

Do I love writing? I used to, especially when I was an elementary and middle school student. I kept my diary at that time. I still keep it in my bookshelf. Sometimes, I read it over and look back those days when I had a really hard time. You know what? My parents were farmers and they needed hands to help them. They got so many things to deal with on the farm, such as feeding cows, plowing the fields, rooting up weeds and harvesting crops. Whenever they had to harvest rice and barley, I didn't have choice but to stay home and help them instead of going to school. I envied other boys and girls who could go to school without doing work in the field. They were free from difficult work and enjoyed studying and playing at school.

I was a good boy at that time and I didn't want to disappoint my teachers and parents. I kept my diary day by day even though I was forced to do it. During summer and winter vacation, my life at home was monotonous. I got up early in the morning, around 5:30 and led my father's cow to the foot of the mountain to feed her. Coming back home after I tied her to a big pine tree near my house, I had breakfast. As soon as I finished it, I usually ran to the sea to enjoy swimming. It was wonderful. I could spend all morning swimming in the sea. What did I do, if I got tired? I caught sea cucumbers, dug out shells or fished. My fishing pole was only a little bamboo with a simple line and a hook at the end of it. Then, I went back home to eat lunch. After lunch, I went to feed the cow again to the hill behind my house. I hung out with my friends or my brothers at night. There were so many stars to look at, so many bugs to catch. I still remember fireflies flying with light twinkling on the dark night. My daily life was almost the same. So, it was a hard work to make up my story to write in my diary. I couldn't write the same story in my diary from the first day to the last day of the vacation. Some pages have 'I did the same thing as yesterday.' When my teacher looked at it, she told me that I was a lazy boy but I couldn't help it.

I lived alone from March 1979 to Nov 1989. I had to leave my parents to study in a high school because there was no high school near my hometown. My high school was located in Masan. It is almost 30 kilometers away.

Korean Cuisine and Dining

- 한국인의 밥상 -

Whenever I talk about movies or dramas, I think of something I used to enjoy in my childhood, something which I sometimes miss. Speaking of dramas, I prefer watching documentary or non-fiction dramas. Recently, I began to have interest in programs which give lots of information about healthy life. 'Korean Cuisine and Dining' which is produced by KBS TV2 is one of my favorites. The narrator, Choi Bul-am, who is 73 years old and one of the most popular TV stars to people in 50s and over, visits every part of South Korea. He meets ordinary people and talks about their daily life, food and its history. He sometimes joins in dining with them.

Two weeks ago, I watched an episode about sea urchins and sea squirts which are special healthy summer food in Youngdeok and Tongyung area. They are my favorite. In Youngdeok, the narrator met a couple who made their living from the sea. The husband sailed a boat and his wife dived into the sea to catch seafood such as sea urchins, sea squirts, sea cucumbers. They made mulwhoi(물회) with those fresh ingredients. It looked really delicious and healthy. They told some other recipes to make fermented urchin, fried squirt bibimbab and jeon, Korean traditional pancake. Tongyung is a small city by the sea where many people from all over Korea visit to enjoy its wonderful scenery, to taste various fresh seafood and to fish all year round. Many people work at shops related to seafood and sea farming. Talking of sea squirts, more than half the sea squirts in Korea are grown. We can see long lines of white floating buoys in sea farms. Most of them are sea squirts fields. Though we can taste them all year round, they are more delicious during winter time. Sea squirts bibimbab is well known. It is made with fermented sea squirt and various fresh vegetables.

When I watch this program I feel as if I were in my hometown. It also provides me with lots of information on towns and villages with traditional healthy food which makes me feel like visiting there. I will find some time and go to meet country people. Their slow life will release me from my tedious and busy city life.

Should Korean History be a compulsory subject in the College Scholastic Aptitude Test?

There was an absurd episode. Students of a vocational high school in Seoul was studying a Korean Language Art. They were discussing a famous novel which set was Imjinwhaeran, the Japanese invasion in 1592. A student asked the teacher whether Admiral Lee Sunsin was a real person or just a created character. The teacher said, "You can see his statue at Kwangwhamoon, so he was a real admiral." I heard that many naval soldiers all over the world knew him with Admiral Nelson of Great Britain. This shows what high school students know about Korean History.

After President Park said that the important subject like this should be put into the national assessment criterion on July 10, 2013, there is a controversial issue whether to designate Korean history as a compulsory subject in CSAT. Since 2005 when Korean history was designated as one of the optional subjects (in the social studies) in CSAT, the number of students who chose Korean history in CSAT has been drastically decreased from 100% to 27.7% in 2005, 9.5% in 2011, 7.1% last year. There are few universities which demand Korean history score for the entrance application. That means 93% of high school graduates can go to university without studying Korean history much. As a result, high school students never study Korean history and lose the national identity. Many people are worrying about it. However, some people wonder what help it will be if Korean history is designated as one of compulsory subjects because it is just a cram course for a test. I think students should learn history for not only individual development and also better future of their nation.

My Favorite Teacher

Looking back over my school days, I had some wonderful teachers. Of them all, my favorite teacher is Mr. Park Se-kwon. He was my homeroom teacher when I was a first grader in a high school in Chang-won City. He was tall and kind. He had a wonderful mustache and a big body. He just graduated from a university and started his teaching career that year. He was a math teacher but I was not sure that he taught math well.

From the beginning of my high school, I had to stay alone in a small lodging near my school. I cooked meals, cleaned my room, studied for myself. At first, I enjoyed my life because nobody told me what to do and I was totally free from my parents' intervention. Before long, however, I began to feel bored with my lonely life. I often hung out with some friends trying to find some guilty pleasure and neglected study. As a result, I got bad grades on the tests. One day, my homeroom teacher, Mr. Park, called me to his office. I talked about my problem and he advised me to concentrate on my study. I enjoyed talking with him. He was such a warm-hearted man. He was not only my homeroom teacher but also he looked like my big brother. He changed me into a completely different student.

After that, he visited my lodging a couple of times and I talked about my future plan. He gave much information on universities. He also told me how to study math effectively. Although I was good at math in my middle school days, high school math was very hard for me. I didn't have any interest in it. I think that he showed a new path to math. In the end, I could get a high score in math and it was a great help for me to go to a university I wanted to. Without his help, I would work at an other office instead of school. I visited my high school homepage and saw his name. He is still working, but as a vice principal, not as a math teacher. I'd like to visit him sooner or later.