Fall 2018

Chinese New Year

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Chinese New Year

Holiday Customs

Informant:

Cheri Connelly was born in 1938 and grew up in a small town in Idaho. She spent most of her younger years as a dancer, cheerleader, friend, and daughter. She married Richard Connelly in the Salt Lake LDS temple on December 22, 1961. After the two of them finished their college degrees they moved to Corvallis, Oregon where Cheri gave birth to her first child Cristen. Several years later, she had eight children, a loving husband, and a great career as a kindergarten teacher. She recently had her 80th birthday which was a room filled with a handful of grandchildren, all of her children and their spouses, and many smiling and emotion-filled faces. She currently lives in Bountiful, Utah and enjoys traveling with her husband, doing acts of service, and spending time with friends and family.

Context:

I know Cheri as my smart and loving grandma. Within her 60s and 70s her and her husband taught English to youth in China. During this time, they also served an LDS mission in Scotland. During the time that she lived in China she enjoyed submerging herself in the culture and specifically the cultural significance behind Chinese New Year. Due to the long drive to Bountiful I spoke with Cheri through email. Prior to her email describing Chinese New Year, we spoke on the phone so I could give her an idea of what information I wanted to collect.

Text:

The Chinese New Year is by far the most important holiday in China. Millions of Factory Workers leave their homes and live in dormitories by the factories they work in and they never see their families except for the Chinese New Year and the Fall Harvest celebration. Factories close, many restaurants and small businesses close and all those who have families go back to their “home towns” and stay for a few weeks. The trains are so jammed full that folks are standing in the aisles. If for any reason trains are delayed, chaos immediately erupts. If the delay is too long folks are even trampled to death because of the desperation to get home. The front doors of homes are decorated with 12-inch-wide red strips above the door and down the sides of the door. Chinese characters are written on each strip in large black or gold Chinese characters.
The messages are all wishing everyone happiness, prosperity, health and longevity. Decorations of large fish and dragons are everywhere. Each new year has a special name. The year of the rabbit or year of the dog or year of the tiger, etc. and large pictures of the animal of the year are everywhere. The garden centers and flower shops are selling peach tree branches with new blossoms, chrysanthemums of all colors, poinsettias and orange trees with small ornamental oranges. The orange trees and peach blossom branches come from very small to gigantic in size. These four things are attractively arranged in all the hotels, restaurants and stores as well as private homes, much the same as our Christmas tree. The official Chinese New Year Celebration goes on for 7 days. The dates change every year, based on the Solar Calendar. New Year’s Eve is a big family/friend night with feasts in restaurants and homes where folks are watching a FOUR-HOUR GOVERNMENT PRODUCED EXTRAVAGANZA TALENT SHOW by the country’s top Chinese Celebrities. They feast on sunflower seeds, peanuts, walnuts, fruits and candy. They play table games well into the night. At Midnight the TV show is ended and then they go outside, and entire cities and villages are ablaze with FIREWORKS that last for hours. The celebration continues for days until the Chinese New Year is over.

Texture:

Through communicating via email I felt as if this interview was slightly less personal. Because I know Cheri as my grandma I am familiar with her love and passion that she has for communicating with people from various backgrounds. Upon receiving her email with the detailed descriptions of Chinese New Year, I immediately became aware with her tone within her writing. The stylistic way she wrote what she observed while in China relayed a sense of urgency for the coming new year. Since her and her husband have returned home, they celebrate Chinese New Year as if they were still submerged in the Chinese culture.

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