

GranitzGlen\_20201013

MATTHEW FOLEY: All right. My name is Matthew Foley, and I am here with Glen Granitz to talk about their experience in Allentown during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our goal is to collect oral histories of people's unique experiences during the COVID-19 quarantine and reopening of the Allentown area and preserve the information for future generations to access. Our project has funding from the Lehigh Valley Engaged Humanities Consortium, and we are meeting on Zoom on October 13th, 2020. Thank you so much for your willingness to speak with us today. To start, can you please state your full name and spell it for me?

GLENN GRANITZ: Sure. My name is Glenn Granitz, Jr. Glenn is with two Ns, and Granitz is G-R-A-N-I-T-Z.

MF: All right. Will you please share your birthdate?

GG: Sure. It's 11-16 of 1978.

MF: This interview is expected to involve [00:01:00] no more than minimal risk of answering questions about the past. You may become bored, tired, or frustrated during the interview. Some questions may make you uncomfortable. In recounting the past, there may be risk of emotional impact.

There is no obligation to answer any question. If you have any concerns about your own mental health, please contact the National Alliance on Mental Illness at 1-800-950-N-A-M-I, or email [info@nami.org](mailto:info@nami.org). Please be mindful that if you use the name of individuals other than yourself, you might be violating their privacy. Instead, please try to refer to those individuals as "my friend" or "my coworker." Do you consent to this interview today?

GG: Yes.

MF: Do you consent to having this interview being transcribed, digitized, and made publicly available online in a searchable format?

GG: Yes.

MF: [00:02:00] Do you consent to have this interview be stored in the archives of the Allentown Public Library, Muhlenberg College, and the Lehigh Valley Engaged Humanities Consortium internal archive?

GG: Yes.

MF: Do you consent to Allentown Public Library and/or Muhlenberg College and researchers using your interview for educational purposes in other formats including films, articles, websites, presentations, and other formats?

GG: Yes.

MF: Do you understand that you will have 30 days after the electronic delivery of the transcript to review your interview, identify any parts you would like to delete, and/or withdraw your interview from this project?

GG: Yes.

MF: Do you understand that you are not receiving any monetary compensation for your time today, and you are not required to participate by your employer, Allentown Public Library, or Muhlenberg College? [00:03:00]

GG: Correct.

MF: This project has been approved by Muhlenberg College's Institutional Review Board. You may contact Dr. Erika Iyengar, current head of Muhlenberg's IRB Committee, at erikaiyengar@muhlenberg.edu with any questions or concerns. All right. That was that. So let's get started with some questions.

GG: (laughs)

MF: Looking back to when you first realized the impact of the pandemic, when did you first realize the impact of the pandemic and is there anything that you would have done differently?

GG: I think I realized the impact of the pandemic when you were coming -- when I was driving to work, and the streets were empty. City Hall was empty, [00:04:00] and in many ways, still is, with people working remotely or hybrid. Working from home. Noticing just some very basic things had changed, and seeing city streets empty at like a Monday through Friday business hours on Hamilton Street, and all of a sudden there's almost no one to be found. Diners and restaurants and things were not open. So I guess that's when it really hit me, cause in police work, we kind of get up and go to work every day, no matter what the weather, no matter what that is going on. So it was strange to really see no one around, especially for a period of time there. And I think if I was going to talk about doing something differently, I'm not sure that there's a whole heck of a lot we could've done differently. I don't think anyone had the crystal ball to see this coming. But I think what it [00:05:00] really has told us is that we can't rely on other agencies, PEMA, FEMA, other agencies that we thought were in place to kind of help us get supplies and things for the unexpected, for an emergency, a disaster, pandemic. We learned the hard way that that wasn't quite true, so it

probably is going to be stocking up and being ready in the future for whatever might come.

MF: Great. And in what ways has your daily life changed? At work, at home? And how are you going about your day differently now?

GG: My day, like I said, I come into work, and maybe even having to work a little more even than usual, which is hard to do. Obviously, even what we're doing right now, we've adjusted even within the police department [00:06:00] to doing a number of things virtually. Of limiting our interaction with each other, particularly at our higher levels, our chiefs, assistant chiefs, and captains. We try not to have us all in the same place, and do a lot of virtual meetings, even when we're quote unquote at work. Really working with some different types of schedules that we've had officers and our employees do, and really working toward more of a home working environment, and I know that might sound a little funny for a police officer, but there might be investigators that could work from home for a day and write reports, and kind of stay out of the loop in case something happens. And then we do have a number of clerical staff that work hand in hand with us, and there's

a lot of that that we can do remotely or differently. And of course, it's really sped us along the track of trying to really increase our efficiency in a number of areas.

MF: Were there any coping strategies [00:07:00] that you were able to employ for yourself, or for your other officers, to help navigate the stress of the current pandemic?

GG: Absolutely. Just like what you said at the beginning, as part of the disclaimers or the disclosures, about mental health, we're very worried about our employees' mental health. We've reached out to their families. Our home life -- which I didn't answer well in the last part -- all of our home lives are upended like everyone else in the world. Our kids are learning remotely. One's in school two days a week, one's home all the time. A lot of our people work shift work, so we've reached out to the families, we've provided a number of mental health resources. We've empowered our shift commanders to allow extra time off that people have earned, but we kind of have a limit on how many people can have off, but we've given a lot more leeway, given the stress of COVID and families. So I think [00:08:00] those are some of the coping mechanisms, is that we've been trying to treat our officers

and our employees as humans, and try to really help them as much as possible.

MF: And in general, how do you think people have -- the citizens, how have they accepted the lockdown and how do they treat each other during this time?

GG: I think at the onset, I was amazed, and I guess it's still fair to say that I am amazed, at the initial first few months. I think people really did a really nice job, and I think that that reflected in some of the numbers and the decreases we saw. I think now, with some schools going back, colleges, I'm no doctor, but I'm involved in a lot of meetings about this, and I think now what I'm sensing is just an overall cabin fever. [00:09:00] Almost like, It hasn't happened to me in so long, and a kind of notion, and it's just incumbent upon the people of Allentown and the surrounding communities to stick with it. But I guess overall I've been impressed.

MF: How have people -- has the police department received any support from outside, or citizens and things like that?

GG: We have. We've been very fortunate. When COVID started, a great outpouring of support. We likened it as similar to September 11th, back in 2001, where there was this feel of

appreciation that isn't necessary in any way, but it was nice, cause I think people realized that essential workers, healthcare professionals, and first responders were a lot of the people that were -- I don't want to say stuck going to work, but I think that's how it went. [00:10:00] And I know we as police officers, we got a whole new appreciation for -- we used to think, police, fire, EMS, and you really got a really good handle on grocery store workers. Like, how important are these people out there? And of course, the healthcare workers and just so many other people that kind of make the world go. Truck drivers, I mean, you think about it, all the people that kind of make stuff happen.

MF: Nice. Is there anything that you found strange when it started and now seems normal?

GG: You know, there's a couple things. The masks. And our officers had a real hard time with the masks at first. And it's been a long road now since March, so we're going on month number seven, almost seven months to the day, [00:11:00] I think, give or take, kind of, that we went into lockdown, and you know, cops are like any other person in the world, creatures of habit, and I envisioned -- I



told people this story that when we received body cameras about five years ago, our officers would get out of the car all the time, and they wouldn't remember to flick them on, because the cop that had been here ten years had never done it before, so it's like a muscle memory. You know, you get out of the car, you take your keys out, you open the door, you're looking around, and now, with our young officers, they don't even think twice about it, but it took us a while to get into the mask-wearing, so I think it's really -- and I was very concerned during this, in terms of crime, of course, cause that's our number one job, is we have everyone wearing a mask. It was a little daunting, if you think back to April, and now it just seems like second nature. And I would also say, the one thing that's really been nice, [00:12:00] is my children now, who I would like to think were always fairly healthy, they wash their hands like that, and I don't even have to say anything, so I guess those are some silver linings in this otherwise dark cloud.

MF: Has there been any changes in crime during this time, or -- good or bad?

GG: Yeah, no. It's actually -- I'm leading a meeting, talking about crime stats. So we have our crime stats through the end of September, and today it's October 13th, so we just tallied up the numbers from September, and crime across the city of Allentown is down significantly. We're talking in the neighborhood of eight to 12 percent on the year to date so far, and now that we're three quarters of the way through the year, you feel pretty good about that trend. And we're higher -- I should say, we're beating numbers from 2018, [00:13:00] which was a pretty good decrease in crime, and what we're not seeing is other major cities -- many people probably see on the news or whatever, are having some significant issues with violent crime, and for whatever reason, this year, we seem to be doing okay. So I guess, again, that's a credit to the people of Allentown, and hopefully some good police work, but I think at the end of the day, we're probably going to chalk 2020 up to an anomaly, win, lose, or draw.

MF: (inaudible) You already mentioned your kids washing hands, but is there anything that, in your opinion, that happened during the pandemic that will probably remain forever changed, and in your view, is a positive outcome?

GG: I do. I think this was a unique moment in time for many people, including my family, [00:14:00] and I know that I may not have been home as much, but my wife is a teacher, so she was home from March until now, and she got to spend an awful lot of times with the kids, and there was some real nuclear family time there, for those first couple months. You know, even until recently, about seeing extended family. So there was some really interesting bonding times. We've become -- I think we're like every other family in the United States. We're very dependent on electronics, and Netflix, and we go to different rooms and do different things, and I saw my kids doing puzzles together, and we did some family game nights, and things kind of slowed down a little bit, if that makes sense, and I'm not sure that was all bad. I think that's a good takeaway from this that I hope sticks a little bit.

MF: All right. I think that's -- is there anything else that you would like -- we're pretty much done. Is there anything else you would like to say? [00:15:00] About this?

GG: No. I just will say that, to anyone that reads this or watches this 20 years from now, that my family and I, we go

to the Allentown Library, my kids are up in the kids' section, when it's prior to COVID, and we'll hope to be back there again, as hopefully things get back to normal, but if you didn't get to experience it here in Allentown, just know that it was probably one of the most surreal things we'll ever experience, from someone that was out there every day. I appreciate the opportunity to be involved in this project.

MF: Yeah. Thank you for doing this. I'm going to stop the recording now.

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