

**Interview with Maggie Froh**

**Maggie Morgan, Interviewer**

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Macalester College  
DeWitt Wallace Library**

[00:00]

MM: My name is Maggie Morgan and I am here with Maggie Froh. First I'm going to let you know about your rights with this interview. We will be signing the oral history agreement form prior to the interview where you'll be able to agree to its recording and use if you do. This interview will be in the college archive likely used for students and community members for things like research and education. And throughout this interview, you'll be able to choose which questions you want to answer and we can stop recording at any time. Here is the agreement form and you are going to sign it now if you agree with the terms.

MF: Okay, thank you.

[00:42]

MM: First I am going to start off with some basic information to get us started. So, what is your name?

MF: My name is Maggie Froh.

MM: And what is your birthday and where were you born?

MF: My birthday is February 21, 2002, and I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

MM: Can you tell me about any siblings or pets that you have?

MF: I have two older siblings, Caroline and Noah, and they are both much older than me, um, 22 and 25, and I have a dog named Annie.

[01:18]

MM: Okay, so I want to talk about the COVID-19 pandemic today, and just about your experiences throughout it. I also want to take this in the order that events occurred so we can start at the beginning. So what was your first memory of the pandemic when it first began last year?

MF: Yes, so my first memory is probably, I was in high school in Milwaukee, and I just remember I had been hearing things from my mom and my grandparents were like warning me about COVID but no one at school was really talking about it. And I just remember like starting to like hand sanitize and like tell my friends that they should just be like washing their hands more. And they were all just like laughing so hard, like Maggie you're overreacting, like it's not here. And then sure enough like a couple days later things started heating up.

[02:24]

MM: So it sounds like some of your friends weren't very worried about the pandemic to begin with, what was your initial impression?

MF: I think because of my family warning me I was a bit more worried than like all my friends. So I kind of realized like the severity of it. But I definitely did not realize we would, like, we would not be going back to school, yeah.

[02:55]

MM: And what feelings did you experience in those early days of the pandemic and that initial lockdown?

MF: I remember a lot of fear, um, I was planning on going out of town with some friends the weekend before school was closing, and I just remember thinking like oh this is such a bad idea, like, things are really heating up. Definitely a lot of fear, yeah.

[03:20]

MM: So can you just tell me about your everyday routine before the pandemic began?

MF: So let's see, my everyday routine, I was a high school student so I would wake up pretty early, go to school, I drove with some friends you know, classic high school day. And then I was also a member of the cross country and track teams so we would have practice every day and I was also involved in a lot of extracurriculars and yeah, just very active and out and about. A lot of things going on and part of organizations and stuff like that, yeah.

MM: And then what did that everyday routine become once the lockdown began in the spring?

MF: So it definitely changed, I mean everything was just put on pause. We were not allowed to obviously like leave our houses and even my school day was a lot different. A lot of kids in our school district did not have access to computers so it wasn't required that everyone like went to school every day on Zoom. So I was one of like, only like five kids who would log on every day for school. So that was kind of weird, and then I was just running on my own and only really seeing, I was only living with my mom because my siblings were out of the house so really only seeing my mom.

[05:01]

MM: Kind of going off of what you just said, did you notice any other examples of inaccess to materials and things like that during the pandemic? Especially with school, I guess yeah can you go off of that a little bit?

MF: My mom is also, she's an elementary school teacher so she was involved in dropping supplies off at students houses and different, the school district, the Milwaukee Public Schools also had like food drop-offs or they would have different like locations like public libraries and stuff like that where families could go to pick up like school supplies and different food items that they could use because they relied on like school lunches and breakfast for their food. So, yeah.

[05:58]

MM: And then with all of the change going on did you notice any impacts on your mental health during the beginning of lockdown?

MF: Definitely, I was very isolated, my family was taking it very seriously so I wasn't able to see anyone, and going from being... seeing a lot of people every day and being very active to nothing really was really hard on mental health. Yeah, I felt very isolated and lonely.

[06:32]

MM: Did you know any other people in your life like family members or friends that were also struggling with mental health? Did you notice that happening with other people around you?

MF: I remember face-timing friends and zooming with different family members and it was definitely like mental health was talked about more during the pandemic. Everyone was you know, experiencing it or taking it different ways. So it was definitely a topic of conversation.

[07:05]

MM: Definitely. And then what did you do to take care of your mental as well as your physical health before the pandemic began?

MF: So before the pandemic I used running as a way to cope with everything, relieve stress, so mostly running and hiking and being outside.

[07:29]

MM: So then once lockdown began and the pandemic was happening, were you able to continue these things, or did some of these mental health and physical health as well, mechanisms have to change?

MF: I was lucky that my sport was one that I could continue to do outside and on my own. It was hard to do it alone every single day but I still ran and I was able to obviously be outside just alone, so I did have things that would relieve my stress, yeah.

[08:05]

MM: So during this time could you tell me more about your relationships that you had?

MF: Yeah, just with family and friends?

MM: Yeah family, friends, and I guess just how did they change or stay the same during this time?

MF: I think one thing that was hard for me was my family and I were definitely taking it more seriously than my friends were. So I had to tell my friends no to a lot of things and they were hanging out more and I saw them hanging out but I stayed in and was being really safe because I was also like grocery shopping for elderly people in my neighborhood and elderly, my elderly like grandparents so I wanted to be really safe. And also just I was used to seeing my grandparents all the time, and I would go like hang out in their living room and talk to them and

do homework over there and they would cook food for me. [laughs] But during the pandemic it really hit that I could not go there so I would just sit in their lawn with a mask on and talk to them on their front porch. It was also really hard for them so that was hard to see. And then I wasn't able to, sometimes I'd go visit my siblings or they'd come home but they weren't able to do that so I just felt very alone, yeah.

[09:40]

MM: So what other things did you have to do to keep these relationships stable besides sitting in your grandparents lawn and things like that?

MF: One thing my family did was we set up Zoom calls and at the beginning we did it every single week, every Sunday we would have Zoom calls with our family. That was very chaotic. But I also made an effort to facetime friends and family members and just reach out to people that I knew. I have a grandfather in San Diego who lives alone so I made an effort to call him more because I knew he was alone. Things like that.

[10:23]

MM: So with all of these relationships having to change a little bit or the ways you were seeing people, did these changes have an effect on you or just your mental and emotional health?

MF: Yeah! It was hard not seeing people and having to say no. Definitely not something I'm used to. It was, yeah, it was just hard I remember feeling very just sad and alone in my room a lot. Like many other people. Just experiencing more anxiety than ever really, just triggered by

everything that was going on and the emotions of all the people around me and like the stories of neighbors that were like working on the front as like frontline workers was just anxiety provoking for sure.

[11:25]

MM: Definitely. So going into the summer of 2020 when the pandemic had been going on for multiple months at that point, did your feelings change from how they had been in the beginning of the pandemic? Just surrounding how you felt about it overall?

MF: I think a bit, by then I was more used to like the new normal. But it was still really hard, it had been a couple months then and things weren't getting better, they were getting worse and I was starting to worry about college and if I was going to be able to go, or even if I was able to go, do I want to go? Is it safe to go? Yeah some of my friends were like, oh I'm getting out of here, but they weren't as worried as I was about getting COVID, yeah.

[12:28]

MM: Tell me more about that college process in the spring and summer because as a high school senior that was a big decision you had to make so I guess-

MF: -Yeah that was-

MM: -Can you elaborate more?

MF: That was definitely a big decision, I remember people telling me, oh you should take like a gap year, this like the experience you're going to have your first year is not gonna be the same, that's what my older siblings were telling me and I just, I had been looking forward to going off to school for so long that I just really wanted to go no matter what like precautions that we would have to take. But yeah that was a scary time.

[13:17]

MM: So going back to mental health, how did the continued distancing and pandemic overall affect your mental health when it was later into the spring and summer of 2020?

MF: So later into the spring and summer I, I think because of how like stressed I was about everything I started to find safe things to do. I started like gardening for elderly people in my community and like I started babysitting for one family that... and I would always wear a mask and we would be outside. So I started like trying to stay busy so that I wasn't inside all the time alone, yeah.

[14:08]

MM: So going back to the college topic, you came to Macalester College in August of 2020 to live in the dorms and start school, so did your view of the pandemic change after the... making this move? And just in what ways?

MF: I think coming to Macalester was really good for me, I was surrounded by people who were also taking it as seriously as I was. I was immediately put in like a bubble with the cross country

team and we were tested right when we came, we had to test negative several times and then we kind of formed a pod. So it was good to have people my age finally around me and have a roommate and just felt more normal. Definitely wasn't the normal college experience wearing masks and sitting far away from each other but it was good to be around people.

[15:08]

MM: How did your everyday routine change once coming to Macalester?

MF: I think it was good to finally be back in an academic setting and even though everything was on Zoom, it was nice to be back in school and with... making new friends. Sorry, what were the other parts of the question?

MM: Just how did your everyday routine change like going through a normal day for you in the fall when you started school?

MF: It was nice to also have practice again and eat meals with people even though it was in a bit of a different way, like we were socially distanced, and outside for the warmer weather. But it was... it was gradually getting back to normal.

[16:05]

MM: How did those smaller communities like the cross country team or your pod that you formed, how did that play a role in your kind of new life you were finding at school? How did those smaller communities help, especially with the pandemic going on?

MF: Yeah! I think it was... like I said earlier, it was nice to have people my age also going through it and they had just gone through the same like senior year of high school getting kind of... it was just ended abruptly. So it was nice to have people that kind of understood where I was coming from and had similar thoughts on COVID and it was just nice to be around them and it like...yeah.

[16:38]

MM: Going back to relationships throughout the pandemic, once moving to Saint Paul how did your relationships... either with people at home or new people at school, how did that change compared to earlier in the pandemic?

MF: I think going to school it was nice to see friends now face to face and family members I facetime and Zoom still. Obviously its harder because we can't like go back and forth visiting each other so it's still kind of at a distance there. And it's interesting like leaving my family pod and now joining a friend pod here. Just being in a different circle, yeah it's different.

[17:54]

MM: Do you think that maybe for your family at home, how do you think you leaving changed their experience during the pandemic throughout the fall, or just lives in general?

MF: I think for a while when it was just me and my mom, we were each others only like source of entertainment and social interaction, so I was a bit worried about my mom like leaving my mom. Yeah...

[18:31]

MM: And then later into the fall and just after all of these changes were happening, did you notice a change in your mental health? Either for better or for the worse?

MF: I think I was still... I'm still experiencing a lot of anxiety both about the pandemic and everything else that's going on, but I think coming to college definitely helped me. I don't feel as isolated here. I feel... I'm really happy that Macalester is taking all of the precautions that they are and making students take these precautions so I feel safe and I'm just glad to be still like living in the dorms and taking classes, I think it's been good for my mental health.

[19:21]

MM: Definitely. And I guess just thinking about resources with mental health, do you think that Macalester has had good mental health resources for students? Especially during this time? Or even just during the pandemic when you were at home, do you think you felt like you had enough resources to help you through what was going on?

MF: I think coming to Macalester they've been really good about promoting the resources that we have access to. Especially on our team, I heard from a lot of teammates about what different counselors that we can go speak to and just different people that are... even though it's on Zoom,

their Zoom door is always open to new people, so that's been really helpful I think, yeah, the Mac community is really good about handling mental health.

[20:19]

MM: And now that is is April of 2021 and the pandemic is still happening, what is one memory that has really stuck with you throughout this time or you think sums up your experience so far with the pandemic?

MF: Yes... I think I have a couple. The first one is probably just like having dinner, I remember having dinner with my grandparents, I had been wanting to do it for a while and it was a couple months into the pandemic so we were like in their backyard, and they had set up like tables like very far away from each other. So I was at a table with my mom like on the other side of their yard, and then my cousins were on the other side of the yard and we were kind of like shouting at each other and we had all brought our own food. Just quite a unique experience, I think it sums up the pandemic pretty well. And then the other one is... I babysat a newborn during the pandemic, and his parents called him the... their little like pandemic baby. And I was their first babysitter and he hadn't really seen any other people except for them, so I was... they just, they were like, oh you're one of the first people that he's meeting in this pandemic, even though he was like several months old. And I would just wear my mask, obviously he didn't wear a mask. [laughs] But it was just really cute... just how everything was handled babysitting during the pandemic, yeah.

[22:10]

MM: Yeah those are great. And I guess are there any instances that stuck with you as being kind of shocking or like frustrating to you throughout the pandemic? Just things that you saw?

MF: I think I just get most frustrated by like others actions, like just walking through the grocery store and seeing anti maskers really gets me riled up. And freaked out, but yeah just... I've been surprised by other peoples actions and by politicians actions throughout all of this. [hair tie she is playing with snaps across room] Ope! And just like... yeah Americans as a whole compared to other countries that are, that have been handling it really well.

[23:07]

MM: So now that the pandemic has been happening for over a year, what are your feelings as you are experiencing COVID now? Have they changed now that it has been over a year or are the same?

MF: I think now it's kind of like we're seeing the light at the end of tunnel, like there's finally hope. People are getting vaccinated, I just got my first dose of Pfizer and a lot of my friends have. So yeah, there's definitely hope and I'm hoping that things will be back to normal in a couple months. I would like a more normal summer, but...

[23:54]

MM: And then what do you think that we can all learn from this experience either individually or on a larger scale?

MF: Yeah... I think that it just makes you rethink like you're relationships with friends and family and how important that is, and how important just seeing each other and conversations and just everything is, especially with like we were saying mental health. Just the little things matter so much and can just change a persons day, yeah.

[24:35]

MM: Definitely. And it sounded like you had been doing a lot for people in your community, and for your grandparents or just older neighbors. Was there an instance where someone did something for you or your family that really made your day or just brought some happiness into the lockdown and pandemic for you?

MF: I can think of let's see... a couple like little things just making like sweet treats. Our neighbors would drop off sweet treats or... one of our neighbors went around taking photos of I think it was like a collection of photographs of like neighbors through the window and that was really sweet and they put it together, a collection of photos. Little things like that, yeah.

[25:33]

MM: And I guess kind of going back to mental health, I know a lot of people throughout the pandemic felt really overwhelmed with other things going on like racial injustices and... just other things happening in the world. So how did you deal with having multiple kind of stressful things happening in the world all at once? How did you navigate that?

MF: It was definitely a lot, I think yeah the pandemic on top of everything going on in the world it's hard to... sometimes we're thinking about COVID so much we don't think about these acts of racial injustice but it was just important to talk about them with friends and family and just do as much as I can. And while still being safe, which I'm still trying to do today, yeah.

[26:42]

MM: With the idea of still being safe even though we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel like you said, do you feel like some people maybe got that feeling a little too early? Do you think that... I guess what would you say about staying safe and continuing our precautions while also having hope for the future?

MF: I think, yeah that's a big thing a lot of people months ago were thinking that things were opening up and the bars were opening up and that was a huge sign. But no, things were actually at like the all time high, like number of cases, so I just think it's important for everyone to keep doing their part and staying safe until... until everyone is vaccinated.

[27:44]

MM: Yeah definitely. And I guess after being at Macalester has your view on the pandemic changed like after being in classes academically? Did you talk about the pandemic with any professors or friends in a way that you think you may have learned something that you didn't know while being at home?

MF: I think it's been interesting to look at now that case studies are out about now that we have been in for several months, we're able to look at like the different minority groups and racial groups that were affected the most, I've talked about in some like public health courses and that's been really interesting. Specifically in Milwaukee, the community that were hit the hardest and didn't have access to the healthcare that they needed to stay safe and yeah, just communities that were hit the hardest is something that I have been reading a lot about a lot.

[28:51]

MM: I guess kind of going along with different communities in the pandemic, have you noticed any differences between Saint Paul and Milwaukee now that you have lived in both cities during the pandemic?

MF: I see... I see some similarities I think Milwaukee is... communities are, or certain communities are living more in poverty so you can definitely see the effects that COVID has had on them more. But I yeah, I see similarities.

[29:32]

MM: Just to end on a lighter note, do you have some things that you were looking forward to doing once the pandemic is over? And what are some of those things?

MF: Yes! I can't wait to just go and sit in coffee shops and just study for hours and hours. And just go out and get food at little cafes with friends, and go to concerts, I'm really excited for that. Just being in crowds in general, yeah. [laughs]

[30:08]

MM: Definitely, well awesome! Thank you for taking the time to talk to me today and for agreeing to be a part of the archive.

MF: Thank you.

[End of interview, 30:17]