

In June of 1994, when I was sixteen years old, my parents moved from Los Angeles to Finland, uprooting me from my home. I joined them in August. I entered a strange new world of different customs, different languages, a new school, new friends, and a new house. It all felt very sudden at the time, but it really wasn't. It was the end of a long process that began years before.

March 1998. A sunny, but windy day in Providence. The students of Brown University walk on the main green, enjoying the rare sunshine. A sense of expectation lingers in the air. Spring break is three days away.

“Case, what are you doing for break?” a friend asks me.

“I’m going home.”

Where?

What exactly is home? Is it a city, a state, a house, a room, a bed, a sound, a touch? Is it the feel of a pillow, the taste of pizza or the smell of the beach? Is home where you want to die? Or where you're comfortable? Are you at home sitting next to your girlfriend or riding on a plane? Can home be as big as a country, yet as small as a stuffed animal?

December 1994. The big Lufthansa plane's wheels touched down on the runway of the Los Angeles International Airport. That's my favorite part of any airplane trip. Somehow the big bump that always come when the landing gear hits the ground and then the plane bounces up and then comes back down again, screeching as it slows. That sensation makes me feel comfortable for some reason. Perhaps it's because I'm on the ground again or perhaps it's because I'm finally at a destination. Maybe it's because I've travelled so much and planes are always carrying me home.

Whatever it is that makes me feel good, that Lufthansa plane hit the ground, marking the beginning of the end of one of the most hellish airplane flights I had ever been on, and my heart skipped a beat. It must have been 15 hours non-stop from Frankfurt to Los Angeles, three hours late, and all in broad daylight, which meant no sleep for me, and with two of the worst movies anyone had ever seen, *The Never Ending Story Part Three* and some made for TV movie called *Linda*. Sleeping on planes was

never something I did well. Yet now I didn't want to sleep; the plane had landed. I was home.

Well, sort of. I was just visiting.

I had been in Finland since August living with my parents in a new home. Now I was finally back where I belonged for a two week visit without my parents. The plane taxied up to the gate and all the passengers in the jam-packed flight filed out of the plane. As soon as I got off the plane I was moving like a fat man at the all you can eat salad bar at Sizzler. I was walking at Mario Andretti pace. Walking fast has always been one of my fortes. My friend Carl used to say that I could shift into a fifth gear while everybody else only had fourth. I upshifted from fourth to fifth and sped toward customs. Miraculously I made it through customs in record time, picked up my bag and headed for the exits. Vroom Vroom.

I walked out of the revolving doors. I was psyched, headed to see my best friends play a soccer game, and headed for a week and a half of visiting home. I came out of the doors pushing my luggage cart, saw my friend Matt's father and grinned a Cheshire cat grin. Home.

I was born and raised in Santa Monica, California. A true blue Southern Californian if ever there was one. Give me the sunshine, the beaches, the beautiful sunsets caused by the smog. Give me the freeways, Disneyland, Dodger Stadium and the Hollywood sign. Let me get anywhere in the city, no matter how far or how close, in exactly twenty minutes. Take me to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Promenade or the Sunset Strip and let me watch as all the beautiful people and celebrities go by. Let me drive with my shades on and the sunroof open, the wind blowing through my hair and the radio tuned to Power 106, bumping 2pac and Dr. Dre's "California Love." I want to walk the six blocks from my house to Main Street and eat Wildflour Pizza, the grease dripping off the cheese, with a house salad with no croutons, or go to Starbucks with my dad. I want to get in my car and know that I can never get lost. Drop me on any corner in Santa Monica and let me get home on the Big Blue Bus. Let me inhale the fresh ocean smell as I dig my feet into warm hot sand, the grains sliding between my toes. I want all of it. Like Randy Newman, I love LA.

The Los Angeles area was what I knew and loved first. I lived there for the first sixteen years of my life; all of them spent in the blue house with yellow trim on the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and Ashland, seven blocks from the beach and two blocks from Ocean Park Boulevard where Sandra Bullock first gets on the Big Blue Santa Monica bus in the movie *Speed*.

It was the house with the sloping backyard that became my brother's, my friends' and my personal wiffle ball stadium, complete with a short porch in right field, like Yankee Stadium and a Green Monster in left, like at Boston's Fenway Park. A stadium where my friend Peter and I played countless games on Sunday mornings. It was always his Yankees versus my hybrid of the Dodgers and Cubbies; Orel Hershiser, Greg Maddux and Mitch "Wild Thing" Williams trying to strike out Don Mattingly, Ricky Henderson and Jesse Barfield with my patented finger in the hole of the ball curve ball that defied all laws of physics. We would play all morning in our bare feet, pitching and hitting and ruining my mother's flowers. It was the backyard that had the perfect slope for a slip and slide that was the only entertainment necessary for countless birthday parties. My brother and I would dive down the slip and slide head first, pretending we were Pete Rose, and rocket down the small hill, splashing into a puddle of water. The house with my room, the one so skinny, my mom called it a closet. It did have a huge walk-in closet in one corner, a closet that housed all my old toys and my priceless baseball card collection. It was the house with my bed and my sheets and pillow cases decorated with toy cars, pillow cases that held my special pillow that I wouldn't let anyone else touch for fear that it wouldn't feel right anymore. It was my pillow.

It was my house. Los Angeles was my city. They were my only home.

Then they weren't.

In January of 1993, President Clinton appointed my father Deputy Under Secretary of Commerce for something or other. Dad began to sublet an apartment in Washington and my mom and I prepared to move to DC. I was heartbroken.

This couldn't happen. I couldn't be dragged away from my beloved Los Angeles, from my house, from my lifelong friends, from my home and be expected to go quietly. Yet for the most part quietly I went, going through the motions of preparing to move

while secretly still thinking that it couldn't happen. *I'm a Californian for life, no way I'm going to move anywhere ever* I thought, with the typical naiveté of a know it all teenager. I went to DC in the spring of '93 and applied to high schools. I visited them and eventually chose one, Georgetown Day School. I think I picked it because their basketball team stunk and I could have been a superstar. That right there shows you that I didn't put much stock into moving. It just couldn't happen.

It didn't. Shortly after I chose my school, my dad decided that he was miserable at his new job and that we would remain in LA and he would go back to his professorship at Occidental College. Yippee!!

One night I was sitting at home, watching a Lakers game with my brother and the phone rang. I answered it. "Is Casey there?" a female voice asked. I responded affirmatively. The woman on the other end said she was a parent from Georgetown Day School and was calling regarding me being a new GDS student. I smiled and told her that I wouldn't be attending GDS. I hung up the phone, looked at my brother and grinned. I was ecstatic inside. I was staying in LA baby, they could take their school and shove it.

I was home free. LA was once again to be my home forever. I never thought we'd really leave and we didn't. Maybe I did know it all.

Maybe not.

In late 1993 my father was informed that he was once again being nominated for a job by President Clinton, this time as United States Ambassador to the Republic of Finland. We would be moving again and this time it wasn't just to the other side of the country but to the other side of the world, to a place most people I knew had never heard of let alone know where it was on a map.

When my dad told me he had been nominated and that we might move to Finland, I didn't think much of it. The experience with Washington had bolstered my confidence. I was never leaving California. It was that simple. And besides before anything was official my father had to undergo a vigorous State Department background check and then be approved by the Senate, first by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Chairman Jesse Helms, and then by the entire Senate. To me all the eventual steps

seemed too far away for it to be real. I acted as if nothing had changed. I wasn't going anywhere.

Months later, after the background check was complete and after Jesse Helms had attempted to degrade my father's character and credibility, my father finally got out of committee and his nomination was scheduled for a full floor vote. The vote took place on a Thursday afternoon. I was in tenth grade at the time and I finished school at 12:30 on Thursdays and Fridays, so I was home eating lunch. My dad was watching C-Span in living room the on the smaller of our two downstairs color TVs. He was sitting on the most uncomfortable of our three couches, but it was the one closest to the TV. He leaned forward on the edge of the couch, his elbows on his knees. He refused to be relaxed. Various Senators had been debating his nomination on the Senate floor. Maybe debating isn't the right word; they were giving speeches that no one else was listening to, except Dad of course. I walked into the living room and sat down on the footrest, pulling it closer to the TV. Dad's vote was coming up any minute.

I felt a little strange sitting their watching the one-hundred distinguished gentleman of the United States Senate about to decide the next move in my father's career. Secretly I thought I wanted them to vote nay so his nomination would fail and I wouldn't have to move. Then the voting started. *Senator Kennedy of Massachusetts votes yea. Senator Gramm of Texas votes nay.* I picked up a pen and paper and started tallying the yeas and nays. With each yea I saw a light in my father's eyes. I couldn't root for him to lose. This was my dad, the one person who had done more for me in my life than anyone else. I couldn't vote against him. I began to cheer with every yea and scorn the Senators who voted against my father. At one point, one of the Senators from Utah's vote was called out for a second time. "Wait a minute," I shouted, "That guy just voted twice." In fact he had originally voted against Dad and had changed his vote to yes after the other Senator from Utah, ultra-conservative Orrin Hatch had voted for Dad. Hatch went against his ideological comrades beaus my father's mother's family is Mormon from Utah. I'm related to half the state of Utah. Voting against a relative of half your state is not a good idea if you want to get re-elected. That Senator's vote brought the total of yeas to 48. Eventually vote number 51 came and my dad was officially confirmed as the US Ambassador to Finland. I couldn't help but smile.

Of course this meant that we'd be moving to Finland. Yet I didn't quite get it. It didn't really sink in. After my father was sworn in I began to tell my friends I was moving to Finland, but I didn't really believe it. In May we began to organize our house and start packing up stuff. Some of our belongings would be shipped to Finland, others would be moved to the State Department warehouse in Maryland. I had to decide what went to Finland, what went to Maryland, what would stay with me for the summer and what I had to throw away.

My mother always complained that I had too much stuff and always wanted me to give or throw stuff away. It was difficult; I liked my possessions and I had a shitload of them. Like any other kid I went through stages of collecting things. Only I kept everything that I collected. Baseball cards, ticket stubs, stuffed animals, baseball card wrappers, sea glass, action figures- GI Joes, WWF figures, Transformers and Go-Bots, comic books, stamps, Garbage Pail Kids, micro machines, Sports Illustrated and other magazines, programs from plays and sporting events, Army Ants, Marvel cards, Lego's, Starting Line-up figures: you name it, I collected it. And I kept it. This meant that I had drawers overflowing with stuff. One of my desk drawers wouldn't close because it had so many baseball card wrappers in it. Packing up the house I had to sift through all the stuff I had accumulated in the first sixteen years of my life and decide what pieces of memories were worth keeping and what could be thrown away.

The baseball cards had to stay; they were my most prized possessions and the one thing I had collected all the way through from age four to age sixteen. The stuffed animals and comic books couldn't go either, too much time and emotion had been invested in them. The ticket stubs and wrappers were easy to discard. The fate of other things were harder to decide. I wanted to keep everything, my mother wanted me to keep nothing, my father took the middle ground and brokered compromise. He was a diplomat at home even before we went to Finland. Eventually it all got settled and all my possessions were earmarked for the final destination.

My parents would be leaving for Finland at the end of June and I would be joining them in late August. In early June when we finished packing up the house, late August felt a long ways away and moving somehow didn't seem quite real. Our last night in our house was the night before my first day of summer school. I came home from class that

afternoon and found my beloved house empty of anything we owned except a refrigerator and one bed that had been used as a couch. Our couches weren't in the living room, my bed and my pillow cases with the toy cars on them weren't in my room. The house was a barren and empty shell of what it had been yet it still felt like home. That afternoon I walked out of the house for what I thought would be one of the last times. The father of my friend Orin, whose house I would be staying at over the summer, came to pick me up. I walked out of the house, turned around and looked at the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and Ashland, at my blue California-style bungalow with yellow trim, and felt only a slight pang of sadness. Leaving the house wasn't the traumatic experience I thought it was going to be. "Goodbye house," I said to myself. I got in Orin's dad's Honda and we drove away.

I stayed at Orin's house for the almost the whole month of July and felt completely at home. I've known Orin since we were three years old and I think at that point in my life I had spent more nights at his house than anywhere else except for my house. His parents were and still are like a surrogate family to me. Dinner at Orin's, eating his mother's specialty dishes, tuna pasta with lemon juice and pinenuts and poor pasta, felt the same as dinner at home in the kitchen, looking out onto our backyard and eating my mom's shrimp with feta cheese or Ruth's chicken. I had my own personal bed in Orin's room. Five years later the bed is still there. When my birthday rolled around on July 23, Orin's mom bought me a cake and we had a small party at Orin's. I wasn't living in my house, but I was still in LA. I was still at home.

On July 26 I left Los Angeles, saying goodbye to my friends and my city. The day before I was at my friend Chris' house. It was getting late and I had to get back to Orin's house. It was time to say goodbye to Chris. I was leaving the next day and I really didn't know when I was coming back. As I got in the car and pulled out of Chris' driveway he began to cry. I assumed they were tears because his friend since the age of three whom he thought would always be there was going away for a long, long time. Maybe they were tears of sadness, maybe tears of change. Things wouldn't be the same for him without me around, I thought as the car pulled away. My home was changing, but so was his.

After stops in New Orleans to visit my sister, and Maine for two weeks of summer camp, I boarded a plane in New York on August 13, 1994 destined for Helsinki, Finland, a foreign land with a foreign language, foreign culture and foreign people.

My first four and a half months in Finland were a whirlwind of adjustments and new experiences. I didn't know what streets went where. I didn't know how the busses and trams ran or where the grocery store was or the movie theatres or the good night clubs. I was a visitor in a foreign city, trying to survive.

My first day in Finland I drove home from the airport in the official car of the US Ambassador, a large black, armored cadillac with bullet-proof windows, a siren and almost as many switches as James Bond's car. We cruised through the suburbs of Helsinki. The land was flat, covered with trees and lacking too many buildings. The urban sprawl of Los Angeles this certainly was not. No skyscrapers or freeway overpasses. No rows and rows of strip malls, car dealerships or supermarkets. No traffic. Instead of a shimmering ocean, bordered by golden sand and towered over by majestic mountains, Helsinki had a bustling harbor full of ferries and fishing boats that came right up to edge of downtown. It was new. It was strange. It was different.

My first day at school I walked into an auditorium full of students, knowing no one and nothing, except that the head of the international program had told me to sit there. I sat through a speech in a language that I couldn't understand, and looked around at a bunch of students whom I was sure were looking at me and wondering who the hell is that kid in the green shirt. I was nervous, excited and petrified all at once. Comfortable I most certainly was not. When the speech ended, a girl who had been sitting next to me asked me to my surprise in English who I was. I swallowed and through the lump in my throat, told her that I was an American and I might be studying in the International Baccalaureate program. She smiled and said that she was in the same program and kept walking. I realized eventually that I had been sitting with all the other International Baccalaureate students. Yet I was different. They were all Finnish except for an Australian girl who was there for two months and the daughter of the Irish Ambassador to Finland. I walked around with my head in the clouds. I was unsure of everything. When I let out a deep breath and regained normality for the drive with my



father back to the embassy complex and our house. The next day it would be back to being surrounded by hundreds of new faces who were speaking a foreign language and giving me funny looks.

When the first week ended I couldn't wait for the weekend. I was emotionally drained from being the new kid and trying to adapt. As time went on, I began to lose the feeling of my mind being cloudy. I figured out how to get home from school on the bus and where the movie theatres were and where I could go to watch hockey or basketball games. I took walks with my father around Kaivopuisto, the park next to our house, and on the Esplanade, the walking street in the center of downtown Helsinki. Things became less foreign and I began to feel more comfortable. The Finns at school came up to me to practice their English and taught me some words in Finnish. I found some new friends at school and joined a fantasy basketball league just like the fantasy baseball league I had had in LA. Things weren't that bad.

But I still wanted to go home. When December rolled around and I had my first break from school, I went back to Los Angeles for Christmas break. The night before my flight as I packed my huge blue duffel bag I couldn't contain my enthusiasm. I was downright giddy. The next morning I got up at 5:30 and drove to the airport to board a plane to Frankfurt. In Frankfurt I got on the Lufthansa jet that would deliver me back into the sunshine.

Back in LA nothing had changed. It was still perpetually sunny. The Santa Monica Pier, the beach and the mountains were still as breathtaking as ever. Most importantly, my boys were still my boys. I arrived at their soccer game and it was weird for about thirty seconds and then it was as if we were nine years old again, watching each others soccer games on a Saturday morning. It felt like it was the way life should be. I knew exactly where I was all the time again. I had tons of friends and a bunch of parties and games to attend. Just hanging out with no particular plan was once again an option that I just hadn't had with my friends in Finland, simply because I didn't know them well enough. The smog-created sunsets were more beautiful than before. My grandparents came to watch my friends play soccer. My friends and I watched the Lakers and went to Six Flags Magic Mountain. It felt like Los Angeles was my real life and that the first

four months in Finland had been some weird vacation. I had finished the vacation and now I was back home.

But my time in Finland was more than some small vacation and I had to go back. When I returned to the Arctic North, I re-entered a world of snow, ice and three hours of daylight after spending two weeks in unadulterated sun, sand and blue sky. I got home to our house in Helsinki and the jetlag kicked in. I began to feel disheartened. My sleeping habits were a mess. I kept sleeping through the only three hours of daylight that we were fortunate enough to have. Then to top it all off, I got sick. This confined me to my couch on New Year's Eve and denied me of at least one night that was sure to be fun. Instead of partying, I spent New Year's Eve thinking about what my friends in LA were doing. I became sad and homesick. Can you be homesick when you're with your parents?

I began to think of ways that I could go home. I discussed with my father the option of spending my senior year of high school in Los Angeles and living at my grandparents' house. I felt as if all I wanted to do was go home. School started and I told some of my friends that I might not be back the next year. And then somehow I stopped worrying about Los Angeles and settled into my routine in Finland.

I spent time with my new best friends Harri and Rami. I played basketball with my brother. I lifted weights with Harri. Harri and Rami and I played pool in the school lounge and complained about our crazy English teach Freddy Dashner and our Math teacher, Juhani Kaila who didn't really speak English and called me Kizzy. "What about you Kizzy" he always used to ask. Harri memorialized that phrase with a drawing that's on the wall in my dorm room.

I learned the culture and traditions of Finland. I traveled to Rovaniemi, on the Arctic Circle and visited Santa Claus' home. I flew to Lapland and drove on a snowmobile and ate in a traditional Lappish hut and watched my father be pulled around by reindeer. I went to the Baltic Herring festival and tried various disgusting, salty forms of that traditional Finnish food. I ate smoked salmon with mushroom sauce and potatoes every time we went to any official function. I ate reindeer (eating Rudolph is how my father termed it) and other Finnish delicacies. I became an aficionado of the sauna and of Lapin Kulta, the Finnish golden beer of Lapland. I learned how to swear in Finnish and how to buy bus passes and order food at McDonalds in Finnish.

At school we spent hours and hours of PE class practicing for what the Finns called the old dances. We chose partners (mine ended up being the girl who had talked to me the first day of school) and learned how to waltz (one two three, one two three), tango, lambeth walk and a host of other funky old dances. The practice was all in preparation for a night and a day at the end of February when the eleventh grade class performed the old dances. Under the Finnish high school system, the seniors (with the exception of the International Baccalaureate [IB] students) finish their classes at the end of February and have over a month to study for their matriculation exams. On this last day of classes the seniors all get dressed up in white jump suits that they have decorated and go around the school singing to their teachers and throwing candy to the elementary school students. The little kids want candy so bad that the seniors or *abit* as they're known in Finland can make them do push-ups or chores for them. The *abit* then get in trucks decorated with the school's name on it and drive around down town Helsinki with trucks full of seniors from the other schools in the city. I would take part in this tradition the next year on a freezing, snowy day, throwing candy and blowing kisses from my truck.

After the seniors parade through the streets and go off to party, the juniors get dressed up in tuxedos or white ties and tails, and fancy dresses and perform the old dances at school. I decked myself out in my father's tux which fit almost perfectly, although it was a little too large in the waste, so I needed a safety pin. Dressed in my tux, my mother thought I was the handsomest thing to ever walk the earth. I personally felt a little uncomfortable, being a casual Californian at heart. None the less, I was looking smooth and I went to school to put on a show and dance smooth. The dances started and the entire class was organized into two huge circles in the big, open center of the school. We moved in circles, spinning, waltzing, bobbing and turning. The highlight of the evening came when the tango began to play. At that moment, all the boys took the roses they had been wearing out of their lapels and stuck them in their mouths. We then danced the tango with the roses in-between our teeth. Antonio Banderas eat your heart out. I did my best Strictly Ballroom impression and had a wonderful time. I was experiencing Finland's oldest traditions with my new friends and family. I was becoming an American in Helsinki, not an American visiting Helsinki.

That spring I also experienced the singular Finnish holiday known as Vaapu. Vaapu begins on the night of April 30<sup>th</sup> and continues on through all of May Day. Vaapu is supposed to celebrate Finnish labor day, but in reality is just an excuse for the entire country to get drunk. And I mean the entire country. Everyone from age twelve onwards gets sloshed on Vaapu. On the night of April 30, the entire city comes to the Esplanade and walks around carrying beer and alcohol and hugging each other and pissing on the streets. Picture Brown's Spring Weekend on Wriston and multiply it by about 500. The first time I saw this display I was taken aback. It reminded me of the LA riots only three years earlier. Yet, Finns are some of the most civilized drunks you'll ever see. While acting loud, obnoxious and crazy, the drunk masses of Vaapu seemed only to hurt themselves not others. With Harri and a few of his other friends I waded through the sea of people and was part of a Finnish cultural phenomenon.

The strange thing about this holiday is not only does the entire country get drunk, but everyone who graduated from high school wears a white hat that sort of looks like a sailor's hat. Instead of a cap and gown, and a tassel, when you graduate from high school in Finland, you receive a white hat with the logo of your particular baccalaureate on it. When I graduated in June of 1996 I received my very own white hat. During Vaapu, particularly on the day of May 1<sup>st</sup> when the entire city comes to Kaivopuisto, right near where I lived, all anyone can see is white hat, after white hat, some bright white, some turned to off yellow by age. Vaapu with its drunken debauchery and its white hats, celebrates both the highest and lowest parts of Finnish culture at the same time. By the second time I had witnessed this tradition, it was somehow comforting. It made me feel safe and comfortable.

Somewhere in the midst of immersing myself in a new culture and new experiences I stopped pining so hard for LA. Don't get me wrong, I still had California Love, but no longer did I feel like I needed to be there to be at home. When I returned to Los Angeles during the summer I still was happy as can be to get back and I still thought I was going home. Yet when I left LA to return to Helsinki, that was going home too. I wasn't visiting either place any more.

In June of 1996, I graduated from high school in Finland. I received my white hat with my parents, grandfather, brother and sister all in attendance. We all had to sit through one of the most boring speeches of all time. The headmaster began his speech with the dinosaurs and finished with post-modernism and it was in Finnish no less, a language none of us really spoke. Only my brother and I knew some words and phrases.

In August of '96 I left Helsinki to visit Los Angeles before heading to Providence to begin my studies at Brown. I began a new chapter in my life, making a home for myself at Brown. My parents have since moved back into our house in Santa Monica and then moved to new house in Washington DC. I've spent much more time in LA and some time in DC. I have yet to return to Finland.

Yet Finland is still home to me. So is Washington, so is Brown, and of course so is Los Angeles.

Two weeks ago, I was sitting in my dorm room looking at some of my childhood and high school pictures with my girlfriend. We turned the page in the album and came to a shot of me at age eight. I'm dressed in a hideous looking purple and yellow soccer uniform with the shirt tucked in and the shorts pulled high. My hair looks funny, my sideburns are long and bushy and I have an enormous gap between my two front teeth, the result of having been born without the two teeth on either side of the front ones. "I love your shorts," said the good-looking blonde on my left, pointing to the yellow shorts which really were short as was the norm in the mid nineteen eighties.

"What a goofy looking kid I was," I said. Then I looked down at myself and then back at the picture of eight year old me and I thought of how much I've evolved and changed. Yet the twenty year old sitting in the dorm room next to a beautiful woman and the goofy looking eight year old, wearing his shorts too high are both me.

I was at home sitting there next to her looking at pictures and I was at home in that picture, smiling my goofy toothless smile.

A notion of home, perhaps like anything, evolves, changes, turns, spins and flips. Last weekend was May 1<sup>st</sup>, the third Vaapu since I left Finland and the third year in a row that I dug my white hat out of my closet, put it on and went out drinking to celebrate a Finnish tradition that has become my own. This year I added a Finnish national team

hockey jersey to my outfit and went out partying. Both nights, April 30 and May 1, I continually got comments. *Nice hat. I like your hat. Aye aye captain. That's the ballsiest hat I have ever seen. Oh captain my captain.* Some people thought I looked cool. Some thought I looked like a sailor, others like one of the Village People.

Personally, being a Southern Californian, wearing a Finnish hockey jersey and my once a year white graduation hat in the midst of masses of drunken undergrads on Vaapu in Providence, Rhode Island, I felt at home.