Julebukking

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Informant: Karla Childers is my aunt. She is the middle child in a family of 3 children, she was adopted into the family after my grandmother did not think she could have more children after having my father. She spent part of her years growing up in Sacramento, before moving to our family’s farm in Meridian, California. Our family has owned property on that same stretch of land since the late 1800s. My aunt Karla was very close with great grandma Nora who passed on Norwegian stories and traditions to my aunt Karla. Karla and her family still reside on our family farm in Meridian, California.

Context: This phrase was told to me over a conversation in my aunt’s kitchen. I remember the Julebukking tradition being mentioned once or twice at our annual Norwegian Tea. This event is hosted by my aunt Karla and includes all the women who are direct descendants of the Norwegian daughters Nora and Anna of the Pederson family. Julebukking originates from the Norwegians worship of the pagan God Thor, who was known to ride a chariot pulled by two goats. This tradition is similar to the tradition of Halloween, except it occurs at Christmas time. Julebukkers go from house to house and sing Christmas carol and then they are typically awarded with candy.

Text: Now um no one has ever taking me up on the Julebukking, I would really like to do that. Julebukkinging a way. I don’t know if it was on Christmas eve or what but it was when they would put on a goat’s head and go around and scare people. And demand, it’s kinda like trick-or-treating, they go out and they demand treats and stuff like that. So you know check it out. Yeah they did that back it Norway. But the girls probably never did that, Anna was 5 or 6 when they came through Ellis Island and grandma was born in North Dakota.

Texture: Karla told me this story in a more serious tone than some of the other things we had talked about. I think is was due to that fact that she would really like to participate in the tradition. However, she maintained a light-hearted nature as she told the story.