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Colae Eason, Oral History Interview, 2022

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Interview with Colae Eason (CE) conducted by EMU undergraduate Will Fawcett (WF) in November, 2022, via Zoom for You Li's Journalism 313 course.

Transcribed by Colae Eason

CE: Okay.

WF: And then I only have 15 questions, but I'll ask. I like might ask for follow-ups or something.

CE: Yeah, that's fine. Whatever you need to do is fine.

WF: All right, so I'm just going to talk about high school experience with dance and kind of a similar thing too. Oh, you asked me, but yeah, so some of them might be stuff you already answered in our last year. You. But I just. Needed questions. So what were parts of high school, of the high school experience that you missed out on because of COVID?

CE: Well, I miss out on classes. Yeah. When junior year happened like it cut off our classes. We weren't doing any classes. And I think the school was shot too, because, like, they weren't able to figure out how to move everything online because my school was not like a little tech-savvy school. So literally, junior year, I didn't do any work. Like, our school tried to set up an online program, but nobody did it. And I think the school kind of understood, like, understood, like everyone was taken back because they just gave us pass or fail grades. So when the second half of the year, you're like, I literally didn't do anything, didn't see anyone. It wasn't

classes. And senior year they figured out everything on Zoom. So I had to get adjusted to Zoom classes, but. That was really we had to do Zoom classes and of course like a senior year. Do you want to experience going to school? Mm-hmm. Just because, like, you know, high school is fun and it just sucks, like, your last year, like, you don't really have.

WF: It's the fun year.

CE: Yeah, exactly. You don't really have, like, the memories to make because, like, we're on Zoom, you know, all your friends. Like, it just really sucked in the graduation. We had a graduation, but it was a drive-through graduation. So it really it makes me sad still just because, like, I wish I had a real graduation and I just wish circumstances were better. And prom. The prom was fine. Like it was a good idea because we had to do it outside instead of inside, which was fine. Like, it was really sort of nice, but it rained the whole day. So there was like no rescheduling through anything because they already booked the venue. So it was just a great idea, but it was not executed well because of the weather. Yeah, well, just those things and stuff like that.

WF: Yeah. So you already touched on it a little bit, but like how did like you said you were sad about it. Like how did it affect you that you missed out on all this stuff? Like, is there any, like, I don't know, wrong? Like, I don't know. Do you feel robbed? I don't know.

CE: I yeah. Um, it is disappointing, I think, but I don't really know. Like, there's nobody to be mad at if it was, like, the school did the best that they could. Like, they still wanted to keep everyone safe, so they didn't really have a real graduation. And I

mean, I think there was other ways that we could have had, like, kind of a real graduation. But like I said, they just did it there so they can. Same thing with prom. Like, they try their best to make it to where we could enjoy it. They did it. Make it rain. I can't be mad at them. Mhm. So it was like. Whatever. And. Um. Yeah, I'm. I'm disappointed about it still, just because I wish I could have had a better experience, but I don't think it's. I don't. I don't really have anyone to be mad at, so I'm not mad or anything. It's just like. This is unfortunate, but. Do you know what happened?

WF: Yeah. So, did the school ever try to do anything to, like, make amends for the rainy prom? Like, dry? I don't know. Just anything at all. Any, like.

CE: No, they kind of just said, you know, we're sorry and this is what we do. And they did have, like, a choice of, like, in-person classes or not. But, like, nobody was doing in-person classes. Like, I think my friends that did like there were like three people in each class. So it was just kind of a situation where I don't know, I think everyone just felt bad and the school definitely felt bad. Like, I don't think they were just like, Well, they deserve it or something.

WF: Well, yeah.

CE: And I just felt bad, I think.

WF: Um. So you talked about how there were other students that, like, went into class. How did other students, like, feel about the whole thing? Like, um, where was everybody understanding? Did everybody? I don't know. What was the general?

CE: But I think the people that did go were like it was just, I think everyone just kind of like they were sad about it just because, like, it is depressing. Yeah. Waking up to go to school every day and like, no one there. And then the school didn't, like, give us a choice to go. Okay, well, if you don't like it, then you can go back or you can go on to online. So once they made that decision, they made that decision. Yeah. And I think they were just kind of like, bummed, like they made the decision to wake up and come into the building just like not to be with everyone. Mhm. Because mostly everyone did it online anyway. So I think both sides were just like bad like we were online. I mean, it was fine for me cause I was able to get a job during that time. So I, it wasn't, I enjoyed it more and I'm glad I didn't choose to go in person. Yeah.

WF: So what? What school did you go to?

CE: Oh, I went to Romulus High School.

WF: Okay. All right. I already kind of asked that. Um. So now I'm going to talk about dancing. So how long have you been dancing?

CE: Um, I started when I was six, so, like, I don't know, 12 years.

WF: Okay, long time. Uh, so. And then how long during COVID did you go without dancing?

CE: Then when it happened, my studio tried to do classes on Zoom. So continue like the season. The seasons are mostly like school, like a school year. Okay, so we can't continue that out on Zoom. And it was fine for the most part because I think

everyone still kind of felt like we were going to dance like a competition or something because our competitions got canceled and everything. But I think everyone was still going because like we thought, maybe who knows? Like something will happen, folks will be able to go back to dancing. But I think. Especially like me personally. Once I realized that nothing was going to come out of this, I kind of like lost motivation to keep going to the classes. Like, even as much as I do love dance, it just felt kind of pointless. So I just, like, stopped going towards the end. And then the next year I didn't like. These are just because like. My parents didn't feel comfortable with me going back to the studio just for like home and everything. So it was just I didn't dance. Probably, like that whole year.

WF: Yeah.

CE: Like in the studio? Yeah.

WF: How did that, like, affect you?

CE: It really took a toll on me just because not only was I just, like, missing the year, like your senior year in Dexter is like a big deal. Like it's a huge deal. Like, because it's your last year with the studio, like, you know, usually like a solo senior year, you compete. I wasn't able to have that. Usually, you get like more parts in dances because you're a senior. Like, it's a really big deal. So when I wasn't able to do that, it was just it's like a big deal because not only was I not dancing, but I was not dancing for like the most important time for me to dance in, like, my high school career. So just like. It was very upsetting. It was very sad for me to go through.

WF: You know? Yeah, it sounds awful. Um. So then when you came to college, you told me you joined the dance team. Were you like were you behind? Were you prepared for it? What kind of was the experience going back to it?

CE: I knew I was behind. Like there was a clinic, which is basically like, how do I describe it? I like to see what a college is like. So that I had one of those in March, it was over Zoom. But even then, I just felt so like lost because I was like not used to like learning choreography anymore. Like, everything kind of threw me off. Like, in I was really nervous. Like, I didn't even think I was going to make the team just based on that. But like I did go out of my way to like take private lessons with one of my teachers. So it was just me and my teacher before I auditioned. That way I could, like, try to make sure you're going to get good. Yeah, yeah. Like, and get used to everything. And, like, it might take me back to at least half of what it was. It was so I would be ready to audition. So I did go on my way to do that. And I guess it helped because I made the team. But yeah, it was just I did feel very behind like before. I joined the team because I didn't even think I was going to make it. But I think once I made it, I got used to it and I was able to get back into it quickly once I knew that I was on the team, if that makes sense.

WF: No. Yeah. So you were a senior in 2020, right? So were, you.

CE: Know, as a senior in 2021.

WF: Oh, in 2021. Okay. Yes. Yeah, that's what I meant. So then you applied for colleges and stuff online, right? Or like yes. During COVID. How what was that like?

CE: Hmm. Thankfully, I was at the scholarship program in high school where we did tour a lot of college campuses in Michigan. But we did have colleges left to tour that I didn't like. I think like there were three more colleges like that I didn't get to see, so that kind of threw me off. But I kind of had a pretty good idea of colleges in Michigan, so I just applied to like apply to like every school in Michigan just to see, yeah, like what would happen. But at the same time, I didn't even want to go to school in Michigan. Yeah, I wanted to go to school out of state. So that was another thing that I got thrown off because I was like, well.

WF: Yeah.

CE: Well I wouldn't be able to ah like is it worth it is a good idea. So I applied to most schools in Michigan and then I'll place like a couple out of state schools. I think if the pandemic did happen, I probably would apply to like. Less like more I mean, more out-of-state schools. But that kind of just threw off what I was planning to do because I didn't know how would have with you know.

WF: Yeah. No. Yeah, that makes sense. So then once you got to college and college started filling out a little bit, are you satisfied with the post-post-COVID college experience?

CE: Oh, yeah. I actually like I like it now that things are getting back to normal. Basically, it feels like college again. Hmm. And. I mean, I took and I like how like kind of there are a lot of online class options because I just like online classes more.

WF: But yeah, I Agree

CE: As far as all this goes like I still live on campus and everything. Like it's a good experience. I don't think it's bad. I know it could have been bad, but it really is good though. I'm satisfied.

WF: It's good to hear. So do you think your high school and even EMU did a good job dealing with the circumstances and the pandemic?

CE: Mm. Yeah. I think everyone in our school especially like I think they just did what they could. And that is really all I can ask for, like as long as you're trying to make things better, because, you know, I went through a bad situation. That's what mattered to me. And I think that's what they did in Eastern, definitely. They still try their best to keep freshmen involved and try to make this so our transition smooth and everything and.

WF: Oh.

THE ZOOM CALL ENDED AND RESTARTED

CE: I thought that when what he said went on the assignment was that if we use the school account as it does, you get free meetings as long as you want. But apparently not. But it's okay.

WF: Yeah. No, that was the last question.

CE: So you can ask it.

WF: Okay. Yeah. Well, yeah. Uh oh. Well, okay. So I was just going to ask, is there anything you think that EMU and your school could have done better?

CE: Yes. Okay. Um. I think my high school did the best with what they could do because they knew what everyone was going through they knew it was a bad situation for everyone and they tried to just make do with what they could. Like they knew we couldn't have a graduation. They said, we'll do a drive-through, and they knew we could have the prom at the place. They usually have it. We'll do it outside. And even though those things did not turn out as great as I would have wanted them to, I know that their heart was in the right place. So that's all that matters to me. And then Eastern. I think they did a good job of like trying to get the freshmen what the transition like during a weird time like when we had orientation here it was on Zoom, so it was kind of weird.

WF: Yeah, it sounds.

CE: But even then, like, I appreciate them doing something like that because like, you know, they could have literally just been like, we don't care. Like, we'll just throw you in college, you know, they adjusted everything so we can be online friends and they really did, I think, Eastern do the best they could trying to introduce everyone with the circumstances. I think everyone's heart was in the right place, even though things might have not been like perfect or great. But yeah.

WF: All right. Well, yeah, that was my last question. So thanks for the interview.

CE: Okay. Thank you. So good. And I'm so sorry for your kids.

WF: So, yeah, it's no problem at all. I'm glad we were able to start early. I got other homework I got to do, so.

CE: Yes.

WF: All right. Well, have a good one. Great talking.

CE: To you.

WF: Good luck.

CE: Thank you. Good luck to you as well.

WF: Okay. All right. Perfect.