

**Cara:** This is Cara Vanderree of the Ashland City Library, speaking with Mike McCarty of Clark County. Mike, first of all, you know that this conversation is being recorded, correct?

**Mike:** Yes, I do. And I give my permission for being recorded.

**Cara:** OK. Thank you, sir. We will be discussing how the coronavirus has been affecting our small community. First of all, when did you first hear about the virus?

**Mike:** I think it was in late January, early February. I'm not exactly sure. You know, when you're out by yourself all the time anyway, you don't really look at the dates. But I think I heard something about that there was a pandemic going on at that time. And then I knew more for sure about spring break when I read that they had shut down state basketball tournaments.

**Cara:** What was your reaction when you first heard?

**Mike:** I guess that I'm not scared, but I am worried, and that was my reaction at that time. I was worried about my family and what was this going to do to us financially.

**Cara:** First of all, let's talk about your family, who lives in your home and who. Who are you connected with, family wise?

**Mike:** My wife and I, Denice McCarty, live in the house. At the time we were going through this, my nephew, Sam Klaver, that is autistic/Down's syndrome and nonverbal was staying with us for five weeks because his mother had other problems that she had to go to the doctor for. So at that time, it made it very difficult to be able to do everything we wanted to do.

**Cara:** Is your nephew still with you?

**Mike:** No, he went back home this past weekend. But then on the same token, we go and help take care of our grandkids, Trevis and Kelly McCarty's kids. Kelly is an accountant, Travis is a feedlot veterinarian. So on mornings Kelly wants to go in to work early, my wife goes in and takes her kids to day care and on Fridays, we still have the grandkids.

**Cara:** Your wife also works at the school. How did this affect her job?

**Mike:** Denice hasn't worked at the school for several years.

**Cara:** Ok, I'm behind the times. So you are still able to take care of your grandchildren because you see them all the time. It's very close. Right?

**Mike:** Right, but we're not able to see our other grandkids that live in Seneca or Andover. We're not able to see those grandkids.

**Cara:** OK, and you missed all the basketball tournaments.

**Mike:** Yes, very much! March Madness.

**Cara:** So do you remember kind of when this virus business first became real to you or how it started to affect your life personally?

**Mike:** It was about the time of the state basketball tournaments that it started to affect our lives, that was about the time the governor put us on lockdown and that. It kind of became real of that time that we needed to do more things healthy.

**Cara:** How did you feel when the schools closed down?

**Mike:** Personally, I thought it was a good thing that schools closed down because that's a breeding territory. I know this is very difficult on parents, teachers and students alike, and the poor kids that were gonna graduate this year. It's made their life a lot different. But the schools are a breeding territory, we all know that from other flu that we've had and everything on that. I think personally, I think it's a good deal on the same token, on that same note. People need to have more reaction. I think you should keep your distance at that time, but our immune system might go haywire with all the people that are not able to be out in public and that. So I'm worried about that part of it, too.

**Cara:** OK. You felt as though your grandchildren were safer for being kept at home at that time. But you're worried about people who never get to leave the house.

**Mike:** I guess the grandkids get to leave the house to out and help us on our ranch and do that type of thing, so they're around other people. But I believe that people that are not leaving their homes at all, but in the long term have more conditions. And that's my own theory.

**Cara:** They were just lucky that our work gets us out of the house sometimes.

**Cara:** All right. You know, sometimes kind of like the frog in the boiling water, things change so

slowly that you don't notice it. Is there something that you're aware of now that you didn't notice when it first happened about the coronavirus?

**Mike:** I think that we are still in a very unknown situation with the virus that we do not know how is going to really affect everything. We are learning daily, but we have so much information and part of it's true and part of this false. We don't really know how it's spread, except for we know that we need to keep our hands washed and not to touch your face and that we need to keep safe distance.

**Mike:** But there's there's still a lot of unknowns as to what the coronavirus has in store for us that we don't know yet.

**Cara:** What is your ranch, your business situation right now?

**Mike:** We're carried on, ranching as normal, we might not have some people away from here come and help us, like during breeding time and that type of stuff. We use more local people and we keep our distance. Like last weekend, we had a crew here, and we ate outside instead of going inside the hosue. We're trying to make everything better for everybody. Denice put everything in baggies so that nobody fished out of dishes or anything.

**Cara:** Yes, my parents worked cattle two weekends ago and had 12 people, and she had to feed them in the barn. When do you think life will get back to normal?

**Mike:** Well, I'm hoping that if everybody keeps their distance and everything like that, that we can get back to normal in May, but I'm scared to death that in the fall of the year we're gonna get back to the way it was before, because that's the time the flu goes back around. And until we get a vaccine for this, we're gonna be having problems all along.

**Cara:** You know, I said get back to normal. What do you think the new normal is going to look like?

**Mike:** I think that's a very unknown situation right now. I don't think that people are going to shake hands for a number years. And, you know, I believe that kids need to have interaction with other kids at school. So I think there might be more on-line stuff until the thing quits. So I don't know what normal's going to be.

**Cara:** So your reaction to the coronavirus now is that you think we are going to get it whipped, we're just not quite sure how it's going to look when it's done.

**Mike:** That's that's exactly the way I feel. I think that we will have a whipped, but I don't know when it's gonna be.

**Cara:** Before we let each other go, do you have anything to say about the cattle market situation?

**Mike:** Well, personally, our cattle market, our grain markets, have been in the doldrums for a long time. We've been struggling to get a fair price for what we raise compared to what we have to buy. But right now, I am scared to death that with the coronavirus, the packinghouses, may have to shut down. Who knows what's going to happen on that, and when that cattle is ready to go to slaughter, you cannot hold them for too long a period of time. I don't know what we're gonna do with those cattle that are fat if the packinghouses are shut down. People are running scared, buying more stuff than they normally buy.

**Mike:** I don't really know what's gonna happen to everything. I think right now it's gonna be a very bad situation until later on in the summertime and maybe the price of cattle maybe will come back up. Hopefully they do, but if we go back into another shutdown, then I think it will go back to the same way we've got right now.

**Cara:** OK. I hope we can weather this one. Well, Mr. McCarty, is there anything that you would like for people who don't live in a small rural area and who are perhaps locked up in a little bitty apartment and just don't know our way of life? Is there anything you wish that they could understand about how we're dealing with the virus?

**Mike:** Oh, that's a difficult question. I just feel sorry for somebody that's in big towns, New York City. [people living on the streets, that don't know their neighbors. We're very fortunate out here that we basically know everybody. And yes, there's been cases in Beaver, Dodge City, places right around close to us. We are very fortunate in this area because we know 95 percent of everybody that we come in contact with. And I guess we don't come in contact, we stay our distance now days.

**Cara:** We've changed in the last six weeks, haven't we?

**Mike:** Yes, we have. It has affected our small town businesses and the way things are doing business. You call places, and they say, we'll bring what you want out to the curb for you. We're still able to go to our grocery store, and we're very fortunate to have our grocery store in Ashland. But it has changed the way we have done business and it has hurt a lot of businesses. I would love to be able to go out. We've never gone out to eat supper very much, but I would love to go out and eat supper with my friends again.

**Cara:** Yes. It is distancing us from our best friends.

**Mike:** Yes, I can imagine for you at the library, you don't get to see your clients every day. It's pretty lonely in there!

**Cara:** Yes. We tried to do curbside, but the only difference is the grocery wants you to take it home and keep it. With people bringing stuff back to us, I am scared that if anything were infected and then I gave it to another patron. What if I spread it? I didn't see a way to win there, even though we had been wiping things with Clorox water and trying to disinfect everything. But I think we will be opening perhaps in two to three weeks, at least for curbside.

**Mike:** But I know that you guys have done everything you could do to try to keep everything sanitized. We cannot worry about... If we do everything to the best of our power to be safe. We can't worry about anything beyond that, or else we will go crazy.

**Cara:** And, yes, some of us may be closer to that edge than others. Mr. McCarty, thank you for giving us this interview. And if you will, let us, we will probably be calling you closer towards the fall to see if any of your opinions have changed.

**Mike:** That will be great.

**Cara:** OK. Thank you, sir. Be careful!

**Mike:** Thank you, you stay safe.