

Korean First Birthday

One tradition we do in our family is celebrating a baby's first birthday. We started this tradition because in the old days, the death rate of babies in Korea was high, so we would celebrate that milestone. The death rate was so high because in the old days Koreans didn't have good medical knowledge. We celebrate by dressing up the baby in a costume called a hanbok and hat. Depending on the gender of the baby it is dressed accordingly. Females are dressed in a flowing pink dress while men are dressed in a shirt and hat. These clothes would be bright colors with intricate designs. Then we decorate the room with colorful paper and decorations. We place fruit and other food around the room. The family then celebrates like a normal birthday party with presents and food. Traditionally the family eats Seaweed soup, white rice and red bean cakes. The family would also place rice cakes, but only the family of the child ate them. It was believed that it brought the family bad luck if other people ate the rice cakes.

In the middle of the party the mom of the child calls everyone together. She prays to Shamsin, the birthing god, asking the god to give her baby a healthy life. Only women were allowed to pray to Shamsin, since Shamsin was a woman.

Towards the end of the party the baby gets to do the fortune ceremony. The parents place objects like a pen, money, string, brushes and food on a table. This ceremony is supposed to tell the child's fortune. When it was my turn to pick, I picked the money. The baby is placed in front of the table to pick up an object. Whatever object the baby picks up tells what the baby will have when he grows up. If the baby picks up the book or paint brush he will be smart. If the baby picks the money then the baby will be rich when he or she grows up. For generations, the Korean first birthday has been celebrated.

-Clarke Avery

Emily Han
Los Altos, CA 94022
650-200-5688
Almond Elementary School
Sixth Grade, Mr. Stuart

Hidden Memories

I caught my breath as my dad brought it into the room. I knew the routine, but it was no less exciting even on our seventh year. One of my family's longest and most unique traditions involves seven canisters, buried like prized treasures, scattered throughout our backyard - one for every year since 2009. Pictures. Ticket stubs. Souvenirs. Tucked away in airtight canisters, these hidden memories are our family time capsules.

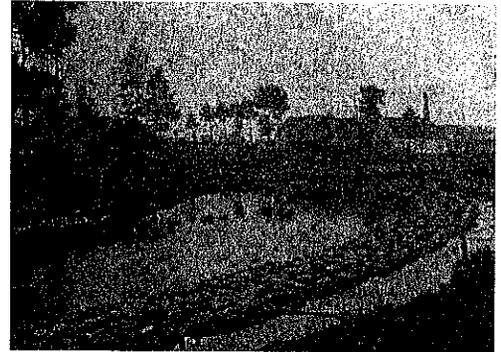
Since my family values each and every memory, time capsules hold very significant meaning. They contain adorable baby pictures. They include apology letters and travel itineraries. Each is a collection of memories from throughout the year. Time capsules represent years of laughing, crying, and everything in between. But mostly, they symbolize family. Every inch within is packed with keepsakes that weave the beautiful story of my family's history, and all the moments we have shared, together.

As each year progresses, we accumulate a massive pile of mementos, and bury the time capsule as the year comes to a close. Our family says goodbye, for a while, to each little reminder of the past year as we gently let them fall from our fingertips. Finally, we seal the capsule and all take part in planting it, with extra care, into the ground.

Memories have always had a special place in our family, in our hearts. My dad has written me a "lunch note" every day since kindergarten, and we own more photo books than toys. My family's time capsule is a perfect example of a way we try to keep all of these memories alive. We cherish every memory because each one symbolizes us, as a family, together, having extraordinary experiences that we never intend to forget.

The Golden Snuffbox By Alec Van Kerckhove

In the early 1800's, my ancestor, Peter Benedict Van Kerckhove was the mayor of the town Lokeren, France (Now part of Belgium). He and his town made lots of linen fabric for middle class and very rich people. Near Lokeren, the River Leie or Lys is famous for having "Magical Waters" to make linen out of flax. The producers bundle the flax and soak it in the river before spinning it into linen. Lokeren was very famous for making linen and the whole area was well known for the craftsmen and the quality of their work. One day in 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte heard about Lokeren so he stopped by on his way to his naval base in Antwerp. Napoleon decided to order uniforms for his soldiers, generals, and himself. After he ordered the uniforms, Peter had to direct the craftsmen in Lokeren and tell them what to do, how many regimental suits to produce, and the sizes of the wearers. He probably checked the quality of the work many times before it was given to Napoleon.



After the suits were made, Napoleon was very happy with the quality of linen he received. He was so happy he gave my ancestor a pure gold snuffbox! A snuff is a tobacco but you inhale it up your nose. The snuffbox was a small rectangular coffer with the initials of Napoleon, N.B on a plaque in the center of the lid. One of the most beautiful features was the raised scrollwork around the edges of the plaque with lots of designs like wavy curlicues, and the foliate pattern. On the corner of the box there were embossed flower-like doodles. The golden snuffbox is still owned by my family. Today it is a secure place in the bank but there is a replica displayed at the Lokeren City Museum.

The linen made in Lokeren rewarded my family again 20 years later. Jacobus Van Kerckhove, relative of Peter Van Kerckhove, won an international contest in London for the highest quality linen. Jacobus was representing Lokeren at the trade fair so when he returned after having made Lokeren famous, the townspeople created a celebratory fair. The fair is called Koveken (in Flemish) or Van Kerckhove (in French). At the fair the people that lived in the town made huge people from linen to celebrate. At the fair the mannequin Jacobus always wears a blue shirt, a red scarf with white dots, and a hat. Sometimes I think about this story and I always thought that it was interesting how one of my ancestors met Napoleon and another had a fair named after him. Through the rewards granted to Jacobus and Peter Van Kerckhove, the town of Lokeren became famous for the quality of the linen textiles it produced.

