Christmas Eve Pajama Pyramid

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Holiday Custom

Informant: Esther Williams is a 21 year old recent graduate of Utah State University. She was raised in Smithfield, Utah, and is the oldest of five sisters. She currently lives at home with her parents and two of her sisters, and is getting married in December. She graduated with a degree in human development and family science.

Context: This was a created tradition that Esther believes came from her mother when she was eight or nine. It is a tradition that continually grows and changes as new brother in laws are added to the family, first with her sister’s husband, soon with Esther’s fiancee. This is a tradition that was so highly valued by the children that one year, when the family finances didn’t allow for the parents to complete their role (acquiring pajamas), the two oldest sisters took the matter into their own hands. They have done it every year since the first. The interview took place in person, inside my home in Smithfield, Utah. We interviewed after watching a cheesy Christmas movie.

Text: Every Christmas Eve we get Christmas PJs, pajamas, and we will go open them up and put them on and then we’ll come back upstairs into the living room with the Christmas tree and the family will take a picture but we all get into a pyramid before we take the picture and so that’s always fun. And we used to have use a piano bench because we didn’t have enough to make the pyramid but then my sister got married and now I have a brother in law to finish the pyramid, and now Dave is going to mess it up. [Laughs]

Texture: At the specific moment of collection, Esther spoke slow and methodically, as if attempting to convey all the details well. However, when I first asked her about her traditions, a few weeks ago, she spoke quickly and with passion, yelling over others who were also trying to share their traditions. She conveyed some sarcastic concern with her fiance’s role, falling into laughter.

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