

I have never been a sentimental person. As a child, I could not understand why my friends collected rocks, cards, and shells. None of them seemed particularly special, and there was always more to find. What was the point?

This mindset persisted until I had to move from the States back to Korea. Suddenly, I realized that all the familiar objects of my life – the Cheetos puffs I had eaten, my small yet cozy room, the street I had to cross to get to school – were about to fade into the distant recesses of my memory. It was then that I understood the value of collecting memories, not objects. These memories would be the only things I could carry with me as I moved on from the life I had lived here. This realization didn't fully hit me until my suitcase was packed and I took one last look at my bare, empty room. I regretted not taking more pictures with my friends, not going out to Chick-fil-A more often, and not cherishing the best moments with them.

Little did I know, the pieces of my past life were still all around me. During my time in Korea, my friend came to visit, bringing the yearbook containing words of my friends and photos and all of it came rushing back. The yearbook is really important to me. It's like a bridge to my past. Whenever I feel lonely or disconnected, flipping through the yearbook becomes a comforting ritual. It's full of photos and notes from my friends, and it reminds me of good times and the fun we had. As I stepped onto the plane back home, alone, I barely had time to look back on my experiences in this land. I closed my eyes, and off I went to my homeland. I was unsure if I was in Korea until I saw the familiar letters again. I saw the cars pass by and I wondered the next time I would see the blue-colored cursive California license plate. That is when I faced reality; I no longer live in the U.S. I missed my friends and was filled with the thought of making new friends again.

The idea of an international school also made me shrink a lot. I had to live on an island all alone in the dorms without knowing anyone. The homesickness intensified as I stared at the poster my friends signed me on the last day. Happiness from that is deeply embedded in my head. Although some of the signs had faded, I could still identify who wrote them. Since the poster was such a big part of me and my memories, I felt like my heart was torn up when I could not fit it in my suitcase on the way to the island. But, more experiences I had to face were waiting for me at the new school.