

My Bristol Is...

When I think of my Bristol I don't picture Hope Street with its red, white and blue lines as the cars hurry by, or the music seeping out of the windows and doors of Gillary's on Thames as it is filled to the brim with college students enjoying their Thursday night. Or even the concerts and fireworks in Independence Park for weeks leading up to the July Fourth festivities. Instead, I picture myself on the stone wall that kisses the water by the Herreshoff Marine Museum where I have watched many sunsets. I think of feeling the breeze come off the bay as the sky turns the yellow, orange and red hues of an autumn day before plunging into inky darkness, and getting a cold brew from Angelina's before rushing down the street to St. Michaels for a choral performance.



Bristol is not house parties and hijinx, nor is it historic buildings in neat rows along the water. Bristol is an Apple Jack at Aidan's on a cold night out with friends, watching from the widow of Portside Tavern as the dogs play in Independence Park while listening to the clanging of the ropes on the metal flag poles, and it's my best friend and I getting up early on the weekend to beat the rush to the Beehive, wondering which animal we'll be given when we order.

It's the sound of college kids walking the streets to the shuttle stop on High Street after a Tuesday night at Common Pub, and the rich, briney smell of the bay when you sit on the rocks by the Roger Williams University sailing center. Bristol is a conglomeration of the good, the bad, and the crazy.

Though Bristol is packed streets on Fourth of July Weekend in the sweltering heat and drunken karaoke at Aidan's on a Thursday, it's also Hope Street on a snowy December evening looking at the Christmas lights as giant snowflakes hang over the quaint, bustling main street and the shop lights welcome in customers. It's watching the sunrise over the bay your freshman year from the Global Heritage Hall lawn and saying hello to your neighbors who consider you to be family. It's the block parties down in the park on Hopeworth Avenue. Or a date at Leo's when you're both so nervous you make small talk about the menu.

Bristol is questioning whether you're under siege from cannons or if it's just fireworks during the summer. It's going to J. R. Bean on a Wednesday to try every type of chicken wing on their menus for half price, cookouts in Colt State Park, and ordering Lucky Garden for delivery on a lazy Sunday.

Bristol is deafening noise and complete silence. Walking the Roger Williams University Shell Path, taking a photo of the Mount Hope Bridge from the Willow Beach, it's the sense of being home--even

when you're not born there. Bristol isn't a place, it's a series of moments and feelings. That is my Bristol.