

Like many others, we were told that we'd have two weeks off school. We'd noticed a few classmates had been out sick, but that was pretty typical for a New England winter. I attended a trade high school, and majoring in information systems meant that my classmates and I had a solid understanding of technology ahead of time... but very little could have prepared us for the uncertainty. We created a discord server, and as we started remote classes, we formed a bit of a system: a morning meeting to take attendance in Google meets with our instructor, and immediately after a group call in our discord server with only us students.

It was lonely, all of us sitting in our homes so far away from one another but using our group calls let us talk like we used to around our meeting tables in class. We could work through classwork together, sending bits of code back and forth and sharing screens when we were lost, but even more so we began to spend time together in ways we never had before. Many of us already played games like Minecraft, but we started to set up servers to play with one another. We'd mute our microphones in class calls and comment on our instructors long winded Texan metaphors. Our junior year ended without fanfare- prom that year was canceled, and we heard our upperclassmen had a drive thru ceremony.

Over the summer, we continued to spend time together online. Though we'd usually fall quiet in school channels over summer break, Connecticut was still self-isolating. Senior year was entirely online for us, too, and we continued our routine of calls and games between classwork. Our senior year was completely pass/fail, and I passed Trigonometry with the help of my classmates through livestreaming my classwork and the technicality that everything over an F was a 'pass', producing the same GPA. We worked through English analysis assignments together and encouraged one another through the AP Computer Science exam that we had not been given the classwork to pass. Only one of us passed that exam.

I saw my classmates two times that year: senior prom, where we rented an outdoor event space and were encouraged, for what felt like the first time in ages, to be close to one another. This one night of normalcy, of laughter and music, was priceless. For our graduation, we were in the new Yard Goats stadium. We'd rented the baseball stadium, still not back to using the high schools' football field and were socially distanced in our rows of seating. My parents were late, my friends' shoes made their feet bleed, and the pictures were terrible. But it was a step above a drive thru, and we went home afterwards without follow up. High school was over. It was empty, like an abrupt awakening when you don't get to finish a dream. We moved on, of course, but I still talk to a lot of my classmates all these years later in the same chat we did our assignments in. It's nice to feel like we held on to our connection, but I can't help but wonder what it would have been like to have a normal last day at school, time to say goodbye and spend time with instructors and classmates that weren't in the IT program. It feels like I never fully left high school, like it was a door that was never fully closed. Even now, in my second half of my

university experience, I can't help but wonder what might have been. In a way, though, I guess that's just life, and I try to keep my eyes forward!