked that the technical awards were done by the faculty. So, there were good things that came out of Virtual SGX.

MG: Mmhm, yeah, definitely. And maybe that can be like implemented the next time we're able to have a regular SGX.

CD: I would definitely vote for having faculty voting [laughter].

MG: It makes sense [laughter].

CD: Yeah.

MG: Like, my mom might not know what to look for in a technical sense when she's playing a game.

CD: Also, she just wants to support you too, so [laughter].

MG: Yeah, she would. She'd be like "oh, I'm just going to vote for Meagan because she's my daughter." It's like "well sure, okay."

CD: Yeah.

00:33:45.000

MG: So, If you were granted a wish for twenty-four hours, with no chance of infection, how would you spend it?

CD: Oh boy, there's so many things I could do.

MG: It's a big question.

CD: It is. For twenty-four hours. And like you have to take into account real travel time?

MG: No.

CD: [Laughter].

MG: It's a wish. Like if you're wishing for stuff, why do you have to do like boring logistical stuff? Just like blink your eyes and be there.

CD: Well, I was fortunate enough, before this year – my freshman year and my sophomore year I got to study abroad. So, I would definitely love to actually get into a plane and go fly somewhere else again because I really like flying. So, like, that would be nice. Not maybe for super long –

MG: Yeah. Mmhm.

CD: – Because your legs do get tired after a while. But also, I'm a big rollercoaster person, so being able to go to Six Flags Great America in Illinois.

MG: Oh yeah.

CD: Would be a lot of fun [laughter] because right now they're closed, and I don't even know when they're going to open. I keep checking and – now I'm even closer because I live in Sheboygan now and I can't go.

MG: Yeah. I mean, I'm from Kenosha, which is like thirty minutes from there –

CD: Oh no way. I grew up in Kenosha [laughter].

MG: Oh, my goodness [laughter]. What high school – this is off topic to the interview but like, what high school did you go to?

CD: Well, okay, I didn't go to there that long. I was born in Eau Claire and before I turned three, we moved to Kenosha and then – because my grandparents live down there.

MG: Okay.

CD: I was there until fifth grade and then we moved back to Eau Claire. I wasn't there for too long.

MG: Mmm.

CD: But for all my little years I was [laughter].

MG: What elementary school did you go to?

CD: I actually went to Friedens Lutheran [Friedens Evangelical Lutheran School].

MG: Okay. I was going to say, if you say South Port, I'm going to lose my cool. That'd be crazy.

CD: [Laughter] No, I'm not that cool. I went to Friedens.

MG: [Laughter] That's crazy though.

CD: I know, no one ever hears of Kenosha. They just like think of Racine sometimes, but.

MG: Yeah, Racine – especially lately with Foxconn.

CD: Mmhm.

MG: People are like “oh I think I've heard of that; that sounds familiar.” It's like, because of Foxconn.

CD: Yeah.

MG: But yeah, you're always "oh, like South of Milwaukee, or like North of Chicago" or whatever.

CD: Yeah.

MG: But that's crazy, oh my goodness.

CD: Yeah, I spend about two weeks – well before, you know, work was a thing – I used to go down to visit my grandparents for two weeks to go to Six Flags, so I'd be all around Kenosha doing it.

00:36:32.000

MG: Yeah, definitely. So, what else would you like to share about your experiences during this pandemic?

CD: Oh boy. It was definitely unexpected. A lot of people thought it was crazy at the beginning, myself included. I thought everyone is overreacting, this is ridiculous, why is GDC [Game Developers Conference] canceled, why are all these other things canceled when we don't even have any confirmed cases yet? But then, really like an eye-opening meeting for me was the Housing meeting to discuss, this is what we're getting information on now because up until then we hadn't really gotten on a whole lot of information, and it was from multiple different sources, and no one really knew what was up. But having the staff that we do at Stout – I can't, I wish, I'm pretty sure her name is Sandi [Sandi Scott, Dean of Students]. She's really high up at Stout, I'm pretty sure her name is Sandi. And she, that day of that meeting, was in meetings from eight in the morning and ended with the RAs at eight at night. She was in so long and she did so much. She did a good job of informing us of what was going to happen as staff members and as students so we could keep our students safe. And then Stout was so prepared for this to happen. They said that they were prepared for like, to even end the semester three weeks early if they had to because they didn't want students to miss out on their schooling. So, throughout this whole thing Stout was way on top of everything. The only complaint [finger shaking] I have from Stout is that we just found out that the graduation ceremony just got canceled in August, which really sucks.

MG: It does suck.

CD: Yeah, because I would rather, honestly – I know that you can go to the winter [Fall Semester commencement ceremony], but to me that takes away from this class because it's just another classes graduation, you know?

MG: Yeah.

CD: So, I'm still in the process of emailing higher ups because I have an idea for – I don't know, I'm just one student, so I don't know. Maybe I'm missing something logistically. Maybe they already thought of this, but I have a plan that I want to at least give to them to still give seniors the opportunity to graduate in August, but.

MG: Mmhm. Yeah, definitely.

CD: That's the one thing I feel like they dropped the ball on.

MG: Yeah, it's really disappointing when graduation is canceled. It's sort of like the period to the end of the sentence, if college is a sentence.

CD: Right.

MG: Like to this metaphor. Like it is a definite ending. You know it's coming.

CD: Yeah.

MG: And then all of a sudden, it's gone.

CD: Well and like they canceled it because too many people wanted to do it that they didn't think they could host that many people, which means that this class wants to. So –

MG: Yeah.

CD: – If there's any way of doing it, they split it up across three days, I don't care. Like –

MG: Yeah.

CD: – I'll drive wherever.

MG: Yeah. Like, it is a hard thing to go through, but it doesn't take away your accomplishment. You did graduate, like you put in the work, you got the degree.

CD: Right, which I actually have already [laughter].

MG: Yeah, so like you are a college graduate now. [Unclear].

CD: Yeah, which is so weird.

MG: Yeah [laughter], I mean, it's an accomplishment. It's a great thing. Congratulations, you did something really hard.

CD: [Laughter].

.MG: And you did it well. But it sucks that graduation isn't a thing, but just because it's not there, doesn't mean you didn't do a good job or that it takes away from it, you know?

CD: Right, right.

MG: But you should email them with your idea because, yeah, you're just one student but I'm sure they have tons of students who are going "yeah, I'm just one student but I need to say what I need to say." And plus, maybe you'll find an answer as to why they are not doing it that way or whatever.

CD: Right, right. Yeah.

MG: Mmhm.

CD: Yeah.

MG: Yeah.

CD: [Laughter].

MG: Sorry.

CD: No, you're good.

MG: Sorry, I like got emotional, like it's okay but like I talk to a few seniors and they're always like "yeah, it's really sad that we can't do graduation." But I'm just like "but you still did a great job [laughter]."

CD: And we did – we finished our year in like the strangest of circumstances [laughter].

MG: Truly, truly you really did. Like my sister was going to graduate grad school [Graduate School] this year. And –

CD: Ohh.

MG: – She was so disappointed when her graduation was canceled, so I just like sent her a little baseball cap with like "Grad Cap" embroidered onto it. Then I put in a little note that was like "even though you can't walk, you can still wear your grad cap." So, like –

CD: That's so cute.

MG: You just got to have to find those little moments to like make your own graduation. It's hard and it's not the same thing but like you can – it's possible in different ways [laughter].

CD: Right. I just want to go back to Stout and at least get a picture in my graduation gown on campus somewhere [laughter].

00:41:43.000

MG: Oh, I get it. Yeah, definitely. You should do that, if you can. But last question.

CD: Okay.

MG: Can you recommend anyone else from the Stout community who we should approach for an interview?

CD: Oh boy. Like, literally anybody?

MG: Literally anybody from Stout.

CD: Have you talked to professors yet?

MG: Yes. I have talked to some professors, some faculty members, and some students.

CD: Okay. So like, one specific professor, you might've talked to him already, is Seth Berrier

MG: How do you spell his last name?

CD: B. E. R. R. I. E. R.

MG: Okay.

CD: He's a CS [Computer Science] Game Design, as well as just general CS professor. But he was one of the people that was super awesome throughout all of this, and he always has good thoughts on everything that is going on in the world. So, he might be a good one to talk to.

MG: Yeah, definitely.

CD: Also, I'm pretty sure her name is Sandi. She was in charge of a lot of Stout's decisions made regarding COVID. I don't know if you've talked to her.

MG: I haven't but I know who you're talking about.

CD: Yeah, okay. And then, there's – the Residence Life Coordinator for my building. She's a former Stout alum [Alumni] who just came back this year, to be a Residence Life Coordinator. So, she might be good too because she's got the alumni perspective as well as dealing with Housing as your first year through all of this.

MG: Can you repeat her name?

CD: Yep, it's Klare Armstrong. It's Klare with a "k".

MG: All right. Great. We will definitely approach them for an interview Thank you so much for your time. Sorry again about the reschedule but –

CD: Oh, this actually worked better, so [laughter].

MG: Oh, perfect. Great [laughter].

CD: Because I met with my game team yesterday, which was going to be really fast after this, but then I had time to prepare so.

MG: Nice. Well, I'm glad it worked out for everybody. Thank you for your time. It's a huge help. And yeah, thank you so much.

CD: Thanks for reaching out to me. I think this is such a cool idea, so.

MG: We're hoping to get all the information done by like mid-June. I'm actually going to stop recording now.

CD: That's coming up [laughter].

00:44:35.000

END