

It was March 13, 2020, when the first encounter happened. The Coronavirus was still new to many of us, so we really did not know the true severity that this virus had in store. One morning, during second period, the entire school was called down to the auditorium for an impromptu assembly. With the recent closings of neighboring schools, we were certain that we were the next to close; everyone was ecstatic. For all we knew, we were just getting a small break from school for a week or two. Except, this was not the case. Our school principal, Mr. Grande, was not there to inform us of a break that we all yearned for, in fact, it was quite the opposite. We were hit with the jaw-dropping news that one of our beloved teachers had passed away after a long battle with a silent killer: Leukemia. Everyone was shaken up for a few days; eventually, when we finally got the call to shut down the school, all the excitement leading to this event dissipated. In the beginning, everyone was still getting accustomed to the remote style of learning, including the teachers. Many days were spent setting up virtual google meet links and figuring out how the curriculum would change for the AP exams, and if these assessments were even going to happen. Instead of seeing our friends every day, we saw a small, circular image of them as their virtual meeting icons. The beginning of the quarantine was all a blur; people really did not understand that this was a serious, life-threatening virus. Sometimes, I would see people posting about being at the beach while listening to the virtual lectures; some people saw this as an opportunity for summer break to start three months in advance. It was the influx of people that caused the virus to spread and escalate during the warmer months when everyone wanted to go outside and enjoy the weather. After more serious enforcement was put in place, people started to realize what our world had really been corrupted with. While some

people began to develop anxiety and depression due to the pandemic, I feel I could thrive in this unfamiliar environment. Being a computer nerd who loved playing video games, I was already used to doing work online; therefore, I was able to get all my work done ahead of time, leaving me with a lot of free time on my hands. With this extra time, I was able to develop healthy habits and prioritize a healthier lifestyle. My friend and I devoted thirty minutes daily to going outside, getting some fresh air, and jumping rope. In doing so, our physical fitness increased, and I helped him lose forty pounds. Staying active was particularly important to me during this stagnant time because prior to our world flipping upside down, I was a four-sport athlete and was always running around to get work done, do chores around the house, get to practice, all while maintaining a GPA that ranked me sixth in my class. The one downside to the quarantine was the loss of sports, and even when they started to allow us to play again, it was not the same. We had to wrestle with masks on, there was very minimal contact allowed in football, and we had “virtual” meets for track and field where we would send in our times to a data center. So, while I found myself in some areas of my life, I lost a part of myself, as well. Eventually, when the world started opening back up again, mine was still locked behind my front door. While my friends were able to hang out with each other with minimal contact, I stayed in my house for fear of bringing the virus back and giving it to my 86-year-old grandmother, who was unvaccinated at the time. The virus was more deadly to elderly people, so my mother was very strict when it came to going out in public, and when we did, we had to wear masks at all times. Although the quarantine caused by the Coronavirus was extremely hard for some people, I did not find it all that bad. If you were able to make the best of your time, then it was quite enjoyable being alone;

oftentimes, I find myself looking back to these times and wishing I still had the time and freedom that came with the quarantine. Some of my best memories were spent talking to my friends virtually and spending quality time with my family at home.