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## **Caroline Murrel, Oral History Interview, 2022**

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Interview with Caroline Murrel (CM) conducted on November 11, 2022 by EMU undergraduate Blake McQueary (BM) for You Li's Journalism 313 course.

Transcribed by Blake McQueary

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**BM:** Hi, I am Blake McQueary. The following phone interview you are about to listen to is one I hosted with EMU sophomore student Caroline Murrel. The central focus of this interview is to discuss Murrel's adjustment from being in high school and doing her regular day schedule to having to go on lockdown and quarantine during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Okay. So how old are you?

**CM:** I'm 19.

**BM:** 19. And what grade are you in?

**CM:** I'm a sophomore.

**BM:** So you were a junior when it happened?

**CM:** Yeah.

**BM:** So first, pretty general question what were your thoughts on COVID-19 back before it

like officially happened kind of when it was like just a thing you know, floating in the air of like, this could possibly happen.

**CM:** I think it kind of just came out of nowhere. Honestly, from where I was, it was like we started talking about it for a couple days, and then our school was shut down. It wasn't like something that we all just kind of talked about for months, at least where I was. It's something that literally feel like it came out of thin air. And I remember when we were talking about it, I didn't think everything was going to be shut down for how long and how extreme it was. But, I wasn't naive enough to think that we weren't going to be closed down for a little bit, I thought it would be maybe like a week, but I do remember everyone talking about it. And I've never been that type of person during the pandemic to be like not believe in that type of thing. I've always thought it was very serious. Never really, like, joke too much about it. Like, I always thought it was very real.

**BM:** So kind of just how you asked me what I remember. And, you know, the first cancelation for everyone was school and things like that. Was it the same for you in like what were, you know, your thoughts on that? Do you remember exactly where you were and when things started getting shut down?

**CM:** Yeah, I was actually in school. I was doing an online class in this classroom where it was like a bunch of kids who were taking separate online classes. We were all just the same classroom working silently. And I had two friends in that class, and then they dramatically spoke over the speaker to everybody that we're going to be closed down for

two weeks. And then that lines up with our spring break and we're gonna take our spring break and come back. And I remember it almost feeling like everyone was really excited, and I was like, not mad. I was like, Okay, that's kind of nice. Like, we get a break, but also I was a little anxious about it. You know, I felt like I shouldn't be super happy about some sort of, like, disease. And it was a little scary. And like that night with that same friend that I was in that class with, we went to Meijers to get stuff to prepare for the pandemic, I don't know why, and Meijers was cleared. And then I was like, I literally said, this feels like the end of the world because it was live. It was all in one day, it was like everything's gone.

**BM:** And so, you know, with that feeling and with those emotions and everything. What were your predictions, you know, during that time? What did you kind of predict and expect of the lockdown and the whole pandemic.

**CM:** My assumption was very similar to a lot of the people that I was around, that it was going to be a couple of weeks. We're going to quarantine all together, we were all going to, or, you know, be secluded for like I thought, three weeks and that was it, and then we'd go back to normal. So of course, they extended it for my school and we didn't go back to school that whole year for the rest of that year, but, I really thought it was just going to be a couple of weeks of this very serious disease, and we would all have to do our part, and that would be it.

**BM:** So during lockdown. Where was your head at? Were you kind of just going with the

flow? Were you freaking out? Were you happy, mad, sad? Just talk to me a little bit about, you know, where your head was.

**CM:** Yeah. Well, I'm an anxious stressor person, naturally. So there was always that fear of like, especially my mom and dad getting sick. And the idea of, like, you know, this is like a very serious illness I could get that could harm both my parents and my grandparents, it was scary to think about. So I tried not to think about it too much, but it was a lot of like, you know, I stopped working for those three weeks and I kind of hated my job. So it was that was really nice not having to worry about it, but school and school and work it was more. I was glad that I had the time to breathe. No pun intended, because, you know, that's what the big symptom was. It was also a more serious fear attached to everything when it came to how COVID could impact my family.

**BM:** And so. How would you kind of take your mind off of that and deal with that? And like, what would you do to pass time and keep yourself busy or entertained during lockdown?

**CM:** So, I watched a lot of TV in my room, I like to play Minecraft, and I did a lot of, like we've talked before, the arts and crafts, like over there, you can see like I have an easel that I would paint on and I made a lot of stuff for my room, so, like, I did a lot of origami chains, I did a lot of water coloring, that was fun. I made a lot of jewelry, I did all sorts of stuff. It was a lot of just being creative because I had the time to. I got into making, like, I would take yarn and, like, tie it together and make, like, a chain of, like, I could put stuff

in a script, like little rocks and stuff. Lots of arts and crafts and lots of doing things that I enjoyed.

**BM:** And so did those that those kind of come along with you just trying new things out. Did you know any friends or family introduce you to any of these, you know, new hobbies? You know, how did those kind of just, you know, come along?

**CM:** So I always been I've always kind of painted on my own. A lot of the origami and stuff is something that I just want to I've always wanted to do, but never had a chance to until I at the time and the jewelry making was actually my aunt. She let me borrow her cat right before the pandemic. Okay. I was like, yeah, you can you can use it, you know, play around with it. And then the pandemic hit and I couldn't see her. And so I got to use her all the time. Okay.

**BM:** And so. You know, what kind of inspired you to develop those hobbies, you know, and keep those hobbies going?

**CM:** I think there was a big sense of community when it came to the pandemic. Throughout social media, a lot of people, you know, like everyone did, like the whipped coffee. I mean, I never did it, but I watched that like whipped coffee or all these other, like, fun things during the pandemic, people were bored. And so people would post things like, look at this painting I did or look at look at how I made this cute decoration for my room, and I was like, That's a really good idea. And so I would take inspiration from those, and

I felt like as a group of all of us in the pandemic, there was a lot of like, working together to find fun things to do. And I guess that always kind of kept me inspired. People were really, really creative and came up with some cool things.

**BM:** And how did these hobbies and activities affect your mental health?

**CM:** They definitely helped a lot. Um, I don't have a bad work ethic, but I don't like working, if that makes sense, so being able to have time to just have a lot of quiet, it was like a pause and everything. Everything paused, which took a lot off my shoulders. But then I was able to feel rejuvenated when I did things that I liked. I think it definitely helped my mental health to be able to be creative because I had the time to look.

**BM:** And with, you know, these hobbies, do you still enjoy doing these to this day? And if so, you know, how often do you find yourself still performing these hobbies?

**CM:** I still do these hobbies, definitely not as often. You know, I'm working again. I'm a full time student again now. I've made an origami chain recently for my living room and I make my friends jewelry and stuff. I don't really paint as much right now, but I still do occasionally. So do my own little hobbies, definitely not as often, and unfortunately, it does kind of feel like more of a chore during the pandemic because I have other things that are higher priority.

**BM:** I guess I should ask these two questions before that last question. But anyways, um,

would you know, during the pandemic, would you do these hobbies with any friends or family or was it more of like a personal kind of thing for you?

**CM:** It was definitely a very personal thing for me. Nobody else in my family is super duper creative, so we all just kind of did our own things during the pandemic. And, you know, I think it made us closer in the end, but we had a lot of alone time.

**BM:** And, you know, during the pandemic and doing those hobbies so often with just passing time and everything. Did you ever consider, like, you know, starting a business or a, I don't know, like a club or anything like that with these hobbies?

**CM:** I had some friends that were interested in similar things, so I could talk to some of them about it. But to me, the hobbies during this time of my life were so special to me because it wasn't to make money, it wasn't to show them off or do it for a project or going to get a great. It was just kind of like something that I did for myself. And so I never sold them because I guess I kind of felt like it was defeating the purpose.

**BM:** So when you do these hobbies today, does it bring back, you know, memories in times of lockdown, like any vivid memories or no?

**CM:** Yeah, I think it does. It's just lockdown, you know. I know one of my family got sick and nobody in my family passed from COVID, so I'm able to have more positive memories attached to lockdown. And to me, it was, like I said, it was this period to breathe and not



stress about what seems like superficial things now. And so when I do, I have these little crafts that does bring me back. And I do remember just sitting in my very quiet, clean room working on stuff.

**BM:** So I know how you mentioned kind of like the pandemic, you know, bringing that creative side out of you that you weren't really sure that you had or you didn't really know that you had that creativeness and, you know, that creative mindset, has that translated over to anything else in your life and like any other areas in your life, you know, now being out of the pandemic and stuff like that?

**CM:** Yeah. So I always knew I was a little creative. Like I was just kind of out of the box ideas and stuff, but I didn't know I would be good at doing it with my hands. And, you know, my grandma gifted me her camera when I was, like, pre-pandemic, and I started using that to and then now I like take photos for the echo and stuff. So I still am implementing these type of like creative hobbies into what I do. And it probably made me a better writer in the end, too, which is why I decided to take a journalism class in high school and then become the schools lead editor there, and then now be a journalism major.

**BM:** And so my last kind of like closing question would be with all that creativeness in mind and it teaching you things that, like you said, you didn't really know that you had. Overall, what did the pandemic teach you?

**CM:** I think the saying, like not everything is as it seems is a good way to sum it up in a couple

of different ways. Like there's a lot of hidden potential in yourself and in others that isn't shown unless the situation asks for it. You know, like the creativity, or if somebody is in a really, really bad situation, they might become very resilient. And that's not something that you would expect. But also, there are a lot of like kind of how you said there's a lot of people who are different than you expect when it comes down to it. And a lot of people show up when you don't expect a lot of family members that treat you differently in good and bad ways and in a lot of relationships that just don't work out. Just kind of how everything came to be with the pandemic, right?