**Ronald Owens**

**Interviewed March 2021**

Matt

All right, Ron. So, a couple questions. What was your daily routine prior to the COVID-19 outbreak?

Ronald

Oh, prior I was pretty active in going places and doing things.

Matt

More specifically, what was your daily routine?

Ronald

Pretty much walking or going to the store. That was basically it, or being right outside.

Matt

And that was your main kind of activity? Walking and going to stores, stuff like that?

Ronald

Correct.

Matt

Okay. And after COVID-19 you were not able to do those things. Is that correct?

Ronald

No, I was not able to get out.

Matt

Okay, so how in your own words, like your own story, how has COVID-19 impacted your life now?

Ronald

Oh, first off, I guess my main concern was for my family. Not knowing what was going on with them. Making sure they were safe. Were we going to be at war with this? Was my son going to be drafted? You know, things like that. But overall with me, I was scared for having pulmonary heart issues like I do. I didn't know if once this thing found me if it was going to be the end of me. Well, it did find me and I survived and had no symptoms at all, but I had COVID.

Matt

You had it, but you said you had no symptoms. How did it affect you when you had it?

Ronald

Once I was told, I was scared. I was scared to death. I didn't know. I don't know I was pretty much playing in my demise so to speak. I didn't know how to really do it and talk to my family and tell them that I came down with this and of course, they were scared and upset and everything but I don't think more so than I was because we all just were fresh with learning and trying to understand this thing ourselves.

Matt

Yeah, so the information you had prior to getting it was that if you got it, you know considering your health conditions, it'll be pretty serious.

Ronald

Right. Now, like I said, that was one of my main concerns. Is this thing going to take me out?

Matt

Yeah. So, before you were diagnosed COVID-19 positive and you were quarantined, what were the challenges that you faced prior to that?

Ronald

I guess just mobility and being able to get out and about, and I was really concerned about the whole country. I'm like, this is really scary, because it's really starting to take a lot of people away from families, you know. And that was my concern, something happened to me or other people or to people around me, people I know. There was a lot of stress, I would say.

Matt

Yeah. So when you were quarantined, how did that affect you?

Ronald

Well, once I was finally quarantined, I don't know I still had the fears and all but it's just not being able to move and being mobile, to get out and walk out and I was thinking well, what is this actually out there? What's going on out there? I mean, it's just something that you can't see and it's really having its toll on a lot of people. I think my concerns were more with my family and other people, I guess upon myself, I caught myself doing that. Because I knew if it found me that it would probably be the end of me with my respiratory issues. So you know, and that's what I thought it was all about attacking your lungs.

Matt

So that must have been quite frightening given that your specific health concerns are specifically related to your lungs.

Ronald

Yes, it is very scary. I mean, I couldn't even go to see my pulmonary doctor. If anything was to happen no questions asked get right to the emergency room. Thank God nothing really bad happened like that. You know, I survived it I guess.

Matt

You were in the hospital during the outbreak as well. But it wasn't COVID related. Is that correct?

Ronald

No, it wasn't COVID related. It was, jeez, I can't remember what I was in there for now. It could have been breathing issues. Well, when I had went in, it was actually after the COVID had started, my lungs had fouled up on me. And I went in and that's when I really got really the effect of what the hospital workers and things were going through. I was met by like six people in space uniforms telling me it's going to be all right just relax as they shoved things up my nose and shoved dyes in me because they were afraid for their lives. But I was like 10 times more scared than they were because I'm like, well, this has happened to me before coming here with breathing issues. Now has this thing actually found me? And of course I tested negative so that was a relief and it was just my pulmonary issues that flare up every once in a while. But damn, it's really scary being in hospital. I mean, you could tell they were afraid. I think they were more scared of me than I was of them. Really weird situation there.

Matt

Weird times, huh?

Ronald

Yeah, cleaning people didn't really want to come into my room. They said, "Oh, you have COVID?" I said, "I don't have COVID." Just things like that really added to it.

Matt

I wanted to ask you something else. Have you had any of your family, have they ever contracted COVID?

Ronald

No, they haven't. But I had a niece who came down with it. And I heard she went through it pretty well, too, like it didn't do anything to her.

Matt

And I assume you haven't had anybody pass away due to COVID-19?

Ronald

No, no one that I know.

Matt

Okay. Okay. So what are your hopes for the future? Given that we're so much, you know, pretty locked down and haven’t gotten back to what it was before COVID. What would you say are your hopes for the future in regards to this?

Ronald

My hope for the future is that everybody really takes this seriously and gets vaccinated if they haven't had it. And I just hope the ones that have had it and will survive and continue being safe and staying healthy. Keep wearing your masks. Yeah, I don't see this going away anytime soon.

Matt

And real quick, I know you probably answered this a little bit before but could you touch on any other challenges that you can think of that you face due to COVID-19? I know that you weren't able to do a lot of things. But I know that before this, you also maybe saw your family a little more.

Ronald

I would say seeing my family and seeing my children and going to their basketball games. And I've really felt bad for him because of the sports activities they were both involved with, and not being able to participate and have them. But I enjoy going and watching my son play basketball, and just having to stay away from them. That was really weird, something that you can't see, touch or smell would keep you from visiting with your family members because you're concerned about their safety. You didn't want to take a chance if you had it not knowing it, pass it on to somebody and you know, but they stay with wearing their mask. And I've always once I was out there, I was wearing masks and somehow it found me.

Matt

Okay, well, I don't have anything else to ask. I know that Julianne might want to ask some follow up questions,

Ronald

Okay.

Julianne

Ron, thank you so much. That was really insightful. What you shared with us,

Ronald

It was truthful.

Julianne

We appreciate that, that had to be terrifying to be in the hospital during the pandemic.

Ronald

Like I said, he was very scary because they were more scared of me than I was of them I think. I mean, this was all new to them also, you know. This was when it first came out pretty much. My lungs flare up from like every three, four months. And I have to go when it's just the way it is. I have COPD real bad and borderline emphysema and other issues, heart issues and all. And sometimes my breathing just gets out of check. But anyhow, I went out of here, I couldn't breathe. They picked me up in the ambulance and had taken me to Riddle hospital. And like I said, upon entering the emergency room I was scared to death. I mean, more so by the way they were looking and what they were wearing. It was just something like out of a sci-fi movie.

Julianne

Yeah, I can't even imagine. This is just kind of a general question I have. When you're at the shelter, does everyone have to wear masks and social distance all the time? Or how does that work?

Ronald

We have been wearing masks ever since this broke, yes. Social distancing is a little harder, but we do all wear masks.

Julianne

Yeah, it seems like the logistics of that would be difficult.

Ronald

Even going out now, I don't go anywhere without a mask and I keep it on at all times. And I'm just amazed how many people I see out there not wearing them and not caring. I mean, I've been on public transportation and seen people without them.

Julianne

Wow, and it has to be different for you. I can only imagine because for me I'm not immunocompromised or anything. So for someone like you, you know, seeing someone put others at risk it has to hit you differently.

Ronald

Right, well I don't want to pass anything on. Like I said, I was diagnosed with having COVID. I never had no symptoms. I was quarantined. I've always wore the mask. I stayed away from people. I didn't really go out and about you know, like adding fuel to the fire so to speak. And I don't know, it's been pretty challenging.

Julianne

I bet, and that's the scariest part that you can get it even if you're so careful.

Ronald

My thing is that I don't want to get it again because you know, God saved me the first time and I don't know what would happen if it would come back or something, or stronger. Now we're signed up for the shots now. Since I was diagnosed with COVID and then told I don't have it no longer through testing, should I get this shot? I don't I don't know what to say or what to do here.