

# Chapel Hill Public Archive Pandemic Stories Project recording with Sophie Curtis

*Narrator: Sophie Curtis*

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*Location: Chapel Hill Public Library*

*Self-recorde*

**Sophie Curtis:** Hi, I am Sophie. I use they/them pronouns, and I consent to this recording, to being recorded.

So what is my name? How would I describe myself? My name's Sophie. I use they/them pronouns. And I am 25, born and raised in North Carolina. And I would say that I'm a pretty generally silly person. Like to laugh. I don't know. That sounds generic.

So for fun over the pandemic... let's see. I went swimming often with some buds, lots of outdoor time with friends. Lately I've been going to Jordan Lake and... with my dog and just like sitting in a hammock and playing ukulele and watching birds. It's been really trashed lately, so I've been taking up trash there. I've read more than I ever have in my life, and I've been kind of obsessive about keeping a log. So it's like, color coded, I have this whole Excel sheet, but I'm very proud of it. Yeah. Anyways, I've been speed reading or, like, speed listening, so I'll listen to audiobooks at like 2.5 to 3 speed, and it's like a big sense of pride for me. And I'm just, like consuming books and stories. Yeah, I don't know, kind of silly, but I've enjoyed that. I've also been getting tattoos, which is fun, but also, yeah, a little bit more to it than that. But there was like a stint over the pandemic where I wasn't able to get tattoos, but it's been safer lately, and that has been really heart-full, if that makes any sense. Like heart, full of heart. Yeah.

My relationship with friends and family, how has that changed over the pandemic. Yeah. With family, I think things have been a little bit... everything's definitely more loaded. And so, I'm a little bit more selective with who I'm spending time with and how. And that has been really hard setting those boundaries. And it's hard being like the boundary setter. But, yeah, not wanting to get other folks sick. Not wanting to get sick. And I think living with other people and living with roommates makes a lot of things pretty loaded as well, because we're all in our, like, the things we do affect other people. But it's not a lot lighter lately. Like a world of difference between how things were when I first started or even last year. But, yeah, more talks about consent. More talk about feelings, which is pretty cool and sometimes fun and sometimes not.

So for like, my mental, emotional and physical health, I've had to be more proactive in how I'm caring for myself, which is also not always fun, but sometimes can be, some of the sweeter things can be that. I got a therapist and I'm reaching out to buds more to like, just hang out with, like go on walks and just chat with over the phone, which I love talking over the phone. I've been trying to meditate, but it hasn't really worked. I like, joined a class, anyways. I may or may not

have turned my camera off. It's like a virtual meditation class and I turned my camera off and just like ate snacks while people were meditating last class. But we're working on it. I'm going into the woods more and like singing and then some things that aren't as fun but impactful that I'm trying to be more honest with people and sharing my feelings more instead of just like taking things and like, logic-ing my way out of why my feelings shouldn't be hurt. So those conversations can be really scary, but, yeah, pretty fulfilling. And then I'm also a couple of months sober, which is new and really cool, and I am trying really hard to keep that up. It's not like a life or death situation. It's just more of like wanting to be intentional about how I'm spending my time and how things make me feel. So it's been hard and cool. I don't really have other buds who are sober right now, so that can be kind of lonely and so much, like drinking is so social, but, you know, we're trying. Weaver Street just got some new de-alcoholized wines and they kind of just taste like sour grapes or sour apple, maybe even like a sour beer. But it's like hitting that, like, I want a little bit of funk at the end of my day. Yeah.

Anyways, the significant cultural political events over the past two years and how that's shaped my life during pandemic. It really does feel like a lifetime over this pandemic. Like the experience of early pandemic or last year or this year just feel. Yeah, they just feel really different. Early on. I remember going to protests in like Raleigh and Durham and people like, wearing masks and now, I don't know, I'd gone to protests throughout my college career and it was just pretty cool to see people still out and see folks that I haven't seen since I'd been in college at these events. Yeah, it wasn't all protests, it was like sort of like community gatherings and noise demonstrations and stuff. But yeah, the ways that we were keeping each other safe amidst like, not really knowing what was happening. Yeah. So that was pretty... Anyways. Yeah, those protests were pretty impactful and also like, hard. Sometimes it doesn't really feel like, I don't know, it can feel lonely maybe, or like you're just sort of screaming into the void and like it's just going to keep happening, but to get on a brighter note... Let's see. Yeah. I don't know. I'm just going to move on.

Living in Chapel Hill shape your experience of the pandemic. So, like, working with the public in Chapel Hill has been interesting. A lot of folks wear their masks and then there's a lot of folks who don't and kind of make everyone else's problem. So we've like, had masks required this whole time in building, and that's about to be loosened up, which I'm kind of scared for or nervous about. But yeah, some patrons would just come in and just ruin people's days. You just need to put this thing over your face for a little bit and then being hurtful and acting inappropriately. But I don't know, I feel like I'm getting all doom and gloomy...

[\*talking to interview facilitator\*] You back Klaus? Sure. No, I can totally do that. That's easy. Great. Sounds good.

Well, that was like a good little hit back into positive-ville. Chapel Hill is beautiful. It's really nice being really close to different bodies of water. That's been really special. And you can just look out and just see so many birds, like, wherever you are. I've been learning lots of different birds. Last week I learned about cormorants because I saw a dead one and was like, wow, this is a really beautiful being. Yeah, anyways. Coming from Asheville or like, I'm from Asheville, there's

like nature in like a different sense, but there's still some pretty good feelings out here. Yeah. Nice that people largely wear their masks are vaccinated.

Is there anything I wish I had done differently earlier in the pandemic? Nothing that I wish I had done differently, I think. I wish I would have had more information. I don't know. The folks in my group, we did the best we could with what we had, and it was like really scary and really lonely, like isolating, I think, figuring out ways to be together, maybe earlier. So going on more walks with buds for like, outdoor movies. But that first little bit was like, scared to leave the house kind of vibes. And then we were able to like loosen up things.

What do I hope we keep from the pandemic? So mutual aid was already happening, but it definitely got popularized, I think. And so we have like community fridges and community pantries. And I just think that that's really lovely. Yeah. Just like normal folks supporting normal folks, I guess. Folks supporting folks. Yeah, I think that's really lovely and special. I also wouldn't mind the normalizing of like, masks, like when we're sick. More masks and that's normal. Yeah. I also really enjoyed I haven't been eating at restaurants, but I really enjoyed outdoor options. Yeah. Like few times where I sat on a patio has been really special and sweet and like, I have fun. Like seeing the roads sort of taken over in Chapel Hill with like, outdoor seating. Yeah, outdoor seating has been sick.

And what are three cultural creations that have been important to you in the last two years.? I've been reading a ton. I love getting heart flutters from a book, and that tends to be with YA, with all the pining. I don't know, just sweetness. Or like with romances, it's so funny listening to a sex scene on 2.5 speed and it's just so fast but it's so fun. It's like a little shot of ginger or something. I don't know. But one of the books that was like super, super impactful for me was Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass* and I just want to read that book every year. There was like this one chapter about her like rehabilitating the pond and it was like kind of for her daughters. She had this dream of like her and her daughters swimming in this pond and she was just like mucking it out and then wasn't necessarily paying attention to the other homes that were around it. So she like noticed this nest and then was like very close to destroying it in her quest to make this pond better. And I just thought that was like a really beautiful reminder of being present. I've tried to pay more attention to what I'm doing. Anyways, just a really beautiful book. Highly recommend. There's a tattoo shop that I have just had some really lovely experiences in called Critter Swamp in Hillsborough and that was created or like it opened up over the pandemic and lots of really lovely tattoo artists have come through and it's just like very queer. It just feels really safe. Which tattooing is super vulnerable. You're getting hurt, you're going through stuff, you're like changing your body and it's really important to have those consent and I don't know, like being tattooed by like, trauma informed folks has just been really, really cool and it's just so caring and loving. Yeah, so that book that space and honestly, I would say like the I guess it's not a cultural creation. I was going to go back to the water or rivers. Shoot. Gotta think of the third. I have been listening to a lot— Oh, Gillian Welsh. Yeah, I've been listening to a lot of Gillian Welsh. Just something really comforting and earthy, sing her songs, out in the woods. Nothing better. Yeah. Anyways, I think that I am done. I'm going to text Klaus. Okay. Just texted him. This was a pleasure, a good treat. Hey, Klaus. Not sure how to sign off. Just rambling.

