

The green grass brushed against my feet, grazing the sides of my ankles. I could feel the warm breeze against my skin, causing the hair on my arm to stand up. It was a calm, sunny, summer day. The birds were chirping as I lay next to them on a beach towel. I was looking at the sprinkler that must've been two hundred feet in front of me. The above-ground pool behind me that sparkled in the rays of the sun. Knowing that the day ahead would be filled with playing mermaids in the pool, laying on the black driveway to warm up after swimming, and hours and hours of volleyball. My brother and I would spend all day in the summer sun running from the sprinkler and then jumping back into the pool, as it made the pool feel heated. The days would end with my dad grilling. My favorite's were always burgers and fries or his famous ribs and corn on the cob, always with a slice of watermelon on the side. Meanwhile, my brother and I would be rotating singing karaoke and fighting over who got to sing what Taylor Swift song next. I'm pretty sure our whole neighborhood could hear us. The best part about summer, though, were those nights that were spent hosting movie nights in the pool. We would project "Surf's Up" onto the garage and tie all the pool floaties together so that we could watch the movie from the comfort of the pool.





The summer days that weren't spent in the pool, were spent playing across the street with Hailey. I would bring all of my American girls dolls or barbies, whatever we were feeling that day, over to her house. We would play for hours on end. When we would finally take a break, it was only to eat. When we were younger, that consisted of eating peanut butter and jelly sandwich's that Ms. Jill made us. I remember sitting one day eating them and watching the clouds pass over us, and of course we named what we thought each cloud looked like. As we got older, it turned into our turn to make our own lunch. We always made mac n cheese. The first time we made it though, oh that first time. Let's just say, it did not go well. No matter what age we were, we always ate a side of goldfish and juice boxes. Hailey's family was that cosco family, you know the ones that had those huge boxes of all those good unhealthy snacks, yeah that family. Can you tell that my family was not?

Growing up in the Chicago suburbs, we should've taken advantage of downtown Chicago more. One weekend every summer my mom and I would do a girls trip. We would stay in Downtown Chicago for a weekend at the Hilton Hotel. We always started with a trip to the American Girl Doll store. I was always allowed to get one outfit and maybe something fun. A few times I was lucky and walked away with a Bitty Baby. We always went to dinner at a fun

place, Heaven on Seven was my absolute favorite because they had the most amazing garlic mashed potatoes. In fact, I think I can still taste them. The last day of our little getaway was always a full day of adventure at Navy Pier. We would see a show, then ride all of the rides (the swings were of course my favorite), and we always had to eat at Harry Caray's restaurant right on the water before taking the water taxi back inland. This was always one of my favorite memories from the summer.

From the age of probably four to nine, we spent a week every summer at our families lakehouse. A few summers we stayed in those sandy, gross beds actually in our extended families' lakehouse. Other summers too many people were going and we would rent a house across the lake with my dad's siblings. We would spend everyday tubing, playing king of the raft, and the parents definitely spent the days drinking. Every night ended with everyone going back to the big house and eating the meal of whomever was chosen to cook that night. I think the parents all alternated, but to be honest, I was too young to remember. I always enjoyed these weekends, but they definitely had their downsides too lol.



Now, summers are spent at the lake, but not that lake. Two summers ago I went to my friend Kylie's lake house and spent a week with her. I've also gone to Lake Geneva several times and gone boating with my friends. We go tubing all day, anchor in the middle of the lake to swim for hours, and coast along the outside of the lake looking at all of the houses. I have also gone cliff jumping and hiking along Lake Michigan.

Good old St. Mary of Gostyn. So many memories here, for some reason the one right now that is coming to mind is the Veterans Day Assembly. I always loved Veterans Day, Mrs. Drabik always made it so fun and we always watched really informative documentaries. I loved the Assembly that they started to do once I got into middle school because they would bring in veterans to talk. One of our deacons was a veteran and I always found it most interesting when he came to talk. The picture that seems to keep coming to mind is a vision of the table as we walked out with an American flag draped over it and all the red poppies that we had made. The poppies were there for people to take as they walked out, everyone was allowed one. I also remember the table at the entrance of the building, in front of the office that was displayed and had a flag folded into a triangle, a chair titled up against the table in vevrance for all those lost, I think there was an empty glass and a lemon maybe.

Let me take you to a happy place. Where sweat is dripping down every part of your body, condensation runs onto your hand from a cold drink in hand, and you spend hours running from the grassy lawn back into the crowd. This is Country Thunder. Kylie pulls the car onto the grassy path that will lead us to our parking spot. We've spent the weekend parking in the reserved parking, and they still have yet to mention it. We get out of the car, take all of our pictures for the gram, and then open the cooler. The staples are always chips and guac and seltzers. We slip

koozies on our truly's to make them more “legal”. We can hear the barling music all the way from the parking lot. Once we are at a good level, if you know what I mean, then we make the mile walk into the festival, past security, past all the rides, right up to the main stage. I can still feel the energy of sweaty teenage bodies packed together screaming back the lyrics, someone making out on either side of you, with the night summer breeze blowing overhead. Kane Brown’s voice is echoing through the speakers as you dance with your best friends. Core memories. My favorite moments of every summer.

One day I’ll be married.

One day I’ll have kids running around the house.

One day I’ll look back and have everything I once dreamed of.

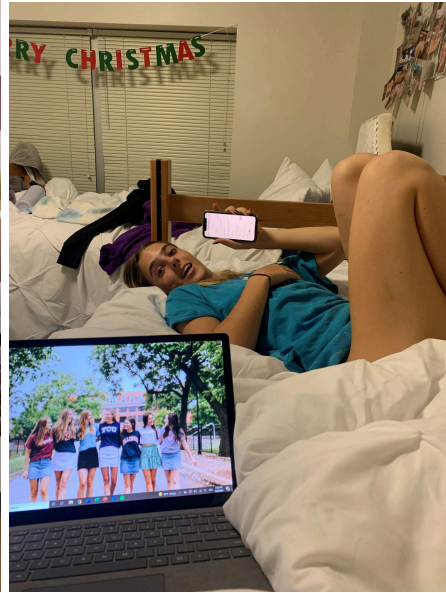
One day I’ll have passed all those moments away.

Will it be enough?

But right now, this is where I am:

Through the neighborhoods, winding down the road, beautiful houses that grow larger and smaller as you approach. All of the sudden, the peaks of the stadium jut over the tops of the homes. You continue walking and run straight into this beautifully stunning and elegant campus painted with yellow brick and light red roofs. Every building looks the same yet unique at the same time. You continue walking straight past the dining hall where my friends eat dinner together every night, past the rec where I go to get rollin more than I do to workout. You walk past the Harrison, a building that supposedly important people reside in. (I’m not sure, I've never seen anyone leave there.) Then you make a left turn through this parking lot for visitors. Finally you will see a building come up on your right, Clark Hall. That is where I reside and that is where I have found my community this year.





You swing open the door to Clark 204 and see two twin beds pushed up against each wall. My roommate resides on the one closest to the window. “Good morning!” I exclaimed as I came back this morning. “Good morning, how was your night?” Reese asked. “Oh it was a

night,” I responded and proceeded to tell her all about it. Reese laughed and responded saying, “It’s always an adventure living with you.” I laughed and began thinking about how I’ve asked her how it is to live with me. She always says it’s an adventure, but that I am also a very calming presence. She said she wouldn’t change her living situation for the world. And I totally agree. While we won’t be roommates next year, we will be just down the hall from each other, and that makes me so happy!

Going to Catholic Church on Sunday mornings at TCU’s Robert Carr Chapel has been something that I deeply cherish and would highly recommend. The priest starts every mass by greeting all the parishioners in a welcoming and personal way instead of just by the order of mass starting. They are so good about making everyone feel comfortable in that space. Going there has made me feel more at home at TCU and more comfortable within myself.

Experiences at TCU in six words:

Late nights at fiji’s frat parties.

Coming home with all my friends.

Christ Chapel on those Sunday mornings.