

CONSULTANT: Sharonda Arnold
AGE: 32
RESIDENCE: Durham, NC?
OCCUPATION: Works with mentally handicapped resident
INTERVIEW DATE: July 28, 2016, approx. 2:30 pm
LOCATION: Durham Central Bus Station

Ms. Arnold was at the Durham Central Bus Station to purchase bus passes for her clients. She works with mentally handicapped residents.

So I've already told you a little about what this about without saying too much. So 1999 becomes the year 2000. New Year's Eve. Put me on that day. Tell me what you remember.

So 1999...New Year's Eve before the year 2K. I remember people pulling their money out of the bank. [laughs] And they said that the banks were not going to understand what year it was. So the money is gonna get lost. I remember people being very afraid. The biggest thing was people thought that either that either the banks were gonna crash or the world was gonna end in 2000 [laughs] So yeah, I just remember a lot of people being afraid and uncertain as to what the year 2000 was going to bring. My father himself he pulled out like all of his money out of the bank, except about a thousand dollars.

Wow.

Yeah.

So what did he do with it, keep it in the house?

SA: He just kept it in the house [laughs]. He was convinced that something...because everybody was talking about it. He was convinced that his money could potentially get lost.

Do you remember how he felt the next day?

[laughs] No, I don't. I don't. I just remember the conversation. I just remember the conversation before.

So you were in high school then?

Yes, '99... I was born in '83, so yeah.

So do you remember what you were doing that night?

Um. I believe that I was just in the house. I was actually afraid, too, because everybody was saying it was so uncertain what was going to happen in the next year. I wasn't convinced that it was going to be like, this big, like shut down in the banks and the markets, I just was a little fearful because everybody else was.

Well, when your dad is taking out all of his money...

Yeah [laughs]. So, that was my experience. But then, when we woke up and the year 2000 was here, and nothing was wrong, I was like [*Sharonda makes an exaggerated sound of relief*] "Woo." [laughs hard].

Do you remember other New Years, like before then? I'm just trying to get a frame of reference? To see if you remember that one a lot better than the other ones?

Yeah, definitely. I remember that one because everybody was scared that year. I mean, the other ones that I would potentially remember are because I was doing something amazing like bringing it in. But other than that, I don't have a real vivid picture of the New Years from, you know, ninety....That is my most vivid New Year.

Do you remember, was it only because of the Y2K bug, or do you remember people thinking, like, for religious reasons or whatever, that the world might end at that time?

Sharonda's eyes light up in surprise, as if she has just remembered something that she had long forgotten.

Yes! Yes.

Tell me about that.

I just remember like people saying that this is the year that the Lord is gonna come. You know, I'm a young girl, so I'm like [*high-pitched, pleading voice*] "Oh, I want to live my life! I want to live my life." But I just remember in the churches, they were...the message that they were preaching is that God is coming back. So I remember being very afraid, like "Oh my God. It's gonna be 2000..."

Now, they were saying this at *your* church?

No, no, just in churches in general. Like, God is coming back. They weren't saying that in the year 2000 was coming, that he was coming back. But they were saying that God was coming back, so that was the message that was preached in 1999. So I was under the assumption with that being the message that was preached, that in 2000 that's what was going to happen. So it was just scary. [laughs hard]

And then relief, right?

Yeah. It was scary, and then relief, in the year...yeah.

So let me ask you this. If a young kid came up to you right now, who was too young to remember that time at all, and said, “What was life like in 1999?” What would you tell him or her?

In 1999, for me, it was...you know, I was still in high school, so it was really fun for me. Toward the end of 1999, it was scary because everybody had evoked fear in everybody, whether it was the fear of the markets were gonna crash, or it was the fear that all of your money was gonna get lost in the banks, or the fear that, you know, it was...that the world was coming to an end. [laughs]

Do you remember, because that was really when the internet was starting to take off, cell phones came out, do you remember when you had your first experiences with that kind of stuff? Like, sending emails, or getting a cell phone?

Um, I remember when I got my first cell phone. It was my freshman year in college. And I remember, in my freshman year in college, which was a few years later, in 2001, but I remember the first time that I actually saw somebody with a cell phone in their car. [laughs]. It was humungous. No, it was, it wasn't just...My father had a phone in the car that was like, it was a big phone. But It didn't work. But the first time I actually saw somebody riding in the car talking on the phone, it was like a really huge phone. And I was like, “Oh my god, why does he have that cordless house phone on his head?”

[laugh] **Cordless house phone.**

This cordless house phone on his head. But yeah, that was...yeah.

What about the internet? Because you were in college right when that –

Right. So, no, we had internet prior to college, but what I remember most is AOL. The [*Sharonda imitates the sound of a modem*] “EHHHHHH!” [laughs hard] So yeah, I didn't really start sending emails until I got to college in 2001. But I do remember going on the internet and really being amazed at how I could just search for anything.

You're like the third person, that when they're sharing their memories, has made that sound.

Sharonda laughs. Really?

And I've gotten a couple of people that have said, "You've got mail."

[laughs] Yeah, that was it. That was it, that was it. Yeah, yeah.

It's funny, that like you probably can't remember names, dates, or anything, but you remember that sound. Because it meant, "Hey, good, I'm on now, finally."

Yeah, it did. It did. "You've got mail." And I still have my AOL account, and people are like [*mocking voice*] "You still use AOL?"

You still use the email address?

Well, I still have my email address and I still use it sometimes. I use it when I'm like signing up for those seven days, de-cluttering your life, I use that email address.

People are like, "Wow! This is from the 90s! Are we gonna get a Bell Biv DeVoe song next?"

Yeah. And then they say, "You know that AOL has issues with people, you know, breaking in...it's not as secure as Gmail." So they're like, "I'm not sending you anything to that email account."

I thank Sharonda for her time and end the interview.