

Access

Oral History Interview with Dorothy Kirk

Conducted by Katherine Sexton on July 3, 2021

Katherine Sexton [00:00:01] All right. Today's date is July 3rd, 2021. My name is Katie Sexton. I'm interviewing Dorothy remotely, not remotely, in Fort Townsend. This interview is being conducted as part of a project organized by the National Humanities Center in conjunction with the University of Washington. Our goal is to collect, preserve and share the stories and experiences of healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. So, Dorothy, do you go by Dodie?

Dorothy Kirk [00:00:29] Yeah.

Katherine Sexton [00:00:30] Dodie, can you tell us a little bit about yourself and what you do professionally?

Dorothy Kirk [00:00:34] Yeah, I am Care Team Support at Jefferson Healthcare. I work with four doctors and deal with their paperwork and the medications, prior authorizations, [inaudible]. Yeah, all kinds of things, you know. Oh, my gosh. People come up and say we need to change Dr. Hong's morning schedule because she's delivering a baby. That also happens with Dr. Carlson. And so, that's the first and foremost thing we do is, you know, change the schedules and try to make the patients happy with where we reschedule them. And I like my work. Sometimes it gets a little mundane, but my favorite part is going in and checking patients out because I- that's what I do also. And I do that a lot with Dr. Hong and Dr. Carlson. They always want their patients checked out. And when I'm in the room and sometimes I can see what they're there for, I will gently tell them, like, if it's mood, I will gently tell them, Yeah, the gravity of this earth can be pretty tough. And you are so not alone in feeling, like, depressed about it; we all do. And so, you know, don't feel alone and that. And they always say, thank you so much. They always are appreciative of that. Some people I don't say it to at all because I know them and I just it- they don't need my opinion and I know that. So, but there's quite a bit to Care Team Support, you know, answering a -what is called a batphone which is doctors or pharmacies only calling and sometimes that phone rings a lot and sometimes it means a ten-minute chore of finding the doctor they need to speak to, which is sometimes on the other side of the hallway. And sometimes the nurse- it's just crazy, sometimes trying to find someone to take that call. But I, usually, I do- I usually do, because I've been doing that for so many years. I know to say, Hey, someone needs to take this so who is going to raise their hand and say, Me. And so, we do that. There's quite a lot we do that we can even think of what we do because it's the stuff that when you're so busy, you say to yourself, Oh my gosh, I haven't been able to get a darn thing done this morning because I've been doing all this other stuff and you've got your inbox in the computer, which is telling you all the things you need to do for all these patients. Most of it's simple stuff, paperwork, which is mostly jury duty notices and get things faxed out and just a lot of different, you know, paperwork. And some days you can't get to the paperwork or the computer inbox. You're so busy doing everything else. And so, I guess that's the answer to that.

Katherine Sexton [00:03:52] Yeah, it sounds like you do a lot-.

Dorothy Kirk [00:03:54] We do.

Katherine Sexton [00:03:55] -Everything. A lot of hats you are wearing.

Dorothy Kirk [00:03:59] Yeah, we really- yeah, we do.

Katherine Sexton [00:04:01] Yeah, how long have you been doing that for?

Dorothy Kirk [00:04:04] Well, I worked- before I was pot support, which has now been since like 2014 I think, I was in just the regular office setting, because this is before Coleman, I was in the-which switched the whole company around. But before Coleman, I was at the phones and the paperwork, just like the paperwork I still have now. But we had several girls working on it and we all answered our own phones to Jefferson Healthcare. We did not have a phone center like we do now. And so, we all just answered the phone. Even at the front desk, you'd answer the phone and somebody would walk up to you and you got to go like this and. So yeah, we just did a lot of the same thing you do now, only with phones and checking patients in. And what was the question again?

Katherine Sexton [00:05:05] How long have you been working there?

Dorothy Kirk [00:05:06] 15 years. I started July 10th, 2006, and I've done a lot of things there. I was a referral coordinator for three years and I was very good at it. I was very good at doing it. As soon as it came in, I wanted to get it out of the way, do it, do it, get it out of the way. Which means either they don't need prior authorization from the insurance company, so I could just write it out, gather the notes, fax it off, document it. This was before Epic we had it Allscripts; so much more easier. We didn't have to answer a lot of what I feel is unnecessary questions. It's just because we were able to type out where they want to go and it was as simple as that. They're going to such and such. It's Swedish and here's their phone and their fax. And we're faxing out the face sheet, the imaging, the notes all to doctor so-and-so for the referral. And so, then we send it. And once that's done, I can't remember if we close it out or kept it in until we know that they had that appointment. I don't remember if we closed it but we used to- I, personally, compared to the person I was working with, who once she trained me, stopped working because I was doing it all and I was on training for a year and it's like, okay, I know how to do this. Can you help out a little? So, that was kind of weird. That's the only time I've ever been a little angry working there, but that has stopped. That doesn't happen anymore. And it turns out the person has changed- and by the way, this is just beautiful. Look at that. Look at that.- So anyway, then when we switched to the new computer system, I believe it was in 2013, we went to Epic, and Epic was originally made to work for a hospital. They were not designed to work in a small- in a medical group, so the registration was outrageously ridiculous and it took a very long time to learn it. You couldn't just sit with someone one day and teach them. It was- It was- it would take you a lot of different weird places; wow. And if you were a workers comp person, I would basically, you know, Shawn, you want to help me out with this because you didn't- it didn't happen that often. And it was very complicated. And Shawn would just help me and I would- she'd say, okay, now click on that, click on that. But I don't do the front desk anymore for about five, six years now. Yeah. And I love it. I really do. I don't get sick when I go to work the way I used to when I worked the front desk. I used to get really nauseous coming to work because they put too much on the front desk. I still think they kind of do, other than they don't have to answer the phone. I still think

they're overloaded because they're checking patients in and there's some things they shouldn't have to worry about, but they still do.

Katherine Sexton [00:08:35] Yeah.

Dorothy Kirk [00:08:36] Which kind of I think is weird. But medical hospitals all over are always struggling to get people to work because people leave because it's too hard. So, they get other people in and people are always in training. Right now we have a few people where I don't even know their names, but I will learn them. I've learned a couple, but it's like, Where did everybody go? Where did everybody go? So, I don't know because it doesn't seem like- I think that once we got settled into the Coleman thing and got our own rhythm down, I think it was great from my perspective as a care team support. I had Cassandra behind me doing referrals, emergency even for only. She had this very calm and insightful attitude about life and work and she literally changed me from being nervous and angry about what's happening to my whole personality about the way I approached my job changed. And it's never gone back. I have the occasional day where I will cuss under my breath, but it's more of a laugh after I say it because it's like, blah, blah, blah. And then I continue to do my thing because it's just usually on a really busy day that that happens. And I jokingly say, God, I hope nobody heard that under my breath. But I guess that's all I have to say about that.

Katherine Sexton [00:10:18] Yeah, well, what I took from that was, you know, your coworkers-

Dorothy Kirk [00:10:24] Mean a lot.

Katherine Sexton [00:10:25] -Really make a difference in your work environment.

Dorothy Kirk [00:10:28] They're everything.

Katherine Sexton [00:10:28] I'm curious if that's changed with COVID and the social distancing and regulations.

Dorothy Kirk [00:10:36] Not at work, except for all the stuff we have to wear. No, we still get along great. So, the answer to that is no for me anyway. Wearing the mask, I noticed I went to safe, not Safeway, I went to QFC [Quality Food Centers] last night, forgot my mask in the car and I went, shoot. And I walked in and I didn't realize until I was already in the store, but I noticed a bunch of people weren't wearing a mask for the very first time. And so, I just didn't go back to my car to get my mask. And at the end, I asked the cashier, I said, What's with people not wearing masks? And he wasn't even wearing a mask, the cashier. And they said, No, as long as you've had your COVID vaccines, you're free to go into a supermarket, our supermarket anyway, I don't know the rules of the rest without your masks. That was a beautiful most- it just warmed my heart to know that this is- there is an end to the game here. Yeah. And we are- we're also able to go into a room and check out patients if they've been vaccinated and I've been vaccinated. We can both take off our masks unless that makes them uncomfortable, and we'll keep them on whatever makes them comfortable, because we don't want, you know, we don't want that [inaudible] jerk

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say, no, no, no, we wouldn't do that. So, yeah, I just think things are starting to look up when it- because we got people on the other side politically thinking this is socialism and they're going to make you wear them forever. And I never believed in that. I said, No, I don't know who you've been listening to. It's like, Well, actually I do know who you've been listening to, Idiot, but yeah, so I knew it would come to an end. And even at work, at some point I won't have to wear that mask and I see it in the foreseeable future so.

Katherine Sexton [00:12:45] Wouldn't that be nice not to have to wear a mask at work?

Dorothy Kirk [00:12:49] It will be. I mean, I had to see my mother in 2018, you know, I can't remember the month, but it was the middle of the year, it was summer and she went to the hospital because she had pneumonia and they were- and she got admitted into the ICU [Intensive Care Unit]. And I went in there and they made me wear a mask because at the time I had a coughing fit and me and Gloria, at work, wondering did we have COVID back then and didn't know it because we had a cough that lasts six weeks; a bad, bad cough. But I put my mask on to see my mother. I put it over my nose. The nurse told me, No, you have to wear it like this. And so, she showed me how to wear it. I couldn't survive 10 minutes. I couldn't survive 10 minutes in the mask. I wasn't used to it. I felt like I was suffocated. I'd been wearing a little small paperclip at the chin of my mask to give a little extra air, and nobody's told me to take it off, even supervisors. So that's great. But it's sad because I wish I had had the strength of the mask now because I hadn't hung out with her for hours. Because now I'm used to the mask. So it was just a matter of getting used to them. And it doesn't mean you like them, but you did it because it was important at the time. You know, people have grandparents or parents that are sick and those are the ones I was thinking about. Is the elderly. Yeah. They were most prevalent on my mind.

Katherine Sexton [00:14:34] Yeah. I'm sorry to hear about your-your mom.

Dorothy Kirk [00:14:37] It happens.

Katherine Sexton [00:14:38] Yeah.

Dorothy Kirk [00:14:39] You know, that's life.

Katherine Sexton [00:14:40] Yeah.

Dorothy Kirk [00:14:41] Yeah. But, you know, it's really, really hard. And I've been in counseling. I haven't seen a counselor probably two months now. The last time it was, kind of, odd because it was very obviously she was a Republican. It was just- she's really nice and funny but the situation was odd. She made me watch a video, didn't make me, but I was curious. It's like, what are you talking about? Showed me a video of Biden with about ten little kids on stage and his patting him on the shoulder, whispering in their ear and then she's saying, this is pedophilia. And I said, you know, people can read his lips. And so, this- if this were really what you're saying it is, he would be in a- indicted. He would be in trouble because there's lip readers and

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his lips were very easy to read from the position. So, there was nothing wrong going on that day. He wasn't being a pedophile. And if he is, he wasn't acting like it that day. Because, you know, you never know in this world. But I- we laughed and whatever. I left the interview. I drove home and I giggled, giggled my patootie off because I felt like I was right in the middle of a Woody Allen movie. Ironic as all get out, I said, I just saw my counselor and that's what happened. And this is hilarious. It was just- it was just hilarious. It was life; how things are just- can be so off the wall. And I just took it as ironic and funny and- okay, okay. Next time I see her I'll just - we won't go into politics unless we go into my politics. You're my counselor. You don't talk about your crap. You're here to listen to me. And so, that's the way I would kind of set it up, because she's nice enough and she would let me do that. But truth is, I wouldn't talk about politics. I never brought it up. You know, that's not true. Donald Trump was bothering me, so I stopped watching news. He had this smug smile, and I hope that's on film.

Katherine Sexton [00:17:18] It is.

Dorothy Kirk [00:17:19] He had this really smug smile about taking- He doesn't smile like a normal human being that's happy. He's always got a smug smile, and he was very- not very respectful of COVID, in my opinion. And even when he got it, he was respectful of it. So, that's that. All right.

Katherine Sexton [00:17:47] And do you have any stories of moments you've shared with patients that have been meaningful during the pandemic?

Dorothy Kirk [00:17:53] Oh, my God, yes.

Katherine Sexton [00:17:54] And just note HIPAA [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act] still applies.

Dorothy Kirk [00:17:59] Oh, I don't have to mention any patients.

Katherine Sexton [00:18:01] But if you have any moments, please do share.

Dorothy Kirk [00:18:04] Sure. I just- we all talk about the masks and not all of us, but there's some patients because I've been there so long, I know them well. And as I'm checking them out, they're like, This is the new normal; we're going to have to wear them forever. And I said, No, we won't. I- I feel like I can promise you that this will all come to an end. And they said, Oh, gee, I hope you know. I said, Well, no, I don't know everything, but it will come to an end. At some point, something new may happen and we may have to wear them again for three months, but at least now we're used to them. But they'll come a time when we don't have to wear them at all. Enough people need to be vaccinated. They need to- a lot of people are afraid to get it because they think the government is lying to them. And that's- we had polio vaccines; polio stopped. We had smallpox vaccines; smallpox stopped. So, why not COVID? And there be different variances and they will come up with vaccines that would include the different variances. But I was proud to get that shot. And I know like with patients sitting in the rooms with them, they-they all have the same they pretty much all had the same feeling. There was only one patient who thought this

whole thing was a farce. He was very Republican, very Donald Trump, and he was speaking the words of Donald Trump when he was talking to me. I could tell. And I just- I just smiled and checked him out because I like the guy. He's actually a nice person. And I've learned that through the years that even my brother-in-law, the greatest guy in the world, is my brother, funniest, greatest guy in the world. He's a Republican. And then they turned into Trumpers. I've never loved any of my presidents the way he and Trump people love him. So, we do get a few in the rooms that are Trumpers and I just smile and comment and, you know, whatever. But there have been many that we discuss the masks and when they're coming off and it's like we just have to wait and see what happens. And plus, I talk about if they're in there for severe sadness and this and that, I tell them a little short story. And most of them say, Can I hug you? And I said, Sure. And we hug. And that happens a lot. Our patients, our personalities and our patients are great people. And I do not mind at all knocking on that door; hello, my name's Dodie. And I sit down and talk to them a little. I love it. I love checking patients out. But for the most part, we all have hope. That's- and the ones that don't, that's their problem. They can live with their lives in their head. And I don't tell them that. I just say, Ok. Well, we can hope, though, you know, that's all we can do. And so, that's- it's been great. I think it's been a great experience dealing with this in the room. And a lot of times people are joking around about it. They're trying to be jovial about it, which means it hasn't killed Port Townsend spirit, It hasn't killed mine. It's not killing spirits because we know it's coming to an end. And I'm kind of mimicking them as we know it's coming to an end.

Katherine Sexton [00:22:04] Yeah.

Katherine Sexton [00:22:05] So, you talk a lot about the hope-

Dorothy Kirk [00:22:08] Sure.

Katherine Sexton [00:22:08] Like the future? Yeah, I'm curious if you have any fears for the future because of that pandemic.

Dorothy Kirk [00:22:14] Oh, no.

Katherine Sexton [00:22:15] No fears?

Dorothy Kirk [00:22:16] No fears. As for the pan- I have fears that are something else relating to If my dog gets- breaks her leg, that will be in big trouble. So, I'm always telling her, please don't break your leg. But as for the pandemic, I don't have any fears at all. I don't.

Katherine Sexton [00:22:38] Yeah, that's pretty cool.

Dorothy Kirk [00:22:40] Yeah.

Katherine Sexton [00:22:40] Yeah.

Dorothy Kirk [00:22:42] I really, rarely think about it. The only thing that makes me think about it is the mask. If it wasn't for the mask, it would never occur to me that

there's a pandemic. Except I do keep my distance from people out of respect for them so.

Katherine Sexton [00:23:00] What do you think the biggest impact of the pandemic will be for you personally in a long-term sense, 5-to-10 years from now?

Dorothy Kirk [00:23:09] I can't imagine it being any big impact. Hopefully I'll still have my job. And I- I'm hoping it'll be like smallpox and polio where it's eradicated, completely eradicated, and that nobody's worried about it. And they don't have to close, like, they don't have to close a country. The one we heard about Italy. Suzy G one of the nurses there told me, Holy moly. She says, Yeah, they shut down Italy. And then it's, like, and then what I heard about the East Coast and of course I didn't want to watch the news because I hate watching the news. I come home stressed even though I love what I do, but it's like crazy. Mommy's home. Let's just kick back for a bit before I do laundry or whatever it is I need to do. But my hope from ten years from now is is like smallpox and polio and other diseases that have been eradicated. But more people need to, in my opinion, quit thinking that they're giving their children autism. I don't believe that. And that it does help. There's a reason we get these- vaccines. I don't think people at WHO [World Health Organization] or the CDC [Center for Disease Control and Prevention] have any- oh, there's a big word I'm looking for- I don't think they have any lies going on around or-or something that would benefit themselves to be doing what they're doing. They're doing it for the right reason. And that's what- and that's the same way with the polio and the smallpox. We're trying to keep people alive and we have a big- the world has grown. So, many people have been born and people are living longer. And so, that vaccine will help those people who live longer in the future continue to live longer because COVID is basically gone. It reminds me of the flu, though. We're still going to have the flu. But what I'm hoping for with the COVID is it gives you a much less version of it, not the deadly version of it, like the flu. It gives you hope. You have a bad flu. You go to the hospital, they give you antibiotics for the stuff in your lungs, and then you leave and then you're sick for a week or two, but you don't die. And that's what we're hoping for with this vaccine, that people don't die. And I hope more people get the vaccine.

Katherine Sexton [00:25:57] Yeah, I've talked to some people who are concerned about getting the vaccine because it's not FDA [Food and Drug Administration] approved and so the uncertainty of-

Dorothy Kirk [00:26:05] Oh It isn't?

Katherine Sexton [00:26:07] No.

Dorothy Kirk [00:26:07] I didn't know that but I don't care.

Katherine Sexton [00:26:09] You don't care?

Dorothy Kirk [00:26:10] No, I don't care. I'm a trusting person and I figure it's definitely worth a shot. And, well, after I had my second vaccine, I had to call out the next day because I had intestinal problems. Okay, I won't go into detail, but it was all- it was like a day and a half. But I didn't feel sick when it was happening. It was only

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one part of my body that was doing something that I had no control over. And then I was fine. So, next time, any time I get my vaccine, it'll be on a Friday.

Katherine Sexton [00:26:45] I think that's smart.

Dorothy Kirk [00:26:47] That's all I can say, yep.

Katherine Sexton [00:26:54] Is there a particular image that comes to mind when you think about COVID-19 over the past year?

Dorothy Kirk [00:26:59] The mask.

Katherine Sexton [00:27:00] The masks, masks that work?

Dorothy Kirk [00:27:03] Masks; they're uncomfortable.

Katherine Sexton [00:27:05] They are.

Dorothy Kirk [00:27:06] And I've seen people come through there from QFC, from Safeway and coming in with anxiety and wanting notes to not wear them and wanting to just wear that shield and the doctor said it won't work. And then we had- I know one who's the daughter of one of the people I used to work with who still works at QFC- she suffers from the most severe type of asthma. So, I think she's been given a cone and basically signed a waiver. I think she did something because she's still able to wear that at home because the mask kept putting her in the hospital and it was getting- taking a lot of whatever it is they give you, steroids, whatever, to open your throat. And she was there for a while, I think it was like a day and a half, she was in the hospital. So, I don't know if she's still wearing that. Haven't seen her, just haven't happened to see her. Sometimes I see her at QFC, sometimes I don't. But when I think of COVID, I think of the mask. That's what I think of.

Katherine Sexton [00:28:15] Yeah, I-

Dorothy Kirk [00:28:17] And Italy.

Katherine Sexton [00:28:18] And Italy? Can you talk more about Italy?

Dorothy Kirk [00:28:20] It has shocked me. It shocked me as to-what? And they're having to choose who lives or dies. That sounds like a horror story to me. And I thought, oh my God, what if that comes here and all of New York, they don't have enough respirators. It is- yeah what was the question again because my mind started to drift?

Katherine Sexton [00:28:54] Now we are talking about if there is a particular image that comes to mind when you think of COVID-19 and you mentioned masks and Italy.

Dorothy Kirk [00:29:02] Because I couldn't imagine all the people who were frantic about their loved one not being able to get the machines they needed to help keep

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them alive, the respirators. And that worried me because I put myself in a position of what if that was my mom laying there or my child laying there with no respirator and their fevers sky high and they need the respirator, but it's just not there and doctors having to make a horrible choice. But that's what I heard happened in Italy. And it scared me because I thought America is much bigger and middle America is so open that I thought if it did happen, it would be the coastlines, because there's so- there's so, so many people there and there's a word I'm looking for, again, populated. They're so populated in the East Coast and there's so populated West Coast, California and so- and California was the ones that were kind of acting like it was stupid. There was a couple of people who were acting like, oh, California's just Oh, that's right. That was the people who didn't believe in the masks. They were saying California, stupid to go for the hype of the- this country's turning into nationalism or socialism excuse me, turning into socialism. They're wearing a mask because someone tells them to; that's socialism. And I thought that was really stupid. And what bothered me about that is a lot of people might believe that because the power of suggestion is incredibly, incredibly powerful. I- Cassandra- she changed my personality for me and I was angry and had to be strong to more chill, just way more chill. And I've practiced that practice long enough to where I am now. So yeah, I just thought of Italy, thought of masks, and that was my main concern and thought about it when it first came out to what I was thinking just now. I wasn't thinking at the time, so I won't mention it, but it hadn't come about yet. But when it first happened it was like, Oh wow, yeah, it was a little weird. And I said, The East- the West Coast is just as crowded, and we're in a small town where we're all huddled together basically. So, let's hope it doesn't hit us real hard, which is why I'm glad we did do the mask. Not saying when I mentioned masks, I never meaning that we shouldn't have been wearing them, but they are not comfortable to wear and you're hot and on hot days I don't like being hot, which is why I moved from California to Washington. I don't like hot. So, that's what I think of when I think of COVID in the beginning.

Katherine Sexton [00:32:22] Yeah, sounds like a lot of shock.

Dorothy Kirk [00:32:25] Yeah it was. I couldn't believe it happened. I thought-

Katherine Sexton [00:32:27] Right?

Dorothy Kirk [00:32:28] -Where did it come from? You know, and- and Donald Trump, who says I am not a racist, called it the Kung Fu Flu. Oh, that-that's real nice- that's real nice. Real nice thing to say about the Asians, now we know who you really are, but your supporters won't hear it or see it that way. They'll just think of it also as a Kung Fu Flu. So, it was a rude comment. It's like if it came from China, it came from China. I am not sure about that because I haven't read up enough about it, where it originated and who brought it all here. The world is one planet. This kind of stuff is going to happen. People travel and they don't know they're sick. I don't- I don't think this was something where it was biological warfare. I don't think it was me because I think positively about humans that they're better than that. I'd like to think that, yeah, because we work a lot with China. And why would they do something like that? And I know Chinese people and I know that any country you went to, you'd find people just as nice as the people I'm speaking to across. I know a lot of Thailand and I know a lot of, what's it called, taiwan. I know a lot of the people because Dr. Hong

has a lot of those people. They're just as nice. They're just just smiley. They're just human beings. And it'd be nice if we could just all label ourselves human and don't even mention China or white or this. But some people are proud of that, and that's fine. But as for being white, I-if I had a daughter and she married a Black man, great. Now we have a child moving forward to the- someday the color of all human beings will be all of skin brown because the Earth has started to come together and humans have stopped fighting. Someday, because it's the only way, yeah. And I might have gotten off track on what I just said, but what was the question again? And I'll make my last comment on it.

Katherine Sexton [00:34:48] Yeah, I think what you just said was really beautiful. So, I want to stay there.

Dorothy Kirk [00:34:53] Okay, I'll stay there.

Katherine Sexton [00:34:54] Yeah, you kind of mentioned like-

Dorothy Kirk [00:34:56] Even the LGBTQ [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, and Questioning] I am so proud that those people are being able- because even me in the twenties made fun of drag queens when they'd walk into the clinic and want a pregnancy test. Okay, you know, let them pee in a cup and I just thought it was weird. I wasn't mean to them, but I thought it was super weird and crazy and that he was super weird and crazy. And now here in 2021, people are starting to let those people live on this Earth as we do comfortably without anybody judging them. And- and they get to a point to where if someone is judging them, they don't care. That's where they need to get to is, I don't care what that asshole, excuse me, what that person thinks; I'm me. And there's going to be a lot of people who do accept me at some point, though, most of them will because they should be. They're just people, humans, like us. Who cares what they're attracted to? How's it hurt me? As long as you're not a pedophile or a kidnapper or a rapist or someone who hurts other people verbally, because there's a whole lot of those in the world. Like marriages, man and wife, both same race who are just abusing the heck out of each other. So, just let everybody be who they want to be-that's just all what it is. It's just let people be who they want to be.

Katherine Sexton [00:36:31] Yeah.

Dorothy Kirk [00:36:32] Yeah, and be kind to them.

Katherine Sexton [00:36:34] That's very, very beautiful. I hope you realize that.

Dorothy Kirk [00:36:38] Thank you, kindness is going to win someday.

Katherine Sexton [00:36:44] Yeah. You have such a optimistic, hopeful outlook on the world.

Dorothy Kirk [00:36:49] And I didn't know I did.

Katherine Sexton [00:36:51] And it's-

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Dorothy Kirk [00:36:53] I knew I did, but I didn't know because I- my biggest optimism is when I'm in a room with the patient and they hugged me at the end because I told them maybe two sentences that would help them get through the death of their mother or father. Truth is, time, the only- time is- you can see counselors till you're red face, or red in whatever that thing is, but time is what heals. The counselors help in the beginning, help you think differently, helped change your thoughts on things. But the truth is that sickness you have and sadness and that alone feeling you have in the world, even though you have a sister and a nephew who live by- time, is heal- has healed me and I'll always miss them. But I'm not- I don't want to be afraid. I don't feel afraid that they're not there anymore. I don't feel afraid. And if I do, it's very short lived like, I mean, 2 minutes short lived.

Katherine Sexton [00:38:01] Yeah.

Dorothy Kirk [00:38:03] So, well, they're in a great place, so it's okay.

Katherine Sexton [00:38:05] Thanks for sharing. Okay, a lot of people have called healthcare workers heroes for their work during the pandemic. Do you feel comfortable with people referring to you as a hero? Why or why not?

Dorothy Kirk [00:38:17] I think we were just doing what we were trained and what we're supposed to do. So, the word hero seemed- a hero is a guy who jumps into a boat and goes out into the middle of water to save a mother and a daughter, I mean, a father and a daughter who are in the water drowning. And the water's so cold, they're ready to have that. Where you- what's the word for when you get so cold?

Katherine Sexton [00:38:48] Hypothermia.

Dorothy Kirk [00:38:49] Hypothermia! And so, a man saw a stick or something, and there was a boat there, and he just jumped in because he saw them out on the water. This man on the shore jumped in, rode his way out with this ridiculous rower, and he almost died himself trying to save them because their clothes were wet. He put them in the boat, put the daughter in the boat, saved them. That's the hero. What we're doing is just doing what we're supposed to be doing. And the only reason I think they called us heroes is because some of us had to work, especially hospital workers, not clinic workers, had to work so much more- so many more hours wearing an even more uncomfortable mask, that N95 with that thing on their head and that stuff over them; the PPE [Personal Protective Equipment], simple, that's the word; PPE. Being in that stuff all day long, they must be sweating under there. And I don't like sweating and I don't like- I feel like I'm like ready to jump out of a window. So, I never had to do that. But the people who did are heroes. Those are the heroes, the ones who worked so many extra hours and it had to be exhausting. But what I did in my clinic, what we did. No, I don't feel like heroes. I feel like we were just doing what we're supposed to do. Oh, and setting up- setting up necessity like the sheds for giving shots and the place that they had set up for doing the swab. They came up with a lot of that very quickly. So, I think our hospital did a very good job of saying, all right, we're going to need to pull some people to have a COVID clinic for if you really have symptoms, that's the clinic you're going to go to so you don't get everyone else

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sick. They had COVID swabs. They had not yet had the COVID vaccine shed yet. But I think that Jefferson Healthcare worked quick on getting it- getting it situated so that we could be- because we were the main hospital of this community of- of quite a big, I mean, the next one over is in Silverdale, I believe. Isn't that right for a hospital? I'm not sure. But yeah, I- some of them were heroes, but I think I was just doing my job cause I didn't have to stay late. I didn't. I had to work the COVID shed once, and it was actually kind of fun.

Katherine Sexton [00:41:34] Can you talk about your experience working the COVID shed?

Dorothy Kirk [00:41:38] I only did it one day and it was hustle, bustle, hustle, bustle. And you kept getting these stickers and you had to put around those. You had to register them and you had to work kind of fast, which I went back to my front desk days. If when you had to work at hyperspeed, which, I mean hyper-speed. You were doing- signing people up because you're [inaudible] card should be coordinated care. Okay, well, we need to fix that right now and while there was a line, we had to do all that stuff. So, it was like that only I didn't feel the pressure. I just felt the pressure of what we're doing is a good thing. Let's get these people out- in and out of here. So basically, I was just checking the cards, checking their insurance and marking the cards, what date and this and that, and handing out the registration paper, putting it in a file. So, the nurses would come in and grab it and go out. And we had three people doing that and another person, literally scanning the papers right then and there. We had a person doing that, so they'd make it to the chart and not to the scan list, that can get a little, you know, three inches high sometimes. But I think it worked very well. I think it worked like- like a ballerina dance and it works pretty well.

Katherine Sexton [00:43:03] Yeah, it sounds like a super efficient.

Dorothy Kirk [00:43:05] It was very efficient.

Katherine Sexton [00:43:06] And everyone knew what they're supposed to be doing too.

Dorothy Kirk [00:43:08] Everyone knew what they were supposed to be doing. Even the first day I got there, it took me 20 minutes to know what I was doing, but I picked up quick and I just kept working and then the whole thing just slowed down. And I was supposed to start on 12:30 and it was 11:30 and they said, Well, they were trying to call people to come in. And at this point they said, Dodie, we don't need three people and you're welcome to go home, because it was on a Saturday. And-and the other lady was more in charge so they stayed. So I said, okay, this was fun. And yeah, it was fun.

Katherine Sexton [00:43:44] Yeah, it sounds fun.

Dorothy Kirk [00:43:46] It was because it was an outside. And it was a nice day. It wasn't too hot, wasn't too cold. Luckily it wasn't raining, so it worked out well and all the vaccinators had it down well.

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Katherine Sexton [00:44:01] If you could go back in time to visit your pre-pandemic self, what advice would you give yourself?

Dorothy Kirk [00:44:12] The future is gonna be weird. You- we got something coming up that I feel like we haven't experienced since, possibly, not sure but possibly since World War Two, when they had to literally be unselfish about the-the stuff that had to be done in all the rationing. You couldn't even get chocolate because it was all going to the soldiers. They weren't building stuff. They were saving all the- you probably know- they were rationing everything on-on the United States soil were being rationed. Metals- they weren't building-I think there's a lot of things they weren't building. Everything- if you had run in your nylon, my grandmother told me, you had to sew it up. Everything was rationed and my mom and dad were thrown in a washing machine when the lights went out in the city. And my dad was, and my mom were thrown in a dryer or washing machine because there was maybe going to be a hit on the city and all the lights will go out and they'd hear large whistles. This hit them a little unexpectedly and I feel like that's what COVID did, but on a much lower level of people having to give up and ration. But the world was in a different angle, and that's what happened. And it kind of like what? And all these people in the hospitals had to- those stains, I mean, those marks on their face from the mask. No, I never expected that, I've never- I've been spoiled. Nothing's happened since I was a child except the gas. The gas was on rationed because, I forget why, people would be in line down all the way the block. When I lived in Garden Grove in the seventies, that was a hassle. That was a big hassle. But this was a big hassle. And it hit. And I thought to myself. This is planet Earth. This is what happens. Things happen. And I think my personal feeling that I had to give up was my free breathing, my being able to come into a room and not have to wear a mask because like I said, I really don't like them, but I understand them. But before the pandemic, I was just doing my thing, probably stressing over my mom and dad and being gone. And no, I don't have any- that's about it. Just things happened and I'm now 59 and I hope nothing else happens. If a second round of COVID comes, at least I'll be used to it and I'll know what I have to do but I'm hoping that something weird doesn't happen, and I don't feel it in my gut that something's going to. I don't think that when I try to look forward and think positively so, that's about it. I just- I've thought of World War Two and the rationing, and it's like, why should we be any different? We need to do what they did. Sometimes you need to protect each other. And those soldiers needed the planes. They needed the guns. I hate to say it, this is World War Two I'm talking about now. Hitler was a bad guy and we needed a war on him. And it's the only war I've ever really felt was downright needed. So, if we could do it then, we can do it now. And I think humans are a lot more resilient than we give ourselves credit for; a lot more. We-we roll with the punches, especially when you're surrounded by people who are rolling with the punches and making you feel better. So, yeah, that's how I feel about that.

Katherine Sexton [00:48:32] You talked a little bit about resiliency.

Dorothy Kirk [00:48:34] Oh, yeah. Well, my doctors call me resilient. Yeah. I mean, I was in a really bad place two year-about a year and a half, two years ago, and I came back from it. And I was always afraid of, will I lose my personality and be

labeled, you know, bipolar II. And it's like, well, I wasn't bipolar II before, so why would I be now? It's just, my mom and dad died; I went nuts.

Katherine Sexton [00:49:00] Yeah.

Dorothy Kirk [00:49:01] Yeah, my- the wrong part of my brain took over, which was the fearful part. It's like you're living in a world where you've got a lion screaming in your face right here, and you've got Jaws over here, both waiting for you. You're in fear mode, and it will pass after time. So- and it did. I don't feel that fear anymore. I never feel that kind of afraid anymore. So- did I answer the question?

Katherine Sexton [00:49:32] Yeah, I think you did. I think you did. Okay, have you personally or one of your family members had COVID? I know you said previously that-

Dorothy Kirk [00:49:43] No.

Katherine Sexton [00:49:43] No?

Dorothy Kirk [00:49:43] No.

Katherine Sexton [00:49:44] Any friends or?

Dorothy Kirk [00:49:45] I have a friend at work. His, yeah, I have a friend at work who- he worked in Arizona as [inaudible] in a hospital. And this, RN [Registered Nurse] was one of his best friends. And that person was very healthy running, you know, ate healthy. He was- he was a healthy, healthy, healthy person. Some people take that very seriously, which I should too. We all should. But this guy did. And he died from COVID. And John missed a day at work at our place. And he's not a patient. He's a worker so, no HIPAA thing there. And so, yeah, John missed a day. COVID killed him. A healthy guy, not the flu, not scarlet fever. COVID-19 killed him so, yeah, that's a young guy that if this disease wasn't here, he'd be alive, which I've thought is very weird, because I looked on my phone this morning about how many people we had lost just through the COVID and- course I can't find it- should be in my recents but-

Katherine Sexton [00:51:08] It's a lot.

Dorothy Kirk [00:51:09] It's- it's a lot. It's.-Oh, here it is. Okay, So, I don't want to bore you with this anymore because I can't find it, so I won't ever mine. But it's a large amount of numbers of people who died of COVID, and I am not sure how many of them had underlying issues, but I know that my mom, if she had caught it instead of pneumonia, it'd kill- I think it- she would have died in a few days instead of living to where we could take her home on hospice and enjoy her. So, but yeah, that's the only one I know, John, that no one in my family, my nieces, my nephews, my sister-sisters, the people on the other side of my family, my dad's side, I don't keep in touch with, so I have no idea. But people on my mom's side and a cousin, Lynn, and her cousins or brothers. No, I'm not covered, so I have not heard of it personally. John has, but I haven't.

Katherine Sexton [00:52:27] Yeah.

Dorothy Kirk [00:52:28] So, yeah.

Katherine Sexton [00:52:31] Yeah. Okay, just a couple more questions.

Dorothy Kirk [00:52:36] Sure.

Katherine Sexton [00:52:41] What do you think the biggest impact of the pandemic will be in a global sense?

Dorothy Kirk [00:52:48] People will start taking it more seriously. I hope people just- that's a hard question because I feel like I can't speak for the other countries. I don't know them. I don't know their personalities. I'm hoping that it always- we always stay diligent on diseases and it's taught the World Health Organization, it's taught the CDC, it's taught them to be very conscious of what is happening in the world. I don't want things to be- this is one thing- I don't want it to be overly exaggerated. And oh my God, you need to do this and that. Because if it ever came to the point where I had to wear like, say, a helmet or something, at that point, I would say, well, and this is a terrible thing to say, but at this point, at that point, if I had to wear this, I would very selfishly think, all right, we're done worrying about COVID. Take off the mask, who dies, dies, who doesn't, does it? Because this is not the way I'm living my life is in a, like, space helmet type thing. You know, who knows what the future can bring with weirdness? I don't think it will ever come to that. But that's the only thing that comes to my mind about the future is if something happened to where we had to put ourselves in a really uncomfortable situation. What's the point of living if- yeah, I just can't imagine it. So, I don't know. I'm just I will see what happens and roll with the punches. But I will never allow myself to get to a point where I am made to be incredibly uncomfortable having to say I can't get a piece of chocolate. Okay, I can still breathe. Having to say I can't get no nylons or I can't get a new shirt. I can still breathe. I have food on my table. But it's you know what I mean? I don't want apparatus on me. Yeah, that would freak me out. The mask is all I want them, so. But I do want them. Just. If you kept things in the beginning, they can get a vaccine started then we get vaccines again. Like I said, I have no fear of vaccines, none. And I trust the people who give them to me. And if something happens because of the vaccine, well, that's the way it was going- that was meant to be because me getting the vaccine was meant to be. So, yeah.

Katherine Sexton [00:55:42] Yeah.

Dorothy Kirk [00:55:43] Yeah.

Katherine Sexton [00:55:44] That's a very tough question. So, I appreciate you answering it. Yeah, very tough. If you had to describe your past year to year and a half in three words, what three words would you choose and why? And you could take some time to think- think about that. I know, because I know that's pretty loaded as well.

Dorothy Kirk [00:56:04] Mask, vaccine, and waiting for the vaccine.

Katherine Sexton [00:56:13] That's more than three words.

Dorothy Kirk [00:56:21] Oh, vaccine, waiting- what was the other one?

Katherine Sexton [00:56:23] Masks.

Dorothy Kirk [00:56:24] Masks, vaccines, and waiting. I should put it in the order of waiting, masks, waiting, vaccines. That's the three words that come to mind.

Katherine Sexton [00:56:46] Can you talk about the waiting?

Dorothy Kirk [00:56:49] Waiting for a vaccine- we couldn't wait. And it got very political, which made me very angry how political it got. And I didn't want Donald Trump getting in the way of because he kept calling it stupid, basically. And it's just a flu. He said that a lot. I watched him say it because when I did watch the news, I saw his orange face, I shouldn't say, alright right, I saw his face saying it's not a big deal it's like the flu. He was clueless. And this is our president talking to his constituents, his his country, his countrymen. And you are saying things that are very dangerous to us. And half the country believed him and half the country- there's a lot of folks that are not getting vaccinated because of it. And I think he's going to meet his maker when he dies and he's going to be in for a big surprise. That's what I say. So, the waiting was- I was very anxious. When I got that vaccine I was like, I can't believe it. I was so excited. I can't believe it. And I got the second one, and then I had the miss the next day, but I didn't care. I was so excited to be vaccinated. Because we sure were when I was just a kid when I got that shot at school, I think it was for polio, because I think it was in the 18 or early 1900s when they got the smallpox vaccine. So, yeah. I'm kind of already forgetting the question that. What was the question again?

Katherine Sexton [00:58:37] It was the three words, yeah.

Dorothy Kirk [00:58:40] So, the waiting and the mask I didn't like and the vaccines I loved.

Katherine Sexton [00:58:47] Yeah. Sounds like quite the journey through those three words.

Dorothy Kirk [00:58:52] Yeah, it's been a journey but, you know, it also gives you a feeling, a very big sense of community. We were all doing what we needed to do, and it was a very- you just had to stay away from YouTube where they showed all these silly videos of people screaming and fighting at each other about mask. It's like, just don't watch YouTube. Don't watch that stuff. Just live in your community, do your thing and respect others, yeah.

Katherine Sexton [00:59:24] Are there any questions that I didn't ask you that I shouldn't have?

Dorothy Kirk [00:59:29] I can't think of any. I think you hit it pretty much on the mark. Maybe-

Katherine Sexton [00:59:40] Or any other thoughts?

Dorothy Kirk [00:59:41] I felt the whole community really- really got behind it and did what they needed to do. I was very proud of Port Townsend, Port Ludlow and, you know, Irondale and Port Hadlock. I was very proud that people did what they needed to do and were respecting the masks in the store. That's all I thought. And we all couldn't wait for it to end. We'd all joke about it. And here we are. I can go into the store now without my mask. And the checkers are thrilled they're not wearing their masks, especially the one that came in for the shield. She's just beside herself so, yeah.

Katherine Sexton [01:00:27] Yeah, we're getting a new normal.

Dorothy Kirk [01:00:29] And that- oh, you just hit a good one. In the very beginning, I kept hearing a new normal, like it was going to last forever. When you hear it from a doctor, when you hear it from coworkers, when you hear it from your bosses, the new normal to me sounded like the new rest of your life. That's- I thought that was a weird word. It's like they should have just said, It's only temporary. It's only temporary. I think the new normal was a terrible word to use because it gave a lot of people anxiety and it just say it's what we need to be doing for now- it's what we need to be doing for now would have been better than saying it's a new normal, because every time I heard that, I went into myself and said, I'm not living this way forever. I'm not living this way forever, I would get snotty about it in my own mind about who said that. And then I realized things started to get more mellow and come back to normal in a much more sooner fashion than I thought, because I thought we were in this for about 3-to-5 years, yeah. And I thought, I can handle that, I guess, you know, I'm going to have to. But I wasn't thrilled about it because that's what new normal sounded to me, if not 3-to-5 years, maybe 10 years. And I thought at that point, just take them off and let people die who need to die. And that's really selfish and awful to say. But that's how I felt about having to wear an apparatus over your face. It's not comfortable. And I think I've mentioned that a thousand times in this interview. Masks, ew , I mean e w you that's it.

Katherine Sexton [01:02:23] Yeah.

Dorothy Kirk [01:02:23] That's it. That's yeah. I'm just glad it's come into a-part one of the end. We're not done yet. We're certainly not, you know, at that end line yet, but we're getting there and it's happening quicker than we think I believe so.

Katherine Sexton [01:02:41] Yeah. Any- any last thoughts before we close out?

Dorothy Kirk [01:02:45] I've completely enjoyed this. This has been the first time in my life, I think, other than a job interview but I knew it wasn't a job interview, so I wasn't that nervous. So, that was kind of cool. But I've never ever been asked professional questions by a college student who may use my information to help others. I hope I get to be part of a video or part of the audio. I really do. I hope for

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that. That's what my hope is. I hope I'm part of this. That would make me really cool. Yeah.

Katherine Sexton [01:03:22] Yeah, thank you so much for sharing.

Dorothy Kirk [01:03:24] You're welcome.

Katherine Sexton [01:03:24] It was really- I feel very grateful to have the opportunity to speak with you today.

Dorothy Kirk [01:03:29] I feel grateful too.

Katherine Sexton [01:03:31] And you shared a lot of things that I will definitely take with me. Yeah, it was very- a lot of beautiful things that you said.

Katherine Sexton [01:03:39] Like it- when you're in a good mood; life is beautiful. When you're in a lousy mood, you might like, like, lay down and watch TV with your dog. But on these kind of weekends, I've definitely gotten up, gotten on the deck, get my dog out to my sister's house. Tried to get the agoraphobia that I felt I was starting to develop. All right, I can heal this. Just get out of the house. Get up, get out of the house. So, but when you- it is positive. The world is positive. It's run by love, but hate, murder, child molestation, crazy, weird people that are just creepy. That's part of the yin and yang. And I wish we had more control of those people and could find them more human traffickers. I wish- I wish we can find them with that kind of stuff shouldn't be going on on Earth. But it shows that mankind is not the most important species on this planet. We're smart, I mean. But who's to say that, I don't know, other species aren't smart like animal species living in their own weird world. Well, do they have evil? Do they have, like, an evil giraffe running around trying to kill other or trying to have sex with their little new babies? Do you have giraffes doing that? No, I don't think you do. I know monkeys fight have wars, but I just wish we can get rid of the negative on the Earth. Because if we could, we'd be in heaven. And some days we are in heaven. Yeah- yeah. I mean, it's really easy for me to say this thing when I look at this beautiful view. I haven't done that in a long time. And except for when I was fishing with my nephew a couple weeks ago. This is beautiful. And it makes me feel like in a really good mood. Yeah. I'm in a really good mood because of this. I thought I was able to vent. I was able to say, and you know how rare it is to talk to somebody without them interrupting you. That- women especially are- I'm going to blame us- yeah, women are big interrupters. I have three- two sisters and a mother well, when they were alive and years ago, we'd have Christmas parties for all three of us were there and we'd be telling stories and we couldn't get out three words without the other ones saying, oh, yeah, that happened to me. And then the third one would interrupt that one. My mom would- it was just you couldn't get a word in edgewise, yeah. And so, to sit here and talk without being interrupted, not that I mind, because sometimes it's conversation and you get interrupted at the proper time. But this is great to not be interrupted because then you can say what you want to say.

Katherine Sexton [01:06:53] I agree. Yeah, I agree. Great, I'm going to stop this.