

## ***Pandemic Perspectives: Jeffersonville Residents Recount Their Lives During the 2020 Covid-19 Pandemic. Interview with Salvador Quinones***

### **SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

firehouse, pandemic, Jeffersonville, work, remember, home, thought, shut, allowed, change, day, cancel, year, families, weird, fire department, news, new orleans, week, people

**Jen Weidner** 0:01: Today is October the 18th 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 Indian and Genealogical Society. I'm here today with Salvador. Say your last name for me.

**Salvador Quinones** 0:22: Quinones.

**Jen Weidner** 0:23: Public Information Officer with the Jeffersonville Fire Department as well as a firefighter. So how long have you been with the fire department?

**Salvador Quinones** 0:29: I've been with the fire department for seven years as of August 3 of this year's anniversary. Seven years ago by fast

**Jen Weidner** 0:36: Yes they do. (laughing) So do you remember when you first heard about COVID-19?

**Salvador Quinones** 0:41: Oh, yes, actually. So I remember very vividly, I was in Chicago with some friends for a Christmas trip where they go shopping with his family and his family go shopping in Chicago, Christmas weekend and I remember seeing the first news reporter in Chicago saying that they had gotten the first case. That was December of 2019 was named the first case. Oh, it was getting bad in China and Wuhan, China. And I remember that shortly after that, you know, and I remember thinking nothing of it. I remember shortly after that, I believe was in January when we got back. Then we got the first US case so it was like I also got here you know, still wasn't thinking anything of it you know, living life regular but it kind of it was crazy to me though how fast it got to the US and how quickly it was, you know, spreading but still me being me and not making much of anything on the news. You know, just kept trying to live like regular didn't think much of it at all. Honestly, it was just another thing on the news.

**Jen Weidner** 1:34: So did you think that it would get to Indiana to Jeffersonville, Indiana?

**Salvador Quinones** 1:38: I figured eventually it would but still, it had not hit me of how serious it was. Or, you know, how easily it spread. I was just once again was like I was just another thing on the news. It'd be on there until the next big thing on the news next week and then that's it

**Jen Weidner** 1:55: And we'll forget about it. Like it never happened. So we know now that it was a big deal, and it was very contagious. So how did things change for you as a firefighter? Once you know we had COVID cases here in Clark County in Jeffersonville?

**Salvador Quinones** 2:10: Yeah, well, the was very dynamic. Everything was changing by the minute, but literally by the minute and we will get one SOP or SOG at work, and it will quickly change like, you know, an hour later we have something new and a new way of procedure of doing things. I remember being in a group chat with my buddies, as soon as they say you know, there was chaos in Indiana, things started getting locked down and I remember making the I still remember making the joke where I was like, I have no choice. I'm gonna get it because we literally go into people's homes every day like all over the place. Like I'm gonna get it I like it. We go into random people's homes every day when I'm on duty like so many times

**Jen Weidner** 2:10: You have no idea what you're walking into.

**Salvador Quinones** 2:19: Exactly, exactly. You don't know if they're sick. You don't know if they have it, you can't tell if somebody had covid or anything else. So I was like, I know I'm gonna get I'll be the first one out of my friends. I told them like I'll be the first one in this group to get it for sure. So it was weird, but I still didn't know the seriousness of it. I just knew it was changing. That no one knew and you know, like I said, very dynamic. It was changing by the minute and changing by the hour by the day everything was so we just try to follow along and be you know, as protective, protect ourselves as well as possible. But not much you can do with something as airborne I don't think you know, there's only so much you can do actually. But yeah, it was it was it was different.

**Jen Weidner** 3:24: So obviously, working for the fire department you guys there was no lockdown for you all like you didn't you went to work. You did your normal shifts. Yeah, there was no...

**Salvador Quinones** 3:35: The only thing that was really weird is we couldn't even have our own families visit the firehouse. No one was allowed. That was the only time since I've been on it, usually obviously being a public and especially paid by taxpayers, you know, funded by taxpayers or salaries and everything in the equipment everything we have. It's our fire firehouses are open to anyone they can come in anytime they want. Look at the truck, you know take pictures whenever they want, you know they you know their tax dollars pay our salaries. And that was the first time we had ever been told, you know, no one's allowed in the firehouse lock the doors, doors remain locked at all times. No one could come in, we had signs on every door and no entry allowed you know we would we couldn't do any more, we couldn't do any school functions. You know, we couldn't go visit schools. We couldn't do any birthdays. Like what, sometimes we would go visit our district and take an apparatus you know, so people will call us and request to have a birthday. Us come by for a second you know, as long as it's in our district. So we couldn't do any of that. It was very strange. It was different. Like I said, even we thought it was weird. When we go home to our families every night you know, but so we're going to be around them no matter what you know, but they couldn't come to the firehouse even though we're around them at home. We couldn't have them at the firehouse at all. But that's all literally to protect them. Because we were going out you know going into runs also not knowing what you could, what we would bring back to the firehouse also. So it was a it was very strange, very different. Definitely. I'm glad that that part is over. We're allowed to have visitors at the firehouse now and that actually helps our day go by, you know when people come by .

**Jen Weidner** 3:35: Oh, absolutely.

**Salvador Quinones** 4:01: That was different. It was a kind of I don't want to say it was like prison because you know, I love my I love my career anyway, you know, I never think of it as a job or anything but it was different. It was we were like, blocked away blocked off from the world.

Basically, we just had all we had, all we could do was respond to medical runs or fires and then right back they didn't want us to go into Kroger like we'll go on duty and will get groceries to cook and we weren't allowed to do that anymore. We had to bring them in every day. So everybody had to go out and get the groceries for dinner or breakfast the next day. We had to go the night before and bring them in because they just didn't want us out in public but, I understand I understood it then. They were cautious and making sure that we were staying safe and we weren't taking it home to our families either.

**Jen Weidner** 5:49: So speaking of your families, how did your life change outside of work? Did you take like, when you got home did you like immediately like take a shower throw your clothes in the washer or?

**Salvador Quinones** 5:58: Yeah, well, not so much. I don't have any kids. I'm not married. I have a girlfriend I've not married and I don't have any kids so it was a little different for me because I don't have you know, I don't have to worry. I don't have a lot of people depending on me at home you know, or that I have to worry about so I wore my uniform home, but a lot of guys though they did take their clothes off at the firehouse and leave them there and just change them to their you know a quick outfit and they were home and then change when they got home. Several guys I remember doing that. I myself, like I said I did not so I would just wear my stuff home and change and shower when I got home. But yeah, I do recall people definitely changing and leaving their work on duty or washing them every day. As soon as they got done. Changing into them when he got to work. It was different for sure.

**Jen Weidner** 6:42: So what have you learned from the pandemic?

**Salvador Quinones** 6:46: I tell you what,

**Jen Weidner** 6:47: Good bad otherwise....

**Salvador Quinones** 6:48: Yeah, well. I've learned that there was good and bad I've learned you can't always take everything you hear or see on TV or the news to heart because everything could change and they're working off so much information that they were given by, you know, whoever but you don't take everything you hear or see on the news as you know is 100% truth. But you also have to be cautious you can also just just say oh you know whatever is nonsense and just do whatever you want. You have to follow some rules and you know, you have to take precautions. There were things like this because I mean it although it never affected me personally, there's I know I do know people who lost family members because of it. And you know it affected a lot of people, it affected a lot of people all around the world but you just have to you know it was just you have to be able to, I do remember, I went to the soccer game. I said we were allowed to have fans back in the stadiums. So it made me have an appreciation for live events and sporting events and everything so much more because it got taken away from us for about two years or so where I couldn't go. I'm a season ticket holder at U of L football. I couldn't go to games for two years, you know? So it just made me appreciate everything so much more because I, I never thought I would live in a world where they will cancel the NCAA March madness you know, we're fans weren't allowed in stadiums during games. I never thought this stuff was possible. And I remember getting out getting my hair cut the week before everything shut down. And my barber was talking to me goes Oh, you think they're gonna cancel the tournament? And I said no way they canceled it. Too much money that they will lose they're not canceling that tournament. Two days later they cancel it.

**Jen Weidner** 8:29: Everything we thought wouldn't happen did!

**Salvador Quinones** 8:33: This is getting real now you know like this is really is different. I was down on Bourbon Street. The week before whenever the conference tournaments and we were down in New Orleans. And so we were down visiting friends. And we were going to watch some of the tournament there on Bourbon St. and so earlier that day we had got in this was March 15 I believe so yeah, so it was March 15 of 2020 And we were down there and we were down at St. Patrick's Day and the beginning of that was so that's about remember the day so we'll watch it so I was like so we were out on Bourbon Street. And I'll never forget a bartender there. She was crying when we went up to get a drink. And we were like wow, you know, we were, I was going on so she says she had just been told by her boss that they were shutting down. They were ordered to shut down and they would probably be closed for a month and she was crying because he did not know what she was gonna do for work to make money. So you know, so that was about I mean, it was pretty early in the day, maybe 2pm or so

**Jen Weidner** 9:32: For New Orleans, even thinking about shutting down when there's not a hurricane coming.

**Salvador Quinones** 9:35: Oh, yeah, yeah. So we went and you know, we got our drinks and we were hanging out. I was like, you know, this is just so weird everything going on. By 5pm that day, there was horseback police officers on horseback going through down Bourbon Street of all places, telling us we had to be off the street by 7pm and they were shutting everything down. All bars, everything shut down immediately.

**Jen Weidner** 9:57: That is crazy in New Orleans

**Salvador Quinones** 10:01: Our original flight back was supposed to be on the 19th of October or March 19th. That was like I said that was on the 15th we had to get a new flight back home the next day. The 16th and fly home early. They were not they canceled our other flights and everything and made us go back home. And as soon as we got back, everything was shut down completely all over the world.

**Jen Weidner** 10:21: That's crazy. Yeah, that is crazy.

**Salvador Quinones** 10:26: It was wild!

**Jen Weidner** 10:28: So let's say like 30,40, 50 years from now, what do you want people to remember about the pandemic?

**Salvador Quinones** 10:34: I do want people to remember it actually. I think I think the time of the lockdown I guess I don't wanna call you know the shutdown. There you go. It actually it helps some people like everyone people you know some people I know that started businesses because of it. It helped people work on their communication skills since they couldn't see anyone so you have some people you know, you can FaceTime or whatever you weren't always but I know that you couldn't see the people face to face. You brought people closer to their families. You see your family. It's about the only few people you could see you know, I had about a year but like two or three friends that I can see but and the guys at work, but yeah, brought families together. You know, I mean, some, some family brought them together. Just I hope people remember how serious it got to the point where they had to shut everything down. And I won't be here if there's another pandemic eventually I'm sure there will be at some point. I would like people to just take it serious a lot sooner that way it doesn't get to the point where they have to shut everything down all over the place. Because I believe I do believe that was the issue

with some and myself included. I mean I was like ahh it's nothing, you know and I will still out everywhere you know in public until they pretty much said alright, since you're not gonna stay home.

**Jen Weidner** 11:49: This is what we got to do, you kids won't listen to us.

**Salvador Quinones** 11:15: Right So yeah, just hope that people remember how bad it got this time around and how serious it got and with everything shutting down and just people not being able to work you know, they just and I hope this this pandemic was able to to everyone learned how to adjust and now from now, obviously it has created a lot more work from home jobs and positions.

**Jen Weidner** 12:19: Absolutely!

**Salvador Quinones** 12:20: My, my girlfriend now works at Jim Beam. She's a scientist at Jim Beam and now she's able to work from home almost anytime she wants now because they learned that a lot of these meetings can be done over zoom or anything else. So if she's not in the lab she doesn't have to be in at work at all and do it from home.

**Jen Weidner** 12:38: Yeah, they've learned that we can be productive at home. Obviously, as a firefighter. You don't have that luxury. That would be weird. But so did you ever get Covid?

**Salvador Quinones** 12:48 I did I actually I actually got it twice!

**Jen Weidner** 12:52: Overachiever!

**Salvador Quinones** 12:54: So and the messed up part was the first time I got it. So I had you know it was in December of 2020. The very end and I hadn't gotten my first vaccine yet but so I had worked all year and it had been fine. I got my vacation. I always take a vacation for Christmas every year. Two days into my vacation, I got Covid, and then so I was I was I had to quarantine for two weeks which is always the duration of my vacation. Luckily I was out of quarantine by Christmas Day so I was able to enjoy Christmas with my family and everything and all that but we had a trip that we had to cancel and all that so and then the second time it was over a year later. It was actually earlier this summer. In June of this year. I got it again. And I hadn't been anywhere. And I was just actually released. Like I said shoulder surgery earlier this year I was released to go back to work. So I went by the firehouse to talk to the chief and give them the paper from my doctors. Hey, August 1 I'm clear to come back. And I went home that day and I started feeling a little a little, you know a little sluggish and I took a Covid test at home now that we have them all over to one at home and it was negative. The next morning I woke up and I had a terrible headache. I took another one and I had it. I was like ah so twice in about a year and a half span there but luckily for me, it was only about three days of symptoms like headache. I never got anything real serious like a shortness of breath or anything like that.

**Jen Weidner** 14:27: Well thank goodness. So is there anything else you want us to know about your experience?

**Salvador Quinones** 14:32: No, I just especially but like I said in our you know in this career. I just knew as soon as that came out, I knew that I had no chance of getting, getting by without catching it at least once I knew it was gonna happen. The experience was something that I hope to never have to relive and I wish every generation could go without ever experiencing the

pandemic. I thought I was gonna get to go to the you know, because the last one was about 100 years before

**Jen Weidner** 14:56: Yes!

**Salvador Quinones** 14:57: I was I was thinking I was gonna get through it. Without ever experiencing it. But look at us.

**Jen Weidner** 15:03: Almost three years later, we're still...

**Salvador Quinones** 15:07: We got one and it lasted way longer. And I thought those things would last I didn't know how that. You know, I never really I'd always heard the word pandemic I never really thought about it.

**Jen Weidner** 15:15: I never thought about that. I was just like sci fi or something like that doesn't happen in this day and age.

**Salvador Quinones** 15:20: Yeah, we have medicine and whatever. Yeah, well, it happened. It happened and it came fast. And it was quick and changed every day. And it's changed life, forever thought or like wherever related like sort of how 9/11 changed the way people travel forever. Covid will change the way we live our lives forever, I believe

**Jen Weidner** 15:40: I mean, some of us still wear masks around here because we have coworkers that have cancer. And we're just trying to, you know, protect everybody. And yeah, well thank you for your time.

**Salvador Quinones** 15:41: No problem. Thank you very much.