

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with John Staff

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Tumultuous 2020 Oral History project

Interview # T20-A-L-2021-028

John Staff, owner of Staff Carpet in Springfield, Illinois during the COVID-19 pandemic, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Dates: Aug 2 & 18, 2021

Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library,
Springfield, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript being
processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:34 + 2:20 / 1.57 + 2.33 = 3.9 hrs.

Session 1: John Staff's personal story and the 50-year history of Staff Carpet

Session 2: Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on John Staff family & Staff Carpet

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on September 28, 2021.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

John Staff, *Tumultuous 2020*, T20-A-L-2021-028

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: John Staff was born in October 1960 in Orlando Florida. By 1963 the family lived in Springfield, Illinois, and John's father Jim made his living for the next decade by loading up a panel truck with carpeting in Georgia, and traveling around central Illinois, selling the carpeting out of the back of the truck. In 1971 he opened up Staff Carpet in Springfield, and for the next two decades built up the business. In 1981 John met Debbie Isabel while he worked in the St. Louis area, and they were married in September 1982. They have two daughters, Lindsey, and Kimberly. In 1988 John purchased the business from his father and has run the business since that time. In December 2013 he moved the business to a new location off Veterans Parkway near the airport. The business is increasingly managed by John's daughter Kim, while Lindsey works as a nurse at Memorial Hospital in Springfield.

John talked at length about his family's experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic from early 2020 to August 2021, as well as its impact on his business. At the beginning of the lock-down he and Debbie were in Florida, getting ready to return to Springfield for the business's annual Tax Invasion Sale, the biggest sale each year. Kimberlie was managing the business at the time. When the pandemic hit in March 2020, John and Debbie were locked down in Florida, while John and Kim decided to close the business. It stayed closed for the next five weeks, but when it did, their business picked up very quickly. During the time the business was closed, he received PPP (Payroll Protection Plan money) through his local bank. Once they reopened, there were fewer orders coming in, but the ones that did were typically much larger orders than a typical year. John attributed that to the fact that people were spending much more time at home and noticing things they wanted to upgrade, as well as the stimulus money people were receiving from the federal government.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Staff Carpet, Springfield, Illinois; carpet manufacturing in Georgia; impact of COVID-19 pandemic on small businesses; Payroll Protection Plan; like at home during COVID-19 pandemic; Kimberly Staff; Jim Staff; Debbie Staff; Lindsey Staff; CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act) stimulus money;

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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