

Citizen Account #1:

Life in 2030 as a senior in college is worlds different from what a college student would have experienced while I was growing up. A massive solar flare back in 2020 knocked out all the networks that cellphones and computers rely on to function. A few of these networks have been repaired in the ten years since this disaster, but many networks remain unstable and unsafe to use. I was eleven when the solar flare hit so I was young enough that I hadn't become completely reliant on cell phones and computers for my sanity, unlike many kids who were just a few years old than me. So many of my friends would rely on their cellphones to stay connected to the world and when those networks crashed so did they. I was one of the lucky ones, I had other things that helped occupy my time, including my riding lessons and photography. Mankind has been taming and riding horses for thousands of years and I don't think that's going to change anytime soon, thank goodness. In the years following the crash of the networks, many adults were simply unable to deal with the abrupt change in their lives and unemployment rates soared through the roof. My father was one of those people, he simply couldn't handle the pressure of losing the networks since his job almost entirely consisted of working with the stock market over the internet. My mother is a teacher so her job hasn't been affected too much, which has been my family's saving grace these last few years. My parents have always had a bit of a rocky relationship, especially when it comes to finances. The crash drove their relationship over the cliff and they divorced shortly thereafter in 2021. Now, ten years later, I think everyone has adjusted pretty well to the new normal. A few of the networks have been restored, but they don't run at the capacity that they used to and networks are no longer safe to use as hackers have been absolutely crawling out of the woodwork over the last decade. A majority of people have decided to go completely off the grid in terms of using the networks, so for them that means their only form of communication with the world is what we used to call snail mail. No more emails, text messages, Facebook messages or any of that. The few landlines that are left are strictly used by government officials.

In the year 2016 I was only seven years old but things were a lot different than compared to what things are like in today's age. A person can no longer hop onto Google to figure out the meaning of some menial word or to learn something about a celebrity. Today you'd have to look up the answer in a good old fashioned book, something that a lot of young people had forgotten about. Books and libraries have become hotspots for young people to hang out instead of internet cafes since there are no more internet cafes. Everyone's a lot more down to Earth now too, since people aren't worried about how many subscribers or followers they have on the various social media websites that used to exist. People can no longer bully others anonymously through the internet, and I think the lack of social media has taken a huge weight off of a lot of people. Even though I was only eleven, I can remember posting pictures on Instagram and being upset that despite the fact that I had almost 800 followers, I usually only got 30 or so likes on my pictures. Looking back I know I was being ridiculous, but it used to make me question myself and my photography. Was I not good enough? Did people not like me? Did they not like my photography? Now of course I realize that it doesn't really matter what anyone else thinks. Not having a cellphone has really helped me come to grips with who I am as a person and what I want to be when I grow up. I don't just want to sit behind a desk in some office, I want to be out in the world, making a difference. Making a change that I can actually see on this planet we all call home.

When I was younger I can remember using my cellphone for a lot of little things, for my alarm clock in the morning and a flashlight when I needed one. The problem with cell phones is that the companies that made them designed them in a way that people would become addicted to their phones. I can remember walking around a shopping mall and seeing almost every person walking around while looking at their phones. It used to boggle my mind that people couldn't not look at their phone for even five minutes. I just didn't understand why people relied so heavily on something that could so easily be taken away from them. Cell phones spoiled us and allowed some to skate through life instead of actually living it. People no longer had to remember how to do or fix something when they could simply look it up and have an answer in mere moments. In a way I think a lot of people forgot what they stand for in lieu of taking the easy way out. Life is hard, although it was considerably easier back before the solar flare. In many ways our society today has regressed to an era pre-2000s when cellphones became all the rage. Life is a lot simpler nowadays, and in my opinion it's fantastic. I can actually have a detailed conversation with someone who isn't distracted by their cellphone and only half paying attention to what I am saying.

My everyday routine has changed a lot since 2020 but that has more to do with the fact that I am older and in college. I did used to spend quite a bit of time on my computer, watching videos on YouTube and shopping for horsey items that I didn't need. While I do miss that time in my life, it certainly has proved to be something that I can live without. As long as I have my camera, my dogs and my horses I'm good. I can't imagine where I would be today without my camera, my dogs and my horses, without them I can't imagine what my life would be like. I really think that having these items helped keep me grounded while the world fell to pieces all around me.

Since the networks have been compromised ten years ago, I rarely ever think of the life I used to have. Sure, I have fond memories from that time in my life, but despite that it's not a time I want to go back to. I love the way things are now. People are more genuine and honest and it's so refreshing to see how much more time people spend outdoors and with their families. Gone are most of the technologies that distracted us from what life is supposed to be. It may be more difficult to communicate with other people who don't live close by, but that doesn't matter. Mankind has finally managed to extract itself from the chokehold that technology was holding us in. We have broken free from the ties that bound us and now we can live our lives however we want. We may not live in the super technologically advanced future that some of us imagined, but none of that matters. What matters is that the human race is flourishing now more than ever and I can't wait to see what we accomplish in the coming years.

As a citizen of planet Earth, anything that happens here is a concern to me. The solar flare knocking out the networks changed people lives in ways no one had really imagined. In some ways it set us back decades, but in others it moved us forward exponentially. I know that back in 2016 the world seemed to be in a bit of a rut in which there was a lot of violence and anger and very little action being taken to solve the root of these problems. People had adopted a mindset that they could just sit back and not do anything because someone else would do it for them. Today we don't have that. If you want something done, you have to go out and do it yourself, no matter how hard it may be. People may not want to admit to it, but technology made people downright nasty. Having it taken away from them in the blink of an eye made people realize just how dependent they'd become on something that really isn't a necessity for survival.

Citizen Account #2:

Dear Diary,

Today is my 13th birthday! I decided to dress up a little nicer today because I was hoping to get lots of birthday wishes once I got to school. While in my classes we had done some reading and some math problems. When we were doing math problems my teacher would put up the worksheet on a projector so she could do the problem with us just as everyone else. In my science class we went outside and looked at the different plant species in the wetlands area. In my english class we went to the computer lab to work on our short stories by looking up examples and using the computers to type it. Once school was over I went home to hang out with some friends for my birthday. I went out for my birthday dinner with my family and afterward I was able to open up my presents. Just what I wanted! A cell phone! My first ever phone. Yes! Most of the other kids in my grade were all beginning to get them and now I can finally keep in touch with everyone else. Best birthday ever!

Sincerely,

JD

August 10, 2008

Dear Diary,

One week until the start of high school! So exciting! Yet so nervous. Today I went back to school shopping with my parents. I got new clothes and school supplies so I would be ready to start the year off right. My dad led us into the Apple Store and I thought that he just wanted to look at the new gadgets, but instead he wanted to buy me a laptop! WOO! I can't believe it! I am so surprised this is such a nice gift! I will take good care of this thing and use it all the time! I feel confident going into high school now and know that I will have the resources necessary to do well.

Sincerely,

JD

April 5, 2014

Dear Diary,

Senior year of high school has been quite great! I already decided that I am going to Lafayette College, so things are smooth sailing from here. School work has started to die down too so I'm constantly hanging out with my friends. Our school recently encouraged the use of technology in the classroom, so you're allowed to have your phone out (with your teacher's permission) and can use laptops in the class as well. Most teachers didn't really allow us to have our cell phones out in class, but normally I was able to have my laptop out. Since my phone and laptop are both Apple, I synced up my iMessage and am able to text my friends on my computer during the day and even at home! I am constantly attached to my phone and my laptop so that I am always synced in on the latest social media and texting. My best friend Jessie and I are always texting, often times meaningless stuff, but today she told me she decided to go to Ohio State! Yay! I'm happy for her! Can't wait to see what the future brings us.

Sincerely,

JD

June 15, 2020

Dear Diary,

Today was the scariest day of my whole life. At approximately 5:45pm the power was knocked out. Originally I thought it was just my neighborhood, possibly some electrical problems causing the shortage, but then when I tried to text my neighbor to see if she heard anything about the reason or when the power will be back on. The weird thing was my text didn't go through. I tried texting other people and none of my messages or calls would go through. The line was dead. I have no power, my phone doesn't work, and I have no idea what was going on. I went to my car and figured I would go for a drive to see if it was just my neighborhood having difficulties, but everywhere I went the lights were out, even the car radio didn't work! WHAT is going on!? I hope the power comes back on soon!

Sincerely,

JD

June 16, 2020

Dear Diary,

Day two of complete darkness. Everything was closed because workplaces couldn't open without power. I continued to look around town to figure out if anyone knew what was happening and noticed people started to gather around the gardening center because there were new solar panels there. These solar panels were able to still operate miraculously and people went to seek that out to find information with power. Hopefully we can connect with someone soon to find out what's happening.

Sincerely,

JD

June 25, 2020

Dear Diary,

Solar Panels have been popping up all over the neighborhood. These seem to be the only thing that is working to power homes and devices. Although, we were able to start to get some power back on, our phones still didn't work! This is madness! I can't live without my phone. I need it for work and constantly am on it every day. Recently, we found out this massive power outage is due to a solar flare. A friend that works at the OSU laboratory studies the magnitude of the sun and noticed that one was coming our direction, but did not realize the strength of the flare until it hit us. Apparently this is what knocked out the entire power grids and all satellites and forms of communication. I hope someone is able to fix this soon.

Sincerely,

JD

June 15, 2030

Dear Diary,

It's the 10 year anniversary of The Great Solar Flare of 2020. Today across the world, communities everywhere shut off their electricity and come to town centers with lit candles in remembrance of the darkness that had once hit. Oh how my life has changed for the better and worse over these past 10 years. Initially, it was complete shock. I had to survive without the use of my phone and radio. Communication was very rocky and I wasn't able to contact my parents in a long time because neither of us were able to use phones. I wrote them a letter so that they would know I am well, but still even that takes a considerable amount of time longer than the usual text. It was strange I would constantly try to

check my phone even though I knew that there was nothing on it. When I didn't have my phone on me I would think that I lost it for a second and panic, but then realize there was nothing important I was missing out on. After I got off my addiction to my phone, it started to become more natural and I realized how many more person to person actions I was missing out on by constantly being attached to my phone. People came out of their shells and were forced to interact with people more often and couldn't hide behind a screen. Everything is far more localized now. The town I live in everyone is able to get everything they need within a small radius and there's a public post to put small letters that people can come pick up instead of having them delivered. Sending "snail" mail is now the popular form of communication. They haven't been able to fix communication to become what it was before so inventors and scientists are working on new ways to advance. Apple sent a section out in the mail that they are working hard to find new ways for us to chat and that possibly something is stirring in the future.

Sincerely,
JD

August 22, 2030

Dear Diary,

Today I really struggled without having instant communication. I had plans to meet up with my friend Madison, but last minute I had to run to work because I had forgotten to finish up an assignment. Normally, she is so understanding with these things, but I basically stood her up and we haven't been able to catch up in weeks. I left a message at my door before I ran out, but I don't think she was able to see it because I went to the post office and she had left me a letter and appeared to be very upset with me. Sometimes it is so nice having more interactions with people face to face, but it often time causes difficulties in settings like this. I stopped by her house after work with some baked goods and an apology letter, but she wasn't home so I left it at the door. Maybe I will be able to catch her tomorrow.

Sincerely,
JD