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## Linus Babcock, Oral History Interview, 2022

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Eastern Michigan University, Oral Histories

Interview with Linus Babcock (LB) conducted on November 20, 2022 by EMU undergraduate student Cellach Allen (CA) for You Li's Journalism 313 course.

Transcribed by Cellach Allen

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CA: Okay so my focus was you moving back home and the feelings behind that. Because I did not do that so it's just interesting to me. Shouldn't be too long here. When you first left home to live at college pre pandemic, what were your general feelings about that?

LB: It was honestly pretty nice. Just that certain amount of freedom you get, and the Eastern dorms were pretty nice you know. Wasn't the greatest spot per se. I was still like a good 20 minutes away from home, so I never felt like home sick or anything. And had good friends that I was living with the first year and having meal plans and just kind of being on campus and that experience was really nice. Eastern is not a perfect campus in any sense, but yeah.

CA: Definitely would be nice to get away from home for a second.

LB: Yeah, I mean I was the youngest child like my sisters were six years older than me and so there was a good time where I was pretty much an only child. So, I had a good amount of freedom so it wasn't that much of a change, but you can definitely feel it when you have your own space.

CA: Before the pandemic how were your relationships with your family members?

LB: Okay. It was pretty good. My parents are not too demanding or anything. I had a good amount of freedom and my own space and everything else. We get along and they like to show me stuff and you know get dinner. That kind of thing. But not exactly extremely close.

CA: Do you remember the moment you found out that you had to come home? That COVID was announced, and you had to come home?

LB: Yeah. So, the last thing I remember doing in a public setting was voting for the democratic primary. It was, like, Joe Biden or Bernie Sanders. I went and I voted for Bernie Sanders, and I came back to my dorm room and throughout the day we had heard rumblings of I think MSU had closed down and a bunch of other colleges were right about to close down so Eastern was just on the brink pretty much. We knew what was going to happen and we had just also gotten back from our spring break like maybe a week or two ago, so we hadn't been back on that campus that long. But I don't know, another break kind of sounded nice so I was kind of excited that it got shut down. I didn't know exactly what it would entail but I knew there's this virus, we're going to shut down for a little bit, you're gonna have another break pretty much. So I was, in a sense, kind of looking forward to that because I didn't quite know the implications and everything that would come from it.

CA: Gotcha. Describe the process of moving out.

LB: So initially I guess it was just supposed to be for a few weeks and they said oh you're going to come back to campus. So, I didn't move out of my dorm. I kind of just packed up some stuff as if I was just going to go home for like a week or so. Most of my stuff was still at my dorm by the time I had left to go back home for the initial shutdown but and then the next couple of weeks or so it seemed pretty obvious that even if we did come back to school that maybe the dorms wouldn't really be operated anymore. And then eventually we found out we would be getting somewhat of a refund for it and that you would have to move out. So, I was lucky in the sense that I'm only around 20 minutes away from school, so the process of moving out I actually did on my own. I didn't really want my parents to have to go to school in case there were any health risks because I don't think I even had a mask on. It was that early. But you were able to go into your dorm and there were not many people there. I kind of loaded all my stuff up and put it in my car made like two trips or something and got everything out, but it was a weird feeling. I believe even the whole place was empty when you knew you were supposed to have like two more months in it. There was no experience of spring or like any warm weather per se and it was empty walls. It was just a weird feeling, but I wasn't still that upset about it because in a sense I did kind of enjoy another break and sometime off and I knew I'd be back the next year living somewhere so it wasn't quite the end of the world for me.

CA: Right, were you were you living alone in your dorm, or did you have roommates?

LB: I had one roommate in my dorm and then we had like a bathroom connected with two other people. We all got along pretty well.

CA: That's cool. Did you guys have to come in separately to move your stuff out or were you guys there at the same time?

LB: It was separate. I didn't know if it had to be separate, but I guess that's just kind of how it worked out. It probably did have to be separate, but I don't exactly remember.

CA: Gotcha, so then after you got back home, I know you live close and all that, but how was the first night back at your house after being away at college?

LB: It didn't feel that different per se. I think the first few nights before it was "lockdown lockdown", I remember there were a few days where it was like school shut down, but you could still go places and visit people. I think I was crashing at some friend's houses those nights kind of just getting all the last hangouts we could before everything started shutting down. But like I said we had spring break a week or two before the shutdown happened, so it didn't feel that different it kind of just felt like it was extended in a sense.

CA: Was there a specific disagreement that you remember getting in with a family member?

LB: So, my eldest sister, she's about eight years older than me, she had her own apartment in

Ferndale, and she was doing some at home remote stuff. Sometimes during the initial lockdown, she would come stay with our family and because she's my sister and family that's okay, but I remember it was a little worrisome. I didn't exactly know how bad COVID was, I thought it was a lot worse than it was, but she would leave a lot of the time and just like kind of go other places and just kind of comeback as she pleased. We didn't know exactly where she was going or who she was seeing or if she was social distancing or anything, so I guess that's like the most tension were I was kind of worried and annoyed with her just like coming and going and that sort of sense. My parents were a little older, so I wanted to make sure they were safe, and I thought the disease was a lot worse than it was in a sense so I'd kind of get upset with her about that.

CA: Right well that would be scary though because that was like super scary that first stretch.

LB: Yeah you didn't know what's going on. You just saw people dying in hospitals.

CA: Yeah. Some people felt like the pandemic has pushed them. Back do you feel that way?

LB: I'd probably say so that it has a little bit. Just in terms of like drive, but like I said I didn't quite have a job for like a year or so after it and just trying to get a desire to go back to work and like getting back in that mindset. Which I got back into and ended up being okay, but it did kind of push me back. I think just because you enjoy sort of doing nothing and you're a little fearful going back into the world in some sense. That kind of adjustment for like the whole year from the other half of 2020 to the other part of 2021 it

was definitely-like I was doing good in school and everything and still had good relationships with people, but it's just under the different sense of like drive and passion for doing stuff wasn't as strong as it was pre pandemic.

CA: Definitely, what was the best thing and the worst thing about moving back home?

LB: It's been like 10 minutes already. The best thing and worst thing...

CA: I only got a few more left I think.

LB: Okay that's all good. The best thing was my parents at our house. I live in Saline and it's like a smaller town. There's a lot of freedom whereas Ypsilanti is not quite as safe, so I was able to go out like longboarding like all night if I wanted to and not have to worry about anything. Also, my parents had a hot tub, so I would just spend a lot of time just hanging out in the hot tub during the pandemic, which is really nice, fully relaxing. So just kind of having a space again that was just mine I enjoyed I got to hang out with my cat a lot. Just that sort of freedom. Was there a second part of the question?

CA: What was the worst thing?

LB: The worst thing. The worst thing was probably, I wasn't able to go out and see any of my friends in person for like the first like two months or something which got kind of tough. I didn't want to like sneak out or anything, but I don't know it's seeing two or three people

all the time for two months does get kind of old. In a sense just not being able to go anywhere else besides one house is probably the worst part of that. It wasn't all horrible.

CA: All right, when you found out that school would be returning in person how did you feel?

LB: I was looking forward to it. I'm a digital media production major, so video and that sort of stuff it can't really be done online. For like the first semester of 2020 I think I had one class that was in person and then it got like shut down again like halfway through the semester and moved online and then that other semester from like winter 2021 that was pretty all online. So, I didn't really fully experience going back to campus till the 2021 fall semester. It was pretty refreshing, and it felt like good and productive to be out in an actual classroom environment; even though at that point you're still wearing masks and everything but that was still the kind of the experience I was looking for that I felt kind of lost for like a year and a half.

CA: Gotcha, how is the move back to school?

LB: So, I didn't move back into the dorms I ended up getting an apartment that next year. So, even more freedom than the dorms in that sort of sense. It was kind of a shady cheap apartments, so it had a lot of issues with it. For a first place that I lived in with a couple guys you know it was a good experience. Eastern couldn't kick me out of that place if any lockdown happened, so we were comfortable in that sense. That this was a place that was ours that school won't kick you out of.



CA: Right and then how would you say the move back home affected your relationships with anyone?

LB: I would say it wasn't anything negative per se mostly positive I guess. In some ways I was able to spend a little bit more time with my parents that I hadn't in a while. I got to learn a little more about them and what they're up to and have them sort of experience me when I was a little bit older, and I was like 18/19. Now with a lot of my friends it was you were able to communicate on zoom and stuff and I think the time apart made like seeing each other again kind of more exciting. We ended up spending a lot of time together that summer kind of just doing nothing all hanging out. Which is really fun, so I would say it was mostly positive. Definitely kind of lonesome in some senses, but I made the best that I could out of it.

CA: Cool that's all I got. So, like 5 minutes left.

LB: That should be good. I guess you have to buy like zoom plus to have a meeting over 40 minutes.

CA: Come on really, I don't know. They even have like Snapchat plus now too, they got everything.

LB: Hopefully I'm still able to transcribe it from here, but I'll figure it out.

CA: Yeah no, but well I recorded the whole thing on my voice memo so if you don't have it I'll send it to you.

LB: Okay, cool appreciate it man.

CA: Yeah of course. Alright thank you see you around.

LB: Yeah, thank you too have a good one.

CA: You too bye.