

COMMUNICATIONS**The 17th Dandelion Camp:
There and Back**

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‘Suddenly my heart is flying away in the breeze like a dandelion seed~ ♪’

Since I started as an intern, I’ve taken part in the Dandelion camp three years in a row. By now, this is something I look forward to a great deal.

Du Ri Park came with her hands full, carrying luggage, just as she always does. I am always so thankful to nurse Du Ri Park for taking it all on herself to run our Dandelion family event. I always promise her that I will help her if I have a little more time next year, and she thanks me for the thought. This year, as usual, I hastily finished my ward duties and just barely caught the rushing bus.

As a member of Konkuk University’s Cosmetic Surgery Department, you can attend the two-day Dandelion camp. It’s a time when Dandelion Association family members and the hospital staff can

**Fig. 1.** Bright smiles from children of Dandelion camp.

gather together. Since 1995, Professor Gi Il Uhm has been key in organizing the Dandelion Camp and the end-of-year meeting for children with congenital cleft lip and palate along with their families.

We arrived at the campground in Gapyeong, Gyeonggi-do, a place with picturesque views and clean water. Once we unpacked our bags, we gathered in the lecture hall to listen to Professor Gi Il Uhm’s lecture to kick off the camp. Families who were attending for the first time were also introduced. It was so cute to see the children, who had been sick whining away in their hospital gowns with the hemovac next to them, laughing so heartily, as though they had never been sick.

After we had all been introduced to each other, we all went outside and shot air rockets up into the sky. The first time I saw air rockets I was doubtful that the children would like such silly toys. However, after a while, it was obvious that the adults were even more zealous than the children in assembling the rockets and competing to see who could shoot theirs the highest. Seeing this, I couldn’t help thinking, “They, too, were once little children that liked to assemble toys and play.”

After we filled our hungry stomachs with barbecued meat, the fun activities started. When I think about it now, perhaps because it was an event with something of a tradition, the camp program went smoothly and was well organized. Even though he looked young, the MC’s well-honed eloquence fired us up. Then the performance that the hospital staff had prepared started. The ward nurses and surgery nurses had spent a long time preparing for the rhythmic dance, the dance performance, and the comic super strength show by first-year interns and residents.

Every year, the first-year interns and residents make their debut on stage. It provided an official opportunity for the first year Dandelion camp teachers to introduce themselves to the children and mingle with them. After these performances finish, the interns and residents undoubtedly become the most popular people at camp. As I watched the comic super strength show, I remembered when Ju Yeon Kim and I did our very successful magic show last year. For the rest of

**Fig. 2.** Dandelion families at our cheerful sports event.

the camp, we were called red-nosed magicians. I began to watch the show with the confidence that they couldn't possibly top our performance from last year, but then I ended up getting sucked into it. I was very proud of our interns and residents for their interesting and lively performance.

The talent show finished, and finally it was time for the highlights of the Dandelion camp, the fireworks and the campfire. Even though this happens every year, this moment was still the most eagerly awaited. The children seemed to feel the same. They were playing here and there or resting in the dormitory. However, when the word went out that the fireworks would start, they bolted to the sports field and gathered there. For thirty minutes, no one could take their eyes away from the fireworks that lit up the June night sky. No one remembered to take pictures—the children, the parents, or myself. We watched the colorful fireworks in awe. Every spark warmed and melted our tired bodies and the timely tune, "Becoming a Dandelion Seed," comforted our exhausted hearts. I suspect that the fireworks became an especially fond memory for the children as well, as they gathered together

with the doctors—the ones who inflicted pain on them to treat them—outside of the hospital setting and watched the sparks of fire, leaving behind the painful memories.

With the scheduled part of the day finished and the children asleep, I could hang out and spend some time with other doctors and nurses from the same department in an informal get-together. The next morning, the camp wrapped up with some mellow games. When it was time to leave, the children came in ones and twos to say goodbye. The mothers also didn't forget to express their thanks. Although we were sad to see them go, we held each other's hands and made promises to meet again at the year-end camp.

It was so good for me to see the children leave the exhausting hospital life and enjoy nature. To see the children do so was a great blessing to me, which made me think that, perhaps, it was arrogant of me to think that I was giving to them in my profession.

Already, I miss their smiling faces.