



## Season 1 | Episode 4 | Breaking Point

(Footsteps on Hardwood Floor)

Taylor Peters, Host: IT'S WEDNESDAY MORNING, LONG BEFORE THE BARS ON BROADWAY START TO COME TO LIFE. BUT MICHAEL CLINTSMAN IS BUSY GETTING THINGS IN ORDER.

Michael Clintsman, Lubbock Business Owner: My name is Michael Clintsman and I'm the owner of Bar PM, Local Bar and Grill and Atomic Pizza Kitchen.

Peters: WE'RE MEETING AT HIS NEWEST VENTURE- ATOMIC ... IT'S NEXT DOOR TO LOCAL. AND COMPARED TO THE OTHER TWO, THIS BAR IS THE BABY. AS WE SET UP OUR MICROPHONES, HE SERVES US ICE WATER IN WIDE MOUTH MASON JARS... HE'S LITERALLY CLEANING THE WATER RINGS FROM OUR TABLE WITH A WHITE RAG... LIKE ANY BARTENDER WOULD. OLD HABITS DIE HARD, I GUESS. BUT HE'S DRESSED NICE FOR THIS INTERVIEW- A CRISP WHITE BUTTNDOWN AND SHARP SPORTS COAT. YOU CAN HEAR THE CLUNK OF HIS BOOTS AND CREAK OF THE HARDWOOD FLOOR AS HE WALKS.

Clintsman: I'm born in Kansas City, was only there for 6 months, grew up in Dallas. Came to Lubbock for college and never left. I dropped out with 18 hours left and bought my first business. My wife is a Tech grad, she has a RHM Degree, Restaurant and Hotel Management degree.

Peters: HE DOESN'T PLAN TO GO BACK AND FINISH HIS DEGREE, BUT HE'LL TELL YOU, HE'S A RED RAIDER.

Clintsman: Through and through, you can't have 3 businesses across from Tech and not love this school. It was the best part of my life, I met my wife at Tech, it's an awesome school... I hope my son goes here... he better. Otherwise, I'll follow him to wherever he goes to school and open a bar in whatever college town he's in.

Peters: HE'S BEEN AT THIS A LONG TIME- WORKING ON THIS STREET OF COLLEGE BARS SINCE HE WAS LEGAL TO STEP FOOT IN ONE. HE AND HIS WIFE HAVE USED ALL THAT EXPERIENCE TO BUILD A LIFE AROUND THOSE THREE BUSINESSES. AND HE'S PROUD OF THEM. PROUD THAT WHAT THEY STARTED ALL THOSE YEARS AGO PANNED OUT AND GREW. THEY GOT BETTER AS TIME WENT ON. IT TOOK YEARS OF STASHING AWAY TIPS FROM EVERY SHIFT... AND AN OLD WATER JUG TO SEE THAT DREAM TAKE FLIGHT.

(Music)

Peters: FROM TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY, WE BRING YOU FEARLESS. A PODCAST FEATURING THE UNTOLD STORIES OF THE SCHOOL WE LOVE SO DEARLY. IN THIS EPISODE, WE PULL BACK THE LAYERS OF OUR LOCAL ECONOMY...

Reporter: The coronavirus pandemic has caused major issues for local businesses.

Peters: WHAT BUSINESS OWNERS DID TO STAY AFLOAT. WHILE THE IN-PERSON COLLEGE EXPERIENCE WAS NO MORE, HOW A SMALL STAFF HELPED STUDENTS NAVIGATE THE

UNKNOWN...IN THIS WORLD WHERE MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES HAD BECOME MORE ESSENTIAL THAN EVER.

(Music)

Peters: THIS IS EPISODE FOUR- BREAKING POINT

(Clapping)

(Graduation Song)

Lawrence Schovanec Graduation Speech: This has been a journey that defies explanation.

Peters: IT'S MAY 7, 2021... GRADUATION DAY. BUT THIS CEREMONY IS LONG OVERDUE, A YEAR TO BE EXACT. WE FOUND A FEW STUDENTS CHECKING IN INSIDE THE SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER SOUTH OF JONES AT&T STADIUM- THERE ARE LOTS OF PEOPLE IN HERE, BY THE WAY, SO IT'S A LITTLE LOUD.

Francis Ramos, 2020 Graduate: I'm excited, I felt last year I was robbed.

Peters: FRANCIS RAMOS IS AMONG HUNDREDS OF GRADUATES PREPARING TO WALK DOWN TO THE FIELD. HE GOT HIS DEGREE A YEAR AGO, THEY ALL DID. IN FACT, MANY HAD ALREADY STARTED WORKING FULL TIME WHEN THEY CAME BACK AND WALKED. IT'S A MAKEUP CEREMONY FOR THE COVID CLASS, THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 2020.

(Clapping)

Wesley McGlory, 2020 Graduate: The pandemic was coming at a difficult time for me.

Peters: WESLEY MCGLORY IS HERE TOO.

McGlory: ...it was right before spring break, and I was waiting to hear back from job interviews, and it wasn't until Memorial Day. And now I'm working full time in Arlington, Texas.

Peters: HIS PARENTS ARE IN THE STANDS- TO SEE HIM WALK THE STAGE FOR THE SECOND TIME AS A RED RAIDER. HE GOT HIS MASTER'S DEGREE IN ARCHITECTURE.

McGlory: For me personally, I went through a lot to get here today, they're glad to see me graduate with my masters.

Peters: FRANCIS, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS WALKING FOR THE FIRST TIME, HE EARNED HIS BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN ENGINEERING. ORIGINALLY FROM HOUSTON, HE TOOK A JOB IN PEARLAND, OUTSIDE OF HOUSTON, DURING THE PANDEMIC. HIS FAMILY MADE THE TRIP UP TOO... TODAY IS IMPORTANT. ACTUALLY, WHILE WE'RE STANDING HERE TALKING, I CAN SEE ON HIS APPLE WATCH THAT HIS MOM IS CALLING OVER AND OVER... SHE'S PROBABLY WONDERING WHERE HE IS, LIKE ALL MOMS DO. LEXIE HARLAN'S FAMILY DIDN'T HAVE A LONG DRIVE AT ALL... SHE HAD HER OWN CHEERING SECTION, IN FACT. SHE GREW UP IN LUBBOCK... WENT TO SOUTHCREST HIGH SCHOOL.

Lexie Harlan, 2020 Graduate: I have all 12 of my tickets booked. And I wish I had more! Because everyone is here.

Peters: HERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE OF WALKING ACROSS THE STAGE. THE ACT OF PHYSICALLY STEPPING FORWARD INTO A NEW CHAPTER, THROUGH A NEW DOOR.

Harlan: We get the paper but being here with my family and friends and having those final moments. It's like closure. It means a lot. Last year it was here and there whether we would have it or not and we were

all disappointed. For them to come back and say 'hey, we got you, we're going to do this' it makes all of our years.

Ramos: ...and even though it's a long year we come back and see Tech again and finally walk across the stage. It feels like time is moving forward a bit.

(Graduation Song)

Lawrence Schovanec Graduation Speech: Through one of the most challenging years in our history, you didn't quit, you didn't give up. Faced with great anxiety and uncertainty you did it. You were tested and you overcame.

(Graduation song)

Peters: EARLY STUDIES SUGGEST THAT THE STAY-AT-HOME ORDERS ELEVATED EMOTIONAL STRESS IN THE HOME- INSOMNIA, DEPRESSION, FEAR, ANXIETY, A LACK OF FOCUS- THESE WERE ALL ON THE RISE AS WE PUSHED THROUGH QUARANTINE. RICHARD LENNOX IS THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE STUDENT COUNSELING CENTER ON CAMPUS. HIS TEAM OF 16 FULL TIME STAFF MEMBERS MEET WITH MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED STUDENTS REGULARLY. BUT BEFORE COVID, VERY FEW OF THEM WERE SEEN ONLINE.

Richard Lennox, Director, Student Counseling Center: Then, of course, March 2020 hits and everyone was scrambling.

Peters: THIS SCRAMBLE EXISTED FOR COUNSELING CENTERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. RICHARD KNEW HIS TEAM HAD TO BE READY FOR WHAT MAY COME WHEN THE CAMPUS CLOSED AND STUDENTS WERE SENT HOME. BUT ODDLY ENOUGH, THE NEXT FEW MONTHS WOULDN'T BE WHAT HE EXPECTED. AND TO BE HONEST, IT'S NOT WHAT I EXPECTED EITHER.

Lennox: Our demand for services bottomed out, it really did. And it happened everywhere, we were going from a very busy semester to very slow for about two months and there are a few reasons for that....

Peters: That surprises me.

Lennox: It surprised us too. Yes. But I was hearing that from other counseling center directors, we thought that with this big shift and all this stress students would be clamoring for services.

Peters: ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION. THOSE ARE THE TWO MAIN REASONS RICHARD SAYS STUDENTS COME TO THE CENTER.

Lennox: When students come into the counseling center, we always do an assessment of what are the primary issues that are bringing you in.

Peters: AND NOT JUST AT TEXAS TECH, THIS IS TRUE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

Lennox: The stress and the pandemic and COVID exacerbated those issues and it got worse.

Peters: REMEMBER DANIEL? WE MET HIM IN THE LAST EPISODE... WE TOLD YOU HIS STORY AS A STUDENT. THE STRUGGLES HE FACED ACADEMICALLY, WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS GRADES DURING THE PANDEMIC. HE HAD SOME CHALLENGES OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM TOO. AND EVEN THOUGH HE DIDN'T MEET DIRECTLY WITH RICHARD AND \*HIS TEAM AT THE STUDENT COUNSELING CENTER, HE HAD BEEN SEEING HIS OWN COUNSELOR FOR SEVERAL YEARS. BUT WEEKS INTO THE PANDEMIC, HE REALIZED THAT WASN'T ENOUGH.

Daniel, Student: I've been seeing a psychologist for years, but I started seeing a psychiatrist where I was diagnosed with depression and anxiety. Which, I'm not new to that, but it was pretty severe. And there were some dark nights I didn't think I could get past. Not because of anything specifically that had happened, but it felt like things were never going to get better.

Peters: HE FELT TRAPPED. HE STARTED TAKING MORE MEDICATION DURING THIS TIME, TRYING TO FEEL LIKE HIMSELF AGAIN. THIS WAS ALL PRETTY HARD TO WATCH FOR THOSE AROUND HIM.

Lauren, Student: To not underplay it, it's heartbreaking.

Peters: THIS IS LAUREN, ALSO NOT HER REAL NAME. SHE'S ALSO A TECH STUDENT.

Lauren: When you know, and you talk to someone and it's hitting them hard... You feel hopeless because you want to be able to do something and you want to be able to help them, but you don't have the ability to.

Peters: "How scary is that?"

Lauren: It's terrifying... Your friends and relationships, their wellbeing affects you. When you see people that are part of your life through extreme pain emotionally, or even physically, it breaks you.

(Music)

Lennox: Then just a lot of uncertainty about future, that all of us were feeling. What's going to happen with the pandemic 8 weeks from now, nobody had answers. What does it mean for graduation, for my job possibilities? Fears around can I even sustain myself knowing I have to move back in with my parents when that wasn't the plan?

Peters: THESE WERE ALL VALID QUESTIONS RICHARD'S TEAM WAS GETTING. STARTING IN THE SUMMER, STUDENTS BEGAN REACHING OUT FOR HELP. NUMBERS WENT BACK TO NORMAL. THE TOP PRIORITY FOR RICHARD AND HIS TEAM WAS MAKING SURE THE STUDENTS KNEW THERE WAS HELP AVAILABLE. STUDENTS HAD A NEED THAT HIS STAFF COULD MEET- EVEN IF IT WAS ONLINE. BUT THE PANDEMIC WAS TAKING A LOT OUT OF THEM, TOO. RICHARD SAYS SELF-CARE HAS ALWAYS BEEN IMPORTANT TO HIM. AND HIS TEAM KNOWS THAT. BUT THE PANDEMIC TOOK THAT TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL.

Peters: I see you as being kind of like a coach. How do you encourage them and. Help them manage the expektorations the students have for them and still take care of their mental health?

Lennox: That has been a theme that's true of my management style for years. Self-care of my staff is primarily important for my staff because if they're not taking care of themselves, they can't take care of others.

Peters: EACH STAFF MEMBER COULD MEET WITH A MAXIMUM OF 8 STUDENTS PER DAY, FOR AN HOUR EACH. THINK ABOUT THAT FOR A SECOND... THAT'S A LOT OF ZOOM TIME.

Lennox: And the staff talks about that a lot doing 6,7,8 counseling sessions with students a day. They talk about the fatigue at the end of the day. It takes a different level of energy to interact via zoom, we all know this now.

Peters: THEY HAD TO RELY ON EACH OTHER. AND THEY PULLED THROUGH. AT THE ORIGINAL AIR DATE OF THIS PODCAST, IN THE FALL OF 2021, RICHARD AND HIS STAFF SAW THEIR NUMBERS INCREASE. AND THEY EXPECT THAT TO CONTINUE.

Lennox: Mental health issues are everywhere in the media right now, which is good! It also increases demand in services too.

Peters: SOFIA MILLER WAS ALSO ADAMANT ABOUT HELPING STUDENTS. AFTER ALL, SHE WAS ONE.

Sofia Miller, Alumnus: I was mainly worried about people's mental health and isolation and suicide rates going up.

Peters: SHE'S SINCE GRADUATED FROM TEXAS TECH, BUT WHEN SHE WAS HERE, SHE WAS WHAT'S CALLED A PEER EDUCATOR FOR RISE- IT STANDS FOR RISK INTERVENTION AND SAFETY EDUCATION.

Sofia Miller: "Thinking about the people who are struggling with their mental health was really scary. After a year of isolation, it can still be hard to come out of your shell."

Peters: DURING THE FALL OF 2020, WHEN SOME STUDENTS WERE BACK ON CAMPUS... SHE AND OTHER PEER EDUCATORS WERE EXCITED TO SEE OTHER STUDENTS HOWEVER THEY COULD.

Miller: When you are isolated, it's like someone actually does care from the outside world which is something that maybe you didn't see...

Peters: THEY SET UP TABLES IN THE SUB... THEY CALL IT TABELING...PASSING OUT FREE STUFF...BEFORE COVID, SHE SAYS MOST STUDENTS WOULD STOP FOR A SECOND OR TWO... BUT NOW, THEY WEREN'T IN ANY BIG RUSH. THEY WERE STOPPING FOR CONVERSATION.

Miller: Just with COVID being hard and everyone realizing it was hard, I think it was easier for people to be like 'yeah, I am having a hard time with this.'

(Music)

Peters: ALMOST EVERY STUDENT STRUGGLED IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER DURING THE PANDEMIC... BUT RECENT STUDIES SHOW THAT CERTAIN DEMOGRAPHICS MAY HAVE BEEN AFFECTED MORE THAN OTHERS. OR DIFFERENTLY, AT LEAST. CAROL SUMNER IS THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE DIVISION OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION, OR DDEI... SHE'S ALSO THE CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER FOR THE UNIVERSITY.

Carol Sumner, Vice President, Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: "What I love is the ability to see a problem or challenge and find people here who are equally as committed to getting it solved. That's the best part of this work. Especially here at Tech..."

Peters: SHE IS COMMITTED TO COMMUNITY. SHE LOVES IT AND BELIEVES IN IT AND IT'S A DRIVING FORCE BEHIND HER HARD WORK. SO, DURING THE PANDEMIC, SHE WAS CLOSELY WATCHING A RIPPLE EFFECT THAT WAS EXTENDING INTO NEIGHBORHOODS, NOT JUST HERE IN LUBBOCK BUT ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

Sumner: Well, it was all of the things simultaneously... you couldn't have asked for a window of time with more dissonance, for already marginalized communities, for communities that are under-resourced...

Peters: COVID PROVIDED ITS FAIR SHARE OF CHALLENGES, THAT WE KNOW. BUT THE COMBINATION OF FINANCIAL AND EMOTIONAL STRESS FROM THE PANDEMIC, AN EMPHASIS ON SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES, NOT TO MENTION A CHANGING PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATION... AND A STORM OF TENSION WAS BREWING. ESPECIALLY IN ALREADY MARGINALIZED COMMUNITITES. AND CAROL WAS WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT TO MAKE SURE THEY WERE ADDRESSING IT.

Sumner: I don't know how to process the loss of jobs, the loss of homes, there was a real effort to make sure people knew what we were doing. The president was issuing statements, we were trying to make it clear what we were doing, clear about issues around with Asian hate, clear about issues around George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. Clear about what we were doing around COVID...

Peters: WITH FEAR AND UNVERTAINTY BUILDING, THESE CONVERSATIONS WERE HARD. BUT COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY IS IMPORTANT TO HER. AND IT MAY JUST MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE. BECAUSE, AFTER ALL... THIS CONVERSATION SHOULD MATTER TO EVERY ONE OF US.

Sumner: For low-income students it was an impact, for black male students it was a significant impact, for anyone who knew a low-income student it was an impact, for anyone who knew a person of color, in particular black was an impact...when you start thinking about the ripple and the intersections of people, you could not be a person who was not impacted in some way, shape or form, with all that was happening in that window of time.

Parent: "Good morning, how is everyone?"

Volunteer: "Good! How are you?"

Parent: "Great. Thank you for everything yall do."

Peters: WE'RE AT THE BACK-TO-SCHOOL FIESTA NOW... IT'S THE END OF JULY AND KIDS FROM KINDERGARTEN ALL THE WAY UP TO HIGH SCHOOL ARE STOPPING BY. OR THEIR PARENTS ARE, ANYWAY.

(Car Driving Up)

Parent: Ooh my kids are going to be so upset they didn't come...I almost want to take a picture to say, 'you missed it'.

Peters: RAIDER RED IS HERE. AND LIKE USUAL, HE'S ATTRACTING A LOT OF ATTENTION.

Volunteer: How many are we picking up for?

Parent: Two.

Peters: IT'S STILL EARLY, BEFORE 9... I DON'T BLAME THOSE KIDDOS FOR SLEEPING IN. EVEN IF THEY MISSED A PHOTO OP WITH RAIDER RED HIMSELF.

Parent: Can I take a picture with you real quick... I want them to know they missed out. They'll come next time.

Peters: CAROL'S OFFICE PUTS ON THIS EVENT EVERY YEAR, BUT THIS TIME IT FEELS EXTRA SPECIAL.

Harris: So, my name is Mary Harris and I'm the director for the college connect program here at Texas Tech University... I focus a lot on these kinds of events, the Back-to-School Fiesta, we do a lot of summer camps, we are just really involved in a lot of outreach opportunities with the community.

Peters: THIS EVENT IS FOR LUBBOCK YOUTH. COLLEGE CONNECT IS A PROGRAM WITHIN DDEI. ITS ALL ABOUT INVESTING IN THE COMMUNITY. BRINGING TOGETHER STUDENTS OF ALL AGES.

Harris: To make sure they know Texas Tech supports them and we want to create a relationship with families and kids at an early age. Texas tech isn't just a university, it's part of this community and it's the heart of the community, so we really want to make connections with families.

Peters: LAST YEAR WAS THE FIRST TIME THE EVENT CONDUCTED AS A DRIVE THROUGH... AND IT WAS A SUCCESS. SO, IN JULY OF 2021, COLLEGE CONNECT KEPT THE SAME DRIVE THROUGH FORMAT AND THE MONEY SAVED WENT INTO DOING MORE FOR THE KIDS.

Sumner: You can lessen the cost by not having to pay for food and tents and you can give 500 more backpacks, so we are giving out 1500 backpacks instead of 1000. Not everything was negative, some of it was positive in 'how can we be more effective in meeting the needs of the people?

Volunteer: "Here you go."

Parent: "Thank you so much."

Volunteer: "Of course!"

Parent: "Y'all have no idea how helpful this is."

Volunteer: "Of course! Have a great day."

Parent: "Okay, thank you so much."

Harris: I just think it's amazing to know that you are making a difference, I love the gratitude that people show but it's not only that, it's being able to give back and know that you are able to do something that's going to make a difference in the life of someone...

(Live Music and Car Engines)

Peters: DDEI IS ALSO FOCUSED ON MEETING THE NEEDS OF TECH STUDENTS. REALIZING THAT FOR SO MANY RED RAIDERS, THE FALL OF 2021 WILL BE FULL OF FIRSTS. BY THAT, I MEAN FIRST TIME ATTENDING AN INPERSON CLASS...

Sumner: ...They haven't eaten in the dining hall, they haven't gone to a football or basketball game, they haven't been able to walk campus, or be here for the carol of lights. All of these experiences they didn't get to have, let alone, not having a prom or a graduation or signing of senior yearbooks, all those traditions that are hallmarks of a transition....

Peters: CAROL SAYS SHE AND HER TEAM LEARNED A LOT FROM COVID. BUT MORE THAN ANYTHING, IT SOLIDIFIED THE VALUE OF CONNECTING WITH AND TAKING CARE OF YOUR COMMUNITY – YOUR WHOLE COMMUNITY... THOSE WHO THINK DIFFERENTLY THAN YOU, OR MAYBE FEEL DIFFERENTLY... OR LOOK, OR SPEAK, OR ACT. WE HAVE ONE THING IN COMMON, IT'S \*THIS PLACE.

Sumner: And for Tech, that can be the beacon on the hill, how do we let those know who don't see the light, we're here for you too. Whether you see it or not, we are here. Some days we have to just keep shining even on the days where it's hard to hold the torch up.

(Bar Sounds)

Peters: WE'RE BACK AT ATOMIC NOW, WHERE MICHAEL IS TAKING A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE THAT LOOKS A LOT LIKE BROADWAY ON A FRIDAY NIGHT.

Clintsman: When I was 21, I started working on Broadway at Rocky LaRue's. My wife started the same day, we met, went on our first date the week after and have been together ever since, and that was Local Bar and Grill, which we now own. It was always our dream to save up and get our own place. And it's

cheesy but we had one of those 5-gallon jugs and would put \$50 per shift in it. So that's \$100, 5 times a week. We had enough a down payment on a small business loan....

Peters: THEY USED THAT MONEY TO PURCHASE BAR PM- P, STANDS FOR PAIGE, HIS WIFE'S NAME... M, FOR MICHAEL. I BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT, NEITHER DID I. THEY OWNED BAR PM FOR 15 YEARS BEFORE THEY PAID IT OFF... THEN MOVED ON TO PURCHASE LOCAL.

Clintsman: Then 6 years after Local, we opened Atomic. My goal is every time I pay off my small business loan, I start looking for another one.

Peters: BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, MICHAEL AND HIS WIFE WERE DEBT FREE WITH LOCAL AND BAR PM... THEY'RE NOT ANYMORE. MICHAEL ADMITS HE'S NOT NORMALLY ONE TO ASK FOR HELP... BUT HE NEEDED IT NOW. AT THE TIME OF THE SHUTDOWN, HE HAD 89 EMPLOYEES. A LOT OF THEM HAVE FAMILIES, OR ARE PUTTING THEMSELVES THROUGH SCHOOL. HE WORRIED FOR THEM AND ABOUT THE UNKNOWN.

Clintsman: When you have a loan and you have new staff.... it's really scary. And it was sad.

Peters: WITH THE LOANS, HE WAS ABLE TO SECURE KEPT THE BUSINESSES AFLOAT.

Clintsman: Without the help out there, I wouldn't be here today, that's for sure. I've never asked for help before but it saved my employees, it saved my businesses. And we are here today because of it. I feel very, very fortunate.

Peters: BAR PM AND LOCAL EACH GENERATE AROUND 1 AND A HALF MILLION DOLLARS A YEAR. IN 2020, THEY WERE DOWN BETWEEN 8 HUNDRED AND 9 HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS PER BAR. THESE PLACES ARE WHAT MICHAEL KNOWS BEST, AND BEING AWAY WAS LIKE NOT HAVING PURPOSE.

Clintsman: I'm a busybody and I would be pacing at home....

Peters: HE WAS READY FOR ALL THIS TO END. OR TO AT LEAST HAVE SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO.

Clintsman: And my wife would say 'just go to work and fix a chair, fix something' and I would come in here and find something to do but I didn't want to spend any money on even a screw. It was hard to walk around empty businesses, day after day after day. I locked the door up when left and it would sit that way. It was scary and sad.

Peters: EVEN WHEN CERTAIN RESTAURANTS WERE OPENING UP, HIS THREE REMAINED CLOSED. THEY HAD TO RECLASSIFY AS A RESTAURANT, GET NEW LICENSES AND PERMITS BECAUSE THEY ONLY SOLD 35% FOOD INSTEAD OF THE 49% REQUIRED TO REOPEN.

Clintsman: You think that you own your own business, but when you own a license, you really don't own your own business because they dictate when you can open and what you can do. I'm making sure I put money away, so this never happens again.

Peters: Yeah, get you a water jug!

Clintsman: I would've needed a thousand water jugs for this last year!

Peters: AND WHEN THEY FINALLY DID OPEN, THEY DID IT RIGHT. MICHAEL SAYS THAT TABC AND THE FIRE MARSHALL STOPPED BY 43 TIMES IN 3 MONTHS AND NONE OF HIS BUSINESSES WERE TICKETED OR SHUT DOWN. BUT THE PANDEMIC ITSELF WAS DAUNTING. HE DIDN'T

KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH HIMSELF. AND HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO FOR HIS PEOPLE. THE EMPLOYEES HE STARTED SEEING AS FAMILY.

Clintsman: Unfortunately, I had an employee who worked for me for 10 years. The first shutdown was rough for him, after the second shutdown, he took his own life.

Peters: MICHAEL WAS DEVASTATED. THEY ALL WERE. IT'S WHAT RICHARD WAS TALKING ABOUT EARLIER... HOW THE PANDEMIC EXACERBATED MANY EXISTING ISSUES.

Clintsman: People don't realize when you take someone's livelihood away the implications that may have.

Dan Pope, Lubbock Mayor: When it was bad. It was bad.

Peters: MAYOR DAN POPE KNEW WHAT MICHAEL, AND SO MANY OTHERS, WERE GOING THROUGH... BOTH ON A PERSONAL LEVEL AND AS A LOCAL BUSINESS OWNER... DAN AGREES WITH MICHAEL, THAT LOCAL BUSINESSES ARE THE LIFEBLOOD OF THIS COMMUNITY. AND DURING THE PANDEMIC, HE WANTED TO KEEP PEOPLE TOGETHER. HE FOUND HIMSELF ADDRESSING THE CITY OF LUBBOCK ON ALMOST A DAILY BASIS. MEMBERS OF HIS TEAM WERE REGULARLY APPEARING ON VIRTUAL PRESS CONFERENCES WITH THE LOCAL MEDIA... PROVIDING COVID UPDATES FOR THE CITY.

(City of Lubbock COVID Press Conference)

Pope: Take care of our neighbors, take care of ourselves, take care of our community. I generally always closed them by telling people to be hopeful.. It was. There were some really scary moments.

Peters: REMAINING OPTIMISTIC AND HOPEFUL WAS IMPORTANT, EVEN WHEN IT WAS HARD TO SEE THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL. HE WAS SEEING FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS STRUGGLING TO GET PAST THE VIRUS... OR THE SUFFERING THAT CAME WHEN THEY DIDN'T.

Pope: My youngest brother is just three and a half years younger, and he had 12 days in late June when he had a fever over 103 and he's healthy. It hit me hard. After that I lost my first friend to this. Judge Ruben Reyas was my age, a dear, dear friend. Tom West ran 60 miles per week.

Pope: But this is something we will carry around forever. We'll be stronger for it.

Peters: I LEARNED SOMETHING IN PRODUCING THIS PODCAST- WHEN I ASK PEOPLE TO TALK ABOUT THEIR MEMORIES OF COVID, THEY TEND TO GRAVITATE TO THE THINGS THAT GAVE THEM HOPE AND ENCOURAGEMENT. THEY'D GO TO THE STORIES OF HOW THEY WITNESSED PEOPLE COME TOGETHER OR WHY IT WAS IMPORTANT TO LOOK OUT FOR THEIR NEIGHBOR. THEY TALK ABOUT HOW THEIR FEELINGS OF FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY WERE JUST A STAGE FOR INNOVATION AND COURAGE. WE IDENTIFIED THE NEEDS IN ONE OTHER, AND IN A LOT OF WAYS IT REFLECTED OUR OWN. I LEARNED SOMETHING ABOUT THE HUMAN SPIRIT AND HOW OFTEN TIMES IT'S THE HARDEST OBSTACLES THAT PRECEDE THE GREATEST REWARD. IN WAYS, THINGS IN OUR WORLD MAY NOT RETURN COMPLETELY TO NORMAL. BUT THAT'S OKAY, ISN'T IT? IF WE'VE LEARNED ANYTHING DURING THIS JOURNEY, IT'S THAT OUR ABILITY TO ADAPT TO CHANGE IS WHAT DETERMINES OUR SUCCESS. IT'S THOSE STORIES WE HEAR NEXT TIME ON FEARLESS.

Peters: FEARLESS IS PRODUCED BY THE TEXAS TECH OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING. IT'S HOSTED BY ME, TAYLOR PETERS, WITH SPECIAL HELP FROM ALLISON HIRTH. FEARLESS IS A TEXAS TECH PRODUCTION – FROM HERE, IT'S POSSIBLE.

Peters: HEY, IT'S TAYLOR. THANKS FOR LISTENING TO FEARLESS... DON'T FORGET TO LIKE, REVIEW AND SUBSCRIBE WHEREVER YOU GET YOUR PODCASTS.

