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Grandpa's Birthday Party Christmas Eve

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Madeline Thomas
Smithfield, Utah
November 29, 2018

Grandpa's Birthday Party Christmas Eve Holiday Custom

Informant: My name is Madeline Thomas, and I am a 19-year-old college student attending Utah State University. I was born and raised in Lebanon, Oregon, but now reside in Smithfield, Utah while I go to school. My parents and three siblings still live in Lebanon, and I am second in the line-up. My entire family belongs to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. I find Christmas to be the most delightful time of the year.

Context: This tradition always took place after Christmas Eve dinner at my Grandparent's house, almost always with my grandma's brother and his wife participating, along with my immediate family. I don't know how long Grandpa celebrated his birthday Christmas Eve, but the way did it is an old enough tradition that I can't remember a time when he didn't, or that we weren't there. He moved to Oregon from Idaho when I was two, so I imagine the traditional aspects of the celebration started there. I collected this folklore from myself, while sitting at my computer at work, earbuds in, listening to Christmas music.

Text: My grandpa's birthday was on Christmas, and my parents and grandma always wanted to do something that was separate and special from the excitement of Christmas Day, so Grandpa Ed received his stack of presents and had his party every year on Christmas Eve. My parents, siblings, grandma, and great aunt and uncle would all sing Happy Birthday and eat cake while he opened gifts that were very specifically not wrapped in Christmas wrapping paper. He loved to tell the story of when he was born, how his older brother was riding his new Tricycle around the house while his Mom was in labor, and how she threatened to shove him back in when he looked in on the birthing process. Grandpa Ed passed away this last August, so I'm really not sure how this tradition will adapt or if it will just be something we look back on fondly.

Texture: It took me quite a while to figure out how I wanted to phrase everything, because I wanted to capture the moment well, because it might never happen again. I stopped typing several times to dwell on some memories of him, sometimes losing track of sentences for moments at a time. I tried to ignore some of the traditional elements of grammar to make it a

more naturally told story. In our participation in the folklore, the tone always seemed impatient as we waited for him to finish opening his presents so we could open ours. Excitement ran through the air, especially when we were all little kids. Our parents would have to sternly tell us that it was about Grandpa, and that we could all wait our turns.

Madeline Thomas
Utah State University
ENGL 2210: Introduction to Folklore
Dr. Lynne McNeill
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