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## UA94/6/1 COVID-19 Diary

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Introduction:

Hello! My name is Isabelle Renae Hobbs. I am eighteen and a freshman at Western Kentucky University. I am keeping this diary for my Citizen and Self Honors Course, although I think if I had the time outside work and school I would keep a Coronavirus diary anyway. I've always been intrigued by such writings as *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and quite frankly, I'd love to preserve a piece of history in my writing. I never thought I'd be given the chance to do so, but here I am.

To give you a better picture, I am 5'4 and 125 pounds, have oaky brown hair, blue eyes, and fair skin with quite a few freckles. I am the oldest of seven children in a Roman Catholic family and live in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. I have lived here since I was two, going to church, running cross country, studying Tae Kwon Do, and more. My biggest passion lies in helping pediatric cancer patients. In fact, as a senior in high school, I initiated a dance marathon called RaiseRED (through the University of Louisville) at my high school, raising just under \$10,000 for pediatric cancer research. I also have a love for ice cream, which just happens to be my job! I work at a local ice cream shop called Dewster's. Everything about crafting banana splits and mixing malts and milkshakes is fun!

I have always been someone who is heavily involved in various activities, be that student council, Beta Club, or singing in the church choir. So when the Coronavirus Pandemic hit, I was in for a bit of a shock.

I still remember the week it happened. I was actually on a date with my current boyfriend, Kaleb. At the time things between us were complicated, but we were prom dates and were looking for a tie that would match my dress. On the way to dinner he told me about how his physics teacher was predicting that schools would be shut down in America through January 2021 and businesses would be forever changed. I told Kaleb he was crazy. The first Covid-19 patient in Kentucky had been diagnosed in Lexington the day before, and there was a certain level of fear I refused to admit...but at the same time I was CONVINCED he was crazy. Nevertheless, I had my first kiss that night. In the midst of a worldwide pandemic.

Five days later was March 12, when Governor Andy Beshear announced that Kentucky schools must prepare to shut down with 72 hours notice. This was a Thursday. There was one problem: Hardin County didn't have school on Friday.

The following weekend everything (including school) seemed to shut down or be cancelled. I quickly became tired of hearing the words "social distance" and "stay healthy at home." All that was left to do was go for a walk outside.

The first week of Non-Traditional Online School Instruction (NTI) was miserable. Trying to learn AP Calculus virtually was beyond stressful; I was just grateful that my class had already covered most of the material. We held onto the hope that MAYBE we'd be back in person before the end of the year. But somehow, I knew we wouldn't be. This virus was too big.

Nobody knew what to do or say or what to expect. Two weeks prior we'd said this was ridiculous. Schools weren't going to close. Now schools were closing. Church wasn't going to

close. Mass was cancelled for at least six weeks. Restaurants were closing their doors to in-person traffic. Masks were required in any public place. There was even a certain fear about going outside.

Despite all this, it wasn't until the end of March that things became real for me. My Papaw had had a fever for a week or so, and being the cautious woman she is, my Nana decided they should quarantine. When my uncle, his family-practice doctor, thought he was developing pneumonia and failing to respond to treatment, he was taken to the ER.

I was blown away when I learned Papaw had Covid-19. Despite the fact that he was days from being 79 and the death toll was rising, I had no doubt he would beat it. But slowly he deteriorated. After about a week he was put on a ventilator. Before long his kidneys began failing and his lungs were showing signs of damage. We would receive a phone call saying he was improving, only to get another a few hours later saying his heart rate was in the 120s. This went on for about five days, through Easter weekend. There is nothing so heart-wrenching as watching your mother drop to her knees at the top of every hour to pray a novena for her dad, barely able to make it through because she is sobbing. Ultimately, the decision was made to remove Papaw from the ventilator on April 15. Somehow, Nana was able to get around the hospital's safety precautions and be with him for the last ten minutes of his life. I can't imagine what she must have been going through. They would have been married fifty years in May.

Somehow, some way, Papaw passing really put into perspective that every day should be appreciated. All of the teens posting on Instagram and Snapchat complaining about their lives in quarantine made me want to puke: they had no idea what it was like to endure the rollercoaster ride that this virus was. They didn't know what it was like to lose someone from it. His passing made me really appreciate all I did have. To put it in perspective: roughly 100 years ago, people my age were being called to fight in World War II. I was being asked to stay home in the air conditioning with social media, an abundance of food, and a family who loved me. Maybe it wasn't so bad. I had lost someone dear to me, but I couldn't change that. I could, however, do my part and stay home to prevent others from enduring the same suffering.

As the spring wore into summer and wounds began to heal, people began to branch out of the house again. I started meeting with some friends and having "Chick-Fil-A Trunk Parties"...we'd sit in the back of our cars and eat Chick-Fil-A in the mall parking lot and talk. This same friend group also threw a "quarantine prom" in my backyard at the beginning of June. We had a playlist, lights, photo booth, pizza, and lots of dancing on the back patio. We're convinced it was better than real prom would have been.

Even though the spring and summer was not what ANYONE expected, it still turned out pretty fantastic. I think John 10:10 relates what I have learned perfectly: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." Despite the mask-wearing, losing my Papaw, and the pandemic turned political, I learned how to have fun during a time when things aren't normal and a lot of people think you can't. I'm calling it positivism. Or perhaps living abundantly.

August 28, 2020:

It's a rainy Friday morning in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. I'm sitting in my favorite coffee shop, The Vibe, struggling to work through the large pile of work before me...all on a computer screen. Everyone who walks in wears a mask...like only a doctor performing surgery or a recovering cancer patient would have this time a year ago. They walk up to the register, where a piece of glass stands between them and the employee who takes their order. Between the masks and the glass, most of the time you can hardly hear what the other person says!!! Once you get to your table you can take your mask off. But if you want to use the restroom or get a new straw, it has to go back on.

This week was the first week of school for all of the high schools and elementary schools in Elizabethtown, as well as Western Kentucky University. COVID-19 has changed so much about education. My little sister, Molly, is a sophomore at the county high school, Central Hardin...can only attend school on Mondays and Thursdays, because they are on an A/B schedule. The hallways are set up so you can only walk in one direction, lunch has to be eaten in the classroom, temperatures are taken upon entering the building. She's not even allowed to touch a pencil without sanitizing it after!!!

The crazy thing is, this pandemic has become political. Even amongst schools. The local city school, Elizabethtown High School, has decided to start online for three weeks. And all of the Etown students, faculty, and alums have had no problem shaming CHHS and Hardin County Schools for "contradicting what the Governor said" (to start online for 6 weeks) and starting in person. WOW...we're getting an education here. Let's be supportive of each other and just wish each other well...not criticize Hardin County students for decisions their superintendent made. College has also been affected. I chose to take online classes, with the exception of a lab, which I have to commute to Bowling Green for once a week. But the students living on campus have most if not all of their classes hybrid, meaning they're usually half in person, half online. It's bizarre. My dad talks about how medical school students 20 years ago would skip class and pay someone for their notes...now everyone wants to be in class because they can't!

Personally, I'm glad I chose to take online classes...there is no uncertainty of whether or not I'll have to move home in 6 weeks. But the workload is tremendous! I've spent close to 14 hours a day reading textbooks, taking notes, and watching lectures this week. I'm not sure if I'm overdoing it or if this is normal for a college freshman...but it sure is overwhelming. And the unfortunate thing is I'm mostly confined to my bedroom unless I wanna drive to The Vibe...most other public study places like the public library are unavailable because of COVID-19.

September 4, 2020:

It's another Friday morning, and I'm sitting in Vibe Coffee once again with Molly doing my homework. Today it's sunny though--a welcome change from the dreary skies we've been having all week! Now that I have two weeks of online schooling under my belt, it has become much more bearable...I've gotten into a routine, although it may not be the best! I wake up

around 8:30 or 9 AM, do school until 11ish, exercise, study until about 3, and then most days I head to work, which lasts until 8:30. Then I come home and eat dinner, get ready for bed, and head down to the basement (which I've unofficially adopted as my new bedroom) where I study until midnight or 1 AM. I can't say I'm completely productive, as my "study sessions" usually involve talking to my boyfriend, Kaleb, on the phone for an hour and a half, but I'd say that's a decent compromise for not being constantly distracted by my peers on a college campus.... Last week I talked about the tension between the Elizabethtown City and Hardin County Schools, but this week I'd like to touch on how drastically the COVID-19 has affected the restaurant business. I'll talk mainly about my own workplace, a local, family-owned and operated ice cream business called Dewster's Homemade Ice Cream and Bakery. Open for less than two years, Dewster's has somehow managed to become a love of many Etonians (as people in Elizabethtown call themselves). Last summer, though I had not yet been hired, I remember seeing the lines of people curved throughout the tiny store's interior, and I've heard many stories from my coworkers of how they would still be scooping ice cream and blending milkshakes long after closing because of the never ending lines and traveling ball teams who enjoyed socializing around our tables. I was hired at the tail end of summer, at the beginning of August 2019, and had been looking forward to this past summer since. But it couldn't have turned out more different than we'd expected.

Normally, customers would be able to come into the store, and we would talk with them as we prepared their milkshakes, sundaes, banana splits, and floats. I'm definitely biased, but I don't think it was just the best ice cream in Hardin County that kept us busy...I think it was the customer-employee interaction.

Unfortunately, due to the restrictions COVID-19 placed on the food industry, restaurants could only be filled to 33% capacity, which would be approximately 10 people in our store. Not to mention we would have to install plexiglass between the customers and employees, and it would be very hard to socially-distance people with the way our line curves around in the corner of the store. So Dewster's made the decision to do curbside only, meaning customers could call in their orders and it would be hand-delivered to their cars. Now...think about this. You can call an ice cream store, who has posted their entire menu on social media, updated daily, with photos of specials, along with their phone number. All you have to do is call, you can even pay over the phone with a card. Within two minutes of pulling into the parking lot, an employee (smiling "with their eyes" because you can't see their mouths!) hand-delivers it to either your vehicle or the outdoor picnic table you have chosen to sit at. You don't have to move! I think this sounds phenomenal! But we had a surprising number of customers throw fits, cuss at our runners, or leave because they didn't appreciate the way we were and continue to conduct business. We, as the employees, have continued to be surprised at the number of people who don't want to call in their order, when they're more than content to do so to order a pizza.

I'll also give a glimpse of what it looks like inside the store. Depending on the shift, we have 3-6 people working. Two people are taking orders over the phone at all times. After an

order is taken, it is passed to “the middle”, where one person is standing in front of the bakery case. This person is responsible for making lids to quarts, pints, sundae containers, shake cups, and banana splits that need to be made, as well packing up baked goods. The “middle” person passes down any containers that need to be filled with ice cream to the packers, who are working with the ice cream. Depending on the shift, there will be 1-4 people doing this job. When an order is completed, all the contents are taken back to the middle person, who packs it up and hands it across the counter to the “runner”, who takes it to the customer’s car when it pulls in the parking lot. (It is not always this simple, especially if the person calls ahead or they have something that must be made upon arrival, like a milkshake, but this is the basic process). Our turnaround is surprisingly fast too. Last Saturday night, notoriously our busiest night, I was running out orders. I would regularly have an order to a vehicle less than five minutes after the time stamp on the receipt.

Despite the fact that many customers dislike the way Dewster’s has chosen to do business, we have managed to do very well this summer. Tips roll in unexpectedly fast, and many customers give \$5-10 tips in hopes of us staying open. It’s not been the summer I hoped for, but it’s been a good one nonetheless.

September 11, 2020:

This week in my honors class *Of Citizen and Self*, we started a book titled *The Only Plane In the Sky*, and it is an oral history of 9/11 as told through the quotes of victims of that awful day in history.

This week in our discussion board we were asked to think about how the horror and trauma caused by 9/11 is similar to that caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic. I’ve experienced trauma for sure, especially in losing my Papaw. But I had not really stopped to consider how these situations are so very alike. Both were unexpected. I had no clue that March 12, 2020 would be my last day in the halls of CHHS as a student. None of the victims knew heading to work that day that their lives were in danger. People reacted heroically despite not knowing the consequences. The medical professionals who have risked their lives treating COVID-19 patients are heroes. When I heard about the nurses holding Papaw’s hand as he was on the ventilator, I couldn’t help but think “wow”. These men and women are just like the firefighters and emergency personnel who reacted to the 9/11 attack.

Despite the similarities though, the way our nation has reacted has been very different in these two situations...after 9/11, the country was united as one. After the COVID-19 Pandemic hit the United States, it seemed we fell apart and were never more divided. I have never seen more riots or heard about more shootings on the news. I’ve begun calling it the “pandemic gone political” because it’s no longer each leader taking care of his or her people, but instead they’re bashing each other for the methods they’ve taken to prevent the spread of the virus. The country seems to be in uproar. I’m honestly wondering how long this will last before there is another Civil War.

September 18, 2020:

Today I was hit with the realization of just how much life has changed because of COVID-19. This time a year ago was arguably the best season of life I have lived thus far. I had just returned home from a summer at the Governor's Scholars Program and started a new job at Dewster's. I was enjoying all of the freedom that comes with having and being able to drive your own car. Best of all though, I was two days away from the first RaiseRED mini dance marathon that Central Hardin High School would ever host...and an event I hoped would become a lasting tradition.

RaiseRED is a dance marathon that originated at the University of Louisville to raise funds for pediatric cancer research and treatment. Since a close family friend had passed away from testicular cancer at 26 in 2016, I had been involved with a similar event called DanceBlue at my old high school. When I transferred, I wanted more than anything to bring my passion to Central. I found two teachers to sponsor the event, sought out sponsorship from local businesses, booked a DJ, ordered t-shirts, coordinated with UofL, and planned the entire day with a group I called the "Core Team".

September 20 could not have been more successful. I was on my feet either working or dancing "For the Kids" from 7 AM until nearly 10 o'clock that night...but it was so worth it when we learned we had raised \$9,613.51 for the pediatric oncology clinic at UofL. The joy we all felt was contagious and everyone in the gym that night said they couldn't wait for RaiseRED 2020. I swore I'd come home from college for it (at the time I wanted to go to UofL so I could get involved with the leadership of RaiseRED).

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, RaiseRED 2020, and potentially RaiseRED 2021, won't get to happen. It hurts my heart knowing that despite the fact that the same number of children are suffering and dying from cancer, we can't have a fundraiser to help them. One of the signs I made for the dance marathon had on it a quote from one of our sponsors: *"No matter how far you search for the meaning of life, you'll never find it until you realize it lies no further than the beating of your heart! Because it is the choices you make and the deeds you do with the heart that gives your life meaning."*

Right now it seems like there isn't much we can do to make a difference. But I think we have to strive to do what we can to help the people around us in these freakishly unprecedented times.

September 24, 2020:

Yesterday I got a text from Kaleb that said "Hey so I don't want you to worry but my suite mate tested positive for covid. It's highly unlikely that I have it especially since we bleached the bathroom yesterday but I just wanted to let you know. I'm getting tested tomorrow morning and my test is going to be rushed so I should know before Friday. If I don't know before

Friday night I'm going to stay here and wait until I get my results back. Don't freak out or anything and we can still most likely do the movie I'm just going to be extra safe."

Kaleb is in Speed School (to get a Masters Degree in Mechanical Engineering) at UofL. He comes home every weekend so we can hang out and he can go to RCIA (the program to become Catholic) on Sunday mornings after Mass. We had been planning to watch a movie at his house when I got off work on Friday night...but as soon as I got that message my brain just shut down. Three days before we'd spent close to ten minutes straight kissing in my car...we'd eaten off the same plate...held hands...what was the likelihood that he wasn't exposed by the guy he shares a toilet and shower with?! In my mind, it's pretty high. Did I have COVID? The funny part of this story is...he's been living at UofL for six weeks now...with four guys using one bathroom, and they had yet to clean it until two days ago. Cleaning the bathroom is why he was considered "exposed".

At first, Kaleb and his roommate, Jacob, were told if they tested negative for COVID today, they would be free to go about life as normal. But last night they were told they actually had to quarantine for 14 days...in a dorm room...frozen meals would be brought to them...they can't do laundry...their classes are 100% online...they're STUCK in there. This whole situation seems surreal to me. Maybe it's because I won't see Kaleb for another 12 and a ½ days, or maybe it's the fact that he's stuck in a room with concrete walls, which I personally would be incapable of enduring.

I want to know why we are so scared of this virus. Interestingly enough, if Kaleb had come to see me on Tuesday night, which he actually asked about, I wouldn't be considered "at risk"...unless he develops symptoms. Why are we so scared of death? I feel like we've made it so much more of a political issue, and "who's responded right?" and who hasn't?...it's a flawed system. My best friend is trapped in a concrete room and can't leave...and he might not even be sick. And 50% of people with this sickness don't have symptoms, and it seems like the other 48% who don't die have the flu...why does he have to go through this? Maybe I'm a selfish teenager, but it seems like we're doing this all wrong.

October 2, 2020:

I am SO OVER COVID!!! I have the "good" days where I somehow manage to be positive and remember all the good things I still have in life, but then I have the not-so-good days, where I'm reminded that we have no way of knowing how long we're going to be in this limbo. And the not-so-good days seem to be taking over. I'm stuck between trying to decide whether to move onto WKU's campus next semester or stay home again. I would love to move on campus, but I don't want to be quarantined in a dorm room for two weeks like Kaleb has been for the last ten days. Not to mention, I've saved a considerable amount of money by staying home for only one semester. Yet I feel like I'm seriously lacking in the social department of life. I see everyone's instagram and snapchat stories, filled with "Caturdays" and trips to Cookout to



get milkshakes and late night study sessions...part of me can't help but feel like I'm missing out. Is it worth saving a few thousand dollars and the risk of not quarantining in a dorm room?

October 5, 2020:

Being a social butterfly in the midst of a pandemic is not fun. It's nearly impossible to be a "people person" in times like these. You can't give hugs without asking, wearing masks means having to "smile with your eyes", and it's almost scary to spend time with anyone outside of the people you live with: both out of fear of condemnation from others and because of the sheer fact that you never know when someone was exposed or will come down with symptoms, and everyone they've been with will have to quarantine. I feel like Corona has caused me to start seeing people not as people, but as objects to be feared. I even have a certain hesitancy around my own boyfriend when he comes home on the weekends...who knows what he's been exposed to? The lens I see people through has been changed. I'm no longer seeing people but the viruses and bacteria they are spewing through the air. What's even worse is when someone is coughing or sneezing, I'm afraid to be near them...I see them not as who they are but as the infectious diseases they might be carrying...almost like when you're in the peak of flu season and schools are on the brink of closing due to absences and the kid beside you is hacking all over the place. I feel like an absolute hypocrite, as we live in the Ohio Valley and it's allergy season and I suffer from allergies myself. What else should I expect? It's miserable. I can't wait for the day I can try my friend's milkshake without a second thought or drink after Kaleb without wondering who he's been around on a college campus that's nearly the same as mine. A world without COVID will be glorious.

October 15, 2020:

I'm really excited for the second semester to start! I'm planning right now to go live on campus. I'm pretty nervous about finding a roommate and getting settled in the middle of the year, when everyone else has had four months to do so, but I'm hoping it'll all get worked out. Knock on wood, hopefully everything keeps running smoothly and we're not sent home two weeks into the semester because of COVID. I guess I've done the whole online schooling thing though, so worst case I guess I can just resort to that again.

I'm thinking of double majoring in philosophy and psychology...I can't remember if I mentioned that before. I'm caught in an awkward limbo between doing what I'm really good at and will guarantee me a well-paying job (science-->healthcare) and doing what makes me "tick". I am FASCINATED by the human mind and how it works and especially when it doesn't work. All the theories and ways of thinking and truth, I could go on thinking and speculating forever. It's SO fascinating. On a zoom call with my academic advisor yesterday, I was telling her that I wasn't sure what I should do: I have an 85+ in anatomy and physiology, a "weeder" class most people are failing, so something seems to be saying I should pursue science. On the other hand though, when I get to reading and discussing philosophy and learning about why a person is

inclined to pursue certain individuals over others based on how they were raised, I'm beyond intrigued. I have no clue where my interests will take me, but I sure hope it's true that pursuing your passions will lead you to a job!

On a different note, not that I'll get an answer, but I'd really like to know what other people's sexual standards are. I know I'm going against the grain by saving myself for marriage, and doing so completely: aka no any type of sex or inappropriate touching until there is a ring on my finger. But I learned this week that my boyfriend, who told me he was a virgin, had oral sex with his ex-girlfriend. I'm wondering if I'm a complete fuddy duddy for being disappointed and worrying about the future? I'm not mad at him...it's the past after all. But in a world becoming more and more sexually casual, how difficult is it going to be to find a spouse who doesn't have far more experience than me and thus isn't disappointed by me? I don't know...I feel like there will always be comparison, which is beyond scary to me. Sharing something so vulnerable and being judged would be awful. I would have a hard time sharing that part of myself with even Kaleb, whom I consider myself to be very close to. And knowing it might make his future wife insecure or hurt makes me never want to do anything to push boundaries. Anyways, I'll move away from the uncomfortable topic...I just wonder what the majority of young people think. I'm surprised, both by how far people are willing to go and how conservative they are.

October 22, 2020:

This week, it seems the United States is in complete chaos. We're nearing the 2020 presidential election, and people are either so pro-\_\_\_\_\_ (insert Trump or Biden) or cannot hardly stand either candidate. I can't say I'm a huge fan of either, but being a fairly conservative Catholic who is completely against Socialism (which seems to be what the Democratic Party is moving toward), I can't in my right mind not vote for Trump. I was on campus Tuesday for my lab, and there was a table with two people with a huge sign that said "Democrats for Socialism". I was SHOCKED. I don't think young people understand what socialism is...that it stemmed from Marxism and is what led to Naziism and Communism. They just jump on the bandwagon too quickly and begin promoting whatever it is they think they agree with. I really don't think COVID has helped with the Socialist movement either. So many people have opted to stay home and abuse unemployment checks because they're bringing in more than they will working. This is in line with the socialist issue where there will be no incentive to work.

I really can't stand politics. It becomes a driving wedge between people and it's unreal how it divides people. My mom posted Catholic Church Doctrine on Facebook and my aunt (also Catholic) came back calling her ludicrous for obviously thinking she knew more than Catholic bishops. I don't think you can count on all of our Church leaders though just because they're in positions of authority anymore. Pope Francis (a Jesuit, and thus more liberal) came out saying homosexuals need to be protected, and not directly, but indirectly insinuating that they need to be given more rights. HOW can he contradict the Catechism, where it says marriage is a union between man and woman, and homosexuality is disordered? It is mind boggling. I wonder what

our world is coming to. We've lost all sense of order and just want to do whatever brings us pleasure, even if it ultimately leads to our destruction. I don't understand how nobody seems to believe in the greater good anymore.

October 30, 2020:

I registered for classes this morning...at 6 AM! My night went something like this: sleep for about four and a half hours, wake up abruptly and stare at a bright screen for twenty minutes to register for next semester (slightly terrified because some of them are apparently filled...but not really. Sleepy eyes just play tricks on you, especially when you don't know how to use TopNet!), then sleep for another three hours. Not the most ideal night!

This week has been something else. Because of the election next Tuesday, my anatomy lecture test has been pushed back a week, and similarly, my anatomy lab test (scheduled for the next week) has also been pushed back a week. So I feel like I have so much free time, but have no motivation to study even though I know I'll regret it next week, as new material will start rolling in!

For my honors class, we are doing an Off-Road Learning project, where we choose a topic to research all semester and then turn in an essay of at least 900 words at the end. I'm researching whether sexuality is determined at birth or if it's due to environmental influences. I'm surveying 20 people, a mix of homosexual and heterosexual, to compare things such as drug presence in childhood home, the sexual orientation of parents, how many older siblings they have, etc. I'm really excited to write this essay. I haven't come up with my hypothesis completely, but I think sexuality is mostly due to environmental influences. I'm not 100% sure if there is a solution to this question, but if there is I'm pretty sure it's environmental.

On another note, my co-worker, Nancy's, husband tested positive for COVID this past weekend. Luckily we all wear masks all the time and I hadn't been around her except from a distance a week ago today. I honestly can't wait for COVID to be over. I'm scared to go to things like my friend Mallory's 18th birthday party tomorrow night because you never know who might be positive on Monday. I mainly am scared to quarantine because I don't want to be away from Kaleb for two weeks, as psychotic as that sounds. But I figure if I'm sick, I'll feel miserable and want to isolate. If I'm just exposed though and have to quarantine, I'll be tremendously frustrated. He's already had to do it once, and said by day five, he and his room mate felt like they were in a fish bowl (because they live in a suite style dorm, they didn't have to leave!) I guess I'd use it as an opportunity for growth, spiritually, mentally, and definitely not physically! I'm training for a half marathon right now, so two weeks of no running would for sure hinder my progress.

With that I'll wrap up this week's entry. I guess by this time next week I'll be able to say how the party went. My plan is to stay distant from everyone...I doubt it will work. But I hope it does!

November 6, 2020:

Boy, oh boy, oh boy. This week has been a week. Talk about a heated election! I think all the rage and riots and strong feelings are originating all the way from back in March when everyone quarantined, and it's been a sort of cascade effect that carried us to the 2020 Presidential Election. Pent up emotions from staying in the house for three months were the perfect energy to fuel the fire of the Black Lives Matter Movement, which seems to have divided our nation in half and has most definitely become largely political. Republicans insult Democrats for claiming to be "COVID-safe" but encouraging protesting in groups of thousands, while Democrats insult Republicans for not protesting. We have to find something to argue about. If we didn't have something to fight over what would we entertain ourselves with? It really does seem like a giant strategy game sometimes--and one which I have no say in at that! I saw an Instagram TV video this morning of a Democrat filling in ballots as she was "counting" them...as Joe Biden is slowly pulling ahead of Trump while the Nation is waiting on Nevada to hurry up and determine results. If this is what people are resorting to (illegally filling in ballots), we really don't live in a Democracy. Especially if Biden or his supporters put Democrats up to filling in ballots, Trump predicted the "results" accurately. Only it's quite plausible that these won't be results and Joe Biden won't have been the president the people voted for. That is if he wins.

November 12, 2020:

I'm finally back in The Vibe! I had put the brakes on my weekly trip to this fantastic coffee shop for two good reasons and one bad reason:

1. Good reason: I got scared of COVID again and have been avoiding public places where I'm eating and drinking in close proximity to others.
2. Good reason: I realized I was shelling out \$6-15 per week going to Vibe, and becoming more and more liberal with spending my money. We have a fantastic espresso machine at home, and I was starting to grow more distracted by the very noisy customers at Vibe.
3. Bad (maybe) reason: The owners of The Vibe opened a gelato shop down the street, and they are not following COVID-19 protocols. There is no plexiglass, the employees don't wear masks or gloves, and The Dreamery (the name of the shop) was taking Dewster's customers. (We've since heard that those even semi-cautious about the pandemic prefer Dewster's even though they can't come in, since we follow guidelines). But besides all of that AND being overpriced, I was very irritated with the owners and so out of spite, I'm slightly embarrassed to admit, I quit going to The Vibe and The Dreamery for almost a month. And probably saved \$30-40!

I missed my lattes and smoothies though and needed a change of scenery to do homework this morning. Plus there is something beautiful about the coffee shop atmosphere and aesthetic...it is fantastic for catching up with old friends, going on first dates, getting immersed in a book, or studying.

A quick update on the political scene: Joe Biden won. I haven't been following much, and I know I live in a tiny Kentucky town, but it doesn't seem like the Nation is falling apart. However it is obvious that ballots were forged. I'm not sure what to make of it.

November 19, 2020:

Yesterday while I was at work Andy Beshear came out with MORE restrictions. Restaurants have to close to in-person dining again, schools have to do NTI until after Christmas break, gyms are limited to 33%, etc etc etc. He said he hopes the vaccine in a couple months will be the end of this, but I don't think he's thinking right, because according to what medical researchers have said, antibodies last 3 months. WHY then, would people pay to get a vaccine? But that would be very convenient, wouldn't it? Americans paying to get a vaccine every three months. I'm pretty sure that would prove right there this whole thing is a scam, because the death rates are still around 1%. Coronaviruses have been around for hundreds of years, they will be around for hundreds of years, and it isn't like we are in the midst of the Bubonic Plague. We don't have black pustules growing under our armpits and are nowhere near needing to lay dead people in the streets. Yes, the infection rate is climbing, but America has reacted entirely wrong by quarantining the young and healthy, rather than the elderly and those prone to sickness, so herd immunity cannot be developed. This whole scenario is just very frustrating. We have a couple hundred politicians dictating what millions of Americans can and cannot do, whilst many medical professionals have said we're reacting all wrong. Yet, Americans just react out of fear instead of using logic.

I'm done ranting though. Sorry for whomever has to read this. The week has been good otherwise. Very sunny and pretty warm for November. There is plenty of talk about all of the dishonesty that took place with mail-in ballots. But I'm pretty sure Joe Biden is still going to be President. The country would probably erupt in a second Civil War because of how many of the "groups" would react if Trump was reinstated. Apparently (don't quote me for reliability), one such group this week demanded our new vice president be replaced with an African American. Anyways, back to the week, dad is home because he was "exposed" to COVID through a wall (technically they were less than 6 feet apart!), and so we've been playing lots of games of pickup basketball. I have yet to beat him...he's almost 44! I'm 18! I can't believe I still can't beat him...he complains of achy knees too much to always beat me!

As I write this I'm savoring what is probably the last morning I'll have studying in The Vibe for a LONGGGGGG time. Tomorrow at 5 PM all the new restrictions become effective, which is really disappointing because Kaleb and I were going to go to Buffalo Wild Wings and have a spicy wings challenge this weekend! I feel like Beshear is bringing the hammer down on us this time, and it is gonna be awhile before everything eases up.

November 27, 2020:

Yesterday was Thanksgiving. The only Thanksgiving I can remember we didn't celebrate with at least one family gathering and often two, and the first without Papaw. To top it all off, Kaleb and I decided to take a break from "us" on Wednesday night. So to be honest, Thanksgiving was miserable. I wasn't able to spend it with the boy I wanted to the most, and there weren't any cousins or uncles or grandpas to go hiking or play football with as a distraction. If the break hadn't happened, it honestly would have been the best day...so I guess you can say my emotional state ruined it.

We ate some FANTASTIC food, my sister, Molly, and I went for a super long walk, the family went to Mass and had brunch with Nana, and we finished the day off with a movie night. I'm not sure how to interpret my emotions, or if it's even worth a diary entry, but I can say for certain that COVID has undoubtedly had an impact on my first attempt to be in a more than half serious dating relationship. It is hard to even go on a date! It is possible, but when you're in college and being on your own college campus has limitations, let alone someone else's, you can really only get takeout and go for hikes or long drives...which starts to get old. Maybe we spent too much time together, but in striving to limit my contacts to as few people possible, I haven't been interacting with many friends beside Kaleb...this has certainly led to an unhealthy focus on the relationship. I know divorces skyrocketed when COVID hit...but what about breakups? I know my parents were ecstatic when dad got to start working from home. They love being together with their crazy seven kids! I don't understand how some people don't. I guess marriage is about titles and a commodity for many people nowadays.

On a different note, it's been pretty frustrating with the Governor's new mandate that closed restaurants again. I know it is selfish, but I really want to sit down in The Vibe and be able to read my Bible or write a paper. Funnily enough, the second business owned by the same family, The Dreamery, which is a gelato shop, is open with seating available. I don't understand this. Is it a mandate or suggestion?

Finally, I've only got ten official days left in my first semester! But I'll hopefully be done much sooner, as I've only got four more classes to attend, one paper to turn in, one test to take, one presentation to give, and three finals to take. I'm essentially done with anatomy...SUCH a blessing.

I really need to start thinking about what I'd like to do with my life. I fill up my time so much I never just sit down and think about what I might be good enough at and enjoy enough that I'd want to go into it as a profession.

December 3, 2020

HOW is it December already? We're coming up on the nine month anniversary of when Andy Beshear shut down life in Kentucky. He said it was going to be TWO weeks. TWO WEEKS. Nine months later...oh well.

I think I can say I've officially experienced "college life" as I stayed up until almost 5 AM working on a paper last night for the first time in my life. Consequently, I slept until 11 this morning and am extra groggy even after 4 espresso shots, so it really wasn't worth it! Last weekend we had some family friends over for dinner, and the dad, who is a physician assistant, said another surge of COVID is predicted for mid-January. This bug just won't go away. Apparently though, they just came out with a vaccine that doesn't have to be kept at -100°F. Who wants that cold of a vaccine injected into their arm?!

As I mentioned last week I'm coming up on finals. I took my anatomy lab final a few weeks ago in Bowling Green. My Honors and psychology classes don't have finals. They just have unit exams and/or final papers. Next week I'll be taking a philosophy, public speaking, and anatomy lecture final. I've wondered if the lack of intensity during "finals week" has been because my classes are online or because of COVID, so as a whole professors aren't being as tough on students. I only have one cumulative final, and it is an open note exam. I'll be interested to see if this is what finals are like for the duration of college or if it is because of COVID.

On more of an ending note, this is my last entry. I think I'll continue to keep a "COVID diary" even after I submit this for my Honors class, just for my own memory. My boss has kept records of everything that has happened during COVID as it applies to small businesses, and it was crazy how much I'd forgotten in even just nine months. Everything runs together. But for now, this will be the end.