

## Week 7: Carolina in My Mind

*Note: This is Meg's final Carolina From Home blog entry. This article was originally published at [www.unc.edu/discover/carolina-in-my-mind/](http://www.unc.edu/discover/carolina-in-my-mind/).*

The summer before my first year at Carolina, I sat in my bedroom and watched videos of various Carolina events – Sunset Serenade, basketball games, a cappella concerts.

One video that I watched over and over was a Clef Hangers performance of “Carolina In My Mind” at graduation. The camera panned over Kenan Stadium as thousands of graduates, decked out in Carolina blue, held hands and cried, and sang along, “Can’t you see the sunshine? Can’t you just feel the moonshine??”

I had yet to set foot in a Carolina classroom, but I remember feeling an ache in my heart. I wanted that. I wanted to feel that. That kind of desperate happiness and sadness all mixed into one – a fierce connection to a place and its people.

“Carolina In My Mind” is a song about wishing you could go back to a place, but not just wishing you could physically be there. You wish you could recreate the experience of being there. You wish you could remember every second of the day-to-day tedium, the routines you made, the way you felt on an ordinary Tuesday in September while walking through the Pit. Watching Carolina graduates sing in Kenan Stadium, you get the sense that they’re desperately trying to remember it all – the highs and the lows, the ordinary and the extraordinary.

This song has always been sad to me. Listening to it fills me with an incredible sense of connection and pride, but also the feeling that time is running out. I’ve always known that the time would come, far too soon, when I could only go to Carolina in my mind. Of course, that time came even sooner than I feared it would.

Sitting in my bedroom now, the same place I was four years ago as I imagined what my life at Carolina would be like, I attempt to imagine what my own graduation would have looked like next week. What would it have felt like to sing that song in that place and know for certain that it would be the last time? My last memories of being on campus as a student – running late to class on the last day before spring break, listening to music in the library between work and class – are now my final memories of being at Carolina. If I’d known, then, how would I have felt?

There’s no way to know for sure. I’ll never be a Carolina student again, at least not the way that I was for the past four years. I’m lucky enough to live near campus, though, and that has given me the opportunity to make a few final memories of this

place I've loved so dearly.

On a gorgeous April day, my mom, brother and I walked onto campus, me decked out in my white graduation dress and my blue robe, stumbling along in an absurd pair of strappy heels, terrified that I would trip on a brick as I had so often on my way to class. As I walked up the steps of Wilson Library to pose for a picture, I heard the sound of applause. Squinting in the Carolina sun, I saw students ? my classmates ? getting to their feet, cheering and congratulating me. ?You're one of us,? they seemed to say. ?You'll never truly leave us.?

The time has come where I can only go to Carolina in my mind. I won't have the May graduation I imagined. But what a wonder it is to forever have this place in my mind, in my heart, in my soul.

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