

Quarantine Oral History

This project was done as part of Dr. Fishman's ENGL 3210 class at Marquette University. All interviewees had to formally quarantine, whether for a positive test or as part of Marquette mandated quarantines of the Schroeder and Cobeen dorms.

All interviewees consented to their participation in the project. For confidentiality's sake, names have been changed.

Interviewees:

O: Not a Schroeder or Cobeen resident, quarantined in Carpenter following a positive test.

R: Not a Schroeder or Cobeen resident, quarantined in their house following a positive test.

B: Not a Schroeder or Cobeen resident, quarantined in their apartment following a positive test.

P: Not a Schroeder or Cobeen resident, quarantined in their apartment following a positive test.

K: Schroeder resident.

Y: Schroeder resident, went home following the quarantine mandate.

What was your initial reaction upon hearing you had to quarantine?

O: I had to quarantine because of a positive test. I was confused. What the hell is happening?

There was a real sense of panic. It was scary, to be honest.

R: I was sitting in the library with my friend. And I didn't know, I didn't know but I just felt off. Which was weird because my friend felt the same way. At first we thought ok, maybe we have mono because another one of our friends just got mono. But felt we should get corona tested just as a formality. And then [my friend] tested positive, and it's just sheer panic.

B: It was a whirlwind of emotions...worried about contacting my job, getting my shifts covered, and just not working for two weeks. I was really worried about school, also. I just felt so sick and fatigued.

P: I Found out on a Wednesday. Monday I felt really sick, so I stayed home Monday and Tuesday. I had a bad headache, but I just pulled an all-nighter so that's what I figured that was about. We all [P and a group of 11 others] got tested on Wednesday. Results trickled in through the day, all positive. The state of Wisconsin actually contacted us, through contact tracing, and told us we qualified as an outbreak. At first there was a lot of laughing, not really sure why. Like oh my god, ha-ha. But also a level of terror. [L and his group are ROTC members] Because if this damages our lungs, we won't commission. We won't have jobs. It became scary very quickly. If [the military] decided we got coronavirus because of something we did, like we didn't take the proper protocol, we'd be out of 180 grand. We're an investment to the government. Responsible for ourselves.

K: I was hanging out in a friend's room. We were given two hours notice. We all freaked out. It was total chaos in the dorm. It blindsided us completely, we had no idea cases were that bad.

Y: I had no expectations, no idea of what quarantine would look like. Within seconds of the email, hallways were flooded. It was panic, total chaos. It came as a complete surprise, a complete shock. There weren't any rumors that anything like this was coming. I feel selfish saying this, but my first thought was how will I eat? I don't normally eat in the Schroeder dining hall and didn't know what to do.

O: My follow up steps were pretty streamlined. I gave [Marquette] a call around 3, they had paperwork filled out by 5, and I moved in by 6:30. From what I've heard other people had similar experiences. But I felt shocked, shocked and embarrassed. MUPD comes and throws you in the back of a paddywagon. We drove to Carpenter, and they let me out the back. There's just people walking around. You get out, and it's like "oh shit, I hope they don't see me walking out of a police car." It was a weird experience, plus there's that stigma there that you maybe didn't make great decisions....

R: I was so panicked....I had just been in the library and didn't feel well. I didn't know that I had corona, but I felt like a terrible person once I tested positive. In my house it was like World War 3 broke out. People were crying, yelling at each other. "You gave me covid!" "No, you gave me covid!" Other friends of ours calling at us, yelling, saying "why didn't you tell us you had covid?" We didn't know that we had covid! I felt super guilty for sure. There was also a lot more figuring out than I expected. I live in a house with seven girls, and we had to figure out where everyone would stay, how separate we were supposed to keep from each other, a bunch of confusing stuff like that. It's not actually math, but it felt like doing math.

K: The two hours notice was so fucked up. I think it was done purposely to incite panic. We all flocked to the stairs, but so did everyone else. So the stairs were completely packed, which was funny because they had just announced quarantine and here we were, all jammed together in a small little stairwell.

Y: Everyone was calling home, in a panic. Media reporters were outside. People were playing The Purge music in the halls, which made me more nervous, honestly. I'm lucky that I live in Illinois. My family was super willing to take me home. Marquette was very vague regarding testing. Didn't give us much information there. There were just so many unknowns, I felt it was best to go home. I felt the plan could have been more comprehensive. But it's so new, so unprecedented, that it's hard to blame.

K: I'm from California, so going home was never a possibility. We were just calling everyone, asking "staying here? Going home?" Everyone then just rushed to stock up on the essentials.

O: I brought a guitar with me. I figured it was something easy to do in dorms and would keep me off my phone and laptop. They let me bring snacks and food also. Each person has a gage for what they need to survive for a week. I brought my toiletry kit I always bring while traveling. Packing was honestly not difficult. I wasn't worried or upset, really. But I do have anxiety and mental health issues, so there was a little worry there, I guess. And I was in Carpenter. I had never been inside the building before. That night I went to bed thinking to myself "this is kinda weird."

How did quarantine affect academic life?

O: I fell really far behind and am still really behind.

R: I did not even look at a single piece of schoolwork. The emotional, mental toll, no chance I'm doing schoolwork right now.

B: It definitely affected my academic performance. I did not listen or pay attention during class. All of school during coronavirus has been really tough, online is not engaging.

L: I'm still catching up. For 6 of the 10 days I was pretty dead. Literally couldn't do anything.

K: I did absolutely none. No drive to do anything at all. Already a shitty situation, no need to make it worse.

Y: I had so much work that I just couldn't drop, had to enter game mode. I did have extra amounts of "11:59 due time" stress, though.

O: First couple days I decided I wasn't going to do any homework. I was really frazzled, just couldn't focus. Had strong symptoms of fatigue. The aches. Had to just lie down in bed for a couple hours each day. So I had 4-5 hours each day, max, where I felt capable of doing work. I'll have to spend most of the next three weeks catching up. 100%, quarantine adversely affected academic life. My professors definitely showed concern, though. Way I worded it in emails was "I'll be ok, but might get some things in late." They were very understanding.

R: Professors were super nice, super accommodating.

K: Professors were great.

Y: All my professors were understanding, very nice to have that flexibility. I got an influx of emails from teachers, administration showing support. I felt very taken care of.

What did the day-to-day of quarantine life look like?

O: I enjoyed putting on regular clothes. Helped me settle into the day.

B: I'd wake up and just lay there. Sometimes I'd shower. Put on the same clothes as yesterday.

R: I just didn't do anything. Did whatever the heck I wanted. I went to bed at 5 p.m. What else was there to do?

L: It was just working during the day, at night it was just lounging around watching movies. The headache was excruciating. It hurt to be awake. I got the spins.

K: My day would start with a weak excuse for a workout, then I watched tv, movies, and drank the rest of the day. There was nothing to do, we couldn't leave. Drinking was our only vice. I didn't go outside for 8 days in a row. My sleep schedule was super irregular. There was a definite

sense of claustrophobia, especially because our rooms are so small...it sucks to be in your room all day, and not allowed to go into other people's.

Y: I loved being home with my family. It was great to spend time with them. I started to go on my walks, five miles a day, which we were very strict about. It's something we've wanted to do forever. I've also always liked reading, and felt guilty as an English major for not having an answer when people ask me what my favorite book is. So I tried to start reading again.

O: I just listened to what my body told me. Unconcerned with schoolwork. I'd play guitar, maybe try to chip away at some homework, watch Netflix, Youtube. I watched a lot of architecture videos. Found some really cool stuff. And watched a bunch of Wes Anderson films. Honestly, not too different from my normal day-to-day.

R: I did put pressure on myself with free time. Maybe read some books. But I just didn't want to. I had no energy to. So I just felt bad about myself.

B: I was really worried because I'm not a homebody at all. I saw everyone hanging out, doing what they wanted, and it gave me fomo. It's really weird to watch the world go on without you. I tried to be positive in the beginning. I didn't have a choice, just tried to focus on being positive. But towards the end I was a little stir crazy. I really wanted to work out but was too exhausted. I missed daily human interaction really bad. It took a toll on mental health. I became depressed.

L: I lived in Mashuda for two years and never wanna go back. Staying in the apartment was an easy decision. I immediately thought of all I wanted to do during the next ten days and did none

of it. I was just awake until I conked. There was no telling when I'd wake up again. I might wake up in 15 hours, might wake up in 15 minutes. I slept through class most days. I did want to work out, and Marquette told us we could go on runs. We're in good shape, most of us are marines or about to be marines, and a one mile walk kicked our asses. Stairs were impossible.

O: Time had no meaning. I felt guilty about interfering with my roommates' plans, because they now had to get tested, maybe quarantine, all of that. I struggle with overthinking things already. This didn't help matters. I go through mental health issues already, which were triggered by feelings that I fucked up.

R: My biggest fear was being alone for that long. Ten days alone and I don't think I would've made it. It was nice to have other people to complain with. Share your sorrows. It would have been fun, but I was really really sick. Started with a fever, really bad headache, really bad congestion. Just every symptom you could have. Even now I get tired really quickly. I lost taste and smell also. My roommates and I did little tests...fed me a spoonful of mince garlic and I tasted nothing...so I started eating big bowls of broccoli.

B: Luckily I went grocery shopping the day before, so I had food. But I just didn't have the energy to make food. I had a fever, shortness of breath, and a lack of senses. My sister came and dropped off a bunch of easy microwaveables, which was really nice.

L: We bought an air fryer, which was fun. But I did lose my senses for a little. I hated eating mushy things, they were so gross. I'd just pound raw spinach.

K: It was the dumbest thing they did [regarding the Schroeder dining hall]. It would make sense if they kept regular hours or something, set some natural limits on capacity. But instead they kept it open for an hour and a half only [for each of breakfast, lunch, and dinner]. So the place was just packed. Counter productive for stopping the spread of Corona. The food was fine, about same as normal...the dining hall staff definitely tried their best for us. They felt bad for us. One woman gave me extra drinks, and she definitely wasn't supposed to be doing that.

O: I was never hungry. I had two meal drop ins a day, dinner always some kind of veggie, some kind of starch, some kind of meat, a dessert, and maybe a salad. They'd also drop off breakfast for the next day. Juice with a lot of vitamin c, which I appreciated, then a bagel, a croissant, something like that, and a fruit usually. And then lunch similar to dinner. I'd wake up and do some push ups and sit ups, then just wait for the knocks. Lunch came at 1230, then dinner and breakfast at 530. It inherently felt like prison, although how else are they supposed to do it....I didn't really see anyone besides the food people. Heard people walking through the halls once. Other than that it was just me. I didn't really mind not seeing anyone.

How would you sum up quarantine?

R: It took a toll in the opposite way I thought it would. I got used to just being with four people. By the end I didn't even want to leave my house.

B: I did not feel cared for, honestly. It was a depressing time. No one asked if I was ok. When I reached out to friends they were mad at me as opposed to checking in on me.

L: I really missed walking to class. Walking down Wisconsin.

K: I had no control over the situation, which made me mad. I felt like a lot of the measures weren't aligned with reality. Like limiting the amount of people on elevators was ridiculous. Like the cafeteria is already packed, what's the elevator gonna do? And the quarantine was just never justified to us. I felt bad for the Hall Director. Not his fault, just dealt a tough hand. I didn't enjoy feeling like I was a prisoner. Yea, I felt cared for on some level, but what would have meant the most was a well thought out plan. But professors and the dining hall workers, they were great.

Y: The problem with quarantine is that you pay the price for what others do to you...that aspect has bothered me.

O: I've been having a hard time concentrating since being released. I became institutionalized in the dorm, very dependent on schedule during quarantine. But what is Marquette really supposed to do? They gave me food and a place to stay.

R: I felt like I needed to do things once I was released. Could not just sit on my couch, lay in bed all all day. Had to keep moving. Working out was not a thing at all during quarantine. Being stuck in that house was torture. And I was quarantined with two of my best friends, but after a couple days I did not want to listen or talk to them. Even their chewing was annoying.

B: It's a very selfish virus.

L: Everyone takes responsibilities off the table once you get coronavirus. And it's really hard once they come back. I miss it!

K: It added to my gratitude for basic things in life. Gave me time to work on myself. I started praying again, trying to save my soul. Got a lot of alone time, was able to destimulate, which is really rare in college.

O: It was a useful experience. Gave me an opportunity to reflect.

