

## **COMMUNITY ARCHIVE: COVID-19 EXPERIENCES ORAL HISTORIES**

### **Rose Villegas Interview**

October 11, 2020

Virtual Meeting, Holt, Michigan

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## Rose Villegas Interview

**ROBYN PIERCE:** My name is Robyn Pierce working in conjunction with Reuther Library at Wayne State University. Today's date is October 11, 2020. This is an interview of Rose Villegas about the effects of COVID on her ability to work. The interview will go into detail about her job as a department analyst, both before and after the shelter in place order was issued. Rose lives in Holt, Michigan and works at the State of Michigan. This interview is being recorded remotely will be housed at the Reuther Library which is part of Wayne State University.

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Okay, so the first question I ask everybody is, do you have an affiliation with Wayne State University?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** No.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Okay. And then, can you give me a job description? What does departmental analyst mean?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** So it's a position within the State of Michigan where it's more analytical work—running reports, analyzing data that we receive. Right now, I do a little bit more than that but that's just a general term for the job title.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Okay. And then, what was working like before the stay-at-home order, for you? [00:01:58]

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** It hasn't changed too much. The only thing that changed was, of course, the location and then, right before COVID hit we lost my boss's secretary. So, when she left, I took over her responsibilities until they found a replacement for her. So when she left I got all of the

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secretary duties on top of mine. It was manageable, I was a busy person every day, but it was manageable. But once—I don't know if you're going to ask this question next—but once we got home it was a different story, because then we had to lay off students, student assistants. And, so once they were gone then a lot of us had to pick up additional work that they were doing for our staff, so.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** So were you furloughed at all? Or, did you just transition into working from home? [00:03:01]

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** I was furloughed one day a week. For, I think, it was eight weeks.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Well, that's not too bad.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** No.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** So what kind of technology do you require to work at home with, to make sure that you're getting everything done that you can?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** So the internet, of course, laptop—I have my monitor—I also got a laser printer here, because I constantly printing stuff for my boss that I have to see her and deliver that to her. I think that's about it.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Yeah, did you go back into the office after the stay-at-home to get some of those things?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Yes.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Yeah, what was that like?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Just that it was weird, the first time I went in. Because every—it felt like time had stood still. The calendars were still on March, and nobody was in there. [00:04:01] On our floor that I'm generally on, there was nobody there. It was very eerie, it was weird. And to be

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downtown Lansing and not see any cars, not see people walking around getting lunch, or taking a break. It was really strange.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Are you capable of doing everything that you were able to do in the office at home now?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Yeah. Yup. I think they're starting to reevaluate whether or not they really need us there now that all of this has happened, because we all are doing everything that we normally do, but we're just at home now, so.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** You guys use Teams or Zoom or whatever to get your conference done?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Yup, Teams. And we see each other once a week. We have a team meeting every week. And before that it was every quarter, we'd have a meeting, or once a month. It wasn't as much as we do it now, so. [00:04:58]

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Yeah. Do you enjoy working at home more than going in?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** I do. (laughs)

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Yeah.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** I miss my coworkers, but like I said, I still see them on a weekly basis, so. I do like being home, you know, being here. Not having pay for parking downtown Lansing. It's different, but I like it. And if they decide to continue this, I would be happy with that. Just dealing with traffic in the morning? No, I don't miss it at all. (both laugh)

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Have they talked about putting you back in the office at all?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Not yet. They just extended the stay-at-home or stay-in-place until the new year.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Wow!

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**ROSE VILLEGAS:** We're at least at home until January second.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Yeah. That's almost a full year for working at home.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Right. I have a friend that works in the Victor Building for the State of Michigan, and they told her, back in June or July, that they weren't renewing the lease on the building, and we might see you in a year. [00:6:08] So they told her they wouldn't probably see her back until June of 2021. Once she told me that, I thought, okay then we're probably not going to go back until then, too. So that will be over a year almost.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Yeah, that's crazy.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** A little bit more than a year. Yeah.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** I know you have a son and schools closed in early March, as well. Did you guys end up coming home at the same time to be working at home?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Yeah, we're here. He got sent home and then literally that following Monday we were both here together. And he mostly—when he did his homework, or he had to be online—he would be in his bedroom. [00:06:56] Once we found out that we were going to be here together (laughs) until next year I told him you need a space where you can sit. Because it was going to be different this time. Before, they just threw stuff at him. Here's some homework to do. There was no lecture, there was nothing like that. But this year it's a little different. So he's in the basement and I'm up in the kitchen still.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Nice. Yeah, I found that between the kids coming home prior to the end of the school year last year, and the beginning of this school year there seems to be a lot more organization.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Oh, yeah. (laughs)

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**ROBYN PIERCE:** Yeah. What do you think is the biggest change between the stay-at-home order, the coming home, any of the different aspects of what we're dealing with, with COVID in general, what is the biggest change to your life?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Biggest change—oh gosh, just being here with Justin all day, my son, that's the biggest change. [00:08:04] And I think it's getting to the point where we're kind of getting on each other's nerves. (laughs) Because we're not usually seeing each other this much during the day. But we're managing. But that would probably be the biggest change is being here with him all day. Even though he's in one part of that house and I'm in the other, but that's probably the biggest change.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Yeah. Did anything get cancelled work related, like were you supposed to get a new office or maybe a promotion that didn't happen when the stay-at-home order came out?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Yup. So they were in the process of reorganizing all of the floors—because the way the cubicles were set up—they wanted to make them smaller. And they wanted to bring down the walls on the cubicles. So we were the next floor. So one through third floor had already went through that redesign. By the time they were trying to do ours—they were going to do it in March. [00:09:01] And so now they have to back track that because we can't all be close like that anymore. (laughing) We need the high walls. So we lucked out. We left and they never did anything with our floor, and I don't think they're going to now. It would be kind of dumb. But they wasted—they didn't know this was going to happen—but they wasted a lot of money doing that. They did put a freeze on promotions. I wasn't up for one anyways. I don't think anyone in our area was. But yeah, no promotions going on right now.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Yeah. Let's see, oh, did you do anything fun with that stimulus check?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** No. Not fun. I put it back. I owed taxes. So yeah, they just got it back. (laughs)

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Oh well. That's kind of nice, though.

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**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Yeah, this was somewhat of a blessing for me because I was leasing my car. [00:09:59] I was getting close in miles. I owed taxes. It was like a thousand dollars in taxes I owed back—which I'm not afraid to say that—whatever. And there was something else—I can't remember. But I thought, if this didn't happen, I would have went over on my miles I would have owed on my lease. (laughs) If we never got that check, I still would have paid it, but that helped everything out, so it was a little bit of a blessing. And all that, so.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** That's nice.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Yeah.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** So the state has started to open back up. I've got a little timeline here. I have hair salons started opening about mid-June and then restaurants and stuff after that. Are you guys going out more now? Are you homebodies instead? [00:10:59]

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** If I go out to a restaurant, I'll make sure they have outdoor seating—I don't know what we're going to do when it starts getting cold—so I will do that. The theaters just opened, I think, or are going to next week. I'm not sure if I would be willing to do something like that. Now, I mean now. Justin, my son, he'll stay home. He was already a homebody. He doesn't like to be out doing stuff unless it's a movie, or we're going to go pick up something for him, but that's really about it. He doesn't mind so much being inside. It started to wear on him probably like around May. He was I just like—I can't believe we can't do anything. I'm like—well, it's only temporary. But that's really about all I will do is probably go to a restaurant outside. And then I don't know what's going to happen when it gets cold. We're not going to order food, I'll just make my own. (laughs)

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Yeah, I think the only thing we've had delivered is pizza, and that's not a different thing for us.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Yeah. [00:11:58]

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**ROBYN PIERCE:** Let's see. I don't have a whole lot more to go through. You're still doing that secretarial job on top of your own job?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Yeah, which isn't awful because right now it's just creating spreadsheets, making sure that my boss is staying on top of the stuff that she needs to. Before I felt like I was running around, like I was literally running all over, doing this getting that—not making coffee, no nothing like that. But making sure everybody was good with whatever they had and so that part of it has slowed down. But I'm still trying to keep her on top. From what I understand, she's the only manager in her pay scale that needs a secretary because she's so busy, and she's always got a bunch of stuff going on. [00:12:58] But yeah, it's slowed down a little bit, but not a lot. And then I'm still helping—can I show you, well, it's not going to be on video—this is the work that I added. All this right here. (shows stack of paper)

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Oh goodness!

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** That stack, I have to go through all of it. (laughs) So I'm still helping my coworker. But, I mean, there's the good part about this is it's going to keep me busy if I don't have too much going on. And there's no deadline on it.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Oh, that's nice. Less stress.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Yeah.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Do they have an idea of when, or if at all, they'll hire someone in for that secretary position and alleviate your work load a little?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Oh yeah, I think once we're back in the building, if we ever go back, they will hire somebody for her. Now, if we never go back, I don't think they will.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** No.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** I don't know if that would be enough for them to be busy at home. And that was their only job is just to make sure she's on top of her stuff, but. [00:14:02]



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**ROBYN PIERCE:** Yeah.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** I don't know. We'll see.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** I wonder how job training is going to go if we—a lot of places, I feel like, are going through that realization that people can do so much more from home, so they might not need to come in anymore.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Right.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** I wonder how job training's going to work with that.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** I know. We've got approval for—because we're on a hiring freeze—but we got approval to hire a department tech, which is right below my job title, to help my coworker with all this work that's she's given me. But she was a former student, and before COVID she was in an acting position, so she was eventually going to get the job when they posted it. And that was another job that they were in the process of posting and it just took forever. And, by the time they wanted to post it, we were already home. And it was like, nope, we're not hiring anybody. [00:14:57] But it got approval. So she came in and thank God she knew the job. I don't know how training would go for her. I mean, how do you train somebody over Teams meeting or Zoom or what? I don't know. But the girl that we help, she goes in the office twice a week, so she would have at least gotten one and one training that way. But thank God she already knew the job, so.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Yeah. When she goes into the office does she mask and all that stuff? Or, is she the only one there, so she doesn't need to do all that?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Nope. The parole board, they have to show up every day, Monday through Friday, nothing's changed for them. I did help her for about a month. I was coming in Tuesdays and Thursdays with her, as well. So you walk in, they take your temperature, they ask you all these questions. You sign off. And you have to wear a mask anytime you move away from your desk. And when you leave, same thing. I did go in one day, it was a day in—it had to be in

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August or July. I had a sunroof at the time, and I think my sunroof was open, whatever. I go in and he takes my temperature and the cut off that they're not going to let you in is—I think it was 100.7°F or 100.5°F—I can't remember. And, so he takes my temperature, and he's like, you have a temperature. And I said, I do? And he goes, yeah, it's 100.3°F. And I'm like, okay, I know when I don't feel good or when I have a fever. I'm like, take it again. So he takes it again, and he's like, that's what it is. He goes, but you're right at the cut off. You don't qualify for me to send you home. I was only going in to get stuff and come back out. Well, I come home and I'm like, I got to take my temperature, I feel fine. I get home and I was normal. I don't know if that thing was accurate, or maybe the sun was beating down on my forehead. (laughing) I was a little worried when I got home, but. [00:17:06]

**ROBYN PIERCE:** I'm glad that was a fluke.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Yeah, me too.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Did you have to change big summer vacation plans or anything for the stay-at-home stuff?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** No, not really. I mean, I ended up—a couple weekends ago went and met some girlfriends up at Traverse City. So that was nice to get away. It was weird being around—going into stores and having to put a mask on every time you go in, and sometimes they wanted you to wear it outside. And I just won't do that. I'm not going to wear it outside. In my opinion, I think it's stupid. [00:17:58] So yeah, I mean, it didn't really change, but. I mean, my friend is getting married in Mexico in March of next year. I don't know what's going to happen. I don't know if we're going to still be able to go. I think they're allowing us to fly over. I don't really think they want us there, but. (laughs) That's the only—she had to cancel—that was the only summer vacation I had planned, it was in July and she was going to get married in Mexico so, she canceled that. So that was the only thing that changed for me. But other than that, no, that was the only thing that got canceled.

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**ROBYN PIERCE:** Yeah. Are you planning something for when the world goes back to a happy medium normal?

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** (laughs) I'd like to, but God, how do you plan something when you don't even know—

**ROBYN PIERCE:** I know.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** —what's going to happen?

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Yeah, it's a little frustrating there's no end date.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Yeah, yup.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Yeah.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** Yeah, once it's all over definitely got to do something. [00:19:03]

**ROBYN PIERCE:** I know.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** It's crazy. (laughs)

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Well, I really appreciate your time.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** You're welcome.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** And, unless you have anything else that you want to interject, or that you've thought about that you want to say, I'm going to wrap this up.

**ROSE VILLEGAS:** No, I think I'm good. Thanks for letting me participate. This is awesome.

**ROBYN PIERCE:** Absolutely. I'm going to— [00:19:33]

*End of interview*