

is *this*

Marshall Fire sweeps Louisville, Superior

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IT?

It was five days after Christmas. Our gifts were barely opened, and our trees were still adorned with the ornaments we so lovingly hung. Some of us were on vacation, in exotic destinations or simply visiting family stateside just like every other holiday. Most of us were at home. Texting with friends, shopping, making lunch, sleeping in.

Because it was a normal day.
Until the smoke came.

Then our little bubble of winter vacation burst. Our Netflix binges were interrupted by evacuation alerts and frantic text messages from family and friends. We were forced to choose with a clouded

mind which of our many possessions was most precious.

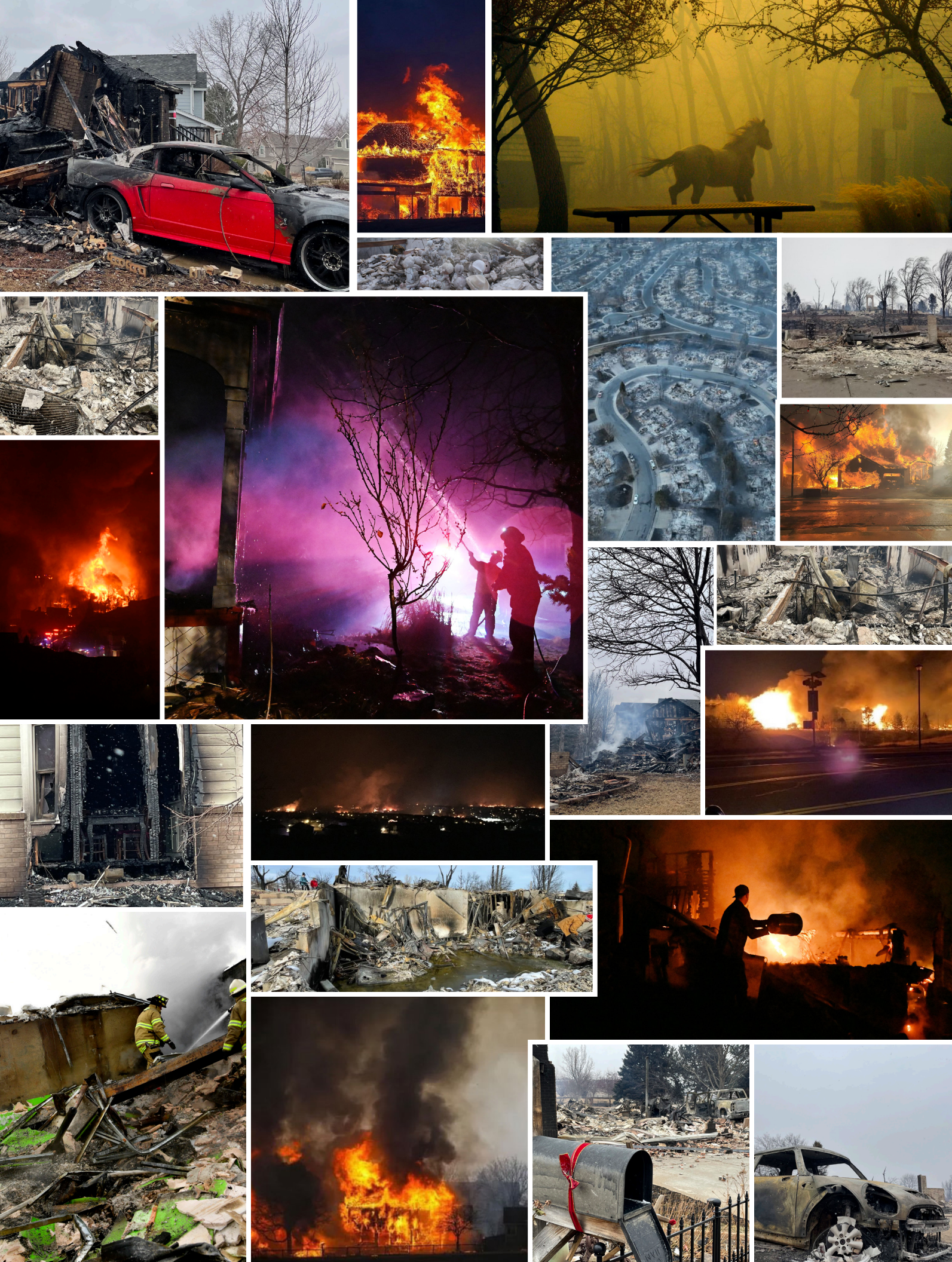
Some of us didn't even get that opportunity. Whether we were able to save something or had nothing but the clothes on our backs, we had to leave our homes behind.

Dec. 30 was a sleepless night as we checked in with our friends and watched the news, hoping beyond hope that the next clip they showed wasn't our home being turned to ash. We wished the snow would come faster, as we watched our community go up in smoke and flame with one question on our minds:

"Is this it?"

JUST THE BEGINNING Houses begin to burn in a neighborhood in Superior in the Marshall Fire on Dec. 30. The fire destroyed thousands of structures in the most devastating wildfire in Colorado history.

photo courtesy of The Denver Post



what NOW?

How do we learn to live with the aftermath?

Finally, the morning came, and the snow began to fall. Some of us were excited to go home. Some of us couldn't. Either way, over the next few weeks, we slowly trickled back to life. But as we drove our normal routes, they were blocked off by armored military vehicles, and the once fresh mountain air gave us headaches because it was filled with ash. Everything felt like a reminder, and now there will forever be a time before and after "the fire."

We desperately wished for normal, even the "new normal" we developed during the pandemic. How do we move on?

"Rebuild" seems to come up in every conversation, but how do we pick up the burned memories and see something more than just that? How do you find a silver lining when everything is black? What now?

Maybe these are questions you can answer as you read this at the end of the school year.

Maybe you can finally answer them as you look back on high school thirty years from now.

Either way, it is moments, events, and tragedies like this that remind you that life is full of unknowns.

So live in the moment. Live in the now.



photos by yearbook staff and courtesy of The Denver Post, Ethan Hendricks, and Maebly Aleo