

The Difference that 472 Miles Makes

Humans are social people and our lives are centered around interaction with others. Although, in March of 2020 we were forced into isolation. None of us knew for how long, but we all tried to remain hopeful. Despite our conscious efforts, hope can only go so far. We started to change our everyday habits in order to create a new sense of normalcy. For some this adaptation was easy, but for others it was quite challenging. People's individual circumstances and where they reside greatly affect their handling of the pandemic. We all live completely different lives and in times of hardship certain obstacles are heightened for many. My grandfather was an extremely social person. He was gifted in the art of "chit chat" and loved the company of others. Quarantine was extremely difficult for him. As a 76 year old man living alone in an assisted living facility in Nashville and receiving kidney dialysis he was completely isolated from the world and greatly yearned for interaction with others. In October he decided the pain of dialysis was too much and the isolation wasn't how he wanted to live, so he stopped medical treatment. His choice to pass away was hard but we had to respect his wishes. We went to visit him and we knew we were going to have to say our goodbyes. Unfortunately, we could only stay in Nashville for 23 hours due to state and school guidelines at the time, but the pure happiness that my grandfather expressed when he got to see us was rather remarkable. During these trying times we often forget how much we mean to our loved ones. When we are searching for our new sense of normalcy we must find ways to care for the people around us. This varies from person to person as different counties and even the states within the US have been approaching the pandemic in their own way. Depending on the region we live in, the governors have chosen to tackle the pandemic using the method that they feel will be the most beneficial to their citizens. As an Illinois resident our state has been locked down and when my family and I were driving to Tennessee it was

evident that things were more opened up and the attitudes were very different. Space has proven to be a contributing factor in how large cities have been responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. Chicago is very dense, so gatherings of any kind become problematic while other cities like Nashville are less dense so outdoor functions are easier to maneuver. With these factors in mind governors have had to make tough decisions based on what they believe is best for their citizens and it remains to be seen what really is best. In these unprecedented times it is easy for us to become angered with the new rules that we live by daily, and that anger often comes from a sense of loss. The loss of control over making the simple decisions we used to and not being able to say the traditional “Hellos” and “Good-byes” of the past.