My Covid-19 Experience By: Nick Racowschi

When the year 2020 first started, I had many high hopes for the new year. I ended 2019 on such a high note, I had gotten promoted at work, finished community college, and most importantly got into my first choice for my top university getting accepted into California State University Long Beach. January was the most normal month of 2020, at this point everything seemed very normal, still maintaining my high hopes. Nothing significant happened, other than school which was resuming for the spring semester. Which I was excited for after a successful fall semester at CSULB, excited to see my friends again. February 11th was the start of the unraveling of my personal experience of 2020, unfortunately, my grandfather who had a long battle with cancer and a pre-existing lung condition passed away. Which was a tough pill to swallow for my mom and her four sisters and my grandmother. March 6th rolled around and at last, we had the service for my late grandfather finally laying him to rest. After the funeral, I thought to myself, ‘This is probably the worst thing you’ll have to go through”. Oh Boy was I mistaken.

In the 22 two years that I have been on this planet, I have never seen such an unknown and these feelings of uncertainty in the world. Which makes me among many other people to feel very uneasy about the current circumstances of the world. I recall the last normal week of march, normal being the last week we were allowed to go to school. It was a Friday, March 13th, 2020 my family and I went to our favorite local restaurant El Zarape it seemed as though it was like any normal Friday night in the city of cypress. The last “normal” night for a while. Although that restaurant is small and the chairs are all close together, I always find comfort in being there with my family. As I’m stuffing my face with chips and salsa I overhear my grandma who was also at dinner with us asking my mom if we would go with her to the Ralphs after dinner since it was right next to the restaurant. I didn’t- want to go to the store, due to the pictures I had been seeing on social media. I’ve been hearing all of the customers at my store complain about the long lines, rude consumer, I didn’t want to involve myself with that. Shelves empty, carts with used gloves abandoned in the parking lot. people hoarding all of the canned goods. In addition to all of the canned goods being hoarded, all of the toilet paper was gone too, why toilet paper I thought to myself. My mom agreed to take my dad and me with them to the store. I was not mentally prepared to see what I saw. It’s insane how in these types of situations how different people react to the panic.

“ Do you have any more toilet paper in the back?” I heard echoing. In the store as I walked in. Upon entering the store right as I walked in I felt as though I was consumed in a sea of people. Aren’t we supposed to be keeping six feet apart I thought to myself? I felt my throat begin to tighten, as I found myself wanting to wait in the car rather than stand in this mass sea of panic at the store. At this point, the cases of the virus were more moderate, so there weren’t as extreme precautions. While walking through the stocked store I noticed, the bare isles with nothing on the shelves, in addition, noticed many other people wearing masks and gloves. Is this going to be the new type of normal? Is this something everyone should be doing? Seeing all of the masked faces and gloved hands made me wonder, should I be wearing them as well? This time is really hard for overthinkers like myself, who overthink every little thing, especially during a pandemic. As my dad and I walked through each and every aisle I was shocked at the appalling behavior I saw from the other people. I felt as though I was in the movie the purge, with all of the panics in the air. Everyone speeding past each other as if they were in the fast lane of the freeway. All of the degrading of the grocery store workers. Calling it an easy job, but yet blaming them for not having the product they were looking for. This is a time we should be more compassionate, but it seems as though this virus is bringing out the worst in people, and selfishness. This virus has been changing life as we know it, not only personal life, but many losing their job due to the pandemic.

March somehow managed to be worse than February. Everything that I valued from my day-to-day life slowly started to crumble. Schools and universities from across the nation quickly converted to online for the safety of the students. Little did I know that online school would consist of painfully long zoom sessions. Making me miss being in a face to the face classroom environment. Then suddenly overnight it seemed schools were closing down left and right due to the coronavirus. Now, most community colleges and universities are being converted to online classes using tools such as Zoom and discussion boards. Suddenly the coronavirus outbreak was consuming citizens in our country, but not only us here in the United States. BUT WORLDWIDE. Here I am turning 23 on the 23rd in quarantine. In 2019 I felt as though I knew true stress and worry were, but that was not the case. Although I know it's impossible to time travel, I would gladly go back and do 2019 all over again 100 times to be away for the spring semester was half in-person half online, between all of the added breaks, it went by in the blink of an eye before I knew it we were about eight months into a global pandemic. In the midst of all of this chaos, I got furloughed by my jobs of five years. I felt as though all of the hard work I had accomplished was suddenly flushed away by some stupid virus, a virus at this point we knew very minimal about. Deaths rising day by day across our country and the world. My family and I managed to stay covid free. Then in October my Dad had a covid outbreak at his work, resulting in all of us in my household having to be tested. With a painful swab of my nose, and waiting 48 long hours, I got a negative result, along with my mom. My dad’s tests still not being back. Then after 72 additional hours from the 48, we thankfully got the result that he was negative. Whew, what a relief.

That was what I would hope to be my last encounter or even my last scare with covid, but it was not. On Christmas eve I felt very off for some reason when I was having dinner with my dad and his entire family. I couldn’t even motivate myself to eat for some reason, I just assumed it was just anxiety which happens from time to time. Something just didn’t feel right to me, so the rest of the night I just stayed upstairs away from everyone else. The next morning on Christmas Day I felt completely fine back to normal. I even went to my mom’s side of the family and spend the full day with them, which is something I shouldn’t have done. I have the 26th off from work, returning to work on the 27th. During my shift my back kept aching really bad, I wasn’t sure why but I didn’t really question it. I just went about my day I work the 27th and the 28th. Then the 29th my back was hurting nonstop Even with taking Tylenol. Even worse I developed a sore throat now I was beginning to worry. So I decided to call my doctor and he ordered me to get tested for the coronavirus once again.

My worst fears came through on January 1, 2021, at 12:01 AM I got an alert from Kaiser my medical provider informing me that I had coronavirus. How ironic that I found out that I had coronavirus the first minute into the new year. Having Covid was a very excruciating and discouraging process, with many ups and downs but in my case, I felt more downs than ups. Now a little over a month later I finally feel better. While having covid I experienced every mild symptom over the duration of my 17 days recovering at home. 17 long stressful days, luckily i didn’t have to do it alone. Everyone in my house tested positive for covid. Losing my sense of taste and smell was the hardest part for me, without having those key senses it was very hard for me to motivate myself to eat anything. Now a month later, it’s interesting to take a look back almost a year later and see how much things have changed. Thankful everything is back to somewhat of normal.