

March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 the military had sent movers to our house to pack up all of our household goods from Georgia. My husband is active duty and he had orders to move us to Washington State. We were going to take a cross-country road trip to our new home.

The moving company finished packing all of our household items into a semi-truck and we watched it drive off to take all of our furniture, dishes, clothes, etc. minus the one suitcase we had left for our travels to Washington State.

Around five o'clock that afternoon, my husband received a memorandum from the Army saying there was a stop movement on all moves for permanent change of stations. They said it would just be a temporary pause for a day or two. Then that turned into two weeks. Two weeks then turned into three months. We bought a cheap mattress and put it on the floor, went and bought a pot and pan, and a few groceries since we donated all of our food.

Just under three months later, we were allowed to continue our road trip on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The travel restrictions were lifted technically, but the whole road trip was eerily quiet with zero traffic. We started first by stopping in North Carolina to visit family and attend my grandfather's funeral before we continued on. The restrictions and precautions varied by each state we traveled in. The Georgia and North Carolina precautions were very relaxed in their mask requirements.

The further we drove from Georgia, the stricter the precautions and restrictions were. The highlight of the trip was stopping at Mount Rushmore. They were doing construction on the trails, so there were limited areas to stand and take photos. I believe a lot of these places decided to take advantage of the limited foot traffic by improving these tourist attractions in hopes that when travel restrictions were lifted more, that the destinations would be ready for an influx of visitors. We did not need masks since it was an outdoor area.

The hotels we stayed in were virtually empty. Finding restaurants along the way became difficult as many locations closed. We relied on larger chains due to drive-thru availability. We tried to support smaller businesses as much as we could, so we would order a lot of curbside pick ups on the way until we made it to our final destination of Washington State. It was an emotionally difficult time due to the life changing events already taking place along with the pandemic that knocked the world off its axis. We did not have the comfort of our bed, all of our clothing items, sentimental items like family photos to bring us comfort due to them being in transit for the past three months. We did have each other and it made us closer and stronger as a family unit.

We had lived in Washington State once before, so we were used to the copious amounts of traffic on Interstate 5. When we reached I-5, there was hardly any traffic. It was unnerving at first. However, the vacant roads became commonplace for us during our travels. Mask requirements existed in almost every state we visited. It was enforced in most, but not all. We traveled with Clorox wipes, hand sanitizer, and spare masks. The six-foot rule applied in every hotel. Plexi-glass adorned all check-in stations. It was a trip I will never forget.