

Robert

Age 15

Grade 10

Somers High School

Somers, New York

April 20, 2020



What were your thoughts when the first COVID-19 cases were being diagnosed in China?

I must admit, that I did not take the outbreak extremely seriously at that time. I perceived of it as a foreign pathogen like Ebola, one that would cause panic in the media, yet would not inflict a huge amount of damage on the American public. I assumed that it would largely remain confined to China, and I did not anticipate a crisis in the United States of the magnitude of the one we are experiencing now.

How have things changed for you and/or your family since the outbreak?

We certainly are not traveling as much, nor are we engaging in some of the activities that were a staple of our lives prior to the pandemic. Normally, we would enjoy a nice meal in a restaurant as a family on the weekends, and I myself would often dine out with friends every two weeks or so. Me and my family are no longer able to do this, and in addition to not being able to dine out, I've been able to spend less and less time with my grandparents. They are in the risk category for COVID-19, so my family and I deemed it prudent that we keep our distance for now. These are probably the biggest wrenches that Coronavirus has thrown into my family's daily existence.

For you, what is the worst thing about this?

The worst thing about this pandemic for me has been that I am unable to see my friends as much as I used to. With school being cancelled and my Spring Track Season effectively shuttered, I have had to resort to speaking to them through text messages, phone calls, and occasionally, a Facetime or two. I am still able to play Xbox with my friends on the weekends, though such interactions are not the same as the face to face fun we used to have. Spring Track being cancelled was a particularly heavy blow that the pandemic landed on me, and I truly feel awful for the high school seniors whose final sports season was taken away.

In your experience so far, what, if anything, has been positive about this?

Perhaps the best thing about this experience for me has been the fact that I am able to read much more often now that I have a less severe load of schoolwork to worry about. I am, at heart, a history buff, and I have been reading numerous historical narratives since the pandemic began. One of the best books that I have read recently was a naval history of World War II, as well as an equally fantastic biography of Frederick the Great. This reading has thoroughly distracted me from much of the pain and misery of this pandemic, as has my devotion to my model soldier collection.

Tell us about a moment or experience during this time that you will never forget.

The one moment that I will never forget from this pandemic was when the first case in our very own Town of Somers was diagnosed and reported. I was eating dinner with my family at Chili's in Baldwin Place on the night of March 6, and I remember my mother gasping as she read the email that Dr. Raymond Blanch, our school superintendent, had sent to parents. That note had closed school for one Monday only, and I assumed that that was as far as the pandemic would go in my immediate area. Alas, I was so very wrong, as that first case school cancellation proved to be a harbinger of things to come.

What would you tell someone in the future who asks what it was like to live through the 2020 pandemic?

I would tell this person not to underestimate the potential for the pathogen in question to spread. That, I feel, was my number one mistake during this pandemic. At the same time, I would tell them not panic, as doing so will only make them feel more miserable throughout the situation. My best advice, though, would be to do whatever the government says is necessary to stave off the disease. Although social distancing regulations are undoubtedly annoying, they truly are for the greater good of the population, and I cannot in good conscience, condone any behavior in violation of such measures. The photograph I have provided was taken on Monday, April 20, 2020, and is of me in my dining room.

