

Corolla Virus-19

By Canevin J.F. Wallace '21

CCOVID-19. I do not think anyone will ever be able to put an acronym for potential life-threatening disease and year together again, at least I hope not. There are too many ways to describe COVID-19. It has been one of the most interesting decades to date. I have personally gained some great knowledge from this pandemic and even found a girlfriend from it. For the purpose of this assignment, I will describe the opportunities that arose and relationships that have been created by the Coronavirus through my eyes. The last year has been a controversial time-period, but I believe it has been a time for growth and opportunity. Things are not normal, and they never might, but I have realized that friends may be all we need.

I first realized how big COVID-19 was going to be while driving home from Cabrini College after playing the most recently D3 NCAA Men's Lacrosse Champions. We were currently on the bus ride home when a few of my teammates and I decided to rent a beach house in Corolla, NC, the Outer Banks. We had been made aware, through a friend on the golf team, that our season was canceled as far as we knew. The golf coach happens to also be the Athletic Director, so we knew that this was not good. We were all heading home for the time being, and little did we know it would lead until the following Fall. Fortunately, we were one of two teams in school, well heading back to it at least, because it was Spring Break. While fellow classmates of mine were traveling across the country living it up in Cancun or Europe, they would soon find out that it was the last of their foreign adventures for a while. We arrived back not knowing if we would see Hampden Sydney again. Luckily, I had been warned about the unpredictable scale of how big this was about to be. My economics professor Dr. Thornton said during macroeconomics, "Gentlemen, I do not think I can even imagine how big this is going to be...". Next thing I know I am finishing the rest of her class through recorded lectures. I enjoyed the A- in the class, but I would have enjoyed seeing her in person. But school was on the back burner for the coming week, as teachers had no fair warning about how to accommodate for our new "Zoom University" or recorded lectures, we had a week to make the best of it.

We arrive in Corolla empty-handed. Nothing but beer from the ride down. We arrive at the house, a 6-room house, with 13 teammates together for a week at the beach in the middle of March. To say the least, we are a fun group. We were able to have an amazing week, even some beach days. However, there was one day on the beach day I particularly remember as I realized how the country was splitting. We were hanging by the water when one of my teammates asked a nice mother wearing a Saint Chris School (Richmond, VA), "Hey do you know John Burke Jr. or Sr.?" The lady soon realized we were almost a quarter of Hampden-Sydney lacrosse team, at a beach where the only exit was a bridge that was now locked down and partying like buffoons. The beach closed to outsiders two days after we arrived to keep people like us out. She replied, "Wait, why are you guys here? You are not supposed to be here." I will never be able to forget the tone in her voice as she sounded so concerned. She basically said through her eyes, and did say, "You guys are not supposed

to be on the island.”. Ok, so the lady was the least of my worries. There were more important actions to be handled.

The next thing I know, my Instagram direct messages finally pay off on this beautiful girl I have never met. I may have commented on every recent post and story, but I was getting some love back. Her name is Madison, Mitey Madz, or formally, Madison Elizabeth Noble. When I met her, through Instagram, I currently had a friend studying abroad in Serbia. He posted a photo in the baths in Budapest accompanied by a beautiful girl. I commented on the photo with a nice compliment about “that girl”. There were two girls in the photo, and with one girl wondering if it was her, she was not, she replied asking who I was talking about. I responded saying it was Madison. We followed each other and the Instagram flirting commenced. Luckily, Madison had been shipped home from Serbia and after I posted something on my story about "anyone come party in Corolla" like I said it was a crazy week, she responded and asked to come to visit. I was shocked out of my mind. I was literally obsessed with this girl, I had never met her, and somehow she came to be my current girlfriend almost a year later. Perfect timing right...

So, she comes down to meet me for the first time. Her first introduction to Canevin John Ford Wallace (oh yeah, that is my name by the way). Maybe she did not think it through, or how she thought coming to hangout was appealing, but she did it and our friendship began. She hung out for 4 days and 3 nights. They were memorable, and I did not do a lot of drinking as they were being spent exploring Corolla as we had both never been there. We explored beaches for wild horses, traveled onto sand-only roads with tricked-out golfs back in the dunes, and ate bagels for breakfast and subs for lunch. Well, the fun and games could not last forever and school had to resume. Along with that, I had been shipped off the work at Stony Brook University in Long Island. Oh, and this was the beginning of the second week at I had been home. The company I worked for, Nash Events, built five tents, every 125x200 yards. We worked in the rain, mud, and cold. Not to mention, we were working the 12am-12pm shift. It was interesting to sleep with the sun up and head to work when it was getting dark. I was also trying to keep up with school. But for the cause, and since it was for Fema and the Army Corp of Engineers, the money was much better than what I was making or what I had. We were building laborites for scientists and researchers to study the disease. However, I made \$5,500 after five days of work. I had just spent my last dime in Corolla after for booze and for Madison and my food.

The past few paragraphs described the crazy, but fortunate, events I was able to embark on because of COVID-19 after my junior year of college was ended early. I never would have had to opportunity to do them if it were not for the pandemic. I believe myself to be an optimistic individual, one of those “glass half-full” guys. It is hard not to be when you live a life on the road, something I have done since I was 14 years old. However, the most important thing I have learned from the virus is that true friends have your back and are hard to come by, especially when so many individuals are self-occupied and concerned about their own personal well-being. I referenced the lady on the beach early in this paper, but it was my first experience with the separation of the world that was soon to unfold. I even remember going to the grocery store in Corolla and there was no toilet paper. I truly thought that was a hoax, but as we spend most of the time having fun and not

worried about the news, we soon found that this would come to become bigger than we could imagine. I will say I was fortunate enough to begin my journey into the pandemic with true friends. Whether it was teammates at a beach house in the Outer Banks, or even a girl I was obsessed with, yet had never met. The loving relationship was there. Our country, even the entirety of the world, was soon to become split by self-oriented decisions for personal well-being as personal health was about to become the top priority of every individual on the planet. No one could have imagined that laws would mandate individuals to wear a mask and socially distance, yet here we are.

I have described the first month of “The Corona Virus” through the eyes of my 20-year-old self, and the experiences I embarked on. Personally, I will say that things never changed much for me. Since then, I have continued to do all the things I originally did and planned to do. Well maybe getting a girlfriend was not on there, but it happened. I came into the virus with the same great groups of guys I have today. The same taste for excitement and laughter I possessed then, maybe even more of one since people have become so crazy. There are plenty of ways to complain each day about how the virus has made life more difficult, complicated, and stressful. But at the end of the day, one must realize all they have is themselves, and if they are lucky enough, some good friends to enjoy a drink and laugh with. We must make the best of each day that is given to us because the sun will rise, and the sun will fall. It is up to the individual what they do with the time in between.