

Oral History with Tom Clardy

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SPEAKERS

Diane Livingston, Tom

- D** Diane Livingston 00:02
Okay, I'm here. I'm Diane Livingston, I'm here with Tom Clardy from Park City, Utah and today is November 7, 2020. We're doing an oral history today about Tom's life and his experiences in his life. And we're also going to be talking about his experiences with COVID in light of religion. So I've known Tom for what do you think, Tom? At least five years?
- T** Tom 00:28
It's been seven years? Yeah.
- D** Diane Livingston 00:29
Seven years? Yeah, a long time. And he's a very good friend of ours, a good friend of my husband's. And so before we begin, Tom, may I please have your consent to record this interview?
- T** Tom 00:40
I consent.

D

Diane Livingston 00:41

Thank you. Thank you very much. So before we begin asking some questions about COVID I'd like to kind of talk about your childhood and growing up, because 50 years from now, people when people listen to this tape, they'll want to know who you are, and where you're coming from, so to speak. So why don't you just tell us, maybe start with where you were born and anything that you feel you'd like to share about your growing up years.

T

Tom 01:10

Right? Yeah. Well, thanks, thanks. This will be a fun opportunity. So my parents were both raised in the city of Philadelphia - in the suburbs. And then, right before I was born, moved to New Jersey. The part of that, sort of close to Philadelphia, sort of Cherry Hill area. And basically, I was born there. And that was my first bit. When I was four - so some of my very earliest memories - we moved to this beautiful area in the in Pennsylvania called Chadds Ford. It's a very historic area. It's near Valley Forge; it's near the Battle of the Brandywine, and where all these areas were. Near - I guess you would call it sort of Southeast Pennsylvania. And the that was a really neat place to grow up. And I think it affected me more than growing up probably some other places, because it had a ton of colonial history. And so for me, as a kid, we got to go on field trips, both with the family and the school, to places that were really important in the founding of the country. And so that, I guess that really impacted me, and just living, oh not my house, but many neighbors lived in these historic houses. And I had a friend named Kurt, who lived in a house that supposedly George Washington stayed in many, many years ago. And so he was sort of a neighbor of mine. So that was neat, and I went to a number of parties at his house, as a little kid over the years. And so, that, I think, growing up there, wound up kind of leaving an impression on me, for my whole life and about how neat of an area it was and what a neat time it was to, in our country, and sort of the founding. Not just geographically, but also in the old sense of the word -- politically. Because a lot of ideas like you know, as a kid, I went to go see the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, and, you know, learned about William Penn. And, you know, we'd go to New York City and see the Statue of Liberty, and all these sort of things. And so, you know, I went to Washington, DC, as a little kid, got to see the Constitution, in the, you know, the vaults where it descends down every night. And so these sort of things, I guess, left an impression of the worthiness of the ideas of the foundation of our country, that, that these were, you know, lofty ideals that had been written down by a bunch of people who are working really hard to make the best possible system they could and their motives were entirely altruistic for humankind. And so I think that was sort of the impression that I got and, and yeah, so that that stuck with me for a long time. And it also intersection there of -- there was absolutely no separation between church and state. They were integral together. And I think that this, the people over time have come to see that the founding fathers definitely said there shall be no religious test

for people to hold office and there should be a separation of church and state. And I think what they they meant, if you read their writings further, was the fact that there shall be no specific, you know, religious requirement for people. But I think they couldn't even fathom that folks would, I think that they were, they really understood very clearly that in order to have the government that they lined out for people to work, that folks had to share the same moral values that everyone at that time shared, basically, bar none. And even those who, at the time, even those who didn't necessarily follow all those values, they still understood them. And they still understood that they were worthy to strive for. And so that, you know, maybe they didn't always reach them but they understood, you know, just like everyone that they were worth attaining and worth working hard for, and teaching your children about only certain things. So that was a neat place to grow up.

D

Diane Livingston 05:47

Wonderful. Thank you. Tell us. I thank you so much. Great ideas about our founding. And I share them. Tell me about maybe your parents. Did you have siblings?

T

Tom 06:02

I do. I have one sister. She's two and a half years older than me. And she took great care of me. She took much better care of me that I took care of her because I was just a little brother. But, and so I just took it for granted that of course there be someone there who had always help in every possible way.

D

Diane Livingston 06:20

What is her name?

T

Tom 06:22

Kate, or Katherine.

D

Diane Livingston 06:24

Katherine. Okay. Let's see. And as you were growing up, did you have any special hobbies that you liked?

T

Tom 06:32

I did. Yeah. The thing I liked the most, I think my parents would tell me and those who

reflect on me was our being outside playing in the woods. That's just what I liked, because we were in these beautiful forests. And I just spend every day outside, I never wanted to come in at all, no matter what.

D

Diane Livingston 06:48

What did you do out there?

T

Tom 06:51

I'd make forts and just go play and look for the animals and try and find the animals and get as close as I possibly could to the deer before they would eventually run away. Over time, they got to know me and they'd let me get, you know, maybe 15 feet away. And then they -- I never got any closer. But I always dreamt as a little kid of petting them. And, and so then, yeah playing, just playing outside. And then as a little kid, that's what I love to do. And then I, every summer we belonged to an outdoor swimming pool, which was neat. And so every summer we just spent, it felt like everyday, all day is what it felt like, at the pool, and swimming, swimming, swimming, so I became a good swimmer. And a pretty good swimmer actually, and then playing soccer. And then scouts was actually a big influence in my life since at a very young age, I guess that was maybe second grade or somewhere around there. So once a week scout meetings, and then even in the summer, two weeks of scout camp for Boy Scouts. And that was -- the Boy Scouts -- you know, everything that Baden Powell wrote down was basically how to take the ideals of, you know, what, what our country was about, and instill them in young men. And little kids, all these little boys all the way through to be young men. And so of course, then I played soccer all through -- sports-wise, soccer was a big for me all the way up through -- till the end of high school, and then skiing as well. So my dad was nice enough that he would -- my mom doesn't like to ski -- but my dad was nice enough that he would drag us out to the local mountains called the Poconos, which were pretty good, actually, they're definitely good enough to learn to ski. Nothing like the Rockies, where we live now as far as the size and the magnificent powder, but they were definitely a great place to learn ski. And so every weekend during the winter, we would go up on Saturday, and he'd wake us up early and, you know, my sister, and I would kind of fall asleep in the car. And we'd get there and, you know, we'd always be there for the first run and stay til the last run. And so that was REALLY fun. And I remember listening to music with them in the car on the way up and how important that was and how much fun it was to get excited. You know, we'd watch the sunrise and ski all day. And then usually once or maybe twice a winter -- my dad had a work friend who had a house there, up in the Poconos. So kind of a cabin -- actually it was a cabin, a smaller cabin -- smelled great of wood on the inside. One of those unfinished wood cabins, it just smelled terrific. So we would go and stay there for

maybe a week during the winter once or twice. And then every once in a while we'd go back in the summer as well, which is neat. And his name was Alex and so it's Alex's house, and lots of lots of good memories are there.

D Diane Livingston 09:52
So fun. Sounds like you have a really fun childhood.

T Tom 09:56
Yeah, no complaints.

D Diane Livingston 10:00
Tell me about education. Did you like school when you were a kid?

T Tom 10:04
I have fond memories of, like, a lot of my friends [pause] they, I remember them saying, you know, man couldn't wait to be out of school, but I had fond memories, I still have fond memories of school. My elementary school was basically called Penn's Woods, Penn Wood, which stood for Penn's Woods, and it was named after William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, which is kind of neat. And it was indeed back in the woods and had these GIANT picture windows. And so I was, you know, the kid who liked to look out the window and dream of being outside playing. Yeah. [chuckle] But I think, fine, I did great. I got good grades. I think this school district where I grew up was a good school district. And so we, you know, we got a strong education -- definitely prepared me for college and later in life.

D Diane Livingston 10:54
Did you have a favorite subject?

T Tom 10:57
Science for sure. Yeah. Yeah, for sure. Science -- it was always Science.

D Diane Livingston 11:00
Makes sense.

T Tom 11:01
Yeah.

D Diane Livingston 11:03
Mm hmm. Okay. And so, as I know, you did some education following High School. Tell us a little bit about that.

T Tom 11:12
Yeah. And then, so I had a good time, you know, going through that school district, all the way, you know, through high school and then I decided -- well, I think I might want to major in Environmental Science, because I was pretty into that. And so I looked for a college that had that. And I chose one that was, you know, not too far away from home is and it was, again, a really nice place. It was a school called Elizabethtown College. And the second -- probably the MOST important thing that happened to me, there was -- the second week of freshman year I was in Biology 101, a big lecture hall (taking all these courses, you know, related to science). I saw this really studious girl sitting up in the front with brown curly hair, wearing glasses, taking LOTS of notes and I thought -- I was sitting, you know, halfway back and thinking, I already KNOW all this stuff, what is she doing taking notes? And that was definitely true for about the first two weeks of class and THEN it got REALLY hard. And I realized, oh, that's why she's taking notes. So I started studying with a with another lady named Rachel. And so she sort of became my study partner. And one day into Rachel's room, walks, Stacy. And I said, [Tom's whispers] oh that's the girl who was sitting up front studying so hard. I thought, man, maybe I should be her study partner. And so that's how my wife and I met -- being study partners for Biology 101. And that was definitely the, you know, we started dating maybe a little while later, courting, and yeah, never, never looked back. And so we were 18 and met then. That is obviously, like, by far the, you know, probably the biggest blessing in my life, being able to, you know -- it's something everybody DREAMS about, right? And so that actually, that happened, and so I'm eternally grateful for that. But then -- so we're back in education. So coming back to education -- so college was great. So the first summer I went out and I said, ah, I better get an internship as I just kind of heard, that was something that people did. So I said, ah I'll do this so I asked all around and finally my dad knew someone who worked at an environmental science company. So that was the initial contact, and I when I interviewed for the internship, and they -- I was REALLY excited to go, I don't know what I was going to do, like save the planet, I think, during that first freshman year. And so I was pretty excited to go do that. But instead, I sat in an office in front of a computer and did Excel ALL summer long. [chuckling] It was a really boring internship and I thought to myself, Oh, man, I hope this isn't what Environmental Sciences is like and so it caused me

to sort of branch out a little bit farther. And my wife, Stacy was pre-Med even in college, you know, or sort of early college she was admitted into this thing called the Primary Care pre-admission program. So she was actually one of just a few kids in the state of Pennsylvania who was accepted into Med school RIGHT out of high school. So her grades were so good. Yeah. And so I knew somehow -- at that point in time, you know, my interest in Medicine sort of started. I didn't really have much of an interest except listening to and talking with her. And, you know, coming out of high school didn't have much of an interest. And so then I started sort of veering towards Computer Science and Medicine together and Biology and so pretty much the rest of my career has been a mesh of those three together. And so then after we graduated she went on to Medical school and I started working at a computer science company and then I spent a couple years there. And then I was trying to think, okay, well, what can I do it at Penn State because that's where she was. And I kept thinking about it and thinking about it and you know, I wasn't really sure what to do. And so I wound up getting, I wound up having another gig with NASA and the Mars society, which was a short but impactful gig where we actually got to go to the Mars Desert Research Station, and do a bunch of science. And it turns out that I wound up as the lead on the science project. So it was kind of neat. So I was the the XO of the mission, but the lead science officer, and we tried to plan out very, very early on how it was that we could use a data network and also do positional awareness. Because we knew someday when we get to Mars, there would be no GPS system and, and when eventually -- everybody knew that, you're going to have a rover and you're going to drive around and collect rocks. And once you get far enough away from your hab, or the you know, sort of the main base station, that you would need to know where you were. And on the first mission, it might be easy, because you could trace your tracks back. But then after that it would be more complicated. So, in designing this, the science protocol and testing all this and all these sort of things, I caught the interest of some of the folks at Penn State. Well, that's amazing. That is really amazing. It's so fun to hear all the different things that you did so early on in your career. And so I wound up being hired on there after that, which was really fun. And that's when I started getting into academic medicine and doing some postgraduate work there. And then eventually went on to sort of had my first REALLY neat job other than the NASA one, which was the Director of Research Planning for Neurosurgery. So that was really fun to be able to just -- probably the best part other than the science was just the people -- really, really fun people to work with every single day. And so that was a huge privilege as well. Yeah, that was lucky.

D

Diane Livingston 17:20

Yeah. And so then you got married, the two of you got married, and you have two little girls who are growing up. Tell us a little bit about what they're about. I love them, they're adorable!

T Tom 17:33
Yeah, that was funny,

D Diane Livingston 17:34
Tell us anything you'd like to share about that.

T Tom 17:36
So I was sitting in my office in Neurosurgery and Stacy walks in one day, and surprises me with the news that we were pregnant. I'll never forget that day. So we had our first child there. And that was, just about, I guess it was 11 years ago or so. And I just, man my heart did something it's never done since I really just couldn't believe what I felt. It felt like -- as soon she told me, I knew that sort of the rest of my life would be different and I wasn't quite sure how [laughs] until 10 months later, or wait actually, I'm sure it wasn't 10 months, it was probably seven months later. And our -- it was a NEAT, REALLY, REALLY neat experience having our first daughter Annamaria, because we had her at the hospital where we both worked. And so it was a really "community and social" kind of thing. Like our friends, just like, we had lots of friends there and they would just come in and see us and be supportive and bring food and -- it was a REALLY neat birth. And then she took -- Annamaria took a LONG time to come out. It felt like, you know, a day and a half but I think it was really just 23 and a half hours. So that was, that was quite a thing. But everything worked out great, thankfully. And you know, the docs were great. And and then you know, those first couple nights in the hospital and then you know, as you know, I just as I mentioned earlier, you know I love nature and the snow -- I've always loved the snow. And on the day -- so on the day we drove her home from the hospital, we had a BIG snowstorm. And so it was kind of funny -- we only lived a mile and a half from the Med Center. And so it was fun to put her in the jeep and drive home through the blizzard on the first day. She loves the winter and the snow as well. So I think it stuck with her. And then when we came to Park City, we were... Well, actually when we were in Minnesota, between Hershey and here in Park City we spent one year in Rochester, Minnesota for a fellowship year for my wife at the Mayo Clinic in Auto-immune Neurology and so while we were there, Cecilia started her journey on this earth and then when we moved out here she was very pregnant. Stacy was very pregnant so we were just hoping that she wouldn't deliver on the drive from Minnesota -- [chuckling] because there's not a lot of infrastructure between here and on Route 90. And then, let's see, we were here just a month or two and we had Cecilia at the University of Utah, which is another neat experience. And I was settling in for a two day labor experience. But she came out in about four hours. That was really quick. So as much to my surprise there. WOW, that was fast! Yeah. So yeah, that was kind of neat. And that's when I learned that Annamaria was destined to be a big sister.

She was just THE BEST big sister that I think I've ever seen anywhere. And that's a widely repeated claim of fame by all of our friends, who have kids, that watch her interact. So she's just SUCH a good person in taking care of others, including herself.

D

Diane Livingston 21:06

How sweet is it hear your thoughts about Annamaria. Tell us a few sentences about Cecilia because she'll want to hear something.

T

Tom 21:16

Right! Right. And so [chuckling] Cecilia was -- the doctor who delivered Cecilia, this, this really sums up -- her first MINUTE outside the belly she lifted her head up and looked around the room and almost kicked the doctor. And Doctor Tilly who delivered her said, I have never seen a kid lift their head up, you know, right after being born and look around the room she said but there Cecilia has! And so that was kind of a neat thing. And that's that sums up her entire personality. Lifted up her head, looked around the room and almost kicked the doctor. So she, she continued to be like that. And she really -- my wife, Stacy and I say she really, really wanted to be able to do all the things that her big sister did. I mean, with a PASSION. So when she was little and couldn't crawl, even move, anything like that. She just was watching her sister all the time. And then just you could see the struggle to be able to, you know, walk into, she did walk pretty early because of that. You know, she kind of went right from, you know, okay, I figured out how to crawl and like, a couple days later, she's like, ah this crawling thing's no good, I'm going right to walking. And she's a very, very determined child, and she was an intense baby. I'll definitely say that. But then for as intense as she was as a baby. She is an absolute joy. Now, she's just my best little friend. And she's has a true heart of gold, which I'm sure came from the loving example set by her sister. And so they're both -- they're definitely each other's best friends. Which is what a great. Yeah, and I hope it stays that way forever.

D

Diane Livingston 23:05

Yeah, what a treasure. That's a happy home.

T

Tom 23:10

Yeah.

D

Diane Livingston 23:10

Let's see, I'm just gonna look here. You know, we kind of -- I will have to say we kind of skipped over -- You talked about working a little bit, but you didn't -- did you graduate from college? I assume?

T

Tom 23:24

Oh, yeah. Yeah, from Elizabethtown, yeah.

D

Diane Livingston 23:26

Share that...

T

Tom 23:28

Yeah, so that was fun, but somewhat uneventful because you kind of get kicked into the real world. So, "Congratulations, you know, you're out and go find something to do." And that's kind of how I felt, I thought to myself, Oh, I see why kids now have a gap year because they sit around for a year, you know, thinking about what to do and travel the world. But, you know, when I graduated, that wasn't too common of a thing and I didn't have anybody who would want to pay for that. So I, you know, said, Oh I'd better go find a job. So when I first got my job -- as an intersection between the newspaper and the old-fashioned job listings in the newspaper, and the internet -- I remember looking at both for my first job and circled things with the pencil. But really, the internet had taken off. And all the action was there. And so I went out and found a neat, really neat computer company that was doing neat stuff that I was once again lucky to get hired onto. That was a smaller company so it actually -- its almost funny that it almost felt like a little family, the group of us. And so that was that was a neat group. I still think about those folks, in fact, speaking because I know that part of our conversation today is about the pandemic and it's funny -- I think I've been hearing many people wind up thinking about folks that you've known a long time ago, during the pandemic, it's definitely changed dreams for a lot for me. And so I think about stuff from you know, the past, more than -- so it's funny to look back and think about how those folks affected you and also mold your work ethic as well, which I think is interesting. So I think you know, the example of what your first job is, I think, at least for me, and you know, the intensity of work, winds up sticking with you. Anyway, that happened for me. And so then from there, after graduating from Elizabethtown, and then getting my first job, I didn't start my postgraduate work until whatever that was, like six, six or seven years later, actually, it's not true. I did, I did a bunch of graduate classes at Cal Tech for the NASA stuff, which was neat. But then there's -- because I knew I really wanted to do something in space. But I guess like any little kid,

you know, I used to want to be an astronaut, or do just do something fun for that. But there's just none of that in Pennsylvania. The aerospace industry was very weak in Pennsylvania. Now, Penn State itself actually does have a pretty neat aerospace program. But I wasn't really thinking of that I was thinking about jobs, you know, what I could do to earn a living. And so that's, that's how I basically got into medicine, which is neat. And, you know, medical companies, and biotech and all these sort of things.

D

Diane Livingston 26:30

So you went to do some graduate work after that?

T

Tom 26:34

I got lucky, because when I was at Penn State, as an employee, you can take as many classes as you want, as your department chair will let you [chuckle] which is pretty neat -- for either free or next to free. So I just gorged myself in information, which is really neat.

D

Diane Livingston 26:55

That sounds just like you, Tom.

T

Tom 26:56

Yeah. So that was really neat, super neat. And, you know, you actually have a real job. And so you're getting paid. Which is important, especially, you know, because keep in mind, Stacy was [pause] she's done the four years of college, and then four years of Med school, and then four years of a PhD with a one year in folded fellowship. And then another, let's see here, one year after -- she did the MD Ph. D. Program, which is pretty neat -- and so then after that also she had yet another year of fellowship. So there was a lot of learning going on. And not a lot of earning. [laughs]

D

Diane Livingston 27:42

Right.

T

Tom 27:42

[laughing] So it was important to...

D Diane Livingston 27:44
Someone needed a job.

T Tom 27:45
Yeah, exactly. Yeah. So that helped.

D Diane Livingston 27:49
That's great. Do you, and so I would just ask now, what kind of hobbies and interests do you have now?

T Tom 27:59
They're pretty much all the same, except for soccer. Yeah, I learned when I got older, that you know, the sports that stick with you are the things like, sort of called, lifetime sports. And, you know, they don't really include, at least for most people, like things like football, because you know, you get older and you're like, "That's probably not a good idea to go crashing into somebody else because that's, that's gonna hurt and it's going to last a while." So now some folks and they're they're pretty tough. But for most people, I've learned basically lifetime sports are things like running, volleyball, swimming, all these sort of things you can do either on your own or in a pickup team. And so for me now I love, I'm still skiing a lot and running has become a real joy for me. I LOVE running the mountains here in our neighborhood. It's just so much fun to have these these beautiful single tracks that we have which are the small little paths that go all throughout the mountains and so I love mountain running. It was tough for me the year we were at the Mayo Clinic because it's very, very flat. So, [chuckling] there are no hills, basically very few hills, so running through there was quite a different experience --running flat and then coming up here -- whoo -- It was a tough. But I learned to love that challenge and so now I barely running anything flat anymore. It's just all up and down. So that's kind of even more so, more fun than skiing for me is just running. I'll do it all seasons of the year. I'll go put on little snow shoes and run in the snow. And I always like it if there's a bit of a crust that keeps you from punching through too often. Which is nice. But regardless, I just stomp on the pack. And I just love being in nature and getting the just the joy of being able to locomote yourself through and take a tour of what's new in nature today because it's -- everyday it's a little different, which is fun. So I enjoy that and then, yeah, I'm not playing soccer anymore. But still running and skiing and swimming.

D

Diane Livingston 30:04

I love to see you with your children. You're really good dad. Oh, thanks, Diane. Yeah, I can see that you're really getting a lot of joy from being a father.

T

Tom 30:15

I am. Yeah. Well, they make it easy. They're really I, you know, there's nothing for me to brag about, because they're just SUCH good kids that they make, you know, being a dad a joy. And, you know, it's really, it's a privilege to be able to watch them grow up and try and help steer them in the right direction.

D

Diane Livingston 30:38

You have a busy household. Your wife works full time, you're working full time, I assume. And then you've got the girls who are going to school. So what does that household look like? I'm kind of curious.

T

Tom 30:50

Well, it's helped.... When the kids were, it's definitely helped --- a lot of our friends that, both do sort of the same thing as us, they wind up using a nanny to basically manage schedules. But the fact that years ago, I kind of got into the biotech transfer and the startup world, and other startup companies as well, has helped my schedule be flexible enough, that between whatever flexibility Stacy can squeeze out, and what I can do that we haven't had to use nanny. So we get to -- one of us is always there with them to pick them up from school or drop them off at school, which is REALLY nice. And as they get older, now, they'll be able to take care of themselves during that. We're kind of, we're basically there now. But now with the pandemic it looks a little different. So the balancing and juggling act has changed, because now the kids are doing their school remotely, still with the school district. But basically, they've managed to pretty quickly transition their entire curriculum to be delivered over a computer. If people are listening to this 50 years from now they'll probably think back on what kind of computer this was. Well, this was a, something that was called a laptop, and it had a keyboard, they used your fingers to type on. And then another piece that was perpendicular to that called, you know, as a screen, that's just a two dimensional representation of things. And that was, probably will be as foreign to them, as the typewriter is to Annamaria and Cecilia. But, you know, we've learned to go from the one room schoolhouse, to, we're sort of back to that now. [laughing] But with the teacher -- but the teacher is not there. [laughing] And the teacher instead is, you know, over the telegraph wire, which has become the internet. And we're really blessed in the fact that Cecilia's teacher is FANTASTIC. She has figured out how to

pivot her teaching career to deliver... Cecilia is only in second grade and so part of the education there is how to become a student. and how to feel part of a classroom. And so somehow her teacher has managed to, to make that work over Virtual Education. And I was amazed and actually, my, when my parents were out visiting, they got to see it as well and they were both amazed. My mom's a retired teacher and so for her to -- she's not easily impressed at all -- and so for her to be impressed by this was, was pretty neat for me to see as well. And so, right now, the balancing the household looks like -- we all get to sort of wake up together and have breakfast together. And then, you know, each retreat to our corner of the house to do our daily things, all on computers, which is kind of neat. And of course, you know, being a physician, you do have to go in. So my wife goes in, you know, as needed. But some of the stuff, some of the patients actually enjoy remote teleconferences. So occasionally, she can do those as well from home. And so there's -- the one thing that the pandemic has bought about is a surprise resurgence in home life, which is REALLY neat. And I think it would be really, really hard if we had little babies, because one of the things you really want to do, at least we did, and I think I shared with every parent that I can remember is you really, really want to get out and about with the babies and you know, go do things. And so I think that would be -- it probably is, if I had to guess, really challenging for those little ones. But we're just at the right age, as a second grade and fifth grade, and we're lucky and blessed to live on a parcel with, you know, where they run outside anytime they want and play, which is nice. So I think it's also probably more difficult for folks who are in the cities. And there's plenty of outside places for them to do, but they can't just run out for 10 minutes as easily, unsupervised, and then run back and do some more schoolwork. So, I'm sure they're they're finding ways to make it fun as well. But the girls have almost effortlessly found their own ways to make it fun and have a good time. And it'll be interesting to see now [pause] heading into the winter because the summer has been great. The spring has been great, fall has been great because you can have these outside playdates with, one or two kids. So you make sure you're trying to limit exposure to everybody. But now, with the winter coming, I guess they'll all be sledding playdates. I guess we'll see. [chuckles] And so yeah, we'll see, we'll see what happens. But I'm sure that's gonna be quite a bit of a change. So the household looks like we're spending way more time together. Everybody's staying happy. We haven't been jumping down each other's throats. And I think that Stacy and I have been actively working to make sure that doesn't happen, and trying to steer everybody. So we're putting a little effort there, to try to keep the family spirit high. And that sense of togetherness high. But it hasn't been a ton of effort because the girls are just little angels. They're just good. They don't, they're helping us though as well which is neat.

D

Diane Livingston 36:22

That's very fortunate. That's cool.

T Tom 36:24
Yeah.

D Diane Livingston 36:26
Well, this has been wonderful. And I feel like we've really gotten a good taste of you and your life and the things that you've done. You have lived a very rich and rewarding life, at least it feels like to me.

T Tom 36:41
Thanks. And to me as well.

D Diane Livingston 36:44
Okay, why don't we -- is there anything else you'd like to share before we move on to the second section of our interview?

T Tom 36:51
No, no, I'm ready.

D Diane Livingston 36:53
Okay, great. So, as we know, as you have all people know, you and my husband are talking all the time about COVID and the effects but as we know, COVID has affected a lot of people around the world, and many people are wondering how COVID has been affecting people. And you talked a little bit about your family life. And, and then another aspect that people are asking questions about is that of worship and faith. And so I'd like to move on to this part of the interview, and just hear from you your experiences with COVID with respect to religion. But first of all, what did worship look like for you and your family pre COVID. And tell us the faith that you belong to and believe in and what it looked like.

T Tom 37:43
So I was, both my wife and I were raised Catholic. And, you know, based both in Pennsylvania. So when we met, we thought, it was pretty easy to tell that she shared really early on, to tell that she shared the same values as I did. And then to learn, we were

both Catholic, I remember even being a little kid, you know, 18 years old, I guess I would call that a young adult, but now it feels like a little kid. And, you know, to just to think, "OH, THAT'S A BONUS", you know, like, "Wow, she's just, you know, somebody of the same faith like this is, this is great!" And, and then I also remember thinking in the back of my head, "Oh, my parents are gonna like this!" And so that was neat. And, you know, worship for us was every Sunday we, I mean, when I grew up as a kid, I can literally say, we missed almost no masses. We, every Sunday, we were there a church, you know, with the rare exception that somebody was sick, and then the rest of the family would go. Probably somebody stayed home with us but we have to be pretty sick the not go. And so yeah, I remember as a kid as well, thinking to myself, you know, I don't know if I want to go, especially as an older kid, really. Now I don't even know if I want to go on Sunday and you know, like, I want to be playing outside in the woods or doing whatever else. But, nope, didn't matter what we thought, we went every Sunday regardless. [chuckling] And it just wasn't up for discussion, EVER, no matter what. And every once in a while my sister and I would maybe try and bring it up. And we just learned -- "No, not up for discussion." And so [chuckle] we'd all go. And, and I, you know, I'm REALLY grateful now that they did that. Because it's, you know, a super important part of my life now. So I also remember my mom once saying, I think I'd believe I was in college, I remember her saying, you know, something, I seem to wonder if, I think was my aunt, saying to my aunt, "You know, if the kids aren't going to as much church during college, that's okay because they're going to get back to it when they have kids." And I thought to myself, that's weird that my mom knows that or thinks that. [chuckle] I sort of filed it away in my brain. I sort of remember her saying that. And it turns out that she was right. And I guess probably during college I really didn't go all that much to church, but you know it remained -- the fact that I went from the time I was zero all the way through till, you know, 18, every single week, not only was it important [pause] I find there's a huge overlap between spirituality and morality. And so just a absolutely huge overlap. And so I was grateful, I guess, in college, for the, at that stage in my life, for the, [pause] and I think I maybe even realized that then for the moral base, not just a spiritual base. And so, but you know, of course, now, I have the benefit of hindsight, which is neat to think about things. But what did it look like pre-COVID? So it looked like your average Sunday Mass, no matter where we were, even on vacation, we would try to make it and, and rarely miss. And then we would pray in the morning together as a family, and then we pray before, before dinner, sort of say grace. And then at night, the kids would say their prayers. And so we would do that all together.

D

Diane Livingston 41:36

Okay, so that is pre-COVID.

T Tom 41:38
Yeah.

D Diane Livingston 41:39
And then I don't know about you, but I can kind of think back when I realized that COVID had hit. It hit us all. And quickly, we had government regulations that were starting to be pressed, impressed upon our religious centers, whichever kind they are. And, and I wonder, do you remember things that your church had to implement based on regulations that were put on?

T Tom 42:13
Yes. I remember[chuckle] I remember in March, sort of seeing all this, watching it come like a very slow tidal wave just coming and coming and coming and hoping that it would, you know, collapse and get pulled back into the ocean, like all surf waves do. And hoping that it would, you know, it was looking ominous, but would break in on itself as breakers do, but it but knowing that it might not. And we were preparing, you know, as a religious education teacher myself. And so, watching all the kids come in, and we started out making sure kids were washing their hands and these sort of things. And then, you know, knowing that, looking at the slope, we spent a lot of time looking at the slope of the trajectory, you know, is this logarithmic? And how's it look? What's the doubling time? How many days did it take to, you know, caseload or doubling? And then also, what was our hospital capacity. And so as I watched all these things come, you know, the, it seems like, all the churches did a REALLY good job of seeing this coming and preparing and then transitioning. We had zero weeks of lost mass, we, just just as the county [Summit County] that we were in basically imposed restrictions on in person, religious services. The church, St. Mary's, in Park City -- we have a new new pastor who actually had only been there maybe two years at the time, his name is Father Gray and he just immediately spun up doing everything online. And didn't miss a beat. And you know, he's sort of younger guy, I guess, in his mid to late 30s. And so, you know, that could be an advantage, technology-wise, and the fact that he was familiar with that and comfortable doing it. And so he's, he did great! I think everyone was REALLY relieved to see his face every single day. So he did [chuckle] it every single day, sometimes multiple times a day he would be there. Yeah, it was REALLY neat. Yeah, without missing any, I think the first one that he missed, was, you know, maybe two, three weeks ago, and here we are in November. He had to take a day or two off. [laughing] And so I give a ton of credit to him and he [pause] just, you know, has the calmness and the clarity of heart to be able to deliver really meaningful messages to everyone who's listening. Not just with our faith, but sort of tying it into scripture as well. And so he's been a real blessing in our lives. That's for sure. And, yeah, so his transition to

that was great. And it goes on -- it is still going on even to this day. We've since reopened, I guess, a couple months ago in-person services. And so people -- he'll do both and he's still doing both. So I'm sure his workload is grown. But he does it without complaint and seemingly with joy.

D Diane Livingston 45:38

Wow. So does he just record himself? And then he puts it on or it streamed?

T Tom 45:42

No! It's live every time! Yeah. Amazing! Yeah, zoom meetings. [laughing] It's amazing. Zoom is somehow -- I give credit to the engineers at Zoom to be able to scale their business, thousands of folds without hiccupps.

D Diane Livingston 45:57

For sure. Okay, so it hit, you guys shut down for a short time that sounds like and then they got back into the in-person?

T Tom 46:07

Yeah.

D Diane Livingston 46:08

Were you able to see your friends? When when the lockdown started did you feel like you were able to see the people that you usually saw or did you feel like you guys were kind of isolated? How did you feel?

T Tom 46:22

Oh, was huge isolation, for sure. But it just made the experiences all that much more important and cherished when we had them. And so, THANK GOONESS, like, the best thing that happened to the pandemic was spring, at least for those in the mountains. Because, you know, spring happened, and so all of a sudden, we could see people outside. And so we were, both my wife and I were careful, both to not catch it ourselves, as well as to make sure we're not giving it to anybody, because you know, keeping in mind, she is a physician, so she if she does get exposed.... So we would simply sit up in our yard and spread out some lawn chairs and, and visit with people just like they did in the olden days.

And so we'd have visits. And so that would work out great. And in fact, together, you know, we had a visit where we walked up Pinebrook Mountain together with you guys, which was really neat. And so, you know, we still have these, these really neat moments. And I guess in a way, it's a really returning to our not so distant history of when people were more spread out, you know, sort of in the colonial era, and you wouldn't have a visit all the time. And, you know, if you were sort of on the frontier, when you did, it was very special. And so I tried to look at it that way, actually. And so there's -- for both my wife and I, you know, this is just a small little blip in our life. But for our at the time, six year old, you know, this represents like a 10th of her life [chuckle], or, at the even at the time it did and now is represents, you know, it's coming into a whole year. So it really it's a, you know, six or seventh of her life. And from what she can remember it's basically half her life. And so it's much more -- I'm constantly aware of-- and trying to figure out ways to make sure she's still having fun and interactions and visits. And luckily, she does have some good friends here in the neighborhood. And so she's able to see them, which is really nice. But, but again, I think of those with younger kids who haven't quite established a friend group yet. And that's, I would imagine, going to be extremely challenging for them.

D

Diane Livingston 48:31

I agree. Yeah. It's been hard for our little grandchildren. So, I was kind of curious about, I don't know what you call your sacrament in the Catholic church is it the Eucharist. Do you call it that?

T

Tom 48:44

Yes. How -- like, for us, we had to not have the sacrament for a little bit. And then we started taking it at home. Did you guys have any sort of changes there? What did you do? Yeah, well, pretty much exactly the same. You know, until in-person mass resumes, yeah, no one had the sacrament. Now, I think that if you requested it, that you could, you know, probably drive up to the church and I'd be very confident to think Father Gray would find a way to accommodate people. And probably some did. But you know, we just had done without, for quite a while.

D

Diane Livingston 49:23

So, but it's resumed now that it started.

T

Tom 49:26

Yes.



Diane Livingston 49:27

Is there any difference as to the way they administer it? Or is it just the same?



Tom 49:33

I think it's, you know, more or less just, you know, people are still wearing masks in church. And so they're, you basically receive the Eucharist and then walk a couple steps away, pull your mask down, that sort of thing.



Diane Livingston 49:51

Okay. Very similar to what you were doing before. People wear masks, are you guys socially distanced in church?



Tom 49:58

Yeah, people are spread out a little bit in pews as well. You know, one of the interesting things that changed, not just mechanics-wise, but it was neat to see the hundreds of people on the Zoom meetings; on the the virtual Masses, just hundreds of people showing up. And so that was REALLY neat to see. Because we could all basically see the other participants. And so, in one sense, it was lonely and isolating. In other sense, it was a tremendous spirit of fellowship and community, because you thought, "Okay, here's everybody else coming and here is the group of the faithful." So that was pretty neat to see -- and encouraging. And you could do it every day, if you wanted to, which is pretty neat. Yeah. Do you feel like there were as many people who were Zooming in as usually come? Or were there more? [chuckling] I felt like, more, I felt like even more. There was a small -- at least in the darkest days, when people were most scared, there was there was definitely a time where it felt like maybe even more. The people that would only come to church occasionally, we sort of call them the -- well, I think it's long standing as this sort of the Christmas and Easter crowd, you know, who always be sure to come, then. I think maybe a lot of those folks are showing up too, which is really neat to see.



Diane Livingston 51:20

That is really neat to see. How nice for them to be able to have have that strength. Is there anything that you think that you've thought about doing at home during that lock time down period, when you couldn't go in on Sundays? It sounds like you were pretty busy, though, with your, with your church still on even a daily basis? Were there any other things that you felt like you needed to do to replace the fact that you weren't there in-

person? Or did you feel quite satisfied with the Zoom calling?

T

Tom 51:55

Um, well, I definitely didn't feel fully satisfied. You know, there's no substitute for being in God's house as they would say. And so you miss that all the time, but fondness makes or distance makes the heart grow fonder. And so it just kind of makes you not take for granted the mechanics of, of going to church every week, which is easy to do. Even to smallest, and even if you don't do it completely, to some small thing, "okay, there it is." And so now its. you know, something that people are, at least in our family, you know, look forward to and actively, all the time. And so that's, you know, there's, there's been that benefit out of it, I would say.

D

Diane Livingston 52:48

Has this experience affected your faith? It sounds like you were looking forward to being there. Do you feel like it's helped or hindered your faith -- that lockdown period and even since then?

T

Tom 53:02

Wow, I DO think -- I've been doing a lot of self reflection about this, over the past couple months, and I do think it's helped quite a bit. And I've learned a bunch of things. One is -- no need to watch scary movies. Because [chuckling], because here it is. All the scariness is here right now. And so I got to myself to thinking about the fact that our society, humankind, peoplekind has been, would think it was funny or interesting, or cute to watch a movie where something terrible was happening. And so, in a way you think to yourself, like, there's some disaster, right, a disaster movie, these sort of things. And so, like, why do we watch this? Well, we know, it's, it's exciting. And it's interesting to think about. And so what I realized is that, nope, that's not exciting, it's all terrible. And it's not something to look forward to watching or living or experiencing. What is exciting is the everyday, normal life in a peaceful society. THAT'S the exciting thing. And so, one of the self revelations that I had was that we're so lucky to live in a country that was founded based on founding fathers who thought so much about how to make a moral society -- how to make a moral country. And, and so, to have it return for us to not, I guess the Romans called it bread and circuses. So to steer away from the bread and circuses and, and focus on what is important; working together as a community for common goals, for the benefit of those in the community. And to as large an extent as possible the benefit of all of us in the community. And to the benefit of those who are serving the community. And so to realize that serving the community isn't itself; has intrinsic value to those that are actually

serving. And to be able to refocus on those things was really neat. One of the things that I didn't mention earlier...but when I was at Penn State, I got into Pandemic Preparedness. And so I started working there, and that, and I think you're probably aware of the fact that I started a ventilator project there. And so to see, when, when this pandemic was brewing in China, in Wuhan, to see that building, you know, I was really tuned into that and watching what was happening, and NOT looking forward to it. Like I had just, like I mentioned before, this the tidal wave of dread, which was, you know, crashing down in Wuhan, and to many others near China, and was threatening to make its way across the sea. And so, for me, I started praying really early on, at the very beginning of this and, and hoping that we would find a way to attenuate the problem, both as society and for the world. So one of the things that I was able to do, and, of course, you know, I worked with a long time ago was to, in some way materially address this problem. And so, we started this -- we re-kicked back off this pandemic ventilator project, myself and another professor at the University of Utah, and they grew to become huge. And so, one of the things I saw was the goodness and kindness of humankind. We had a whole number of people at the University of Utah volunteering their their time. And then became, the university Stanford, Stanford University actually joined our effort. And then shortly after that Brown University joined our effort. And so it became the Utah Stanford Brown University collaboration, the USB ventilator. And then we had a bunch of commercial companies that joined. And I was very pleased and happy to see that people are volunteering their time to help in our effort with no expectation of any remuneration whatsoever themselves. They simply wanted to save mankind; save lives, as many as they could. And there was initially a big shortage of ventilators. And that pressure is has been relieved in the US, but it does exist in other parts of the world. And so right now we're manu- it has become a worldwide effort. And one of the professors at the University of Stanford we knew had contacts in India where we're now manufacturing these with a company that's -- out of the goodness of the heart of the company, they donated a lot of money and a lot of employees and a lot of time to manufacture these. And so that was part of the spirituality for me, was everyone coming together, just to help and they knew nobody was going to get anything out of this. So that was neat to see. And we had no shortage; and it just grew and grew and grew. And so, you know, for the darkness of what the disease is and all the consequences of the economic shutdown, and the people are dying, and people are sick, and this terrifying nature for many, many families, many people, many individuals then the loneliness. There were these punctuations of rays of goodness and kindness that just burst through all that and said, "You know, here we are." And, you know, we're going to be able to do something. And we did, which is -- you don't even have to be successful -- but we, luckily in this project, we were. And so we were able to help folks. And so I learned a couple different things. One is that fear is not fun because when you're actually doing it, it's not so fun. And so I think that's probably a little message from God is that you shouldn't be focusing on those sort of things in life. I think that's an important lesson to learn. And then that the

community is actually strong and robust. And it does exist still. And there is a lot of goodness and I'm sure that it's an impossibility that that wouldn't be connected to, you know, the goodness of the Lord. And the Lord, being will touch people to, to act to to help like that.

D Diane Livingston 59:46

Wonderful. Do you feel like it's been easier or harder to stay strong in your faith in God during the pandemic?

T Tom 1:00:00

Definitely easier because I'm focused on it all the time, all the time, every day, multiple times a day. You know, there's not, there's there's, yeah. Just always thinking about it.

D Diane Livingston 1:00:13

What a silver lining.

T Tom 1:00:14

Yeah.

D Diane Livingston 1:00:19

Has there been anything that surprised you, during this experience with COVID? religiously? I'm sorry to put that framework and maybe -- you don't have to keep that framework. But is there anything that surprised you religiously?

T Tom 1:00:38

One thing that was the -- earlier on, I mentioned the huge number of people that had come and be part of the virtual mass. And so that has whittled down. And there's been attrition. Now, I'm not sure if all those folks have just -- are returned to in person or not. Or if people, you know, basically recharged their, their battery and now they're off and doing something else? I don't know. But it's been a surprise to see that that hasn't maintained itself. And that there's been fewer people and things have been going down. And I don't know why. Other than I mean, [chuckle] I really don't know why. I've tried to reflect on why that is. And I just don't know. I'm not sure.

D

Diane Livingston 1:01:30

I think that I personally think that these are going to be studied times for this is giving a lot of food for fodder for socialists will have lots to think about for a long time. And that type of movement is an interesting thing to notice. Would you say that there are fewer people than there were pre COVID?

T

Tom 1:01:58

Um, it's hard to know, because it's very hard to know, because -- now I'm sure that the Parish knows, but for me, I don't know, because there's this split between virtual and in-person. And so I don't get to see everybody all the time. I don't know what people are doing. But we could find that out. By talking to them. Yeah. I get the impression that maybe it's back to baseline would be my guess. Were before which still in a historical sense, is super low. [chuckle] Because the you know, if people are listening to this, you know, 50 or 100 years from now, there's been a steady decline in church attendance, from when I was a kid till now. And it's really disheartening to see for me.

D

Diane Livingston 1:03:04

It is. Alright, Tom, is there any other thought that you would like to leave -- parting thoughts to be remembered years down the road about this time during COVID? That doesn't have to be restricted it religious, any other thoughts that you'd like to share as we close?

T

Tom 1:03:20

Well, it is, yeah, that our lives are losing enrichment, because we're not at gymnastics, and not always at school, and not doing you know, even in-person Religious Ed, you know. And there's this -- that level of enrichment of being together as a society has taken a huge hit. And just being out -- going out to eat, you know, enjoying dinners, and these things are still going on to some extent, but they're all attenuated and they're all not as much fun as they were because of the, you know, the implicit dread that's always there, that, you know, I want to go do this thing, but I'm not sure if I'm gonna turn out well or not. So there's always that in the back of people's minds, and even those who have decided to, you know, be brave in the face of the pandemic and put on a brave face, and, you know, there's still that underlying fear. And so, as, as sad as that is, I have found it to be more or less fully counterbalanced by the resurgence in family time and focusing on that. And so knowing that this too shall pass someday it's interesting to have this time to refocus on the family. There's, there's an interesting quote, that where some people may think that domesticity

is is boredom. But in fact, domesticity and one's house is the last bastion of freedom where one may enjoy oneself to the fullest extent in any way they wish. I didn't quite do that quote justice, but it's an important thing to sort of keep in the back of my mind about that. And one other thing is, you know, I pray all the time, and I keep, you know, listening for any kind of great answer. But I think the answer so far that I've got, isn't, you know, one of those few times in, in people's lives where you REALLY think you you've heard the voice of the Lord or the Holy Spirit or something like that. I haven't had any gigantic moment like that, but one of the things that I, that I constantly hear is, basically, "steady on", like, you know, "keep going, keep doing the right things, the right things are easy to know." And they are, you know, we already know what to do. It's just a matter of finding the strength and the will to make each day happy, rather than, you know, a burden. And so, I think that's something that probably many, many folks are working on, at this time. But there's certainly less distractions in society. And I've been very lucky. The other thing is, that the generation of the baby boomers, has taught us something. So my parents are of the generation of baby boomers and I've seen that they've maintained the spirit and the knowledge to -- without a beat -- when they see something like this happen, they say, you know, "Well, we're just gonna pivot and adjust and get through it." And there's no complaining, whatsoever, which is amazing. There's no settling for anything less than finding a good way through and together as a family. So that's been neat to see as well. So they've imparted some strength on on us by looking at their strength.

D

Diane Livingston 1:07:22

Wonderful. So Tom, I have one last question for you. My question is, what do you hope for the future? In your life?

T

Tom 1:07:30

Oh wow. I hope that our country returns to a God-fearing constitutional republic of people who are, you know, strong in faith. And that morality is strengthened in everyone. And that [pause] the United States returns to the shining beacon of hope. And, and a great example of liberty that it once was, and to an extent, it still is, but that, it can it can shine off its tarnish. And I hope that in in some way that this challenging time leads us through to a better place. And I continue to hope and pray about that all the time. And think that, think in the back of my mind, that maybe it will. Maybe this is part of the transition to something more beautiful than where we were before. And so and so I yeah, that's that's what I think about all the time.

D

Diane Livingston 1:08:56



Thank you, Tom. Thank you so much for sharing.



Tom 1:09:00

Yeah, thank you for letting me share.



Diane Livingston 1:09:04

This has been so great. Very wonderful. And we just love you as friends.



Tom 1:09:09

Yeah, likewise. Thank you.



Diane Livingston 1:09:11

So I'm going to go ahead and close the recording. And thank you again.