

JENNA MAUL

COM 340

PROFESSOR NIMAN

SEMESTER PHOTO ESSAY

2020 has been an interesting year, to say the least. Most of what we used to know doesn't exist anymore, or looks very different. We wear masks anytime we are outside of our house, sanitize every five minutes, and school and work environments have never been more different.

One thing we all could look forward to is the holidays—a positive way to end the year. Thanksgiving marks the beginning of the holiday season, and although it looks much different than past years, there were some things that almost made it feel normal.



ready to go home and bored from a slow day.

For most, myself included, Thanksgiving starts the day before with a trip or two to the grocery store for some last-minute items. One of the first things I noticed was how quiet the store was. Usually, the day before Thanksgiving, the store is booming with panicking people searching for food essentials, but this night the store was no busier than a normal day.

It was quite depressing looking, even the people working were looking like they were





I noticed most of the store was stocked, as opposed to how it normally looks quite empty before Thanksgiving. The only empty aisle was the toilet paper aisle, since that is a concern again.



The aisles that did have people were very empty, only a few people. Which was beneficial to following social distancing standards, but very eerie and unusual. Standing in those aisles was like standing in a time warp.



In my family, our Thanksgiving prep starts at 5AM with my dad getting the oven hot and the turkey ready. After the turkey is put in the oven, we go back to bed.

This was one of the moments this thanksgiving that felt normal, especially since my dad got a turkey that was big enough to feed our normal 20-something number of guests even though only six of us were having it this year.





Around 9AM, my mom starts getting the rest of the food ready. It all felt normal until around 11AM, when my brother and his girlfriend came over...just my brother and his girlfriend. No grandparents, no aunts or uncles or cousins, which was a bit sad and surreal, but made everyone more grateful for the family around.





Around noon, the food is nearly done and we are all excited and ready to eat!

image not taken by me, but directed by me



As my parents finish getting the food out of the oven and picking the turkey apart, us ‘kids’ (all now 20-somethings) set the table and get the wine out.

This was a strange moment because our table is significantly smaller and emptier than how it normally is on Thanksgiving. It felt like something was missing, and felt almost like another normal day because of this.





Washing hands before dinner, which has also just become all too normal to do throughout the day because of the pandemic.



image not taken by me, image not my own

2019-2020

The image on the left was taken Thanksgiving at the head of the table in 2019, and on the right is Thanksgiving 2020 from the head of the table. The comparison is sad. Last year was so full of life and laughter and this year, and this year, though quieter, was more intimate and enjoyable nonetheless. Just very different.



image not taken by me, image not my own

Every year, we take a family selfie. This year, it was significantly smaller as compared to last year...



Thanksgiving, 2019 (image not taken by me, image not my own)





Dinner is served! At least having all of the same foods left a sliver of normalcy for the day.



After dinner, we facetimed some of our family members who couldn't be with us that day. It was strange seeing my whole family have separate dinners and seeing what everyone made. And a sad at the same time knowing we haven't seen each other in person for almost a full year. Normally after dinner we would all watch the football game together, so because we couldn't do that together we texted during the game.





Every year, my mom makes homemade cinnamon rolls that the whole family is obsessed with. Since we didn't see anyone, my mom and I decided to drive to our family's houses and give them the cinnamon rolls and say happy Thanksgiving. I was sad to see my grandparents eating alone, almost like it was just a normal dinner night. They were happy with our visit though, which made my day.



COVID has made this year very difficult on families all over the world. Looking at these photos I took and comparing them to ones taken last year makes me sad, but grateful. I know not everyone can say that they haven't lost friends or family members to COVID. I know not everyone was able to have a Thanksgiving dinner at all. So, although it was different, I'm grateful that I was surrounded by family and loved ones this year, and that all of my family is healthy and safe.