

5-18-2022

Jackson Beeler Interview 2022

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Recommended Citation

Jackson Beeler interviewed by Logan Barr, Western Oregon University Oral Histories, Hamersly Library, Western Oregon University, May 18, 2022.

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Narrator: Jackson Beeler = JB

Interviewer: Logan Barr = LB

Date: 18 May 2022

Place: Monmouth, Oregon

Media: Audio; JacksonBeeler_OralHistoryAudio_2022; 1
of 1.

The interview with Jackson was completed on May 18th, 2022. Jackson has read and approved this document.

[Transcribed by Logan Barr June 2022, Audited by Logan Barr June 2022]



Jackson Beeler.

Jackson Beeler was born in Hillsboro, Oregon on March 15, 2000. Currently Jackson is living in the Arbor Park apartments while he finished his Senior year at WOU, after enrolling as a student here in 2018. Jackson graduated from Liberty High School in Hillsboro prior to coming to WOU. In this interview, I talk with Jackson about his experience during Covid, including his time working for the Parks and Recreation Department in Hillsboro during the summer, while also trying to be as cautious as he could because like many people can relate to, his mom is immunocompromised so it was important to him to do his best to keep her safe. Jackson details how Covid impacted his time at WOU, and how he was lucky to be able to continue working because of the environment he works in.

[JacksonBeeler_OralHistoryAudio_2022 file begins 00:00]

LB: Alright, so this is Logan Barr its May 18th, 2022 at 2:33pm, I'm interviewing Jackson Beeler for our history-oral history project, documenting his experience with covid. So how you doin today, Jackson?

JB: I am in fact alive!

LB: Wonderful! Which means you didn't contract covid and die.

JB: That is...that is true.

LB: So, that's good news, um, let's start with your early Covid period,what was your early experience with COVID and how did you hear about it?

JB: Well I heard about it through my roommates actually we were, we were living in our apartment in Arbor Park on campus and we-we, were talking about we were just talking about...actually it was this exact apartment that I'm right now...

LB: ...that's so strange!

JB: we-we were talking about it in the kitchen being like "oh yeah this this Covid stuff is it's kind of crazy", we were gonna go home for spring break and then it was gonna be like a two week thing and then we'd be fine, uh, so we went home for spring break, I actually had my-we

celebrated my birthday, because I was born on March 15th and then the very next day after we celebrated my birthday was when the whole, when the whole state went into lock down and so my early Covid experience was “Congrats you turned 20, now it’s all Covid, welcome to the world”

LB: Oh, man. Alright, um so looks like, what do you remember about how the people around you are responding? How was your roommate responding, and how does it-how did it seem like the rest to the people in Arbor Park were responding?

JB: Well initially, like a lot of people we've really didn't know what was going on. We, we knew that Covid-19 existed, but we didn't fully understand what it was or how it was gonna affect us or anything, we were just like “oh yeah this this kind of...this kind of disease came out of..it was discovered in China it's now over here and it really didn't quote unquote affect me until I got home, because my mom is immunocompromised and so she doesn't have an immune system and so we had to immediately start being extra careful for her otherwise, 'cause if she gets it, she wasn't gonna make it.

LB: Yeah, yeah that’s hard, especially living in an apartment complex. Alright, so then we can move on to during Covid, how did you shut down the-or how did you spend the shutdown period? Did you stay at WOU or did you end up going back home and uh, and being safe with your mom?

JB: So, initially so the spring term, that week we got shut down all our classes went online, I stayed at home, but then after that, after that school year ended I went back to working the job I had spent the previous summer working with the city of Hillsboro Parks and Recreation Department, uh and so I went back to work another term-to work another season with them except for this time since fall was still in Covid we were still knee deep in Covid, I stayed on a lot longer than I had the previous summer I ended up staying my full six months all the way into November and at the city we had to wear masks and everything. So, I was I was masking up all the time everywhere not only because we had to, but I was also thinking about my mom, I just wanted to protect her to the best that I could, and so then after that I decided to-actually let's see, this was my-so I had my junior year, right, ok, so after the winter term I moved back into an Arbor Park apartment, after the fall term, and we, we were livin there it was kind of, it was kind of fun, it was kind of fun. Not all my roommates were back, one stayed-decided to stay down Eugene, which is completely understandable, but then at the end of winter term, the other two decided to move back home because all online classes, it just makes sense just save the money go back home and everything, And so, I would say definitely that spring term of my junior year was by far the hardest term here at WOU just purely because I was alone. I was in an apartment by myself, I couldn't go outside and hang out with my friends because everything was still shut down and so, I basically spent all day every day inside on my computer with the only ever real human interaction I would get would be when I go into like the grocery store to get some groceries or when I go to McDonald's to get some food which happened a lot more during Covid just because I was getting no other like physical human interaction. Which it, surprisingly caught me off guard how just important human like physical interaction with people is, and also just

interesting to to notice like once it's take-once it was taken-taken away just to see how like how important it is in my life to be able to physically talk to people.

LB: Right! Yeah, for sure. Did you or your family have any direct experience, did anyone you know get Covid? Did you or your family get Covid or anything like that?

JB: Uh, yeah, so we knew a surprisingly large amount of people who got Covid, my mom had friends who got Covid, my aunt got Covid, and so it was a bit scary because my aunt had to work at the airport, the Portland airport and so-and she was living with my grandma and so it was a bit worrisome that “oh is my grandma gonna get Covid?” thankfully she did not, but, so I guess my aunt was really the only member of our family-actually, wait, no there was-so that aunt was on my dad side; that's his sister, and then on my moms side, her brother and his wife also got Covid, but they live just the two of them. Except for they do see their-my cousin who is in a, I don't remember what it's called, but it's essentially is an assisted-it's an assisted living home but for those who are on the autism spectrum, uh he is a-he's nonverbal autistic and so, that getting him into that home, because Oregon is very good about its treatment-very good with their treatment of nonverbal autistics and just autistic-people on the autistic spectrum in general. So it was very good for them to get out of Montana and come back to Oregon and get him into one of these homes and he's been-but Covid was definitely, I would say, it was hard for him just because he couldn't fully grasp what was going on. And it was hard for them when they got Covid, 'cause they couldn't go and see him, which was one of-it was-they did that-they do that almost every single week, at least once a week maybe sometimes twice. It was a very big part of their life so that was really the only people that in our family that got Covid and of my friends I don't think

any of us got Covid, not to my knowledge at least. There was a couple of, like, “oh, I’m feeling kind of sick, is this Covid?” and then it turned out to-oh, it’s just a cold it’s not Covid, it’s just a cold.

LB: Uh, you mentioned that your aunt worked at the airport, so I-I also had a friend who worked at the airport, and because of that they were more conscious about not traveling. So, did your aunt's experience working at the airport and still seeing people travel kind of influence your families view on traveling and maybe change your guys mind about traveling too?

JB: Uh, so that's a good question. It-she-yeah it kinda did, um, we don't travel that often, it's I mean, it's slightly off topic but growing up, instead of like going to Disneyland or going to Disney World every year we would just instead go camping everywhere around Oregon. I can't count how many different campsites we've been to, and so that was-that was definitely one of the bigger things that is sort of traveling but not necessarily through the airport, was like all the campgrounds even got shut down because they couldn't support making sure everything was like Covid safe and-and it was-it was just interesting to see like how much we saw the world just shut down was kind of the biggest part for that my family kind of experience was just watching how the world just shut down it just came to a complete stop and nothing moved.

LB: Yeah. Alright, so going off of that, when everything shut down, we could talk about how it shut down and then kind of when things reopened. Were you anxious to go out and stuff when things first started reopening? I know we had kind of a wave of things opening back up and then

shutting back down and some people were-were hesitant to go out at first but what was your experience with that?

JB: So with my personal experience with it, it was a bit odd because I have-I had started working, after I finished my junior year, I had started working back at the city for my-for the third season and so, and at this point I had already been vaccinated and everything I had already gotten both shots and so I was able to be cleared if you showed-with our bosses if you showed the assistant Superintendent your-your proof of vaccination like just your card we wouldn't have to wear our masks anymore and then that was the, near the beginning of the summer and so that lasted for all of I want to say three weeks before cases started to jump back up and masks had to go back on and it was just really interesting because working for the city specifically, people were anxious to get things open again but we -we couldn't just do it because people were saying "hey we want you to do this we we need you to do this", our hands were always tied, we-we couldn't just do something because "hey I want you to do this". I'm-I'm sorry you feel that way we, can't do that right now. That was an interesting part we also actually-we also had to-near the end of my season which was the end of the summer, coming back here for my final year we had actually opened a brand new park in south Hillsboro which is a very recent addition to Hillsboro that's technically not-that is technically part of Hillsboro but it's called South Hillsboro it's like a whole new developed area. But there is a regulation in place that there has to be a certain amount- a certain amount of parks or natural areas per X amount of residential area, it but-it's been a thing like that has been in place since I think the 1970s or 80s and so we actually opened up a new park in South Hillsboro near the end of Covid, at this point we were back to having our masks off outside but they still have to be on inside and it was just interesting to see how the city

[clears throat] how the city evolved their regulations through the-throughout the summer because we went from having to clean the bathrooms, well we had to clean the bathrooms every morning for any parks that had a bathroom we had to clean the bathrooms every morning and then we had to lock half of them because the [pause] Oregon Health Department, I think it was the Oregon Health Department or maybe the CDC, recommended and sort of required that we clean the bathrooms twice a day and plainly, just putting it as plainly as possi-as possible we do not have the time to clean the bathrooms in the morning, come back at halfway through the day and clean the bathrooms again, and still try and get all the work we needed to get done because our full times, who are the-it goes seasonals are assigned to a full time position-full time employee, full times see a coordinator and up and up and up, so the full times are in charge of not just one park, not just two they're usually in charge of 3, 4, 5, 6 parks even. And so, trying to-not every single park has a bathroom, but trying to keep all those clean twice a day plus trying to get everything else done it just is impossible to-it would be impossible to get anything done and so what we ended up doing was we would close half bathrooms and then we'd have our lock up crew come through halfway through the day, they'd start half-they'd started at noon and they went to about 8:00 o'clock and they would come through and they would lock the bathrooms that are-that have been used for the day and then they would unlock the other ones and so that's how we were able to work our way around having to clean the bathrooms twice a day while still keeping those clean bathrooms for our park patrons. And so, [inaudible] yeah and it's it was very interesting 'cause near the end of this-end of my season we closed the bathrooms down and so I was working almost through the end of September and so we were beginning to lock bathrooms up because, pipes freezing and everything, and so we were-it was just-we were just beginning the process of just deep cleaning the bathrooms one last time, turning off the water, draining the

draining the water out of the bowl and putting antifreeze in the pipes just so pipes don't freeze over during the winter and it was just it's really just an odd experience.

LB: Yeah, that-that sounds interesting. Um, so you were able to work the whole time during covid then, even though you were seasonal, your work wasn't affected then, right?

JB: Yeah, so, I always say that I'm very lucky as much as I complained about that job, I was very lucky in the sense of, since I was working outside I was able to-and a very necessary position, I was able to be able to work all my seasons throughout Covid and I'm very thankful for that as odd as it would seem be-just because I would-I would definitely go a bit stir crazy just having to be stuck inside for basically two years it's...I like being outside it'- it's very nice and working for the city we get to do a lot of really fun things, because we're in the city. We get things like-we get to park where not everyone gets to park because we have the permission to so we get places-we can park where people can't park, we get to use equipment in the parks 'cause that's kind of our job, we get to-we get to mow the grass using super fun equipment , we get to do all this stuff that normal people don't get to do but we get to do because we're a member-'cause we work for the city.

LB: That's awesome. Um. Did you -do you have any positive or like positive experiences or benefits from the lockdowns and shutdowns during covid?

JB: Um, that is a good question. I definitely had at least one positive experience from the shutdown, working my second season I actually ended up meeting my best friend Justice, she

was-she had come from Michigan to work for the city for a change of pace and so she was assigned to the park-to the she was assigned to the full time that I ended up getting assigned to as well, he was kind of-we-there's two full times who kind of combined their parks into one, kinda combined all of their parks into one kind of mass group and just because one of those parks one of the parks is one of the biggest parks we own and so it's just, we basically were the two seasonals and we had to show up we showed up directly to the park 'cause in order to keep the number of people in the office down, if there was satellite parks which are just parks that have some at least some kind of storage for their equipment bigger- bigger storage area for their equipment, so for at the park that we were at there's a whole garage that fits the mowers and everything. We [clears throat] so we had show up there together and so we we'd show up there at 6:30 every morning Monday through-Monday through Friday. We just got to know each other really well and we've-we've kept in contact and she just-over the amount of things that we had to deal with together really just brought us close together as friends, and so that was definitely the most positive experience from Covid is is meeting her and just getting to just have someone that understood what I was going-like what we were having to do and being able to just vent to each other that's-I wish I was joking when I said that what we spent-spent most of our time doing it's just complaining to each other and it even happened when I went back last year, every time there was something negative I was just like "oh I had to with this today" or we would go back to our least favorite park be like "Hey! Look where I am" and just silly things like that.

LB: Um, speaking of parks, did you um notice any like protests or anything going on in any of the parks that you were working at, or any of the any of your coworkers, uh did any of the protests during Covid affect your work or any of the parks that you guys uh worked at?

JB: So, that's a—that's a great question, um we didn't really get to we didn't really see at least in our parks we didn't really see that much of a protesting Covid like protesting Covid in our parks, we did have BLM event-I think it was a BLM event, I don't know for sure but it was, people showed up I-I'm pretty sure it was BLM related and they did the event, they were fine, didn't leave a mess but they left, no worries. What we had to deal with a lot more of was the homelessness-was the homelessness crisis in Covid which made it just every which way even worse to have to deal with. That's what a lot we had to deal with-a lot of is is the homelessness crisis and while still in a Covid environment 'cause we got a lot of-and in-from Portland they got rid of a lot of their homeless people and they said "here's a bus ticket, go that way" and they naturally just came to our parks because it's usually a place where they can spend the night and stuff and that was much more of our experience than any of the protests or anything I'd say.

LB: Interesting. Um is there anything else from like uh Covid, any like crazy things you remember happening? Um, you know, the toilet paper shortage, any of those things that you remember that were maybe different in Hillsboro than they were in Monmouth? Um, did you have any experiences when you were on campus verse when you were home where you were like "wow, this way different here that it is here"?

JB: Um, I would say definitely like wearing masks. I won't point fingers towards one political party or another but definitely living in Monmouth I saw a lot more people not wearing masks and refusing to wear masks than in Hillsboro, in Hillsboro I obviously saw some in Hillsboro because everywhere people weren't wanting to wear masks but it was not-it was definitely a lot more-a lot more frequent in Monmouth than it was Hillsboro and I think that partially comes from the population. Right now Hillsboro from the census, we just hit I think about 108,000

people compared to Monmouth is only about 10,000 people and so, while I saw less people in Monmouth as a whole I-if I had scaled it up to the amount to the size of Hillsboro I feel like there still would have been a lot more people not wearing masks and so that's definitely the biggest difference I saw between the two towns. The toilet shortage I thought it was kind of funny I said "these people are-these people are dumb they're kind of crazy, whatever". My family had-right before the toilet paper shortage like really kicked off, my mom had gone to Costco and got those one of those big case,like Costco size toilet paper things and that lasts us anywhere from like four to five months just because it's so much toilet paper and so we didn't really have to worry about the toilet paper crisis because we just had-we were just-we had enough toilet paper, that lasted through the entire crisis, through the entire like panic buying of all the toilet paper.

LB: Nice. Alright well we can wrap that up then. Is there anything else that you wanted to add, you know is there anything I didn't ask, anything else that stuck out to you?

JB: Um, no, I-I think that's-I think that was- I think that all went pretty good.

LB: Good, alright.

[JacksonBeeler_OralHistoryAudio_2022 file ends 26:33]