

Pandemic Perspectives: Jeffersonville Residents Recount Their Lives During the 2020 Covid-19 Pandemic. Interview with Vincent Thomas

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

pandemic, remember, work, Jeffersonville, arizona, life, vacation, hearing, scary, respiratory illness, debt collection, bills, coming, music, township, community, forced, started, genealogical society, southern indiana

Jen Weidner 00:19 Today is November 14, 2022. I'm Jen Weidner with the Jeffersonville Township Public Library, conducting interviews for Pandemic Perspectives: Jeffersonville Residents Recount Their Lives During the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. This project was made possible with a grant from the Indiana Genealogical Society. I'm here today with Vincent Thomas. So Vincent, what were you doing when the pandemic first started in 2020?

Vincent Thomas 00:48 I just graduated college. I graduated from Indiana University Southeast. I got my degree in music industry with a concentration in music business. I was working for a security company. I was doing security for concert venues and the Kentucky Center for the Arts.

Jen Weidner 01:19 So do you remember when you first heard about COVID-19 or what your reaction was when you started hearing about it?

Vincent Thomas 01:27 Yes. So I remember I was in Arizona, was taking a little vacation with two friends and we were hearing about some disease they were calling it, but at this time they thought it was coming from Mexico. And me being in Arizona, we were like, hmm might need to go home. So I just remember I stayed for two weeks and I was supposed to stay for three in the second week, I just I kept hearing about it getting worse and more, more and more people were going to the hospital. And I believe this was in February at this at this point in time. I remember I went home a week early on my vacation because I was like I don't want to be stuck in an airport or stuck in another state.

Jen Weidner 02:21 So did you think that it would come to the US and then it would come to Southern Indiana of all places?

Vincent Thomas 02:28 Um, yeah, I did, honestly because I remember the h1n1 virus, that swine flu?

Jen Weidner 02:37 Yeah

Vincent Thomas 02:38 I remember how that everywhere, I just knew that it was gonna be bad.

Jen Weidner 02:46 How did your job change during the pandemic?

Vincent Thomas 02:50 So with me working in live entertainment, that entire industry was closed, so I had no work. I had no updates on when we would go back to work. I had just finished my degree by that time. And my degree was in music. And music is based around live performance that entire industry, so I was like, what am I gonna do! My job changed because I just had to find different odds and ends jobs. I remember driving for DoorDash, and like debt collection, which I still feel like I need to repent even doing that for like a week.

Jen Weidner 03:34 That sounds rough!

Vincent Thomas 03:35 Yes.

Jen Weidner 03:38 So your employer at the time was not offering any pay or anything

Vincent Thomas 03:42 oh No

Jen Weidner 03:42 They just cut you off immediately when they closed?

Vincent Thomas 03:46 We were screwed. My only saving grace was all of my debtors like who I had bills through credit cards. I was getting calls from them saying like we understand what's going on in the world right now. All of your bills are frozen. You don't have to make a payment this month. Let us know when you're working again. We'll work with you to get you back on a plan and stuff. So that's good.

Jen Weidner 04:12 Yeah,because it's a scary time.

Vincent Thomas 04:13 It was terrifying.

Jen Weidner 04:16 So you ended up coming to work at the Jeffersonville Township Public Library in I believe 2021

Vincent Thomas 04:26 Yes

Jen Weidner 04:27 When the pandemic was still kind of in full force. So what was that like starting a new job during the pandemic?

Vincent Thomas 04:35 At that point, it was familiar, because I was forced to try a couple of different new jobs. But starting in such a public building, it was kind of scary, and especially knowing the rest of the community didn't necessarily take it as seriously as I did. Working with people who refuse to wear a mask. Not only refused but will ask you well, why are you wearing that? Aren't you really that scared of getting sick? Like, yes, I am. I'm asthmatic. This is a respiratory illness. I don't like any of those problems. So yeah,

Jen Weidner 05:16 What have you learned good bad?

Vincent Thomas 05:22 I have learned I guess I'll say I've learned to have less expectations about where I need to be in life and when I'm supposed to be doing at a certain point of time because there are things that are just out of our control. This pandemic really, really showed us that because I went to school for music, I record music. By this point in time I went to Arizona to work on music as well during that vacation. By this time I would have would have records on the radio that I would have signed a record deal by now. It didn't work out like that. But I don't feel like I'm off my path. I just feel like that took a couple of detours. Actually, it forced me to come to the library. And make meaningful connections so that I do have an impact in the community in a different way than I intended to live my life. So it's actually been scary, but rewarding. So I've learned to just I've also learned to appreciate life itself. You know, the fact that I'm still here, so many people are not a lot of people didn't make this pandemic. And I'm just grateful for those of us to did

Jen Weidner 06:47 So in the future, let's say 50-100 years from now. What do you want people to remember about the pandemic if people were coming in and reviewing these, listening to these oral histories? What do you want them to remember?

Vincent Thomas 07:00 I want them to remember, this was a real disease. I don't want, there are a lot of big moments in history. In retrospect, people tried to deny, as somebody who has had COVID twice, it was very real. It kicked me in the butt. I just want people to know like this was serious and this was it was chaotic. And I want to say in today's modern world, we haven't seen like an incident like this where the entire world shuts down. That was monumental. It was life changing. When are stores going to have toilet paper again, I want people to remember the panic that it caused and not just the panic, but how we work together as a community to come together to get whatever sense of normalcy we could. It was the community that helped each other.

Jen Weidner 08:09 I've heard so many people say that same thing, through these oral histories. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

Vincent Thomas 08:20 No

Jen Weidner 08:20 Well thank you so much for being here with us.