

Miller, Virginia

*Cara:* Today is August 22, 2020, and we are interviewing Virginia Miller, of Ashland, Kansas.

*Cara:* Virgie, when did you first hear about the coronavirus?

*Virginia:* I don't recall the very first time, but I believe it was when the news first came out with it. That's all I know. Of course, you hear news, news, news, and it was on the mind from then on.

*Cara:* What was your reaction?

*Virginia:* Probably some fright, thinking back to other pandemics and how they took the world, although in modern times we have a lot of different medicines, et cetera. But I think it was fright.

*Cara:* Your home situation, who lives in your home with you?

*Virginia:* Me and my husband, Von.

*Cara:* Were there any challenges or changes that took place in your house because of Covid?

*Virginia:* Not specifically just in the house, no.

*Cara:* When did the virus become real to your first start to really affect your life?

*Virginia:* Well, when we had to change things at work. For one thing, we closed our lobby and ran out the door and waited on people in the street. That was a little bit difficult, but we were glad that we didn't have to shut up completely. So we were willing to do that for our customers. And as far as in my personal life, not much. Not much, just going to work and getting through that was all.

*Cara:* Your husband is retired, so he doesn't have to go to a job. You were the only person with a possible exposure risk?

*Virginia:* Right, and me bringing it home to him, which he has a lot of health problems and he's older, that was the really only thing that bothered us too much, was doctor appointments, et cetera, in the beginning, because of his, well... we were hoping to have some surgery, and that has still not happened. And we still don't even have an idea of it happening. And it's all because of the virus. So that's a bad thing for him. He feels like he's really been affected.

*Cara:* I should have asked, where do you work?

*Virginia:* I work at the Bank of Ashland.

*Cara:* OK, and you're over 60, right?

Miller, Virginia

*Virginia:* Yes.

*Cara:* What things changed right away in your life because of the virus? Was it just at work?

*Virginia:* Mainly, we didn't go anywhere. We stopped going to other towns to shop. We just kept up... but we didn't go to church for a while. Not too long. I think the main thing that changed was my personal... I don't know, almost a depression because of it, and that bothered me a lot. It was like on your mind all the time, all you heard on the news, everything seemed to be rotating around that. And it gets really wearing.

*Cara:* How did you deal with it? How are you dealing with it?

*Virginia:* Just keeping going day by day and hoping that it doesn't get any worse here in our neck of the woods. Anything gets any worse. You know, we're still not going out of town to shop. We are going to church, so I still feel the mental results, I think. I feel kind of hopeless, I guess, is the whole thing like when is it going to end? If you look at it, it's never going to end because that virus is going to be here. Whether they'll ever get it into some kind of control, I don't know.

*Cara:* Do you feel more vulnerable because you work with the public or because of your age and Von's age?

*Virginia:* I have, yes, I think so, because you can look at the youth and it doesn't seem to bother them at all. And so, I think it is because of my age. And when you heard about the deaths, right at the first, especially, it was all almost all older people, and that was pretty scary.

*Cara:* Speaking of the kids, how did you feel when schools closed?

*Virginia:* I hated it because that's kind of a kid's life, you know, and I hated it for them. I think they're missing out on education, you know, even now. So much upset and turmoil at school, and I know they've tried to do the best they can, but, you know, they're not learning like they should be. And it's scary to think that we're going to expect them to go off to college someday and I don't know if college will be any better, if it continues to be a threat and everything has to change. I know I don't want everything to change, do you? And stay changed. We all, I guess, want to go back to the way things were, which. We just never thought of anything like this happening. There was no preparation.

*Virginia:* And when you hear the rumors and the things that you hear about, like, "it all started in China" and "they did it on purpose" or, you know, just on and on, that stuff, and you think about it, you think, "That's possible," "That's possible," "That's possible the government even did it to us," it's possible with the things that happen. But I don't know if it's probable.

*Cara:* OK, are there some changes in your life that happened so slowly that at first you didn't notice what was going on?

Miller, Virginia

*Virginia:* I can't really think of any real changes in my life, I mean, it's just to continue as best you can.

*Cara:* You think about it, we're six feet apart. I'm more comfortable being just a little closer to people. Did you do that from the first moment when it first?

*Virginia:* I haven't really done it very well, you know, just too used to the other way.

*Cara:* OK, what is your job situation right now?

*Virginia:* Well, we are totally open. We ended up putting up the little plastic barriers at the counter, and that's all.

*Virginia:* That's all as far as I know, there's no chance of losing a job. And with me so close to... or I should have retired, I'm not really I don't worry about it so much. If I were younger and had young children to support, I think that would be a real thing. And you do feel so bad about the people that are without work and without jobs. I can't imagine how many it is. It's boggling.

*Cara:* When do you think life will go back to normal? Or what has to happen before it'll go back to normal?

*Virginia:* I don't think it ever will. I truly don't. But we may be able to adapt to changes, just like you said, sitting far apart or whatever, but that's not going to be normal. In church, every other pew, no pew books, no song books. That's not normal. Greeting your pastor with a handshake or anybody, we can't do that, and I don't think it will ever happen that we can again, really, people will, I'm sure, but...

*Cara:* OK, when we say "normal", our new normal will be the things that we just have to do every day. What do you think will be some short-term changes and what do you think we're stuck with forever?

*Virginia:* I wonder about this Stay-At-Home thing and what effect that has had on children. Some of them are going to end up growing up in that, in a way, and how are they going to relate to other people, all the people in the world? You know, when they've been just with their own family, which is the way things used to be, but that's not a modern way of living.

And I just wonder about how people how children will grow up and not have the same collective feeling about everybody else in the whole world. That's one thing that bothers me, even if it was all over with in a few years. There's going to be kids growing up that don't know how to... And if they keep them out of school, you know, all this stuff like that, they don't... They don't learn, I guess, how to how to be one of the crowd. Yeah, so that's one thing I don't know. Otherwise, I hope that we are able to go back to kind of the way it was.

*Cara:* What is your reaction to Covid now, how do you feel about what's going on.

Miller, Virginia

*Virginia:* I still have fear, of course, because it's still there. I just hope. I just hope it isn't anything that, you know, like I said earlier, the rumors that it could be a political thing or anything like that, I really, really hope it isn't, but if it all stopped after the election, that would be wonderful. Wouldn't it? That would be a real blessing.

*Cara:* That would depend on who got elected.

*Virginia:* Yeah, if it all stopped.

*Cara:* Do you have any other thoughts about how this has affected you, or if it's made you into a different person?

*Virginia:* I think maybe everybody's probably changed a little bit, you know. Thinking about the other person in a way, because you have to when you put your mask on, you're really thinking about other people, but I think maybe, maybe that might help in some way or another. That might be a good thing. And maybe everything isn't all bad. That's what we can all pray for.

*Cara:* Thank you, Virginia.