

The Putnam Files

It's been five days since I've been outside, the days are long and the food is cold, but to understand all of this, we need to go back about a week.

I had just left my grandfather's house in Western Minnesota after an unsuccessful hunting trip, but then again, I was feeling good and happy to see some of my family that I don't see often. I knew going up there would be a risk technically because of Covid-19 but since I knew their circle was small and that they didn't get out much the risk would honestly be better than staying here at school. The ride back was long, and I had class in the morning, so I decided to stay home one more night.

That Tuesday I got back on campus and continued my normal life here on campus, I ate lunch with my friends, I did my normal Tuesday lecture and caught up on some missed homework from the previous weekend. Everything was normal and I was settling back into the swing of things, that's when I got the phone call.

I looked down and saw my dad was calling, we talk a lot on the phone and we are very close so I had just assumed he got bored and decided to give me a call, something I always appreciate. I answered and immediately could tell he had news to tell me. I asked what had happened and he said, "Grandpa tested positive for Covid". Hearing this my mind started reeling. I was very relieved to hear that he was in fact doing well, something that shocked me but made me very grateful judging his age and medical conditions. I called my Grandpa, who told me not to worry, he only had "a touch of the Covid". His attitude towards it made me laugh. After the initial shock and making sure my grandfather was ok, I got scared and staring thinking of all the people I had been in contact with since I was back.

That night me and my roommate discussed my potential options, he thought that I would be ok and could just continue to act like everything is normal. Although I felt fine, I was still very scared that I would develop Covid within the next couple days because of the 2-5 day incubation period. I knew that on Friday I would have to get tested because I am on the cross country team, and that if it came back positive all my teammates and friends would have to spend Thanksgiving alone in isolation because of me. I couldn't let that be on my conscious, so I decided to make a big decision: voluntarily check myself into Putnam Hall, the quarantine dorm.

I told my coach the situation and he told me he would reach out to housing for me and they would contact me from there. I spent my last day out packing up my final stuff and making sure I didn't miss anything, I also went on one last run because I didn't know when I would get to be outside again. I got my room information and brought my duffle bag and backpack down to Putnam with some other stuff. I had heard it was awful boring and lonely in there, so I was dreading moving in, my motivation was to protect my friends and take on for the team. I walked in the front door and showed the desk worker my email and told her my situation, she gave me my room combo and I was on my way up the stairs to room 308.

It was already about 7 pm so I decided to unpack and head to bed early, I had class online in the morning and had nothing better to do.

I woke up the next morning and had a fairly normal morning; up at 8:30, Econ from 9-9:50 and then time for some homework. My first realization that things were different was around noon. Me and my roommate always go down to Davies at lunchtime and eat with the team every day, today I had to eat here. The one issue was I didn't get my food until around 6pm. You see, meals in Putnam are delivered at night, then you get your one hot meal (dinner) and breakfast, lunch, and snacks for the next day. Luckily, I had packed some extra snacks, so I munched on some mini donuts and a fruit cup while looking out the window. For months I had walked down that hill and looked towards Putnam, standing tall over the river. Me and my friends would sometime joke about Putnam, but I now I know what the view looks like from the inside.

I did some more schoolwork and watched a little YouTube to pass the time, 3:30 rolled around, practice time. I was already envious of my teammates for being able to go run, I was starting to miss them already. Dinner arrived when I was doing homework, they drop it off at the door to avoid contact, and it was time to eat. I was excited for some good food but was sad that my food was cold. No worries though, I didn't really mind it and figured it was just an accident. I ate my dinner and unpacked my food for the next day. They gave me so much food! I was excited to have a lot of snacks and a good breakfast and lunch, maybe it wouldn't be bad in here. I reflected that night about my first day lying in bed, the quiet time wasn't bad, I could use the space to finish some work and the food wasn't bad, this quarantine would be so bad.

I lived on a very repetitive schedule for the next few days. I did my school in the morning after breakfast and coffee, I made sure to pack the Mr. Coffee, and then spent the day wasted on YouTube, where I found myself very fond of videos about a rock climber named Alex Honnold, world famous for his free solo of El Cap. I would watch videos and movies until dinner, which I learned quickly was always going to be cold. I was getting updates from my team, who had just raced a mile, something I was looking forward to doing before I went to Putnam. The

quiet was getting a little long, although I talked to family and friends on the phone and snapchat, it was still lonely. I noticed myself looking out the window a lot, watching the world.

Housing had been in contact with me and my release date was two days before Thanksgiving, I was very happy to hear that I would be able to spend the holiday with my family. On one of my last nights, my sister decided to send me a pizza, and whether it was the secret sauce in the Domino's pizza that night, or my first time having real food in a week, it tasted amazing. I was up that night until about 2 in the morning. Motivated by a mix of Alex Honnold, the movie Creed, and Eminem (I am very easily motivated), I decided to exercise. After about 30 minutes of pushups, abs, and squats I was exhausted by for the first time since I moved in, felt accomplished. That night I stayed up and thought to myself about who I wanted to be, maybe still high off my workout or enlightened from my isolating, I decided to be the best I could be and to not take anything I get for granted because I have now seen how quickly I can lose it all. It had been 5 days since I had seen people, been outside, and even eaten hot food. I realized that I was very fortunate to get those everyday luxuries that I took for as a right.

I got my release email the next day and I felt free. I quickly packed up my room, loaded all my belongs into the little red cart and walked back up the hill. My first step out the doors was bliss. I would so happy to be outside again. I got back to my room and quickly unpacked and headed back to Davies. When I got there, I grabbed the famous teriyaki bowl and found my friends at the normal booth. After a quick hello and some jokes, I sat down and at that moment my quarantine adventure came to a close. I was back with my people doing what I wanted.

Although not that long, my week in complete quarantine did make me realize things. It made me realize that I need to not take anything in life for granted. It made me realized that I had goals in life and was going to do whatever I could to achieve them. Finally, it made me realized that I love good food. Putnam was a good reset to my life and made me step back to reevaluate things, something that I am very grateful.

It's funny how the wildest things in life can lead to important moments you never knew you needed. For me, it was the Coronavirus pandemic and room 308 in Putnam Hall.